

DATE: 6/30/26 FILE NO: DATE678

TO: Cherokee County Council

SUBJECT: Minutes of PH & Regular Meeting, 6/29/26

There was a Public Hearing & Regular Meeting of County Council Monday, 6/29/26, 5 PM in Council Chambers. Chairman Spencer presided with David Smith leading in prayer. All council members were present along with Admin. Bishop, Asst. Admin. Bradley, Attorney Joe Mathis and Master Clerk Doris Pearson. The news media was informed by agenda and it was posted in accordance with the SCFOIA. One news media was present along with 35+ visitors.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt the agenda of the Public Hearing & Regular Meeting of Monday, 6/29/26 as received and posted in accordance with the SCFOIA and with the deletion of Item 11 Bid 2026-28 and Item 13 Executive Session. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Billy Blanton made the motion to adopt the minutes of the Public Hearing & Regular Meeting of Monday, 6/15/26 as received. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to approve the claims for Cherokee County in the amount of \$730,804.56. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Donnie Hardin made the motion to adopt Resolution No. 2026-08 providing preliminary approval for certain property tax incentives to induce a company identified for the time being as Project Foxtrot, acting for itself, one or more current or future affiliates and other project sponsors to establish or expand certain facilities in Cherokee County, SC, including (1) a Negotiated Fee Arrangement; (2) Multi- County Industrial or Business Park Arrangement; and (3) other related matters. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

Chairman Spencer opened the Public Hearing on three ordinances and called upon Administrator Bishop to read them: **1) Ordinance No. 2026-05** to develop a Jointly Owned & Operated Industrial/Business Park in conjunction with Spartanburg Co., 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 (Project Cruiser). No one was present to speak. **2) Ordinance No. 2026-06** authorizing the execution & delivery of a Fee in Lieu of Tax & Special Source Credit Agreement by & between Cherokee County, SC and Quarry Propco LLC, formerly known to the county as Project Cruiser 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 Credits; and other matters related thereto. No one spoke. **3) Ordinance No. 2026-10** authorizing the execution & delivery of a Joinder Agreement to provide for the addition of Aerowerks

Real Estate, Inc. as a sponsor affiliate to the Infrastructure Credit Agreement between Cherokee County, SC and Aerowerks Corporation of America, to amend the investment period and to address other matters related thereto. No one was present to speak and the public hearings were closed.

Councilman Peter Wilkins made the motion to adopt 3rd Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-05 to develop a Jointly Owned and Operated Industrial/Business Park in conjunction with Spartanburg Co., 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 A Valorem Taxation; and providing for other matters related (PROJECT CRUISER). Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Peter Wilkins made the motion to adopt 3rd Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-06 authorizing the Execution & Delivery of a Fee in Lieu of Tax Agreement by & between Cherokee County, South Carolina and PROJECT CRUISER, the code name for a Delaware Limited Liability Company 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 Credits; and other matters related thereto. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor. Development Board Director Ken Moon announced that Collett Developers would be joining two spec buildings off State Line 85 in Blacksburg and will be constructing a 350,000 square foot spec building on Quarry Rd., Blacksburg, investing \$30 million.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt 3rd Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-10 authorizing the execution & delivery of a Joinder Agreement to provide for the addition of Aerowerks Real Estate, Inc. as a sponsor affiliate to the Infrastructure Credit Agreement between Cherokee County, SC and Aerowerks Corporation of America, to amend the investment period and to address other matters related thereto. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

Administrator Merv Bishop read a statement stating that over the past several months Council has asked Administration to do 3 things: 1) bring forth a balanced budget; 2) avoid deficit spending; and 3) continue looking for ways to reduce the impact on taxpayers & residents. The budget before you tonight reflect those priorities. When this process began, the recommended Solid Waste Fee was \$240/annually per household; the budget included a \$3.5 million increase. Following guidance from council, administration went back to work and negotiated lower disposal costs & tonnage; eliminated the proposed milage increase, removed all deficit spending, and reduced the Solid Waste Fee down to \$222/annually. This budget preserves a service that makes Cherokee County unique. We are the only county in SC that provides residential trash collection to our citizens. For many families, especially seniors and residents in rural areas, that service is not a luxury. It is an essential county service they depend on every week. Any proposal that substantially reduces the fee below the actual cost of providing the service must be covered through deficit spending. And, if the county ultimately exits the residential trash collection business, the cost does not disappear, it is transferred directly to our citizens

