



Environmental Advisory Committee

4:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 11, 2024

Council Chambers

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC 29451

Agenda

1. **Call to order** and acknowledgment that the press and the public have been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act
2. **Citizen's Comments**
3. **Approval of previous meeting's minutes – March 14, 2024**
4. **Presentations**
5. **Old Business**
 - i. Wildlife- update on native plant exhibition
 - ii. Litter
 - iii. Water Quality-
 - a update on potential water quality testing program
 - b discussion of Folly Beach septic ordinance
 - iv. Climate Action- update on bill H.5118 regarding upcoming natural gas project
 - v. Update on Sea Level Rise Adaptation RFP
6. **New Business-**
 - i. Review of efforts to publicize EAC initiatives on City website
7. **Miscellaneous Business**

Next meeting date: 4:00 p.m., Thursday, May 9, 2024
8. **Adjournment**



ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

4:00pm, Thursday, March 14, 2024

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

and broadcasted live on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms>

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Sandra Brotherton, Mary Pringle, Todd Murphy, Laura Lovins, Doug Hatler, Lucia Spiotta

Absent: Belvin Olasov, Jordan Burrell, Dane Buckout

Staff Present: Director Kerr, Zoning Administrator Simms, Council Member Miars

2. Citizen's Comments -- none

3. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

MOTION: Ms. Pringle made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 21, 2024 meeting, and Ms. Lovins seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Old Business

A. Wildlife

Ms. Pringle reported that the site preparation and planting of the native plants and grasses in the garden at Palm Boulevard and 7th Avenue is complete. A watering schedule needs to be created until the plants are established.

Ms. Pringle suggested a QR code be added to any signage that would allow visitors to scan and learn about the plants in the garden. She will work with Barb Bergwerf and Sharlene Johnson to create the signage and send it to the City for approval. She will then work with Ms. Lee on ordering the sign.

Discussion ensued about the benches being donated for the garden and how they could be anchored to the ground. Ms. Robbie Berg said they will be black wrought iron benches with memorial plaques.

B. Litter

Dr. Brotherton said that she and Susan Smith have not had an opportunity to speak with any other shops about no longer selling low quality belly boards. Ms. Smith sent an email to those who volunteer with the Clean Up Crew to help educate them about these boards.

Dr. Brotherton asked about adding low quality belly boards to the City's ordinance banning Styrofoam on the beach. Council Member Miars said there would be an issue enforcing that as the officers cannot tell a low quality board from something else. She also noted that the issue is the boards being left on the beach and the littering ordinance is in place for that sort of activity. Director Kerr read from the ordinance that provides an exception to Styrofoam items encased by a more durable material.

C. Water Quality

Mr. Hatler said the next step is to present the financial request for water quality testing to City Council. He believes the cost will be less than \$10,000. Council Member Miars supports taking the request to City Council and said if the cost is less than \$10,000, it should be done in FY24.

D. Climate Action

Zoning Administrator Simms shared that the City was awarded the grant for solar panels on the Public Works building but not the grant for the native plants.

He said he spoke to Megan at Smart Recycling about hosting another class on food composting. Katie McClain is not available until June, but Megan could share some best practices in the meantime. Zoning Administrator Simms said the City purchased an additional 150 food composting buckets. Director Kerr said he could have the PR Officer share the QR code to the online composting class on the City's social media channels.

After further discussion, it was decided that the City will ask Megan to come to the City's Shred Day on Tuesday, April 23 to answer questions about food composting and direct people to the online course.

Regarding Charleston County's position on glass recycling, Zoning Administrator Simms said, "They do currently recycle glass, plastic, and paper, and it is separated and sold off to remanufacturers. But I think we were talking about glass recycling mostly. So 4-5 years ago, she said the Council cancelled glass recycling because it was just too costly, and there was no lucrative end market for that material. But now they do recycle again. They recycle glass again and sell it to a remanufacturer out of Georgia, and that whatever I guess they don't sell off, they do use for Bees Ferry and for the road construction." He said whether or not they recycle the glass is dependent on market conditions.

Prior to renewing any contract with Fisher Recycling, the Committee will see what the County is doing to determine if their efforts are redundant.

