

Town of Pinetops
Board of Commissioners
Regular Monthly Meeting (Also available via Zoom)
Minutes
August 11, 2020
Pinetops Town Hall

Present. Present for the meeting were Mayor Brenda Harrell, Commissioners Donald Webb, Barbara Taylor, Dennis Sugg, and Oscar Mabry. Commissioner Florence Pender was out of town and not able to participate in this meeting.

Also in attendance. Town Administrator Natalie Bess, Finance Officer Tammy Keesler, Public Works Director Phil Webb, and Police Chief Stacy Harrell. Van Holland from the Tar River Times paper was also in attendance as well as the Fire Chief, Steve Burress.

A. Call to Order

Mayor Harrell called the August 11th meeting to order at 6:00p.m. The Mayor took a moment to welcome everyone that was present via Zoom. She then requested they please mute their phones to help alleviate background noise.

B. Invocation

Invocation was given by Commissioner Taylor.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Harrell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Proposed Agenda

Administrator Bess requested two items be added to the agenda under Items for Consideration. The first item was the Pinetops Baptist Church annexation request and the second item was a Food Truck proposal. Mayor Harrell called for a motion to approve the proposed agenda with the two items added under the Items for Consideration. Commissioner Webb made a motion to approve the proposed agenda as amended. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Sugg made a motion to approve the minutes from the Board Meeting/Public Hearing held on June 23, 2020. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

F. Public Comments

1) Dennis Hussey – 103 Reason St.

Dennis Hussey phoned in to discuss a ditch that needs to be cleaned out. He began by saying that he has mentioned this ditch in the past but nothing has been done as of yet. He told the board that he believes this is an essential ditch in leading water out of Pinetops. The ditch in question is on Pitt Street and the water runs from 2nd street to Pines Chapel Church. He requested that the board hire a contractor to clean out this essential ditch before another storm comes through. He also suggested the board consider installing storm drains to help with drainage. Mayor Harrell thanked Mr. Hussey for his comments and explained that the town has just recently named a team to look into the drainage issues around town. Commissioner Sugg added that a report on this very issue will be given on later in this meeting.

2) Chester Lancaster

Chester Lancaster phoned in to find out who is responsible for the curbing and sidewalk in front of his property located adjacent to the town hall parking lot. He stated that the current sidewalk is not on his property but was told that it was on the town's right-of-way so therefore he felt like it was the town's responsibility. Mayor Harrell asked Mr. Lancaster exactly what was it that he wanted to do to which he responded that he wanted some driveways/cut-in's installed to be able to access his property. Mayor Harrell asked that the Town Administrator as well as the Public Works Director to meet with Mr. Lancaster concerning this issue and be able to give him an answer to his question by the end of the week.

3) Kendrea Thorne – 135 Leisure Lane

Kendrea Thorne phoned in to the meeting to inquire about available recreation opportunities in town. The town administrator reported that she had put this on the agenda and it will be discussed later during her administrator report.

G. Departmental Reports

1. Police Department: Chief Harrell read over the police report for the months of June – July. The total calls for the months were 2,311. There were 83 traffic stops and 31 citations issued. There were 5

vehicle accidents during the two month period. There was 1 breaking and entering of a shed. Pinetops has also been assisting ECSO and Tarboro PD with shootings and homicides that have relation to Pinetops. The police department is fully staffed with 7 full-time officers but 1 dispatcher is still out on medical leave. There is a balance of \$15,358.62 still remaining on the Governor's Crime Commission Grant.