through private collections. These costs are already substantially higher than the fee proposed in this budget. In the end, our citizens would find themselves paying more. Tonight's decision and I recognize it is not an easy one, is not simply about a fee. It is about whether Cherokee County will continue providing a service that our residents have repeatedly told us they value and want to keep. I want residents to know that Administration understands the impact any new fee may have on families living on fixed incomes. If this budget is approved, we will begin exploring options for a sliding scale for qualifying elderly, disabled and low-income residents. We will also explore any grant opportunities or outside funding sources that could help offset future costs. We have a responsibility to present a budget that is honest, sustainable, and balanced. The budget before you tonight accomplish those goals. It preserves county wide trash collection, avoids deficit spending, eliminates the need for a tax increase, and positions this service to operate more efficiently in the future. Finally, we have a responsibility to adopt a budget before July 1 or else our new EMS system will not be deployed, and we run the risk of not having ambulance service. I respectfully ask for your support in this budget before you tonight and for your commitment to maintaining the services our citizens rely upon every day.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt 3rd Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-11 to adopt, charge and collect a User Fee for the Collection & Disposal of Solid Waste for Cherokee County, SC and other matters related thereto. Donnie Hardin seconded. David Smith stated I thought we were getting out of trash business. Donnie Hardin asked if we don't adopt this tonight and then adopt a balanced budget for the new fiscal year, we will have to shut down, is that correct Attorney Mathis? Attorney Mathis replied statute says you are to adopt a balance budget by July 1st. Elliot Hughes asked if this budget has the sale of the transfer station in it? Donnie Hardin replied this budget is to maintain the current trash collection that we have in place now with a fee of \$18.50/month; no tax increase. Elliott Hughes replied I don't think we should sell the transfer station at all. I have asked Merv if there were any other options and I have not received an answer. Merv replied that at your last meeting council voted to allow me to sign the Letter of Intent to sell the Transfer Station. Elliott Hughes asked have you checked with any other company besides Republic. Merv replied in all the investigations that we have carried out, there are no sales of Transfer Stations. If that is the direction that council wants us to go, then we will. Elliott Hughes replied aren't you supposed to follow procurement? Merv replied we were approached by Republic and they made that offer to us. Elliott replied but you haven't checked with any other and I asked you several times to check. Merv replied at the end of the day I have to take direction from full council and if that is the direction council wants to go, then I need 4 votes to tell me to do that. Merv replied what we have proposed tonight is the \$222/yr with no deficit spending. Peter Wilkins replied I am not for deficit spending. We have to pass this just to offer a service and give us time to work out a better plan. David Smith replied I will support this but we need hard numbers to make a decision for convenient centers, etc. My goal is to get out of the trash business altogether. Merv replied we have over 17 convenient centers now, they are not manned or policed and have a lot of trash. We pay for a dumpster at our Recycling Center because our trash goes to the Convenient Center. We are going to have 6 convenient centers and in operation from Monday – Sunday. Kristy stated that we need around

2.5 acres for convenient centers, looking at around \$30,000/acre, plus around \$200,000 to \$300,000 to build these centers. I can support this for a year based on we can get some real hard numbers of what it will cost us down the road. Merv replied one of the things we have in the \$222 is the purchase/lease of 7 new trash trucks for 4 years. Also, includes new software and making all the employees full-time becoming county employees. Lease trucks will come in Dec. Tax bills go out 10/1/26. Teresa Bonner stated you will be putting this on the tax bill and a lot of people can't afford it and will lose their homes because they cannot pay this trash fee. Can we find another way to bring it down to \$222/yr. Merv replied years ago when we started on this, Billy Blanton proposed \$120/yr. but we didn't have a tipping fee and now we do. We need 7 new trucks and they cost around \$250,000/truck. I feel this is the best route for the county but maybe not good for all. Another thing, if a person does not pay the fee, it will not make their property to be put on the delinquent tax record. It would go into a debt collection. **Chairman Spencer called for the vote: Favor: Donnie Hardin, David Smith & Peter Wilkins. Oppose: Bill Blanton, Tim Spencer, Teresa Bonner & Elliott Hughes. Motion failed.**