E. Update on Sea Level Rise Adaptation RFP

Director Kerr said Seamon & Whiteside met with the City's engineers related to oceanfront work, dredging, and drainage together with the sea level rise adaptation consultants for Sullivan's Island and Folly Beach as part of their information gathering. He expects they will come before the Committee in April. He will resend their scope of work to Committee members. Mr. Hatler suggested having Seamon & Whiteside submit their questions to the Committee prior to the meeting.

5. New Business

Todd D. Krafft Septic Health Initiative Program in Nags Head, NC

Ms. Lovins said this program initiative helped educate the people of Nags Head to the dangers of not properly maintaining and inspecting septic systems. The town gave residents incentives to switch to sewer. Any such program on the Isle of Palms would require a lot of education along with buy-in from City Council, businesses, and rental agencies.

She will put together a white paper about the program and will include the results of the water quality testing. She will also share best practices for switching over to sewer. She believes the program could be a “gap filler” between where we are now and where the Water & Sewer Commission would like to be.

The Committee will discuss the issue further at the April meeting.

6. Miscellaneous Business

Mr. Murphy asked if a future agenda item could be about contractors’ lighting around construction sites and how it is disrupting. He would like to discuss what Folly Beach has done about this issue to see if City Council could address it.

He also expressed concern about the lack of “Stay Off the Dunes” signage. Much of it is faded and some gone due to the work on the beach. He will speak to Wild Dunes about adding such signage on the private areas of the beach.

7. Adjournment

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee is scheduled for Thursday, April 11, 2024 at 4pm.

Mr. Hatler made a motion to adjourn, and Mr. Murphy seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:49pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk

Immediate Water Quality Goal No. 1 - Conduct a water quality audit of water supply, storm-water run-off, and wastewater discharges.

Water Supply and Wastewater Discharges

Water supply and wastewater discharges are monitored by IOP W&S. In discussions with Chris Jordan, General Manager, data indicate that levels of pollutants comply with regulatory requirements. PFAS has been detected in water coming from Charleston Water, but the levels are below the proposed USEPA drinking water MCL limit. The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) recommends that annually Chris Jordan present water quality results to the EAC during a committee meeting. Based on the results, the EAC will update the City Council on any impactful changes to historical water quality.

Douglas Kerr indicated that there are no individual drinking water supply wells on IOP.

Stormwater Run-off

Stormwater run-off has been previously monitored for pathogens, which are an indicator of human pollution. The results exceeded water quality guidelines. During one monitoring activity approximately 20 years ago, further testing suggested that much of it was due to non-human mammals on IOP. Due to the lack of data on the quality of stormwater runoff and its potential impact on receiving streams (e.g., Hamlin Creek, Intercoastal Waterway). The Environmental Advisory Committee recommends monitoring stormwater run-off to obtain a current baseline of water quality.

The steps and table below are the EAC's proposal for monitoring. The parameters are typical general water quality parameters SCDHEC recommends for a municipal stormwater management discharge. PFAS was added to understand whether it is present.

1. Retain a contractor to collect one (1) grab sample from 50% of the stormwater outfalls (9 outfalls) during the first hour of a rain event.
2. Analyze each sample for the parameters listed in the table below.
3. Only analyze up to five (5) stormwater outfall samples for PFAs.
4. Prioritize sample locations to dense septic and commercial areas.

