Budget Workshop
Tuesday, June 23, 2026
Town Hall, Great Falls, SC

Councilmembers Present: Mayor Keevi Worthy, Councilmember Monica Eagle, Mayor Pro Tempore Jody Knight, Councilmember Eric Owens, Councilmember Wytricia Mack, Councilmember Hope Sims, Councilmember David Dutton. A quorum was present.

Councilmembers Absent: [Verify and complete]

Staff Present: Chief Parker (Police), Jessica Eubanks (Mayor Assistant), Erica Dooley (Clerk Treasurer), Buddy Bigham (PW Supervisor), Steve Skinner (Wastewater Supervisor)

The public and media were duly notified of the date, time, and place of the meeting. Mayor Keevi Worthy called the Budget Workshop to order at 7:00 PM and led the Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.

ITEM 1 FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Mayor Worthy opened the budget overview, and Mayor Assistant Eubanks walked through the proposed Fiscal Year 2026–2027 budget department by department, with input from staff throughout. The discussion covered general revenues, sanitation, brown goods and bulky-item fees, administration, municipal court, police, public works, recreation, hospitality tax, and wastewater. Several fee increases and reclassifications were considered to address rising costs.

Revenue Discussion

Mayor Assistant Eubanks discussed the projected revenues for FY 2026–2027 and noted increases across several categories, including property taxes, vehicle taxes, franchise fees, accommodations tax, business license revenue, and insurance premium reimbursements. The Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) was clarified as a state-collected local distribution. Council discussed correcting a prior misclassification under “in lieu of taxes,” which had inflated a line item, and agreed to move the street lighting expense (approximately $80,000 per year paid to Duke) from Administration to Public Works so the Administration budget reflects true administrative costs.

Council agreed to increase carryover funds from approximately $200,000 to $350,000 to support future capital purchases, equipment replacement, and facility improvements, rather than to fund recurring operations. It was noted that $600,000 had previously been moved to Edward Jones, with additional prior-year surpluses available for capital and equipment needs.

Sanitation Revenue and Fee Review

Council reviewed sanitation revenues and operational costs tied to residential garbage collection. Staff presented the math: at 750 cans in service, increasing the household can fee from $16 to $18 per month would generate roughly $162,000 per year, compared with about $130,000 at the current $16 rate. The $2 increase would provide approximately $18,000 in additional revenue annually if all cans are billed and collected.

Council reviewed a letter from Chester County Landfill dated June 17, 2026, announcing fee increases effective July 1, 2026: commercial municipal solid waste rises from $57.31 to $63.03 per ton, residential solid waste will be billed at $60.18 per ton, and Construction and Demolition rises from $48.00 to $50.00 per ton as a fuel surge charge. Supervisor Bigham shared that Public Works typically makes four trips per week to the landfill and that the truck cannot hold a full five tons per load. Historical monthly tonnage has run between 52 and 69 tons.

Council also discussed a brief disagreement over the magnitude of the can-fee increase. Councilmember David Dutton noted that the original intent had been for the $2 increase to grow to $5 over time. Mayor Pro Tem Knight and Councilmember Sims indicated they were comfortable with the $1 increase being recommended on the wastewater side, and council generally supported the $2 increase on the sanitation can fee to offset rising disposal costs. Council agreed that the sanitation ordinance will need to be updated to reflect the new fees once adopted.

Brown Goods, White Goods, and Bulk Item Collection Fees

Council reviewed the current fee schedule for brown goods, white goods, mattresses, tires, and construction-related materials. The most pressing issue is the mattress disposal fee: the town currently charges $25, but the landfill now charges $75 per mattress (which must be wrapped in plastic and kept separate), so the town is losing $50 on every pickup. Mayor Pro Tem Jody Knight suggested raising the mattress fee to $75 to match the landfill charge, with several members open to going as high as $100.

