



## **Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes**

**January 27, 2026 | 4:00 p.m.**

The Lowcountry Regional Water System Commission (“Commission”) held its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. in the Large Conference Room of the Hampton County Administrative Center, located at 200 Jackson Avenue East, Hampton, South Carolina. All meetings of the Commission are open to the public, except for matters discussed in Executive Session as permitted by law.

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## **Commissioners Present**

- Rocky Hudson, Chairman (Town of Brunson)
- Mayor Robert Brown (Town of Hampton)
- Mayor Nat Shaffer (Town of Varnville)
- Daniel Anderson (Town of Yemassee)
- Dennis Thompson Jr. (Hampton County)

## **Officers and Staff Present**

- Brian Burgess, General Manager
- Sara Craven, Secretary
- Marlene Marchyshyn, Treasurer
- Blake Hodge, Field Operations Manager
- Jake Skinner, Treatment Operations Manager

## **Visitors Present**

- Bill Hancock
- Brenna Hancock
- David Deloach

**Quorum:** A quorum was present.

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## 1. Call to Order

Chairman Rocky Hudson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

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## 2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Robert Brown delivered the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Hudson and recited by all in attendance.

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## 3. FOIA Compliance

The Secretary reported that notice of the meeting was posted in accordance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act. The agenda was prominently posted at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting and provided to local media outlets and to all individuals who requested notice.

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## 4. Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Mayor Robert Brown and seconded by Commissioner Dennis Thompson Jr. to approve the minutes of the November 25, 2025, regular meeting as presented.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

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## 5. Reports

### A. Financial Report

Treasurer Marlene Marchyshyn reviewed the financial statements for November and December 2025, including revenues, operating expenses, and account balances.

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## B. General Manager's Report

General Manager Brian Burgess provided a comprehensive operational update, including:

- **Accounts and Payments:** The Town of Furman has remitted payment for services rendered.
- **System Growth Planning:** Mr. Burgess requested direction from the Commission regarding the establishment of defined terms or conditions for additional municipalities seeking to join LRWS. He explained that long-term capital planning and infrastructure investments would be significantly impacted by system expansion.
- **Fairfax/Allendale Sewer Billing:** A subsequent meeting was held with representatives from Fairfax concerning sewer billing for the Allendale system. Fairfax is currently paying approximately \$24,000 per month, with projected increases to approximately \$50,000 per month. Mr. Burgess noted that this rate is very high. This affects LRWS because our wastewater from Gifford is pumped to Fairfax. This increase will result in a higher bill for us.
- **Staffing Update:** Jake Skinner has been hired as Treatment Operations Manager. Mr. Skinner is originally from the area and has recently returned.
- **Engineering Staff Changes:** Staff Engineer Kari Foy accepted a position with Beaufort Jasper Water and Sewer Authority. Mr. Burgess noted that staffing adjustments will be necessary to manage the engineering workload.
- **Regulatory Compliance – Brunson WWTP:** LRWS received a Notice of Violation for Total Suspended Solids (TSS). An enforcement conference was held on January 6, 2026, and LRWS is awaiting a response.
- **Brunson Plant Status:** No determination has been made regarding the closure of the Brunson plant. Chairman Hudson inquired whether the facility could serve as a solution to the Gifford/Fairfax sewer issue; Mr. Burgess confirmed that this is a potential option.
- **Hampton WWTP Violation:** A Notice of Violation for BOD<sub>5</sub> was issued for an October sample. As this was the first occurrence, it was not escalated to enforcement. The cause may have been sampling-related.
- **SCIC Flooding Issue:** Mr. Burgess reported continued flooding near the LRWS pipeline infrastructure at SCIC. He identified the problem as a drainage obstruction. He stated that he was waiting to hear back from the county about a solution. Commissioner Thompson asked what assistance was needed; Mr. Burgess stated that corrective drainage work is required.
- **AGT Project:** Water and sewer drawings requested over a year ago have not been received. Despite this, hydrant pipelines have been installed. LRWS instructed the contractor not to proceed further until approvals are obtained. The contractor stated that they would remove the pipeline if needed.
- **Legislative Updates:** Mr. Burgess referenced recent legislative matters for Commissioners' review.

