



Mayor
Elise Partin

Mayor Pro-Tem
Tim James

Council Members
Phil Carter
Hunter Sox
Byron Thomas

City Manager
Mike Conley

Assistant City Manager
Wesley Crosby

**City of Cayce
Regular Council Meeting
Wednesday, August 20, 2025**

The August 20, 2025, Regular Council Meeting was held this evening at 5:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Those present included Mayor Pro Tem Tim James and Council Members Phil Carter, Hunter Sox and Byron Thomas. City Manager Michael Conley, Assistant City Manager Wesley Crosby, Municipal Clerk Mendy Corder, Finance Director Allison Barrs, Human Resources Director Keisha Brunson, IT Director Jamie Beckham, Utilities Director Betsy Catchings, Police Chief Bruce Wade, Fire Chief Steven Bullard and City Attorney Will Dillard were also in attendance.

Mayor Pro Tem James stated that Mayor Partin was not present for the meeting and she gave notice that she would not be there. He stated that he hoped she was enjoying a very well deserved absence from duty, and it gave him an opportunity to make sure everyone understood that while Council worked very hard in putting together a yearly calendar, life events did happen. He stated that it was a five (5) member Council and meetings were allowed to continue on, even in the absence of the Mayor Pro Tem, another Council Member or even the Mayor from time to time. Mayor Pro Tem James 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 Pro Tem James called the Regular Council meeting to order and Council Member Thomas gave the invocation. Police Chief Wade led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment Regarding Items on the Agenda

No one signed up for Public Comment.

Presentations

- A. Presentation by Mr. Ju'Juan Belgrave regarding his business, The Party and Event Store, on Knox Abbott Drive

Municipal Clerk Corder read the statement that she sends to anyone that presents to Council to explain the process. It read "Please keep in mind when presenting to Council, it is not a back and forth conversation. You cannot ask Council questions, that they will not engage in conversation with you. They are merely listening to your concerns.

This is not a question and answer period between the speaker and the Council or the speaker and City staff. Obviously, your presentation should not be derogatory towards a specific individual or individuals, and no foul language is allowed. Please be reminded that the meetings are recorded and live.”

Mr. Belgrave thanked Council for the opportunity to speak. He stated that he was owner operator of The Party and Event Store located at 901 Knox Abbott Drive and he was there to speak about the overlay district rule. He stated that he was told by City staff that he could not display his inflatables outside of his business and if he did he would be fined. He stated that he was a young man and this was his first time in business. He stated that he asked what an overlay district meant and where he stood being a new business compared to the businesses that already existed. He stated that the business across the street from his business was able to display their own rentals of what they do and he was told that particular business was grandfathered in. Mr. Belgrave stated that he was told that his inflatables being displayed were promoting sale, and that was against the overlay district rules. He stated that he researched what grandfathered in meant and it meant that business had been there for a particular amount of time, so they were exempt from certain rules. He stated that his question was if the rules that they had 30 years ago still worked for them today, he believed that he would benefit from that same thing. Mr. Belgrave stated that he wanted to try to partner with the City, because he believed he had a good niche business, and had worked in childcare for 13 years prior to owning his party and event store. He stated that in the last two (2) weeks, he contributed 1,500 items to the Back to School Bash and he was a sponsor for the Brookland Cayce Band. He stated that he was a vendor for USC and in the last three (3) months he had been open, he had a chance to partner with about 44 businesses between Cayce and he knew it would stifle his business if he was not allowed to display. Mr. Belgrave stated that he understood the inflatables could be hazardous and that was why they were secured with 100 pound weights to concrete.

Mr. Belgrave stated that his business also did balloon art so when summer ended and he got a chance to display his balloons, it was going to be very eye catching, and he wanted to make sure that he complied but also wanted to make sure that the rules did not stifle his business from being as great as it should be. He stated that he hoped the rules could be overlooked and there were a few businesses that were doing exactly what he was not allowed to do. He stated that he wanted to be allowed to display his inflatables on Knox Abbott Drive and he wanted to make sure that his creativity and passion were not stifled.