Members also discussed simplifying the fee schedule by establishing flat-rate charges for most brown and white goods rather than maintaining small, medium, and large classifications. Suggestions included a $50 flat fee for most items, with mattresses and a few others listed separately. Mayor Pro Tempore Jody Knight suggested $35 each for certain brown goods. Buddy Bigham (PW Supervisor) raised concerns about the cost of collecting bulky items and operational inefficiencies, including the metal bin that is reportedly never swapped out (scrappers often beat town crews to the metal); repurposing that bin for brown goods was suggested. Council expressed concern about ongoing billing from outside vendors and directed staff to audit bin and vendor contracts (Stavis & Ware versus Waste Management) and verify billing practices.

On construction debris, members noted that town ordinance prohibits its pickup. A recent incident at Pinecrest involved heavy concrete and bricks that had to be moved by excavator. If the town does remove construction debris, the recommendation is to recover full costs (labor, equipment, fuel, tipping) plus a percentage. Mayor Assistant Eubanks suggested using load-based or trailer-load pricing rather than item-by-item charges. Councilmember Sims expressed concern that fees set too high could become a burden on residents. Council directed staff to update the fee schedule and post the revised fees on the town website once approved.

Sanitation Enforcement and Collection Procedures

Council discussed how to tighten enforcement of sanitation and nuisance collections. Supervisor Bigham described the operational gaps that need to be closed: there is currently no firm time limit between quote, payment, and pickup, and crews sometimes arrive to find items added that were not part of the quoted ticket. Council agreed on a number of process changes, with Councilmember David Dutton emphasizing the need to enforce consistently.

The recommendations included: implementing firm time limits from quote to payment and from payment to pickup; after the deadline, the town would remove items and bill under the nuisance ordinance (with the standard 15-day notice and escalating penalties — for example, a 5 percent penalty after 5 days and 10 percent after 10 days); moving to a three-part ticket so the pickup crew has an itemized list and collects only what was quoted and paid for; including photographs, the address, and the item list in the dispatch packet to prevent “add-ons”; and adding a flat $100 surcharge if a resident adds extra items after the quote and payment.

Council also noted a related nuisance issue: a yard that has become a nuisance can be added to property taxes through the ordinance process. Chief Parker confirmed the 15-day notice timeline.

Administration Budget Review

Council reviewed the Administration Department budget, including salaries, employee benefits, professional services, insurance, training, community activities, and contingency funding. Mayor Assistant Eubanks recommended a 3 percent cost-of-living adjustment for all full-time employees, noting that many staff members had not received raises in two years. Mayor Pro Tempore Knight supported the 3 percent raise, and the rest of council agreed. The raise is budgeted to take effect with the July payroll, subject to final budget approval.

Council reviewed allocations for legal services, the auditor, public defender, community projects, scholarships, and hospitality-related expenditures. Members discussed ensuring expenditures are properly classified and that sufficient contingency funds are maintained for unforeseen expenses. The training line, which historically combined HTA, Recreation, and training dollars, will be cleaned up by moving the Hometown Association and Recreation contributions to the Contributions/Hospitality line.

Municipal Court Budget and Technology Upgrades

Council reviewed the Municipal Court budget, including personnel costs, training, jury pay and snacks, office supplies, and software needs. Since January, approximately $12,800 in fines have been assessed with about $10,000 collected. The town's share is small on state offenses but is retained in full on town ordinance violations that do not have an equivalent state statute.

On staffing, council discussed increasing the Clerk of Court's hours by one day per week with a corresponding pay adjustment. A legal note was raised that the Clerk of Court's duties should be dedicated to court functions, while current practice has included some front-desk assistance; staff will verify the legal requirement and align duties accordingly.

On technology, Mayor Pro Tempore Knight recommended moving forward with the statewide Court Management System (CMS) at $3,500 per year, plus approximately $8,500 one-time for a new system, with about $4,000 budgeted for additional hardware. An optional $5,000 LawTrak conversion was discussed; Judge Greenleaf will confirm whether CMS can pull data from the Police Department's new system to avoid that conversion expense. Cloud versus server hosting is still being confirmed.

