

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 Meeting

Yvonne C. Butler Council Chambers, 700 Paris Avenue

January 14, 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, Police Deputy Chief Andre Massey, Town Manager Van Willis, Assistant Town Manager Brooke Plank-Buccola, Town Clerk Lisa Graham

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Phillips called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council Member Guerrero led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. INVOCATION

Council Member Owens led the Invocation.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Minutes from the Public Hearing of December 10, 2025**
- B. Minutes from the Council Meeting of December 10, 2025**

Council Meeting
January 14, 2026

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to approve the minutes by Council Member Owens. Seconded by Council Member Heyward. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

V. ELECTION OF MAYOR PRO TEMPORE

Council elected Council Member Guerrero as Mayor Pro Tempore.

VI. PROCLAMATION

A. Honorary Mayor – Natalie Kata

Mayor Phillips read the proclamation into the record, presented Honorary Mayor Natalie Kata with a key to the Town, and invited her to strike the Mayor's gavel.

VII. PRESENTATION

A. Police Department Promotion and Update

Chief Meyers and Police Pastor Daniel Russell swore in PFC Nicholas Curry to the rank of Corporal. Deputy Chief Massey provided an update following his completion of the FBI National Academy, thanking Council for the opportunity to attend the 11-week program. He noted that the education, valued at over \$50,000, was fully funded by the FBI at no cost to the Town and that only 1% of law enforcement officers worldwide are selected to attend. The program included graduate-level coursework, physical fitness training, and leadership development, culminating in graduation alongside 255 classmates from around the world. Deputy Chief Massey emphasized the lasting professional network formed, the leadership growth gained, and his commitment to bringing that knowledge back to the Port Royal Police Department and community. He also expressed gratitude to his family, colleagues, and residents for their support during his time away.

VIII. COUNCIL BRIEFING

Manager Willis gave an update on the following:

Retail Strategy Survey – Staff met with Retail Strategies consultants to begin visioning sessions funded through a grant secured by the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation. The effort focuses on developing short- and long-term retail strategies for the Downtown area and the Ribaut Road Corridor. Activities included a staff meeting, a walking tour, and a stakeholder session with local business owners to gather feedback and outline the grant's objectives. Input from staff observations and business stakeholders will be used to develop a five-year retail strategy, with close collaboration during the first year. The initiative is intended to provide businesses with tools and guidance while supporting improvements to the overall retail climate in the Town of Port Royal.

Splash Pad – Project bids have been issued and are due on January 21. The work currently underway is for additional parking improvements, including drainage work, to increase available parking for the existing playground.

Jefferson Commons – A draft application for the artist incubator space has been prepared and will be circulated in the coming weeks. The Town holds two-year leases on two units, with a proposed six-month term for each artist’s residency. Applications will be reviewed to assess interest and determine whether eligibility should be limited to Port Royal artists. The second unit remains under consideration, with potential opportunities to support existing local businesses through collaborative efforts such as shared marketing, coordinated events, and a common calendar to strengthen synergy. The space may also serve as a venue for business collaboration and planning. Minimal buildout is recommended to maintain flexibility for varying artistic disciplines, with wall separations as an initial improvement. Further directions will be guided by application responses and continued discussion.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

At this time, the Mayor will recognize members of the audience who have submitted speaker forms to address the Council on agenda items. Each speaker will be limited to three minutes.

There were no comments at this time.

X. SECOND READING

- A. 2025-20. An Ordinance to amend and/or supplement Chapter 2, Article V, Division 2 – Public Records Program, Sections 2-260 and 2-261 of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Port Royal, South Carolina, to repeal references to the “Town Records Management” and to assign FOIA responsibilities to the Town Clerk and the Police Department.**

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-20 by Council Member Heyward. Seconded by Council Member Owens. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

- B. 2025-21. An Ordinance to authorize the Town Manager to convey excess real property to facilitate construction of sidewalks within the Town described as Beaufort County tax district 110, map 10, parcel 158 (1008A 12th Street – 30 ft).**

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-21 by Council Member Owens. Seconded by Council Member Guerrero. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