Councilman Billy Blanton made a motion to reconsider the prior motion to reduce the Solid Waste User Fee to \$8.00/month and to limit it to disposal services only. Teresa Bonner seconded. Elliott Hughes asked will this do away with trash pickup altogether? Merv replied that will run through 6/30/27. After discussion, **Billy Blanton & Teresa Bonner withdrew the motion.**

Councilman Billy Blanton made the motion to reconsider the prior motion to adopt 3rd & Final Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-11 to adopt, charge and collect a User Fee in the amount of \$18.50/month for the Collection & Disposal of Solid Waste for Cherokee County, SC and other matters related thereto. Tim Spencer seconded. Voting in favor: Donnie Hardin, Billy Blanton, Tim Spencer, David Smith and Peter Wilkins. Opposed: Teresa Bonner & Elliott Hughes. Motion carried.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt 3rd Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-12 adopting a budget for the County of Cherokee and to provide for the levying of taxes and fees for county purposes for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027, and declaring that the same shall constitute the budget of the County of Cherokee for such fiscal year. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

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 and to provide for the proposals of the following fire departments:

- **No. 2026-13 Draytonville, McKowns Mountain & Wilkinsville (DMW) VFD – Councilman Elliott Hughes made the motion to adopt. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.**
- **No. 2026-14 Grassy Pond VFD – Councilman Billy Blanton made the motion to adopt. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.**

- **No. 2026-15 Buffalo VFD – Councilman Peter Wilkins made the motion to adopt. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.**
- **No. 2026-16 Corinth VFD – Councilman Elliott Hughes made the motion to adopt. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.**
- **No. 2026-18 Antioch VFD – Councilman Peter Wilkins made the motion to adopt. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.**
- **No. 2026-19 Cherokee Creek VFD – Councilman Peter Wilkins made the motion to adopt. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.**
- **No. 2026-20 Goucher/White Plains VFD – Councilman Elliott Hughes made the motion to adopt. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.**
- **No. 2026-21 Blacksburg Fire District – Councilman Peter Wilkins made the motion to adopt. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.**
- **No. 2026-22 CKC VFD – Councilman Peter Wilkins made the motion to adopt. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.**

Councilman Peter Wilkins made the motion to adopt 3rd Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-17 levying an Ad Valorem Tax for the operations and maintenance of the Gaffney Fire Protection area for the Calendar Year 2026/2027. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt 3rd Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-23 adopting a Supplemental Appropriation for the County of Cherokee and to amend the Fiscal year Budget beginning July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2026, and declaring that the same shall constitute the budget of the County of Cherokee for such fiscal year. Donnie Hardin seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to adopt 1st Reading of Ordinance No. 2026-24 authorizing the Execution & Delivery of a Fee in Lieu of Ad Valorem Taxes Agreement by & among Cherokee County, SC, and a company known to the County and identified for the time being a “Project Foxtrot”, including any related or affiliated entities and any sponsor affiliates, to provide for payment of a Fee in Lieu of Taxes and Certain Special Source Revenue Credits; and other matters related thereto. Teresa Bonner seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Peter Wilkins made the motion to move the Regular Scheduled Meeting of Monday, 7/6/26, 5 PM to Monday, 7/13/26, 5 PM. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

Administrator Merv Bishop announced that the EMS will officially take over the Cherokee County Ambulance Service this evening Monday, 6/29/26, at 12:00 midnight. There has been a lot of planning and hard work put into this and it will be a giant step forward for our county.

Action for Bid 2026-28 C-Funds Paving Project was not taken at this time.

Councilman Donnie Hardin made the motion to award Bid 2026-25 HVAC & Electrical design for Cherokee County Emergency Operations to Salas O'Brien for the total amount of 245,925. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor. Kristy Bradley reported that EOC had received a grant in the amount of \$3.4 million provided by the Federal Land Grant/Homeland Security and a large portion was for the upgrading of the electrical, mechanical & plumbing design of \$314,000 for the EOC Renovation Design Project.

Councilman did not go into Executive Session at this time.

As there was no other business to come before council at this time, Chairman Spencer adjourned the meeting at 6:33 PM.

APPROVED: 7/13/26

Respectfully submitted,

BY: CHEROKEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Doris F. Pearson, Master Clerk to Council