

Minutes
Spruce Pine Town Council
Monday, May 13, 2019

A meeting of the Town Council was held on May 13, 2019. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members James Acuff, Rocky Buchanan and Larry McKinney. Staff in attendance included Richard Canipe, Darlene Butler, Michael Wood, Libby Phillips, Billy Summerlin and Crystal Young. Others attended, including Russell Lankford, Bill Wygand, Claire Wygand, Jesse English, Amber Briggs and Corey Spiers (Mitchell News-Journal).

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Darla Harding called the regular meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Rocky Buchanan gave the invocation. Larry McKinney led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Rocky Buchanan moved to approve the agenda as presented. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Larry McKinney moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of April 22, 2019. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Rocky Buchanan moved to approve the minutes of the special meeting of April 29, 2019. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

APPOINTMENTS

Jesse English demonstrated his police canine at Council Member Larry McKinney's request. Jesse is an officer with the Mitchell County Sheriff's Dept. He thanked the Council for their decision to purchase a drug/search canine. He advised that he has been a canine officer for 11 years. He recommended that the police department let the public see what the dog can do. He brought his dog in and demonstrated finding hidden narcotics.

Amber Briggs, AMY Regional Library Director, updated the Council on the Regional System and local library. She thanked the Council for their help, especially with the mini split heater. She expressed her appreciation for Rocky Buchanan's efforts on the Library Board. She discussed the regional system, noting that it was officially recognized as a regional system in 1961. The Regional agreement will renew in the year 2021. She mentioned several benefits of belonging to a regional system, particularly economic benefits. She spoke about the Spruce Pine Public Library, advising that patronage of the library is at a 10-year high. They offer 2 sessions of Play and Learn, an Aging Well series, and a successful bookmobile. There is a new AMY website. Amber is heading a public library broadband initiative, and is involved with the Homework Gap Initiative to provide Wi-Fi. The regional library has secured a spot for a Smithsonian exhibit, which will be placed in Burnsville. US Representative Virginia Foxx has been instrumental in protecting federal funding for libraries.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Public Works

- Phillip Hise did not attend. Town Manager Richard Canipe distributed open and closed work orders. There were 188 completed work orders and 11 open ones.

Parks & Rec

- Michael Wood updated the Council on park work for April. Things are going well. In April, he represented the Town at a Mitchell High School Job Fair.
- Park restrooms are all open. The waterfall is repaired, cleaned, and operational. Painting of fences and picnic tables is completed. He is in his second round of pulling weeds town wide. Sand from flooding at Riverside Park has been removed. Mowing and weed eating continue. Shelter reservations are being accepted for May through September.
- The pool has been painted and is being refilled. Pool programs are scheduled. Pool opening is planned for Memorial Day weekend.
- Mayor Harding asked about getting an estimate to repair the merry-go-round. Staff will pursue an estimate from McGee Brothers Machining.

Main Street

- Libby Phillips presented the Spruce Pine Main Street Executive Director's Report for May, which is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.
- She noted that Spruce Pine Inn has several rooms that have renovations completed.

Police Department

- Chief Bill Summerlin talked about the fire at the Pizza Shop on Oak Avenue. NCSBI is in charge of the investigation. Once the investigation is complete, clean up can begin. Shop with a Cop funds were used to replenish the food pantry at the senior center.
- Several DUI's were issued this weekend at a checkpoint on Roan Rd.
- Bill complimented officers Kelly Johnson and Kasey Cook. He asked Council permission to promote the two officers, making them supervisors. Mayor Harding advised that he could make promotions in his own department. He received Council's blessings.
- Bill updated the Council on the SPACE Festival, scheduled for June 14-15.

Water & Sewer

- Russell Lankford distributed the Veolia Monthly Operations Report for April, which is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.
- Claire Wygand complimented Russell on the job he does.

