



MINUTES

City of Liberty- Regular Session

August 11th, 2025 – 6:30 pm

Rosewood Center- 419 E Main St., Liberty, SC 29657

- **Welcome and Call to Order, Mayor Woods** Time:6:30pm

Present:

Councilmember Arms
Councilmember Whitaker
Mayor Woods
Councilmember Padgett

Not Present:

Councilmember Massie
Councilmember Shoenleben

- **Invocation** Giving by: Mayor woods

- **Pledge of Allegiance**

- **Public Session (Speakers are allowed 3 minutes)**

None

- **Presentation:**

-Pickens Regional Joint Water System-Update-Troy Rosier, City Engineer

- **Approval of Minutes –**

June 9th, 2025- Regular Session

Motion: Councilmember Whitaker

2nd: Councilmember Arms

Discussion: Councilmember Arms clarified that the commission vote should reflect abstentions for himself and Councilmember Whitaker, rather than “no” votes. Ms. Locke explained this was a clerical error. Arms also stated that he did not announce he would not be running again, and that record should be corrected.

Vote:4-0

- **New Business: (1st Readings/ Resolutions)**

Resolution 2025-05: A resolution concerning business licenses and hospitality taxes for children participating in the city-sponsored event promoting education and entrepreneurship among youth, scheduled for September 20, 2025 (date subject to change).

Motion: Councilmember Arms

2nd: Councilmember Whitaker

Discussion: Councilmember Arms asked if it was legal to include the date. City Attorney Ms. McCormac advised to remove the date. Councilmember Arms then made a motion to amend the resolution to exclude the date.

Councilmember Whitaker seconded, and the motion passed with a 4-0 vote.

Vote:4-0

Resolution 2025-06: A resolution regarding the city-sponsored community yard sale to be held Saturday, August 23, 2025, from 8:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. on South Commerce Street.

Motion: Councilmember Padgett
2nd: Councilmember Arms
Discussion:
Vote:4-0

Ordinance 2025-06: 100% annexation of Parcel #4097-13-13-5497.

Motion: Councilmember Arms
2nd: Councilmember Whitaker
Discussion: None
Vote: 4-0

Ordinance 2025-08: Rezoning parcel #4087-12-75-9744 (Old Norris Rd.)

Motion: Councilmember Arms
2nd: Councilmember Whitaker
Discussion: Councilmember Arms asked the developers several questions regarding plans, traffic control, infrastructure, and schools. The developers stated they could provide a letter from the school district and the county confirming sewer capacity. They also stated they would submit the design to Ms. Locke.
Vote:4-0

Ordinance 2025-05: Amendments to the Business License Ordinance — Special Events and Entertainment provisions.

Due to Councilmember Arms having to abstain because of a potential financial gain, there would not be a quorum. Therefore, this ordinance will be moved to the next meeting for its first reading.

Ordinance 2025-07: Amendment to the Stormwater Ordinance.

Motion: Councilmember Whitaker
2nd: Councilmember Arms
Discussion: Ms. Locke explained the new stormwater process. The County will no longer handle the full stormwater program but will only oversee the education and public outreach portions. Clearwater will now take on the operational role. As a result, revisions to our ordinance were necessary to update fees and structures, since we will no longer be using the County for these services. Councilmember Arms asked for the numbers for review fees from other Cities.
Vote:4-0

Appointment: Appointment of new members to the Board of Zoning Appeals and the Planning Commission.

Emma Moffitt- BZA
Alecia Gull-BZA
Douglas Finster-Planning

Councilmember Arms yielded his time to Hester Elrod, Chair of the Planning Commission, who expressed her concerns about not being informed of the appointment of new commissioners or who they were. She stated that she and the commission should be notified in the future.

Mayor Woods asked for a motion to appoint the following individuals to the assigned groups:

- Emma Moffitt – BZA

- Alecia Gull – BZA
- Douglas Finster – Planning Commission

Motion made by Councilmember Arms, seconded by Councilmember Whitaker, and approved by a 4-0 vote.

Approval of Bids: (Bid or Proposals)

- Grass cutting for the one-mile recreational loop (budgeted).
- Siding repairs on Mills Avenue (insurance claim—Helene).
- Lawnmower purchase for Recreation Department (equipment maintenance).

Councilmember Arms moved to approve the above items, contingent upon them falling within the budget. Motion by Arms, seconded by Whitaker, and passed with a 4-0 vote.

