

City Council Minutes
August 18, 2026

Orangeburg City Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at 6:00 pm in Council Chambers, 933 Middleton Street with Mayor Butler presiding.

PRESENT:

Michael C. Butler, Mayor
Annette Dees Grevious
Jerry Hannah
Jordan E. Hawkins
Dr. Kalu Kalu, Mayor Pro Tem
L. Zimmerman Keitt
Sandra P. Knotts

Public Hearing 1: Consideration of an ordinance to adopt a budget for the City of Orangeburg for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027; establishing the Hillcrest Golf Course Enterprise Fund; and renaming the Service Department as the Maintenance Department.

Lt. Danny Dantzler, 110 Dan Keowen Drive, Orangeburg stated, "I am here to provide some answers and clarification to the questions during August 4th Council meeting concerning the Orangeburg Forensics Lab. It was suggested by Councilmember Hannah that the lab has not produced value and that its first and foremost purpose is to generate income for the City of Orangeburg. The word value can be defined as the importance, worth, or usefulness of something. Under this definition, the lab has provided tremendous value to the citizens and victims of criminal cases by identifying suspects from all case types to include murders, attempted murders, armed robberies, criminal sexual cases, burglaries, and the like. The primary purpose of the lab is to assist in criminal investigations, not to be a source of revenue. The lab generates income by providing forensic services for fees to other law enforcement agencies and private labs. The lab is currently assisting ten neighboring law enforcement agencies, three private laboratories for which they pay for our forensic services. In addition, we continuously promote our service to other agencies we are currently negotiating with Orangeburg County, the First Circuit Solicitor's Office, and others. Mayor Butler stated that the lab has not performed outreach to gain further interest in the services. The lab performed outreach and to the advice of Councilmember Grevious and Mr. Evering, we met with the City's marketing group, Foresight Communications, last November for their assistance in producing a marketing plan and outreach campaign for the lab. At the conclusion of this meeting, they were to work on a promotional package that we could take to other agencies throughout the Southeast. However, as of yesterday, we have not received anything from them. The lab hosted lunch and learn events where we hosted numerous law enforcement agencies from across the state to better inform them of the services we provide. The fruits of this labor have already been proven with more agencies submitting their evidence to our lab which continues to grow. Mayor Pro Tem Kalu inquired about toxicology which the lab does not provide toxicology services. The state law enforcement division lab is the only public lab that provides this service for criminal investigations. Mayor Pro Tem Kalu asked how closing the lab will affect criminal investigations. Time is critical to any investigation. Without the Lab, investigations will slow significantly as turnaround time for analysis of critical evidence will dramatically decrease identifying suspects to make arrests or determining whether additional investigative steps are necessary. The citizens of Orangeburg are deserving of timely resolutions to their cases. Chief Austin provided that all forensic analysis would revert to SLED if the lab were to be closed. Councilmember Grevious inquired about the status of SLED's current backlog. To say the current backlog of SLED is significant would be an understatement. In addition to paying private labs to work against their current CSC backlog in property crimes, SLED recently requested assistance from all local DNA labs in the state including our lab. As of June 20, 2026, SLED had over 2,130 untested criminal sexual conduct cases from jurisdictions all over the state. The oldest known to us dates to 2007, which is nearly 20 years old. Currently, there are 52 untested criminal sexual contact cases from Orangeburg County dating back to 2018 and an additional ten untested child sexual exploitation (CSE) cases dating back to 2020 in Orangeburg County. These numbers do not consider crimes such as murder, attempted murder, armed robbery and the like. In fact, SLED has stopped accepting property crimes completely and is solely working cases based on phone call requests from agency heads. This ineffective process is further proof that SLED is unable to keep up with the routine casework as it is submitted to them. On August 10, we had a conversation with SLED Major Todd Hughey and Captain Emily Reinhardt from the SLED lab. Captain Reinhardt

said that due to their case backlog, they are only assigning cases when they have a special request from a prosecutor, sheriff, or chief. Once the case is assigned, it then takes approximately eight months for the case to be completed. The best answer we could get from them was indefinite. Mayor Pro Tem Kalu mentioned the hospital possibly testing DNA. Hospitals offer blood tests to monitor health, diagnose conditions, and guide treatment but not identify individuals related in criminal activity. Hospital systems do not have access to databases for searching for the scientific application and techniques performed in a forensic lab or not similar or conducive to the hospital setting and vice versa. Councilmember Keitt requested the number of cases the lab has worked. So far this fiscal year, property and evidence has received 669 cases, which consisted of 31,162 items of evidence. CSI has processed 38 crime scenes, as well as processed evidence from 77 additional cases. Forensic chemistry tested 938 items from 214 cases. DNA has analyzed 203 items from 82 cases which resulted in 32 Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) matches. DNA section also completed case reviews on 67 cases from private labs. Defunding the DPS Forensics Lab will have a detrimental consequence for the entire criminal justice system by contributing to the prolonged uncertainty for victims and pushing back the identification of persons of interest in criminal cases. Allow me to echo Councilmember Hannah's statement at the last Council meeting, 'it is about the quality of life for citizens'. The City of Orangeburg is blessed to have access to such an incredible solid, active, investigative tool. The Citizens of Orangeburg will be negatively impacted by the short-sighted decision to close the lab. What price do you put on the citizens' safety? We would like to invite you to come to the lab, spend some time and see what we do and how we operate."

