



City of Charleston
Committee on Public Works & Utilities
November 17, 2025

A meeting of the Committee on Public Works & Utilities was held this date beginning at 5:00 p.m. over video conference call.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

Present: Councilmember Waring, Chair, Mayor Cogswell, Councilmember Gregg, Councilmember Parker, and Councilmember Seekings.

Also Present: Matt Alltop, Ron Bucci, Tareton Cave, Jennifer Cook, Julia Copeland, Magalie Creech, Melissa Cruthirds, Elizabeth Dieck, Matthew Fountain, Mandi Herring, Steve Kirk, Hampton Logan, Sheila Smith, and Carolyn Schnell.

Link to meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sViCyd9K3wE&t=1s>

A. Invocation

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence provided by Chair Waring.

B. Approval of Public Works and Utilities Committee Minutes

1. October 27, 2025

On a motion by Councilmember Gregg, seconded by Mayor Cogswell, the Committee voted unanimously to approve Item B1.

C. Request to Set a Public Hearing

None.

D. Old Business

None.

E. Acceptance and Dedication of Rights-of-Way and Easements

1. Authorization to notify SCDOT that the City intends to accept maintenance of 500 LF of concrete sidewalk on Mutual Drive to connect the existing sidewalk that currently terminates at the Ashley Preserve HOA property to Savannah Highway (US-17) in conjunction with the Mutual Drive Sidewalk Improvement project.

Mr. Bucci said the 500 linear feet of sidewalk on Mutual Drive was requested by the City using the transportation sales tax. The project was being managed by the County, and they have asked the City to take over the maintenance, and the City has agreed.

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Seekings, the Committee voted unanimously to approve Item E1.

2. **Authorization to notify SCDOT that the City intends to accept maintenance of 280 LF of 5' concrete sidewalk on Forrest Acres Circle (S-1312) in conjunction with the Pointe at Governor's Cay project.**

Mr. Bucci said it was a similar situation. The sidewalk on Forrest Acres Circle was requested by the City to provide more mobility in the area and would tie into the sidewalk along Forrest Drive that was associated with the TRC project.

On a motion by Councilmember Gregg, seconded by Mayor Cogswell, the Committee voted unanimously to approve Item E2.

F. Temporary Encroachments Approved by The Department of Development Services (For information only)

1. **120 Meeting St. (Duckworth Gallery) - Installing right angle sign encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**
2. **471 King St. (Sweet Palm Coffee) – Installing circular blade sign encroaching into City right or way. This encroachment is temporary.**
3. **409 King St. (Sloane Boutique) – Installing right angle sign encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**
4. **41 Church St. – Installing front stairs that extend into the City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**
5. **416 Oak Hammock Ct. – Installing fence encroaching into City maintained drainage easement. This encroachment is temporary.**
6. **844 Bent Hickory Rd. – Installing fence encroaching into City maintained drainage easement. This encroachment is temporary.**
7. **1168 Blakeway St. – Installing fence encroaching into City maintained drainage easement. This encroachment is temporary.**
8. **2018 Pierce St. – Installing fence encroaching into City maintained drainage easement. This encroachment is temporary.**
9. **1265 Harriman Ln. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**
10. **263 Newsday St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**
11. **241 Newsday St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**
12. **256 Newsday St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**
13. **264 Newsday St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**
14. **417 Kandinsky St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**
15. **612 Satum Rocket St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.**

16. 549 Spiral Ramp Ct. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
17. 521 Spiral Ramp Ct. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
18. 420 Kandinsky St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
19. 1233 Harriman Ln. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
20. 357 Glide Slope St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
21. 251 Newsday St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
22. 405 Kandinsky St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
23. 236 Newsday St. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
24. 130 Fairbanks Oak Aly, Unit 4B. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
25. 1213 Harriman Ln. – Installing irrigation encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.
26. 2318 Sunnyside Ave. – Installing drainage pop up emitter encroaching into City right of way. This encroachment is temporary.