- **Old Business: (2nd Readings)-**
-No Materials at this time.
- **City/Financial Report-** See attachment
- **City Council Comments –**
 - Robbie Shoenleben (Ward 1) - Not Present
 - Lavant Padgett (Ward 2)- No Comments
 - Jeff Massie (Ward 4)- Not Present
 - Zachary Arms (At-Large) Councilmember Arms asked about the status of the downtown courtyard flowerbed. Mayor Woods explained that there is a leak from the wall into the building on the other side of the flowerbed. Arms thanked all of the candidates who are running and asked about the possibility of having them sign an NDA agreement in order to sit in on executive sessions. Ms. McCormac said she would need to look into that. Arms also thanked the Mayor and staff for a great 4th of July celebration. He mentioned how impressive the City's website is, noting that it features real-time photos of Liberty rather than stock images. The Planning Commission held a public hearing downtown. We got public input and planning's opinion on the service oriented businesses can we move forward on this topic? Arms then asked why the City is waiting on the strategic plan. Ms. Locke explained that, since there is an upcoming election with multiple people running for Mayor, it would be best to wait until after the election. This will help avoid having to backtrack, as the plan lays the groundwork for the administration, and at this time the mayor is serving as Acting Administrator.
 - Rhonda Whitaker (At-Large)- No remarks but wanted to say thank you Robbie, Zach and Daniel for leaving her. She will still be there and continue to serve her time.
- **Mayor's Announcements-** See attachment
- **Motion to Enter Executive Session SC Code Section 30-4-70(A)(2)**
 Motion: Councilmember Arms
 2nd: Councilmember Whitaker
 Discussion: None
 Vote:4-0
- - discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements, discussions of a proposed sale or purchase of property, receipt of legal advice, settlement of legal claims or discussions of the public agency's position in adversary situations, discussion about development of security personnel or devices;
 - discussions of a proposed sale or purchase of property intended for the City of Liberty.
- After returning to regular session, Council may or may not vote or take action on the matter discussed in executive session.

- **Motion to Exit Executive Session**

Motion: Councilmember Padgett

2nd: Councilmember Padgett

Discussion: None

Vote: 4-0

- **Adjournment @8:20pm**

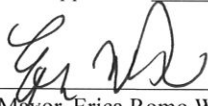
Motion: Councilmember Arms

2nd: Councilmember Whitaker

Discussion: None

Vote: 4-0

Date approved: 9-8-25



Mayor, Erica Romo Woods

July/August 2025 City/Financial Report

City Hall:

- Following the completion of our Comprehensive Plan, we have moved directly into updating the Zoning Ordinance. Due to the time it has taken to complete this process, we've decided to delay the start of the Strategic Plan until the Zoning Ordinance is finalized. With the upcoming election, we anticipate beginning the Strategic Plan in January or February of 2026.
- We are still in the interview process for the Administrative Coordinator position. To clarify, this position is not an assistant to me. It is primarily responsible for overseeing events and economic development. While the role is based in City Hall, the person selected will also be cross-trained in the Water Department and Business License Department, as all City Hall staff are. We are still actively interviewing for this position.
- We currently have one open position in Public Works. We will shift our focus to filling that role once the Administrative Coordinator position has been finalized.
- We have gone live with both the new website and the new business license/hospitality tax processing software. Both still require maintenance and will take a little time to reach 100%.
- The business license software will be fully operational by the 2026–2027 business license renewal season. The new software allows business owners to make payments online. City Hall is no longer accepting cash payments for business licenses...check or card only. A total of 26 business owners still have not paid their renewals. Currently a penalty of 30% and a \$25 filing fee applies to these businesses. Additional delinquency notices were sent out during the last week of July.
- The new website is up and running and comes with a new app that is completely free to download. Check out the Facebook page to learn about all of the features available to our citizens.
- We have released three newsletters so far and expect the next one to go out at the end of August. Katie has not received any input from constituents about what they would like to see more of in the newsletters, so she has been working with Mayor Woods to highlight different things happening in Liberty. This next issue will cover April, May, June, and July. It's important to note that newsletters may sometimes cover more or less than three months, depending on the amount of information included and when some information becomes available. There is no set timeline of when these will be published.
- We hired four new employees in total.
Two joined the Recreation Department: Ashley Baker, Athletic Coordinator, and Thomas Riddle, Facility Maintenance and Parks & Recreation Assistant.

Two certified officers—Benjamin Perry and Sean Smith—joined the Liberty Police Department on June 16, 2025. Both are experienced law enforcement professionals and, after completing the department's field training program, are now assigned to uniform patrol.