| Parameter | Issue | Indication | Actionable? | Method | Lab | \$/sample | Quantity | Total, \$ |
|------------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------------|---------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Total Coliforms | Ear/intestinal infections, shellfish bed closure, recreation, and aesthetic loss | Animal waste in contact with stormwater runoff and groundwater in contact with septic systems. | Best Management Practices; Improve drainage; convert septic to sewer | Standard Methods | Trident | 55 | 9 | 495 |
| Fecal Coliforms | | | | Standard Methods | Trident | 55 | 9 | 495 |
| Total Nitrogen (N) | Algal blooms, ammonia toxicity, nitrate toxicity | Landscape fertilizers from land application (N); Soaps used kitchen, laundry, & bathrooms from septic systems (P). | Best Management Practices; convert septic to sewer | US EPA 351.2/353.2/Calculation | GEL | 75 | 9 | 675 |
| Total Phosphorus (P) | | | | US EPA 365.4 | GEL | 35 | 9 | 315 |
| Oil & Grease | deplete oxygen levels in water; affect human kidneys, livers, and blood and increase the risk of cancer. | Oil & grease from vehicles in parking lots and roadways, restaurants, & illegal dumping. | Best Management Practices; Convert septic to sewer | US EPA 1664B | GEL | 75 | 9 | 675 |
| pH | affects chemical and biological processes in water limiting species distributions in aquatic habitats | Natural processes; commercial and construction site runoff in contact with acidic or basic chemicals (e.g., lime, batteries, etc.); acidic or basic septic discharges to groundwater | Best Management Practices; convert septic to sewer | Field | GEL | 6 | 9 | 45 |
| Total Suspended Solids | Habitat changes, stream turbidity, recreation and aesthetic loss, contaminant transport, bank erosion | urban surfaces; construction activities; commercial activities; land disturbance; stream bank and shoreline erosion; decaying vegetation and organic matter; atmospheric | Best Management Practices | SM 2540 D | GEL | 15 | 9 | 135 |

| Parameter | Issue | Indication | Actionable? | Method | Lab | \$/sample | Quantity | Total, \$ |
|--|---|---|---|-------------------------|-----|-----------|----------|--------------|
| | | deposition; illegal dumping and littering: | | | | | | |
| PFAS | Bioaccumulation in food chain, Toxicity to humans and other organisms | Septic systems and stormwater runoff in contact with consumer products. | Best Management Practices; PFAS source elimination; convert septic to sewer | US EPA Drat 1633 Rev. 1 | GEL | 450 | 5 | 2,250 |
| Est. Analytical Fees (including waste disposal) | | | | | | | | 5,500 |
| Est. Sample Collection Fee | | | | | | | | 1,600 |
| Est. Total Budget (+10% contingency) | | | | | | | | 7,810 |

DRAFT

FOLLY BEACH SEPTIC ORDINANCE

§ 55.01 INTENT.

The purpose of this chapter is to promote public health and safety; to prevent the spread of diseases associated with failing septic systems; to educate the public about proper septic system operation and maintenance; to promote a quality environment in the city's marshes, wetlands, rivers, and beaches; to reduce contamination generated by failed, poorly maintained, and eroded septic systems; and to ensure that septic systems are properly operated and inspected, and routinely maintained.

(Ord. 11-19, passed 4-9-19)

§ 55.02 APPLICABILITY.

(A) This chapter shall be applicable to every owner of property that operates or proposes to install a septic system. In no way do the provisions of this chapter abrogate the powers and duties of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) in regards to the permitting of wastewater systems and enforcement of wastewater system regulations.

(B) All owners of premises who operate septic systems with designs requiring storage tanks and alternative drain fields shall comply with the requirements set forth in this chapter. All septic systems shall be maintained according to state standards, any applicable approved management plan, and the product manufacturer requirements. Where applicable, property owners shall provide the City of Folly Beach a copy of the approved SCDHEC Management Plan and installation permit.

(Ord. 11-19, passed 4-9-19)

§ 55.03 DEFINITIONS.

For the purpose of this chapter, the following definitions shall apply unless the context clearly indicates or requires a different meaning.

ALTERATION. Any modernization, modification or change in the size, type, or flow of an existing septic system, including but not limited to any work performed in connection with a building renovation and/or change of occupancy of that building.

BASELINE INSPECTION. A thorough evaluation of an operating septic system to determine whether the system is functioning as designed, is not exhibiting signs of failure, and is being operated properly. A pump out of the system is required for a baseline inspection to properly examine the interior of the tank and to check for leaks from the house or saturated conditions in the drainfield. All inspections and pump outs must be performed by inspectors and pumpers with valid SCDHEC licenses.