Mr. Harvey Elwood stated, "The Forensics Lab as it puts the City of Orangeburg on the map in a positive way. I employ you to keep moving Orangeburg on a trajectory upward mobility where we can be recognized statewide for doing great things. Please be creative and inventive to continue to build Orangeburg. Whatever decision you make, I know it will be the right decision."

Ms. Rachel Grant stated, "I am the DNA Technical Leader of the Forensic Lab. I am sure you have been given several letters of support, but I wanted to read another one that I received yesterday from an agent from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). It says, 'To whom this may concern, I am writing to express my strong support for the continued funding and operation of the Forensic Science Laboratory in Orangeburg South Carolina. As a Federal Investigator, I have relied on the services and expertise provided by this laboratory. They have assisted me with several federal investigations, providing valuable forensic analysis that has helped me advance and strengthen the investigation process in my cases. In addition to this, their efforts have helped me identify several suspects in cases to include a homicide and a gun store burglary. Forensic laboratories are not just support services for law enforcement; they are an essential part of the criminal justice system. The ability to have evidence examined professionally can and has made a significant impact on what has happened and ultimately holds offenders accountable. The loss of this forensic laboratory would have a direct impact on local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies that depend on their services and expertise. This can create a domino effect causing increased turnaround times, delays, and investigations which in turn can cause very real consequences. I have personally seen the value this laboratory has brought to law enforcement investigations. The professional expertise and quality of work provided by staff and personnel have made them valuable partners. I ask that the long-term impact be considered when deciding to eliminate this laboratory. This cost should be viewed as an investment in public safety. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter and understanding the important role forensic science plays in supporting the criminal justice system. Respectfully, Special Agent Johnson.' I want to ask everyone that is here in support of the Forensic Laboratory to raise their hand to show the importance and relevancy that we have."

Ms. Sheree Waring stated, "I am with Next Level Real Estate, Orangeburg. I am here in support of the Forensics Lab. I want to reiterate the importance of it and the safety for our community. Safety is not just absence of crime, but safety includes the ability to be able to solve crimes when committed. Safety involves people not sitting in jail because they have been falsely accused and we do not have the forensics to be able to exonerate them when that is in order. When people ask about crime and safety in an area, as realtors, we cannot make comments due to the Fair Housing laws. We encourage people to connect with our local law enforcement, talk with the police department, and look up statistics and information. I would not want people to connect with the local law enforcement office and find out we do not have forensics for this area. Keep in mind that there is a close relationship between safety and economic growth and development. When

people are looking for a home, a place to put down roots for their family or for a business, they are concerned about safety. I ask that you take this into consideration as you make your decision.”

Mrs. Laura Hatt, 1259 Cattle Creek Road, Rowesville, stated, “Some of you know me as the Director of the Orangeburg County Historical Society. Tonight, I am here as a private citizen and a survivor. I do not share this story often. Very few people outside my immediate family know what I am about to tell you, but I believe Council needs to hear it before you vote on eliminating funding for the local Forensic Lab. I am also sharing because if you do not fund this lab, you could be putting someone else’s chance of going from a victim to a survivor in jeopardy. Years ago, I was attacked by someone who was supposed to love and care about me. For years, I tried to leave. I went to the police more than once, but I was too afraid to press charges and under the law at the time, that meant their hands were tied. I wish back then that an officer had been able to press charges on my behalf, the way the law allows today as I might have found the strength to leave sooner and stay gone. I want this Council to understand what that fear is like. It is the fear that if you ask for help and it does not work, you will pay for it later alone and behind closed doors. I will not go into every detail, but I want to be clear about what happened. One time, I found out I was pregnant with my daughter and I left him. While I was away, he found me and attacked me. I was raped and assaulted so badly that I lost my vision for three weeks. At the hospital, the police told me a rape kit could be processed quickly and that speed is the reason I am able to speak to you today. That evidence went to a local forensic lab, and my attacker was arrested in under a month. When they arrested him, they found that he had made plans to leave for another state. If that evidence had gone through the state lab instead, with the backlogs those labs face, I do not believe he would have been caught before he crossed state lines. I would not have gotten justice and that arrest is the reason I got away, never went back, and I was able to build a new life for myself and my daughter. Because the case moved quickly, I was able to testify, and he was sent away for several years. That speed gave me something I do not think this Council can fully understand if you have not lived it, peace of mind and freedom. I tell you this now because I believe this Council needs to understand in real terms what is at stake when you talk about defunding the local lab. This Council already knows that a victim’s own strength is sometimes not enough. That is why the law now allows an officer to press charges even when a victim is too afraid to. A fast, local, forensic lab is that same kind of backup. It is not asking a victim to be strong enough. It is making sure she does not have to be. The people who will pay for the loss of this forensic lab are victims, survivors, people going through exactly what I went through at the very moment that they need speed, certainty, and someone standing behind them. I am asking this Council formally and directly to vote against eliminating funding for the local forensic lab. Every day that evidence sits unprocessed because it was sent away instead of handling locally is another day a victim waits for answers and another day an offender remains free to hurt someone else. Anyone on this Council who votes for this cut should be ashamed of themselves for putting money before victims’ peace of mind and possible freedom. Respectfully a survivor and a citizen of Orangeburg.”

