

**Minutes  
Spruce Pine Town Council  
Monday, August 8, 2022**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Present were Mayor Darla Harding and Council Members Rocky Buchanan and Jackie Rensink. Staff in attendance included Darlene Butler, Michael Wood, Libby Phillips, Billy Summerlin, and Shelley Buchanan. Others attended, including Russell Lankford, Chad Donnahoo, Lynn Holler, Richard Canipe, Matthew Ward, Lori McIntyre, Walton Shepherd, Cynthia Sciacca, and Sherry Sautner.

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

Jackie Rensink moved to approve the agenda with the addition of approval of closed session minutes from July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Rocky Buchanan 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 July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Rocky Buchanan moved to approve the minutes from the closed session held on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

APPONTMENTS

Richard Canipe attended the Council meeting on behalf of Mitchell County EDC to introduce the new EDC Director Matthew Ward. Mr. Ward is a Mitchell County native but has lived away for the last several years. Richard expressed he believes Mr. Ward is an excellent candidate for the job. Mr. Ward thanked Richard and the Council for the opportunity to introduce himself. He stated that it was a pleasure to be back home and he is excited to get started and work alongside the county and the towns to get going back in the right direction. Mayor Harding told Mr. Ward she was very happy to have him on board.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Main Street

- Libby presented the Main Street Directors report for July. Said report is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

Parks and Rec

- Michael Wood presented his report for the month. Said report is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes.

Police Department

- Police Chief Bill Summerlin gave an update on his department. His officers have been made aware of an issue with loiterers in the cemetery leaving trash. They are patrolling the area more often.
- The NC Highway Patrol will be conducting road checks in the area in the next few weeks.
- Trash pickup will be held Thursday along the 226 Corridor.
- Billy is working on having all of the businesses in town hang Christmas lights this year.
- "Stuff the Bus" project is currently underway. A school bus is parked at Walmart for people to donate school supplies that will be distributed among each of the schools.
- Billy mentioned that the Town's criminal ordinances need to be updated in order for the citations that are written to hold up in court.
- Billy shared his appreciation of new business owner, Walton Shepherd. Walton has volunteered his time on many occasions since coming to the area.

Water and Sewer

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

## Public Works

- Darlene gave an update on the public works department. There were 88 closed work orders and 3 open for the month.
- She commended the staff for stepping up while they have been without a director.

Finance- Crystal was unable to attend.

## ACTION AGENDA

Jackie Rensink made a motion to provide water at outside rates with no annexation to Mitchell and Stephanie Warren at 45 McRae Court. Darla Harding seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Mayor Harding presented a resolution to name September 2022 Big Brothers Big Sisters Month. Rocky Buchanan made a motion to approve this proclamation. Jackie Rensink seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Darlene initiated a discussion about revolving loans made by the Town of Spruce Pine. She advised this was a practice started by the Town in the 1980's. She presented a report from Finance Officer Crystal Young describing the history and current status of this program. Said report is incorporated by reference and attached to these minutes. It has been highly recommended by the Town auditors that this service be discontinued.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Lori McIntyre addressed the Council concerning the ability of property owners who are not residents of the city limits of Spruce Pine being allowed to vote in local elections. She advised she has conducted her own research into the feasibility of this. She mentioned that some states allow nonresidents to vote in their local elections if they own property in the city limits, however North Carolina does not specifically say this. She asked the Council to consider allowing property owners to vote in local elections and stated she would continue to do her own research. Mayor Harding commented that she had spoken to Senator Ralph Hise regarding this in the past and that there would have to be a local bill introduced and pass the House and the Senate. Darla asked the town attorney to look into this further.

Sherry Sautner approached the Council requesting their blessing on the date she has set for the Alien Festival she plans to hold next June on upper street. She asked to hold the festival on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. She advised she needs a confirmation from the Council so she can move forward with NCDOT and guest speakers she is scheduling to be present. She mentioned that Spruce Pine Southern Shows does take out liability insurance and that there will be port-a-johns available. It was the consensus of the Council to give their informal blessing on this date and event and asked that Ms. Sautner keep them informed of her plans.

## Town Manager

- ❖ Darlene and Libby have attended five of the eight classes for the Rural Community Capacity Building Program. She thanked the Council for allowing them the opportunity to attend these sessions as this will enable Spruce Pine to move up the ladder in receiving grants in the future.
- ❖ She advised that the playground equipment for Brad Ragan Park has been ordered, as well as the cornhole boards.
- ❖ The skateboard park has their 501C3 in place and fund raising is underway. Darla mentioned there is a fund raiser coming up at Bierdock and asked that the Council support this event.
- ❖ The splash pad equipment for Riverside Park has been ordered and bids for installation will be going out soon.
- ❖ Darlene has asked for email confirmation that the spiral slide for Riverside Park was shipped on August 1<sup>st</sup>.
- ❖ Sibelco volunteers are still clearing land on Stroupe Road and will be requesting a burn permit from the fire department to burn the brush.
- ❖ Water and sewer bills went out this month with the new rate increase.
- ❖ Tax bills will go out by the end of August.
- ❖ Darlene stated that the new Land Use Plan is in process and she is working on forming the initial committee which will hold several meetings over the next nine months.
- ❖ Russell Lankford, Darlene, and the town attorney are working on the new policy for sewage dumping.
- ❖ She affirmed what Chief Summerlin said about the Town's ordinances. She noted the city ordinances need to be completely redrafted as the town code was drafted in the 1970's. She hopes to get assistance from the UNC School of Government and/or the HCCOG.

MAYOR/ COUNCIL COMMENTS/REQUESTS- none

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Harding asked for a motion to enter into closed session. Jackie Rensink made a motion to enter into closed session citing NC G.S. 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 public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee. Rocky Buchanan seconded the motion, which carried with all present in favor.

Upon return to open session Mayor Harding asked if there was any further discussion.

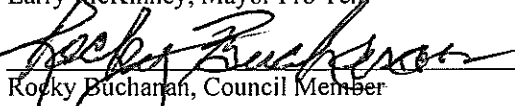
ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion Rocky Buchanan moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 PM.

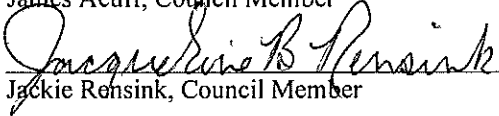
  
Shelley Buchanan, Town Clerk

  
Darla Harding, Mayor

Absent  
Larry McKinney, Mayor Pro Tem

  
Rocky Buchanan, Council Member

Absent  
James Acuff, Council Member

  
Jackie Rensink, Council Member