



Mayor  
Elise Partin

Mayor Pro-Tem  
James E. Jenkins

Council Members  
Phil Carter  
Tim James  
Hunter Sox

City Manager  
Tracy Hegler

Deputy City Manager  
Jim Crosland  
Assistant City Manager  
Michael Conley

**City of Cayce  
Special Council Meeting  
Tuesday, September 26, 2023**

The September 26, 2023 Special Council Meeting was held this evening at 5:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Those present included Mayor Elise Partin, Mayor Pro Tem James Jenkins and Council Members Phil Carter, Tim James and Hunter Sox. City Manager Tracy Hegler, Deputy City Manager Jim Crosland, Assistant City Manager Michael Conley, Municipal Clerk Mendy Corder, Assistant Police Chief Shawn Grant, Fire Chief Steven Bullard, Finance Director Kelly McMullen, Utility Director Betsy Catchings and City Attorney Danny Crowe were also in attendance.

Mayor Partin asked if members of the press and the public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the FOIA. Ms. Corder confirmed they were notified.

**Call to Order**

Mayor Partin called the meeting to order and Council Member Carter gave the invocation. Mayor Partin led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Discussion Items**

- A. Discussion and Approval of Request to Lexington County Board of Voter Registration and Elections for an Early Voting Center for the November 7, 2023 Municipal Election

Ms. Hegler stated that the item before Council was discussed at the September 20, 2023 Council Meeting. She stated that in short summary, it was a request before Council to consider early voting centers. She stated that at the prior week's Council Meeting Council relayed a number of questions pertaining to this item. She stated that she attended the Lexington County Board of Voter Registration and Elections Commission meeting the prior night along with City Attorney Danny Crowe. She stated that three (3) of the City's Council Members were also in attendance. She stated that the Commission did not announce a quorum at the opening of the meeting but also indicated instead that it was an informational meeting only. She stated that they shared that State law required the County host at least one (1) and no more than seven (7) early voting centers around the county and they had elected to hold one (1) at the Voter Registration office in Lexington.

Ms. Hegler stated that the Chairman indicated that the Commission voted in May to not hold any additional early voting centers citing the lack of funding for them and that the municipalities would not want to pay for them but having received calls about opening the early voting centers, the Commission agreed to meet to reconsider.

She stated that based on a previous election, the County identified four (4) potential outlying early voting centers one in Batesburg Leesville, one in Pelion, one in Irmo, and one in the Cayce- West Columbia area. Ms. Hegler stated that they stated that because anyone in the county could vote at any of these early voting centers, all 13 municipalities would have to share the cost of the additional centers. She stated that there was some discussion over whether or not those 13 would also have to split the cost of the Lexington early voting center and it was pretty clear from the Executive Director that they would. She stated that the estimated cost for each center was \$9,000 to \$12,000.00, depending on whether or not they would need to pay to rent the space and for the four (4) additional centers that would equal \$2,769 to \$4,000 per municipality. Ms. Hegler stated that the Chairman indicated they could not secure certain sites for the early voting centers and cited security needs for the equipment at these sites. She stated that they ultimately asked all municipalities to respond with their intentions by the end of the week but that was not a hard date but the Chairman did indicate Friday in one of his comments. She stated that she was happy to try to answer any questions Council had to help with the deliberation and if anybody else had anything to add that was in attendance.

Mayor Partin stated that she believed Council needed to be responsive to the Election Commission even though they had not been responsive to Council. She made a motion to let them know that Council did want to participate in an early voting center that was in or near the City of Cayce. She stated that did not necessarily obligate the City to any funds, but just let the County know that they were interested in participating in such. Mayor Pro Tem Jenkins seconded the motion. Mayor Partin stated as State law, it followed that regard and if Council could just let them know that they were interested, she thought they could continue to work with the County and the State to help fund that just like they have other situations.

Council Member James stated that the Mayor's motion was just to advise the County that Council was interested but no finances. He stated that he believed that at the meeting the prior night they knew that Council was interested or they would not have been there. He stated if Mayor Partin's point was just that Council was interested in an early voting center, certainly everyone recognized that having early voting was not anything that they did not want. He stated that he learned a great deal at the previous night's meeting and in finding out where the early voting actually came from, when it was a gubernatorial election and for the Presidential election but not usually for municipal elections. Mayor Partin stated that there had not been a cycle yet for municipal elections. Council Member James stated that he truly thought that it was just missed and when it was missed, then everyone had to try to figure out something that could be done last minute and it certainly was not the Election Commission's fault. He stated that the City could have easily caught it and figured out what needed to be done to be able to make sure early voting centers were in place.