Mr. Bucci explained that all the items presented were for information only.

G. Request for Permanent Encroachments

None.

H. Public Service Department Update

None

I. Department of Development Services Update

1. **Ordinance to Adopt Magnolia Trip Wall O&M Plan**

The agenda item is to pass an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to adopt on behalf of the City an Operations and Maintenance agreement for the Magnolia Landing Trip Wall. A trip wall is a coastal structure that can be used to alter flood risk and revise the effective FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) of the adjacent area once reviewed and approved by FEMA in a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR). For more information on the overview of the project scope, refer to the Director of Development Services Memo included in the agenda documents. The Ordinance is finalized, however, the City and developer are still working on finalizing O&M language regarding the physical inspection frequency and wall crest elevation maintenance criterion.

Mr. Bucci said he prepared a quick 3 slide presentation for the Committee to show and educate the members on what a trip wall was. To view Mr. Bucci's Trip Wall slideshow start at the video's 3:29 mark or click on the following link: [Trip Wall Slideshow Link](#)

Mr. Bucci said that he was able to answer any questions from the Committee. The Item would go to first reading at the next Council meeting and would have to be adopted as amended based on the revisions.

Councilmember Gregg asked if Mr. Bucci would clarify that the City was going to own it. But the cost of construction and the cost of O & M was being provided by the developer.

Mr. Bucci said that was correct. FEMA required it to be owned by the municipality that was why they were entering the agreement to ensure all cost responsibilities were theirs. They would share all the operations, maintenance, repairs with the City that was required in the ordinance.

Councilmember Seekings said he wanted to follow up on what Councilmember Gregg had said and asked what would happen if the developer or other entity that had taken over was no longer around, no longer existed, disappeared, would that just all fall back on us?

Mr. Bucci said that was why FEMA set it up that way just in case that were to occur. It was tied to the POA itself and the entity would be held responsible.

Councilmember Seekings said that was an important fact to know. They would be able to pay for whatever on their O & M obligations among other things like collecting dues that the HOA would take in. Would that be built into our agreement with them so if for some reason they would not pay right away we would get first lien on the dues to make sure it would get paid?

Mr. Bucci said that he would need to check with Legal on that.

Ms. Creech, from Legal, said that she was happy to help with the question. The development agreement with Magnolia provided that there would be recorded restrictive covenants that would describe in detail the responsibilities of the POA. When it was time, legal would look to include the proper language.

On a motion by Councilmember Seekings, seconded by Mayor Cogswell, the Committee voted unanimously to approve Item I1.

2. FEMA FMA Elevation Grant Formal City – Owner Agreement

The City and Owner have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that was previously brought to Council when the grant award was accepted. The item on the agenda is for the City to enter into a formal agreement with the property owners that are committed to moving the project forward. We ask Council to approve as to form subject to Legal Department review and approval. The grant has an extremely tight timeline with a Period of Performance expiration in June 2026.

Mr. Bucci said that there were 2 grants with FEMA being discussed. August 2025 already went through Council and was approved as a shorter MOA with the homeowners but now they have to come through with the longer City owner agreement with the property owners so they could move forward with the grant and the FEMA HMGP which was another funding source that has to go through the same process.

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Gregg, the Committee voted unanimously to approve Item I2.

3. FEMA HMGP Elevation Grant MOA and Formal City – Owner Agreements

The Owner has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that was not previously brought to council when the HMGP grant award was accepted in 2023, however, the MOA was brought to council in the context of the other elevation grant earlier this year. We are bringing the owner signed MOA back to council so that the Mayor may execute the agreement. Additionally, we present a drafted formal City-Owner agreement for the City to enter into a formal agreement with the property owner that is committed to moving the project forward. We ask Council to approve as to form subject to Legal Department review and approval. The grant Period of Performance

has expired in November 2025, and we are awaiting to hear back from FEMA on if the grant will be extended.