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## Staff Reports

## **1. Human Resources Manager's Report**

- Monthly work-hour reports were submitted.
- One new hire was added to Distribution and Collections in both November and December.
- Customer Service Representative Teresa Smith will retire effective April 10, 2026. The position has been posted, and approximately 150 applications have been received.
- A qualified applicant has been identified for a position under the Treatment Operations department.

## **2. Billing Manager's Report**

- Billing activity for November and December was reviewed as part of the Operations Report.

## **3. Engineer's Report**

- The elevated tank bowl has been successfully placed atop the pedestal; preparation for interior painting is underway.
- The tank project is currently under budget. To comply with grant match requirements, the installation of LED color lighting is being evaluated.
- Final payment for the Hampton force main project is pending completion of USDA and engineering documentation.
- Bids for the Yemassee WWTP Improvements Project have been received and will be addressed under New Business.
- CDBG approval has been issued to award the Yemassee Water and Sewer Project contract.
- Concurrence to bid the Hampton WWTP filter upgrade is still pending.

## **4. Field Operations Manager's Report**

- Crews responded to damage caused by a vehicle striking a meter box at Piggly Wiggly and a contractor striking a force main on Sharon Road.
- Over 280 locate requests were completed during the past month.
- All scheduled service taps were completed.

## **5. Treatment Operations Manager's Report**

- December production and treatment data were reviewed and discussed.

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## **6. System Member Reports**

### **A. Town of Brunson**

Chairman Rocky Hudson reported on several recent initiatives and improvements within the Town of Brunson. He stated that the Town has installed surveillance cameras throughout the community. These cameras include facial recognition capabilities and are intended to enhance public safety.

Chairman Hudson also reported that Sheriff Russell assisted the Town in securing a grant that was used to fund the hiring of a full-time deputy to serve the community. He noted that this addition will further strengthen local law enforcement presence.

Additionally, Chairman Hudson reported that the Town's basketball court has been resurfaced, and the Public Works Department has installed new nets on the basketball hoops. He stated that the Town is pleased to have an emergency kiosk available for public use. Chairman Hudson further reported that a dedication ceremony was recently held for the Town's new bus stop.

Chairman Hudson concluded his report by asking the Commission to keep Mayor Williams in their thoughts and prayers, as Mayor Williams is currently not feeling well.

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## **B. Town of Gifford**

No report was provided, as the Town of Gifford was not represented at the meeting.

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## **C. Town of Hampton**

Mayor Robert Brown reported that a municipal election for the Town of Hampton is scheduled to be held on April 7, 2026.

Mayor Brown also reported that the Town has received a grant to fund improvements at Dave Daniel Park. In addition, new lighting will soon be installed at Lightsey Park to enhance visibility and safety.

Due to safety concerns, a fence has been installed near the gazebo area. Mayor Brown stated that the Town was able to fund its portion of these park and safety improvements through hospitality tax revenues.

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## **D. Town of Varnville**

Mayor Nat Shaffer reported that a public hearing is scheduled to be held during the upcoming weekend regarding the Old Gin Building Project.

Mayor Shaffer further reported that the Town is continuing work on the Gin Street Park, also known as the Dr. H. L. Brooks Memorial Park. He explained that the Town Council faced challenges in designing the park to accommodate both a basketball court and a toddler play area within the same space.

Mayor Shaffer noted that an additional grant was required to fund the walking trail component of the park project. He also reported that the Town has completed the first reading of an ordinance related to the hospitality tax.

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## **E. Town of Yemassee**

Commissioner Daniel Anderson reported that the sidewalk project located in front of Yemassee Heights has been completed.

Commissioner Anderson also reported that construction of the new Yemassee Police Department facility is nearing completion. He stated that the former police department building will be leased by Hampton County for use by Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services.

Commissioner Anderson noted that the Mayor is very pleased with the newly constructed splash pad. He further reported that a new grocery store will be opening in Yemassee and will be located next to the existing Family Dollar store.

In addition, Commissioner Anderson reported that a resident located on LeCreuset Drive has expressed interest in obtaining water and sewer service from LRWS.

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## **F. Hampton County**

Commissioner Dennis Thompson Jr. reported that Hampton County recently underwent an audit conducted by the firm Mauldin & Jenkins. He stated that the County's financial position has significantly improved and that the County is approximately \$1.65 million in positive financial standing after having experienced multi-million-dollar deficits over the past five years.

