

**Minutes
Spruce Pine Town Council
Monday, March 08, 2021**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on March 08, 2021. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members Rocky Buchanan, James Acuff, Larry McKinney and Jackie Rensink. Staff in attendance included Darlene Butler, Bill Summerlin, Phillip Hise, Crystal Young, Shelley Buchanan, Libby Phillips and Michael Wood. Others attended, including Leland Riddle, Jarod Dauderman, and Abigail Autry (Mitchell News-Journal).

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

James Acuff moved to approve the agenda, adding the approval of minutes from the joint meeting held with Mitchell County commissioners on February 15, 2021. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Rocky Buchanan moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 22, 2021. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor. James Acuff moved to approve the minutes of the joint meeting with Mitchell County held on February 15, 2021. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, with carried unanimously.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Main Street

- Libby Phillips presented the Main Street Director's Report for February, which is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes,
- As we are still dealing with the Covid19 pandemic, Libby is inquiring about regulations on capacity limits and social distancing for upcoming events.
- She is looking to brighten up downtown.
- Mayor Harding asked when Main Street would be resuming in person meetings, to which Libby replied that she is still getting a lot of resistance and hesitancy about meeting indoors. She plans to look into meeting outside, weather permitting.

Parks & Rec

- Michael Wood updated the Council on park work for February. He advised his crew has been busy gearing up for spring and summer. He also stated that park use is increasing as residents are ready to get outdoors.
- Michael advised that the Mitchell Giving Gardens at Riverside Park installed their shed last week.
- He then requested the Council make a decision on opening the swimming pool for 2021 as well as shelter reservations. After some discussion it was the consensus of the Council to open the pool and follow CDC guidelines on sanitation and social distancing. The Council also advised Michael to begin taking shelter reservations. Mayor Harding asked Michael what we charge out of town residents for shelter reservations. Michael advised that we charge \$20.00 for the first four hours and \$10.00 per each additional hour. Mayor Harding conveyed she did not think this amount was fully compensating the time it takes to maintain these shelters. Mayor Harding made a motion to increase the fee for shelter rentals from \$20.00 for four hours to \$40.00 for four hours plus \$10.00 for each additional hour.
- The Council advised Michael to move forward with contacting his lifeguards and making sure their certifications are up to date.
- Town Manager Darlene Butler commended Michael for working hard to receive his Pool Operator Certification.

Water & Sewer

- Russell Lankford was unable to attend.

Public Works

- Phillip Hise presented open and closed work orders for February.
- He thanked the Council for being good to his department and asked if there was anything they were seeing or hearing in the community that his maintenance crew needed to give attention to.
- He advised they had been extremely busy with multiple water leaks and that he has retired the snow removal equipment for the winter.
- Darlene Butler and Council Member Larry McKinney both commended the Public Works Department for always doing a good job.

Police Department

- Police Chief Bill Summerlin noted that his crew is working on drug enforcement and they are starting a campaign to get the increased prescription drugs off the streets of Spruce Pine.
- He thanked the council for the two new Dodge police vehicles and allowing them to assign vehicles.
- Bill shared that per the request of Darlene and Crystal he has been going door to door in the city limits with a survey for residents to complete concerning the improvements to Brad Ragan Park
- He then stated that he is in contact with local judges to bring back the Town being able to utilize offenders in the Community Service Program. The Council was pleased with this and agreed it would be a huge asset to have these individuals picking up trash and other things around the community.
- Chief Summerlin asked the council about Fourth of July events this year. It was the consensus of the Council to plan to have the Fourth of July fireworks display.
- Council Member Rocky Buchanan asked Chief Summerlin how much the police K-9 is being used. Bill advised the dog is being used more than they had even anticipated and that he is doing an excellent job. Rocky also asked about raising the fine for littering in the city limits. To which Chief Summerlin replied that his officers can issue a \$500 state citation in lieu of the \$50 town citation.

Finance

- Finance Officer Crystal Young presented Financial Reports ending February 28, 2021. The tax collection rate is 95.6 %. Said reports are incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.
- Rocky Buchanan made a motion to advertise delinquent taxes in the Mitchell News-Journal in April. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- Sales tax is running strong at 10% over budget, which Crystal attributes to the increase in online shopping.
- It was consensus of the Council to have the first budget meeting of the year on April 26, 2021.

APPOINTMENTS-none

CONSENT AGENDA - none

ACTION AGENDA

Leland Riddle attended the meeting on behalf of the Mountaineer Shrine Club to request a Solicitation Permit for a fundraising event on May 7, 2021 with a rain date of May 14, 2021. Rocky Buchanan made a motion to approve the solicitation permit. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Town Manager Darlene Butler presented the council with a resolution adopting the High Country COG Charter amendments. Jackie Rensink moved to adopt the resolution. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor. Said resolution is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Abigail Autry introduced herself to the Council as a new reporter with the Mitchell News-Journal. She shared that she is originally from the west coast but has lived in Burnsville for much of her life and now resides in Spruce Pine. The Council welcomed her.

Jarod Dauderman introduced himself as a new resident and son of local property manager Kent Dauderman. He advised he will be taking over some of Kent's properties as well as trying to start up an emergency shelter in this area for people displaced from their homes due to an emergency such as flood or fire.

MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS / COMMENTS

Mayor Harding stated the council will discuss and nail down the details of the Appearance Standards Committee at the second meeting in March.

She also advised the Council needs to be thinking about the approaching retirement of the Town's long time attorney Lloyd Hise. Jackie Rensink asked if we are required to have an attorney that specializes in municipalities. Darlene responded that in the instance we have a major issue, the NC League of Municipalities will step in with an attorney to represent us.

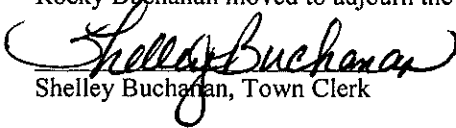
Town Manager

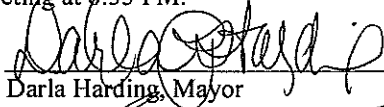
- Darlene advised the contractors have begun work on the sewer line on Biggerstaff Hill and when that is completed they will begin on Locust St.

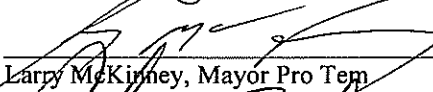
- She then shared that Crystal, Michael and she have been working hard on the PARTF grant for improvements to Brad Ragan Park. She said the Town has received letters of support from the Mitchell County EDC, the Bike Alliance, the Chamber of Commerce, the Housing Authority, and the Partnership for Children.
- Darlene stated the new cemetery data base is almost complete and as soon as she has learned the new system it will be turned over to the new Town Clerk, Shelley Buchanan.
- She then presented the Council with a request from a resident on Church Rd off of Pine Branch Rd to reimburse them \$120.00 on a bill from Burleson Plumbing due to a line not being capped off properly. Rocky Buchanan made a motion to pay the bill. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.
- She updated the Council on the Golden Leaf Application, saying they are still waiting on a decision.
- The CIP for water and sewer is close to being completed by Withers-Ravenel.
- Darlene stated she has a memorandum of understanding to have Lloyd Hise review for the pump track at Brad Ragan Park. She also mentioned she is making the Bike Alliance aware they need to request a line locate from NC 811.

ADJOURNMENT

Rocky Buchanan moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:55 PM.


Shelley Buchanan, Town Clerk


Darla Harding, Mayor


Larry McKinney, Mayor Pro Tem


Rocky Buchanan, Council Member


James Acuff, Council Member


Jackie Rensink, Council Member