



Chester County Council Workshop

Planning and Development Session

R. Carlisle Roddey Government Building
1476 J A Cochran Bypass | Chester, SC 29706

Monday, August 11, 2025 | 4:00 PM

MINUTES

Present: Chairman Pete Wilson, Vice Chair Erin Mosley (4:07pm arrival), Councilman William Killian, Councilman Bobby Raines, Councilman Corey Guy, Councilman John Agee, County Administrator Brian Hester, Attorney Michael Kozlarek, Clerk to Council Kristie Donaldson

1. Call to Order

Chairman Wilson called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

2. Presentation and Discussion of Comprehensive Plan Section 3: Public Infrastructure

Jeremy Ward, Planning and Development Director

Planning and Development Director Jeremy Ward presented Section 3 of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan, that focused on public infrastructure. He explained the importance of dedicating a section to infrastructure, noting that while much of it (like fiber optic, schools, wastewater, roads, and railways) is outside direct county control, the county council's land use decisions have a major impact on how infrastructure is allocated and developed.

He distinguished between auxiliary infrastructure (such as libraries, animal control, parks, and permitting) and essential infrastructure (utilities, water, wastewater, transportation, emergency services, public education, and internet). Director Ward emphasized that essential infrastructure is critical for supporting new large-scale development and is closely tied to public safety and welfare.

Mr. Ward provided data on the county's current infrastructure capacity, including water and wastewater treatment limits, and explained the financial implications of expanding these services. He highlighted that only about 55% of county households are within 100 feet of a water line, and that future growth will require significant investment in infrastructure.

He also discussed trends in emergency services and public education, noting shifts in school enrollment, the rise in homeschooling and private school attendance, and the impact of these trends on planning. He answered council questions about water and sewer capacity, school attendance zones, and the challenges of planning for growth when many infrastructure elements are outside county control.

Director Ward concluded by presenting a map that categorizes areas of the county by infrastructure strength, encouraging council members to use this as a tool for making informed decisions about where to allow new growth. He stressed that while the map is a guide, community preferences and other factors must also be considered.

3. Sustainable Funding for Fire Service in Chester County

Brian Hester, County Administrator

Tommy Darby, Treasurer

J.P. McNeil III, Deputy Director of Fire Services

County Administrator Brian Hester began by outlining the purpose of the workshop: to discuss a proposal to amend Chester County's ordinance governing the distribution of fee-in-lieu (FILOT) tax revenues as they relate to fire service funding. He explained the history of the ordinance, how FILOT revenues had been allocated, and the rationale for considering changes. Treasurer Tommy Darby then explained the three categories of FILOT revenues—pre-gateway, gateway, and post-gateway—and described how these funds had been distributed among the county, school district, and fire districts. He noted that the county collected about \$10.4 million annually in FILOT revenue, with a portion allocated to fire districts, and discussed the budgeting process and the need for stronger financial controls. Administrator Hester presented the proposed amendment, which would have restructured the existing 5% allocation to special purpose fire districts. Instead of automatic distribution, the funds would have been pooled into a dedicated fire service fund, with allocations made by county council during the annual budget process based on demonstrated need and strategic priorities. He emphasized that this change was intended to improve transparency, coordination, and efficiency, and not to reduce funding for any district. The presentation addressed concerns and rumors in the community, clarifying that the proposed process change would not take effect until the next budget year and that no immediate funding would be lost. Administrator Hester highlighted the county's significant investments in fire service over recent years, including increased operational budgets, hiring full-time firefighters, and capital investments in new fire trucks and equipment. Deputy Director JP McNeil provided data on fire service investments, apparatus age, maintenance costs, and the importance of mutual aid among departments. He described the challenges of maintaining an aging fleet and the need for a dedicated funding source for future apparatus replacement and maintenance. The presentation concluded with a discussion about the roles and responsibilities of county council and special purpose fire district boards, the importance of communication and partnership, and the need for all districts to participate in the new budget process. Council members debated the proposed changes, with some expressing concerns about board involvement and communication, while others supported the move toward greater accountability and transparency.

4. Council Comments

Chairman Wilson stated that the next council meeting would be held on Monday, August 18 at 6pm and requested all board members be notified and reiterated that Administrator Hester and council have an open door to discuss the proposed changes in the first reading of the ordinance.

5. Adjourn

Councilman Guy motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Killian. Vote 6-0 to adjourn.

Time of adjournment: 6:07pm

Kristie Donaldson
Clerk to Council