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## **7. Old Business**

None.

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## 8. New Business

### **\*\*A. Audited Financial Statement and Auditors' Report**

Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2025\*\*

Mr. William Hancock of The Brittingham Group, L.L.P. presented the audited financial statements for the Lowcountry Regional Water System for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025. Commissioners were provided with a printed audit booklet prior to the discussion.

Mr. Hancock reviewed the financial position of LRWS and reported that the system experienced an operating deficit of approximately **\$75,000** for the fiscal year. He explained contributing factors, including operating expenses and revenue trends. He noted that credit card fees were a big expense. Mr. Hancock advised the Commission to closely review expenses and recommended that LRWS consider conducting a new rate study to ensure that rates accurately reflect current operational and capital costs.

Commissioners discussed the report and acknowledged the importance of maintaining financial sustainability while balancing customer affordability. No formal action was required at this time, as the audit was presented for informational purposes.

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### **B. Request by Nupi Americas Concerning Logo Placement**

Mr. Burgess presented a request from **Nupi Americas** asking for permission to place its company logo on the new elevated water tank.

Mr. Burgess suggested that, rather than permanent painted signage, a **digital or alternative signage option** could be explored. Commissioners discussed the request and expressed interest in obtaining additional details from Nupi, including proposed design, size, placement, and any associated costs or benefits.

Commissioners also requested that Mr. Burgess reach out to other industrial users in the service area to determine whether there may be broader interest in similar opportunities. No formal action was taken, pending receipt of additional information.

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### **\*\*C. Transfer of Funds for Yemassee WWTP Improvements**

(\$8,560.00)\*\*

Brian explained that funds from depreciated assets were transferred and would be reimbursed once grant funds are received.

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### **\*\*D. Resolution 2026-01 – Acceptance of Loan Assistance**

South Carolina Water Quality Revolving Fund Authority\*\*

Mr. Burgess presented **Resolution 2026-01**, authorizing and approving the acceptance of loan assistance from the South Carolina Water Quality Revolving Fund Authority. The resolution also authorizes the Chairman of the Board to execute the loan assistance agreement and related documents on behalf of LRWS.

The purpose of the loan assistance was explained, and Commissioners were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding repayment terms and project applicability.

Motion was made by **Mayor Nat Shaffer** and seconded by **Mayor Robert Brown** to approve Resolution 2026-01.

**Motion carried.**

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### **\*\*E. Resolution 2026-02 – Award of Construction Contract**

Yemassee Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements\*\*

Mr. Burgess presented **Resolution 2026-02**, recommending the award of a construction contract for improvements to the Yemassee Wastewater Treatment Plant. He summarized the bidding process and stated that bids had been received and reviewed in accordance with procurement requirements.

Motion was made by **Mayor Robert Brown** and seconded by **Mayor Nat Shaffer** to approve Resolution 2026-02 awarding the construction contract.

**Motion carried.**

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### **F. Draft Alternative Sewer Service Management Program**

Mr. Burgess presented a draft **Alternative Sewer Service Management Program** for preliminary review. Commissioners discussed the complexity of the program and expressed a desire for additional time to review the document and consider its implications.

Motion was made by **Mayor Robert Brown** and seconded by **Commissioner Daniel Anderson** to table the item until the next meeting.

**Motion carried.**

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## **G. Billing Services Software**

Mr. Burgess provided a chart that compared the cost of 3 new billing systems.

Motion was made by **Mayor Robert Brown** and seconded by **Commissioner Dennis Thompson Jr.** to table the item until the next meeting.  
**Motion carried.**

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## **H. Customer Convenience Fees for Credit and Debit Card Use**

Mr. Burgess reminded Commissioners that they were previously informed of rising credit and debit card processing costs. He reported that LRWS currently pays **in excess of \$200,000 annually** in processing fees and that these costs continue to increase.

Commissioners discussed the impact of these fees on the system's operating budget and expressed reluctance to pass additional costs on to customers. However, it was noted that customers have alternative payment options available, including bank draft, which does not incur additional fees.

Chairman Hudson and Mayor Nat Shaffer stated that, as customers themselves, they would be willing to pay a convenience fee, noting that similar fees are common for other services. Mayor Robert Brown noted that customers can avoid fees by utilizing bank draft options.

