

**Minutes  
Spruce Pine Town Council  
Monday, June 08, 2020**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on June 08, 2020. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members James Acuff, Rocky Buchanan, Jackie Rensink and Larry McKinney. Staff in attendance included Richard Canipe, Darlene Butler, and Crystal Young. Others attended, including Lynn Holler, Karen Bomar, Valerie Blevins, Dale Blevins, Cathy Arrowood, Cheryl Buchanan, and Juliana Walker(Mitchell News-Journal).

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jackie Rensink moved to approve the agenda as presented. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Rocky Buchanan moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of May 11, 2020. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Rocky Buchanan moved to open the public hearing on the 2020/21 budget. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Harding called for any comments on the proposed 2020/21 Budget for the Town of Spruce Pine. Finance Officer Crystal Young noted that the only change since the last budget workshop is adding a leaf and blower assembly for Public Works.

Lynn Holler asked if the Town expected to receive COVID-19 funding, and if the budget included that income. Town Manager Richard Canipe advised that the Town may receive \$10,000 of the money received by Mitchell County, but that is not definite and is not included in budget revenues. Ms. Holler noted that closed restrooms both downtown and in the parks create a burden on businesses. Richard noted that the guidance on public restrooms is sparse. Public restrooms would need to be staffed all the time, and cleaned after each use.

Cheryl Buchanan asked if someone could be hired to clean the restrooms for Parks and Rec. Richard noted that an extra position is not scheduled.

Karen Bomar addressed the decision not to open the pool. Richard advised that there is an extensive list of regulations to open public pools during the COVID pandemic. He will provide that to Ms. Bomar.

Ms. Holler asked that a copy of the budget should be available on Facebook and the town's website.

With no more comments on the budget, the public hearing was closed.

BUDGET INFORMATION

Finance Officer Crystal Young read the 2020/21 Budget Message from the Finance Officer, which is a part of the budget packet that is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes. She noted the addition since last budget discussion of a leaf and blower assembly for the street sweeper. She noted that Main Street requested less money for this fiscal year. Richard advised that no money in the Main Street budget for new sidewalks was included due to the funds needed for the pedestrian bridge project. Crystal advised that the budget reflects a reduction in sales tax revenue. Financing for 4 vehicles at 1.82% has been initiated. Crystal requested permission from the Council to refinance the street sweeper at 1.74%. James Acuff moved to refinance the sweeper. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

ACTION

Rocky Buchanan moved to adopt the 2020/21 Budget as presented. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Lynn Holler, of 621 Summit Avenue, reiterated that meeting agendas should be published on Facebook, as well as links to minutes. Mayor Harding noted that meetings are always on the second and fourth Mondays, unless cancelled.

Karen Bomar, of 467 Rockledge Road, stated that she loves the town, but it has become a "Can't Do Town". The kids can't play at the parks and playgrounds. Richard clarified that the State of North Carolina decreed that playgrounds remain closed through stage 2 of state re-opening. Ms. Bomar asked why the Town couldn't postpone opening the pool rather than closing it. She suggested 2-hour increments at the pool.

Valerie Blevins, of 918 Dale Road, advised the council that pools can open at 50% capacity, with social distancing. She noted that the COVID-19 cannot be transmitted through chlorinated pool water. She listed several pools that are opening for the season. She suggested 2-hr. increments. She noted that the pool provides jobs for college kids. She asked that the Council reconsider its decision to not open the pool this season.

Dale Blevins, also of 918 Dale Road and former pool supervisor, noted that current chemical protocol would be adequate for the pool water. He recommended that the wading pool not be opened.

Mayor Harding mentioned that the pool is used as a drop off service for kids during the summer. She questioned, in light of recent years' low attendance, would many kids come if parents are required to accompany children. She stated that the Council considered visitor and employee safety in their decision. She advised that she would not change her vote. James Acuff and Jackie Rensink expressed support for the Mayor. The consensus of the Council was that not opening the pool is the safest course of action.

Cathy Arrowood, of 158 Pine Avenue, thanked the Council for the clean up of her neighbor's property. Regarding the pool, she questioned why not open the pool. She noted that she has a family member who is a physician, who states that chlorine will kill the Coronavirus. She stated that parents should accompany children and take responsibility for safety and social distancing. She thanked the council for the opportunity to address them.

Cheryl Buchanan requested that port-a-johns be placed downtown if the restrooms cannot be opened.

## TOWN MANAGER

- ✓ Town Manager Richard Canipe recommended that sewer be provided to 382 Sullins Branch at outside rates with no annexation. Rocky Buchanan moved to provide sewer at outside rates. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- ✓ Richard requested that the mayor send a nuisance letter to the owners of the burned property at 116 South Dale Street, requiring that the property be cleaned up. If the owners do not comply, condemnation may be necessary. Consensus of the Council was to proceed with notification.
- ✓ Richard advised the Council that the Methodist Church is holding a Faith, Justice, and Peace Rally on Thursday, June 11 from 6-7 PM at Riverside Park. Chief Summerlin will attend.
- ✓ Richard noted that the property tax collection rate is 97.8%.

## MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS / COMMENTS

In response to Council Member Larry McKinney, Richard advised that the problem with the downtown cameras is a software problem and should be resolved this week.

Council Member Rocky Buchanan re-addressed his request that the littering violation fine be increased to an amount that will serve as a deterrent. Richard noted that he will work with legal counsel to amend that city ordinance.

Mayor Harding noted that one of her priorities is to get the appearance committee up and running.

Consensus of the Council was to cancel the second meeting Council Meeting for June.

ADJOURNMENT

Larry McKinney moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Darlene Butler  
Darlene Butler, Town Clerk

Darla Harding  
Darla Harding, Mayor

Larry McKinney  
Larry McKinney, Mayor Pro Tem

Rocky Buchanan  
Rocky Buchanan, Council Member

James Acuff  
James Acuff, Council Member

Jackie Rensink  
Jackie Rensink, Council Member