

Town Council Regular Meeting

February 24, 2026 – 2:30 PM

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Seabrook Island Town Hall, Council Chambers
2001 Seabrook Island Road
Seabrook Island, SC 29455



MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kleinman called the meeting to order at 2:33 pm.

ROLL CALL

Council Members Present: Bruce Kleinman, Mayor; Darryl May, Raymond Hamilton, Patrick Faulkner, and Thomas Hund

Town Staff Present: Joe Cronin (Town Administrator), Amber Howard (Finance Director), Abby Grooms (Communications Director), Tyler Newman (Planning Director), and Peter Wiggins (Town Clerk).

FOIA STATEMENT

The Town Clerk confirmed that the meeting was advertised in compliance with the requirements of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act. Agendas were posted and furnished to news media and all others requesting notification.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 27, 2026

Mr. Hund motioned to approve the minutes of January 27, 2026, seconded by Mr. Faulkner.

Mr. Hund's motion was APPROVED unanimously.

REPORTS OF TOWN BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

Environment & Wildlife Committee

Mr. Hamilton stated the committee went through prior agenda items that were unfinished from prior years. Mr. Hamilton highlighted the Beach Rules Ordinance, Beachfront and Marshfront Management Plans, and Bobcat Guardian Program that need addressed. He continued by stating the inlet relocation is also a priority for the committee. He stated the committee wanted to work with SIPOA on education programs, as the inlet relocation is vital for the beach on Seabrook Island. He continued by stating the committee discussed the conservancy fund. He stated the committee wanted to start researching grant programs and the feasibility of using funds for projects behind the SIPOA security gate.

Public Safety Committee

Mr. May stated the committee met on February 17. He stated the committee discussed past agenda items and potential agenda items

Discretionary Grants Committee

for 2026. Mr. May highlighted the Beach Rules Ordinance and awarding a contract for Beach Patrol Services.

Mr. Faulkner stated his committee met on February 18. He stated the committee recommended combing the two prior grant programs into one. He stated that there was an action item on the agenda which was to adopt the updated grant program guidelines.

Mr. Faulkner motioned to adopt the updated Discretionary Grants Program Guidelines.

Mr. Hund stated the guidelines were simple and easy to understand for potential applicants. He stated he was pleased to see this in the guidelines.

Mr. Hamilton asked why the committee is recommending raising the maximum allowed award to \$5,000.00 from \$2,500.00.

Mr. Faulkner stated some applicants were applying to both the Promotions Grant Program and the Conservation Program, and further, the committee did not want to penalize applicants who had legitimate projects that were eligible for funding under both programs.

Mr. Hamilton asked if the guidelines should reinstitute a minimum allowable award.

Mr. Faulkner stated there was some conversation about removing the minimum award. He stated there was an applicant in 2025 that was awarded a small, Promotions Grant amount in order to close out the Promotions Grant Program for FY 2025. He stated that considering this small amount was allowed to be awarded, the committee chose to remove the minimum allowable amount.

Mr. Hamilton stated it was his opinion that if an applicant chose not to attend the committee meeting at which the application is discussed, it should be an automatic denial.

Mr. Faulkner stated the committee wanted to be a little softer with potential applicants. He stated this was why the language found in the guidelines doesn't guarantee a denial.

Mr. Hamilton motioned to insert language in the guidelines guaranteeing denial of a grant application if a representative from the applying entity is not present at both the committee and council meeting at which their application is heard, seconded by Mayor Kleinman.

Mr. May asked if Mr. Hamilton would entertain an amendment to his motion that would allow an application to be heard if there is an extraordinary circumstance that didn't allow an applicant to appear at either the committee or council meeting.

Mr. Hamilton stated that he would allow his amendment to be modified, however he stated that he was concerned about what reasons might be defined as extraordinary circumstance.

Mr. May stated that ultimately it would be up to Mr. Faulkner and his committee to apply this issue appropriately, but that the council could exert pressure on applicants if attendance becomes a problem again.

Mr. Hamilton's motion was APPROVED unanimously.

Mayor Kleinman stated he couldn't figure out what the intent was of the added Evaluation Criteria.

Mayor Kleinman motioned to delete the Evaluation Criteria from the guidelines, seconded by Mr. May.