Mr. Brad Riley stated, “I am not a citizen of Orangeburg; however, I do work for the citizens of Orangeburg. I am one of the Assistant Solicitors for the first circuit. My office is here at the courthouse. Some cases I get involve drugs. I receive cases where the drugs are sent to SLED, and I receive cases where the drugs are sent here. I am always impressed and surprised at how fast I get these drug results back from the drugs that have been sent to Orangeburg Forensic Laboratory. I will tell you that from the perspective of a prosecutor, a case does not get better with time, it usually gets worse with time. The fact that Orangeburg can get us these drug results in such a quick time makes our job a lot more efficient. It allows us to do more prosecution on other cases as well. I urge you, please keep this drug lab.”

Ms. Bethany Miles stated, “I am the Deputy Solicitor in Orangeburg County. I handle our murder docket as we refer to it. We have about 98 pending murder warrants currently and about 118 attempted murders pending on our docket. Just on those murder and attempted murder warrants, there are about 93 people in our jail just on those cases. We have 106 cases right now just on those types of cases. We have had some waiting since 2017. Our situation is we are not allowed to put something on the docket until discovery is complete. Discovery being complete means we need to have the DNA done. When we call SLED, they say we cannot run it because of the magnitude of cases unless you have a case on the trial docket. Therefore, it is an endless cycle as we cannot get on the trial docket because we do not have DNA and we cannot get DNA because we are not on the trial docket. We have been trying to try at least one or two murders every term. We are trying to make a dent in the backlog, but we cannot process them fast enough to get them back and

what happens is when these people are in jail, three, four, five years, they wind up getting out on bond and creating other crimes. A lot of the murders that we have are committed by people who should still have been in jail or prison. I do not think that we are going to be able to make a true difference in that until we are able to prosecute it quicker and more effectively. A lot of these people, if they knew that DNA came back and it matched them, would plead a lot faster and we would go to trial a lot faster. We just sent our first case to the City's lab. I met with them a few weeks ago and met with the County and talked about how we can make it more efficient. How can we move these cases? What can we do on our end? We sent my last trial that was set for Monday. The lab had it done in a few weeks and he pleaded 30 years yesterday. We were able to move that 2024 case on the trial docket instead of waiting for the five, six, or seven years that we are currently waiting with SLED. SLED is great but I prosecute in all 46 counties, and they just cannot do it fast enough. From our perspective, having this lab is imperative to keeping our docket moving and keeping our citizens safe here."

Mr. Paul Miller stated, "I support everything that these people have said in support of the Forensic Lab. I think Councilmember Keitt and Councilmember Knotts were a part of Council when we made the decision to open the Forensic Lab. The reason it came about was Orangeburg was on the top of the list in South Carolina for violent crimes. Employees that work at the lab are certified by the FBI, which is very important as they can testify in court when there are cases involving these crimes. I urge you to consider not removing the funding for our Forensic Lab."

Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson stated, "I am a citizen of Orangeburg now. About 30 or 40 years ago, my father was killed in New York City. My mom had to go to New York, and the forensics lab told my mom how my father died, that he fought for his life, and he died quickly. Four members of my family were recently murdered. The forensic lab told my aunt how they died, whether they were shot in the front or the back. They needed to know as it gives peace of mind to know that they did not suffer. We do not want to wait two or three years. It is important that you do not close the lab here. We need it."

Public Hearing 2: Consideration of an ordinance to adopt a budget for the operation of the Department of Public Utilities of the City of Orangeburg for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, (2) adopt amended Electric rates effective October 1, 2026, (3) adopt amended Water rates effective October 1, 2026, and (4) adopt amended Wastewater rates effective October 1, 2026. There was no one to speak at Public Hearing 2.

Public Hearing 3: Consideration of an ordinance to approve a change to the Zoning District Map from A-1 Residential, Single-Unit District to B-3, Neighborhood Business District for property belonging to Donald G. and Steven M. Adkins located at 1374 St. Matthews Road TMS #0174-18-09-005.000.

Mr. John Politis with Apollo Realty Partners, Boca Raton, Florida stated, "I have been around Orangeburg for 42 years as I own the Big Lot Plaza on St. Matthews Road and Chestnut Street. I am here to request rezoning of the vacant property across from Walgreens. The three corners are zoned commercial and have commercial tenants there. My plan is to clear the property which is $\frac{3}{4}$ quarters of an acre and build a coffee kiosk with double drive-thru takeout. There will be no seating inside. I would like to remind Council that last year, three properties with houses were rezoned on St. Matthews Road next to the Credit Union. There has been no activity, and the three houses remain there. If Council approves this rezoning, I plan to immediately start construction."