Mr. Bucci said that he had mentioned this in the prior item 2. It was very similar to the FEMA FMA grant with the only difference being the funding source. They had to enter a separate agreement with separate property owners. This would be adopted as amended.

On a motion by Councilmember Gregg, seconded by Mayor Cogswell, the Committee voted unanimously to approve Item I3.

J. Stormwater Management Department Update

1. Update on Howle Ave Project

Mr. Fountain introduced the Project Manager Mr. Tarleton Cave and said that he would present the project overview to the Committee.

Mr. Cave said he would share his screen with the group and then began his presentation. To view Mr. Cave's Howle Avenue Project Overview start the video at the 14:38 mark or click on the following link: [Howle Ave. Overview](#)

At the conclusion, Mr. Cave said he would be happy to answer any questions.

Chair Waring asked if this new site would be the place for the water to go where previously it would flood into the neighborhood.

Mr. Cave said that was correct. This site was adjacent to the existing infrastructure and during a larger storm when the infrastructure became overwhelmed and the flood waters staged up, the new site offered an overflow capacity to the adjacent flooded area where previously the water would go out into roads and/or potentially into people's homes.

Councilmember Gregg said hats off to our City's staff for a great project and innovative way to get things done. There were not many places doing things like this.

The Committee all agreed.

Mayor Cogswell asked what type of grass or grasses were used.

Mr. Cave said there was some Spartina and a mixture of native plant species that were able to be totally inundated with water and tolerant of those conditions.

Chair Waring asked about the size of the project site.

Mr. Cave said that the cleared area was a little over 2.5 acres.

Chair Waring asked if Councilmember Parker would like to add anything.

Councilmember Parker said that it was an incredible project not only for the flooding relief but for being great for the community in general. These were the types of projects James Islanders liked to see, nature-based solutions to their problems.

Mr. Fountain said that this project was a great example of where the County, the City and the grant agencies were able to work together and came up with a project formulation to let them build an entire project using non-traditional City funds, Greenbelt funds, NFWF funds and County contribution for some of the labor for having hauled out excavated materials. Mr. Fountain said it was a great job by Mr. Cave who touched on the issue of the high construction bids because of the strange combination of skill sets needed.

Chair Waring said stormwater planning was not even a thought when some of the older neighborhoods where built and then to come back with a solution like this. He asked if Mr. Fountain had a ballpark on the cost.

Mr. Fountain said without the land acquisition and with the County contribution maybe \$750k.

Chair Waring said that was great.

Mr. Fountain said the land acquisition was around half a million.

2. Update on Cooper/Jackson Project

Mr. Fountain said they had a grant application discussion with the previous committee and a few Councilmembers who asked for some context. They had talked about this much recently and wanted to provide a brief overview of the project and current approach. Cooper Jackson drainage were the basins that made up the upper East Side near Lee Street, America, Aiken, and Morrison with typical flooding in that area. The preliminary design work was finished, and they had looked at a phase construction option. They talked about the approach so they could phase out a couple of different options between an economic development agency grant and a Federal economic grant where ports could be used potentially as a beneficiary. It was a more complex grant structure where a private industry beneficiary enabled public infrastructure project work that supported economic development in the area. It could work with the Morrison corridor in Phase One of the project, with improvements to the outfall under Morrison and then be tied into future improvements to Aiken and America into this big outfall improvement which would be one of the more expensive parts of the project. Then also line in some Morrison Drive improvements to reduce the flooding duration on Morrison. This was the most straightforward portion of the project from a utility and permitting perspective. So, potentially doing that as a Phase One to the project.

