



Minutes
Sumter County Council Regular Meeting
Tuesday, June 27, 2023 -- Held at 6:00 p.m.
Sumter County Administration Building
Third Floor, County Council Chambers
13 E. Canal Street, Sumter, SC

Social Distancing Is Encouraged At All County Council's Meetings, And Seating Is On A First Come First Serve Basis.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAHjiqzPaonQ9LFS2kO37tA>

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: James T. McCain, Jr., Chairman; James R. Byrd, Jr., Vice Chairman; Artie Baker, Eugene R. Baten, Charles T. Edens, Vivian Fleming McGhaney, and Carlton B. Washington.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Gary Mixon, Mary W. Blanding, Lorraine Dennis, Johnathan Bryan, Joe Perry, Valerie Brunson, Helen Roodman, Greg Hawkins, Carolina Richardson, Lauretha McCants, and two Sheriff Deputies.

MEDIA PRESENT: Shelbie Goulding and Bruce Mills, The Item Newspaper reporters, were in attendance.

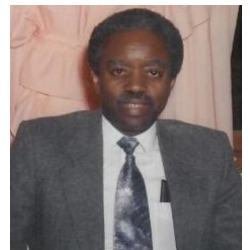
PUBLIC PRESENT: There were approximately 44 members of the public in attendance at this meeting.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman McCain read the following statement then he called the meeting to order.

Good afternoon, everyone; I would like to say welcome, and we appreciate the citizens who have come to observe local government in action. Since this is a Legislative Body professional and respectful in its decorum, in that regard, it is appropriate for those that are not members of Sumter County Council to refrain from participating in the process of disturbing the meeting through verbal or nonverbal conversation. Members of the audience, please refrain from private conversations among yourselves during the meeting, please remain seated, and please do not make comments while County Council works through its agenda. There will be an opportunity for the public to speak to County Council through the Chair during the Public Comment Section of the agenda. In that regard, there is a sign-in sheet at the entrance of Council Chambers. For those who wish to speak during public comment, I invite you to do that now. The sign-in sheet will be collected and given to me. During the Public Comment section of the agenda, I will invite those that have signed in to speak from the podium and to speak for two to three minutes or as determined by me according to how many people are wishing to speak. It is important that everyone wishing to be heard during the public comment portion of the agenda be allowed to speak time during that time and there be no disruption during the decision-making process.

INVOCATION: Councilmember Vivian Fleming McGhaney gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was led by US Retired Air Force Veteran Nelson Summers who served our Country from Sept. 1956 to March 1977 with 20 years of honorable service. He currently lives in County Council District 7. Thank you for your service.



APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Regular Meeting Tuesday, June 27, 2023

Chairman McCain asked the Clerk to Council if there were any changes to the June 27, 2023, agenda. Mrs. Blanding stated that there were no changes to the agenda. Then Chairman McCain called for a motion on the proposed amended agenda.

Discussion: Councilman Washington said that he was a little bit surprised at Council's new policy for the sign-in procedure for public participation. He also mentioned that what the Chairman read was not something that Council has done since he has been here (*a member of Sumter County Council*). Councilman Washington further stated that the statements by the Chairman are a little bit unusual, but Councilman Washington said he would roll with the Chairman and asked the Chairman to roll with him as well. Then Councilman Washington said he would like to amend the agenda because there are a lot of folks at the meeting tonight that would like to speak on the School Board issue and would like to have public participation right before the School Board issue is discussed.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Washington, seconded by Councilman McGhaney to allow for Item #13 to be moved up on the agenda to the first agenda item under Agenda Item #8 (New Business). Council members Washington, McGhaney, and Baten voted in favor of the motion. Council members Baker, Byrd, McCain, and Edens, voted in opposition of the motion. The motion failed.

Chairman McCain asked Council for another motion, since the previous motion failed.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Vice Chairman Byrd, seconded by Councilman Baker, and unanimously carried by Council to to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Sumter County Council

Special Meeting and Budget Workshop Tuesday, June 13, 2023 – Chairman McCain called for a motion concerning the Special Meeting and Budget Workshop held on Tuesday, June 13, 2023.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Baten, seconded by Councilman Baker, and unanimously carried by Council to approve the Special Meeting and Budget Workshop minutes of June 13, 2023, as presented.

Regular Meeting Tuesday, June 13, 2023 – Then Chairman McCain asked for a motion concerning the Regular Meeting of Sumter County Council held on June 13, 2023.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Edens, seconded by Vice Chairman Byrd, and unanimously carried by Council to approve the regular meeting minutes of June 13, 2023, as presented.

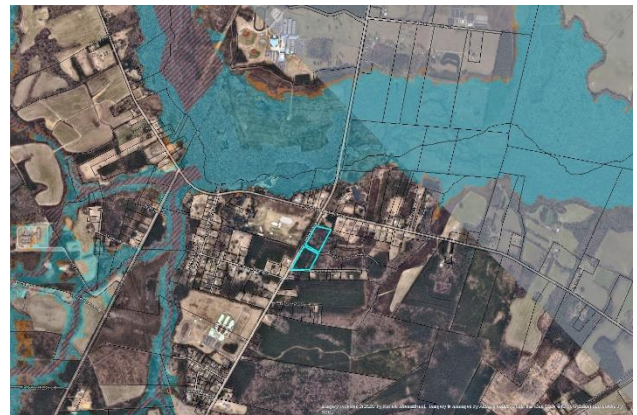
LAND USE MATTERS AND REZONING REQUESTS:

Planned Development/Rezoning Requests:

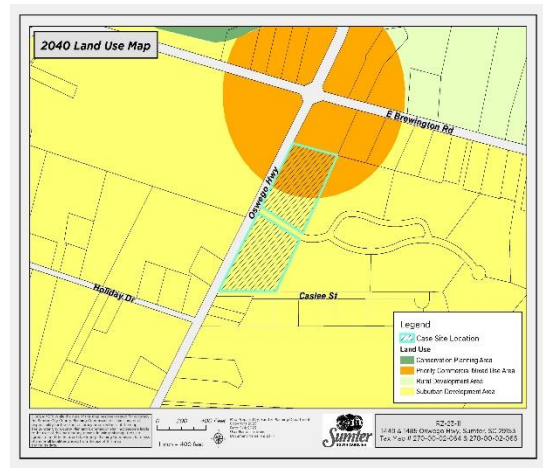
NOTE: RZ = Rezoning Of Property As Applicable In Sumter County Zoning and Development Standards.
AC = Agricultural Conservation As Applicable In Sumter County Zoning and Development Standards.
NC = Neighborhood Commercial As Applicable In Sumter County Zoning and Development Standards.
LI-W = Light Industrial-Warehouse As Applicable in Sumter County Zoning and Development Standards.

