

Mayor Elise Partin	Mayor Pro-Tem Phil Carter	Council Members Tiffany Aull Byron Thomas Alice Rose	City Manager Mike Conley	Assistant City Manager Betsy Catchings Wesley Crosby
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**City of Cayce  
Special Council Meeting  
Monday, April 27, 2026  
5:30 p.m. – Cayce City Hall – 1800 12th Street  
[www.caycesc.gov](http://www.caycesc.gov)**

The April 27, 2026, Special Called Council Meeting was held this evening at 5:30 p.m. in Council Chambers. Those present included Mayor Elise Partin, Mayor Pro Tem Phil Carter, and Council Members Byron Thomas, Tiffany Aull, and Alice Rose; City Manager Michael Conley; Assistant City Manager Wesley Crosby and Assistant City Manager/Utilities Director Betsy Catchings; Municipal Clerk Kristen Hall; and City Attorney James Smith.

Mayor Partin asked if members of the press and public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Ms. Hall confirmed they were notified.

#### Call to Order

Mayor Partin called the Special Called Council Meeting to order. Council Member Thomas gave the invocation, and Mayor Partin led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### Presentation

- A. Presentation by Cayce Council on the details of the potential agreement of the proposed Thomas Dambo public art project.

City Attorney James Smith presented an overview of the proposed agreement with Danish artist Thomas Dambo for the installation of a large-scale public art sculpture along the Cayce Riverwalk. He explained that the proposed agreement was still under negotiation and would not become binding unless formally approved by City Council. The presentation addressed questions raised by residents regarding total project costs, funding sources, maintenance obligations, site selection, safety, and transparency.

The project was described as an economic development and tourism initiative intended to attract regional and out-of-state visitors. The proposed sculpture would be the first Thomas Dambo installation in South Carolina and would be designed specifically for Cayce using reclaimed materials. Estimated project costs include a \$350,000 base contract for design, fabrication, and installation, with additional project-related expenses estimated between \$50,000 and \$90,000, for a total anticipated investment of approximately \$400,000 to \$440,000.

Funding would be derived from legally restricted Hospitality Tax and Accommodations Tax revenues, as well as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds, grants, sponsorships, private donations, and in-kind contributions. The City Manager noted that approximately \$100,000 in existing Hospitality and Accommodations Tax fund balances and additional eligible TIF revenues were available to support the project, with the intent of leveraging outside funding to reduce the City's direct contribution.

The City would be responsible for site preparation, permits, logistical support, installation assistance, and long-term maintenance. Annual maintenance costs were estimated at approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000. Under the agreement, the artist would retain ownership of the sculpture, while the City would receive a renewable 10-year license, provided the sculpture is properly maintained.

As part of the presentation, examples from other communities were cited to illustrate potential tourism and economic benefits. One example from Detroit Lakes reported more than 62,000 visitors in the first month and an estimated \$4 million in economic impact following installation of a Thomas Dambo sculpture. The City Attorney emphasized that, if approved, all project costs, funding sources, maintenance plans, and economic outcomes would be publicly disclosed to ensure continued transparency.

### **Public Comment Regarding Items on the Agenda**

Robin Reese - spoke in opposition to the proposed Thomas Dambo troll project, questioning whether Cayce currently has the infrastructure needed to retain tourism spending. She noted the City's limited number of restaurants, retail businesses, and hotels and argued that visitors may come to Cayce but spend their money in neighboring communities such as Columbia. Ms. Reese also expressed concern that the City's existing Arts District project remains incomplete and suggested the troll project would not provide the level of economic return being presented. She urged Council to prioritize Cayce's interests and vote against the project.

Ron Wright - opposed the project, citing concerns about the City's limited tourism infrastructure and the potential for surrounding municipalities to receive most of the economic benefit. He noted that many comparable troll projects were funded through private donations and grants rather than public funds. Mr. Wright expressed concern that the total cost, including installation and maintenance, could approach \$500,000 and recommended pursuing private fundraising instead. He referenced the Boyd Foundation's donation toward the City's visitor center as evidence that substantial private support may be available.

Regina Langston - spoke in support of the project, emphasizing its potential to strengthen Cayce's Arts District and stimulate economic development. Drawing on her experience in Rock Hill, she noted how significant public art investments contributed to that community's growth. Ms. Langston encouraged the City to think boldly and described the project as an opportunity to inspire new businesses, artists, and short-term rental opportunities.

Renea Eshleman - President of the Cayce Arts Guild, expressed strong support for the troll project and highlighted the excitement it has generated within the arts community. She described the project as a significant opportunity that could spur additional public art installations and strengthen the City's Arts District. Ms. Eshleman noted that the Arts Guild has already begun discussing ways to support and expand the project's impact.

Ross Shealy - voiced support for the project, describing it as both an economic development opportunity and an enhancement to the City's quality of life. He compared the expected visitor interest to the popularity of the synchronous fireflies and stated that the project would help make Cayce an even better place to live, work, and raise a family. Mr. Shealy stated that he would support the project even if it only broke even financially.

Joe Long - supported the project and characterized it as Cayce's "moonshot moment." He cited data from Wauwatosa, where a Thomas Dambo troll reportedly generated substantial visitor traffic and economic impact within its first month. Mr. Long argued that hospitality and accommodations tax revenues are specifically intended for tourism investments and stated that the projected return on investment makes the project financially sound. He encouraged Council to move forward and follow through on the vision first endorsed in February.

Clyde Alley - opposed the project, recommending that the City seek financial support from neighboring municipalities or private donors rather than relying on tourism tax revenues. He raised concerns about flood risks along the Riverwalk, visitor safety, site security, and whether the location could accommodate increased traffic. Based on his own visit to a Thomas Dambo installation in Charlotte, he questioned whether the project would generate sufficient activity to justify the expense.