BEDROOM. Any room in a residential structure which is: greater than 70 square feet in area; susceptible to present or future use as a private sleeping area; has at least one egress window or door per fire code; has at least one interior method of entry and egress, excluding closets and bathrooms, which allows the room to be closed off from the remainder of the residence for privacy; and has a closet. In determining the number of bedrooms contained in any residence, it shall be presumed that all residences contain a living room, kitchen, bathroom and at least one bedroom.

CHANGE IN OCCUPANCY. Refers to any change in the occupancy classification of a structure that is likely to result in an increase in sewage flow into the system.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (or FBDPW). The Department of Public Works, City of Folly Beach.

DRAINFIELD. A system of trenches or beds, or other such seepage systems approved by SCDHEC, designed to disperse septic tank effluent into the soil for treatment.

FAILED SYSTEM. Any septic system that does not adequately treat and dispose of sewage that consequently creates a public or private nuisance or threat to public health and/or environmental quality, as evidenced by, but not limited to, one or more of the following conditions:

- (1) Failure to accept sanitary sewage;
- (2) Discharge of sanitary sewage to a basement, subsurface drain, surface drain or surface water unless expressly permitted by SCDHEC;
- (3) Sanitary sewage rising to the surface of the ground over or near any part of a septic system or seeping down-grade from the drainfield at any change in grade, bank or road cut;
- (4) Any deterioration or damage to any a septic system that would preclude adequate treatment and disposal of wastewater (for example, damage from a vehicle driven over the drainfield or septic tank);
- (5) A septic tank that is not constructed to be watertight (such as bottomless tank) as required to hold wastewater for primary treatment prior to discharging to a drainfield;
- (6) The presence of a grease trap to which kitchen waste is discharged and which is not connected to the septic tank or drainfield;
- (7) Exposure, reduction, or elimination of the drainfield area or holding tank through erosion;
- (8) Repeated and prolonged inundation by floodwaters resulting in leakage of sewage;
- (9) Water quality testing of adjacent and nearby waters that reveals a septic system as the source of contamination.

GOOD OPERATING CONDITION. A state in which the septic system, upon inspection, is determined to function in a sanitary manner, prohibits the discharge of untreated or partially treated wastewater onto the ground surface, into surface water, or into groundwater, and allows building plumbing to discharge properly.

GREASE TRAP. An interceptor tank used to trap grease and oils from kitchen waste. If the tank is not plumbed so that the remaining liquid enters the septic tank or a drainfield, it is in violation of this chapter.

INSPECTOR. An individual who has who has been approved by SCDHEC to inspect septic systems.

LICENSED INSTALLER. Any individual who holds a valid SCDHEC license for the installation and repair of septic systems. **LICENSED INSTALLERS** may hold a dual license for installation/repair and cleaning of septic systems; installers with a dual license are also classified as licensed pumpers.

LICENSED PUMPER. Any individual who holds a valid SCDHEC license to clean septic tanks and self-contained toilets.

MAINTENANCE. The clearing of stoppages in pipes and the regular cleaning of any septic tank, grease trap, building sewer, distribution lines or any other component of a septic system for the purpose of removing any accumulated liquid, scum and/or sludge

without removing, replacing, or rearranging of pipes or surrounding soils. The term **MAINTENANCE** shall also be held to include any regularly required servicing or replacement of related mechanical, electrical or other equipment.

OCRM. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management.

OWNER. Any person who alone or jointly or severally with others holds legal title to any real property or has possession or control of any real property through any agent, executor, administrator trustee, or guardian of the estate of a holder of a legal title or has possession or control through any lease or purchase and sale agreement. Each such person is bound to comply with the provisions of these rules and regulations.

REGULATION 61-56 (R.61-56) INDIVIDUAL WASTE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS. Statewide regulation that governs the permitting, design and installation of septic systems.

RENOVATION. Any addition, replacement, reconstruction, or modification of an existing structure that adds bedrooms.

REPAIR. Work performed on a septic system in order to mend or remedy a specific defect or deficiency after the failure, injury, deterioration, or partial destruction of a previously existing septic system or component thereof. A **REPAIR** shall not include any alteration work performed on an existing septic system that increases the flow capacity of the system.

