

DATE: 6/24/25 FILE NO: DATE647
TO: Cherokee County Council
SUBJECT: Minutes of PH & Regular Meeting, 6/23/25

There was a Public Hearing & Regular Meeting of County Council Monday, 6/23/25, 5 PM in Council Chambers. Chairman Tim Spencer presided with Tracy McDaniel leading in prayer. All council members were present along with Administrator Bishop, Asst. Admin. Bradley, Attorney Joe Mathis, Finance Director Kristy Howel and Master Clerk to Council Doris Pearson. The news media was informed by agenda and it was posted in accordance with the SCFOIA. Two news media were present along with 90+ visitors.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt the agenda of the Public Hearing & Regular meeting of Monday, 6/23/25 as received and posted in accordance with the SCFOIA. Tracy McDaniel seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to approve the minutes of the PH & Regular Meeting of 6/2/25 as received. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Billy Blanton made the motion to pay the claims as presented in the amount of \$650,808.58. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

Cherokee Co. Director of Veterans Affairs Todd Humphries gave an update for his office and informed council that he would be retiring from his position effective 6/30/25. He thanked council for their support for him and the veterans. Todd introduced the new Cherokee Co. Director of Veterans Affairs Steve Bright and asked council to continue to give Steve support as he takes on this new position.

Chairman Tim Spencer opened the public hearing for **Ordinance No. 2025-22** authorizing the Execution & Delivery of a Fee in Lieu of Tax & Special Source Revenue Credit Agreement by & between Cherokee Co., SC and Project Kingfisher with respect to certain economic development property in the county, whereby such property will be subject to certain payments in Lieu of Taxes, including the provision of certain Special Source Revenue Credits and the benefits of a Multi-County Industrial & Business Park; and providing for other related matters. No one was present to speak and the public hearing was closed.

Councilman Davis Smith made the motion to adopt 3rd Reading of Ordinance No. 2025-22 Project King Fisher authorizing the execution & delivery of a Fee in Lieu of Tax and Special Source Revenue Credit Agreement by & between Cherokee Co., SC and Project Kingfisher with respect to certain Economic Development Property in the County, whereby such property will be subject to certain payments in Lieu of Taxes, including the provision of certain Special Source Revenue Credits and the benefits of a Multi-County Industrial & Business Park; and providing for other related matters. Tracy McDaniel seconded and council voted In favor. Development Board Director Ken Moon announced that Project Kingfisher is Cielo Digital Infrastructure and he recognized Senior Vice-President C.J. Maier. Maier announced the company plans to invest approximately \$2.1 billion in the data center

and create an expected 30 new jobs. Cielo is a provider of data center infrastructure and will be located at the Ford Rd., Gaffney. The initial phase of operations is expected to be online in 2028.

Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to adopt 1st Reading of Ordinance No. 2025-24 to amend the Agreement for Development of a Joint County Industrial Park by & between Spartanburg & Cherokee Counties, SC, so as to include additional property in Spartanburg Co. as part of the Joint County Industrial Park, and other matters relating thereto (Sacred Mountain, LLC and 1017 Florida, LLC). Billy Blanton seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to adopt 1st Reading of Ordinance No. 2025-25 to develop a jointly owned and operated Industrial/Business Park in conjunction with Spartanburg County, such Industrial/Business Park to be geographically located in Cherokee County and established pursuant to Section 4-1-170 of the Code of Laws of SC, 1976, as amended; to provide for a written agreement with Spartanburg County; to provide for the expenses of the park, the percentage of revenue application, and the distribution of Fees in Lieu of Ad Valorem Taxation; and providing for other matters related. Billy Blanton second and council voted in favor.

Chairman Spencer opened the Public Hearing on the Proposed **Ordinances adopting Operating Budget for the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2025**, for the Cherokee County General Fund, Grassy Pond Fire District, Cherokee Creek Fire District, Corinth Fire District, Buffalo Fire District, CKC Fire District, Antioch Fire District, the Gaffney Fire Protection District, Blacksburg Fire District, Goucher/White Plains Fire District, and DMW Fire District. No one was present regarding the Fire Districts and the public hearing was closed.

Chairman Spencer presented the 3rd Reading of Ordinances adopting a budget proposed by the County Administrator containing estimates of proposed revenues and expenditures by the County of Cherokee for the Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026, for the following Fire Departments:

No. 2025-11 – Cherokee Creek VFD – Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to adopt as presented. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

No. 2025-12 – CKC VFD – Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to adopt as presented. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

No. 2025-13 – Corinth Fire District – Councilman Elliott Hughes made the motion to adopt as presented. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

No. 2025-14 – Draytonville/McKowns Mtn./Wilkinsville Fire District (DMW) – Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt as presented. Elliott Hughes seconded and council voted in favor.

No. 2025-15 – Gaffney Fire Protection – Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to adopt as presented. Billy Blanton seconded and council voted in favor.

