



MINUTES

**SPECIAL CALLED COUNCIL MEETING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

The Special Called Council Meeting was called to order and presided by Mayor Randall with Councilmembers Cook, Williams, Cogsdill, Kuykendall, Smith and Walsh present. City Manager Meadors and Assistant City Manager Riley were present. The meeting was an open meeting. Citizens could view the meeting on the City's YouTube page.

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by Councilmember Williams.

CITY COUNCIL to conduct DISCUSSION OF STRATEGIC PLAN

Mayor Randall stated the first and only item of business is the discussion of the Strategic Plan. City Manager Meadors stated there would be three (3) additional speakers not including himself and stated this would consist of: Ms. Susan Tallman, Ms. Katherine Elrod and Mr. Jim Spry.

The first to speak was City Manager Meadors, who gave a Power Point presentation on the Strategic Plan proposed. City Manager Meadors went over the meaning of a Strategic Plan, explaining it is a Municipal Government's five (5) year Strategic Plan as well as vision and mission, strategic goals, action strategies, performance indicators, financial and resource planning and community engagement. City Manager Meadors went over questions to ask these groups and gave some possible examples and went over the City's vision statement and mission statement. City Manager Meadors also spoke about Council's "Must Do Priorities" which consist of some as follows: Communication (internal and external), Goals, and Strategies and Actions. City Manager Meadors also spoke about communication success indicators and the Downtown Master Plan. Next, City Manager Meadors introduced Ms. Susan Tallman to speak as a dedicated community leader and entrepreneur with a strong commitment to the City of Clinton. City Manager Meadors stated he has asked Ms. Tallman to speak at the meeting as representation of the downtown business owners and some community residents.

Ms. Tallman stated she was "glad" to see this Strategic Plan Meeting take place and stated the City has asked for feedback using tools such as surveys and questions asked in the past but stated she felt where it "falls short" is with the follow up. Ms. Tallman went on to explain the follow up would be where the City comes back and states "this is what we thought" and "this is what



you all thought” and “this is what we can do” for example. Ms. Tallman stated if everyone is confident and all findings are based in data, there should not be a problem with saying “I understand this is how you feel, but unfortunately our budget doesn’t account for that” for example and in her opinion. Ms. Tallman stated as a business owner, she “does not love a process” but noted she feels a process for these types of things is what is lacking. Ms. Tallman went on to explain she feels the City needs a process of people and citizens knowing who to speak with or who to talk to regarding certain things, further explaining this as a chain of command that should be shared with the public. Ms. Tallman went on to explain it has been her experience that it is “hard” to know who to speak with in the City about certain issues and noted that causes “not the best answers” to be given. Ms. Tallman stated she believes this would help developers as well to not have to ask so many questions, stating she feels they would “know” what to do with a process like this. Ms. Tallman stated she believes Facebook is the “channel of choice” for the City and stated while it has been better recently, in her opinion, stated she feels there is more “posting” than going back and reviewing what has been said by citizens and other people. Ms. Tallman stated she believes “everyone just wants to be heard” and then “given the time and explanation”. Ms. Tallman stated she has heard the City’s website is being redone and noted she feels like this is very needed before explaining keeping up with correspondence and messages through the website would “make a big difference” noting the website needs to be more “clear and concise” to make things more accessible for everyone. Ms. Tallman also noted she feels like the City’s seal needs to be updated to something “happier” comparing the seal to Main Street’s seal and stating she feels it should be “happier” in the same way. Ms. Tallman stated she feels someone should be put in place, even as a volunteer, who would be able to help guide business owners to their first and next steps and ease them into the process that needs to take place before going to the Design Review Board, where she currently serves for the moment. Ms. Tallman also stated she believes information packages should be created and given to anyone wishing to open a new business or conduct business in the City to make things more helpful for everyone. Ms. Tallman also stated she has recently emailed someone within the City and after about a week of not hearing back from them, she received an email stating this person had been out of the office. Ms. Tallman went on to state she believes it should be mandatory for all City employees to put an “out of office” on their emails and voicemails going forward to make sure anyone who contacts the City feels important and heard and that they are not “being ignored”. Ms. Tallman reiterated she is “happy to help” with any of these things mentioned. Mayor Randall thanked Ms. Tallman for her comments and stated the City would hopefully be able to implement some of these things she mentioned. City Manager Meadors stated the City’s new website would hopefully be “up and running” by mid-February 2026. City Manager Meadors stated the next person to speak was Ms. Katherine Elrod. City Manager Meadors reminded everyone that Ms. Elrod had recently spoken at the PMPA conference over the past summer and explained Ms. Elrod is with the company, Seeker. City Manager Meadors stated he believes Ms. Elrod will be able to help with City with their communication issues.

