

**Minutes  
Spruce Pine Town Council  
Monday, March 22, 2021**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on March 22, 2021. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members James Acuff, Rocky Buchanan, Jackie Rensink and Larry McKinney. Staff in attendance included Darlene Butler, Shelley Buchanan, and Crystal Young. Others attended, including Amber Briggs, Katie Willett, Sylvia Buchanan, Jessica Jackson, Karen Dobrogosz, Ellie Huendo, and Cory Spiers (Mitchell News-Journal).

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Darla Harding called the regular meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Rocky Buchanan gave the invocation. Larry McKinney 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**

James Acuff moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of March 8, 2021. Larry Mckinney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

**APPOINTMENT**

- Amber Briggs along with Katie Willet (Williams YMCA), Sylvia Buchanan, Jessica Jackson, and Karen Dobrogosz gave the Council an update on the Riverside Story Trail project. Ms. Briggs elaborated they have had wonderful community response and support of the project and are ready to move into the next phase, installing permanent fixtures. She noted they have already received 50% of the financial support to establish the permanent Story Trail. She went on to describe how the Story Trail promotes health, economic development, and leisure by bringing a collaborative of nature, literacy, and movement to the park. They are currently displaying their second book called Snowy Day. Ms. Briggs encouraged the Council to visit the park and walk the trail. Katie Willett presented the fixtures the story books are attached to. Rocky Buchanan asked for the opportunity to see if a local business could make these fixtures at a cheaper price, to which they agreed. Mayor Harding and Council Member Jackie Rensink both extended their admiration of the project, stating it is a wonderful addition to Riverside Park and a win for everyone in the community. Ms. Briggs then asked the Council for their consideration to support the permanent Story Trail financially and with installation. Council Member Jackie Rensink made a motion to fund the \$6,000 requested. Larry Mckinney seconded the motion, which carried with everyone present in favor.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

Mayor Darla Harding opened a public hearing to solicit and receive public comment regarding the Town's plan to submit a grant application to the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF). The grant funds would be used to construct a mountain bike trail, pickle ball court, dog park, and other upgrades/renovations at Brad Ragan Park.

Town Manager Darlene Butler presented the Council with the PARTF grant project description which is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

Rocky Buchanan stated that he would contact the office of Richard Burr for a letter of support.

Mayor Harding as well as Darlene Butler expressed the community's excitement over the possibility of the dog park. Mayor Harding also commended Crystal and Darlene for their diligent work on the grant application.

With no more comments, Council Member Rocky Buchanan made a motion to close the public hearing.

**ACTION AGENDA**

Finance Officer Crystal Young presented the Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan, which is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes, as well as the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan, which is on file at Town Hall and available upon request. Mayor Harding then asked for a motion to adopt these plans. Jackie Rensink made a motion to adopt the Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Plan. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Larry McKinney made a motion adopt the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried with those present in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT- None

TOWN MANAGER

- ✓ Town Manager Darlene Butler recommended that water be provided to 6045 US HWY 19E at outside rates with no annexation. Jackie Rensink moved to approve a water tap for Chandler Concrete, 6045 US HWY 19E, at outside rates with no annexation. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.
- ✓ Darlene gave an update on the sewer line project on Biggerstaff Hill. She noted it is going very well and that the company, TP Howard, is doing an excellent clean up job as they move forward with the line.
- ✓ She cited that the Golden Leaf application has been submitted and is still being considered.
- ✓ Darlene updated the Council on the Brad Ragan pump track. She stated that work is now being done and dirt has been moved into the park to build up the track.
- ✓ She then requested the Council give clarification on what day they wish to have the fireworks display for the July Fourth holiday. It was the consensus of the Council to have the display on Saturday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- ✓ She expressed her gratitude for Jeff Harding Landscaping anchoring the broken tree that had fallen at the intersection in town.
- ✓ Darlene stated she has spoken with Whitson Electric about replacing the broken and cloudy globes on the lights across the bridge downtown. He is working on a quote to have this done.
- ✓ She then mentioned she had been part of a meeting earlier in the day with the Town of Bakersville, Mitchell County, and the Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce to follow up on ideas about marketing the county that were shared at the joint meeting held in February. The take aways from that meeting were the challenges of designing an updated map of the area with the ever-changing businesses, and new signage.

MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS / COMMENTS

- Mayor Darla Harding stated they now have secured seven individuals to serve on the new Appearance Standards Committee. It was the consensus of the Council that we start with this group and schedule a meeting with attorney Lloyd Hise to get the committee up and running.
- Mayor Harding noted the new brewery in town is open and doing very well. Council Member James Acuff asked what is going in the former Tokyo Restaurant building, to which Darlene replied it was her understanding a retail store would fill the bottom level and the top level would be a residential apartment.
- Council Member Jackie Rensink mentioned that she had been on a zoom meeting with the merchants in town and the businesses located on Upper Street were voicing concerns that most of the foot traffic is confined to Lower Street. Jackie then proposed that the Council give Spruce Pine Main Street \$5,000 towards new signage that would make patrons aware of the businesses on Upper Street. Rocky Buchanan voiced his opinion that this would not be a good use of Town funds. It was a consensus of the Council to table this discussion until more information can be gathered.
- Mayor Harding reminded the council of the first budget meeting of the year scheduled for April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Harding asked for a motion to enter into closed session, citing NCGS 143-318.11(a) (6): To consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective officer or employee. Larry McKinney moved to enter into closed session. James Acuff seconded the motion, which carried unanimously. Council requested that the Town Manager and Town Clerk remain for the closed session.


RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

James Acuff moved to return to open session.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, Larry McKinney moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 PM.

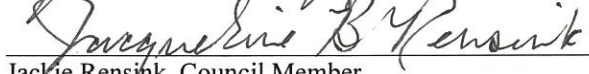
  
Shelley Buchanan, Town Clerk

  
Darla Harding, Mayor

  
Larry McKinney, Mayor Pro Tem

  
Rocky Buchanan, Council Member

  
James Acuff, Council Member

  
Jackie Rensink, Council Member