

**Minutes  
Spruce Pine Town Council  
Monday, June 14, 2021**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on June 14, 2021. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members Rocky Buchanan, Larry McKinney and Jackie Rensink. Staff in attendance included Darlene Butler, Bill Summerlin, Kelly Johnson, Matthew Custode, Phillip Hise, Crystal Young, Shelley Buchanan, Libby Phillips and Michael Wood. Others attended, including Russell Lankford, Peter Franklin, Mike Vance, Wendy Smith, Bobby Young, Ariana, Maniatis, Richard Canipe, Dr. Kelly Georgeou, Lex Georgeou, Jan Godwin, Cheech Stewart, Kelly Jones, Casey Ledford, and Cassidy Ollis.

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Rocky Buchanan moved to approve the agenda. 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 held on May 24, 2021. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

**DEPARTMENT UPDATES**

**Finance**

- Finance Officer Crystal Young presented the financials ending May 31<sup>st</sup>. The tax collection rate is 97.9 % at this time. Said reports are incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.
- She elaborated on an online workshop she attended to discuss how the monies from the ARPA can be spent as well as the time frame in which it must be spent. She also made the Council aware there will be opportunities for several grants we will be eligible to apply for.
- Email billing is now available for our water customers.

**Water & Sewer**

- Russell Lankford presented his water and sewer report from Veolia. Said report is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

**Main Street**

- Libby Phillips presented the Main Street Director's Report for May, which is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.
- She also expressed concern that businesses in town are still short staffed and some are having to close early due to not having enough help.

**Police Department**

- Police Chief Bill Summerlin updated the Council on the police department's efforts to crack down on the buying and selling of prescription drugs in the town. He asked Kelly Johnson, K9 Officer "Tank", and Matthew Custode to join the meeting and congratulated them on a large drug bust earlier in the month.
- Chief Summerlin also stated they plan to start seizing vehicles that are lien free.
- He thanked the Council and asked for any suggestions for his department.

**Public Works**

- Phillip Hise presented open and closed work orders for May. He explained that the majority of the work orders have been for brush and yard waste pickup.
- Rocky Buchanan asked about the water line upgrades on Berry Street, to which Phillip replied 210 feet of new water line has been laid and tested.
- He updated the Council on the 19E sewer line project. The project is near completion as all that is left to do is put new epoxy coating on the new manholes and tie in. Phillip also stated the work has begun on Lower Street and is not moving as quickly as we had hoped due to the crew running into more issues than expected. But they are sending in a crew to start fixing the sidewalks back as they finish an area. Rocky asked how long this project has been in the works, to which Phillip replied three years.
- Phillip mentioned he is getting the new mower mid-July and will get the mowing in town caught up as soon as possible.
- He thanked the Council and asked if there was anything they needed him or his department to work on.

#### Parks & Rec

- Michael Wood presented his report for Parks and Recreation, which is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.
- Michael updated the Council on the opening of Brad Ragan Pool. He advised the pump and motor are in transit and should be delivered by the end of the week. His hope to have it installed next week and get the pool opened as soon as possible for the community.
- He also mentioned an incident of vandalism at Brad Ragan Park by a student which has been handled by the school.

#### APPOINTMENTS- none

#### CONSENT AGENDA - none

#### ACTION AGENDA

Town Manager Darlene Butler presented the council with the Ordinance Creating a Special Commission Known as the Town of Spruce Pine Appearance Commission. Jackie Rensink moved to adopt the ordinance. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor. Said ordinance is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

Darlene Butler brought a request from Danny Burlison to reappoint Mac Robinson to the ABC Board. Jackie Rensink made a motion to reappoint Mac Robinson to the ABC Board for another term. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Darlene Butler requested the Council consider eligible prospects for two new members for the Zoning Board of Adjustment, and be ready to discuss and make recommendations by the next regular meeting.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Peter Franklin- Says he attended the meeting because of what is not on the agenda. He feels the most important issue in the town right now is the zoning issue around churches being allowed to purchase property in the business district of downtown. He went on to say downtown is struggling and having shared wall buildings with churches is a hindrance to the property rights of other business owners. Churches purchase these properties and then are no longer taxable by the city.

