

Council

Kevin Phillips
Mayor

Mary Beth Heyward
Mayor Pro Tempore

Jerry Ashmore
Jorge Guerrero
Darryl Owens



Van Willis
Town Manager

Jeffrey Meyers
Chief of Police

Jeffrey S. Coppinger
Operations

Noah Krepps
Planning

Minutes

Council Workshop

Port Royal Town Hall, Yvonne C. Butler Council Chambers, 700 Paris Avenue

January 7, 2026

Members Present: Mayor Kevin Phillips, Council Member Mary Beth Heyward, Council Member Jerry Ashmore, Council Member Jorge Guerrero, Council Member Darryl Owens

Staff Present: Fire Chief Tim Ogden, Police Chief Jeff Meyers, Town Manager Van Willis, Assistant Town Manager Brooke Plank-Buccola, Town Clerk Lisa Graham

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Phillips called the workshop to order at 6:34 PM.

II. PRESENTATION

A. Mardi Gras Parade – Nancy Plank, OVA

Nancy Plank of the Old Village Association reminded Council of the Mardi Gras Golf Cart Parade on February 7, with lineup at 3:00 PM on Paris Avenue and a 4:00 PM kickoff, ending at Shellring. Two school bands will participate, with applications posted on the OVA Facebook page and at Town Hall. The event will also feature a Battle of the Bands between Battery Creek and Whale Branch High Schools, along with food trucks, face painting, and a request for the Mayor and Council to serve as judges.

B. Police Department – Deputy Chief Andre Massey

Presentation to be rescheduled.

C. **Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust – Christine Rogers-Raetsch**

See presentation.

III. **COUNCIL BRIEFING**

Manager Willis gave an update on the following:

Drayton and Battery Park Roads – We have begun the process and are submitting a single application for the speed limit reductions and speed humps on Drayton and Battery Park Roads. We will keep you apprised of any progress.

Villages (SCIIP) – As previously communicated, additional funding has been secured for this project. A pre-construction meeting has been held with the selected contractor, a Notice to Proceed has been issued, and the project is expected to be completed by May 20 to meet funding requirements. Public outreach, including door hangers, will be part of the process. We are currently evaluating whether alleyways can remain partially accessible through phased construction or if temporary closures will be necessary to ensure residents are not restricted from exiting during active work. Materials will be staged adjacent to the building and in the gravel lot, making proximity and parking availability important during construction.

Casablanca (Fyall) Drainage Improvements – We are continuing to move this project forward, with the expectation that it may be funded through a future CDBG program. The project is being positioned accordingly to ensure it is ready when that opportunity becomes available.

Paris Avenue Streetscape (CDBG Grant) – Four Waters is advancing the project, with a meeting scheduled later this week to discuss the paver selections. The mosaic installation in front of the Cypress Wetlands will present some logistical challenges and will require temporary lane closures. We are coordinating with adjacent businesses and will have a traffic control plan in place. While the work will be disruptive, the goal is to keep the construction window as tight as possible to complete the project efficiently and minimize impacts.

Sanitary Sewer Ribaut Road Master Plan – There are no new updates at this time; this item remains included to keep it on everyone's radar.

Marsh View Park – We were awarded \$300,000 for the park, and there is another funding source that could potentially provide the remaining balance. We haven't received confirmation yet, but if awarded, the CDBG funds could serve as the required match, substantially reducing our out-of-pocket costs for the full project. To avoid jeopardizing the other grant, we will wait for a definitive answer before beginning construction. Once confirmed, we'll coordinate timelines to align both funding sources. While competition for the additional funds is high statewide, we have a reasonable chance of receiving some support. If not, we will proceed with the CDBG funding to move the project forward.

Sands Beach Causeway – The engineer is continuing work on the design for the causeway shower and rinse-off area. Focus has primarily been on the Villages drainage project and other priority initiatives.

Splash Pad – Sidewalk work is currently underway to help control the area. Bids are due January 21, and we expect to provide a more detailed update at the February meeting.

STR & Development Permit GIS Database – The short-term rental and development permit GIS database is complete and currently under review. We plan to launch it soon so that the public and Council can easily view project statuses on the website. The engineering firm assisting with this will be pushed to finalize the public-facing version promptly.

Cypress Wetlands Path – The first phase of the Cypress Wetlands Path is complete. We are now coordinating the second phase and have submitted related grant applications. All necessary background information and budgets have been provided to Scot Clark with the foundation to support the submissions, so the project is moving forward.