After discussion, motion was made by **Mayor Robert Brown** and seconded by **Mayor Nat Shaffer** to implement a customer convenience fee for credit and debit card transactions.  
**Motion carried.**

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## **\*\*I. Memorandum of Understanding with Hampton County School District**

Regarding Water and Sewer Services\*\*

Mr. Burgess presented a proposed **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with the Hampton County School District related to water and sewer services at a school facility. He explained that the property includes both an off-site and an on-site sewer pump station.

Under the proposed MOU, LRWS would assume responsibility for maintaining the pump stations, with the exception of certain service lines. Mr. Burgess further explained that the property on which the on-site pump station is located would be deeded to LRWS. He noted that the total cost of water and sewer infrastructure for the project is approximately **\$1.5 million** and that the system is designed to accommodate future growth, including potential residential development in the area.

Motion was made by **Mayor Nat Shaffer** and seconded by **Commissioner Dennis Thompson Jr.** to accept the memorandum and authorize General Manager Brian Burgess to coordinate and negotiate final terms with the Hampton County School District.

**Motion carried.**

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## **9. Executive Session**

Motion by Mayor Robert Brown, seconded by Mayor Nat Shaffer, to enter Executive Session pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(A)(2) for legal and contractual matters.

**Motion carried.**

Motion by Mayor Nat Shaffer, seconded by Daniel Anderson, to return to open session.

**Motion carried.**

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## **10. Action from Executive Session**

No action was taken.

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## **11. Public Comments**

Mr. David Deloach addressed the Commission regarding water service availability to his property located in the Town of Varnville. Mr. Deloach stated that he owns a trailer park consisting of three mobile homes, of which one is currently occupied. He requested that water service be restored or activated for the remaining two mobile homes.

Mr. Deloach explained that he has contacted LRWS staff, including the General Manager, on multiple occasions regarding this matter and expressed frustration that service had not yet been provided. He noted that electrical service is currently available to the mobile homes and stated that Kari Foy, former Staff Engineer, had visited the property and advised him that the water and sewer connections were not properly installed. Mr. Deloach explained that the mobile homes were placed on the property by a prior owner, Mr. Henry Tuten, from whom he purchased the property.

Mr. Deloach stated that he had been informed a pump would be required for service and indicated his willingness to purchase the necessary equipment. He further stated that rental housing is part of his livelihood and that restoring water service would allow him to rent the additional units, thereby increasing revenue for both himself and LRWS. He expressed concern

regarding potential impact fees estimated between \$1,200 and \$2,400 per unit, stating that such costs may be difficult for many property owners to afford.

Mr. Deloach also expressed concern that he had been informed his property could potentially be condemned if requirements were not met. He stated that references to condemnation were personally upsetting and that water service had been provided in prior years when the Town of Varnville managed water and sewer services.

Chairman Rocky Hudson responded on behalf of the Commission. Chairman Hudson explained that regulatory requirements governing water and sewer service have changed since LRWS assumed responsibility for the system and that LRWS is required to comply with current state and federal regulations. He noted that, similar to electrical service requirements, water and sewer service cannot be provided unless all infrastructure and connections meet applicable codes and standards.

Chairman Hudson stated that LRWS cannot simply activate service by opening a valve and emphasized that all connections must be properly installed, inspected, and approved. He explained that, in addition to infrastructure compliance, LRWS requires a notice of occupancy from the Town of Varnville confirming that the mobile homes are approved for habitation.

Chairman Hudson further stated that LRWS values Mr. Deloach as a potential customer and is willing to work with him to achieve service once all requirements are satisfied. He advised that General Manager Brian Burgess would provide Mr. Deloach with a detailed list of corrective actions and documentation required to move forward. Chairman Hudson emphasized that LRWS's goal is to provide service while ensuring compliance with all applicable regulations, stating that cooperation from all parties is necessary to do so.

Mr. Deloach responded that he understood the explanation provided, agreed that the requirements sounded fair, and thanked the Commission for its time.

Chairman Hudson apologized to Mr. Deloach for the length of the meeting and the wait to be heard.

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## 12. Adjournment

Motion by Mayor Nat Shaffer, seconded by Commissioner Dennis Thompson Jr. to adjourn.  
**Motion carried.**

Meeting adjourned at **6:17 p.m.**

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**Respectfully submitted,  
Sara Craven, Secretary**