

Minutes
Spruce Pine Town Council
Monday, September 14, 2020

A meeting of the Town Council was held on September 14, 2020. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members Rocky Buchanan, James Acuff, Larry McKinney and Jackie Rensink. Staff in attendance included Richard Canipe, Darlene Butler, Phillip Hise, Crystal Young, Libby Phillips and Michael Wood. Others attended, including Jimmy Hinshaw 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 with the addition of two tax releases under Action Agenda. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Larry McKinney moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of August 24, 2020. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Rocky Buchanan moved to approve the minutes of the closed session of August 24, 2020. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Water & Sewer

- Veolia Project Manager Russell Lankford distributed and presented the Veolia Monthly Operations Report for August through mid-September, which is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

Public Works

- Public Works Director Phillip Hise updated the Council on the status of his budgeted capital items. The new F250 is in service. He is unable to get the F450 as was budgeted, and decided instead to replace the motor on the existing brush truck. The street sweeper is getting the budgeted blower installed now. The new shop lighting is installed. The budgeted water meters and radio-reads have been received and are being installed.
- Of budgeted paving, Greenwood Rd. and English Rd. are completed. The consensus of the Council was not to repave Lynn St. in this budget year, as there are streets in worse condition that serve more residents. In terms of priority, if paving is added during this budget year, portions of Boone Street and Valley Road should be considered.
- Work at the Sunshine Hill pump station has been completed and should reduce operational costs there.
- Phillip noted that public works employee Tommy Woody has been out sick.

Main Street

- Main Street Director Libby Phillips distributed and presented the Spruce Pine Main Street Director's Report, which is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

Police Department

- Police Chief Bill Summerlin did not attend.

Finance

- Finance Officer Crystal Young presented Financial worksheets for the general and water/sewer funds. She also presented an Analysis of Current Year Tax Levy. The tax collection rate for FY19/20 is 98.13 %. Said reports are incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.
- Crystal advised that the sales tax revenue is not reflecting the expected decrease, which will help overall revenues. 2020 property taxes are being printed now.
- The town's portion of the Walking Bridge Project will come entirely from the 20/21 budget.
- The auditors are almost finished with the audit, which should be presented in November or December.

- Crystal updated the Council on the number of delinquent utility bills falling into the COVID-19 period of freezing penalties and cancellations of service. Account holders have up to six months to catch up on balances from this time period.
- Crystal met with a representative from Prudential Retirement, who would be available to talk to the Council about retirement options for general employees.

Parks & Rec

- Parks Supervisor Michael Wood updated the Council on park work for March through September. He noted that it has been a different kind of summer in the parks, with the pool, restrooms and playground being closed due to Covid-19 precautions. Playgrounds and some restrooms are open now, with more frequent cleaning schedules. Several picnic tables have been moved from Brad Ragan Park to Central Park, and have been well-utilized.
- His crew has been working on landscaping and maintenance.
- He updated the Council on the Community Garden project at Riverside Park, noting that Quartz Corporation built raised beds.
- At Riverside Park, a section of split rail fence has been installed and the press box has been boarded up.
- Michael has replaced one mower.
- Council member James Acuff asked about dealing with the kudzu at the train mural on Oak Avenue. Michael will look into this.

ACTION AGENDA

Rocky Buchanan moved to provide water at outside rates with no annexation to Terence and Joyce Jernigan at Den Drive, Lot 10. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Rocky Buchanan moved to adopt the Interlocal Agreement Between the County of Mitchell and the Town of Spruce Pine for Management of Funds from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) Established by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Crystal noted that the funds will be used for reimbursement of law enforcement salaries.

James Acuff moved to release 2015 property taxes in the amount of \$36.07 for Grant Sparks for a single-wide mobile home sold in 2014. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

James Acuff moved to release 2020 property taxes in the amount of \$46.41 for Pizzle View Projects, LLC for paving removed. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Finance Officer Crystal Young distributed 2020 property tax discoveries for Siemens Financial Services for \$5853.36 and Vesper Lodge for \$436.31.

Said releases and discoveries are incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

APPOINTMENTS

Jimmy Hinshaw advised the Council that plans for the Toe Jam Festival have been cancelled. He made a presentation on behalf of his company, Realwave. He described Realwave's surveillance services as an Intelligent Video Surveillance Cloud. He proposed that his company could offer surveillance for traffic counts, safety and security. He proposed a package that includes two 360-degree cameras and eight fixed cameras at strategic intersections. He estimated a \$35,000-40,000 package.

CONSENT AGENDA - none

PUBLIC COMMENT - none

TOWN MANAGER

- ✓ Town Manager Richard Canipe stated that the walking bridge renovations contract is ready to execute.
- ✓ The Giving Gardens have been constructed by Quartz Corporation at Riverside Park. A Memorandum of Understanding and insurance rider for the Town are in place.
- ✓ The latest NC Transportation Improvements Plan has pushed out the widening of Highways 19E and 226S, with right-of-way acquisition pushed to 2029.
- ✓ Mitchell County EDC and Yancey County EDC plan a joint meeting for discussion of a housing needs study funded by the Dogwood Trust.

- ✓ Ads for the Town Manager position have been placed in the local newspaper, the High Country Council of Government, and the UNC School of Government.

MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS / COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Rocky Buchanan moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 PM.

Darlene Butler
Darlene Butler, Town Clerk

Barla Harding
Barla 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