Pamme Eades - spoke in favor of the project and challenged the notion that Cayce lacks the amenities needed to attract visitors. She highlighted the City's existing attractions, including the Timmerman Trail, Riverwalk, State Street, and local restaurants. Ms. Eades emphasized that the project could be supported through a combination of public and private fundraising, involving the City's beautification foundation, chamber, civic clubs, and event committees. She described the project as a visionary opportunity that would provide lasting value to the community.

April Blake - encouraged Council to evaluate the project from a business and investment perspective rather than an emotional one. She urged Council to focus on the financial analysis and projected returns when making its decision.

Danny Creamer - not opposed to the concept of the troll but questioned whether the City is positioned to fully capitalize on the expected tourism benefits. He noted Cayce's limited hotel and restaurant inventory and expressed concern about the total project cost, ongoing maintenance obligations, and the fact that the City would not own the artwork. Mr. Creamer recommended exploring outside sponsorships and considering alternative uses for the funds before proceeding.

Chip Salak - raised concerns about the decision-making process and stated that several of his submitted questions remained unanswered. He noted that additional funding sources, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF), were introduced during the presentation and suggested that project costs, particularly site preparation, remain uncertain. Mr. Salak questioned the long-term durability of the installation and whether the City is adequately maintaining existing assets such as the Riverwalk and Timmerman Trail. While he supports the concept of a troll in the future, he stated that Cayce is not yet prepared to undertake the project.

Brian Prevatte - opposed the project, expressing concern about using \$400,000 to \$440,000 in tourism tax revenues for a project manufactured overseas and based on projected returns rather than formal studies. He suggested the City consider other long-term community investments, such as an amphitheater, park, or walking trail. Mr. Prevatte also raised questions regarding termite protection, ownership rights, and long-term maintenance costs and encouraged Council to vote against moving forward.

Cathrine Allgrim - spoke in support of the project, sharing her positive experiences with Thomas Dambo trolls at the Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park. She described the sculptures as immersive and interactive works of art and expressed confidence that the City's amenities and

infrastructure would continue to grow before the project is completed. Ms. Allgrim encouraged the City to move forward with faith in its future.

Nim Norris - opposed the project based on personal religious beliefs. He expressed concern about the historical origins of trolls in Scandinavian folklore and stated that he viewed the installation of a troll sculpture as inconsistent with his Christian faith. While he acknowledged the City's efforts and stated he supports community improvement projects generally, he urged Council not to proceed with this project.

**Executive Session, if needed, pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-70(a)(2), for discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements and/or receipt of legal advice concerning the proposed Thomas Dambo Public Art Project Agreement.**

Council Member Rose made a motion to go into Executive Session. Council Member Aull seconded the motion which was approved with a 4/1 vote.

After the Executive Session was concluded, Mayor Partin announced that no action was taken in Executive Session other than to adjourn and resume the Regular meeting.

#### **Action by Council Regarding the Thomas Dambo Public Art Project**

Council Member Aull made a motion to approve the agreement with Thomas Dambo for the design, fabrication and installation of the public artwork within the city of Cayce and authorize the city manager to execute the agreement. Council Member Rose seconded the motion with a 3/2 vote.

#### **Adjourn**

Council Member Rose made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Aull seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by roll call vote. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

  
Elise Partin, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Kristen Hall, Municipal Clerk

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK ON A MATTER APPEARING ON THE MEETING AGENDA, PLEASE COMPLETE THE INFORMATION BELOW PRIOR TO THE START OF THE MEETING.\* THANK YOU.

## COUNCIL MEETING SPEAKERS' LIST

Tuesday, April 27, 2026

Name	Address	Agenda Item
✓ Robin Reese	606 New State Rd	2A
✓ Ron Wright	Grange Crossing	11A Troll
✓ Regina Langston	937 Marlaney Avenue	11A
✓ Renea Eshleman	508 Moss Creek Dr	11A
✓ Ross SHERLY	107 Fernwood Cir	11A, V
✓ JOE LONG	Naples	11A
✓ CHARLES HITE	EW	TROLL
✓ CLYDE ALLEN	1137 FORT CONWARE TRAIL	Troll
✓ Pammy Eades	619 Poplar Street	Troll
✓ April Blake	932 Gabriel	2A
✓ Danny CRAMER	1011 M Ave	TROLL
✓ Chip SALAK	301 Tamwood	IF - A
✓ Brian Prevatte	103 Oak Lane	Troll
✓ Catherine Allgrim	604 Dogwood St	Troll
✓ Kim Morris	1229 G. Avenue	Troll
• Chip SALAK	301 Tamwood	V.
✓ MITCHELL LEE	933 M Ave	Troll

**\*Appearance of citizens at Council meetings - City of Cayce Code of Ordinances, Sec. 2-71.** Any citizen of the municipality may speak at a regular meeting of the council on a matter pertaining to municipal services and operation, with the exception of personnel matters, by notifying the office of the city manager at least five working days prior to the meeting and stating the subject and purpose for speaking. Additionally, during the **public comment period** as specified on the agenda of a regular meeting of the council, a member of the public may speak on a matter appearing on the meeting agenda, with the exception of personnel matters by signing a speakers list maintained by the city clerk prior to the start of the public comment period. The number of speakers at a council meeting may be limited in the discretion of the mayor or presiding officer, the length of time for any speaker's presentation is limited to a maximum of five minutes, and a presentation may be curtailed if determined to be uncivil, contentious, or disruptive in the discretion of the mayor or presiding officer or by majority of vote of council.