City Council Summary 7.1.25

**Camden Council enhances employee recognition program, reviews hunt club mural proposal, moves closer to art policy, and introduces new PIO**

**By Dawn-Marie Johnson**
**CAMDEN, S.C.** — The city of Camden has expanded its employee recognition program to better honor workers who reach service milestones.

Previously, employees had to choose between a service pin or a small monetary award when celebrating five-, 10-, 15- and 20-year anniversaries. Officials announced they will now provide both forms of recognition to recipients.

“We value our employees here very much,” said Camden City Manager Matt DeWitt during Tuesday night’s meeting. “Our employees are far more valuable than making them choose between a pin and a monetary award. Giving them both really is the least we can do.”

The enhanced program recognizes employees at five-year intervals with both a commemorative pin and financial recognition.

Nine employees were recognized by the city for reaching service milestones. Those honored at the meeting included:

* Fire Lt. Billy Haynes, five years
* Sanitation Department collector Leslie Bracey, 10 years
* City Clerk/Permit Technician Brenda Davis, 15 years
* Water and Sewer Department Supervisor Charlie Robinson, 20 years
* Fire Chief Eddie Gardner, 35 years

Employees not in attendance but also recognized were Shannon Roach, Finance Department, five years; Bryan McLeod, Water Plant, 15 years; Duane Dykes, Utilities Department, 25 years; and Lee Rose, Water and Sewer Department, 25 years.

**Camden Hunt Seeks Mural to Mark Centennial**

The Camden City Council on Monday heard appeals for a mural commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Camden Hunt and a mural proposed at 537 Gallery while also taking steps toward adopting a public art policy to guide future projects across the city.

Salley McInerney, a resident and representative of the Camden Hunt, addressed the council with a history of the organization, which was founded in 1926 by equestrian enthusiasts. The hunt, she said, is more than a sporting tradition, serving as a steward of thousands of acres of preserved land, rare Carolina Bays and local wildlife.

“In a time when kids are glued to their phones, we teach young riders about land, horses, hounds and history,” McInerney said. “And now, as we approach our centennial, we hope to commemorate this legacy with a mural on the east wall of the Little Theater.”

McInerney said the building owners, James and Rhea Scott, support the mural, as does the neighboring Presbyterian Church. She asked the council to approve the project, noting that renderings and mockups have already been shared with city staff.

Also speaking in favor of the mural was Olivia Frazier, a junior member of the Camden Hunt. Frazier, who lives across from the proposed mural site, described the hunt as much more than a sport.

“The Camden Hunt is more than just a tradition — it’s a way to honor the land and the animals and the people who came before us,” Frazier said. “We don’t chase foxes; we celebrate the beauty of our country, the wetlands, pine forests, that bring brightness to our community. We’re asking for support for a mural that will tell the story of the past century and inspire future generations like us who care deeply for this place.”

Council members praised the mural’s design and message but raised concerns about the size and placement of such artwork in Camden’s historic downtown. Several said a coordinated art strategy is needed to avoid visual clutter and maintain consistency.

**Public Art Policy Discussion**

The council also heard from Harvee L. White, public art coordinator for the South Carolina Arts Commission, who presented the proposed Camden Public Art Policy. White said the policy would establish broad guidelines for public art, followed by a more detailed plan outlining specific projects, preferred locations and community engagement strategies.

“This is the kind of groundwork we encourage all cultural districts to put in place,” White said. “Public art should not only beautify spaces but reflect the community’s identity and values.”

White noted that Camden’s designation as a South Carolina cultural district makes it eligible for additional state support, provided local policies and plans align with that status.

Council members expressed interest in reviewing similar policies adopted in other cities and stressed that Camden’s plan should tie into its existing strategic and comprehensive plans.

While support for the Camden Hunt mural was strong, council members clarified that procedural requirements, including a public hearing, would delay a final vote until August. Residents and stakeholders were encouraged to attend and provide feedback.

**New Public Information Officer Introduced**

City Manager Matt DeWitt introduced Dawn-Marie Johnson as Camden’s new Public Information Officer.

“Dawn-Marie has been challenged with the job of getting the word out about all the good things happening here in Camden,” DeWitt said. “Often, people aren’t aware of the great work we’re doing because we haven’t communicated it well. Dawn-Marie is here to help us be more transparent and better connected with our community.”

DeWitt encouraged residents and media to reach out to Johnson with questions or for information. Those wishing to contact the Public Information Office can email her at djohnson@camdensc.com or call 803-432-2421, ext 1107.

**Other Council Business**

In other business, the council gave first reading to Ordinance 2025-20, which involves the potential acquisition and redevelopment of the midtown property. The ordinance passed first reading with minimal discussion, with more details expected at future meetings.

The council also postponed a vote on a resolution to transfer ownership of subdivision streets and stormwater infrastructure in the Bellehaven neighborhood to the city. City Manager Matt DeWitt said that, ‘while the city has the capacity to maintain the infrastructure, more documentation is needed to confirm that proper inspections and compaction testing were conducted during construction.”

Mayor Vincent Sheheen and several council members agreed to defer the item to a future meeting.

**Looking Ahead**

A public hearing on the proposed Camden Hunt mural and the broader public art policy is expected at the council’s August meeting. If adopted, the policy would provide a framework for future public art projects while preserving the city’s historic character.