

Observer Corps Reports May through July 2025

Community Chats with Sheriff Tanner

Date: July 8 & 22, 2025

Various council members present for informal sessions held in Sheriff's Department Headquarters, Bay Street and Bluffton Library

Audience Size: in excess of 100 both meetings, standing room only

Time meeting started: 5:30 to 6:30 pm

Proceedings: Informal sessions organized by council members to allow Tanner to speak on issues of ICE (U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement) and U.S. 287 (g) program.

Relevant to LWV: (Sorry Sam and Susan... Can't get rid of blue background) Suzanne)

Sheriff Tanner, who was first elected in 1998 and has been re-elected seven times, outlined his reasons for seeking an agreement with the federal government to participate in the ICE program. The department the 287(g) program from 2008-12, operating one of 18 ICE task forces in the country with five deputies assigned to the unit. Tanner has said he expects to continue the program, once an agreement is signed, with only two deputies who will receive special training.

The task force associated with 287(g) was cancelled during the Obama administration following charges of racial profiling and civil rights violations.

Tanner said he expected to have an agreement with the federal agency by the end of the month.

Council members stressed they have no input in Sheriff's decision to pursue ICE agreement. Several critics of the proposal pointed out the Council does have control through the annual operating budget process.

Meeting broadcast on Beaufort County Broadcast Channel, found on YouTube

Date Submitted: July 24, 2025

Name of Observer: Lolita Watson

Beaufort City Council Meeting July 14, 2025

All council members present, Josh Scallette who attended on Zoom.

Time meeting started: 7 pm

items relevant to the League of Women Voters Beaufort Area are described below:

Proceedings:

Presiding Officer has meeting under control: Yes.

Officials attentive/alert: Yes.

Adequate discussion of issues: Yes, additional items/comments were proposed, discussion ensued and votes were taken to proceed with the added items. Although this added to the time spent in the open Council meeting, in this observer's view, it added to the understanding of the council's commitment to the county.

Decisions cut and dried: No, time was provided as needed with no short cuts.

Closed Session. Executive Session held to discuss conveyance of property. No action announced.

Issues Relevant to LWV:

Recognized retiring Police Officer Chris Cushman After 30 years of service, Paul Trask for his service on the Planning Commission and the retirement of radio personality Mark Robeson after 48 years of community volunteer service. Council passed Resolution honoring the 10th anniversary of the Pan-African Family Empowerment and Land Preservation Network's Help Save Gullah Geechee Land Campaign

Item IXA: Public hearing and second reading of changes to the city Development Code, sections 7 and 9, dealing with landscaping requirements and development permit process. At request of the Chamber of Commerce, second and final reading was delayed for further discussion. City Planning Commission and staff had multiple meetings to discuss proposed changes. Chamber, which had no representatives participating in those meetings, asked for delay weekend before meeting took place.

Item 2X A and B: First reading of ordinance to name road Clayton Cooler Loop (In Southside Park, in honor of former long-time Public Works Director) and Airport Road extension on Lady's Island, Donnie Beer Drive (in honor of the long-time former City Councilwoman Donnie Beer).

City Manager's report: Update on city's decision to close part of the Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park, prior to Water Festival, because of concerns about structural safety. The city's Waterfront Advisory Committee is in place. Contract engineers are working to draft plans on how to proceed. .

Agenda: [07082025-1937](#) (meeting broadcast on city of Beaufort FB)

Time meeting ended: 9 p.m.

Meeting: Beaufort County Board of Education 05/20/25

Board Members Absent: none

Audience Families of performers and award recipients, Jim Miller, Three community members (see below)

Time Meeting Started 6:00 PM

Items Approved 1) Filing for E-rate Program funding (making internet available to students) and budgeting for any needs not filled by funding

2) Preliminary budget (not provided)

Meeting under control Yes

Officials attentive & alert: Yes

No Adequate discussion of issues Decision "cut & dried"

Issues Relevant to LWV {these are all always Yes}

1) Carlton Dallas (chair of legislative committee) asked the Board to provide their Legislative priorities by next week.