Police Department Budget Review

Chief Parker presented the Police Department budget and walked council through current staffing and coverage challenges. The department currently has 5 full-time officers (including the Chief) and one part-time front-office employee who is not a sworn officer. Nights frequently have only one officer on duty, and prisoner transports to the county jail create one- to two-hour windows with no local coverage; Chester County will respond, but does not manage town scenes as the primary agency.

Mayor Assistant walk council through three budget scenarios: maintaining current staffing (FY 2025–2026 baseline of approximately $549,938); adding one officer plus one vehicle (approximately $737,755); and adding one officer plus two vehicles (approximately $860,399). A two-officer-plus-one-vehicle scenario was also discussed, which adds coverage more than fleet but is financially heavier (roughly $160,000 with benefits). Councilmembers Owens specifically requested that the "one officer plus one vehicle" scenario, costed at approximately $66,680, be put in writing for further review.

A new hire's primary assignment would be ordinance and code enforcement and community work, with patrol shifts when short. If two officers are added, the Chief would run split shifts (for example, 2:00 PM to 2:00 AM) to ensure dual coverage at peak hours. Council discussed vehicle procurement, with SUVs favored for traffic and one pickup truck preferred for community and equipment hauling. The Chief recommended a municipal lease and state contract pricing over enterprise fleet leasing. Mayor Assistant announces meeting with Enterprise is set for June 30, and grant opportunities for a second vehicle will be pursued. The Police Equipment Fund and incoming reimbursements (including from Lancaster) can be applied to capital outlay.

Public Works Budget Review

Council reviewed the Public Works budget and discussed staffing, operations, equipment replacement, sanitation operations, and fuel costs. Staff reported rising costs in landfill disposal, vehicle operations, uniforms, and supplies. The uniform line is increasing from $1,500 to $3,000 to provide quality boots and rain gear. The solid waste disposal line will be raised to reflect actual monthly tonnage (referencing roughly $52,188 at 69 tons per month, with a buffer pushing the line closer to $55,000).

Members discussed whether to keep the part-time maintenance worker as part-time or convert the position to full-time. The on-the-job risk is similar but benefit costs are higher; council kept the position part-time for now. Council also reviewed the proposed purchase of a Ford truck at approximately $120,000, negotiated down roughly $16,000 from the original $136,000. Staff recommended using state contract purchasing to satisfy procurement requirements (avoiding the three-bid process) and ensure best pricing. Staff will confirm the out-the-door figure and documentation.

Recreation Department Budget Review

Council reviewed the Recreation Department budget, including recreation fees, concessions, sponsorships, the Town Contribution ($15,000), and the County Contribution ($8,000). Members discussed the distinction between recreation funding and hospitality tax expenditures, with the reminder that hospitality tax funds cannot be used for salaries or scholarship programs.

Ms. Angie Cooper continues to handle recreation. Councilmember David Dutton noted that the original grant was intended for the Recreation Director, and Jessica Eubanks clarified that the Recreation Director has not been carried on the Administration salary line. Mayor Pro Tempore Knight stated he would like the Recreation Director position to have its own budget line going forward, and council agreed to clarify whether the position is volunteer or paid and to reallocate funding from the appropriate source (general fund rather than hospitality tax). The position is paid.

Council also reviewed the previously approved scholarship plan (top of class, top student athlete, female athlete, and ROTC). The plan was approved but never executed, and council confirmed scholarships can still be issued from the prior year's budget.

Hospitality Tax and Community Events

The Hospitality Tax brings in approximately $22,000 per year and must be used for tourism promotion, tourism facilities and infrastructure, traffic and event promotion, and capital needs that support tourism (for example, trail or golf course drainage and amenities). It cannot fund scholarships or recreation salaries. Current allocations — including roughly $17,000 to the Hometown Association and contributions to the Fish Festival and Christmas Parade — approximately consume all hospitality revenue. Mayor Assistant Eubanks was directed to ensure the Hometown Association, Fish Festival, and other event payments are actually paid from hospitality tax and reallocate any recreation or scholarship items to the appropriate funds.

