



Chester County Council Budget Workshop

R. Carlisle Roddey Government Building
1476 J A Cochran Bypass | Chester, SC 29706
Monday, April 14, 2025 | 3:30 PM

MINUTES

Present: Chairman Pete Wilson, Vice Chair Erin Mosley, Councilman John Agee, Councilman Corey Guy, County Administrator Brian Hester, Treasurer Tommy Darby, County Attorney Nicole Workman, Clerk to Council Kristie Donaldson

Absent: Councilman William Killian and Councilman Mike Vaughn

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Wilson called the meeting to order at 3:32pm and noted a quorum of council present.

2. FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Brian Hester, County Administrator

Tommy Darby, Treasurer

Treasurer Tommy Darby started the presentation by giving the current year General Fund budget status. He noted that expenditures are on track to be approximately 3% below what was budgeted equating to \$1,032,192. He noted that revenues are projecting higher than budgeted by \$950,707. He noted with those savings the General Fund fund balance at year end is projected to be \$19,186,116.

Mr. Darby briefly discussed the County's Capital Reserve Fund and that the anticipated balance in Fiscal Year 2026 is \$4,768,657

Mr. Darby discussed General Fund revenue projections for the upcoming budget to be \$36,767,609 and that the General Fund budget recommendation includes no millage increase. The County is projecting additional revenue from an increase in the Value of a Mill from \$125,036 to \$132,041. Mr. Darby stated this equates to an additional \$1 million in revenue. Mr. Darby also discussed other revenue increases in Fee in Lieu of Taxes of \$1.394 million, Local Government Fund of \$76 thousand, and EMS of \$440 thousand. Mr. Darby also stated they anticipated a decrease in interest income as rates have dropped from the start of the current fiscal year. Mr. Hester briefed Council on proposed Rental Fee adjustments.

Mr. Darby discussed talking points regarding the General Fund expenditure budget. Mr. Darby noted the rising cost of health insurance that is estimated to increase \$501,000 next year mainly due to more employees with family coverage. Administrator Hester mentioned the ongoing efforts to analyze insurance options and potential cost savings. Treasurer Darby noted a proposed 4% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for county employees in January 2026, equating to \$193 thousand and other reclassifications and adjustments totaling \$267 thousand. The recommendation also includes a 7% increase for Sheriff's Office and 911 employees and 10% for Detention Center employees for a cost of \$271 thousand. Administrator Hester spoke about the importance of competitive salaries for recruitment and retention.

Treasurer Darby stated the expenditures for next fiscal year also include the mid-year addition of three lieutenants, a training officer and inspector, and six County firefighters to be stationed at Lando Fire District. These additions are expected to cost \$268 thousand and improve response times and have a positive effect on the county's ISO rating. Mr. Darby also stated that the budget included adding two paramedics to the West Chester station and part-time coverage in Fort Lawn for a cost to EMS of \$194 thousand.

Administrator Hester and Treasurer Darby also highlighted the addition of a Communications Officer position, a tuition reimbursement program for employees, continuing the contract with Low Country Urgent Care, adding part time positions to help with Litter Control, the Magistrate's Office, and the Public Defender's Office. Mr. Darby also presented various savings measures implemented to reduce expenditures including a new copier contract, food service contract at the Detention Center, streamlining Economic Development costs, and moving the Tax Collector's Office to the Treasurer's Office. These reductions add to a total of \$698 thousand in savings. Administrator Hester emphasized the importance of continuing to find efficiencies and reducing costs where possible.

Treasurer Darby also presented the budget recommendation for the County's Other Funds. Treasurer Darby stated that the Solid Waste Disposal budget is recommended at \$1.976 million with revenue projected at over \$2 million with the budget including a 5% increase in the disposal fee to \$57.31 per ton. He also stated the Solid Waste Collection budget is \$1.150 million with no changes to disposal fees for the recycling sites. Administrator Hester discussed ongoing efforts to improve efficiency and reduce costs in the solid waste department. The Gateway budget was recommended at \$493 thousand and projected to cover all costs, including salaries and utilities. Treasurer Darby also stated that the Local Accommodations Tax allocated to the Chamber of Commerce would be \$201 thousand and the State Accommodations Tax promotion fund of \$45 thousand once allocated to the Olde English District.

Mr. Darby highlighted the budgets and projected revenues for the Fire Districts: Chester, Richburg, Lando, Fort Lawn, and Lewis. He also overviewed the Rural Fire maintenance contracts that would experience a \$40 thousand increase that would cover electronic reporting, annual maintenance, generator maintenance, and fire extinguishers. Treasurer Darby also informed the Council of the \$54 thousand increase in insurance due to the increase in the annual apparatus premiums and volunteer supplemental insurance. He stated that the allocations would be \$195,890 with a \$2,852 increase as requested. Regarding capital for rural fire, \$329,758 was requested and \$306,758 was recommended.

Treasurer Darby outlined the total capital request for \$3.6 million and the recommendation of fulfilling capital requests in the amount of \$2.243 million.

Administrator Hester asked if Council has any questions after reviewing the budget, to please contact himself or Mr. Darby to discuss before the first reading of the budget. Chairman Wilson suggested to keep the scheduled budget workshop between first and second readings to address any issues that may arise.

3. ADJOURN

Councilman Raines motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Guy. Vote 4-0 to adjourn.

Time of adjournment: 5:25pm

**Kristie Donaldson
Clerk to Council**