(1) **RZ-23-11 -- 1449 And 1485 Oswego Highway -- (County) - Second Reading/Public Hearing -- A Request To Rezone +/- 9.97-Acres Of Property Spanning Two Tracts From Agricultural Conservation (AC) To General Commercial (GC). The Property Is Located At 1449 And 1485 Oswego Highway And Is Represented By Tax Map #'S 270-00-02-064 And 270-00-02-065. (County Council Will Take Action On Second Reading Immediately After The Public Hearing For This Rezoning Request.)**

Mrs. Helen Roodman, Planning Director, presented this proposed rezoning request to Council for second reading and public hearing. She reminded County Council that Stephanie Tisdale is the authorized agent on behalf of the property owners. Also, it was mentioned by Mrs. Roodman that the request is to rezone 9.97 acres of property spanning two tracts from Agricultural Conservation to General Commercial and it is located on the Oswego Highway, 1449 and 1485. The property is currently undeveloped as seen on the 2023 Aerial Photography Map.



The property is very close to Chestnut Oaks Middle School, per Mrs. Roodman. She also stated that the property is in the Suburban Planning Area, and the northernmost tract is influenced by the Priority Commercial Mixed-Use Area. The goal of the Suburban Development Planning Area is to scrutinize and manage development patterns, foster intentional mixed-use development, and identify new commercial and industrial locations where form and design are a focus. Priority Commercial Mixed-Use areas are intended to direct future, high quality commercial and residential mixed-use development. These locations encourage destination retail commercial uses and neighborhood commercial uses as appropriate. The request is in general alignment with the Comprehensive Plan.



Additionally, Mrs. Roodman mentioned that the intent of the Agricultural Conservation (AC) zoning district is to protect and preserve areas of the County which are presently rural or agricultural in character and use and that are uniquely suited to agricultural use. Where urban development is permitted within the district strict quality standards should be required. The intent of the General Commercial (GC) zoning district is to accommodate the broadest possible range of commercial uses, determined principally by market conditions, while protecting the environment from potentially objectionable uses.

Lastly, Mrs. Roodman said that if the rezoning request is approved, it does not mean that the property would not have to go through a commercial site plan, a plan review, appropriate permitting review, stormwater review, approved water from the appropriate water process, and septic review process, etc.

After Mrs. Roodman's comments, the Chairman convened a public hearing. The following people spoke during the public hearing.

- Ms. Stephanie Tisdale and Mr. Al Davis were present on behalf of the rezoning request. Ms. Tisdale stated that she and Dr. Al Davis were present on behalf of Youth Academy, Inc. She also mentioned that during Sumter County Council's previous meeting at first reading, the question was raised as to why they wanted to rezone both properties. Ms. Tisdale stated that although the maps look as though there is a road; however, it is just a pathway, and a road was never developed on the property. Also, she mentioned that they want to sell the property to a business, but there is no particular business that has contacted them. They are just trying to have the property rezoned so that if a commercial development would like to consider the property for development, the rezoning would already be completed.

After all comments, the Chairman closed the public hearing and he asked for a motion on second reading which is listed under Old Business.

OTHER PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- (1) **Ordinance #23-989 – An Ordinance Authorizing The Sale Of The Property Located At 14 Law Range. (County Council Will Take Action On Second Reading Immediately After Public Hearing Or During Old Business.)**

The County Attorney, Johnathan Bryan, presented this proposed ordinance to Council for public hearing and second reading. He informed Council that the ordinance is for a Contract Of Sale for 14 Law Range to Erick Hodge in the amount of \$101,000, as is. The purchaser is responsible for the funds for the sale of this property and those funds will be deposited into the County's Infrastructure Account. The Chairman convened a public hearing; he asked if anyone wished to speak, no one spoke. Chairman McCain closed the public hearing and Council took action on the ordinance as listed under Old Business.

WHEREAS, Sumter County owns the real estate located at 14 Law Range, identified as Sumter County Tax Parcel numbers 249-09-01-022 (the "Property"); and

WHEREAS, Putting the Property on the real estate market produced a number of offers and Erick Hodge has made the best offer to purchase the property; and

WHEREAS, Sumter County does not currently need the Property for any public purpose.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF SUMTER COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, AT ITS REGULAR MEETING DULY ASSEMBLED AND BY THE AUTHORITY THEREOF:

That Sumter County authorizes the sale of the Property located at 14 Law Range to Erick Hodge according to the terms of the Agreement/Contract: To Buy and Sell Real Estate attached hereto as Exhibit A, the terms of which are incorporated herein by reference.

The County Administrator is authorized to sign the Agreement/Contract: To Buy and Sell Real Estate attached hereto as Exhibit A, the Quitclaim Deed and any document(s) deemed necessary to convey the Property to Erick Hodge, or his assignee, pursuant to and in compliance with the terms and conditions set forth in the Agreement/Contract: To Buy and Sell Real Estate.

Proceeds of the sale will go to the Sumter County Infrastructure Fund.

Exhibit A



AGREEMENT/CONTRACT: TO BUY AND SELL REAL ESTATE (GENERAL COMMERCIAL USE)

1. PARTIES: This legally binding Agreement ("Contract") To Buy and Sell Real Estate is entered into as of the Effective Date between:

Buyer(s), Erick Hodge _____ ("Buyer"), and

Seller(s), Sumter County _____ ("Seller")

- (A) "Party" - defined as either Buyer or Seller, "Parties" defined as both Buyer and Seller.
(B) "Brokers" are licensed South Carolina brokers-in-charge, their associated real estate licensees, and their subagents.
(C) "Closing Attorney" - is the licensed South Carolina attorney selected by Buyer to coordinate the transaction and Closing.
(D) "Effective Date" - the final date upon which a Party to the negotiation places the final and required signatures and/or initials and date on this Contract and Delivers Notice to cause this Contract to be binding on all Parties.
(E) "Business Day" - a 24 hour period starting at 10 AM (M/Tu/WTh/Fr) and counted from 10 AM of the first Business Day following the Effective Date. Business Days shall not begin or end on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal legal holiday.
(F) "Good Funds" - is the transfer of the required amount of United States Dollars (USD) within any required timeframe.
(G) "Time" - all time stated shall be South Carolina local time. Time is of the essence with respect to all provisions of this Contract stipulating time, deadline, or performance periods.

☐ BUYER ☐ SELLER IS A SOUTH CAROLINA REAL ESTATE LICENSEE

2. PURCHASE PRICE: \$ 101,000 _____ (USD)

Payable by ☒ a combination of financing and cash or ☐ cash. Payment shall be good funds.



The sale of Buyer's real property ☐ is ☒ is not required for Purchase and this contingency terms ☐ are ☐ are not attached.

3. PROPERTY: Seller will sell and Buyer will buy for the Purchase Price any and all lot or parcel of land, appurtenant interests, improvements, landscape, systems, and fixtures if any thereon and further described below ("Property"). Seller agrees to maintain the Property in the same general condition as existed on the Effective Date, including any landscaping, grounds and any agreed upon repairs or replacements, from the Effective Date through Closing subject to normal wear and tear. Buyer is solely responsible for inquiring about lease issues prior to signing Contract. Leasing issues: (see Adjustments).
Leased items on Property can include fuel tanks, alarm systems, satellite equipment, roll carts etc. and contain fuel, etc.