Councilmember Hawkins asked, "Will there be private fencing behind the coffee kiosk?"

Mr. Politis stated, "Yes."

The Public Hearing portion was closed.

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to approve August 4, 2026, City Council Minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

A resolution honoring the life, service and legacy of James Winston Roquemore was presented to the Roquemore family.

Mr. Mark Hobbs and Mr. Ben Halligan with The Hobbs Group presented the 2025 audit. Mr. Mark Hobbs stated, "We are here tonight to present you about a very good audit report. The City is subject to Government Auditing Standards which require us to test internal controls. In September 2024, you had about \$4 million in federal programs that were qualified to be under a separate audit and an opinion rendered. In 2025, that number went up to \$12 million. Our audit report includes a clean report on your federal dollars that were spent. Last year there was a material weakness and internal control reported and that was lifted on this year's audit report. It is considered a clean audit report. One comment that we included in the City report is that the trial balance was not available to us until March, which is about six months after year end. This is something you need to improve. In the prior year it was a material weakness, we felt things had improved but we have not quite got there yet. We believe the City should be able to produce a trial balance by December 31st of the year following the audit. Under that type of timetable, if we could commence in January, perform it in January and the first of February and present your audit in April, which is timelier, rather than August. Part of a system of internal control includes the preparation of the trial balance."

Mr. Ben Halligan with the Hobbs Group stated, "We performed field work in April and finished everything in June-July. We used the audit strategy; it is reasonable assurance that financial statements are presented fairly. We did a fraud risk assessment including improper revenue recognition and management over the controls. We did not have any issues or find anything that you all need to be aware of. The procedures we performed as you see in the slide, controlled testing of cash disbursements, payroll, and journal entries and substitutive procedures over cash receipts. We did not have any issues. Everything seemed to be working efficiently and effectively. On your screen is a high-level snapshot of the City's overall financial position at September 30, 2025. The City reported combined net position of \$347 million and that represents the difference between the City's assets and deferred outflows of resources and its liabilities and deferred inflows of resources. The total net position increased by approximately \$27 million during Fiscal Year 2025 which is improvement from the prior year. The City has around \$380 million in capital assets net of accumulated depreciation and amortization which includes buildings, infrastructure, utility systems, equipment, and construction progress. On liability side, the City has reported \$104 million in long-term liabilities which includes debt, pension liabilities, OPED obligations, finance purchases, leases, and other long-term commitments. Overall, it was a good year with the change of around \$27 million in that position. The next slide shows the City's overall financial total net position increased by \$27 million. Last year it increased I believe by \$11 million. The DPU had an increase of \$24 million. The City also had governmental activities improved by about \$2.3 million. Looking at the General Fund budgetary highlights, the revenues are approximately \$20 million, which is about \$1 million above the final budgeted numbers. Expenditure was about \$29 million which is under budgeted expenses of \$30 million. You will notice there is a big gap between the revenues and expenditure. A lot of that is taken care of by the transfers that were made during the year. There were about \$8.5 million in transfers and then there was other income that covered that difference and the decrease in the fund balance was only about \$653. In DPU financials, they had \$131 million in revenue, and the operating income was about \$20 million. This slide is a breakdown of your federal expenditure in 2024 and 2025. We performed the single audit over the ARPA Program which included the Bull Swamp Water Improvement Project as well as the other water system improvement program. We also performed a single audit over the CDBG program. We did not have any findings or issues. We issued a clean compliance opinion."

Mayor Pro Tem Kalu asked, "Can you clarify the significant risk identified on page 2?"

Mr. Hobbs stated, "Fraud was not mentioned in accounting and auditing standards until 1988 which requires CPAs to address fraud and the two fraud elements that our standards require us to address are improper recognition of revenue recognition and whether your organization could override the internal controls that are in place. We also test credit cards as required by our standards."

Councilmember Hannah asked, "What is the December 31st deadline you stated?"

Mr. Hobbs stated, "We plan to work with City management to get it completed by December 31st so we can present the Audit in April and not August."

Mr. Van Gaffney, 1831 Old Riley Street appeared before Council concerning the Police Advisory Board. He stated, "Approximately three years ago, I came before Council with the idea of an

advisory board for DPS. I have come several times during those three years to talk to Council about implementing it because the County Sheriff's Department and the SC Highway Patrol have advisory boards. Chief Austin set up a program where each City Council member nominated a member to the board. To date, this board has not been formed. I have been checking with the City Administrator, Chief Austin, and City Council. Chief Austin stated he has the curriculum. City Council said there is an issue that has not been resolved. Recently, we heard one of our City police officers is being investigated by SLED. The advisory board is not to run the police department but to advise. We need this volunteer board. We need to be proactive, not reactive. We need to make sure our public law enforcement agents are doing what the City wants them to do. The advisory board is to advise Chief Austin and his staff on what the people of Orangeburg want since they are to protect and serve, but the citizens of Orangeburg do not have a voice. The advisory board would work together for the safety of Orangeburg and help alleviate something that could be blown out of proportion. It is a positive message of people working with DPS and communicating to work for the betterment of Orangeburg. The people of the City of Orangeburg are suffering because they do not have an active voice to speak to law enforcement so they can work together and make Orangeburg a better place. I am asking City Council to please enact the volunteer police advisory board."