RESIDENCE. Any structure used for housing purposes, including but not limited to single- or multiple-family dwellings, duplexes, tenements, apartment buildings, condominiums, mobile homes, recreational vehicles or trailers.

SANITARY SEWAGE or WASTEWATER. Any human or animal excremental liquid or substance, any putrescible animal or vegetable matter and/or any garbage and filth, including but not limited to any black water discharged from toilets, or grey water discharged from laundry tubs, washing machines, sinks and dishwashers, as well as the content of septic tanks or privies.

SEPTIC SYSTEM. Any system of piping, tanks, drainfields, alternative toilets or other facilities designed to function as a unit to convey, store, treat and/or dispose of sanitary sewage by means other than discharge into a public sewer system. This may be either an on-site sewage disposal system (OSDS) or an engineered specialized onsite wastewater system (SOWS) permitted by SCDHEC pursuant to Standard 610 of Regulation 61-56. All new septic systems must be located on the same parcel as the structure to be served.

SEPTIC TANK. A watertight receptacle that receives the discharge of sewage from a building sewer and is designed and constructed to permit the deposition of settled solids, the digestion of the matter deposited and the discharge of the liquid portion into a leaching system (such as a drainfield).

SHORT-TERM RENTAL. Uses in which overnight accommodations are provided in dwelling units to guests for compensation for periods of less than 30 days.
(Ord. 11-19, passed 4-9-19)

§ 55.04 ENFORCEMENT RESPONSIBILITY.

The enforcement and management of this chapter shall be the responsibility of the City of Folly Beach Departments of Public Works (FBDPW) and Utilities.
(Ord. 11-19, passed 4-9-19)

§ 55.05 CONSTRUCTION OF NEW STRUCTURES, SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT, CHANGE IN OCCUPANCY, OR RENOVATION.

A valid SCDHEC **must verify wastewater service is not available, confirm new resident is signed up for maintenance program before septic system permit** ~~must be submitted to the city~~ for new construction, substantial improvement, change in occupancy, or renovation that increases the number of bedrooms. The number of bedrooms allowed shall be determined as defined by this chapter so the system will not be undersized.

(A) *Permit required.*

(1) The number of bedrooms must correspond to the number of gallons per day of approved flow indicated on the SCDHEC permit application at a rate of 120 gallons per day, per bedroom.

(2) A permit to construct the system must be issued by SCDHEC before construction on the structure or the septic system can begin.

(3) The proposed system must be located adjacent to the most landward SCDHEC septic setback and as landward as possible unless the property owner can demonstrate that the area is unsuitable. In no instance shall a building permit be issued for a structure for which the proposed septic system is located within the dune management area.

(B) *Certificate of final approval.* The owner must receive a SCDHEC certificate of final approval to operate the system before the city can issue a certificate of occupancy (CO.).

(C) *Survey required.* Any application for a change of occupancy, new construction, substantial improvement, or renovation which relies on a SCDHEC approved septic permit dated prior to January 1, 2007 shall require a survey which:

(1) Is stamped by a licensed SC surveyor or engineer;

(2) Shows the location of all components of the proposed septic system;

(3) Indicates the nearest distance from any portion of the septic system to the baseline or a critical line. Any baseline or critical line indicated on the survey must be certified by SCDHEC OCRM;

(4) Clearly displays the setbacks required by SCDHEC at date of original approval of the septic permit; and

(5) Shows all proposed parking areas.

(Ord. 11-19, passed 4-9-19) Penalty, see § [10.99](#)

§ 55.06 INSPECTIONS.

(A) *Baseline inspection required prior to sale.* A baseline inspection using SCDHEC approved inspectors and FBDPW inspection forms is required prior to the sale of any property with a septic system. The inspection shall take place no earlier than 60 days prior to the sale of any ownership interest in property. In the event that the inspection does not occur as specified prior to the sale, an inspection must be completed within 30 days of the water transfer. **New owner recognizes requirement to be on Septic Tank Maintenance program with MPW and execute new agreement.**

(B) *Baseline inspection after failure and repair.* Properties with a septic system that has been repaired after notification of failure by the city are required to have a baseline inspection using SCDHEC approved inspectors and FBDPW inspection forms. The inspection shall take place no later than 60 days after the repair to the system is complete.