Mr. Faulkner stated the criteria was added in good faith. He stated there was additional language defining each criteria that was recommended deleted by the committee. He continued by stating that he didn't think deleting the section would be detrimental to the purpose of the overall guidelines. He stated it was the overall decision of the committee to leave the criteria as is, minus the added definitions.

Mr. Hund stated his wish was to leave the criteria in the guidelines as it helps the applicant with their post-grant presentation.

Mr. May asked from where the redline additions came.

Mr. Faulkner stated the additions are added language that was not in the FY 2025 guidelines. He further stated the additional, proposed language was removed for the sake of simplicity.

Mr. Kleinman stated his understanding of what was being proposed featured some staff additions that the committee ultimately decided needed to be removed. He continued by stating the application form, which is already a two-page document, will not continue to be a two-page document if the grant guidelines become too cumbersome. Mayor Kleinman continued that several sections of the current guidelines are reactions to experiences from prior years, but the evaluation criteria didn't seem to be one of them.

Mayor Kleinman's motion was APPROVED with four yeas and one nay, as follows:

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| <i>Mr. Faulkner</i> | <i>nay</i> |
| <i>Mr. Hamilton</i> | <i>yea</i> |
| <i>Mr. Hund</i> | <i>yea</i> |
| <i>Mr. May</i> | <i>yea</i> |
| <i>Mayor Kleinman</i> | <i>yea</i> |

Mayor Kleinman stated he wished to discuss the town providing grants to organizations whose beneficiaries are not residents of Seabrook Island. He stated there are several examples of these groups that have applied. He stated the guidelines seem to tighten the Town's ability to award grants to the groups. He stated his opinion was that the Town needs to be a good neighbor and if the Town chooses not to award grants to these types of groups, it doesn't feel like we are good neighbors.

Mr. May stated he recalled two organizations that are similar to the situation being discussed. He stated he was not in favor of a bird conservation group that applied for funding last year, and even though they were a good organization, they had nothing to do with Seabrook Island. He stated he also remembered the organization that Mayor Kleinman referred to. He recalled he was in favor of their grant application due to residents from Seabrook Island volunteering for that group, as well as individuals who work on Seabrook Island availing themselves of the group's services. He stated he wasn't sure what the current guidelines do to refine that nexus. He stated it was his opinion that there needed to be a nexus, but that the guidelines should not require funds to be spent on Seabrook Island.

Mayor Kleinman stated the language to which he is concerned was under "Project Eligibility" that gives preference to projects that occur within the Town's corporate limits, and further, that projects may be considered if they provide a clear and demonstrable benefit to the Town, its residents, visitors, or businesses. He stated the guidelines have never had that language before, and thinking about the organizations that have been discussed, he stated he wasn't sure how it could be argued that a clear a demonstrable benefit has been achieved by some prior applicants. He stated that he would rather see the language amended to say that a clear and demonstrable benefit be provided to the community.

Mr. Hamilton asked what was meant by the word "community".

Mayor Kleinman stated that was a fair question. He stated that the Town had not had an applicant that was so remote that they weren't from at least Johns Island, and further, that those groups who were

from Johns Island employed Seabrook Island volunteers. He stated it was not his opinion that the Town should support every charity on Johns Island, but he did want to support charities that employ Seabrook Island volunteers.

Mr. Cronin stated that the first sentence of the language to which Mayor Kleinman is objecting, is pulled from the existing Conservation and Promotions Grant Guidelines that require projects have a benefit to, and within the Town. He stated both program guidelines already establish a preference to award funding to projects that are affecting the Town.

Mayor Kleinman stated this language was added in 2025 once this issue came up in 2024. He stated the guidelines also have language that allow projects that promote community wellness, cultural and historical awareness, economic development, citizen participation, satisfaction, and sense of place to be considered. He stated his concern is that the next time a similar organization applies for grant funding, the Town is effectively tying their hands.

Mr. Cronin asked Mayor Kleinman if his concerns are addressed in the eligibility language that states grant funding may be awarded for projects that “enhance citizen participation, satisfaction, or sense of place”.