Address 14 _____ Law Range _____ Suite/Unit# _____

City Sumter _____ State of South Carolina

Zip 29150 _____ County of South Carolina

 ☒ BUYER ☐ BUYER  ☒ SELLER ☐ SELLER HAVE READ THIS PAGE

Form 331 PAGE 1 of 9

The first page of the contract is listed above; there are eight additional pages that are not included in these set of minutes but is a part of the entire sale process.

NEW BUSINESS:

(1) **Consider Action On: R-23-04 -- A Resolution By Members of Sumter County Council Adopting Council's Actions On The 2023-2024 Budget Request From Sumter School District.**

Chairman McCain introduced this proposed resolution, and he asked for Council members to state their pleasure concerning Sumter School District's Resolution. Councilman Washington asked to be heard; however, Chairman McCain stated that a motion needed to be made first prior to discussion on this matter. The Chairman called for a motion on this resolution.

ACTION: ORIGINAL MOTION was made by Councilman Washington, seconded by Councilman McGhaney to approve the resolution with a 12.78 millage increase listed in the resolution.

Then Councilman Edens asked to offer a substitute motion as listed below.

ACTION: SUBSTITUTE MOTION was made by Councilman Edens, seconded by Councilman Baker to approve the resolution with the same millage that was provided to Sumter School District in School Year 2022-2023.

Then Councilman Washington offered another motion.

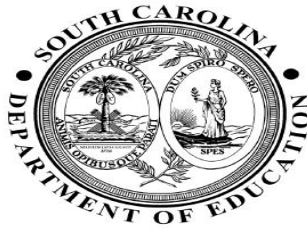
ACTION: A MOTION to TABLE the substitute motion was made by Councilman Washington and seconded by Councilman McGhaney to table the substitute motion by Councilman Edens until after discussion on the previous motions.

Subsequently, the Chairman asked for any discussion on the motions:

Councilman Washington asked the Clerk to Council to place on the screen documents that he gave her right before the meeting. As Mrs. Blanding was pulling up the documents, Councilman Washington stated that there has been a lot of conversation about budget numbers and a lot of back and forth about a \$6,000,000 increase coming through the County for the School District and \$1,000,000 increase coming from the County. He further stated that as he understands it now, it is \$400,000; however, he stated that he would give Council the facts.

Councilman Washington stated that since 2016, there has been only one full millage increase, to the Sumter School District; it has almost been 10 years. The only millage increase they have received is back in 2021 and that was a two mill increase. He added that every one of them sitting on Council knows that everything has gone up in price including electricity, water, power gas, furniture, and other things. The cost of education has gone up as well. He also said that if you don't believe him, look at what Charleston is doing; giving their teachers a \$5,000 increase and a \$5,000 Bonus through the ARPA funds and increasing the salaries to \$50,000 per year has been given to the Charleston County School District. This was approved this year in May. Listed below are the first five things they concentrated on for the teachers.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force
 Recommendations

Created by Proviso 1.114 of the 2022–23 General Appropriation Act

May 2023

Summary Tables

The task force recommends that the South Carolina Department of Education use the tables below to structure an annual report on South Carolina’s progress toward these recommendations at a minimum through August 2026. The task force also recommends annual evaluations of initiatives enacted with attention to return on investment to serve as a basis for decision-making about future funding and expansion.

Compensation and Evaluation Recommendation Summary

Recommendation	Lead	Partners	Recommended action by June 2024
1. Salary Schedule	SC General Assembly	RFA, SCDE, Governor’s office	Pass legislation that raises salaries to \$50,000 by 2026.
2. Teacher Career Ladder	SC General Assembly Education Committees	Districts, SCSBA, SCDE, and State Board of Education	Develop funding model, pass legislation, and enact policy.
3. Extend Salary Schedule Steps	SC General Assembly	Districts, SCDE	Develop funding model and pass legislation.
4. Critical Needs Stipends	SC General Assembly Education Committees	SCDE, State Board of Education, and Districts	Identify areas and fund stipends.
5. School Support Professionals	SC General Assembly Education Committees	SCDE, Districts, and related professional associations	Pass legislation and fund reduced ratios and other working condition recommendations.
6. Consistent Educator Evaluation	SCDE	Districts, State Board of Education, state organizations related to supporting teaching and learning	Advisory committee convened and changes recommended.

Councilman Washington stated that the information above from the Task Force was comprised of Chamber members, community leaders, legislators, and Barbara Neilson, chaired the Task Force. These are things that the State Task Force focused on and this mirrors what the Sumter School District focused on.

The local Charter School's starting salary is \$45,500, with the potential of a new teacher to earn up to \$55,500, with performance pay, perfect attendance, and other work incentives. Councilman Washington also referenced the 2022 S. C. Ready Test Scores By Grade Level for English-Language Arts and Math as listed below.

2022	
SC READY TEST SCORES BY GRADE LEVEL	
SUMTER SCHOOL DISTRICT	
ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA)	
<u>GRADE LEVEL</u>	<u>DO NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS</u>
3	43%
4	48.5%
5	36.9%
6	41.4%
7	38.7%
8	37.7%
END OF COURSE SCORING "C" OR HIGHER	
42.5%	

2022	
SC READY TEST SCORES BY GRADE LEVEL	
SUMTER SCHOOL DISTRICT	
MATHEMATICS	
<u>GRADE LEVEL</u>	<u>DO NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS</u>
3	43.5%
4	48%
5	48.6%
6	59.1%
7	53.3%
8	61.8%
END OF COURSE SCORING "C" OR HIGHER	
23.8%	

In Addition, then Councilman Washington provided Council with additional information concerning the Projected Expenditure Increases for Academic Year 2024 (see information below).

PROJECTED EXPENDITURE INCREASES 2024	
STATE AND FEDERALLY MANDATED	\$10 MILLION
WORKERS COMPENSATION/PROPERTY INSURANCE	\$1.5 MILLION
Note: Sumter School District's projected Workers Compensation premium increase is likely due to high employee turnovers and consequentially "new" and "inexperienced" personnel numbers which generally increases a carrier's risk assignment. And like Homeowners policies, commercial property insurance rates similarly increase based on building conditions (i.e., needed repairs) and as a result of rising building material costs.	
TECHNOLOGY SERVICES, SOFTWARE, MAINTENANCE, <u>INCREASED ENERGY COSTS, ETC.</u>	<u>\$2.5 MILLION</u>
TOTAL	\$14 MILLION
NOTE:	
REVENUE PROJECTION OF \$14 MILLION INCLUDES THE 12.75 MILLAGE REQUEST.	

In Addition, Councilman Washington provided information concerning the School Districts total employees which is listed below.