- Update on the Maplecroft paving project. We put bids out, and we received no bids. At the time, the previous city administrator had reached out to the County. They had consented to do the work. Since then, they have pulled out and are only focusing on their projects. We will be reopening these bids at a later date at the discretion of our City Engineer.
- Update on our EPA Grant. We have our first Steering Committee meeting in September. We have 10 committee members.

Recreation:

- 1) Football Cheer Registrations (50)
- 2) Tackle Football Registrations (56)
- 3) 6U Flag Football Registrations (31)
- 4) Fall Volleyball Registrations (44)
- 5) Fall T-ball, Baseball and Softball Registrations (45)
- 6) New/Renewed Sponsorship (1)
- 7) Maintain all Parks and Recreation grounds and facilities.
- 8) Rental of city stadium for this month (0)
- 9) Rental of Rosewood center / parking lot Animal Vet 2 times per month.
- 10) Rental of Mills Ave (2)
- 11) Rental of City Gym (2)
- 12) Rental of Baseball field (2)

Police:

June:

Warnings Issued – 166

Citations Issued – 103

Total Arrested – 6

July:

Warnings Issued – 141

Citations Issued – 153

Total Arrested – 8

Community & Events

4th of July

The Liberty Police Department helped support the City's 4th of July celebration by setting up barricades and traffic cones, directing traffic, assisting with parking, and ensuring everyone's safety during the carnival and evening events.

Water Tag

On July 26th, 2025, officers joined city staff and community members for a Water Tag event. It was a great chance to cool off, have some fun, and connect with the community in a laid-back setting.

Finances:

May 2025 City Finances

- General Fund: Lost \$226,193 in May. So far this year (Jan–May), it's down \$523,323.
- Utility Fund: Made \$85,941 in May. Year-to-date total is \$400,999 – this fund is doing well.
- Hospitality Fund: Made \$11,687 in May. Year-to-date total is \$65,551.
- Victim's Services: Lost \$386 in May. Year-to-date total is a loss of \$2,860.

Bank Balance (end of May): \$2,714,915.48

Overall: The City lost \$128,952 in May 2025.

(10 months into the fiscal year)

- Revenue goal: By now, we'd want only about 16.6% of our budgeted revenue left to collect. We actually have 21% left – about 5% behind schedule.
 - General Fund: 29% of revenue still to collect → behind schedule.
 - Utility Fund: 9.6% left → ahead of schedule.
 - Hospitality Tax: 15% left → on track.
- Spending goal: By now, we'd want 16.6% of the budget still unspent. We have 21.3% left → ahead of schedule.
 - General Fund: 18.5% left → slightly ahead of target.
 - Utility Fund: 23% left → well ahead of target.

Big Picture

- Revenues for the month of May are a bit behind budget, but spending is better than budget.
- Utility Fund is performing **strongly**.

- The City's revenue is seasonal. Some months have low income but high expenses; other months (like when property taxes, license fees, or franchise fees come in) bring in big surpluses.
- Large property tax payments and the MASC insurance tax program (coming in June) should help close the \$300K revenue gap.

City of Liberty – June 2025 Finances

How we did in June:

- **General Fund:** Made \$474,175 in June; still down \$74,042 for the year.
- **Utility Fund:** Made \$87,944 in June; up \$486,633 for the year.
- **Hospitality Fund:** Made \$10,441 in June; up \$75,992 for the year.
- **Victim's Services:** Made \$1,369 in June; still down \$1,535 for the year.

Overall for June:

- The City made \$574,229 in total this month.
- Bank balance at the end of June: **\$3.16 million.**

Budget vs. Actual for the Fiscal Year (2025 is now complete):

- **Revenues:** Overall, we're slightly ahead of budget (more money came in than expected).
 - General Fund: **On target.**
 - Utility Fund: 11% **ahead** of budget.
 - Hospitality Tax: 3% **ahead** of budget.
- **Expenses:** We spent **less** than budgeted (good news).
 - General Fund: Almost exactly on target.
 - Utility Fund: Well under budget.

Big picture:

- We brought in \$166K **more** than expected and spent \$242K **less** than expected this year.
- The Utility Fund had a **strong year** with \$486,633 in net income.
- Our income isn't the same every month—some months are slower, but we make up for it when large payments like property taxes, annual license fees, state programs, and quarterly franchise fees come in. June is one of those "big income" months.

Mayor Announcements 8-11-25

Happy 25/26 school year!

For our Liberty students, parents, teachers, and staff: I hope your school year got off to a positive start. I pray for safety, strength, health, courage, confidence, love, compassion, focus, discipline, wisdom, knowledge, humility, and peace.

God bless you all this school year!