Council Meeting
January 14, 2026

- C. **2025-22. An Ordinance to authorize the Town Manager to convey excess real property to facilitate construction of sidewalks within the Town described as Beaufort County tax district 110, map 10, parcel 370 (1008D 12th Street – 30 ft).**

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-22 by Council Member Heyward. Seconded by Council Member Owens. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

XI. FIRST READING

- A. **2026-1. An Ordinance to authorize the Town Manager to convey excess real property to facilitate construction of sidewalks within the Town described as Beaufort County tax district 110, map 11, parcel 359 (810 11th Street – 100 ft).**

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-1 by Council Member Heyward. Seconded by Council Member Owens. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

- B. **2026-2. An Ordinance to authorize the Town Manager to convey excess real property to facilitate construction of sidewalks within the Town described as Beaufort County tax district 110, map 11, parcel 459 (917 8th Street – 100 ft).**

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-2 by Council Member Owens. Seconded by Council Member Heyward. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

- C. **2026-3. An Ordinance to authorize the Town Manager to convey excess real property To facilitate construction of sidewalks within the Town described as Beaufort County tax district 110, map 10, parcel 369 (1008C 12th Street – 30 ft).**

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-3 by Council Member Guerrero. Seconded by Council Member Heyward. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

XII. COUNCIL ACTION

- A. **Appointment to Beaufort County Transportation Advisory Committee**

Beaufort County Transportation Sales Tax Update – County Council Chairperson Alice Howard provided an update on the Beaufort County Tax Transportation Advisory Committee. In 2026, the committee will develop a detailed transportation referendum proposal, potentially for a one-cent sales tax, identifying specific roads, projects, and safety improvements. Cost estimates will be supported by an engineering firm to ensure accuracy. The committee includes one representative from each municipality and district and is expected to submit recommendations to County Council by April, following public meetings across localities. The LATS project list will help guide prioritization, with major projects anticipated to include the Highway 170/278 corridor. Chairperson Howard also noted initial steps are underway to

Council Meeting
January 14, 2026

acquire the former Parker's Gas Station property at Ribaut Road and Lady's Island Drive. The acquisition funding secured and improvement funding to be pursued through the transportation program.

Council Member Ashmore made a motion to appoint Gary Freeman. Seconded by Council Member Heyward. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

B. Approval of London Square Wetlands

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to approve the London Square Wetlands by Council Member Owens. Seconded by Council Member Heyward. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

XIII. IMPORTANT DATES

Manager Willis read the following important dates:

- A. Monday, January 19, 2026 – *Martin Luther King, Jr. Day* – Town offices will be closed**
- B. Tuesday, January 20, 2026 – *MASC Hometown Legislative Action Day* in Columbia**
- C. Monday, January 26, 2026 – *Planning Commission Meeting* – 5:30 PM**

XIV. PUBLIC COMMENT

At this time, the Mayor will recognize members of the audience who have submitted speaker forms to address the Council on non-agenda items. Each speaker will be limited to three minutes.

Bill Reeside introduced himself as a Libertarian candidate for U.S. Representative for South Carolina's 1st Congressional District.

XV. COUNCIL COMMENT

Council expressed appreciation for the collaborative leadership of Council and staff and congratulated Deputy Chief Massey on his promotion and completion of advanced training, noting the benefit to the Police Department and the community. Council thanked Chief Meyers for supporting professional development and acknowledged community gratitude for the Police Department's swift response to a recent hit-and-run incident. Members recognized the outgoing Mayor Pro Tempore, expressed confidence in the new Mayor Pro Tempore, and reflected on a strong start to 2026, looking ahead to continued collaboration and success for the Town of Port Royal.

XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Potential contractual matter regarding property**

Council Meeting
January 14, 2026

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to go into executive session to discuss potential contractual matters regarding property by Council Member Owens. Seconded by Council Member Heyward. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

They entered executive at 7:30 PM.

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to exit executive session by Council Member Owens. Seconded by Council Member Heyward. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

They exited executive session at 7:54 PM.

XVII. POSSIBLE ACTION ON ITEMS DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no action taken at this time.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Phillips entertained a motion to adjourn by Council Member Heyward. Seconded by Council Member Guerrero. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



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.portroval.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.