

Minutes
Spruce Pine Town Council
Monday, September 27, 2021

A meeting of the Town Council was held on September 27, 2021. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members Rocky Buchanan, Jackie Rensink and Larry McKinney. Staff in attendance included Darlene Butler, Shelley Buchanan, Phillip Hise and Crystal Young. Others attended, including Kelly Jones and Jim Erlandson.

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

Larry McKinney 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 on August 23, 2021. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Larry McKinney moved to approve the minutes of the closed session meeting held on August 23, 2021. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Jim Erlandson with Habitat for Humanity, accompanied by Ms. Kelly Jones, attended the meeting to request the Council vote to provide water service for the proposed Habitat for Humanity development off of Stewart Ridge Rd in Bakersville. Mr. Erlandson explained that Habitat for Humanity provides housing to low income families who are currently without a home or are living in unsafe conditions. These families are required to have income and be able to afford a reduced monthly mortgage payment as well as put in several hours of "sweat equity" when construction of the home begins. They were able to purchase land on Stewart Rd in Bakersville large enough to build five Habitat homes. However they found out finding a water source was more difficult than anticipated. Since the Town of Spruce Pine has water lines running through that area they have received permission from the DOT, property owners Roger and Maxine McKinney, and other engineers to lay a two inch water line across a creek and through the McKinney property. Phillip Hise stated the Town would be taking over these water lines and would require there be a survey and defined Right of Way for the Town of Spruce Pine on record. Council member Jackie Rensink made a motion to approve providing water service with engineered plans to the proposed Habitat for Humanity development on Stewart Ridge Rd. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

ACTION AGENDA

Darlene presented the bids for the Spruce Pine Henredon Pump Station Rehabilitation Project. The Town of Spruce Pine will award the bid to the lowest responsible bidder, Kemp Construction Inc. for \$166,900.00. Jackie Rensink made a motion to award the bid to Kemp Construction, Inc. Larry McKinney seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Larry McKinney moved to provide water only at outside rates with no annexation to Maria Tehandon at 185 Vaughn Rd, Spruce Pine, NC 28777. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

TOWN MANAGER

- ✓ The Lower Street sewer rehab work continues with plans to do slip lining at night. This will have the street closed at night and town has advertised this information through every avenue possible.
- ✓ The Engineering contract has been awarded for the Hwy 226 water line replacement project.
- ✓ Darlene updated the Council on the \$100,000 grant received by Mitchell County Transportation to fund a fixed route in Spruce Pine for one year. The new route has been named The Pine Line and is available for citizens at no charge at this time. This transportation route will be used for getting people to and from work as well as shopping and other necessities.
- ✓ Main Street had their downtown cleanup day over the weekend in preparation for the upcoming BBQ Festival.
- ✓ Darlene stated the Parks and Rec PARTF grant has still not been awarded, so she is still hopeful.

- ✓ She asked the Council for their thoughts on Trick or Treating downtown this year. After some discussion it was the consensus of the Council that Darlene get with Main Street and the merchants in town to see how many would be willing to participate.
- ✓ Darlene presented a petition from three residents on Washburn Road requesting the Town take over the two inch water line that runs from the Wagon Master Trailer Park. It was Phillip Hise's recommendation that the Town take over the line with a moratorium stating no more houses may tap onto it. After some discussion the issue was tabled until the next meeting. Darlene is going to research who has purchased water taps before discussing further.
- ✓ She stated she had met with the EDC by zoom and they are still working on a joint industrial site for Yancey and Mitchell County.

MAYOR/COUNCIL REQUESTS / COMMENTS

- Mayor Harding opened a discussion concerning the pay scale for the Public Works Department. In recent weeks this department has lost three employees and it has been determined the pay scale needs to be re-evaluated. Darlene explained that we are not in competition with other towns' salaries but with the private industry who are paying a lot higher wages for these same skills. She also mentioned what a wonderful benefits package the Town of Spruce Pine offers. The Town pays \$721.00 per month for the employee's health insurance, dental insurance, vision insurance, short term disability, a small life insurance policy, and retirement. Mayor Darla Harding recommended a 15% increase in pay to the Public Works department. Council Member Rocky Buchanan stated his recommendation would be a 12.5% increase for Public Works. After some discussion Jackie Rensink made a motion to increase the pay scale in the Public Works Department by 15% by a special appropriation out of the general fund for the remainder of this year. Mayor Harding seconded the motion. Rocky Buchanan and Larry McKinney voted nay, therefore motion did not pass. Larry McKinney made a motion to increase the Public Works pay scale by 12.5% using a special appropriation out of the general fund. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Rocky Buchanan moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 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