Employees Making Less than \$25,000			
12 MONTH EMPLOYEES			
A - Maintenance/Building Services Workers	117		
E - Clerical	110		
Q - Clerical	78	303	
10-11 MONTH EMPLOYEES			
D - Parapros/Clerical	33		
R - Certified	200	233	
9 MONTH EMPLOYEES			
B - Food Service	25		
C - Parapros	112.50		
K - Bus Drivers	11		
S&ZZ - Teachers	900.50	1049	
TOTAL EMPLOYEES		1585	

Cost of Raise to Salary of 1,585 Employees to \$25,000:

\$3,074,560 Gross Salary
\$1,050,912 Fringe Benefits

Includes Retirement, Health, Social Security, Workers Compensation

TOTAL COST: \$4,145,472 MILLION

Councilman Washington noted there are 1,585 employees working at the School District that make less than \$25,000 per year. He also reminded Council that Council members passed the County's Budget with compensation for those that make less than \$25,000 by increasing their salaries to that level. Also, Councilman Washington said that if you add the \$14,000,000, which is the projected income and includes the request of 12.75 mill increase, to the \$4,145,472 for the hopeful increase of employees making less than \$25,000, the Sumter School District already needs over \$18,000,000 to operate this coming year and exceeds the 12.75 mill increase which equates to \$2,750,000.

FY 2023 Retention Stipend Estimates- Scenario#1			
# of Years	Stipend Amount	Stipend Amount with fringe	# of Employees
0 to 9	\$2,000	\$2,165.67	1,141.00
10 to 19	\$2,500	\$2,707.09	512.00
20 to 29	\$3,000	\$3,248.51	308.00
30 and above	\$3,500	\$3,789.93	73.50
Total Cost		\$5,417,013	

As shown above in the Estimates-Scenario#1, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) Task Force noted that this scenario would add in \$5,417,013. If approved. However, the SCDE also provided an estimate-Scenario#6 and that particular scenario would equate to \$8,795,824.

FY 2023 Retention Stipend Estimates- Scenario#6			
# of Years	Stipend Amount	Stipend Amount with fringe	# of Employees
0 to 5	\$3,000	\$3,248.51	852.50
6 to 10	\$3,500	\$3,789.93	342.00
11 to 15	\$4,000	\$4,331.35	230.00
16 to 20	\$4,500	\$4,872.77	258.50
21 to 25	\$5,000	\$5,414.19	178.00
26 and above	\$5,500	\$5,955.6	173.50
Total Cost		\$8,795,824	

Councilman Washington stated that with the \$8,795,824 added to the \$14,500,000, then the \$4,000,000, then the figures are way above any 12.75 mill increase. These are the things that are necessary for this School District to be competitive. This Council must take its foot off of the School Districts neck. In order to do that, per Councilman Washington, businesses will have to pay like everybody else. He added that he is willing to pay for education. It was also said by Councilman Washington that he has a public-school education, and it was very good. Additionally, Councilman Washington said that the County has not given the School District a full millage increase since 2016; by the end of this year that will be ten years. He asked the question; how can you expect them to do a good job without funding help. The Councilman also said that every one of the Council members know that the teachers need increases, the buildings are sixty-five years old which needs to be addressed. Teachers' stipends need to be put in place, teachers' steps need to be put in place, and there is no reason that this Council should not approve the full millage increase requested from the School District for a 12.75 millage increase. Councilman Washington thanked the Chairman for allowing him to speak on this matter.

Councilman Baten asked to be heard and said that he is really disappointed with his colleagues on Sumter County Council because we wanted people to support us in decisions we have made. It is like inviting someone for dinner and asking them after the dinner what they would like to eat. That is what Council did. Councilman Baten then stated that he wants to piggy-back on a couple of things that Councilman Washington talked about. Therefore, Councilman Baten said the \$25,000 was said by members of Sumter County Council that in order for an individual to live a suitable life in Sumter South Carolina, they need to make at least \$25,000. That is what Council wants to pay the County employees; Council is also saying that someone that works for the County and cleaning the rest rooms in the County buildings should make more than someone cleaning the rest rooms in the schools. He added that, *that is ridiculous to him*; yet, that is the message of County Council. Right now the School District needs \$4,145,472, to bring the salaries up for those making less than \$25,000 per year.

Councilman Baten stated that we cannot continue to pay slave wages and expect people to keep coming to work. He then said that we have been taking advantage of the school's staff long enough. He also said that he is ashamed of this. Councilman Baten also said one thing that no one wants to do...; we are just too nice, we are real nice. We do not want to tell it like it is. People don't want to tell it like it is. He then said, he does not mind telling it like it is because he does not depend on anyone in this County for his livelihood. Councilman Baten said we have a serious systemic racism problem in Sumter County and this Council is a part of it; and it has a history of racism. Members of this Council has a history of racism. Let me tell you what the definition of systemic racism is. *Institutional Racism is also known as systemic racism and is defined as policies and practices that exists throughout a whole society or organization that results in and supports a continued unfair advantage for some people and unfair or partial treatment of others based on race.* Councilman Baten then said, who are our businessmen or businesspeople? The majority of the businessmen or businesspeople in this town are White; let's be for real. Also, Councilman Baten asked the question - Who are the people in our public school system? They are low-income families and the majority of them are Black. Then Councilman said "so here we go, unfair to one, and fair to another and that is systemic racism, and that is what we have been doing for all of these years. He added that he is ashamed of what has been happening.

Then Councilman Baten said that between 2017 and 2022, Sumter School District only received \$375,000 from Sumter County of what they requested. However, they were entitled to receive over \$6,000,000. People do not like to say that the School District is entitled to anything; they like to play that game with you. He said that the School District is entitled to things by law. Councilman Baten said that on Tuesday, June 8, 2021, Sumter County Council approved Sumter School District's budget with a \$2,000,000 increase. The School District was entitled to \$13,000,000. Council voted down a substitute motion offer by me, per Councilman Baten, to increase the amount of the millage from \$375,000 to \$700,000. He further stated, why did I want this; he answered and said because the School District came and requested these funds to give their employees, non-teachers, a COLA increase that they had not received in two years. The School District came before Council begging asking to raise the salaries of their employees. They are not getting paid enough; but Council again turned them down; McCain, Byrd, Baker, and Edens voted against the motion. Councilman Baten stated that he, along with Council members Washington and McGhaney voted in favor of the vote; it was a 3 to 4 vote.

Then Councilman Baten said there was an article in the Sumter Item dated Friday, June 3, 2021, which stated that Sumter County Chairman James McCain stated that a two mill request last year came from the Sumter School District, Dr. Penelope Martin Knox had the full school board support. McCain also said that in a personal conversation that he had last year with Dr. Knox, she said she only wanted two mills this year, and again next year. Additionally, Councilman Baten said this was an outrageous fabrication; outrageous, then in an article of the Sumter Item, and the Item reporter is here tonight at this meeting, dated Friday, June 17, 2021, Superintendent Dr. Penelope Knox said "*a point of clarification that she never made an agreement on a millage request. In questioning, Dr. Knox, from Councilman Baten in response to the June 3, 2021, article where Chairman McCain told the newspaper that he had personal conversation with Martin-Knox asking for two mills and Martin-Knox told Baten that they had said.*"

Also, Councilman Baten further stated that when we addressed Dr. Martin Knox here is what she said, "*I am here to address a statement which was said at a public meeting that is inadequate; she said no one made an agreement with me or with our Board for two mills. The Item contacted McCain on whether he would like to respond to Martin Knox's statement and he declined to comment.* After these comments, Councilman

Baten asked the Item Reporter, Bruce Mills, if he remembers the write-up; and then Councilman Baten said *I just want you to know that*, as the Councilman addressed Bruce Mills.