Mayor Partin stated that the City would not have caught that because it was absolutely the County's one job to do. Council Member James stated that the City had never even asked before if it was going to take place and it had not taken place in a cycle in the past. Mayor Partin stated that in the last several elections it had been offered so there were a lot of people saying it was going to be open. She stated that it was not on City staff and asked Council Member James if he was saying that it was on staff. Council Member James stated that he was not saying that but was saying that there were 13 municipalities that were there all asking why there were not early voting centers but it was obviously the first time that a municipal election was taking place out of cycle of a gubernatorial and a presidential election.

Mayor Pro Tem Jenkins stated that Council was going to punish their citizens and whether or not Council believed it, it was a punishment. He stated that Council needed to do things for their citizens and they were griping over a couple of dollars. Council Member Sox stated that an article published that day pushed on why the elections board didn't go to the municipalities with this idea for 2023. He stated that the Board Chair stated that with the tight timeframe to figure out how to handle the first year of early voting for municipal elections, he did not want to get into it with the various Town and City Councils, regarding how much they would be willing to pay. He stated that some more equitable solutions on how to pay in the future were brought up. Council Member Sox stated that he did not know that anyone left the prior night's meeting thinking that needing an answer from all municipalities by Friday would be a viable option. He stated that multiple municipalities did not even consider having an early voting center. He stated that it was brought up that everyone need to figure everything out for 2025 and start working towards that. He stated that based on some of the numbers that were mentioned, only six people voted early absentee in the last election, which was the first municipal election off cycle, which is 0.13% of in person absentee but the City's voter turnout was higher than the County's average. Council Member Sox stated that it was a great time to start being proactive for the future and start considering how to work with other municipalities in the county for the 2025 elections. He stated that it was necessary to find a way to be equitable.

Council Member Carter stated that the Chairman of the Commission mentioned that they voted in May not to have additional early voting centers. He stated that the Chairman also stated that he sent that notice to all the municipalities and heard nothing back from any of them. He stated that the Chairman also stated that that it was an all or none issue so if there were any municipalities not on board with an equitable cost share, then it was simply not going to happen this cycle. He stated that there were several municipalities present that stated that they had no intention of proceeding with an early voting center because their numbers just did not support it. Council Member Carter stated that it had not been budgeted by any municipality because obviously it was past budget time. He stated that he did not really understand the nature of why Council was there voting on this issue since they disposed of the matter the prior week. He stated that Council supported early voting but logistically, the Chairman named several

facilities that they normally used, that were not available in November. He stated that while they certainly could pivot and use other facilities, it was cumbersome for them because they had to have a two-week block of full-time availability to facilities. Council Member Carter stated that the Chairman was adamant that it simply was not going to happen this year so he did not understand how Council could decide to do it and cover the cost for all five (5) centers.

Mayor Partin asked Council Member Sox to repeat the early voting statistic he mentioned earlier. Council Member Sox stated that in-person absentee in the first municipal off cycle election six (6) people voted in-person absentee, 581 people voted in total and there were 4,739 registered voters during that cycle. Mayor Partin asked if that was when early voting was only held at the County office about 30 minutes from the City. Council Member Sox stated that was correct, that people could turn in their absentee ballot in person there. Mayor Partin stated that number was what they should expect this time because they were making it that hard for people because they had to drive out to the town of Lexington. She stated that those statistics helped to support the need for early voting close to the City. She asked Ms. Corder if she received an email in May from Dean Crepes from the County office. Ms. Corder stated that she did not remember receiving anything.

Mayor Partin stated that she was not sure how they would have known about the May meeting since the County's minutes were not online and basically their meetings were secret since they did not notice them publicly. Mayor Partin called the question. Council Members Carter, James and Sox voted no. Mayor Partin and Mayor Pro Tem Jenkins voted yes.

### **Executive Session**

- A. Receipt of legal advice relating to claims and potential claims by and against the City and other matters covered by the attorney-client privilege

There were not any items for Executive Session.

### **Adjourn**

Council Member James made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Sox seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by roll call vote. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:15pm.

---

Elise Partin, Mayor

ATTEST:

---

Mendy Corder, CMC, Municipal Clerk