Councilmember Hawkins asked, "What would this advisory board do?"

Mr. Gaffney stated, "My vision is that the advisory board members would come together and talk about complaints from the public and advise Chief Austin. If things come up, the volunteer advisory committee could help. DPS will have a representative on the committee. It may diffuse some people in the community. The board will have a six-week training session."

City Administrator Evering announced the 2027 Diamond Youth Baseball World Series Logo reveal will be held Thursday, August 27, at 10:30am at Orangeburg Recreation Park. There will be 72 teams of 10-12-year-olds for a two-week tournament beginning July 28, 2027."

City Administrator Evering addressed Council concerning second reading of an ordinance amending the budget for the City of Orangeburg for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026. He stated, "This is the annual budget amendment that we do every year. Our approximate expenditure is around \$20,100,000, which is about 77% of the budget. The current estimate for the amended budget for this reading is \$23,709,310. We will have a definite number for you at third reading. We ask that you consider giving second reading to this amendment."

A motion was made by Councilmember Grevious, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to approve second reading of an ordinance amending the budget for the City of Orangeburg for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026. The motion was unanimously approved.

City Administrator Evering addressed Council concerning second reading of an ordinance adopting the budget for the City of Orangeburg for fiscal year October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027; establishing the Hillcrest Golf Course Enterprise Fund and renaming the Service Department to the Maintenance Department. He stated, "As a reminder, I will go through some of the highlights. With the renaming of the Service Department to the Maintenance Department, there will be some restructuring to put all facility and landscaping needs under one department to add some efficiency as we have duplicated equipment in the Parks and Recreation and the Service Departments. The Hillcrest Golf Course is being accounted for as an Enterprise Fund to make accounting easier and cleaner. Some ongoing challenges include assessment value for the City dropped 2.4% in 2026. The City will get approximately \$140,000 less in 2027 for the same millage. Property Tax collection rate is down from 95% to 90% which is an ongoing conversation with the County to make sure that we can get all the property taxes due on time, but that current delay is causing the City approximately \$400,000. The DPU transfer that we are recommending for 2027 remains unchanged. We have some deferred maintenance in ageing infrastructure and capital needs that we must address. Of course, I have mentioned consistently that the economic environment of inflation has taken a considerable toll on the City. The cost of goods and services is higher, and it affects the City as it does each of us personally. In the initial recommendation, we recommend closing the Forensics Lab and a 10 millage increase to pay for capital improvements. Obviously you have heard from the public here tonight and I have spoken with some of you that requested we try to find an alternative for your consideration that will keep the Forensics Lab open and either eliminate or reduce the need for a tax increase and we still will be able to provide for our capital needs and services that we require. That plan essentially would take the remaining

ARPA funds, which is approximately \$1.9 million, and apply them for this upcoming fiscal year budget. However, I must stress this is a one-time funding source. It is not recurring and will not provide relief beyond next year. The business license rates would remain unchanged. We do not recommend incurring any new debt. We have talked to you about a compensation program for our employees that would be performance evaluation basis in coordination with DPU. We will fund the comprehensive plan which is required by law to be completed every 10 years. The total recommended budget with the option that we had at the last meeting was \$26,734,984. With the option that would use the ARPA Funds, the total revenue would be \$27,234,984. Again, it would allow for the Forensics Lab to remain open. It would allow us to meet some of our capital needs, but it is again a one-time funding source, and it will push our plan back an additional year."

Mayor Pro Tem Kalu stated, "I know it is a hard time, and I know you want to balance the budget as Council wants to balance the budget, and no one wants to see any increase in taxes. I am glad that you listened to some of the members of Council on the Forensics Lab. You just spoke about the 2027 tournament where there will be a lot of folks in Orangeburg. SCSU is trying to increase the number of students. The population of Orangeburg is growing and will grow more. If we are growing Orangeburg, we need to have security. We need this Forensics Lab in Orangeburg."

City Administrator Evering stated, "I received a marketing plan from DPS that I know will be implemented that will help market the services of the lab while also meeting the needs of our community. Obviously the forensics lab will never make enough revenue to cover its cost, but I believe there is revenue to be made because the City of Orangeburg."

Mayor Butler stated, "I want to say to the public, we do listen to the citizens, and we understand the need for the Forensics Lab. We discussed budget cuts and where we can cut our budget. It was never intended not to provide the citizens with a service. It was to help us move forward in the City. We hear you and we are going to accommodate the citizens because you put us here. We must make rational decisions to support our citizens, and we must do the right thing."

Councilmember Grevious asked, "You are recommending that Hillcrest becomes a separate Enterprise Fund. How close are we in terms of completion of the project at Hillcrest?"