Phase Two would work with the South Office of Resilience to add the upstream improvements along Lee, Aiken, and America Streets to drain out flooding in those areas. The whole project was a much more complex utility relocation project that they would work with CWS and their vendor on and look at possibly going design build. They looked at options for delivery mechanisms to buy down the risk of the utility conflict work and bring on a contractor for some utility locating on pre-construction services. That project would line up with the South Office of Resilience. It would look for ways to improve drainage, especially in housing areas with low to moderate income. Again, trying to layer in different funding sources. That was the approach they were looking at right now. A two-phase style, possible design bid build on Phase One because of the simplicity, and design build on Phase Two to help buy down risk, that depended on whether those grant applications were successful. Mr. Fountain also wanted to add that it would be built for a potential future pump station to be added. Not part of the initial project but it would likely be part of any future battery extension work in the area. And if not, at some point for future sea level rise conditions, they would want to have the ability to do a pump station to help with drainage. The project would drain out the flooding water quicker. It would help prevent flooding at low tides, but at a very high tide with heavy rain, like in a hurricane event, you would still expect to see some initial flooding.

K. Miscellaneous Business

1. Discussion regarding Charleston Water System Possible Rate Increase (Requested by Councilmember Caroline Parker)

Councilmember Parker said she received a lot of information from CWS and most of her questions and concerns had been answered. Because 2 board members were on the Committee she wanted to continue the discussion. She spoke about the rate plan that was made with the City in 2024 and how each year there was a bump up in the rate. She asked if in 2026 that would be the final increase for all capital improvements.

Chair Waring said that some of the improvements went beyond 2026. When the rate plan was entered it was prior to Rapid Bus Transit and initially for Forever Chemicals which were for EPA unfunded Federal mandates to make the drinking water better. The mandates were not just for the drinking water; they also included the wastewater. The only way to get the funding/revenue for the mandates was from the customer.

Councilmember Parker said that she believed that it was a relative topic to discuss in PWU. She thought it was prudent to understand what the rate increase meant for the customer/citizen. And when discussing CWS you needed to understand with Plum Island located on James Island it was a fair question. With so many units that had come online, her constituents had been concerned. There were some great capital projects done on Plum Island and CWS came to James Island and gave a great presentation. But just moving forward, they should consider explaining things because the burden of these costs' rests with the citizens.

Mayor Cogswell apologized for interrupting but said that Mr. Mike Saia from CWS had tried to attend this meeting and would have been able to answer the questions in greater detail. He offered to come to the next meeting.

Councilmember Parker said that Mr. Saia answered many of her questions which helped.

Chair Waring said these issues also affected the wholesale customers like North Charleston and they were charged higher rates outside the City. It was gut-wrenching to vote and pass things because it felt tremendously unfair for the government to come down with all these additional guidelines and not come up with at least a partial solution on how to pay for it. It was particularly punitive on larger water utilities, water and sewer utilities. Some of the smaller ones don't even have to comply. It was the extra chemicals, the extra equipment, the extra testing and if you don't do it, then your license to be in business was threatened.

Councilmember Gregg said that the City could get a consent decree if they did not comply. He worked with utilities all over the country and would put CWS up in the top tier because of their ability to manage capital projects efficiently and operate the system efficiently. Drinking water and wastewater were being provided at a pretty good price. What Charleston Water Systems was doing right now with the type of infrastructure being talked about on the drinking water side and on the wastewater side was incredibly expensive. Hundreds of millions of dollars for the projects at Plum Island and at Hanahan. There was really no way around it unless the Federal government would stop handing down unfunded mandates, then they might be able to avoid some of this.

Chair Waring said that the water out of the tap was cleaner than the bottled water from the convenience store or Harris Teeter or wherever. The water from CWS was cleaner than that. And now the thing you had to think about was how long that water sat in that plastic bottle and where it was stored.

Councilmember Parker said she appreciated everyone who entertained the conversation. She will follow up with Mr. Saia and if anyone had any more questions or if he needed to come to a meeting. If the public was still concerned it might be time for James Island to have CWS sort of share with the James Island customers on what was going on with some of the capital projects that were done at Plum Island to help remedy some of the issues.

Chair Waring asked if anyone had any more questions?

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:44 p.m.

Sheila Smith
Clerk of Council's Office