

Minutes

McClellanville Town Council

July 6, 2026 – 7:00 PM

McClellanville Town Council met on the above-noted date. Notice of the meeting was published in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. Mayor Rutledge Leland presided. Council members Chris Bates, Malcolm Baldwin, and Jim Scott were present. Councilman Bob Gannon was absent. Others present included Town Administrator Michelle McClellan, Fire Chief Shaun Gadsden and Fire Marshal Duley with the Awendaw-McClellanville Consolidated Fire Department, Tree Committee Chair Larry Mellichamp, Cheves Leland, Sherry Browne, and Susan Martindale.

Mayor Rutledge B. Leland, called the meeting to order. Mayor Leland requested Council review the minutes from June 1, 2026, Council Meeting. Councilman Scott made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Councilman Bates and passed unanimously by all members present.

Cheves Leland presented concerns about dangerous tree limbs and debris throughout the town, showing photographs of dead and hanging branches on Charlotte Street, Legare Street, and Pinckney Street that pose safety risks to residents and vehicles. Mayor Leland requested the Tree Committee conduct a town-wide survey of trees identifying dead limbs and branches hanging too low to present to SCDOT to explore potential cleanup assistance. Tree Committee Chair Larry Mellichamp said he would speak with committee members and bring the matter up at their next meeting.

There was not a representative from Charleston County Sheriff's Office in attendance.

Fire Chief Gadsden gave a monthly fire report. He reported that District 4 had 126 total calls with 40 in the McClellanville area, including three fires, two hazardous situations, 21 medical calls, nine non-emergency calls, four public service calls, and one rescue call, with an average response time of 10 minutes and 56 seconds. Chief Gadsden proposed hiring 45 additional personnel over five years to improve response times and reduce overtime costs.

Captain James Duley was introduced as the County's first full-time Fire Marshal. He requested that the Town bring the water tank behind the Arts Council back online for fire protection purposes, explaining that under Chapter 9 of the International Fire Code, fire protection systems must be properly maintained. He noted that the Town would need to have the well evaluated to confirm it is operational. Council agreed to have HM Northcutt assess the water system.

Captain Duley explained that the International Fire Code requires permanent water supplies for fire protection during construction and demolition activities in subdivisions. He noted that the Town's lack of a hydrant system, combined with current drought conditions, makes this requirement especially critical. He stated that developers would be responsible for providing

the water source. He said that although the IFC requirement is every 500 feet, they would allow water sources to be spaced at 1,000 feet.

Captain Duley stated that this requirement has been in the International Fire Code since 2006 but had not been enforced due to the absence of a dedicated fire marshal position. He noted that the fire department is working with the Town of Awendaw and Charleston County, both of which have agreed to coordinate efforts to require permanent water supplies in subdivisions rather than temporary solutions.

Councilman Baldwin expressed concerns about applying the new fire code water supply requirements retroactively to existing subdivisions. He stated that it would be unfair to impose these standards on property owners and developers who created subdivisions more than 20 years ago, before the fire marshal position existed and before the code was actively enforced. He emphasized that individuals who subdivided their land years ago had no knowledge of these requirements and should not be burdened with new financial obligations after the fact.

Councilman Bates expressed concerns about the financial burden these requirements would place on small developers and existing subdivisions, arguing that the requirement would force out smaller developers in favor of large developers.

Fire Chief Gadsden noted that the Town could adopt its own ordinance if it chose not to follow IFC regulations. He also noted that the Fire Department could assist the Town in identifying potential grant opportunities to support establishing water sources in town. Mayor Leland suggested checking with the Town Attorney to see what options were available and agreed that Council would revisit the issue once that guidance was provided.

Mayor Leland opened the public hearing on the ordinance to adopt the fiscal year budget, which includes a millage increase from 11.1 to 11.53 mills. No members of the public offered comments. After closing the hearing, Mayor Leland called for a motion on the final reading of the ordinance. Councilman Scott made a motion to approve final reading, which was seconded by Councilman Baldwin and passed unanimously by all members present.

Next, Council held First Reading: Amendment to the Carolina Seafood Planned Development Ordinance to Designate an Additional 13.74 Acres of Open Space (Portion of Tract A and All of Tracts J, K, and L) as Reflected on the "Carolina Seafood Hwy Commercial PDD" Site Plan (2004; Amended Through May 3, 2026). Councilman Baldwin recused himself since he was a property owner in the PD. Councilman Scott made a motion to hold first reading and to defer the public hearing to the Planning Commission public hearing held on June 22, 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilman Bates and passed unanimously by all members present and voting.

Council discussed the upcoming franchise agreements with Dominion Energy and Berkeley Electric. Ms. McClellan noted that Dominion has requested a meeting with Mayor Leland to review Electric Rights Service Agreements, and that a new franchise agreement is expected to follow. She added that the Town's current franchise rate is 3%, though municipalities are

permitted to charge up to 5%, and stated that Council will need to determine what rate they wish to set moving forward.

Councilman Scott raised concerns about potholes in the boat landing driveway and requested repairs. Ms. McClellan noted that Charleston County had provided a quote two years ago in the amount of \$67,000, and Council agreed that this was a significant cost for the scope of work. Mayor Leland stated that he would reach out to local companies to obtain pricing information.

Councilman Baldwin raised concerns about the condition of sidewalks in Town. Mayor Leland agreed that several areas need attention but noted that sidewalk maintenance falls under SCDOT's responsibility. He suggested asking SCDOT to look at the sidewalks when they come to evaluate the tree issues in Town.

Councilman Baldwin suggested hiring a consultant to develop a comprehensive master plan for the Town's parks and green spaces. He noted that a PARD Grant might be used to support that effort. Ms. McClellan explained that typical PARD Grant awards fall in the \$5,000–\$7,000 range, which is likely below the cost of a planning study. She added that Kathryn Basha had confirmed the higher cost for such work and recommended that the Town explore additional grant opportunities to fund a consultant.

Council discussed future support of the previously supported microgrid grant. Council agreed to keep backing grant opportunities that could help move that work forward. There was general agreement to stay involved and continue supporting Clemson Extension and Dominion Energy as they seek grant opportunities for the Town.

Councilman Baldwin raised concerns about the water demands and infrastructure impacts of data centers and suggested creating an ordinance to prohibit them in Town. Council agreed with his concerns, and Councilman Baldwin will draft an ordinance for Council to review.

There were no questions regarding the financial statements.

There were no public comments.

Mayor Leland made a motion to enter executive session. The motion was seconded by Councilman Scott and passed unanimously by all members present.

Upon returning to regular session, Mayor Leland stated that no votes or action had been taken during executive session. Council resumed open session.

Mayor Leland made a motion to approve an agreement with Dominion Energy to replace the existing lighting in the school gym at 711 Pinckney Street with LED fixtures. Dominion is offering a \$7,500 incentive, reducing the Town's cost to \$3,684.96. The motion was seconded by Councilman Bates and passed unanimously by all members present.

Mayor Leland made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilman Scott and passed unanimously by all members present.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle McClellan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle McClellan
Clerk of Council