City Administrator Evering stated, "I received an email about the Top Tracer project that the equipment has finally arrived. They will begin installation next Monday. The installation is expected to take two weeks. I have talked to the Parks and Recreation Director. We are working on ordering furniture and some equipment. The project is behind but that was beyond our control."

Councilmember Grevious asked, "You are not recommending a tax increase of any kind with this new proposal? "

City Administrator Evering stated, "We would prefer there be some type of tax increase. 10 mills would have raised \$440,000 to \$450,000 to go toward paying for some much-needed capital improvements. If you reduce it to 5 mills, it will be approximately \$20 to \$23 annual increase to a \$100,000 home which would only raise half of the \$450,000 amount. The \$225,000 can still go toward paying for some capital improvements. The value of a mill in the City is not much. We must do all we can to increase the tax base to bring in more revenue, or we must reduce expenses. We have worked with our directors to find ways that we can reduce expenses and increase revenue where possible."

Mayor Butler stated, "Remember we asked the City Administrator to comb the budget so we could stay inline. We are coming back with recommendations after he has combed it. We are obligated to the public to give them what they deserve. If you are going to be proficient in giving services, you must be proficient in bringing in revenue."

Councilmember Keitt stated, "The pubic must understand for us to keep the budget where it should be, we must increase rates. Council is trying to make life better for all citizens of Orangeburg."

Councilmember Grevious asked, "With the tax increase, if we do half of the 10 mills, we are looking at about six or six and half cents a day in terms of a tax increase on \$100,000 home and the understanding that everything is increasing in price. I know every penny is an important penny to any household. If we are looking at 10 mills increase, we are essentially looking at 12 cents per day. I am not in support of cutting the forensic lab which I think I made clear last time. I

understand there must be a give and take. We must look at inflation everywhere. When was the last time we raised taxes in the City?"

City Administrator Evering stated, "It was 2-3 years ago but then we did a rollback because of the reassessment and taxes decreased."

Councilmember Grevious stated, "In your proposal, you are not recommending a tax increase as you are presenting it before Council tonight."

City Administrator Evering stated, "Yes, as I am presenting it, but I will advocate that Council consider doing some increase because it would be a reoccurring revenue stream. Whereas the solution that we are presenting tonight is just a one-time fix."

Councilmember Grevious stated, "It is a one-time fix. So, we may be back next year in the same position trying to get out of something else."

City Administrator Evering stated, "Yes."

Councilmember Hannah asked, "I do not think no one on Council is advocating to close the forensics lab. We just want to get out of our forensics lab what we put in. I do not want to see it close. I just want to see it run more efficiently. Does the County owe us \$400,000?"

City Administrator Evering stated, "Yes, in terms of property tax collection, they have been a little behind."

Councilmember Hawkins asked, "Instead of using ARPA funds, like you said about being back in the same situation in a year, without raising taxes, what is the plan in the next 2-3 years to keep the forensics lab open?"

City Administrator Evering stated, "The plan is for the forensic lab, hopefully, to raise some revenue to help offset some costs but right now we do not have a full plan in terms of making sure we are not in the same situation again next year. That is something we must consider as we go throughout the year and look for additional sources. Like I said earlier we must increase the tax base. The tax base in Orangeburg has not grown in a significant way in over 40 years. We are still trying to provide the same level of services but with inflation, it impacts not only us individually but us as an organization and our ability to provide those goods and services."

Councilmember Hawkins asked, "Do you feel all the surplus or fat was cut from this 2026 – 2027 budget? Do you feel it is slimmed down as much as it can possible?"

City Administrator Evering stated, "Yes, we have tried. We have looked at everything. I have met with our directors multiple times. For me to say there is no fat, I do not feel any organization can say that, but I can assure you that we have tried to seek every opportunity to either cut expenses or raise revenue. As a reminder, one of the biggest expenses is our employees. They have cost of living increases that they deserve because they must live in an environment where everything has increased."

Councilmember Hawkins asked, "Concerning the enterprise fund at Hillcrest Golf Course, is SCSU still contributing?"

City Administrator Evering stated, "Yes, SCSU provided \$700,000 to pay for Top Tracer. They also contributed \$200,000 last year to help offset any losses. We did not have losses last year primarily because of the \$200,000 from SCSU. In total I believe they agreed to commit \$1.3 million and Council agreed to put \$2.2 million from the capital project sales tax that should go into effect next year into improvements at Hillcrest. The improvements are certainly warranted. We understand the importance of Hillcrest in the community, and we are doing all we can to make the course better and bring in more players and casual golfers which is hopefully what Top Tracer will be able to do."

Councilmember Hawkins asked, "Is there a plan set in place to move forward. I rode past the course yesterday and the grass is knee high, and it looks rough. We cannot expect it to generate revenue when it looks like that, as people will go elsewhere."

City Administrator Evering asked, "Exactly, that is why we must put the money into the course. The course has not had enough funds put into it in quite some time. For next year the plan is to put capital sales tax into the course. This will not be funds that come out of the general fund. It is an investment into a facility that serves the public."