Ms. Elrod stated she would be able to help with internal and external communications before noting she “loves a process”. Ms. Elrod gave an example by speaking on Chick-Fil-A’s culture, explaining that “everyone” thinks they have a “beautiful culture”, even if they don’t like their



chicken. Ms. Elrod stated this is due to going to Chick-Fil-A being a “overall good experience” before stating this did “not happen organically” and was “a process” that has now developed into a “beautiful culture”, in her opinion. Ms. Elrod spoke on her background, stating she is qualified to speak about this subject due to her degree from Woffard as well as her prior careers with the Greenville Journal and Town Magazine. Ms. Elrod went on to state she “will always be a reader of the printed word” before noting this background aides her in speaking on this subject. Ms. Elrod stated she also spent about ten (10) years working with a branding and digital marketing agency, where she managed the launch of over one hundred (100) websites. Ms. Elrod stated she also worked on about two hundred (200) branding campaigns with that same company before spending the next ten (10) years working with a company called Seale, noting this company is based out of Liberty. Ms. Elrod stated Seale builds, designs, engineers, and manufactures on site primarily for the Department of Defense. Ms. Elrod stated a lot of this was with industrial computers, noting this is not something “you or I” would normally use, as this is what the vast majority of 911 call centers use. Ms. Elrod stated she is a “big note taker” and stated she still has her notebooks from her previous work endeavors, noting most of the first pages are abbreviations used by engineers she wrote down and did not understand at the time. Ms. Elrod noted she used her spare time to look those same abbreviations up to learn more about them, noting after about ten (10) years she understood them all well enough to market them to others. Ms. Elrod stated this knowledge led her to the realization if she “could market that” she “could market anything”. Ms. Elrod stated this all leads to her current company, Seeker. Ms. Elrod noted Seeker was born out of those experiences as well as her love for “getting in the trenches with companies”. Ms. Elrod stated it is important to her that she be able to drive to companies she works with within a day, stating this is due to her preferring to be more involved with the organizations. Ms. Elrod stated she was able to meet with City Manager Meadors over the summer of last year to discuss the City of Clinton and stated what “struck her” is the common phrase “perception is reality”. Ms. Elrod explained that is “if what people think is true is true or what’s being said in lie of good information then becomes fact for them”. Ms. Elrod stated she would challenge the City to make reality the perception. Ms. Elrod stated City Manager Meadors took her through some of the things being done, noting the recreation complex and what is planned for future development in terms of sports complexes, sports fields, hotels, restaurants and residential. Ms. Elrod stated it is her goal that people talk about what is coming to Clinton, not as a distraction but as the reality of what Clinton looks like today. Ms. Elrod stated this starts with defining and committing to a brand, explaining this ties into the logo Ms. Susan Tallman was speaking on. Ms. Elrod explained a brand is the feelings and emotions people evoke, explaining the question should be asked “what are we known for today?” and “what do we want to be known for?”. Ms. Elrod went on to explain we should also ask ourselves the question, in reference to everything coming to Clinton, “why wouldn’t I want to live here?”. Ms. Elrod stated further questions to ask ourselves are: “What are we best at?”, “how do we measure success?”, “Who is our audience?”, “how and what do we communicate internally?” and “who does what we do best?”. Ms. Elrod stated this then leads into the process, stating this consists of “how we communicate”, which is broken down into: visuals, language, tone, frequency and expectations. Ms. Elrod stated this then leads us to “identifying the tools we use” which is broken down into: social media, identifying platforms, annual and monthly content calendars, frequency commitment and