Items for Discussion and Possible Approval

- A. Discussion and Approval to move forward with the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Application

City Manager Conley stated that this item was tabled at the August 5 Council Meeting and staff was looking for approval from Council if they felt it was appropriate for staff to continue moving forward with the hazard mitigation grant application. He stated that the reason staff brought this forward to Council was because of the very large match that was required by the grant. He stated that the grant was for approximately \$21.75 million which would require a \$7.25 million match from the City of Cayce. He stated that

the grant was an opportunity for staff to continue to look for grants to help with the storm water situation that had been on the Avenues for a long time. Mayor Pro Tem James stated that a \$7 million match funded out of a budget the size of the City's meant that Council would have to vote to increase the millage as far as they possibly could within one year, as well as borrow from the fund balance probably close to \$6 million. He stated that Council recognized the significance of storm water damage within the properties throughout the entire City of Cayce, not just the Avenues. He stated that they recognized there was a level of priority and importance but it came with a huge price tag, so therefore, he had asked to postpone this item to the August 20, 2025, Council Meeting so Council could absorb the price tag a little bit more before it was brought back for discussion and also Council Member Carter was not at the initial meeting.

Council Member Sox made a motion that Council approve to move forward with the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program application for discussion purposes. Council Member Carter seconded the motion. Council Member Sox stated that he did not know necessarily where the funding would even be able to begin to come from, but he thought Council and staff could discuss some ideas and maybe move forward with something where the funding could come from. He stated that storm water issues was a city wide issue and figuring out a way that every district in the City could be addressed by this would be the only way he would probably support moving forward with it, regardless of the price tag. Council Member Sox stated that he would like to know what their options were for funding and if staff had any ideas. City Manager Conley stated that there were not a lot of options for funding the huge price tag of the match. He stated that he and staff truly understood the importance of storm water, not only for the Avenues, but for all of Cayce, but the required match would be approximately 1/3 of the City's operating budget annually. He stated that it was a once in a lifetime grant since traditionally this grant was not offered this far inland. He stated that the grant came from when Hurricane Helene came through and hit the mountain side of South Carolina and up into North Carolina and did so much damage so the emergency declaration moved further inland than it traditionally did on most hurricanes. City Manager Conley stated that allowed the City to actually apply for this particular grant and since it was that once in a lifetime sort of grant, it was an all or nothing approach to it.

City Manager Conley stated that he was not sure there was a high likelihood of the City getting this particular grant, but staff did want to go after it, and were directed by Council to look for funding opportunities and this was a funding opportunity at the time. He stated that the funding for the match would probably have to mostly be incurred onto

the City's fund balance, which would do heavy damage to the fund balance. He stated that, of course, staff would talk to the other partners, but there was no guarantee that anyone else would want to support that particular special incentive, especially since the City had sort of gone into the process already. Mayor Pro Tem James stated that he spent time after the last Council Meeting really looking at some of what he believed causes a great deal of the storm water runoff and what, while the City was in the midst of a \$10 million project of attempting to get as much water to the river as possible, there were areas throughout the City of Cayce where the ditches were just completely overgrown. He stated that there were other areas where 8 inch pipes had been neglected for many years. He stated that he had pictures and he counted countless pipes that were totally covered and some were in yards that were getting flooded because the water had nowhere to go to. Mayor Pro Tem James stated that if the City was spending \$10 million on trying to open pipes, but at the same time, the smaller pipes,

or the smaller culverts were not cleared, then the water could not even get in the pipe to begin with. He stated that the \$7 million match was a lot of money to put on the citizens of Cayce at a time when the City was doing everything to mitigate the water runoff as it currently was. He stated that he did not have the heart to put a \$7 million bill on the citizens of Cayce, if the City had a fund balance that could handle hiring some people to concentrate on the ditches and the culverts and the drains throughout the City that could be cleaned. He stated that he knew the City did not currently have that manpower but asked if the City could do a mitigation effort of trying to find a way to be able to. He stated that the State and the County both said it was not their responsibility but Council owed their citizens much more than to have them on a telephone getting knocked around.

Council Member Sox asked if Mayor Pro Tem James was proposing this for city wide. Mayor Pro Tem James stated that it would be city wide. He stated that the City had implemented some good Ordinances for water runoff as development continued to occur in the City but for years and years, things were being built and roads were being built, and there was no place for the water to go. Council Member Sox stated that he thought Mayor Pro Tem James' idea was a phenomenal idea and he was happy to amend his motion. He stated that over the past few weeks, he had been sent probably 30 plus pictures of resident's pipes and drains that were backing up and there was aging infrastructure that were full of tree limbs and muck and they needed to be cleaned out. He stated that it would be ideal if whatever they proposed could coordinate with the County or State agency, to be able to make it happen and streamline the process especially in areas of the City like the Churchill Heights neighborhood, where half of the neighborhood was in the County and half was in the City. He asked Mayor Pro Tem James what he was envisioning staff wise. Mayor Pro Tem James stated that he did not know but possibly City Manager Conley would have an idea after the other Council Members spoke.

