

**Town of Pinetops**  
**Board of Commissioners**  
**Special Called Meeting**  
**Budget Retreat Minutes**

**March 29, 2022            8:00 am - 2:00 pm**

Mayor Harrell called the Special Budget Retreat Meeting to order.

All Board members were present for the Budget Retreat Meeting. Also present was the Town Attorney, Town Administrator, Finance Officer, Public Works Director and David Phillips.

Phil Webb led the invocation.

Mayor Harrell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

There were no objections to the proposed budget retreat agenda.

The Finance Officer presented the Board with the Budget Scenario for fiscal year 2022-2023. She provided the Board with a Budget Summary that outlined what was included in the proposed budget. The proposed budget didn't contain a COLA for employees, but the budget summary outlined the cost associated with granting a 2%, 2.5%, or 3% increase. After some discussion back and forth the Board asked the Finance Officer to recalculate the cost associated with giving a 3.5% or 4% COLA. The Board felt this might be warranted since inflation has increased to 7.5%.

David Phillips presented the Board with a list of 3 employees he felt like deserved increases. In addition to the three employees he also expressed an interest in raising the vacant position from 12.01 to 13.00 hr. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to increase the vacant maintenance position to \$13.00 per hour, Jimmy Taylor be increased \$1.50 per hour, Cody Lancaster be increased \$1.00 per hour, and Mike Joyner be increased \$1.50 per hour. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

The Finance Officer asked the Board if they could firm up the salaries associated with the budgeted vacant position, especially in the administration department. She explained that budget includes the salary of a utility collection type of position which is \$31,500 but if the Board wanted to pursue trying to get a Deputy Finance Officer, they are looking at a salary range from \$31,500 to \$42,500. The Board suggested budgeting in the mid-range which would

be \$ 37,000. The Board also requested the Town Administrator review the position to see what he feels might be appropriate. The Board agreed that the P/T dispatcher was still needed so that the police department would have full dispatcher coverage from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday so the office staff wouldn't need to answer police calls.

Will Burge from Locality Network came to the Budget Retreat to discuss the possibility of providing IT services for Pinetops. He began by providing a brief history of his company. He stated he would love to provide IT services to the town, but the timing is not great because he is in the middle of two major projects. He presented the town with two options but stated that he would prefer the simple phase-in approach if the town was okay with that. The first option was a Simple Phase-In Approach which would mean that they would take over the police camera installation, take over the phone system, and spend 1 hour per month getting familiar with the town's hardware system. This option would be at a lesser cost to the town and carry a time frame of 6–8 months to complete (a year max.) The second option is a Carry-Over Plan which would be more expensive than the first option. With this option they would devote 4 hours per month at a cost of \$1,000 to go over the hardware and map the town's system. The Board asked if he could possibly come up with a written proposal by the next meeting. The Mayor thanked Mr. Burge for attending the meeting.

Commissioner Mabry asked the Board to consider taking some sort of action on a proposed electric flat rate that was discussed a couple of years ago. He briefly explained that this has been brought up numerous times without any action being taken one way or another. Currently the town has one rate for customers who use 0-750kwhs and another rate for customers that use over 750kwhs. What was discussed in the past was coming up with one flat rate and not two separate rates based on the customers kwh usage. The Board agreed that an electric rate study needed to be done so that they could finally take an informative vote on this issue. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to set an effective date of fiscal year 2023/2024 for a rate study to be completed and the Board to be prepared to vote on an electric flat rate. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to rescind his request for transparent billing since this would no longer be needed if a flat rate is implemented. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

The Finance Officer asked the Board to think about how they wanted to obligate the ARPA Funds. The town is scheduled to receive around \$393,500 which needs to be obligated by Dec. 31, 2024 and completely spent by Dec. 31, 2026. She told the Board that it looks like a lot of municipalities are obligating the funds as "Revenue Loss" which seems to alleviate much of the paper trail that is involved with Federal Funding. The Attorney commented that he has heard that also and it would be his recommendation that maybe obligating it for salaries which would free of that money for other uses. The Board asked that this suggestion be followed up on so that we can make sure the town would be complying if we chose to go that route.

The Town Administrator opened the sealed bids on the grass mowing contract. The Finance Officer told the Board that they received 4 bids but one of them could not be included because it was received after the 5:00 pm. Deadline on March 25, 2022. The bids were as following: Farmer's Lawn Service \$38,700, Carolina Gold \$42,273, and Forehand's Lawn \$38,430. All bids received consist of 18 cuts per the contracted price quoted. The Town Administrator told the Board that he would like to have time to review all the contracts with a decision being made at the April Board Meeting.