2) Considering using BCSD properties to develop workforce housing opportunities.

3) {The three speakers indicated were all talking about banning books, with the third reading a particularly salacious passage from one currently in HS libraries}

- Public Comments • John Amanchukwa, Hardeeville, who spoke about student safety, the specific books that are in Beaufort High school's library that he believes are harmful to children. Ivie Szalai, Beaufort who spoke about the Oath of Office that Board members took. David Cook, Hilton Head Island, whose topic was on Parents Rights and advocating for his children in the schools.

Recommendations for LWV Action No specific actions recommended—just being aware. Time meeting ended 9 p.m.

Name of Observer Janet Gould

Date submitted 07/20/25

Meeting Beaufort County Board of Education

Date 06/24/25

Board Members Absent Several phoned in

Audience unknown—viewed remotely

Time Meeting Started 6:00 PM

Items Approved

“Beaufort County School Board believes that private, religious, and homeschool who accept students spending public funds for their educational expenses should be required to take all Federal and State mandated assessments required of public school students.”

Approved \$30 million bond issuance.

Approved getting more info on metal detectors.

Procedures

Yes No

Meeting under control

Officials attentive & alert

Adequate discussion of issues {these are generally all Yes}

Decision “cut & dried”

Time for public comment

Visitors treated with respect

Issues Relevant to LWV

Broad legislative issues to be considered by the committee—new funding formula, athletics, school choice, school vouchers, rights of parents-teachers-Board members (no mention of students), school resource officers, social media. Special attention paid to testing fairness.

Recommendations for LWV Action

Be aware.

Time meeting ended 9:15pm

Name of Observer Janet Gould

Date submitted 07/21/25

Beaufort County Council Meeting July 14, 2025

All members present in person except members Passiment , Gerald Dawson, and Lawson on Zoom; Cunningham absent. Location: 1501 Bay Street at Beaufort County Sheriff's Office (administrative building under renovation).

Audience Size: space filled due to announced retirement of Marie Smalls, B.C. director of elections.

Time meeting started: 6:00 pm

Items Approved: Items related to Northern Beaufort County and relevant to the League of Women Voters Beaufort Area are described below:

Proceedings:

Presiding Officer has meeting under control: Yes. **Officials attentive/alert:** Yes.

Adequate discussion of issues: Yes, additional items/comments were proposed, discussion ensued and votes were taken to proceed with the added items. Although this added to the time spent in the open Council meeting , in this observer's view, it added to the understanding of the council's commitment to the county. **Decisions cut and dried:** No, time was provided as needed with no short cuts.

Closed Session. The "Caucus," replacing Executive Session, ran past the allotted time; when that occurred on July 14, the chair proceeded with the caucus, even though the public could hear its votes. Nothing appeared controversial.

Issues Relevant to LWV (numbered items identified from agenda):

Significant retirement: Although the agenda stated simply that the County Administrator would provide a report, as he routinely does, Mr. Moore's big news was the retirement of Marie Smalls, the Director of the Beaufort County Office of Elections and Voter Registration. Many attendees were there for the sole purpose of celebrating Ms. Smalls and letting the county know how valuable she was to the county—and to the League

Interaction with other government bodies:

Item 9: The Council agreed to work with Jasper County for a one-year period (which could be extended) on animal control and intake. The agenda provided a "fiscal impact" summary as part of the agenda. Jasper County officials were present to respond to questions and to thank Beaufort County.

Item 14: An amendment to the Beaufort County Code of Ordinances settled many years of confusion throughout the county regarding the definition and implementation of storm management throughout the county including all the county cities and townships.

Item 20: A resolution to prioritize projects within the three categories of the 2018 one cent sales tax program. This resolution replaces an earlier decision to use the “left-over money” for the replacement of the bridge to Hilton Head Funds for the bridge will come, hopefully, for a federal grant listed below.