(C) **Baseline inspections for short term rentals.** A baseline inspection using SCDHEC approved inspectors and FBDPW inspection forms is **required annually** for any property used for short term rentals.

(D) *Copies of inspections required.* The inspector shall give a copy of the completed inspection report to the occupant, to the property owner, and to the city. A copy of the inspection report, signed by the pumper, must be submitted to the city within ten business days of the inspection. For sale of property, a copy of the report also shall be provided to the city.

(Ord. 11-19, passed 4-9-19)

§ 55.07 SEPTIC SYSTEM OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE.

(A) Role of city.

(1) The FBDPW (and/or SCDHEC) may conduct random site visits during inspections, pumping, repairs, or alterations to evaluate the quality of such work. The FBDPW and/or SCDHEC will also respond to citizen complaints with regard to septic system services and/or inspections.

(2) The city shall inspect the front beach after major erosional events to document eroded septic systems.

(3) The city shall inspect flooded areas to document failed systems.

(4) The city shall notify owners in situations where a failed system has been identified and documented.

(5) The city shall notify owners and initiate water cut off procedures for properties where failed systems have been identified and documented.

(6) If, upon receipt of a baseline inspection report that a septic system is determined to be a failed system as defined by this chapter, the city will notify SCDHEC of the failure within five business days of receiving the inspection report.

(7) The city shall maintain a record of each septic system installed, inspected, pumped, repaired and altered.

(B) Role of property owner.

(1) It shall be the responsibility of the property owner to ensure that the septic system is operated and maintained according to its designed use and capacity, and approved management plan.

(2) Property owners shall provide all requested and known information about the septic system to the city and the inspector to facilitate locating and assessing the condition of the system.

(3) The property owner shall maintain the septic system so that it is accessible for inspection and maintenance.

(4) The property owner shall maintain the septic system so that it is protected from vehicular traffic and parking.

(5) The property owner shall protect all parts of the septic system from erosion and prolonged inundation.

(6) The property owner shall request an evaluation from SCDHEC within five days of notification of a failed system from the city or an inspection. The property owner shall initiate repairs to failed systems within five days of the issuance of an SCDHEC evaluation. If repairs are not completed in 90 days, the property owner shall relocate the system as required by § [55.05\(A\)\(3\)](#).

(7) The property owner shall initiate minor repairs such as replacing cracked lids and missing or broken tees and baffles as required by a baseline inspection to bring the septic system into good operating condition within 30 days of the inspection. Evidence of said work must be submitted to the city.

(Ord. 11-19, passed 4-9-19) Penalty, see § [10.99](#)

§ 55.08 ENFORCEMENT; PENALTIES FOR OFFENSES.

Failure to comply with the inspection and repair provisions of this chapter will be deemed a violation of [Chapter 94](#): Health and Sanitation; Nuisances. Penalties, up to and including termination of water services, will be administered as per § [10.99](#).

(Ord. 11-19, passed 4-9-19)

https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/south-carolina-canadys-utilities-pipeline-power/article_73333df6-e635-11ee-bb98-d372acdc936a.html

FEATURED

SC conservation groups rip revised Statehouse plan to fast-track Lowcountry gas plant

BY NICK REYNOLDS NREYNOLDS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

MAR 20, 2024



Dominion Energy's Williams Power Station operates near Goose Creek on Feb. 23, 2021. South Carolina is now moving to expedite the conversion of the state's coal-fired power plants to gas with a bill critics said will eliminate consumer safeguards.

FILE/STAFF

COLUMBIA — South Carolina lawmakers advanced controversial legislation to fast-track a new natural gas plant in South Carolina's Lowcountry with language some believe would hamstring the state's solar energy sector.

The nearly 32,000-word bill, called the South Carolina Energy Security Act, proposes to clear multiple regulatory hurdles for in-state utilities to build new pipelines and, ultimately, gain approval for new natural gas facilities.

Lawmakers and utility companies anticipate the bill will be used to fast-track a joint venture between energy giant Dominion and the state-owned utility Santee Cooper to convert an existing coal-fired power plant in Colleton County to natural gas amid what lawmakers have described as a burgeoning crisis facing South Carolina's power grid.



