



**MEETING OF FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2026 – 3:00PM
CITY CENTER – PECAN ROOM (4TH FLOOR)
324 WEST EVANS STREET
FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA**

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Lethonia Barnes, Chaquez McCall, Lawrence Smith (by phone)
- STAFF PRESENT:** Jerry Dudley, Annie Brown, Michelle Morgan, Scotty Davis, Mary DeLung
- MEDIA PRESENT:** Emmy Ribero with Morning News, Dierdre Weaver-Currin with Post and Courier
- CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Lethonia Barnes called the meeting to order at 3:03pm.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Councilman Chaquez McCall made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 29, 2026, meeting. Mayor Lethonia Barnes seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

Mayor Lethonia Barnes begins the meeting with the general discussion and briefly mentions she spoke with the chief of police about working with schools.

No update was available on the house demolition.

Mayor Barnes discussed the idea of organizing a meeting that would bring together local nonprofit organizations and other community groups to explore opportunities for collaboration and identify ways to strengthen the Florence community. She explained that many smaller organizations and individuals have a desire to serve the community but often lack the connections, resources, or awareness needed to effectively reach those in need. Mayor Barnes suggested that a community gathering would provide an opportunity for organizations to share information about their missions, programs, and services. She also noted that the proposed Empowerment Center on Oakland Avenue could potentially serve as a central hub where nonprofits and community members could connect and coordinate services.

Michelle Morgan informed the committee that she serves on the Florence County Collective Steering Committee, which works closely with many of the area's larger, established nonprofit organizations. She offered to assist with distributing information about the proposed gathering. Mayor Barnes clarified that while many larger organizations are already connected and actively collaborating, her primary focus is on supporting smaller local organizations and community members who want to become involved but may not know how to establish partnerships or access existing resources.

Committee members discussed the benefits of bringing organizations together and agreed that increased collaboration could help create synergy among service providers while reducing duplication of services. Ms. Morgan noted that many organizations are working toward similar goals while competing for the same limited resources. She stated that greater coordination could improve efficiency and maximize the impact of available resources throughout the community.

Councilman McCall suggested holding a roundtable-style meeting, and Mayor Barnes added that the City Council Chambers could serve as a suitable venue.

City Manager Scotty Davis suggested that the City could further support nonprofit organizations by offering training sessions focused on organizational success. Topics could include grant opportunities, budgeting, and other resources beneficial to new and emerging nonprofit organizations.

Next Ms. Morgan provided an update on Building Florence Together, reporting that the organization's \$1.2 million budget had been approved. She stated that the funding will be used to acquire additional rental properties and provide maintenance for existing rental units. Michelle also expressed the need for more affordable rentals as she has 132 names on her waiting list and only 11 rental houses.

Dr. Annie Brown distributed a printed update from the Community Services Department outlining current Neighborhood Revitalization and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects. The update included information on housing rehabilitation projects, demolitions, down payment assistance programs, lot acquisitions, homebuyer workshops, and neighborhood meetings.

Jerry Dudley provided an update on recent property acquisitions, reporting that the City has acquired 27 properties with the goal of developing new neighborhoods. He noted that homes constructed within new neighborhood developments have historically sold more quickly than homes built on scattered infill lots.

Dr. Annie Brown noted that June is National Homeownership Month. The committee agreed to prepare a resolution recognizing National Homeownership Month at the next City Council meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 4:00pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 24th at 3:00pm.