Pickens County Habitat for Humanity will be hosting a community listening session on Tuesday, August 19th, from 6:30-7:30 at the Rosewood Center. This session will introduce the public to our organization and share details on our recent acquisition of a 2-acre property on W Front Street in downtown Liberty. We'll begin with a short presentation, followed by open discussion and written feedback. Our goal is to gather input from residents about what they do and don't want to see developed on the site as we consider next steps.

A Big Thank You!

We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Easley Combined Utilities (ECU) for their generous support. Last week, their team spent two days helping us by running their cameras down and jetting our sewer lines on N. Azalea St, Blue Ridge Dr, and N. Palmetto St.

It was the two hottest days of the year, but they were out there with me, Liberty Public Works Director Tim Moore, and South Carolina Rural Water Association, working hard to find the cause of a few manholes that overflow during very heavy rains, on Blue Ridge Dr, and N. Palmetto St. I appreciate their patience as I bombarded them with questions to get a better understanding of sewer in general, our specific sewer issues, and possible next steps.

Some of the findings were: roots, sediment, grease, and in Freedom Park we located a collapsed line approximately 2 feet long. All of these factors significantly reduce flow capacity and can contribute to overflowing manholes. ECU got rid of the roots and pulled out several 5-gallon buckets of sediment. Our public works department repaired the collapsed line. We are not saying the problem has been fixed, but we have continued to monitor these areas and found that some areas have not overflowed since then, while a couple of others show signs that there may still be an issue. This is an ongoing project for the city, and I have made it a top priority to resolve this issue.

We recognize that there are times we need help from our neighbors, and we are grateful that ECU so generously shared their valuable time, tools, and skills to assist us. They sent us a very knowledgeable, professional, and kind crew. Thank you, Easley Combined Utilities, you are greatly appreciated!

Love My Liberty July 4th Celebration – we had a good, laid-back time celebrating America's independence with the community. We had a good variety of vendors, the music was very entertaining, the fireworks show was one of the best we've had, everyone enjoyed themselves playing games and fellowshiping with one another. But behind every successful community event is a tremendous amount of time, effort, and resources from dedicated individuals and

Mayor Announcements 8-11-25, continued

organizations. It's a beautiful, concerted effort. From planning and preparation, execution to tear down, and sponsorship, so many hands come together to create moments of joy, unity, and pride for our community.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed—volunteers, organizers, sponsors, and participants. Your hard work and generosity made this event possible and memorable for all.

Our council and staff in city hall, police, parks & rec, and public works departments, as well as the county fire department - it takes every department doing their part. It starts with council voting on the budget, and staff can then do their part... planning logistics, marketing and promotions, securing sponsorships, and all the details that are involved...grounds maintenance, traffic control, hanging banners, facility clean up, stage set up, communication with vendors, etc. I appreciate their efforts to ensure it was a great celebration.

Sponsors/partners- Potter's Clay Fellowship. This Liberty church has stepped up and into an amazing partnership with the City of Liberty in several of our community events. They were part of every stage of this event. Heather Smith is a vital part in the planning stages and communication with the city. The church sponsored the children's area and provided the shuttle services. Their army of volunteers arrived early to set up and worked the entire event making sure the children had a good and safe time. I sincerely appreciate Pastor Cleveland for being an example to the church and the entire community by actively supporting and engaging with the city.

Liberty Mortuary has also been a generous sponsor of our Love My Liberty event. For several consecutive years they have donated bottled water to share, at no charge, to our thirsty guests. I am grateful for their partnership and generous spirit.

Volunteers - along with the huge team of volunteers, through Potter's Clay Fellowship, we also had other individuals from the community and council. Brian Reed, Jason Reed, and Council member Zach Arms gave their time and manpower to make sure things outside the children's area ran smoothly. Thank you to Brian for opening our event in prayer, and Jason for leading our pledge to the flag. You may have heard it said, "volunteers don't necessarily have the time, they just have the heart." I deeply appreciate their giving spirit.

Vendors and entertainers - I know you have a pool of events to choose to participate in, I am grateful you chose Liberty. Your services helped make this event special.

Community events are more than just festivities; they are vital connectors that strengthen our love for community, promote local pride, and provide safe, fun spaces for everyone to come together. They inspire collaboration, foster relationships, and create lasting memories.

Thank you and God bless you all for giving of yourselves to bring the community together and give them an uplifting experience. I enjoyed working alongside you.

If anyone is interested in contributing good to the Liberty community, please reach out to me - I'd love to help get you involved.