Council Member Thomas stated that Council wanted to do the best they could to find solutions for the citizens, because at the end of the day, they could get access to Council faster than they could with the State or the County. He stated that they wanted

to be fiscally responsible to figure out how they could potentially help mitigate these issues, while also working with the State and County partners to continue to overall fix the problem. He stated that the City did not have \$7 million for the match but he knew City Manager Conley was going to work during the budget season to start setting Council up where citizens would know where the City was going so they were not surprised with any increases. He stated that storm water issues needed to be looked at throughout the City and not just on the Avenues. Council Member Thomas stated that he had seen on social media where some people were not happy because they felt the City was only focusing on one area.

Council Member Carter stated that storm water had been an issue ever since he was first elected to Council. Hed stated that he would be fully supportive of some kind of initiative to clean out the ditches and culverts. He stated that it was simple, if the culverts and drains were blocked, the water stayed in the road. He stated that if City Manager Conley needed to hire new staff members and purchase equipment, then he would support it.

Mayor Pro Tem James stated that he was envisioning a program that not only would clean out ditches to make sure that the water could flow through, but being proactive as well. He stated that would include having Ordinances in place that prohibit

blowing leaves into a drainage ditch and Ordinances that prohibit stacking trees and limbs over a drain. He stated that it would be as much of a proactive program as it would be a reactive program. He stated that Council Member Carter spoke of partnering with the State and the County and Council was going to continue asking them to be with the City on this and to have funding for it.

City Manager Conley stated that he and staff had talked for a while about being on the proactive side of the maintenance on storm water. He stated that whether Council went for this opportunity, staff would still continue to look for funding opportunities. He stated that he and staff had been discussing a three pronged approach of education, mitigation and maintenance to address storm water issues. He stated they could decide on a budget and start working in a proactive nature of maintenance, actually doing some of the cleaning, especially in places where the resident might not have the ability to do those particular things. He stated that the City had great workers and good, solid equipment, and they could see what they could do with the existing equipment. He stated that education was big, not only for citizens, but for City staff as well. He stated for example, What could the City be doing to help alleviate some of these concerns? What are some of the rules that the City has on the books? Are they being enforced correctly? Are they being enforced at all? City Manager Conley stated that it was important to get that education out to staff members and citizens. He stated that he would love the opportunity to bring back a program that staff and Council could sit down and talk about, where they could be proactive in the community and help out. He stated that he did believe that the City's partners were a big part of this but suggested starting in the proactive approach and lead by example to say let's start cleaning these things up. He

stated let's start talking about how to mitigate these concerns, talk about education and what they could do to help with this, because sometimes people did things without them knowing what the impacts of those particular things were. City Manager Conley stated that he did believe that a two (2) person team would be massively impactful and he would like to bring a more detailed approach to Council and he thought it would be value well added to the City's team and citizens.

Mayor Pro Tem James asked what Council could do to excel and expedite the proposed program. City Manager Conley stated that he had the authority to start working on the proposed program and could come back to Council with the budgetary concerns and bring an actual budgetary item to Council. Council Member Thomas asked if the City kept a log to keep track of where people lived that had storm water issues. City Manager Conley stated that he did not believe there was a log, but the City had a lot of institutional knowledge with staff from the Parks Department to Code Compliance and Police Officers. He stated that they were very aware of most of the problem spots and part of this program would be actually mapping those particular problem areas. He stated the City would have to rely on partners for construction and sealing or fixing pipes, but he thought they owed it to the citizens to find those and map them and then look for a solution with the City's partners.

Council Member Sox stated that he wanted to clarify that when he made the motion to approve the match that motion was intended to open the floor for discussion and be amended. He stated that he completely agreed that the City was not coming up with that amount of money based on the City's fund balance even though the City had a strong fund balance due to staff and Council budgeting and being fiscally responsible over the years. He stated that he wanted to amend his motion to not move forward with

the hazard mitigation grant program application, but to direct the City Manager to bring back a proposal, including a recommended amount of funding needed to put a program together to address storm water and hazard mitigation city wide at the September 2 Council Meeting. Council Member Thomas seconded the motion. Mayor Pro Tem James stated that he would like to clarify something that Council Member Sox mentioned. He stated that for Council to discuss an agenda item, there had to be a vote and a second, and then they could have their discussion period. Mayor Pro Tem James called the question which was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