Next Councilman Baten said when I said this County has a history of racism, what I mean is that members of Sumter County Council have a history of systemic racism. During the redistricting in 2001 due to the 2000 census, White Council members sent racist redistricting plans to the United States Department Of Justice. Those plans, five of them, were rejected because they violated Section V of the Voting Rights Act. Those plans reduced the voting age population of Black voters from 59.4 % to 49% in Sumter County District 7, which is the District that Councilman Baten said he lives in. He added that the goal was to maintain control of Sumter County Council with four Republican County Council members; that was the goal. Councilman Baten said if that is not systemic racism, what is? He said we can see this even further, our Clergy recognized this. When we had this big debacle in 2012 about the budget; at that time Sumter School District mills were 13 mills; it revealed a strong division between business community and the need to fund public education. After the consolidation of the two school districts, District Two and District Seventeen in 2011, the new superintendent, Dr. Bynum, inherited a \$5,500,000 deficit. The man was lost when he took the job, per Councilman Baten. He further stated that comments made by Sumter business leaders/owners asked Sumter County Council members to oppose any millage request. Then, on June 19, 2012, 300 people attended County Council's meeting at Central Carolina Technical Nursing Center on Main Street here in Sumter due to the large attendance. The Councilman also stated that about 75 percent were opposed to the millage increase. On June 22, 2012, the Concerned Clergy of Sumter County sent a letter to the four Black Democrats on Sumter County Council. In the letter they asked each of us to take a careful look at this matter because if Sumter School District does not get the money that they need, our children will suffer from it; not the children in private schools. Councilman Baten also said when we say "our children" that means the ones you represent in your district, to the four Black Democrats. The letter included the names of 27 Clergy which stood up and supported this document. It was further stated that the action by the business leaders/owners and the action by Sumter County Council is a clear indication that there is a clear systemic racism problem in Sumter County. Councilman Baten said that if you do not want to believe me, then, when you, the public, walked into Council Chambers, there was a big sign out in the lobby. That was given to Sumter County Council by the Sumter Leaders of Faith. They had a rally on the lawn of the Sumter County Courthouse steps, and they shared in 2020 from their associations an anti-racism statement that racism is a sin against humanity and God. They also said that racism is a lie about our fellow human beings for it says that "some or less than others." Councilman Baten also said that racism suggests that School District people are less than other people. He also mentioned that the sign indicates the following, *"those who serve God and his church in the greater Sumter area, should commit to being part of the change and we pray for change in the community."* That statement was signed by 70 members, Councilman Baten said that the public can see the signatures of Godly men on the sign as acknowledgment that racism exists in Sumter County. Councilman Baten said that we don't want to deal with it; so, we can go on and play the game because we don't want to talk about it. He then stated that when he goes out in the public, and he listens to people and they say to him, Councilman Baten, the reason why they are voting against it is because the majority of the kids in those schools are Black, if they were White, they would not vote against it.

Council member Baten said, let's be for real, with the people and stop playing games with their livelihood. Those people need to eat just like you do. They pay the same price when they go to the grocery store that every one of the Council members pay. There is no separate line for low-income people; that they will get a discount, you don't have to pay \$2.00 for bread, you can pay \$1.00, there

is no such thing and does not even exist. Then Councilman Baten said that we owe the School District over \$4,000,000 to get their employees up to \$25,000. He also stated that, that little 13 mills, 2.4 mills, that does not even cover it. Additionally, Councilman Baten said that when you talk about you don't want to give them any money, all you are doing is continuing the systemic racism in this County. He thanked the Chairman for allowing him to speak.

Then Councilman Washington asked to be heard. Councilman Washington stated that what he does not understand is a couple of years ago the Legislative Delegation in its wisdom decided that it was important to expand the Sumter School Board and added two; from seven members to nine members so that they could have adequate control over what was going on. The expansion has been done while people lobbied for certain people to come on to the school board and all of that has been done and now Council still, still does not want to fund the School Board; after they got what they wanted. He said to Council members, you have your nine and County Council still refuses to fund the millage, the full millage increases since 2016. Yet, per Councilman Washington, these businesses pump their chest and say we need this, and we need that and the kids are not being educated but when it is time to open their pocket book, cricket, cricket. He further stated that what we are doing is not right and it will come back to haunt us. People will not be agreeable with things that we will want to do in the future. The people have a right not to be agreeable; these people are here because they asked to speak before the deliberation on this matter and we insulted them by saying we do not even want to hear from you; you wait until we make the decision. Councilman Washington emphasized that "we," Council members are government that is closest to the people; and that's what we did, slap them in the face.

Then Councilman Baten said he had one other thing to add; low-income people in this County have power and it is in the vote. He added by stating to the audience, "You Have The Power." Councilman Baten said that this County Council will come to you next year and ask you to pass a penny tax. They will ask low-income people to voluntarily put a seven-year tax on themselves when they refuse to give the people an income. Therefore, he added the comment that my thing to you and pass it on, no millage, no penny tax.

Councilman Baker stated that the School District in the last five years has placed in its fund balance \$41,000,000; and that is what he looked at in making decisions. Councilman Baker further said that we, the County (County Council) had to balance our budget and we went to our fund balance to balance our budget. He also said that he does not understand why the School District does not use some of its fund balance and the leftover funds from the vacancies that they have not filled which should equal to \$4,000,000 to \$5,000,000. He rhetorically said "why can't they pull \$2,400,000 out of their fund balance and take care of the millage they are asking for. The Councilman said that Sumter County Council did just that; pulled funds out of its fund balance to balance the budget.

Councilman Baker then said, to previous comments from Councilman Baten, that we asked the School District did they change their budget, and their response was yes. He said he then started looking at the line items by line items and the School District moved \$3,200,000 from Social Security to personnel in their general fund. Councilman Baker said the Superintendent could use some of those funds for the millage and certainly he hopes the School District will use that for personnel and any employees that are making less than \$25,000 per year. He added that he would say shame on the School District if they had employees sitting on \$23,000, or less a year. The Councilman also said that he can remember four years ago they came to us without asking for the money and increased their executive

branch in the District, the high paying positions, with \$800,000, giving some of them \$20,000, some \$30,000, and some \$10,000 a year although they were already making six figure numbers. He said that he asked the question, “What are you going to do for your cafeteria workers, your custodians, etc., and we are going to give them one percent and those employees will see a negative on their checks. Then Councilman Baker said he hopes that they will use this \$3,200,000 to satisfy the income. He also said that he taught school.

Lastly, Councilman Baker said that he takes it personally when you, Councilman Baten, called me racist. I take my time teaching at Hillcrest High School, coaching at Hillcrest High School, and 95 to 98 percent of the folks I taught were Black children. He also stated to the audience, y’all can sit here and boo me or do whatever you want to, but I am not there (a racist), and I have proven myself even while I was teaching through my actions. Ask any minority student that I taught; he added the statement to Councilman Baten, you can smile over there, but you did not go to school over there, and you did not experience it. Councilman Baker also asked Councilman Baten not to interrupt him because he was not finished. He continued his comments that I know what you are about to say, Gene, that I need to recuse myself from voting because I run a business. He further stated that Gene you should not vote because you don’t know what it takes to run a business because it can be quite difficult out there and when the County starts putting taxes on the business, it can add up. Councilman Baker said he heard today what over taxing can do to economic development. He said that he has said his piece and they can find the money within the district and balance the 12.75 mills.