No. 2025-16 – Goucher/White Plains Fire Dept. – Councilman Elliott Hughes made the motion to adopt as presented. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

No. 2025-17 – Grassy Pond VFD – Councilman Billy Blanton made the motion to adopt as presented. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

No. 2025-18 – Antioch VFD – Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to adopt as presented. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

No. 2025-19 – Blacksburg Fire District – Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to adopt as presented. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

No. 2025-20 – Buffalo Fire District – Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt as presented. Tracy McDaniel seconded and council voted in favor.

Chairman Spencer opened the Public Hearing again for the proposed Ordinance 2025-21 adopting the Operating Budget for the period of 7/1/25 – 6/30/26 for the Cherokee County General Fund. Administrator Bishop explained the rules & procedures for those speaking stating they would be given 3 minutes to speak and the timer will be set.

Speaking in opposition of the FYB for Cherokee County: 1) Lynn Wilkins; 2) Tracy Littlejohn; 3) Brad Wilkins; 4) Charlotte Littlejohn; 5) Courtney Smith; 6) Vanessa Oglesby; 7) Chuck Lewis; 8) Kristy Jefferies and 9) Sherry Cerny.

Speaking in favor of the FYB for Cherokee County: 1) COC Brandi McBee; 2) Sheriff Steve Mueller; 3) VA Todd Humphries; and 4) Jeff Dover.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt the 3rd Reading of Ordinance No. 2025-21 adopting a budget for the County of Cherokee and to provide for the levying of taxes & fees for the county purposes for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026, etc. Donnie Hardin seconded.

Administrator Merv Bishop stated since the 1st Reading of FYB 25/26 for Cherokee County, Administration has worked diligently to make strategic reductions and adjustments to further refine the proposed budget. This budget is as lean as possible while remaining accurate & capable of delivering the level of service our residents rightly expect in return for their tax dollar. We considered the feedback we received from council and moved forward to reducing the budget as much as we could and still address the needs; provide the equipment & tools needed throughout our departments; provide the resources for our employees for them to perform their job duties for our citizens; consider our fire departments; and make decisions around taxation which must ultimately reflect the current and future needs of our

community and our duty to provide essential services at a level that meets the expectations of those we serve. The General Fund Budget is balanced at \$43,382,435.10; Capital Fund Budget is balanced at \$4,145,310.81 and the E911 Tariff budget is balanced at \$708,307. To help balance the budget we transferred the Airport Fund Balance of \$211,061.04; this will eliminate the Airport Fund balance. Administration has gone through the Operating Expenses and has been able to cut an additional \$907,313.26 from 1st Reading. Administration recommends an overall 12.0 mill increase for fiscal year budget 25/26 along with \$4,121,146.69 from Fund Balance to balance this year's budget. We also deleted Section 35 regarding any employee that retires after 7/1/25 at the minimum age of 65 yrs. old to receive \$200/month allotment that may be applied toward the employee's post-retirement health insurance policy, etc. This doesn't affect those that came before 2009.

Councilman Tracy McDaniel spoke in favor of the motion regarding the FYB 25/26 stating that it will take 12 mills increase to balance the budget; .2 mills go to the Recreation District, etc. I'm in favor of this budget because it is what we need to move forward and provide services to our citizens. Every year we have been getting further behind because we did not raise milage. Our equipment is very old and breaking down and when we don't have the equipment we can't provide the services. We haven't raised taxes in over 3 years; and pretty soon we will not have any savings left to bail us out if we keep dipping into that account. I don't want to raise taxes but we must find a way to operate this county and give the citizens the services that they need. I appreciate our employees and they desire a pay increase; I want our kids to have a better future.

Councilman David Smith stated he was in favor of this budget so we can provide services to the citizens of this county and move forward.

Chairman Tim Spencer stated he was opposed the millage increase because they are a lot of people out there that will not be able to afford this. It will have a big impact on a lot of people. Everything is going up and it is getting harder for the poor people to make ends meet.

Councilwoman Teresa Boner stated she is against this millage increase because a lot of people in my district live in the City as well and they will be doubled taxed. This City is increasing their millage and the county is and that is going to make it hard on them.

Vote taken on Ordinance No. 2025-21 adopting the County of Cherokee FYB 25/26 as presented. Voting in favor: Donnie Hardin, Billy Blanton, Tracy McDaniel and David Smith. Oppose: Tim Spencer, Teresa Bonner and Elliott Hughes. Motion carried with 4 voting in favor and 3 opposed.

Asst. Administrator Kristy Bradley had no report.

Councilman David Smith made the motion for council to go into Executive Session at 6:15 PM pursuant to Section 30-4-70(a)(2) for receipt of legal advice where the legal advice relates to matters covered by the attorney-client privilege regarding Public Works Facility. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion for council to come out of Executive Session at 7:16 PM. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor. Attorney Mathis stated that no vote or action was taken during Executive Session.

Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to allow Administration to solicit a broker to send out RFPs for the sale of the Broad River Electric Bldg. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

As there was no other business to come before council at this time, Chairman Spencer adjourned the meeting at 7:17 PM.

APPROVED: 7/7/25

Respectfully submitted,

BY ITS CHAIR: Tim Spencer

Doris F. Pearson, Master Clerk to Council