

Camden City Council Meeting: 7/14/25

News Article

Camden Launches New Bus Route While Resident Requests Return of School Crossing Guards

New Bus Route Connects Key City Locations

The highlight of the evening was the unveiling of the "King Haigler Express," a new bus route launching August 4th through a partnership between the City and Santee-Wateree Regional Transportation Authority (SWRTA).

"This route is more than just a bus line. It's a vital connection for the people of Camden and the surrounding community," said Tanisha Gibbons, Executive Director of the regional transportation authority.

The service will operate from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with six daily runs, connecting residential areas to grocery stores, medical centers, and employment locations. The 45-minute route includes stops at key destinations such as Walmart, Food Lion in Dusty Bend, Kershaw County Mental Health, downtown City Hall, and MUSC at Haile Street. Complete bus route can be found by clicking on this link: [Your New Ride Around Town – King Haigler Express - Experience Camden, South Carolina](#).

During a three-month trial period, rides will be completely free. After that, the fare will be just \$1 per ride—among the lowest transportation costs available in the region.

"Every person who steps on the bus is helping us build a record," Gibbons explained. "Higher ridership means we can make a case for extended hours, expanded routes, and permanent service with long-term funding."

Why It Matters to Camden

The new route addresses a critical need for reliable transit, particularly for residents without personal vehicles. The service fills essential gaps in access to employment opportunities, healthcare facilities, shopping centers, essential services, and civic life participation. For many Camden residents, this bus route removes daily barriers that previously limited their access to opportunity.

Affordability & Equity

The three-month free pilot program, followed by the \$1 one-way fare, represents a commitment to accessible transportation. Made possible through local support and SWRTA's mission, the route specifically addresses transit gaps that disproportionately affect low-income residents, seniors, and people with disabilities. This initiative stands as a concrete example of how local partnerships can drive economic opportunity and equity, ensuring that transportation costs don't become barriers to essential services.

Community Impact Through Partnership

The route's future depends entirely on community participation. Higher ridership numbers will provide justification for extended operating hours, expanded routes, and permanent service designation. Each passenger represents not just a fare, but a documented case of community need that strengthens the argument for long-term investment in public transportation infrastructure.

What's Next?

Transportation officials will conduct ongoing data collection and gather community feedback throughout the pilot period. Based on usage patterns, they plan to adjust stops and schedules to better serve rider needs. Future considerations include exploring demand-response overlays, establishing service hubs, and developing sustainable long-term funding mechanisms to ensure the route's permanent establishment in Camden's transportation network.

Resident Asks for Return of School Crossing Guards

Charles Russell Major addressed the council requesting the restoration of the city's school crossing guard program, which was discontinued on July 30th.

Major, who worked as a crossing guard for six years, cited safety concerns at local intersections, specifically mentioning Broad Street. He noted that children exit school buildings rapidly and felt that the decision to eliminate crossing guards was not safety-focused.

Public Art Policy Sparks Discussion

Andrew Batten, a member of the Bethesda Presbyterian Church congregation, raised concerns about the city's public art policy, suggesting better coordination between art applications and the Historic Landmark Commission. The speaker, representing Bethesda Presbyterian Church, said that Camden's status as South Carolina's fourth oldest city and first inland city makes most downtown locations historically significant.

"I think it's a grave injustice to consider these policies as if they're standalone and don't impact each other," Batten said, calling for an administrative review process to prevent community organizations from being "pitted against each other."

Officer Rogers Recognized for Outstanding Service

The city council recently honored Officer Isaac Rogers for his exceptional handling of a mental health emergency call that could have escalated into a much more serious situation.

City Manager Matt DeWitt presented Rogers with a certificate of recognition, praising his calm and professional approach. "Patrolman Isaac Rogers exemplifies our police officers who handle far more complex situations than officers faced many years ago," DeWitt said during the presentation.

According to his supervisor, "Patrolman Rogers is the main reason this call for service ended with a simple report and did not escalate to something much worse. Had he not approached the situation in a calm, professional manner, outcomes could have been much different."

DeWitt emphasized the city's appreciation for modern officers' expanding responsibilities. "We see the extra duties our officers take on and the prudence they exercise daily in public interactions. They consistently go above and beyond, and we want to recognize positive outcomes like this."

The recognition highlights the importance of de-escalation techniques and compassionate policing in today's law enforcement, showcasing how proper training and approach can transform potentially dangerous situations into positive outcomes for everyone involved.

Camden's 37th Tree City USA Award

Camden received its 37th consecutive Tree City USA award from the South Carolina Forestry Commission. Ann Huyler, Urban Forestry Specialist Pee Dee Region, presented the award, noting that Camden meets all requirements including maintaining a tree ordinance, having a tree board, spending \$2 per capita on trees, and celebrating Arbor Day.

"Thirty-seven years is a very long time to be a tree city. Camden has really excelled," Huyler said.

Financial Matters

City officials addressed routine financial reports, including a temporary deficit related to the recent Midtown property purchase. Finance Director Danny Hollis explained that the shortfall will be resolved through upcoming bond financing arrangements.

The council approved several routine ordinances and consent agenda items before adjourning the meeting.

The next Camden City Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 5, 2025 beginning at 5:30 pm. Public participation is welcome during designated comment periods.