PALMETTO POLITICS

SC facing an energy crisis. A Statehouse bill may offer a solution and controversy

BY NICK REYNOLDS NREYNOLDS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

The bill's boosters claim the state needs to bring 2,000 megawatt hours of energy online in the next several years to support South Carolina's booming economic and population growth, and the bill provides an expedited approval process to do so.

Critics of the measure argue the legislation eliminates multiple consumer protections, including a downsizing of the regulatory body that oversees the approval of utility projects and the pre-approval of pipeline projects on existing right-of-ways.

The S.C. House Committee on Public Utilities Review Committee sought to assuage those concerns through several amendments to the bill in a subcommittee hearing March 19.

Utilities will still need to go through the traditional approval process under the state's Public Services Commission. So-called "transformative" economic development projects such as BMW or Scout Motors would expressly not be allowed to choose their own energy providers, an issue some were concerned could result in higher fees for residential ratepayers.

**BUSINESS****SC energy regulator quits over bill that would reduce oversight of electric utilities**

BY JOHN MCDERMOTT JMCDELMOTT@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

And while the bill would still give the South Carolina Supreme Court the final say on all legal challenges to utilities projects, the bill will “in no way” limit who is allowed to intervene during the approval process, Committee Chairman Jay West, R-Belton, said. Critics said the changes were not enough to address their concerns. The bill still rolls back regulatory safeguards meant to protect customers from utility monopolies, representatives for the Conservation Voters of South Carolina told The Post and Courier in a statement.

It proposes to move the state's consumer advocate from the Office of Consumer Affairs to the Office of Regulatory Staff, which is responsible for new energy projects. It still gives power companies sweeping authority to use eminent domain to take private property, and it retains economic development concerns as principal to the public interest. And it expressly boosts natural gas in legislation promoting an “all of the above” approach to energy generation while enforcing new restrictions on other sources of energy.

In addition to policy changes, the version of the bill introduced March 19 would also require energy projects of more than 125 acres, in addition to the existing 75 megawatt requirement, to submit themselves for review under the South Carolina utility siting act — a move critics believe will have a disproportionate impact on solar energy projects.

**BUSINESS****SC power utilities tee up new projects as demand strains the grid**

BY DAVID WREN DWREN@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

"This amendment is not an improvement," John Brooker, energy policy director for Conservation Voters of South Carolina, said in a statement. "It is a smokescreen that will allow power companies to profit on the backs of South Carolina families."

Some, like Rep. Russell Ott, D-Matthews, still had concerns the bill was worded in a way that appeared to coerce the PSC into greenlighting energy projects deemed by the legislature to be in the "public interest" — language he said resembled some of the text contained in the 2007 Base Load Review Act that cleared the way for the controversial and, ultimately, failed expansion of the V.C. Summer nuclear energy facility in the Savannah River basin.

"We need to leave (the PSC) to do the task they were tasked to do," Ott said.

The bill now advances to the full Public Utilities Review Committee, where it is expected to easily pass March 20 before proceeding to the full House of Representatives.

Contact **Nick Reynolds** at 803-919-0578. Follow him on X (formerly known as Twitter) @IAmNickReynolds.

MORE INFORMATION

New SC state park, tied to VC Summer bust, set to open this fall on Lake Murray

SC Senate advances sweeping energy legislation despite concerns over speed of process

NICHOLAS REYNOLDS

Nick Reynolds covers politics for the Post and Courier. A native of Central New York, he spent three-and-a-half years covering politics in Wyoming before joining the paper in late 2021. His work has appeared in outlets like Newsweek, the Associated Press, and the Washington Post. He lives in Columbia.