Ritter Circle/Spanish Moss Trail Connection – Work on the final phase of the Spanish Moss Trail is ongoing. The Hawk signal is expected to be installed this week or next, marking one end of the project, with Ritter Circle at the other. Installation is scheduled for completion by March 30.

Naval Hospital Sidewalk – No new updates at this time. We are awaiting confirmation on when the silt fencing will be removed so that a ribbon-cutting can be scheduled for the completed sidewalk.

Golf Cart Tours/Cruise Ships – Marcy Roy with HPRF provided an update on organizing golf cart tours for cruise ship passengers, starting when ships return on February 1. The plan is to begin with one Town-owned cart, highlighting historic points with a board member or docent, and ending at Mrs. B's, where guests can explore nearby shops or continue to Shellring, with entertainment options coordinated by owner Nick Borreggine. The primary issue is insurance, as the cruise company requires coverage for passengers. Marcy is working with her insurance company and plans to contact Beaufort Golf Cart, and the cruise line will send a representative in January to preview the tour.

Safe Harbor – No significant updates at this time. Invitations have been sent for a master planning effort for the property between 10th and 12th Streets, involving local businesses, nearby property owners, and the Spanish Moss Trail. The goal is to develop a cohesive plan addressing parking, the trail, and other related issues.

E-Bikes – This item is more for discussion than an update. E-bikes are becoming an issue nationwide, and we want feedback on how to proceed locally. Examples from the Town of Mount Pleasant ordinance have been included in your folders. The goal would be to draft guidelines on e-bike use, sidewalk restrictions, and other limitations. While we haven't had Major problems this year, there has been a recent increase, and incidents elsewhere highlight the potential risks. Chief Meyers noted that our officers are well-trained on state laws and have successfully used education and warnings to manage compliance. The Town ordinance currently prohibits bicycles on sidewalks, but Council could implement age limits, wheel-size restrictions, or other measures. My recommendation is to have Deputy Chief Massey, who has experience with this, help draft a few options for review by the Town Manager, so Council can discuss and provide direction before enforcement becomes necessary.

Construction of the Shrimp Dock/Processing Facility – The application has been submitted, with follow up questions regarding ownership addressed through the provision of the recorded deed. The process is moving forward, and updates will be provided on any developments or potential roadblocks. Progress is currently proceeding smoothly.

Cypress Wetlands – Trail work has been completed, including repairs to drainage in collaboration with the YMCA. For example, the path just behind the windows by the treadmills received drainage improvements. It is a strong partnership, and the results are very positive.

Capital Sales Tax – A representative will be provided to the committee by the 15th, with formal consideration of the appointment handled next. The representative will be briefed on the Town’s capital improvements program, focusing on key priorities such as roads and intersection improvements. Critical areas include Savannah Highway/Parris Island Gateway, Savannah Highway /170, and Groeber Hill/Parris Island Gateway. These projects remain top priorities for the Town, whether funded through the capital sales tax program or other long-term funding sources.

Airbnb – Meetings continue with short-term rental operators to explain the ordinance and the outcome of the settlement with Airbnb. Clarification has been provided on reporting requirements and obligations. The Town has no formal relationship with individual operators beyond the settlement with Airbnb; compliance with the ordinance is ultimately the responsibility of Airbnb and its customers. Reports from operators are needed for reconciliation, and while other jurisdictions may enforce payments and reporting more aggressively, that approach has not yet been adopted. Significant resources have been spent on direct training and legal support, which has become disproportionately expensive relative to collections.

Incubator – The Town is now officially a tenant in Jefferson Commons and is developing a plan to occupy the spaces, drawing on a Savannah-based incubator program as a model. The program will begin with vetting applicants across various disciplines—sculptors, painters, metalworkers, or other creators—with spaces adapted to meet their needs. The second unit will support food-related incubator activities while also serving as an exhibit space and community information hub, showcasing local events and engaging visitors. The application process for this unit will align with the artist selection process to streamline participation and maximize impact.

Shooting Incident in Shadow Moss: An incident occurred in Shadow Moss involving errant gunfire from an informal range in neighboring unincorporated Beaufort County. Several homes were damaged, highlighting the need for increased safety measures for properties adjacent to neighborhoods. The Chief is coordinating with the Sheriff’s Department, and discussions with the County continue regarding appropriate precautions.