Mr. May stated this language does not help the situation that much, considering the final sentence deals with what the locale restrictions are. Mr. May continued by stating the medical clinic that applied for funding in 2025 provided a benefit to the town and businesses through their services that are used by employees of Seabrook Island businesses. He stated it was his opinion that the preference given to projects occurring within the Town’s corporate limits is not the be all and end all, and the council should include language making it clear that projects can occur outside the corporate limits of Seabrook Island.

Mayor Kleinman asked the council if the paragraph being discussed needed to stay in the guidelines.

Mr. May stated that the guidelines should establish the council’s preference that groups or projects have a connection to Seabrook Island.

Mr. Hamilton stated that he liked the language giving preference to projects within Seabrook Island, but stated he was fine with the last sentence reading, “Projects outside the Town limits may be considered”.

Mr. Faulkner stated that he preferred to leave the language as is. He stated that if the sentence is amended as suggested by Mr. Hamilton, it could open the grant program to any organization in the world.

Mr. May stated the proposed language was a little too open ended for his tastes. He stated he could propose an amendment to have the last sentence read, "Projects outside the Town may be considered provided they are a benefit to the Town, its residents, visitors, or business and their employees".

Mr. McQuillin stated there still must be a public benefit anytime an organization is spending public funds. He reminded the council that public funds cannot be used to benefit a private business.

Mayor Kleinman stated that the guidelines already establish that eligible projects must promote community and cultural awareness. He continued by stating that he didn't think amending these guidelines opens the door to misusing public funds.

Mr. McQuillin stated that as the council debates this topic, they should keep in the back of their minds the requirement that public funds be used to promote a public benefit.

Mr. Hund stated this is only a pathway for an organization to get public funding. Regardless of some parts of the guidelines saying a group is eligible and some parts of the guidelines saying a group is not eligible, the group should still fill out an application.

Mayor Kleinman asked the council if they were running Backpack Buddies, after reading the guidelines, would you think the group is eligible. He stated the group has been rejected in the past and it was his opinion that that was a bad decision.

Mr. Hund stated it was his opinion that the current guidelines would not exclude a group like Backpack Buddies. Further, he asked if applications are denied immediately because of a group not being eligible.

Mr. Wiggins stated that if the Town receives an application, it will be heard by the committee. He stated it was not the practice of staff to reject an application.

Mayor Kleinman stated that an application would not be denied until it is heard by the committee and voted upon. He stated an application from Backpack Buddies, based on prior guidelines requiring beneficiaries to be Seabrookers, was denied. He continued by stating the language of the guidelines wasn't broad enough to convince the council it was an eligible organization, despite Backpack Buddies being

a meaningful and charitable organization that many Seabrookers volunteer many hours working.

Mr. May asked if this group did its work within the Town.

Mayor Kleinman stated the work is done at Oyster Catcher.

Mr. May asked the council to assume the group was working jointly with another group on Kiawah for a similar purpose. He stated it was his belief that the group would still be eligible because it provides a psychological benefit to Seabrookers who volunteer for the organization. He stated that the language should still be made clear that the Town will not entertain applications from groups as far away as Kansas, due to Seabrookers having no connection to Kansas.

Mayor Kleinman stated he didn't think he was hearing anyone say they didn't think a charitable organization whose beneficiaries happen to be on Johns Island, but whose volunteers and/or funders are Seabrookers, shouldn't be eligible.

Mr. Cronin stated in the first sentence of the paragraph being discussed, "shall" could be replaced with "may", and then upon consideration of an application, the council and committee can make their own judgements related to if an organization is eligible.

Mr. May stated he wasn't sure it was the greatest solution, and council should just proceed to a vote. He stated that if in the future, someone creates better language, the guidelines could be revisited. He stated he thought the groups at issue could already be deemed eligible due to the language allowing groups that enhance the citizen participation and satisfaction of Seabrookers.

Mayor Kleinman motion to defer consideration of the Discretionary Grant Program Guidelines to the March 10, Special Called Town Council meeting, seconded by Mr. May.

Mr. Faulkner stated that, as part of Mayor Kleinman's motion, he would like to see the grant application to ensure the language is to the council and committee's satisfaction.

Mr. Cronin stated the application will be drafted after the guidelines are approved. He stated he would draft an application based on the current guidelines.

Mayor Kleinman stated he could direct staff to draft the final application and present it at the March meeting of the Discretionary Grants Committee.