Councilman Washington asked to be heard; the Chairman stated that he and Councilman Baten had spoken and that he, the Chairman wanted to make a comment; however, Councilman Washington continued to talk because he wanted to respond to Councilman Baker’s comments.

Councilman Washington said that Councilman Baker said that the County went into its reserve for its needs. The County also went into its reserve for its wants. The County put \$700,000 on the line for Magnolia Place and that was not a need; he said to Councilman Baker that you and I both know it. Secondly, Councilman Washington said that Brian Nickelson from the Auditing firm clearly states in this report that any savings that the District has comes from unfilled positions. So, if the positions are filled, that money is gone and there is no money to do nothing else. He then said, why are we putting them in that position, he said to Councilman Baker, you were a teacher, why would you do that. Councilman Baker said, because they have the funding, and they may not fill all those positions and they have the funding from as far back as 2019. Councilman Washington said to Councilman Baker that you saw the information that was on the screen showing \$14,000,000 in mandated costs, \$4,000,000 in retention costs, and then if they implement the retention, they will be in the \$20,000,000 mark. Councilman Washington said the \$2,400,000 is nothing in comparison to what the School District actually needs. Then Councilman Washington said that the additional taxes would be \$76 on a \$100,000 house (second home) and at an increase of about \$19.00 on a \$25,000 car. He asked Councilman Baker was he serious about his statements and Councilman Baker replied yes, I am serious.

Vice Chairman Byrd stated that the S. C. House Ways and Means Committee has agreed to pay 100% of the needs of the schools; however, Councilman Washington repeatedly asked Vice Chairman Byrd whether or not the S. C. House Ways and Means Committee would agree to pay the \$14,000,000, the \$4,000,000, or give the schools any money to recoupment the costs for the needs of the schools.

Then Vice Chairman Byrd mentioned that the Magnolia Place is needed for Voter Registration; however, Councilman Washington said that Voter Registration does not want to leave the building that they are in; they feel that they are fine where they are, and Magnolia Place is a want and not a need. He added that County Council went in the reserve to secure funds for Magnolia Place.

Chairman McCain read the following remarks and gave the remarks to the Clerk for inclusion in the minutes.

I would first like to say I sit here before you this evening as a product of public schools in Sumter. Both of my parents were educators. Both taught here in Sumter and instilled within me at an early age the importance of education. And my time serving this community on County Council has further solidified how crucial education is in moving us forward.

I stand on my voting record of supporting specific needs that have been brought to Council by the School District. And I will continue to support the Sumter School District's retention efforts one hundred percent. We've seen too many teachers leave us for other Districts and communities and we need to reverse that trend.

I'm proud to represent the constituents of District 6 and all of us on County Council are responsible to the 104,000-plus citizens of Sumter County. I hear from my constituents all the time how they are burdened with taxes. For the small businesses in our community that rent or lease space -- and there are many -- this increase will be compounded even more and passed on to the consumer. Everyday chain businesses make decisions to open new locations around our state, and we've been told time and time again a large factor is the comparison of our property tax rates vs rates in other communities.

Don't think Target, Olive Garden and Publix won't pay attention to property tax increases. Again, I will state: I completely support the schools' efforts to employ and retain quality teachers. However, I personally believe the funds exist in their current revenue stream to accomplish this task that they have outlined for Fiscal Year 2023-24.

Based on information provided by Sumter School District, they will receive an additional \$10.6 million dollars in state revenues over 2023, which includes an additional \$2.3 million in Tier 3 funds, which is revenue tax offset money from local residential exemptions. According to their own external audit report for the Fiscal Year ending 2022, and I quote, "In reviewing the fund balance of the School District, it may be useful to analyze the unassigned fund balance of the School District to determine the adequacy of the fund balance on June 30, 2022. The unassigned fund balance for the general fund totals \$39,547,762.

Per Act 23, of 2017 S.C. Code 59-20-90, South Carolina School Districts are required by law to maintain a general reserve fund of at least one month of general fund operating expenditures. At June 30, 2022, the minimum required fund balance is approximately \$10.3 million. Industry best practices recommend that general-purpose governments have two months' worth of expenditures in unassigned fund balance as a minimum, especially during periods of economic uncertainty. At June 30, 2022, Sumter School District has approximately four months of unassigned fund balance in the general fund (approximately 32% of expenditures), two months above this recommended two-month minimum."

This is how School District has been able to build its current fund balance. Since 2016 when the ending fund balance was \$106,449, this is how they have built their fund balance to the current levels. In 2017, they added \$779,230. In 2018, \$7.7 million dollars. In 2019, \$5.7 million. In 2020, \$11 million. In 2021, \$7.7 million. In 2022, \$9 million.

Since the time the School District was placed on Fiscal Watch by the state Department of Education, the School District – to their credit – has easily exceeded the 3-month mandate. Much like the operations of local government, the School District grew it's fund balance due primarily to budgeted employee vacancies, which account for salary and benefit savings. Based on their own figures of having over 100 teacher vacancies in 2023, the School District should anticipate a savings of over \$7 million to add to their current fund balance.

Chairman McCain asked if anyone in the meeting think that the School District will hire 100 teachers next year. Several people from the audience tried to answer the Chairman but, he informed them that he was being rhetorical in that statement. However, Councilman Baten challenged Chairman McCain on the fact that the Chairman sounded like he was asking the audience a question and when they tried to answer, the Chairman rejected the participation of the ordinance. Eventually, Chairman McCain finished his comments as listed below.

In the initial budget request presented to Council on June 6, 2023, in the salary line items of their budget, the FY 2024 proposed budget was \$88,343,595. On June 19, 2023, at the first ever joint meeting of County Council and Sumter School Board, Council was presented an amended budget request with those same line items totaling \$91,563,468, an increase of \$3,219,873. Which is more than the amount that the requested 12.75 mills represent.

Councilman Baten interrupted the Chairman stating that he was again inviting the public to participate in his comments, yet, not wanting them to respond to him. However, the Chairman stated that his questions and statements were rhetorical, and he asked Councilman Baten to allow him to finish his comments.

In conclusion, I believe the funds are there within the current budget to accomplish their stated goals by utilizing a small portion of their fund balance, just like the City of Sumter and Sumter County Government have been doing for years in order to balance their budgets. Throughout this year we will have a better and more firm understanding of how budget decisions impact the operations of the Sumter School District.

Chairman McCain asked for clarification of the previous motions; Councilman Washington and Councilman Baker offered clarifications on the previous motions. Councilman Washington said he had a motion on the floor for approval of the 12.75 mill request from Sumter School District; Councilman Baker said that Charles Edens had a substitute motion that the School District would receive the same amount of millage as they received last year. Chairman McCain asked Councilman Edens to restate his motion:

ACTION: SUBSTITUTE MOTION was made by Councilman Edens and seconded by Councilman Baker to fund Sumter School District at the same millage level they were funded last year.