Mayor Phillips clarified that the incident occurred the Sunday before Christmas. A high-powered rifle was discharged in unincorporated Beaufort County, striking a home in Shadow Moss five times while it was occupied. Children were present nearby. The Port Royal Police Department and Sheriff’s Office responded promptly. While firearm discharge in the County is legal, concerns were raised about neighborhood safety and the need for greater oversight.

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Council Member Heyward inquired about updates regarding the VA. Council Member Guerrero reported that the Beaufort County Veterans Council confirmed a site decision has been made, with a 30-day period before public announcement.

Council Member Owens highlighted that many residents are unable to access social media but wish to view meetings, suggesting a web-based link be made available for public access.

Mayor Phillips proposed creating a yearly calendar of Town events, festivals, and activities to assist businesses and residents with planning. The calendar would be updated as events are added or removed.

Council Member Guerrero reported that the South Carolina Department of Veterans Affairs has increased Beaufort County disability application approvals by 1,200%, resulting in \$300 million in direct compensation, including \$8 million this year to local veterans. The Secretary has expanded her staff to five VSOs and an administrative assistant. Guerrero suggested hosting a presentation from the VA to improve community awareness and engagement, particularly for Vietnam-era veterans returning to the system.

IV. REVIEW AGENDA FOR THE JANUARY 14, 2026 COUNCIL MEETING

Manager Willis reviewed the agenda for the January 14th Council Meeting.

V. IMPORTANT DATES

Manager Willis read the following important date.

- A. January 5 through 9, 2026 – *Christmas Tree Drop Off* at Naval Heritage Park**

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments at this time.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Phillips adjourned the meeting at 7:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



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**Lisa Graham
Town Clerk**

In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80 (a)(d)(e), as amended, notification of regular meetings was given at the beginning of the calendar year. A copy of the agenda was posted on the Town Hall's bulletin board and website www.portroyal.org twenty-four hours prior to the meeting. A copy of the agenda was given to the local news media and requested public on file.

The Town of Port Royal does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission to, access to, or operations of programs, services, or activities. Qualified individuals who need accessible communication aids and services or other accommodations to participate in programs and activities are invited to make your needs and preferences known to the Civil Rights Coordinator. If at all possible, please give us at least a three to five day advance notice so we can adequately meet your needs. Civil Rights Coordinator at 843-986-2211.



Update to the Town of Port Royal Town Council

January 7, 2026

The Beaufort-Jasper Housing Trust grew out of a regional effort by local governments to address affordable and workforce housing needs.

Brief Timeline:

- 2022: Eight jurisdictions approved the intergovernmental agreement
- 2023: (Jan) Launch of operations; (May) Incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit
- 2024: (Apr) Claude Hicks hired as Executive Director; (Jun) First grants made
- 2025: (July) Christine Raetsch joined the Board as Port Royal’s representative

Where do we stand with funding?

- All 8 jurisdictions are current on their contributions.
- The Town of Port Royal has contributed \$230,352 so far.
- Going forward Port Royal’s contribution is roughly \$35K per year.

Where are the funds going?

- Over \$3M in funding committed/deployed covering 3 program areas (the vast majority of which was approved after Claude joined the team).
- 64 new affordable Senior rental units created at Carrington Manor
- 52 homes preserved throughout Beaufort and Jasper Counties by home repairs (\$479,000)
- 27 new homeowners created through homebuyer assistance programs (\$215,000)

What can we do?

1. Replicate Beaufort’s repair program in Port Royal

City of Beaufort Repair Program	Proposed Town of Port Royal Repair Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COB contributed \$150K; BJHT matched to \$100K = \$250K total funds available • Allows up to \$50K per house for repairs • Income target 80% AMI and below, for a family of 4 (\$88,100) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR contributes \$35,000; BJHT COULD match with \$65,000 = \$100K total funds available [in concept] • Allow up to \$20K per house for repairs • Income target 80% AMI and below, for a family of 4 (\$88,100)

This program would complement Habitat for Humanity’s repair program

Habitat for Humanity Repair Program	BJHT Repair Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roofing • Accessibility improvements – primarily ramps • Weatherization • Siding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roofing and roof replacement • Accessibility improvements – int & ext • Plumbing • HVAC • Electrical

2. Consider in future phases of the Safe Harbor plan some set aside (say 10 - 15%) for workforce housing (80% AMI).