Item 21: A resolution to support the 278 Bridge project and authorization to apply for a large Bridge Project Grant through the Federal Highway Administration Bridge Investment program. A long discussion followed the proposed resolution; chances of success for the application appeared to be around 10%. A fiscal impact statement following the resolution reiterated the prior agreement for the state to share any cost overruns with the county on a 30/70 basis—with the county paying 70%.

Item 22: A resolution authorizing the county to provide funds (from the county’s Green Space Program) to purchase the Chelsea Tracts, as a conservation easement; money from the Green Space Program will be reimbursed by the Open Land Trust. Those supporting included officials from Jasper County where Chelsea Tracts is located next the Gregorie land previously acquired jointly from the counties, and a representative from the Nature Conservancy.

Item 2 from the Consent Agenda: A Memorandum of Understanding between the county and the College of Charleston to complete a Federally sponsored “Living Shoreline Mapping and Matrix Activities.”

Time meeting ended: 8:25 p.m. , requiring a vote to extend the meeting time past 8:00 pm.

Date Submitted: July 15, 2025

Name of Observer: Alison Davidow

BEAUFORT COUNTY COUNCIL APRIL 28, 2025

Observer Report

Note: This report is short. The plan as voted upon by the County Council early in 2025 was that Council meetings would be held in a variety of locations so that citizens would have an opportunity to attend. The subject meeting of April 28 was held at the St. Helena Island Branch of the Beaufort County Library. The size of the room and St. Helena Library’s proximity to a parcel of land that is the subject of great controversy led to an excess of participants; there was no room for seating or for hearing. Accordingly, readers of this report would be better served to read the attached agenda, and follow-up agendas for information and voting on/about the meeting.

Attendees: Three Council members attended the meeting on line: Passiment, Brown, and Cunningham; the rest of the Council attended the meeting.

The early part of the meeting was devoted to recognition of individual Beaufort County employees; to “Military Children” who are part of military families stationed in Beaufort County; to a recipient of an award who worked with women associated with the military; and to county employees working at the detention center. The sheer volume of traffic required by the awards added to the time needed for the meeting.

Many attendees signed up to speak at the Public Comment portion of the meeting. (Note: Council President Alice Howard cautioned that one person signing up on behalf of many speakers was NOT the process desired and would not be allowed in the future; would-be speakers were to sign in for themselves and produce identification.) The comment portion took much more than 30 minutes; further, several speakers were admonished for inappropriate language or name-calling. (Another note: nothing was decided regarding the Cultural Protection Overlay, the subject of the controversy; this topic was not on the agenda since it rightly belonged to the Planning Commission.) The meeting ended close to 8:00 p.m.

Submitted by Alison Davidow

Beaufort County School Board

I heard of something new—Gaggle. Apparently it scans everything written on District provided devices searching for signs of depression, cyberbullying, aggression, and such. Interesting.

Legislative report—they are working on establishing a better relationship with key members, doing a better job of identifying real priorities, being more proactive in proposing bills, and providing more public information.

The calendar has been established for the next two years.

The District has lost \$2.9m in direct State aid, with more going to State sponsored charter schools. They were able to get almost \$300k back.

Public comment—band guy (Jim Miller) started. Then Mary Foster spoke about Teacher Appreciation. Then I spoke about it too on behalf of the League. (BTW—our poster was right by the sidewalk as we walked into the meeting) Then two people spoke about a pride symbol—sign—not sure what that a teacher was asked to remove from the room. Board members seemed unaware and Dr Rodriguez met with them after the meeting ended so I’m betting he’s following up. The FABB people didn’t speak, so not as exciting as I hoped.