B. Discussion and Approval of Bid Award for Airport Gateway Landscape Project

City Manager Conley stated that this project was a win for the City of Cayce and the surrounding areas. He stated that the project started when Dawn Staley went to the news and said it was horrible that the university of South Carolina had a NCAA basketball tournament in the City of Columbia, and she felt bad that the teams had to drive down Airport Boulevard to get the teams to the basketball game and how horrible that corridor looked. He stated that the Midlands Business Leadership Group and all of the Lexington

and Richland County municipal and county entities got involved and did a lot of fundraising to fund the project. He stated that the Airport gateway landscape project was the first component of this gateway and it was happening in Cayce. He stated that Council approval was needed to approve the bid award to Chason Landscaping in the amount of \$697,529.37 to install the landscaping for the Airport Boulevard gateway project.

Council Member Sox made a motion to approve the award to Chason Landscaping for the Airport Gateway Landscaping Project for the amount stated. Council Member Thomas seconded the motion. City Attorney Dillard stated that he wanted to ensure that it was clear where the funds were being allocated from. City Manager Conley stated that the funds were coming from the Central Midlands Council of Governments. Council Member Carter stated that the White Paper stated \$609,749.40 but the memo from Landplan Consultants used the term base bid and the motion was for \$609,529. City Manager Conley stated that the memo was correct and there was a one year maintenance clause that was subtracted out of the bid proposal, because the maintenance for the actual project was divided between the City and West Columbia and Springdale and that amount would come in a proportional way, based on allocation of population.

Council Member Sox amended his motion to the correct number of \$609,749.40. Council Member Thomas seconded the motion. Council Member Sox stated that this was a great project for the Airport corridor and he was appreciative of the Midlands Business Leaders Group for putting this together and putting the funding together, and grateful for Lexington County for giving upwards of a half million dollars to this project. He stated that it was going to be huge for the Airport corridor, and really for the Midlands in general. He stated that it had been in the works for years and he was excited to see this come to life in the fall. Council Member Sox stated that sadly, the project stopped right at I 26 so there was a lot of work left to do for the Airport corridor to connect it back to Charleston Highway and the Knox Abbott corridor. Council Member Thomas stated that one of the great things about Cayce was it had an amazing Historical Museum and the Airport's code of CAE was short for Cayce and that was something to take pride in.

Mayor Pro Tem James called the question which was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Committee Matters

A. Discussion and Approval of a Waiver of Attendance Policy for Museum and Historical Commissioner

City Manager Conley stated that Ms. Charlita Earle was a long standing member of the Museum Commission and the African American subcommittee, which was now a standing committee of the Museum Commission and she had been an exemplary member. He stated that she was in the process of finishing her master's degree and had

asked for a waiver from the attendance policy. He stated that she did not want to step down and wanted to continually serve the City but was requesting a four (4) month reprieve to finish her degree.

Council Member Thomas made a motion to waive the City's attendance policy for Ms. Earle for four (4) months. Council Member Sox seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Conley stated that he did not have anything to report.

Council Comments

Council Member Thomas stated that he had new constituents from the recent Council redistricting who had called him regarding certain votes he had taken, or certain issues that they had seen and he wanted to thank them for doing that because as their councilman, he appreciated whether they agreed or disagreed on an issue, they could still talk about the issue, and hear where he was coming from, and he could hear where they were coming from, because that was the American way. He asked his constituents to continue to email or call him because he wanted them to know whatever truth that he was aware of and he would give them the facts. He stated that there was information online that could spread like a wildfire but he would be honored to give the facts on information. Council Member Thomas stated that the Events Committee had five (5) openings and he once served on that committee and took great pride in serving on it. He asked if there was an age limit for committee members. Municipal Clerk Corder stated that she did not know but would check and let him know. Council Member Thomas stated that if there were young people who were looking for an opportunity to serve, and were creative, this was their opportunity to join an amazing committee, and not only volunteer to help City staff with events, but to get creative, to bring ideas to Council for them to support. He stated that it would be great to have people in the community on the committee, because there was potential to do amazing things in the City's parks and in some of the neighborhoods. He stated that they had the Soiree on State in the City's Arts District but could also have events off of Julius Felder, or in Riverland Park or in Concord Park, or other places in Cayce.