2. **Public Works Department:** (a) Phil Webb read over the water and sewer report for the months of June – July. The report shows the total million gallons of sewer flow and water discharge for the month. The sewer flow totaled 11.68 million gallons for the month of June and 5.79 million gallons for July. The water discharge totaled 5.36 million gallons for the month of June and 6.31 million gallons for July. Moving forward he will also be presenting a power outage report for each month. For the month of July there were three outages. (1) Fuse blown caused by squirrel, (2) town circuit affected for 5 hours caused by vehicle hitting pole, (3) Three homes affected by lightning striking transformer. The outages will be reported to the public through the All-Call system, town website, and monthly at the board meetings. Commissioner Mabry suggested wrapping black/white reflective tape around the utility pole that was struck since this is not the first time it has happened.
3. **Fire Department:** The Fire Chief presented the Fire report for the month of July. The total calls for the month of July was 4. The report consisted of Town Fire Calls - 2, Town Service Call -1, and Medical Responder Calls - 1. Hours in Training & Meetings - 155. The ISO rating class for commercial property dropped to a 3 which means beginning in November they could see a drop in their insurance. Commissioner Sugg asked the Chief if he could to add where the fire calls take place.
4. **Finance Officer:** Ms. Keesler gave the financial report for the month of July. The general fund had a negative balance of \$126,691.74. The electric fund had a positive balance of \$176,640.99 for the month of July while the water/sewer fund ended the month with a positive balance of \$28,032.07. She presented the board with a Paid Check Report for the month of July along with a Revenue and Expenditure Report. She requested the board approve an additional budget amendment for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 in the amount of \$19,322 to cover the police salary overage due to COVID-19. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to approve an additional budget amendment transferring funds from the electric fund to the general fund in the amount of \$19,322 to cover the police salary overage due to COVID-19. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Mabry asked the Finance Director if there was a way add the department to the vendor paid check report to which she responded she didn't think so because the

way it prints out is how the software program is written. She told the board that the Auditor came back down last week for the 2nd site visit and should not need but maybe one more follow-up visit.

5. Town Administrator.

- a) The Town Administrator told the board that the Governor's Executive Order 142 did end as of July 29, 2020. Payment plans have now begun to start and will allow customers the opportunity to repay delinquent bills within 6 months. She told the board that she has sent out letters to delinquent customers informing them they need to come in and make/sign payment arrangements. Moving forward customers can be turned off if they do not pay their current bill or do not honor the payment agreement. The Administrator did ask the board to decide if they wanted to allow business's the same chance to set up payment plans since they are not included in the governor's executive order. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to extend business owners the same courtesy to set up payment plans on delinquent utility bills just like they have residential customers. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- b) The town has been approved funding in the amount of \$11,000 through the first part of the Cares Act. There will be a second round soon in which the town will be available to apply. The money can be used to help offset the additional wages cost associated with COVID-19 as well as safety/protective equipment that needed to be purchased.
- c) The Town Hall lobby door is still closed due to COVID-19. We have been accepting credit card payments as needed but are still urging customers to drop cash, checks, or money orders in an envelope through the slot in the door. The office is still operating under normal hours, Monday-Friday, 8.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. She did say that speaking for the office staff they are still a little weary about opening completely back up because it doesn't seem like cases of COVID-19 has begun declining as of yet. Commissioner Mabry remarked that he felt like the decision should be left up to the Administrator because he can understand the safety concerns of the office staff. Administrator Bess said we would leave the lobby door locked for a few more weeks then revisit the issue again in the near future to see if any changes may be warranted. The park equipment and playground remains closed at this time due to safety concerns pertaining to COVID-19.
- d) Administrator Bess informed the board that the audit visits seem to be going well and we should be on track for getting the report in on time.
- e) Administrator Bess presented the board with a copy of the personnel policy to review and asked them to note any changes they feel may be needed. The Administrator did highlight a couple of items she felt needed to be looked at such as length of probationary period, salary

ranges, merit increases by %, employment of relatives, longevity checks and employees having the choice to request taxes being withheld or not. The administrator asked the Commissioners to phone, text, or come by with any changes or suggestions they may have pertaining to the personnel policy. Once the personnel policy has been amended as needed and approved a copy will be made available to all employees.