Councilmember Keitt stated, "One of the things that will help the budget would be changing the Service Department to the Maintenance Department. We still need to look at purchasing being under one department. You would be able to track what is being bought and what is being spent."

Councilmember Hawkins asked, "What is the total amount you are allotting to the Forensic Lab?"

City Administrator Evering stated, "\$708,000."

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu, seconded by Councilmember Keitt to approve second reading of an ordinance adopting the amended budget of the City of Orangeburg for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, for the Forensic Lab to remain open; establishing the Hillcrest Golf Course Enterprise Fund; and renaming the Service Department as the Maintenance Department. The motion was approved 6-1. Councilmember Grevious opposed.

Assistant City Administrator Williams addressed Council concerning second reading of an ordinance to approve a change to the Zoning District Map from A-1 Residential, Single-Unit District to B-3, Neighborhood Business District for property belonging to Donald G. and Steven M Adkins located at 1374 St. Matthews Road TMS# 0174-18-09-005.000. She stated, "This item that was discussed at the June Planning Commission meeting where we also held a public hearing. We mailed letters notifying the residents of the potential change and posted signs on the property. At the public hearing, the developer, Mr. Politas, discussed his plans for a drive-thru coffee shop. One person from the community was present but chose not to speak. The Planning Commission voted to recommend the zoning district map change to City Council."

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to approve second reading of an ordinance to approve a change to the Zoning District Map from A-1 Residential, Single-Unit District to B-3, Neighborhood Business District for property belonging to Donald G. And Steven M Adkins located at 1374 St. Matthews Road TMS# 0174-18-09-005.000. The motion was approved 5-2. Councilmember Knotts and Councilmember Grevious opposed.

DPU Manager Harley addressed Council concerning second reading of an ordinance to amend the Budget for the operation of the Department of Public Utilities for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026. He stated, "As you know, I will have firmer numbers before the third reading and will give you the details at that time. I ask that you give second reading tonight."

A motion was made by Councilmember Hannah, seconded by Councilmember Knotts to approve second reading of an ordinance to amend the Budget for the operation of the Department of Public Utilities for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2026. The motion was unanimously approved.

DPU Manager Harley addressed Council concerning second reading of an ordinance to adopt the Budget for the operation of the Department of Public Utilities for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, (2) adopt amended Electric rates effective October 1, 2026, (3) adopt amended Water rates effective October 1, 2026, and (4) adopt amended Wastewater rates effective October 1, 2026. He stated, "This plan continues the DPU's ongoing process of providing reliable and essential services this community relies on. As we told Council in our budget workshop, we give you a five-year picture. We are projecting \$190 to \$200 million over the next five years. We continue to address the aging infrastructure that we have in our system, and it is imperative that we continue as Council has allowed us over the last 10 years. We have done an excellent job of making headway in improving our system. We are projecting a capital expenditure of about \$43 million to include \$10.8 million for the Water Division and \$10 million for the Electric Division. The capital outlay is our general routine stuff that we do every year that is under the \$250,000 project amount is about \$13.4 million. It will be a capital outlay of about \$42.5 million. As we cautioned you in our budget workshop, the financial advisor forecast cautioned that if we do not address rates and other things that we would deplete our fund balance by 2029. The current transfers the City Administrator mentioned are \$9.1 million. We increased that in the current budget year by \$3 million, and it will continue through the next budget year as well, which is

approximately 38% of our net profit. Some of the highlights, we propose a rate increase in this year's budget in the Water and Wastewater Divisions that is projected to raise about \$1.9 million. There is no rate increase proposed on Electric or Gas Divisions. We also have some operating expenses that will increase including depreciation of \$600,000 and \$400,000 in system repairs. We project that our cash at the end of the year will be about \$67 million. We will be well above our minimum requirement of \$46 million."

Mayor Pro Tem Kalu asked, "Are the increases in Water and Wastewater due to the cost of chemicals?"

DPU Manager Harley stated, "There is a rate increase for Water and Wastewater. The total increase is \$1.9 million. It includes the general cost of operating our Wastewater system, which includes chemicals and personnel. This rate increase is consistent with what we projected last year what our rate would need to be in this fiscal year that was included in our five-year plan shared with Council."

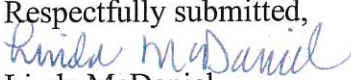
A motion was made by Councilmember Hannah, seconded by Councilmember Keitt to approve second reading of an ordinance to adopt the Budget for the operation of the Department of Public Utilities for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, (2) adopt amended Electric rates effective October 1, 2026, (3) adopt amended Water rates effective October 1, 2026, and (4) adopt amended Wastewater rates effective October 1, 2026.. The motion was unanimously approved.

