

**Minutes
Spruce Pine Town Council
Monday, November 09, 2020**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on November 09, 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, Shelley Buchanan, Crystal Young, Michael Briggs, Billy Summerlin and Brooke Peterson. Others attended, including Florence Grant, Doug Tennant, and Dr. John Boyd.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Darla Harding called the regular meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Jackie Rensink gave the invocation. Larry Mckinney led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

James Acuff moved to approve the agenda. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Larry Mckinney moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 26, 2020. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

ACTION AGENDA- none

PUBLIC COMMENT- none

APPOINTMENT

- Florence Grant with the Mitchell Giving Gardens gave an update on the project and what they will be doing over the winter months. She began by thanking Richard Canipe and the Council for their support of the gardens. She elaborated that since August 16 raised garden beds have been installed and sown with a variety of plants including kale, lettuce, and collard greens that were donated by Lakeview Nursery and other local greenhouses. She advised there will be coverings over the beds through the winter for frost protection. They have several local volunteers watering and harvesting the produce and will be distributing the items through the local food banks. Ms. Grant asked if the use of town water in the park was still ok, to which Richard replied that it is easier than putting in an additional water tap, and the Council agreed. She also inquired about the construction of a shed and compost bin for the gardens. Richard replied that would be fine but because that land was purchased with FEMA money after it flooded, the shed cannot be a permanent structure. She agreed that it could be built on skids and be moveable.
- Doug Tennant, with Combs, Tennant, and Carpenter PC, presented the Council with the June 30, 2020 audit and financial statements. He advised that the audit revealed a clean report and the Town of Spruce Pine is in very good financial shape. He also commended the Town's efforts on tax collecting. Mayor Darla Harding asked Mr. Tennant what percentage of the fund balance we are required by law to keep on hand. Mr. Tennant replied that it is 8%. He concluded by saying the town is in good financial position and to keep up the good work.
- Dr. John Boyd attended the meeting to request a public hearing be announced and scheduled in the next couple of weeks to request the next \$100,000 allocation for the renovation of the Pinebridge Inn. Dr. Boyd updated the Council on where the project stands at this time. He stated they are managing the project themselves and not hiring a contractor, as well as hiring local people to do most of the work. Finance Officer Crystal Young asked what the cost estimate is to have the hotel ready to open. Dr. Boyd responded that he believes it will take another \$750,000 to complete the project and they hope to open at least part of the hotel by May of 2021. He is estimating \$30,000 per room and 34 rooms to renovate. CPA Doug Tennant advised the Council that the town will not be able to collect property tax on the building or the land as cited by Dr. Boyd. The town will only collect on some of the personal property such as furniture, since the building and property are owned by a government entity. Therefore, Mr. Tennant said he does not believe the hotel will be a large source of tax revenue for the town. Ms. Young informed the Council the \$100,000 would have to come from the fund balance and reminded them of the \$240,000 budgeted by the Town for the renovation of the walking bridge. Council instructed staff to advertise a public hearing for December 14, 2020 to receive public comments on the requested funds.

TOWN MANAGER

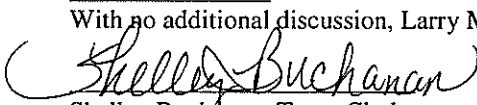
- ✓ Town Manager Richard Canipe stated the brush truck for the Public Works department is currently having the engine replaced and would hopefully be back in service in the next week. He also gave an update on the Topaz St sidewalk. He stated he had gotten an additional quote from Miller Construction and a quote from Young and McQueen. Mayor Darla Harding asked that Richard schedule the work to be done with whichever one can get it started sooner. Richard advised that Mike Woods has ordered a pressure washer and work will be underway as soon as it is delivered.

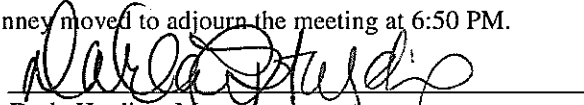
MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS / COMMENTS

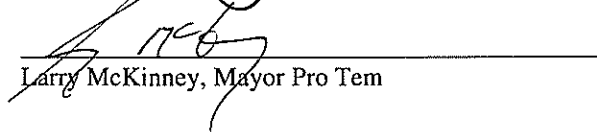
- At this time, Finance Officer Crystal Young introduced Brooke Peterson to the Council. Brooke is the new Utility Billing and Collections Clerk and will begin work on November 23rd. Crystal went on to say that Brooke is a Spruce Pine native and has had experience as a bank teller and currently works for Mayland Community College. The Council welcomed Brooke to the Town of Spruce Pine. She thanked the Council and expressed her excitement to work for the town.
- Finance Officer Crystal Young made the Council aware of two tax discoveries; one for Webb Funeral Home in the amount of \$754.93 and the other for HCA in the amount of \$6,011.78.
- Police Chief Billy Summerlin discussed the issues he faces at the police department concerning paid meal breaks and take home vehicles. New Town Manager Darlene Butler explained the additional payroll expense incurred with paid meal breaks and proposed that the officers receive paid meal breaks at straight wages and not overtime. Chief Summerlin was in favor of this proposal. Council Member James Acuff made a motion to begin paying the police officers for their meal breaks at straight time. Larry Mckinney seconded this motion, which carried unanimously.
- Richard Canipe discussed the implications of each officer taking home a vehicle and then proposed that we purchase two new police vehicles and assign each officer to one vehicle to kept at the police department. He also suggested there be quarterly inspections done for vehicle maintenance and appearance. Chief Summerlin was in agreement with this proposal for his department. Crystal Young added that we need to get five additional internet boxes for the police vehicles at a monthly cost of \$37.99. Larry Mckinney made a motion to purchase two additional police vehicles and then assign them. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- Richard Canipe brought up the fact that Captain Michael Briggs does not have a take home vehicle even though he has been with the department over 20 years. The Council agreed that Captain Briggs receive one of the new vehicles and be allowed to take this vehicle home. Captain Briggs may begin immediately driving the Dodge Charger home. Chief Summerlin also added that the cars will be assigned by seniority.

ADJOURNMENT

With no additional discussion, Larry Mckinney moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 PM.


Shelley Buchanan, Town Clerk


Darla Harding, Mayor


Larry McKinney, Mayor Pro Tem

Rocky Buchanan, Council Member

James Acuff, Council Member

Jackie Rehsink, Council Member