Derrick Smith and Will Larsen with Wooten Company came to the Budget Retreat to discuss the State ARPA Funds available for distressed units. He began by informing the Board that there is a maximum limit per municipality of \$15 million. This is 100% grant funds with no town match needed. The application deadline is May 2, 2022 and hopefully towns that are funded should hear back by July. Derrick told the Board that he had met with Commissioner Sugg, Phil Webb, David Phillips and Tammy Keesler the month before to discuss what projects might warrant an application. The projects discussed will include the WWTP & gravity work on incoming lines, Sewer AIA plan consists of WWTP line replacements, Water AIA plan consist of hydrant replacement and meters, Water line replacement of galvanized lines, and possible Sewer Interconnect with Tarboro. He explained that the first step would be the Town Board approving the resolutions to apply for State ARPA funding of said projects and appointing a designated/authorized signatory like the Mayor. He told the Board that he could draft the resolutions and have them to Tammy by this Friday so they can be voted on at the April meeting in order to meet the May 2, 2022 deadline. The Mayor thanked both gentlemen for attending the meeting.

David Phillips requested the Board think about creating some type of policy as it relates to employees receiving certifications. He explained that in the past employees that received certifications pertaining to their job status would also receive an increase (2.5% or 5%). As it currently stands, he has several employees that have received certifications without any sort of bonus. The Board asked the Town Administrator to check into this and make sure that whatever the Board decides is included in the personnel policy.

Commissioner Mabry made a motion to get an upgraded bid on the Lions Club Building Renovation. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Mabry made a motion to box up the memorabilia, take down all fixtures and anything of value then proceed to have the Centennial House demolished. Seconded by Commissioner Taylor. Passed. The Finance Officer inquired about getting a cost estimate of demolition so it could be included in the proposed budget. She also asked if the lot would be sold to help offset the demolition costs. After a brief discussion Commissioner Mabry rescinded

his motion. After another brief discussion, Commissioner Taylor made a motion to demolish the Centennial House. Seconded by Commissioner Harrison. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Mabry made a motion to obligate all ARPA Funds (\$393,500) as "Revenue Loss" and use them to offset salaries. This would decrease expenses and free up some money that can be used to repair the Lion's Club, demolish the Centennial House, and cover some salary related issues. The Attorney suggested double checking with the School of Government to make sure this is an allowable item and to see how a municipality documents a "Revenue Loss". Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Mabry emphasized the need to use drop box more regularly.

The Town Attorney explained the differences between the two forms of government and the process that must be followed in order to change it. He went on to say that if it is changed it must remain that way for at least two years. The main thing is that if it is changed the Board members would have to be consistent in deferring all employee issues to the Town Administrator. If it is changed the Board would be out of compliance if the manager leaves and that position remains vacant for any time. The Board asked the Attorney to draft a resolution to amend the town Personnel Policy to defer all employee issues to the Town Administrator.

The Attorney provided the Board with a list of Town Owned Properties. He explained that the Board could vote to get rid of any property they are not using but the foreclosure process can take up to 9 months. The Board should weigh the cost of foreclosure and tax liens to determine if that option is in the towns best interest financially.

Commissioner Taylor inquired about the process of getting vacant lots in town cut. The Attorney explained that first a letter is sent to the property owner advising them they are in violation of the town's ordinance and if not corrected the town will take the next appropriate steps. If the property owner does not comply the town will then have the lot mowed, an invoice sent to the owner, and if not paid a tax lien can be attached to the property. The Attorney explained that a master list of all offenders can be sent to his office once a year and filed together.

The Pinetops Community Development Advisory Board By-Laws was recently sent to the Town Attorney who proceeded to make a couple of modifications to the draft for Board review. Commissioner Mabry will make the suggested changes and send it back to the Attorney who will then proceed to draft it in the corrected format for official Board approval.

Commissioner Mabry suggested on the Pinetops Community Development Advisory Application that a line item be added asking if they own property or a business inside the Town of Pinetops.

He also suggested deleting the line items dealing with running for the Advisory Board if you reside within the ETJ.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to implement a Storm Water Fee to customers in the amount of \$2.00 to be effective July 1, 2022. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mabry seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

Date: April 5, 2022

  
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Mayor Brenda Harrell

ATTESTED:

  
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Finance Officer/Town Clerk Tammy Keesler