Prior to Council's vote being recorded discussion from Council occurred.

Councilman Baten said that he wanted to make some comments to the Honorable Artie Baker because he did not want Council to leave here tonight because Council should work together. He continued his comments stating that when in came on Council in 2005 I had to go to my God and ask Him, to give me the strength and the patience to work with members on County Council. Councilman Baten said that the reason he had to do that was because of the 2000 redistricting process. He stated that he was not on County Council but was a member of the Sumter County Voter Registration and Election Commission as a Commissioner. He further said that he observed County Council violating the voting rights Act, Section 5. It was also stated by Councilman Baten that when he came to one of County Council meetings, he had one message, please “obey the law.” He continued his comments saying that he and one of his friends came to Council’s meeting with signs protesting, stating “Obey The Law” which was also published in the newspaper. Councilman Baten said the reason that he did that was he wanted Council to Please Obey The Law. Then after the Council meeting that previous evening, Councilman Baten said that he, being the Executive Director of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, was notified by the Commission members telling me that they received a letter from Sumter County Council stating that he should not be coming to Council meetings, and that he was making trouble at the meetings. However, the Commission members, including Commissioner Frances Hill, stated that he, now Councilman Baten, had a right to speak because he was a citizen who can and should voice his opinion about matters.

Councilman Baten asked Council members that served during 2000, did you all send letters to everyone that came before Council to speak? Although Chairman McCain tried to stop the discussion, Councilman Baten continued and said, he feels that Councilman Baker feels a certain way about what he previously said about racism. Councilman Baten said that Council at that time discriminated and discriminated against him. Then Councilman Baker said go and find someone that I coached that is a Black person and let them tell me that I treated them as a racist, if you want to play a game. Councilman Baker also said that there are thousands of young people he taught of all races, and he was not a racist to any of them.

Chairman McCain then restated the substitute motion and Council took action on the motion.

ACTION: SUBSTITUTE MOTION was made by Councilman Edens and seconded by Councilman Baker to fund Sumter School District at the same millage level they were funded last year.

AFFIRMATIVE: Council members Baker, Byrd, Edens, and McCain

OPPOSITION: Council members Washington, Baten, and McGhaney

ACTION ON MOTION: The motion passed.

Councilman Washington then offered the following Motion.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Washington, seconded by Councilman Baten to fund Sumter School District for the 2023-2024 academic year with millage of 11.75. The following action was recorded:

AFFIRMATIVE: Council members Washington, Baten, and McGhaney

OPPOSITION: Council members Baker, Byrd, Edens, and McCain

ACTION ON MOTION: The motion failed.

Councilman Washington offered another Motion.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Washington, seconded by Councilman Baten to fund Sumter School District for the 2023-2024 academic year with millage of 10.75. The following action was recorded:

AFFIRMATIVE: Council members Washington, Baten, and McGhaney

OPPOSITION: Council members Baker, Byrd, Edens, and McCain

ACTION ON MOTION: The motion failed.

Councilman Washington asked the Chairman to consider the following Motion.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Washington, seconded by Councilman Baten to fund Sumter School District for the 2023-2024 academic year with millage of 9.75. The following action was recorded:

AFFIRMATIVE: Council members Washington, Baten, and McGhaney

OPPOSITION: Council members Baker, Byrd, Edens, and McCain

ACTION ON MOTION: The motion failed.

Councilman Washington also offered another Motion.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Washington, seconded by Councilman Baten to fund Sumter School District for the 2023-2024 academic year with millage of 8.75. The following action was recorded:

AFFIRMATIVE: Council members Washington, Baten, and McGhaney

OPPOSITION: Council members Baker, Byrd, Edens, and McCain

ACTION ON MOTION: The motion failed.

Councilman Washington then offered an additional Motion.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Washington, seconded by Councilman Baten to fund Sumter School District for the 2023-2024 academic year with millage of 7.75. The following action was recorded:

AFFIRMATIVE: Council members Washington, Baten, and McGhaney

OPPOSITION: Council members Baker, Byrd, Edens, and McCain

ACTION ON MOTION: The motion failed.

Then Councilman Washington offered another Motion.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Washington, seconded by Councilman Baten to fund Sumter School District for the 2023-2024 academic year with millage of 6.75. The following action was recorded:

AFFIRMATIVE: Council members Washington, Baten, and McGhaney
OPPOSITION: Council members Baker, Byrd, Edens, and McCain
ACTION ON MOTION: The motion failed.

Lastly, Councilman Washington offered the Motion listed below.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Councilman Washington, seconded by Councilman Baten to fund Sumter School District for the 2023-2024 academic year with millage of 5.75. The following action was recorded:

AFFIRMATIVE: Council members Washington, Baten, and McGhaney
OPPOSITION: Council members Baker, Byrd, Edens, and McCain
ACTION ON MOTION: The motion failed.

- (2) It May Be Necessary To Hold An Executive Session To Discuss An Employment Matter, An Economic Development Matter, A Legal Briefing, Or Other Matters Pertaining To An Executive Session, And Take Appropriate Actions Thereafter In Open Session If Necessary.

No executive session was held.

OLD BUSINESS

- (1) Ordinance #23-989 – Second Reading -- An Ordinance Authorizing The Sale Of The Property Located At 14 Law Range.

Attorney Bryan presented this proposed ordinance to Council for second reading and public hearing. After the public hearing, Council took action on second reading as listed below.

ACTION: MOTION was made by Vice Chairman Byrd, seconded by Councilman Edens, and unanimously carried by Council to approve second reading to the rezoning request as presented.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- (1) Fiscal, Tax, And Property Committee Meeting Scheduled For Tuesday, June 27, 2023, At 5:15 p.m. In the County Administrator's Conference Room, 13 E. Canal Street, Sumter, SC 29150.

The Chairman of the Committee, Chairman McCain, stated that Committee members along with other members of Sumter County Council received a briefing from Jay Schwedler and Brian Rauschenbach concerning two potential economic development matters. No action was taken.

- (2) Report From Council Members On Other Meetings, Trainings, And/Or Conferences.

There were no reports from Council members.

MONTHLY REPORTS

- 1) Public Works Department Monthly Report
- 2) Planning Commission and Building Department Monthly Report

3) Freedom Fest 2023 - Shaw AFB

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Gary Mixon, County Administrator, had no report to give to Council at this meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Citizens Desiring To Speak During Public Comment Are Limited To Up To Three Minutes. Comments Are To Be Made Through The Chairman Of Sumter County Council. If There Are Any Questions, They Will Be Answered After The Meeting.