DPU Manager Harley addressed Council concerning second reading of an ordinance amending Section IV. Department Installations, Subsection C. Water (2) Impact Fees, and Subsection D. Wastewater (2) Impact Fees of the General Terms and Conditions of the Department of Public Utilities. He stated, "This section covers Water and Wastewater Impact Fees. As a reminder, impact fees are fees that new customers or new development pays for the capacity that we provide them when they come on to our system. As our community and system grow there will be additional impacts to our system. We are recommending we raise our impact fees on Water from \$300 to \$1,200 and Wastewater from \$350 to \$2,670. We are also recommending increasing our Water taps fees from \$900 to \$1,300 and Wastewater fees from \$1,200 to \$2875. Those fees are the average actual cost of what it takes to put those systems in or to tap into our system. Our current budget has projected in it about \$392,000 in total for tap impact fees. We looked at the last several years of the average and we project that this increase would increase that number, if approved by Council, to approximately \$1,000,052. These impact fees are only for the capital projects in the Water and Wastewater divisions that serve those customers creating the capacity that we need to serve the new customers."

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Councilmember Grevious to approve second reading of an ordinance amending Section IV. Department Installations, Subsection C. Water (2) Impact Fees, and Subsection D. Wastewater (2) Impact Fees of the General Terms and Conditions of the Department of Public Utilities. The motion was passed 6-1. Councilmember Hannah opposed.

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Councilmember Grevious to go into Executive Session concerning discussion of matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging the location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body Sec. 30-4-70(a)(5) – Project Orange, discussion of employment, appointment, compensation, promotion, demotion, discipline or release of an employee. SC Code Sec. 30-4-70 (a)(1) – Department of Public Safety and discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements and the receipt of legal advice SC Code Sec. 30-4-70 (a)(2) a) E-Bikes, b) Old City Gym, 1420 Broughton Street. The motion was unanimous.

Council did not return to open session. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

 Linda McDaniel
 City Clerk



RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE, SERVICE, AND LEGACY OF JAMES WINSTON ROQUEMORE

WHEREAS, The City of Orangeburg join the citizens of Orangeburg, Orangeburg County, and the State of South Carolina in mourning the passing of James Winston "Jim" Roquemore, whose life was marked by exceptional leadership, visionary entrepreneurship, dedicated civic service, and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of others; and

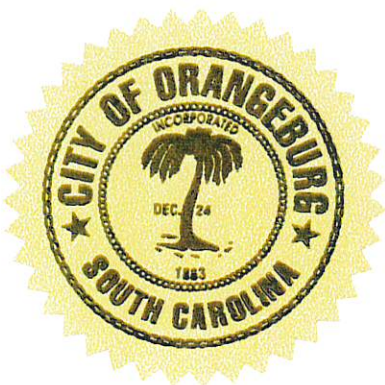
WHEREAS, Mr. Roquemore moved to Orangeburg in 1983 and became one of the community's most respected business and civic leaders, devoting more than four decades to advancing economic opportunity, supporting educational initiatives, strengthening community institutions, and promoting the prosperity of Orangeburg and the surrounding region; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board of Patten Seed Company beginning in 1997, Mr. Roquemore transformed the company into a nationally recognized leader in the turfgrass industry, creating jobs, fostering innovation, and contributing significantly to the economic vitality of Orangeburg and South Carolina until the company's sale in 2020. His distinguished business career earned him numerous honors and recognitions, including the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina's highest civilian honor, induction into the South Carolina Business Hall of Fame, and Orangeburg Citizen of the Year. His leadership extended well beyond the business community through service as a Director of South State Bank, Director of SCANA Corporation, Chairman of the South Carolina Conservation Bank Board, Chairman of the Palmetto Agribusiness Council, President of the Orangeburg Economic Partnership, and President of the Orangeburg Rotary Club; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Roquemore devoted time and resources to supporting education serving on the Clemson University Board of Visitors and the Coker College Board of Visitors, where he was recognized with an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters for his contributions to education, leadership, and community service. He was a passionate advocate for youth development and character building through his longstanding support of the Boy Scouts of America, earning Silver Beaver Award and District Merit Award in recognition of his outstanding service to young people and the scouting movement; and

WHEREAS, throughout his life, Mr. Roquemore generously mentored countless entrepreneurs, business leaders, students, and young professionals, sharing his wisdom, experience, and belief that success is best measured by the positive impact one has on the lives of others. Despite his many accomplishments, those who knew him best remember him as a devoted husband, father, grandfather, friend, and man of faith whose compassion, humility, integrity, and commitment to serving others defined his character and inspired all who knew him. Mr. Roquemore's enduring legacy can be seen throughout Orangeburg and South Carolina in the businesses he helped build, the organizations he strengthened, the lives he mentored, and the countless acts of generosity and leadership that enriched the community.

BE IT RESOLVED the City of Orangeburg recognizes **James Winston Roquemore** as one of Orangeburg's most distinguished citizens whose vision, leadership, generosity, and dedication to service have left an indelible mark upon this community and whose legacy will continue to inspire future generations. **ADOPTED** this 4th day of August 2026.



Linda McDaniel City Clerk

Michael C. Butler
Mayor
Jim Roquemore
Council Members
John P. ...
Linda R. ...
John ...
AKJ
...