Finance

- Finance Officer Crystal Young presented financials for the general fund and enterprise fund through April 30. The property tax collection rate was 97.2%, with Krantz Industries holding the largest delinquency. Said financial worksheets are incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

CONSENT AGENDA - none

ACTION AGENDA

Larry McKinney moved to approve a water/sewer tap for Robin Willis, 583 Bear Creek Church Rd., at outside rates with no annexation. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Larry McKinney moved to approve a water/sewer tap for Patrick & Patsy Phillips, 5201 S 226 Hwy., at outside rates with no annexation. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Crystal Young explained General Fund Budget Ordinance Amendment #3. Expenditures were increased to reflect the Parks and Rec capital outlay for painting the pool and a revolving loan increase due to an increase to the loan for Leland Riddle. She noted that revenues received to cover increased expenditures include past year taxes, tax penalties, and interest on investments. Rocky Buchanan moved to approve General Fund Budget Amendment #3 as presented. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor. Said amendment is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

Crystal Young presented the proposed budget for fiscal year 2019/2020. She read the Budget Message aloud. She noted that the budget includes a part-time Main Street employee, as well as an additional public works employee. The budget includes a 25-cent increase to each usage tier above the minimum for water and sewer. She advised the Council that no tax increase is included, but that each penny increase to the property tax rate results in \$21,500 in total tax revenues. She recommended that the budget public hearing be held during the regular Council Meeting on June 10th.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bill Wygand read a statement. He stated that he owns property near Spruce Pine and is the most encouraged he has ever been. However, he was very disappointed that Council did not attend the NCDEQ Public Hearing on the renewal of discharge permits for Sibelco and Quartz Corporation. He wanted local government to insist that limits for the permits are tightened.

Zan Sistare attended on behalf of the SPACE Festival, emphasizing that he was not speaking on behalf of Spruce Pine Main Street. He advised that non-profit Toe River Valley Watch would like permission from the Town to pursue a temporary alcohol permit to offer a beer garden in the parking lot next to theater. The area would be fenced and secure. Profits from the sales would benefit Toe River Valley Watch. Larry McKinney moved to allow Toe River Valley Watch to oversee the Beer Garden for the SPACE festival with proper security. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor. Zan noted that the festival has several sponsors, and 35 vendors so far. The main stage will be on Lower St., with a second one at 670 on Oak. There will be a speaker (fee charged). Children's inflatables will be set up in the Mitchell News-

Journal parking lot. There will be shuttles to the Dark Sky Observatory, which will require a fee as well. Council asked that the organizers update them at the June 10 Council Meeting.

TOWN MANAGER

- ✓ Town Manager Richard Canipe asked to cancel the 5/27 Town Council meeting due to Memorial Day.
- ✓ He will be out of the office on Wednesday and Thursday while attending the NCLM conference in Hickory.
- ✓ Larry McKinney moved to appoint Zan Sistare to fill the open position on the Planning and Zoning Board. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.
- ✓ Larry McKinney moved to appoint Ken Young to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor. Council set a public hearing date of June 10 for the proposed rezoning of 246 Tappan Street.
- ✓ Council instructed Richard to proceed with a nuisance letter regarding trash piled up at Mountaineer Auction on Cabin Rd.
- ✓ Richard requested permission to work with Attorney Lloyd Hise and the Mitchell County building inspector to begin condemnation of the old Hampshire Hosiery building on Hwy. 19E Keith Johnson is the property owner. Rocky Buchanan moved to proceed with the condemnation. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.
- ✓ Richard presented a request from the organizer for the Town of Spruce Pine to pay for port-a-johns for the SPACE Festival. Richard cautioned against using taxpayer funds for a private endeavor. He noted that the Mitchell County EDC and Chamber of Commerce declined to fund, as well as Mayland Community College. Rocky Buchanan moved not to fund port-a-johns for the festival. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried with three in favor, James Acuff against. Mayor Harding noted that the town will provide parks and police support.
- ✓ Bill Wygand questioned if the Town could provide the toilets for every private event. He was advised that the Town only provides for town-sponsored events.

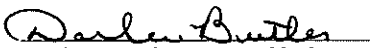
MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS / COMMENTS

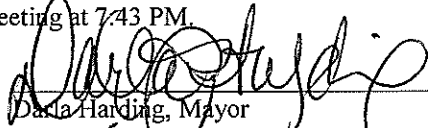
Mayor Harding cancelled the Memorial Day meeting.

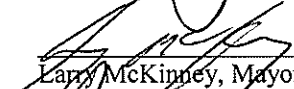
Council Member Rocky Buchanan advised that Morris Stamey has expressed concern about speeding cars on Valley Road. Richard noted that the speed bump was taken up for winter. Street paving is planned, and public works delayed reinstalling the speed bump. Richard will discuss it with Public Works Director Phillip Hise on Thursday.

ADJOURNMENT


Rocky Buchanan moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 PM.


Darlene Butler, Town Clerk


Darla Harding, Mayor


Larry McKinney, Mayor Pro Tem


Rocky Buchanan, Council Member


James Acuff, Council Member

absent
Jackie Rensink, Council Member