

Media Release



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HEART OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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Town of Bluffton to Renovate Town Hall

Bluffton Town Council unanimously approved award of a \$4,333,039 contract to JE Dunn Construction Company at its October 10 meeting to renovate Town Hall, located at 20 Bridge Street.

The project includes renovating the existing structure which currently houses Town Hall offices, the Charles E. Ulmer Auditorium and Calhoun Station. It will also add 4,582 square feet to the original building. When finished, total construction will be 28,876 square feet.

Construction on Town Hall is expected to begin in November and last approximately 10 months. During construction, Town Hall employees and assets will be temporarily relocated.

Project's Highlights:

- Provide a formal meeting space for Town Council, Municipal Court and other public gatherings that is 4,582 square feet with 145 seats.
- Renovate Town Hall, Charles E. Ulmer Auditorium and Town Hall's exterior façade.
- Enhance citizen entry to Town Hall and create a streamlined, shared common area for Town Hall, May River Theatre and Municipal Court.
- Install a new, efficient heating and cooling system.
- Improve the working environment for Town Council and staff with more efficient, consolidated working stations while providing natural light and common meeting areas.
- Upgrade information technology (IT) infrastructure through state-of-the-art equipment to support Gigabit internet access and future technological advances.
- Improve and provide additional parking.

"It is important the business of the Town remains in the heart of the town by giving new life to a building which has already contributed to the community as a school, a daycare, a theatre, a gathering place and Town Hall. This renovation will add a new chapter to the rich history of this building," Town Manager Marc Orlando said.

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Orlando said it is rare for a municipality of Bluffton's size to invest \$4.3 million dollars without borrowing funds to complete the project. The project will be financed through the Town's General Fund's Fund Balance.

Relocation of Town Hall Employees & Services:

Town Hall employees will immediately begin to relocate to temporary operating locations. The Town will communicate through frequent public updates regarding where services will be provided.

- Customer Service Center employees (i.e. permits, licenses, etc.) will conduct business in office trailers behind Town Hall along Pritchard Street.
- Municipal Court sessions, held every Tuesday, have already relocated to the Beaufort County Government Center (4819 Bluffton Parkway, 2nd Floor). This location is strictly for court sessions. Municipal court employees will be located in the office trailers behind Town Hall along Pritchard Street.
- The majority of Town Hall staff, including the Town Manager, finance, growth management and engineering staff will relocate to 98 Fording Island Road, which is the former Hampton Lake real estate office.
- Town Council Meetings and all public meetings will be held at the Rotary Community Center located at 11 Recreation Court within Oscar Frazier Community Park.

"It is imperative our residents and business owners know each Town employee is focused on meeting the needs of our customers no matter where they are," Mayor Lisa Sulka said. "On behalf of Town Council, we realize any renovation phase can be challenging. However, as a result, Bluffton residents will have a new Town Hall, with its efficiencies and features, which will better equip all of us to do the work of the Town for generations to come."

The Town plans to keep its residents and business owners informed about each step of this project through frequent news releases and social media posts. If you want to receive the Town's news releases via your email, please sign up via the Town's website: <https://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov/subscribe-to-our-mailing-list>. Please also "like" the Town of Bluffton Facebook page for regular updates.

For more information about the Town Hall renovation project, visit the Town's Capital Improvement Projects Story Map at <https://tinyurl.com/blufftoncip> or contact Bryan McIlwee, the Town's Director of Engineering, at (843) 706-7824 or BMcllwee@townofbluffton.com.