Mayor Announcements 8-11-25, continued

Community Connections: Water Tag

We had a blast at our Community Connections: Water Tag event! There was some stiff competition out there. What a refreshing time of cooling off and connecting with people face to face, in a positive atmosphere. I don't know when the last time was, I had a water gun fight, but it was a joy to run around and let go any inhibitions, because there was no judgement or criticism by anyone, only the laughter of children and adults alike, and the coming together to enjoy each other's company in an out of the ordinary and fun way.

Thank you to Low Key Squeeze for spending your Saturday in Liberty!

We're especially grateful to our amazing staff who helped us prepare for this event, and Deputy Administrator Bailee Locke, Council Member Rhonda Whitaker, and Chief Tetter, Sergeants Thomas and Freeman, and Officers Sean Smith and Benjamin Perry who came out to play and connect with the community, it truly means a lot. And a huge shoutout to the Liberty Area Fire Department for the surprise water spray that helped everyone cool off and took the fun to the next level!

A big thank you to everyone who came out and participated in this event! We know it was a hot day, but we're so glad you chose to spend it having fun with us. Thank you for being part of what makes Liberty so special. We can't wait to do it again!

Congratulations to Liberty Artist Chuck Greene!

His artwork is currently displayed at the Pickens County Museum of Art & History. Bobby and I attended his reception on Saturday. It was nice to see a good showing of support. He has quite an impressive collection of oil paintings dating back to the 1980's and some as recent as this year. His style is rustic, with country and beach landscapes from a wide range of rural locations.

I encourage everyone to go visit Chuck Greene's art exhibit, which will be up through the month of August.

Upcoming events:

Trick or Treat downtown Liberty is coming up on Halloween night, October 31st. This year, Potter's Clay Fellowship will be adding a Fall Festival, which will be in Sarlin Park. We encourage all churches and business owners to register online to give out candy. It is always a fun event, which brings out about 3,000 attendees each year.

New businesses opened:

June 9 - **Moose on Main** – E Main St, in the Rock Station

July 28 - **Liberty's Own Carwash** - W. Front St

New businesses coming to Liberty:

Pendleton Candy Company – opening in the Fall

It's been a joy to work with the owners of this business. I am excited that they chose Liberty to open a second location of their successful store.

Mayor Announcements 8-11-25, continued

There is a lot of work, meetings, and relationship building that goes on behind the scenes when we are attracting business to come to Liberty. So, when people who operate from a place of ego, hate, deception, and political games, they are not thinking of anyone or anything else but their own selfish agenda. Shamefully, that led to a council member to take it on himself to announce the Pendleton Candy Company was coming to Liberty. His reasoning was, and I quote, "I refuse to let the mayor take credit for them coming here." Regardless of who does or doesn't deserve credit, the bottom line is, this was not his announcement to make. He deleted the post a short time later, only after he had to be told the harm he was causing and trust he was betraying. He robbed this new business from making their own announcement to the community. I, then, had to do damage control and break the news to the business owners.

And if that wasn't bad enough, a community member and investor of a few downtown buildings added insult to injury by using it as a weapon against me, because it is campaign season. Again, not stopping to think outside himself, he announced the name of the company, along with another business, that has not had the chance to make their official announcement. These two individuals did not allow these two businesses the right and joy of making their own announcement to the public, in their timeframe and their way. Another disappointment, I reached out to an admin on the community Facebook page that it was posted to and explained that was not this person's news to share. The admin told me that if the business called and asked to have it removed, it would be deleted. Why should professionals have to get involved in this childishness? Credible business professionals don't have time for these petty, little games. How insulting for the admin to expect them to do that. It is concerning that the admins saw no need to remove the post.

I say all of this because it is important for everyone to be aware of the truth going on behind the scenes. How embarrassing for this city that grown adults – an elected official, and a Liberty investor and Liberty business owner, are creating such a public spectacle, at the risk of losing business, all because their agenda is to discredit someone who they have a bizarre obsessive hate for. I am thankful that despite this business's announcement not being what they planned; they are still excited to come to Liberty. They will be such a great asset to the city in more ways than one. They have bubbly personalities and are always upbeat about overcoming challenges. We need more of their uplifting spirit here. I am grateful they are adding to our business landscape. I hope everyone will be welcoming and supportive of them.

I want to remind the public, if anyone has any questions about anything they read or hear, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. I will be happy to sit down with you, hear you out and clarify anything for you. Thank you to those who have already met with me; I have enjoyed getting to know you.

We continue to work diligently to improve our City of Liberty. The Lord is blessing our efforts and answering prayers. We are blessed and I am grateful.