Mike Vance- Representing Scotland Property Group, he has purchased three properties (Crystal Place Apartments, the old Tokyo building, and the Carolina Theatre) in the downtown area. He stated he has made these large investments in Spruce Pine because he believes in this community. He believes the town needs stability and needs to ban churches from purchasing in the business district because it takes property rights away from other business owners and puts alcohol license in jeopardy.

Bobby Young- Mr. Young learned that the Town Public Works Department had purchased a new tractor. He addressed the Council and asked why his local tractor dealership was not considered for this purchase. He said our last purchase came from his dealership 25 years ago. The question was directed to Phillip as the Public Works Director. He replied that he did not think about Young's Tractor at the time and he apologized for that. Mayor Darla Harding also apologized for not asking Mr. Young for a quote before buying elsewhere. Mr. Young thanked the Council for their apology.

Jan Godwin- Ms. Godwin commented that alcohol seems to be doing well in the area. She spoke on behalf of several businesses in town and agreed with the previous comments that the future of Spruce Pine needs to be invested in. She also implored the Council to meet with local real estate agents to learn what people who are moving into this area are looking for.

Casey Ledford- Ms. Ledford owns a new boutique in town and wanted to show her support for the previous comments. She expressed that she feels the Zoning Board made a bad decision not to change the zoning ordinance to omit the sale of property to churches in the C-1 district and wants to see that decision overturned.

Cassity Ollis- Ms. Ollis also spoke on the need for jobs, housing, and tourism in the downtown area. She is a social worker who sees these needs on a daily basis with her clients.

MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS / COMMENTS

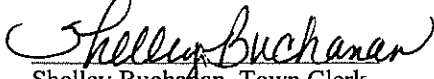
Rocky Buchanan requested that DOT be contacted about the state trucks using their jake brakes on Greenwood Rd.

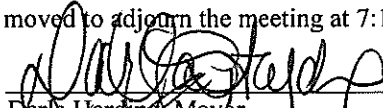
Town Manager

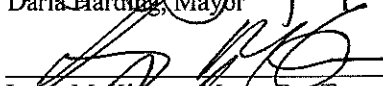
- Darlene shared with the Council a request from PRC regarding a sewer pump station. The engineers that designed a new sewer line for PRC made a mistake resulting in the possible need for a sewer pump station. PRC has asked that if they have this pump station built will the Town of Spruce Pine be willing to take over the future maintenance of it. After some discussion the Council decided to talk to Russell Lankford and Veolia before making a commitment.
- David McPherson with Spruce Pine Housing Authority has a pump station on Feldspar St in need of repairs and wants to turn it over to the Town of Spruce Pine. The Council discussed and it was a consensus they will take over the sewer pump station only if it is rebuilt and in good working condition.
- Darlene asked the Council consider adding \$2,900.00 to next year's budget to patch Mountain View Dr at the request of Brenda Pitman. It was consensus of the council to fix this street.
- Darlene presented information about the Big Brothers Big Sisters Organization to the Council and how it could really benefit the citizens of our community. She and Jackie Rensink met recently with a representative from the organization and learned how they are trying to establish in the smaller areas. Darlene asked that Council consider adding a \$1,000.00 donation to this organization to next year's budget. It was consensus of the Council to do so.
- She then approached the Council about re-advertising the mowing contract for the town for the upcoming year. It has not been up for reevaluation since 2017. She would like to make it more clear what the Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for maintaining and what the contractor is responsible for. Consensus of the Council was to solicit proposals.
- The Story Trail was awarded the \$15,000 grant for the audio system.

ADJOURNMENT

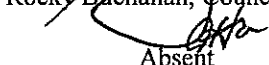
With no further discussion Jackie Rensink moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 PM.

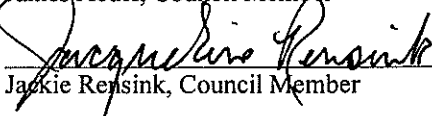
  
Shelley Buchanan, Town Clerk

  
Darla Harding, Mayor

  
Larry McKinney, Mayor Pro Tem

  
Rocky Buchanan, Council Member

  
Absent  
James Acuff, Council Member

  
Jackie Rensink, Council Member