Council Member Sox thanked staff, Police Chief Wade and the City's Officers for attending the community meeting he put together regarding the Fairfield Inn on Airport

Boulevard. He stated that there was a great turnout from residents and concerned citizens and it was a great opportunity to inform the neighborhood that the property did not have to be rezoned or go through any rezoning hearings that would have gone before Council for a vote, and it fit the zoning land use and comprehensive plans that had been put in place that took community input and guided the plans for what was going out there. He stated that the conversations were productive, and he thought that the overall project was going to be better for the neighborhood

and for the community as a whole and definitely better than the previous uses on that property, which were a couple bars over time on that same site. Council Member Sox stated that he spoke with the developer that day about incorporating a few of the modifications that were talked about at the meeting, and that he heard from folks, and he also asked if they would share a flyer or mail with all the neighbors in the neighborhood once they formally decided what they were going to do. He stated that the modifications discussed included some privacy fencing along portions of the project site, some extra foliage along Waterloo that backed up to the neighborhood as well, and then looking into replacing the white oaks that they were going to plant with a more native plant that did not drop acorns that could further fill or stop up the drains. He stated that they would keep that line of communication open at the City level as well to make sure everyone was informed and aware of what was incorporated from the meeting. He stated that another important outcome from that meeting were conversations that probably would not have happened without this project and created an open line of communication and commitment from Lexington County regarding the storm water infrastructure issues that had plagued that neighborhood for years and they appreciated them being there. Council Member Sox stated that he looked forward to working with them on the maintenance and cleaning out of those pipes and upgrades that were unrelated to the hotel project, but that came up because of it, and the conversations that happened because of it. He stated that they had also started outreach with the DOT regarding a transportation plan for the commercial corner that they were looking to sell and believed they had moved the NAI sign that was blocking the view and it would be easier for people to get in and out. He also spoke to them about what they were going to implement for traffic mitigation and safety, and asked what could be implemented until someone purchased that property, or what they recommended the City doing and what the long term plans likely would be with a commercial use on that corner. He stated that he wanted to have talks about future safety upgrades to the area, including cameras at the entrance and exit, like what had been done at the other entrance and exit down the way and in some of the City's neighborhoods and stated that ultimately, he would like to see a police substation out there. Council Member Sox stated that he would love to try to get Dawn Staley to the grand opening, if possible, given that was kind of her idea. He asked City Manager Conley how many years was the maintenance that the City was going to have to cover for that corridor. City Manager Conley stated that they bid out a five (5) year maintenance plan to get a cost but would have discussions about it and they were still putting together those plans to go back to the technical committee to see where that all fits out. He stated that he would bring that information back to Council once they got it.

Council Member Carter stated that he regretted that he had to miss the last Council Meeting but as Mayor Pro Tem James pointed out, the City moves on and meetings move on. He stated that while he was on vacation in Europe he visited the American Cemetery and it was an incredible experience. He stated that there was a group of people laying a wreath, and they started singing the Star Spangled Banner. He stated that his friend he was with said that Americans were such patriots and loved their country. Council Member Carter stated that they argued and fought but everyone needed to appreciate what they had here in this country and what they were allowed to do with freedom. He stated that people in the world appreciated our way of life and the way we did things. Council Member Carter asked City Manager Conley if the City had received everything that was asked for from the Chamber of Commerce regarding A tax. City Manager Conley stated that he gave everything to the City's Grant Administrator, but from his understanding, they had received everything that was asked for.

Mayor Pro Tem James stated that the Municipal Association of South Carolina chose the City of Cayce, to come to the prior night to host a congressional district meeting with local Congressman, Joe Wilson and others. He stated that it was a proud moment to be able to have the surrounding municipalities there and showcase the City. He stated that it was delightful to be able to talk through something as important as the mitigation of storm water at that night's Council Meeting in front of the assembly and people watching the meeting virtually and come to a great conclusion that did not spend \$7 million but they were able to make some great things happen and thanked Council and City Manager Conley for that.

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
 - i. Claim for improvements to Taylor Street and New State Road
 - ii. Zoning Appeal Litigation (1028 Michaelmas Avenue)
 - iii. Drainage easement acquisition
 - iv. Fire truck litigation

- B. Discussion of Lexington County economic development projects relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses within the City

Council Member Sox made a motion to move into Executive Session. Council Member Thomas seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Reconvene

After the Executive Session was concluded, Council Member Carter made a motion to reconvene the Regular meeting. Council Member Thomas seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by roll call vote. Mayor Pro Tem James announced that no vote was taken in Executive Session other than to adjourn and resume the Regular meeting.

Possible actions in follow up to Executive Session

- A. Other

No action was taken in follow up to Executive Session.

Adjourn

Council Member Sox made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Thomas seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by roll call vote. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:33pm.

Timothy James, Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST:

Mendy Corder, CMC, Municipal Clerk