- f) Administrator Bess informed the board that beginning in July the town began outsourcing our payroll to Paychex. Since it is a new system there have been a few minor glitches but nothing major.
- g) Administrator Bess reminded the board that Edgecombe County will begin collecting the property taxes for the Town of Pinetops beginning with the 2020 tax season. An all-call was sent out informing residents of this change. Any prior taxes will still be collected through the town.
- h) Any Lions Club repairs will need to be bid out. The Administrator told the board that she had spoken to a couple of contractors which she advised to come down and look at the property for themselves to see what type of repairs need to be done.
- i) The Town Administrator asked the Police Chief how many signs need to be order pertaining to the Weapons Ordinance. The following will be ordered, one for the park, one for the police department, one for the town hall, one for the maintenance complex, and a couple for the ballfield.

Projects we are working on.

- a) Well Rehabilitation Project – The Administrator told the board that the town has submitted the 1st pay request on the well rehabilitation project.
- b) Demolition – The bid period has been extended as it relates to demolition. The bid packages have been prepared. The town has not received any bids so far on the demolition and thus the reason the bid period has been extended.
- c) Code Enforcement Properties – Administrator Bess told the board that some additional properties will be turned over to the town attorney so they can be added to the demolition process. A couple of the properties were supposed to be brought up to code by now but nothing has been done.

USDA Loan Progress – Police Cars and Utility Truck

Monica with USDA has been requesting information as it pertains to the requested vehicle purchases to which the administrator has been complying.

NCRWA Rate Study – The Rural Water Association will begin its free rate study for the Town of Pinetops once it receives all the information it needs.

Residential Concerns.

- 1) **Grass Complaints.** The Town Administrator told the board that she had received a couple of complaints from residents via the town website. Grass cutting complaints seem to be a big one this time of year. Once she receives a complaint she goes out to look at the property, sends a letter to the homeowner advising them of the grass ordinance, if it is not cut in a specific time allotted then we get someone to cut it and they are billed. If not paid then it can be attached as a tax lien on the property.
- 2) **Speed Bumps by Ballfield.** The Police Chief recommended that speed bumps be put down near the baseball field since we have received complaints. The maintenance department looked into the cost to get this done and it will be about \$5,000.
- 3) **Recreational Opportunities.** Administrator Bess told the board that she has been inquiring about any funding available as it relates to recreational opportunities. She has received comments as it relates to baseball being allowed but basketball not being allowed as well as not allowing kids to use the playground equipment. She was also contacted from someone wanting to know if the town would be interested in taking over the Cougar Cubs. The Town Administrator and Police Chief both agreed that this would be a major undertaking for the town since we don't have a recreation department and there is so much involved in running this type of program. Commissioner Mabry suggested leaving this item on the agenda in order to get citizens feedback. There was also a suggestion about putting a survey on the town website to see what citizens would like to see.
- 4) **Handicap Access.** The Administrator was also asked who is responsible for the ramp in front of the ABC store because it is in need of repair. Commissioner Mabry stated that in the past he had requested that a walkway or ramp be installed leading up to the Gazebo but nothing has been done.

Upcoming Events.

- 1) **Suicide Walk.** Administrator Bess told the board that the individual that has been responsible for the suicide walk has moved to New Bern.
- 2) **Christmas Parade.** Kirby Fuller has inquired about this year's Christmas Parade as it relates to COVID-19. The Raleigh parade has already been cancelled. The board discussed the possibility of doing some type of tree lighting as well as encouraging the business owners to decorate. She was told by Kirby that he would try to report again in September.
- 3) **Mayor Harrell** told the board that she was contacted by an individual who is trying to clean up the Carter Cemetery and improve the service access to it. He had contacted her to make sure that was okay and to welcome any help the town might could provide. He told her that

he would let the town know the next time they meet in hopes that someone from the town could be present.