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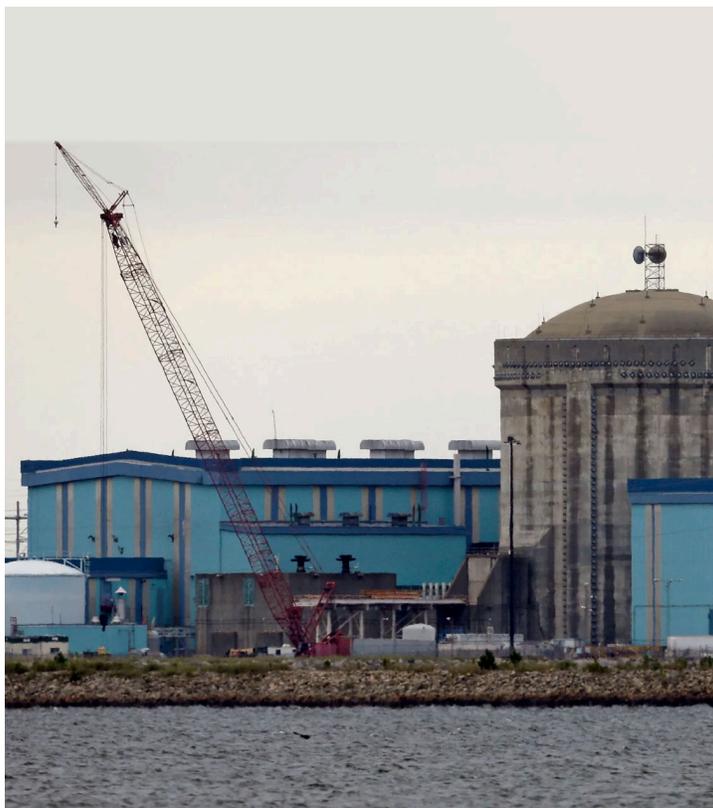
Palmetto Power Gamble

LEARN MORE

Discussion Points

We've seen a project like this before, and it ended in disaster for South Carolina ratepayers.

-  The failed VC Summer nuclear plant led to 5000 jobs lost and \$9 billion of wasted funds. These are the consequences of treating one large energy project as the solution to all our energy needs.
-  Like VC Summer, this gas plant's unknown cost could be in the billions, considering megaprojects' tendency to be behind schedule and over budget.
-  Even if the plant is constructed, utility customers pay 100% of the costs of supplying fuel to the plant, leaving us with even higher bills.



Independent observers urge caution on this mega-project.

- An independent report commissioned by state regulators questions the gas mega-project and urges Santee Cooper to consider alternate options instead of treating gas as a foregone conclusion. [Read more here!](#)
- While fossil fuel costs are rising, clean energy technologies like solar and battery storage are getting cheaper every day.



This gas plant will take too long to construct and be too unreliable to address our energy needs, including during emergencies.

- Winter Storm Elliott showed how unreliable natural gas can be: 63% of unavailable megawatts occurred at gas plants. Gas isn't a silver bullet.
- Natural gas must be piped in from other states, ceding our energy independence and resilience. But investing in renewables means investing in South Carolina's economy.
- With over 100 miles of pipeline upgrades needed, construction will take—at a minimum—seven years. Clean energy, energy storage, and energy efficiency can meet our needs more quickly.



South Carolina’s precious natural resources are our greatest assets and need to be protected, but increasing our dependence on polluting fossil fuels takes us in the opposite direction.

- ➔ The proposed gas plant will emit air pollutants and heat-trapping gases and worsen pollution at its site on the Edisto River.



The proposed plant's 40-year lifespan would lock South Carolina into significant greenhouse gas emissions and pollution for decades.



Take Action Now 

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Environmental Initiatives

- I. Headings
 - a. Litter and waste
 - i. Butt Cannisters info with pictures
 - ii. Glass Recycling with Fisher
 - iii. Composting with link to website
 - b. Wildlife and Native Plants
 - i. Turtles
 1. Information and pictures of signs
 2. Articles
 - ii. Shore birds
 1. Information about nesting
 2. Articles
 - iii. Native Plants
 1. Information about the native plant garden demonstration project
 2. List of Native Plants
 3. Articles published in the Island Eye News
 - c. Climate action
 - i. Link to Charleston area Greenhouse Gas Emissions
 - ii. Grant award for solar panels on the public works building.
 - d. Water quality
 - i. Initiative to test water quality
 - ii. Articles from local publications regarding water quality