Janet Gould May 6, 2025

LWV Beaufort Observer Corps Report: Beaufort County Council

Date: February 24, 2025 **All members present.** **Location:** **Burton Wells Recreation Center**

Audience Size: (the video did not provide any extended view of the audience)

Time meeting started: 6:00 pm

Items Approved: See the attached agenda; the items related to Northern Beaufort County are described below:

Proceedings:

Presiding Officer has meeting under control: Yes. **Officials attentive/alert:** Yes. **Adequate discussion of issues:** Yes, if additional comments were proposed, chair agree to provide the time/attention. **Decisions cut and dried:** Further discussion provided as needed with no short cuts. **Time for public**

Closed Session. A new format, "Caucus," appears to be taking the place of "Executive Session" time.

Issues Relevant to LWV:

Public Comment: William Smith, Natasha Robinson both spoke about the decrease in Gullah/Geechee programs held at the St. Helena Library; both stressed the need for these programs to teach youngsters about their heritage.

(unknown name): in response to the Chair's call for other comments, one person spoke to the coming Earth Day on April 25 and the urgent need for comments related to plastic bags, Styrofoam, and plastic straws. The Chair announced that the deadline for comments had been extended to April 1, 2025.

Two issues, 2025/13 and 2025/06 on the agenda, referred to the maintenance of animals on property not otherwise zoned for the maintenance of animals. The presence of animals has a direct effect on the water supply in the county. Zoning allowing for such maintenance was denied in both instances, although York Glover recommended that the country consult with Clemson University about measures that would place parameters on animal farming in the county.

Time meeting ended: 7:00 p.m.

Date Submitted : February 28 (to allow for addition of the County's summary of decisions; that summary is provided following the Observer Corps' report:

Name of Observer: Alison Davidow

February 28th Summary provided by Beaufort County (Northern Beaufort County information stressed):

LWV Beaufort Observer Corps Report : Beaufort County Council

Date: February 10, 2024

Board members absent: Gerald Dawson

Audience Size: mostly full (note employees and families recognized plus attendees listening to announcements relative to Lafayette Month in March)

Time meeting started: 6:00 p.m. (new time; further the **sites for county meetings will vary throughout the country from Hilton Head up to Beaufort.**)

Items Approved: see agenda for listing; Note: It may be worth the review and input from the League if the Council would identify the location of those efforts/ improvements proposed/listed on the Agenda so that the League could review the implications of the County Council's actions.

Proceedings:

See the agenda for zoning and projects voted upon by the Council. Note: identification of zoning-related property should be provided, e.g., by neighborhood or, at a minimum, by the appropriate side of the Broad River.

Of special note was the presentation by a representative of the Community Block Grant from Lowcountry Council of Governments : the speaker stressed commitment to housing for those of low to moderate income; the program, begun in 1982, receives funds from the state (although the speaker referred briefly to the current national situation as possibly affecting funding). The Community Infrastructure, Local Priorities program, and Community Enrichment project funding, Business Development and Regional Planning were also briefly listed. More information is available on the Lowcountry Council of Governments' website: www.lowcountrycog.org

Committee reports:

Community Services: Education – discussion of banned books at Education Committee (Tabernikl)

Special Needs – this is a new committee (Bartholomew will chair)

Finance Committee –McElynn – Next meeting on February 20.

Natural Resource Committee – Glover: Mitchelville property appraisal coming up also Seaside Road zoning will be on Agenda next (these were discussed at committee)

Links to agendas:

City of Beaufort: [Agenda Center • Beaufort SC • CivicEngage](#)

Beaufort County Council: [Council and Committee Meetings](#)

Beaufort County School Board: [Board Calendar - Beaufort County School District](#)

Town of Port Royal: [Agenda Center • Port Royal, SC • CivicEngage](#)

Note from Alison and others in agreement:

Comments about sounds systems: I've never asked this before but I think we should put in an all-observer effort at the County's improving the meetings' sound systems; we clearly want to attend meetings if we can (with our League buttons adorning our lapels!) but if we can't hear the proceedings, we will have to double our efforts when we have to listen again at home in order to make reports AND give up on our efforts to have council members SEE us as active, interested citizens. Maybe our NEXT letter to the editor AND our citizen comments at meetings should be about the systems!!