Mr. Faulkner stated he wanted to ensure that the application presented at the March meeting is consistent with the approved grant guidelines, and is not an expanded language application that creates similar issues to the issues currently being discussed.

Mr. Cronin stated that review could be done at the March meeting of the Discretionary Grants Committee, but that staff creations like applications are not something that is reviewed by committees. However, Mr. Cronin stated that if the committee would like to review the application at their March meeting, he had no objections.

Mayor Kleinman stated that historically, applications are drafted by staff in reliance on already approved guidelines. He stated if the process is going to change as has been discussed, we might be building in another step that is not necessary.

Mr. May stated that the committee could still review the application, but that they would not formally approve the form in keeping consistent with prior processes.

Mayor Kleinman's motion was APPROVED unanimously.

Community Facilities & Infrastructure Committee

Mr. Hund stated the committee met on February 19. He stated the committee discussed the Seabrook Island Road Project and was also updated on permits the Town is already in possession of and permits that are still to come. He stated the committee also discussed what is an immediate need for a new Town Hall. He stated the committee discussed different ways the project could be moved forward. He stated the committee discussed space needs and site requirements. He continued by stating the committee discussed bringing in a design professional to assist the Town with compiling requirements, needs, and space uses. He informed council the committee chose to move forward with an informal solicitation process to consider who might be the right consultant for the Town. He stated that once the needs assessment is completed and a site identified, the Town could move forward with conceptual designs.

REPORTS OF TOWN OFFICERS AND STAFF

Mayor

Mayor Kleinman stated the preliminary list of projects for the proposed sales tax referendum did not include Seabrook Island Road. He stated that Seabrookers pay sales tax at a greater per capita share than other municipalities, and even though the project list contains \$300 million for projects along the Battery and \$400 million for Mt. Pleasant projects, the Town has received \$0 for projects on Seabrook Island. He informed the council that another public comment period is coming and the Town will be working with other entities on Seabrook Island to create a plan to gather public support for Seabrook Island Road.

Mayor Kleinman stated that an original version of the agenda for the current meeting included first reading of Ordinance 2026-01, an ordinance amending the Development Standards Ordinance (DSO). He stated he removed this item from the agenda in order to ensure transparency and afford a chance for Seabrookers to participate in this process. He stated the Planning Commission has already met, revised the ordinance, and made their recommendation to the council. He stated a public hearing will be held on March 24, with first reading on March 31, and second reading on April 28. Mayor Kleinman closed by stating that these amendments establish a Planned Development Zoning District.

Mr. May encouraged the Town to communicate a summary of the proposed ordinance to Seabrookers via the Town's usual communications methods.

Town Administrator

Mr. Cronin reminded the council that their Strategic Priorities Workshop is scheduled for March 10, at 10:00 am.

Finance Director

Ms. Howard stated she distributed the December 2025 financials on February 17. She stated she is still doing some work to update the new budget codes. She stated as soon as that is complete, she will complete the financials from January 2026.

Planning Director

Mr. Newman provided a report on the Town's zoning and code enforcement activities since the January council meeting.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Bill Reeside

Mr. Reeside of Edisto Beach informed the council that he intends to be a candidate for the United States House of Representatives, representing the 1st District of South Carolina. He thanked the Mayor and Town Clerk for affording him the opportunity to speak.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Beach Patrol Services RFP

Mr. May motioned to enter into an Executive Session for the purposes of discussing contractual arrangements related to the Town's Beach Patrol Services contract, seconded by Mr. Hund.

Mr. May's motion was APPROVED unanimously.

Town Council entered into an Executive Session at 4:12 pm.

Mr. Faulkner motioned to exit Executive Session, seconded by Mr. Hund.

Mr. Faulkner's motion was APPROVED unanimously.

Town Council exited Executive Session at 4:43 pm.

Mr. May motioned to authorize the Mayor to enter into a contract with Barrier Island Ocean Rescue as recommended by the Public Safety Committee for Beach Patrol Services from April through September, seconded by Mr. Hund.

Mr. May's motion was APPROVED unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the council, Mayor Kleinman declared the meeting adjourned at 4:43 pm.

Peter D. Wiggins II, MPA
Town Clerk