

TOWN OF EDISTO BEACH
Town Council Goal-Setting Retreat
January 29, 2026
10:00 a.m.

MINUTES

Town of Edisto Beach
Town Hall
2414 Murray Street
Edisto Beach, SC 29438

Present

Crawford Moore, Mayor; Jerome Kizer, Robert Renner, Jay Watts, Joey Bagwell, Council Members. *Quorum of Council Present*

Staff Present

Town Administrator Mark Aakhus, Assistant Town Administrator Dee Stalvey, Town Attorney Maryann Blake, Fire Chief Denney Conley, Police Chief Daniel Seyle, Building Code Administrator Patrick Brown, Utilities Director Patrick Zemp, Special Projects Coordinator Phyllis McElveen, Municipal Clerk Donna Rizer

Facilitator

Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) Field Services Manager Desirée Fragoso

Others Present

Several residents of the Town of Edisto Beach were present at this meeting.

Call to Order

The goal-setting retreat was called to order by Mayor Moore at 10:00 a.m. Mayor Moore welcomed attendees and thanked residents for their participation.

The purpose of the retreat was to identify, discuss, and prioritize key strategic goals and needs for the Town during the 2026-2027 fiscal year. No formal votes were taken; discussion was informational and directional.

Drainage

Council discussed areas of recurrent flooding and the need for long-term stormwater management solutions. Mr. Aakhus noted Davis & Floyd Engineering completed its Interior Lagoon Study and recommended potential stormwater management system improvements to increase the Town's resiliency to future storm events. Cost estimates have been provided.

The Town is actively pursuing funding sources including FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, state and federal earmarks, and the Colleton County Transportation Committee (CTC). The Town will seek all available external funding opportunities; if necessary, remaining costs may be covered using Town reserves and ATAX funds.

The Town-wide Stormwater Planning Strategy has prioritized areas based on flood risk criteria. Council will wait until mid-February for responses on potential funding sources. If no funding commitments are received by that time, Council will discuss next steps at its March meeting.

Convenience Center Operations

Discussion included the current condition and capacity of the convenience center, operational challenges, and options for improvement.

Council discussed potential options to increase the hours of operation at the convenience center. One option considered was to staff the facility for additional hours using an Edisto Beach Public Works employee. Expansion of services at the convenience center, including acceptance of electronic waste, batteries, and similar materials, was suggested.

As the current contract period with the contractor is ending, Council discussed putting the convenience center services out for bid and comparing the cost of contracted services with services in-house provided by Public Works. It was suggested the Request for Proposal (RFP) include alternative bid options to allow for flexibility in service levels and staffing models.

Parking

Increased growth in the area and a rise in day trippers were noted as contributing to parking pressures. Police Chief Seyle reported an increase in service calls associated with this growth.

Council discussed the need for a comprehensive parking plan to address current and future demands. As part of that discussion, potential tools such as paid parking and QR code systems, particularly at beach access points, were considered, with an emphasis on acting proactively rather than waiting until parking issues become critical.

Next steps may include updating the inventory of existing parking, evaluating existing parking plans, and reviewing how other towns manage parking.

Septic Systems

Council discussed septic systems, environmental impacts, and compliance concerns. Mr. Aakhus and Mr. Renner met with South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) to discuss water quality concerns related to septic systems. Weekly quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) testing is ongoing, though results have been inconclusive. Notably, when contaminants were observed, they returned to safe levels by the next measurement. SCDES also noted that fluctuations in water quality may be influenced by river outflow and reduced wave action near the sound. A public presentation of the recently completed SCDES report will be scheduled.

Council suggested continued septic maintenance education for residents, and at this time, no additional septic requirements are recommended. Residents suggested that future water testing could be conducted following significant rain events to better monitor potential contamination.

USACE Beach Renourishment

Mr. Aakhus provided an update on the Beach Renourishment Project. A dual-premise methodology has been advanced by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the Town's appraiser has begun his work in this regard. Funding for the project has been secured.

Mayor Moore noted the Town is also thinking ahead, recognizing the need to plan for future renourishment and funding cycles.

YMCA Partnership

Council reviewed potential partnership opportunities with the Summerville YMCA including programming, community services, and shared facility use. Mr. Watts noted the Town may utilize space at the Civic Center for a fitness center. The Town will host a public meeting to inform and shape potential YMCA programming opportunities. Tenants and other lay stakeholders will be included in the discussion to ensure broad and representative input. Cost estimates and funding options remain undetermined; however, Mr. Aakhus noted a cost share arrangement will need to be negotiated and included as part of any lease agreement.

Road Improvements

Mr. Aakhus indicated he has spoken with the Town's engineer who can prioritize Town-owned roads that need resurfacing. Cost estimates will be obtained and funding options, including funding from the Colleton County Transportation Committee (CTC), will be considered for road improvements.

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Project

Mr. Aakhus reported on the AMI Project. Approximately 99% of the existing meters have been replaced with readability currently at 96%. The AMI customer portal was discussed, as well as billing integration, frequency, and the desire to encourage electronic payments.