Mayor Pro Tempore Knight proposed starting a committee to support the Fish Festival, noting that council representation on the Fish Festival board is required by ordinance but has not been implemented. Members also discussed producing additional town-led events — for example, quarterly gatherings or a "Finally Friday"-style event — to improve outcomes and retain revenue, while continuing to support the Fish Festival. Mayor Assistant Eubanks noted that the "Special activities" line (~$10,000) has historically covered Fish Festival and town events such as quarterly gatherings and Christmas costs (~$750).

Council also discussed improving enforcement of business licensing and hospitality tax collection for visiting vendors (such as food trucks) participating in local events, including issuing daily or special licenses and ensuring hospitality tax is remitted.

Wastewater Department Budget Review

Council reviewed the Wastewater Department budget, including revenues, staffing, maintenance, utility costs, pipeline repairs, sludge disposal, and equipment needs. Wastewater Supervisor Steve Skinner walked through the operational picture and recommended several adjustments.

On rates, Mayor Assistant Eubanks stated the recommendation to go up $1 per month per customer, which would generate approximately $11,000 per year (based on 920 to 990 accounts). Councilmember Dutton noted that the original vote for a $2 increase had been intended to grow to $5 over time, while Mayor Pro Tempore Knight and Councilmember Sims indicated they were comfortable with the $1 increase. If both the wastewater ($1) and sanitation ($2) increases are adopted, a typical household bill would rise by approximately $3 per month. Because sewer charges are tied to metered water usage plus a base, individual household bills will continue to vary month to month.

On expenditures, pipeline maintenance will be increased by $20,000 to fund substantial pending work, and the sludge disposal line will also be increased. Fairfield agreement funds are restricted to Fairfield-line work; Mayor Assistant Eubanks confirmed that the prior dedicated account had been closed and combined into the wastewater fund, and tracking will be maintained going forward.

On staffing, the department currently has two full-time employees plus one part-time. Council discussed converting the part-time employee to full-time and adding an additional part-time hire, which would reduce on-call burden (moving from a monthly rotation to a 1-in-3 rotation) and improve coverage. Jessica Eubanks recommended adding approximately $5,200 to the budget to support the additional part-time hire. Slight overtime savings would partially offset the added benefit cost.

Wastewater Equipment Purchases

Supervisor Skinner recommended the purchase of a tractor equipped with a front-end loader and auxiliary hydraulics, estimated between $49,000 and $52,000 depending on tax. The equipment would support sewer line maintenance, tree and debris clearing, brown goods handling, and trail corridor maintenance (which overlies the sewer lines). Side-arm mower or street sweeper attachments could be added at a later date.

Council also reviewed a future service truck purchase, previously quoted at approximately $130,000, but agreed the tractor represents the more immediate operational need; the service truck will likely be deferred to a future budget. Funding for the tractor would be provided through the wastewater “Other Contingency” allocation and available reserves. Estimated residual contingency was discussed at approximately $139,000 with the part-time position retained, or approximately $122,000 if the position is converted to full-time.

Budget Adoption Timeline

Council reviewed the budget adoption schedule. Mayor Assistant advised that revised budget worksheets incorporating all discussed changes will be circulated to council, including the “two officers plus one vehicle” police scenario in writing. The public hearing notice is scheduled to run on June 30, 2026. The public hearing will be held mid-July (avoiding the July 15–19 conference), with the public hearing held a hour prior to second reading. Second reading is tentatively scheduled for July 21, 2026. Council acknowledged that amendments may still be made following adoption if necessary.

Workshop Consensus and Direction

Council generally supported the proposed 3 percent employee pay adjustment, the $2 sanitation can fee increase, the $1 wastewater rate increase, the additional $20,000 for pipeline maintenance, the tractor purchase, and further review of police staffing and vehicle options. Mayor Assistant Eubanks was directed to revise the budget worksheets, update the sanitation and brown goods fee schedules and post them online, audit bin and vendor contracts, pursue municipal lease and grant options for police vehicles, finalize the CMS court technology decision, and circulate updated budget numbers and scenarios to council ahead of the public hearing and final readings.

ITEM 2 ADJOURNMENT

With no further budget items before council, the workshop was adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erica Dooley