engagement and response requirements. Ms. Elrod stated other communication tools are emails and digital newsletters, mailers, phone, physical office, press releases, signage and the website. Ms. Elrod also spoke on the importance of a multi-level approach, explaining then: residents will have a preferred platform, some content will be a “better fit” for one outlet versus another, sometimes communication systems fail and “plan the work, work the plan”. Ms. Elrod spoke on how to communicate internally, noting everyone that works within an organization also represents that organization – good and bad. Ms. Elrod stated it is important to treat employees and council members as ambassadors and to equip them to present the City to the community. Ms. Elrod spoke on feedback loops and metrics, speaking on what our opportunities are, what additional resources need to be developed, what is working, what is not working and how are we measuring success in a quantifiable manner. Ms. Elrod stated the value proposition is someone not being able to appreciate the value of what they were being offered because they did not understand what was being offered. Ms. Elrod stated the key takeaway is to begin with education before giving an explanation before inviting questions and discussion from Council. Councilmember Williams stated a concern of hers is during public comment, Mayor Randall reminds everyone it is not a question and answer session and notes citizens are only given two (2) minutes to speak and states she encourages everyone to write down their comments and questions with their name, date and address and then expects that those who turn in those statements or comments to the clerk then get a follow up. Councilmember Williams stated she would like for everyone who speaks to get a follow-up response even if they do not leave a statement. City Manager Meadors stated in the January 5, 2026, Council Meeting, two residents from Gary Street spoke on noise complaints and issues with the Police Department responding and noted Assistant Police Chief Lawton spoke with them before they left the meeting to aide them in this issue. City Manager Meadors stated he plans to continue having this done going forward. Ms. Elrod stated there is an opportunity for visibility there and noted the City can publish those complaints as well as the steps they took to resolve the issues. Councilmember Cogsdill gave an example of the recreation complex and stated the information “out there” is the City paid twenty-five hundred dollars (\$2500) an acre, noting the information of Mr. John putting down one point five million dollars (\$1.5 million) that he will lose if he doesn’t “do anything” with it over the next four years should also be public information. Councilmember Cogsdill noted in her opinion, this would make the public understand the same option is available to them if they are able to put down the same amount of funds, for example. Councilmember Williams spoke on transparency and stated this eliminates “all speculations” in her opinion, going on to explain the information should be available for all to read if they wish to do so. Councilmember Williams explained the entire Council packets should be posted online for transparency and public inspection as well. Ms. Susan Tallman requested to make a comment at this time, to which Mayor Randall granted. Ms. Tallman stated the City of Greenville requires developers to meet with people residing within a certain radius of plans to answer any questions had before being able to go any further. Ms. Tallman also spoke on the strain this not being done puts on the Design Review Board and Planning Commission, who is giving maps and Ordinances as explanation and stated she feels the Planning Commission does not always have the information they need. Councilmember Smith stated he believes City staff and Council should encourage more citizens and business owners to come to the Council



Meetings to speak and give their opinions, which can then be streamed on YouTube for other citizens to see. Councilmember Smith stated he would like to see more “good news” shared and posted throughout the City and community. Councilmember Williams spoke on the importance of hearing “the good, the bad and the ugly” to be able to try to “take the bad and ugly and get some good out of it”. Councilmember Kuykendall stated he believes it is important that the City create a “team Clinton”, noting City Manager Meadors and his staff “need to know they have the support of this team” stating he feels Clinton is a “great town with many possibilities currently in the realm of happening”. Councilmember Kuykendall stated team Clinton should “show spirit” and have dialogue back and forth with everyone working for the same cause, noting not everyone would agree all the time. Councilmember Kuykendall stated he believes this will speak to the betterment of the City and the lives of the citizens. Councilmember Kuykendall stated “when somebody comes knocking, don’t just accept it” in reference to developments that may not add value to the City of Clinton. Councilmember Williams agreed with Councilmember Kuykendall that the City should not accept some things that are not good, going on to state the City does not need a bunch of empty houses. Mayor Randall, Council and City Manager Meadors all thanked Ms. Elrod for her presentation and comments. City Manager Meadors spoke on the need for better communication and the strides that have been made to better this over the last seven (7) months, before noting there is still work to be done regarding this before stating this is one of the reasons Mrs. Donya Langston has been named Public Information Officer. Councilmember Walsh questioned if the City has had a Public Information Officer in place and City Manager Meadors stated “no”. Councilmember Walsh expressed her excitement over Mrs. Langston being chosen for the role. City Manager Meadors stated the last to speak is Mr. Jim Spry, the Main Street Director.