Demonstrations of the customer portal capabilities may be provided, and the importance of alerts for leak detection was noted.

Causeway Elevation

Discussion focused on vulnerability to flooding and storm surge along the causeway. Council acknowledged the importance of elevation improvements for safety, resilience, and emergency access.

Mr. Renner, who represents Colleton County on the Lowcountry Council of Governments (LCOG) Board, indicated LCOG has completed a feasibility study about the causeway. The report includes options and cost estimates. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), in an earlier report, expressed interest in restoring flow to Scott Creek as part of the project. South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) concluded, however, that restoring flow would not provide significant advantage for the project.

Council will continue evaluating elevation options and support LCOG and SCDOT's efforts to fund the preferred approach.

Dog Park

Council discussed community interest in having a dog park, potential locations, maintenance consideration, and liability issues. It was noted that the concept of a community dog park at Tract M was proposed in the 2021 Recreational Master Plan.

Council discussed the need to consider several key impacts before moving forward. Considerations include occupying needed flex space for Town operations, insurance requirements, estimated costs, parking availability, and zoning regulations. Council will develop a preliminary design that incorporates these factors and may ask the TIDE Committee for a review to ensure the project is feasible and sustainable.

Pickleball Courts

The growing demand for pickleball courts was discussed, including the possibility of adding an additional court. Council will evaluate the feasibility of such an addition.

Edisto Beach Property Owners Association (EBPOA)

Council received the following recommendations from the EBPOA: additional recreational opportunities including a dog park, concerns regarding lot fill, and concerns regarding tree cutting.

Council acknowledged the recommendation from EBPOA on the dog park. Council has discussed the matter under a separate agenda item and has a plan in place to move forward.

The EBPOA expressed concern that adding fill to individual lots could create drainage issues, increase flooding, or cause runoff that affects neighboring properties. Mr. Brown, Building Code Administrator, noted that if any fill materials are brought in during new construction, project engineers must fill out a “No Adverse Impact Certification” indicating the project will not alter the existing drainage patterns and will not adversely affect any of the adjacent neighbors or downstream properties or increase the potential for flooding of streets or roads.

Regarding tree cutting, Mr. Brown noted the Building Department requires a tree survey as part of any site development. Established processes are in place to manage tree removal and ensure replacement when necessary. There was a discussion about potentially strengthening the current ordinance to provide enhanced protection for trees. Council suggested the TIDE Committee be tasked with evaluating current regulations and developing policy recommendations to address EBPOA’s tree management concerns.

It was also noted that the Town is currently participating in a tree study that could provide relevant information for any policy recommendations.

Adjournment

The facilitator, MASC Field Representative Desirée Fragoso, concluded the session by reviewing the 2026-2027 fiscal year goals established during today’s retreat:

1. Drainage

- Continue to seek county, state, and federal funding.

- Identify and implement local funding options, including the use of Town reserves or ATAX funds, if state or federal funding is unavailable.
- Council discussion regarding drainage project at March 2026 meeting.

2. Convenience Center

- Modify scope of services.
- Issue RFP for new contract, compare with in-house model.
- Decide on most feasible option.

3. Parking

- Update parking inventory.
- Evaluate existing parking plans.
- Develop strategy to manage increased demand.
- Consider paid parking.

4. Septic Systems

- Host public presentation of recent SCDES Report.
- Continue public education of proper septic maintenance.
- Continue working with SCDES on regular testing and data collection.

5. USACE Beach Renourishment

- Continue dual-premise appraisals.
- Develop funding strategies for future beach renourishment projects.

6. YMCA Partnership

- Host a public meeting to gather input and shape potential YMCA programming.
- Develop cost share arrangement as part of any potential lease agreement.
- Involve tenants and other lay stakeholders in discussion.

7. Road Improvements

- Engage engineers to prioritize needed road improvements.
- Seek cost estimates.

8. AMI Project

- Implement integrated billing and payment systems.
- Evaluate the online portal to expand electronic payment options and usage.

9. Causeway Elevation

- Council will consider options from LCOG study.
- Discuss funding and next steps with LCOG and SCDOT.

10. Dog Park

- Evaluate impacts such as land use, insurance costs, parking, and zoning.
- Engage TIDE Committee in developing actionable recommendations.
- Develop a preliminary design if warranted.

11. Pickleball Courts

- Evaluate feasibility for expansion.

12. EBPOA

- Engage TIDE Committee to review current tree regulations and recommend policy updates.

Ms. Fragoso commended the Town Council, Mayor, and staff for the effectiveness and civility, noting them as an example consistent with MASC's Civility Campaign.

Mayor Moore thanked all participants for their engagement and stated the Council will adopt these goals as a formal resolution and proceed with implementation.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

APPROVED BY TOWN COUNCIL

Donna Rizer

Donna Rizer, Municipal Clerk
February 12, 2026