H. Items for Discussion

1. Open Projects Update – Storm water Run-Off Management Project.

Commissioner Sugg presented the board with a handout outlining the electrical service quality process as well as a storm water runoff management project update & recommendation. The electrical section basically discusses a way to track, analyze and report electrical outages. He would also like to develop a notification process alerting the public of planned/unplanned electric outages. Commissioner Sugg took a few moments to touch on the project objective as it relates to the storm water run-off management project. The main objective is to enhance the run-off capacity of existing town drainage infrastructure. Commissioner Sugg stated that the project team recommends that the board moves forward with engaging The Wooten Company to perform the first of three assessments. The first assessment will cover Sections 1, 2, and 3 which are the areas of Pinetops that have the greatest issues with storm water drainage. Cost of this assessment will be \$15,100. He noted that recommendation for the remaining two assessments will be presented to the Board at a later date. Mayor Harrell asked Commissioner Sugg if he was putting this recommendation in the form of a motion to which he responded yes. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. WWTP Update.

Commissioner Mabry told the board that the WWTP assessment is on track and they are just waiting for feedback from The Wooten Company.

3. Rate Study.

Commissioner Mabry informed the board that the Rural Water Association will be conducting a rate study for the Town of Pinetops. He wanted to make sure that the flat rate is included in the rate study that will be conducted by the Rural Water Association.

4. Transparent Billing.

Administrator Bess told the board that she had been in contact with Shane from LOGICS about the cost to restructure our billing software to be able to implement changes mentioned by Commissioner Mabry. Commissioner Mabry wanted it noted that he didn't suggest the billing software be restructured. He had inquired about being able to add or modify the rates codes on the utility bills so customers could see a breakdown of the billing codes. The quote she received from LOGICS was \$14,000 and Shane told her he would have to talk to the

software programmers because he is not sure how long this type of change request would take to complete or even if LOGICS would be willing to do it. She went on to tell the board that Shane will be at the next board meeting via ZOOM to answer any questions they have concerning this request.

5. Economic Development Plan.

Commissioner Sugg told the board that he believes the town needs to think where we could house or acquire land that already has electric and water available to entice large industries to come in near Hwy 42 or Hwy 43. Commissioner Sugg went on to say he thinks the town needs to create a plan for commercial development.

1. Items for Consideration

a. Proposed Solid Waste Collection, Recycling, Collection Agreement.

Administrator Bess took a few moments to inform the board that she had received an agreement from waste industries on what the cost would be and what is included if they begin picking up the solid waste and recyclables for the town. The garbage would be collected weekly while the recyclables would be picked up every other week. Commissioner Mabry asked that this be tabled because he would like to have time to look over the agreement. Commissioner Sugg agreed and also added that he would like a detail outline on what it currently costs the town to provide this service to its customers.

b. Food Truck Vendor.

Administrator Bess told the board that she had been contacted by a food truck vendor from Princeville inquiring about setting up a food truck in the parking lot behind the police department or possibly the parking lot at Piggly-Wiggly. She told the town administrator that she had heard that Pinetops allows food trucks in both of these locations. Administrator Bess informed her that the only truck that had been allowed to park behind the police department was the medical unit testing for COVID-19 and as far as the food trucks being allowed at the grocery store that was they set up for the parade.

c. Annexation petition request from Pinetops Baptist Church.

Administrator Bess told the board that she had received an annexation petition from Pinetops Baptist Church requesting a small portion they own that is outside of the city limits be annexed into town, mainly for insurance reasons. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to approve the annexation petition request from Pinetops Baptist Church. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

d. Pinetops Code of Ordinance.

Commissioner Mabry suggested the town's code of ordinance be put on the agenda so it can be reviewed, revised, amended and finally updated so there will be an up to date version available.

J. Adjournment

Commissioner Webb made a motion to adjourn at 9.00 p.m. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Date. 9-1-2020



Mayor Brenda Harrell

ATTESTED,



Finance Officer/Town Clerk Tammy Keesler