Mr. Spry gave a presentation regarding Main Street Clinton and downtown. Mr. Spry stated today’s main points are: “what could have been”, “what is”, and “what could be”. Mr. Spry stated an example of “what could have been” if downtown Clinton rubble had not been resolved and cleaned up after the fire. Mr. Spry gave a list of some businesses downtown that would not be in operation now had Musgrove Street not been cleaned up after the fire. Mr. Spry also went over “what is” and went over the economic response to Musgrove Street’s clean up, stating the cost of clean up was one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) and private investment response was one point three million dollars (\$1,300,000.00). Mr. Spry spoke on the businesses that responded with private investment responses regarding the Musgrove Street clean up. Mr. Spry spoke on “the bad” noting that currently in historic downtown Clinton, north of the railroad tracks, there are approximately seventy-five (75) store fronts. Mr. Spry stated thirty-one (31) were occupied while forty-four (44) are currently vacant, stating this is a vacancy rate of fifty-nine percent (59%). Mr. Spry spoke on “the ugly”, noting thirty-two (32) store fronts on Carolina Avenue via pictures, stating twenty-one (21) are vacant and four (4) look modern and updated. Mr. Spry stated the challenges facing downtown are it is not attractive, it is not safe, it is not intuitive and it is not affordable. Mr. Spry spoke on “what could be”, speaking on the Economic Development opportunity. Mr. Spry presented photos of the layout of downtown stores and roads, speaking on the development zone and noting how expensive it is for seven (7) of the shops pictured to be “operable” or “fixed up”. This ranged from six million to two



hundred fifty thousand dollars, making a total of seventeen million dollars. Mr. Spry posed the question “how do we leverage spending five hundred thousand to one million dollars to unlock another sixteen million dollars. Councilmember Williams questioned the incubator that was had in downtown and discussed smaller store fronts with Mr. Spry. Mr. Spry noted part of the reason the stores are empty is due to Clinton “being seen as a pretty risky investment at the moment with a sixty percent (60%) vacancy. City Manager Meadors spoke on the traffic that will be coming into Clinton with the ball fields and stated it is important to get that traffic into downtown and make them “want to come back”. Councilmember Smith stated he feels the City should look at ways to incentivize current downtown business owners to spent money renovating their buildings. Councilmember Smith also stated the City should do something like this with their property at 109 to incentivize this to current business owners. City Manager Meadors spoke on possible façade grants and the City and Mr. Spry helping business owners with that. Mr. Spry stated he agrees that the City should work on the condition of 109 before asking this of business owners. Councilmember Kuykendall questioned where impact fees go and City Manager Meadors stated it goes to Police, Fire and Parks. Councilmember Kuykendall questioned if the City could give impact fees a new description and City Manager Meadors stated the City cannot do that because of Ordinance but noted he would speak with Lawrence Flynn on the possible matter of adding another impact fee for this purpose. Mr. Spry spoke on the possibility of the City reducing property taxes for those who “spend money downtown” with programs that other counties have. Councilmember Cogsdill stated she feels like the City should incentivize people coming into the City with new businesses to utilize downtown spaces that are already available rather than building new spaces and buildings. Mayor Randall stated this is all “good information” and “gives us a lot to chew on”. Mayor Randall and Council thanked Mr. Spry for his comments and presentation. Mayor Randall and Council thanked all speakers and presenters who have spoken at the meeting tonight and stated all comments would be taken into consideration. City Manager Meadors encouraged everyone to continue looking over the documentation provided regarding the Strategic Plan and to submit any ideas they have to him to share at another Strategic Plan Work Session in the future. City Manager Meadors also stated he has been working on a succession plan to bring back up at a later work session, noting it was something on Council’s “Must Do” list. City Manager Meadors reiterated the new website is also in process as well as spoke on his plans to put out an advertisement to hire a Planning Director within the next few days. City Manager Meadors stated Planning Director Lindler is doing a “great job” but noted with everything happening in Clinton currently the City needs a more full time Planning Director.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the January 8, 2026 Special Called Council Meeting was adjourned with a Motion from Councilmember Kuykendall and a Second from Councilmember Smith. The vote was unanimous.