The following citizens spoke during public comments:

1. Myra Washington said she signed up on the attendance sheet tonight anticipating that she would be able to speak before the School Board budget process. She stated that even if the public was allowed to make comments, Council members minds were already made up. She further said that to comment on the question that the Chairman imposed to the audience about the 100 vacancies of teachers that the School District intends to hire new teachers and whether we thought that would be something that would take place. She further stated that hiring teachers is clearly something that is needed because you cannot have school if you do not have the teachers to teach. Mrs. Washington also mentioned that she is not ok with the schools not having qualified teachers, but apparently four members of Council are OK with this. Also, it was noted by Mrs. Washington that it is sad that Council has taken this position and that the kids will suffer from this action of Council. Lastly, she noted that just because a person has a Black friend and says that it does not make them a racist; she said she believes that to make that statement is a clear answer to someone that the person really is a racist.
2. Dr. Austin Floyd said that he is an educator and that he has experience with politics, public administration, and political science because that is what his degree is in. Dr. Floyd said that it is clear that there is tension amongst Council members. It was noted by Dr. Floyd that he had never been to a Sumter County Council meeting. He said that he had seen it on Twitter and thought it was a joke, but it is real. Then he gave Council members his view which includes the fact that everyone has an opinion, and those opinions can be brought to the table. Not in a way that "I'm right and this is what we should be doing." Matters should be brought to the table in hopes that an agreement can be reached despite a Council member's interest, i.e., businessmen, kids, the school district, etc. Dr. Floyd said that four months of reserve funds is nothing. He also talked about the weight of work on the teachers during the previous school year. Dr. Floyd also did some research with the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development. He said that the 12.75 millage would not have been a big burden on the businesses; however, he also said he would not have granted the full request, that was then time for negotiating and come in the middle to grant something to the School District. Lastly, he said to do nothing is not good as a leader but do what you can do to make things better and add accountability.
3. Elizabeth Kilgore thanked Council for a few words. She said that she is speaking as an after fact because her comments are about Sumter School District and education throughout Sumter County. Ms. Kilgore said that she is disturbed about Council members. She also said that the vote was about the children, not about the teachers, nor the staff; but about the children and Council's lack of funding our children's education has been done. She said it is imperative that Council does what is right for the children because they cannot do it for themselves. It was noted by Ms. Kilgore that everyone wants a qualified workforce and the children in school now will be the workforce that we are looking for in the future. She stated that most of Council members are fighting for their businesses; however, those that are concerned at the meeting are fighting for the lives of the children. She thanked Council members Washington, McGhaney,

and Baten for fighting and standing strong for Sumter School District and the children of this district. Ms. Kilgore's last statement was that she would see Council members at the poll next year.

4. Dr. Brenda C. Williams said that she has been a physician here in Sumter for over 41 years and counting. She said that she has been Sumter School District all the way. However, she mentioned one of the issues she had with the Sumter School District as it relates to the lack of funds that the School District had for Sumter County Career Center. The students and staff worked in no heat nor air conditioning for five long years. Dr. Williams said she discovered this in 2019 and the Board Members and Superintendent said they did not know that the school did not have any heat or air conditioning for five years. They also said they did not have the money for the heating and air conditioning. Dr. Williams said that she found out through Council members that the School District did have the money in its reserve account, but they did not know how to manage the money. She asked for the School District to use what they have to get what they need.
5. Debbie Sisson said that she is a business owner in Sumter County, and she previously worked for Sumter School District for 22 years. She said that she has witnessed Sumter School District for years and years playing the same song with a different choir for the children, for the teachers, for the essential workers. Ms. Sisson said that she is before County Council to let them know what the essential workers and teachers have to put up with at the District. Ms. Sisson said she decided to ask for a raise one year to see what would happen, especially since she worked hard at Sumter High School for 22 years. She said the person she talked to about the increase said that you have to get a raise. She said he never asked what work she was doing or any credentials. Ms. Sisson said that Council members were lied to last week that the essential workers would get the raise; it won't be the essential workers, it will be the higher ups getting the raises. She said that the small raises (\$6.25) that the essential workers will receive will hurt them instead of helping them; yet the District workers will receive \$20 and \$30 thousand dollars of increases. Ms. Sisson asked if Council members remembered when there were two districts and then one big one was formed with Senator Phil Leventis, it was a good idea to save money and help the children, but it didn't. She also talked about some of the hiring practices at the District Office from her perspective and how the District Office is handling the money at the District.
6. Ruby Miller said she has attended Council meetings in various locations, and she has never seen one that had made choices in detail about layman's discussions and what they have and don't have. She also said that this is the first time she has been to a Council meeting when the Council did not approve a dime for the school.
7. Jackie Humes said that she believes that people think that money solves all problems but if that is true, then how much money would it take to bring all those students up to passing scores. She said that sometimes she wish that County Council would give the School Board what they want to prove that money doesn't solve all the problems and all the drama on Council does not solve the problems; sometimes it makes the problems worse. Ms. Humes said that she was a substitute teacher in three locations in South Carolina and one was in Sumter County. She added that she quit being a substitute teacher because of problems within the school system that she did not agree with during the time when she worked at the School District.
8. Lorraine Muhammad stated that she came tonight to talk about the road conditions in Sumter County; but this meeting was explosive. She mentioned that her oldest daughter graduated from Hillcrest High School which has been a long time ago. She noted that it appears to her that the world has flipped, the

teachers are wearing what the students are wearing and how they act. She said that sometimes you cannot tell the students from the teachers and teachers are having sexual encounters with the students. Therefore, what are the children learning; they are not learning home economics, business law, and business math, how to write a check or balance a checkbook, etc. Ms. Muhammad said this matter with the school seems to be a moral issue. She added that Councilman Baten did not have to tell us about the racism in Sumter, you can smell it, you can see it, and you can feel it. She also said she and her husband came two weeks ago and nothing has changed with the roads. Ms. Muhammad said she wants better for her neighbors and for others, this is a moral issue, and the roads are still bad even though we are still paying taxes.

9. Siddi Musa said that he will not comment on the issues that his wife talked about, Lorrane Muhammad, but he wants County Council members to know that since the last big rain on Keystone Road, off Cannery Road, it is still bad. He said when he drove on the road the water was just below his headlights and if he had not driven his jeep, he would have been stuck in the rain and he would have needed someone to pull him out of the water. He asked Council for help on the road he lives on, Keystone Road.
10. Barbara Bowman said this was a first for her in attending Council's meeting in reference to the School District Budget. She added that what has been said is said and it is done. She said the people need to get out to vote. People need to know who they are voting for before they vote. Ms. Bowman stated that people need to vote for people who will do the best job for their community. She said that this meeting was upsetting to her.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for Sumter County Council, and no additional comments from the public, the meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m. after a motion by Councilman Baker, seconded by Vice Chairman Byrd, and unanimously carried by Council.

Respectfully submitted,

James T. McCain, Jr.
Chairman or Vice Chairman
Sumter County Council

Mary W. Blanding
Clerk to County Council
Sumter County Council

Approved: July 11, 2023

I certify that public and media notification of the above-mentioned meeting was given prior thereto as follows required by Freedom of Information:

Public Notified: Yes

Manner Notified: Agendas posted on Television on first floor of the Administration Building.

Date Posted: June 22, 2023

Media Notified: Yes

Manner Notified: Agenda Information is listed on Sumter County's Home Page, and E-mailed to The Item, The Chamber, WIS-TV, WBTW, and Spectrum Cable.

Date Notified: June 22, 2023

Respectfully submitted,
Mary W. Blanding
Clerk To County