

**Minutes**  
**Spruce Pine Town Council**  
**Joint Meeting with Mitchell County Board of Commissioners**  
**February 15, 2021 6:30 PM**

A special meeting of the Town Council was held on February 15, 2021. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members Jackie Rensink, James Acuff and Larry McKinney. Staff in attendance included Darlene Butler and Shelley Buchanan. Others attending included Commissioners Vern Grindstaff, Steve Pitman, Jeff Harding, Brandon Pittman, and Harley Masters. Others attending included Tim Greene, Christy Young, Patti Jensen, Chuck Vines, Kim Stephenson, Mickey Duvall, Bob Hensley, Jon Masters, Dean Grindstaff, Steve Miller, Charles Nash, and Julianna Walker (Mitchell News-Journal).

PRAYER

James Acuff

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Manager Tim Greene

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Masters made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Harding seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Vern Grindstaff called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He then turned the meeting over to the Town of Spruce Pine and the Town of Bakersville to open their meetings. Mayor Harding called the Spruce Pine Town Council's special meeting to order: to discuss some long term and short term goals to promote and beautify Mitchell County.

DISCUSSION

- Commissioner Jeff Harding stated that this meeting is about working together to promote Mitchell County. It's about Mitchell County as a whole not just individual towns. He suggested we clean up the county and make it more attractive to visitors coming in off of the Blue Ridge Parkway and the other corridors. He also suggested we design a map that would give information about local business, restaurants, activities, and events. Commissioner Harding went on to say the most expensive thing the county needs is proper/updated signage, and that it needs to be funded by the towns as well as the county.
- Charles Nash shared that the Willis Observatory would be a good point of interest for the county.
- Chairman Grindstaff strongly agreed to Commissioner Harding's suggestion for new signage and landscaping. He then implored the EDC to research possible grant opportunities. He also explained the need to know where our visitors are coming from so that we can expand our advertising efforts.
- Commissioner Masters asked EDC Director Mickey Duvall if he has data collected showing where visitors are coming from, to which he replied he would ask Dr. Boyd at Mayland Community College.
- Commissioner Steve Pitman stated that the Covid19 pandemic had drastically changed the way people travel and that more people were searching for outdoor recreational activities.
- Mayor Chuck Vines elaborated on the stretch of beautiful scenic highway, NC 80. He stated there is already a lot of interest by motorcyclists, it just needs to be promoted.
- Commissioner Brandon Pittman conveyed that lodging is major problem in Mitchell County. He mentioned that the opening of the Pinebridge Inn would hopefully alleviate some of this problem, as well Air B&B's advertising more in the area.
- Council Member James Acuff announced that a new pump track is coming to Brad Ragan Park. Mayor Harding also mentioned the Town of Spruce Pine is applying for a PARTF grant to install a mountain bike trail and other improvements to the park.
- Council Member Jackie Rensink stated the county should have appearance standards. She also described the corridors coming into Mitchell County through a visitor's eyes as horrifying. She went on to say she knows zoning is a very uncomfortable subject, but it's going to have to happen in order to get our county cleaned up. She also suggested pushing the Adopt-a-Highway Campaign.
- Patti Jensen with the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce discussed recent marketing strategies they used to promote the county. She talked about the growing need for digital advertising, including YouTube and

social media. She discussed the negative impacts and hurdles the Covid19 pandemic has caused. She asked for suggestions from the Boards on what more the Chamber can do to help clean up and promote Mitchell County.

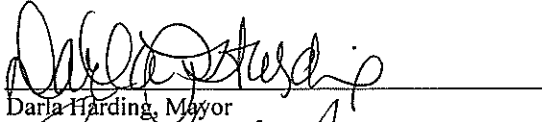
BOARD COMMENTS


- Commissioner Harding stated he would like to partner with the towns and set some attainable goals for the improvement of Mitchell County. He asked that each board discuss a plan at their March meetings and plan to have another joint meeting soon.
- Commissioner Masters shared her appreciation to all that attended and their willingness to work together.
- Chairman Vern Grindstaff also thanked everyone for attending and their input.

ADJOURNMENT

Jackie Rensink moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

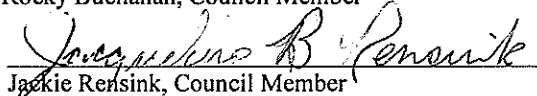
  
Shelley Buchanan, Town Clerk

  
Darla Harding, Mayor

  
James Acuff, Council Member

  
Larry McKinney, Council Member

Absent  
Rocky Buchanan, Council Member

  
Jackie Rensink, Council Member