

Town of Pinetops
Board of Commissioners
Regular Monthly Meeting (Also available via Zoom)
Minutes
October 6, 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, Jameson Woolen, 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 October 6 meeting to order at 6.00p.m. The Mayor took a moment to welcome everyone that was present via Zoom.

B. Invocation

Invocation was given by Phil Webb.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Harrell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Proposed Agenda

Administrator Bess requested that the EAP Partnership be added to the Agenda under Items for Discussion. Mayor Harrell called for a motion to approve the proposed agenda with the EAP item added under Items for Consideration. Commissioner Taylor made a motion to approve the proposed agenda as amended. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Sugg made a motion to approve the minutes from the Board Meeting held on September 1, 2020. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Webb. Motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Sugg asked if the action items discussed during the September 1, 2020 meeting are being worked on. Administrator Bess stated that they are and some of the items will be discussed further tonight during her Town Administrator Report.

F. Public Comments

1) **Mary Jones – 206 N Martin Luther King St.**

Administrator Bess told the Board that she had received a note left in the door asking about the status of the flat rate for electric service. The note addressed the fact that this had already been voted on in the past but the change has not occurred as of yet and she would like an answer as to why it hasn't been done. The note went on to say that the electric should be broken down on the utility bill. Commissioner Mabry stated that the electric sales flat rate was addressed and approved by the prior Board during the August 6, 2019 meeting but it just didn't state a date that it was to be implemented. Commissioner Taylor stated that she would like the minutes to reflect that the Town Board will be looking into the issue further and try to get it resolved.

G. Departmental Reports

1. **Police Department:** Chief Harrell read over the police report for the month of September. The total calls answered or initiated during the month was 1180. There were 27 traffic stops and 8 citations issued. Major crimes have continued to slow down in the last month. The police department will be down to 5 full-time officers in the next couple of weeks. This will make the department short 2 officers. One dispatcher is still out sick but he has a return to work date scheduled for the 1st of November. Chief Harrell has applied for another Governor's Crime Commission Grant in the amount of \$25,000. He reported we still have a balance of \$15,358.62 remaining on the current grant.
2. **Public Works Department:** (a) Phil Webb read over the water and sewer report for the month of September. The report shows the total million gallons of sewer flow and water discharge for the month. The sewer flow totaled 9.08million gallons for the month of September. The water discharge totaled 5.11 million gallons for the month of September. He explained that this is the 4th time this year that the town has been over the limit and will probably receive a penalty violation. For the month of September a section of town was impacted by an electrical outage when a pecan tree limb fell on a power line in York Trailer Park. The recovery time was approximately 2 hours.

The area impacted was Irwin Street from Second Street to Third Street and York Trailer Park. He also presented the Board with a list of items the maintenance department has been working on this month. The handicap ramp and sidewalk are both formed and ready for concrete. He is also seeking cost estimates for repairs on the roof of the centennial house.

3. **Fire Department.** The Fire Chief presented the Fire report for the month of September. The total calls for the month of September was 6. The report consisted of 2 Medical Responder Calls, 3 mutual aid fire calls, and 1 town fire call. Hours in Training & Meetings = 76. Total volunteer hours was 82. The Chief wanted the citizens to be aware of the new ISO Public Protection Classification Class 3 that will take effect in town on November 1, 2020. The new ISO grade will not affect home owners insurance but commercial and industrial property owners should see a significant rate reduction in premiums. Chief Burress told the Board that the radio replacement system has been completed. The total cost of this project was \$45,160 but the town's cost was only \$13,777 because most of the cost was funded through grants. The grants were funded by the NC Department of Insurance, BCBS of NC and the U.S. Forestry Service.
4. **Finance Officer.** Ms. Keesler gave the financial report for the month of September. The general fund had a positive balance of \$24,892.61. The electric fund had a positive balance of \$111,929.30 for the month of September while the water/sewer fund ended the month with a negative balance of \$5,602.94. She presented the Board with a Paid Check Report for the month of September along with a Revenue and Expenditure Report. She explained that the payroll amount was left blank in all funds because she has not received the General Ledger information from Paychex since they started doing our payroll. The payroll, payroll taxes, and state with-holding has not been posted for the months of July, August, and September.
5. **Town Administrator.**
 - a) **COVID-19 Updates.**

The Town Administrator informed the Board that No-Cost COVID-19 Testing has been scheduled to take place beginning October 8, 2020, Monday-Friday in the Town Hall parking lot. The drive-thru testing will be by appointment only and will take place each day from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. The test sites will be for the community of Pinetops and Princeville. The COVID-19 testing will be advertised on the town's website as well as through the All-Call System.

b) **Office Position.**

The Town Administrator told the Board that Holding Temporary sent over 1 candidate to be interviewed for the office position. She asked for the Board's guidance on whether to approach this position as temporary or go ahead and hire someone full-time. The issue she is running into is that most of the individuals are looking for full-time. She also explained that the only way this person would be able to help with day to day operations is if they are trained by LOGICS on the computer system and she is not sure how much this would cost. They normally charge by the hour for training but you can't really say how quickly a new person will learn the system, especially if they don't have any prior knowledge of it. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to hire a full-time (temporary) person for the office and to proceed with the LOGICS training after a couple of weeks if the individual seems to be a good fit. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

c) **Auditor Site Visit.**

Administrator Bess reported that the Auditor is scheduled to come on Friday, October 9, 2020 for a final site visit and walk-through.

d) **Strategic Planning Update.**

The strategic planning is scheduled to start in January. Commissioner Sugg mentioned that he would like to see a letter of intent. Commissioner Mabry suggested scheduling a few meetings in November and December with the Board to discuss strategic planning before the scheduled date in January. He suggested maybe holding a special call meeting at 5:00 p.m. on the regularly scheduled Board Meeting date in November, December, and January.

e) **Lions Club Repairs.**

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. She told the Board that she would like to have Phil present when she meets with them. Currently she is still waiting on receiving estimates from the contractors.

Projects we are working on.

- a) **Well Rehabilitation Project** – The Administrator told the Board that she had received payment for the 1st and 2nd pay request she submitted. The well rehabilitation project continues progressing.

- b) NCRWA Rate Study – The NC Rural Water Association began its free rate study for the Town of Pinetops on September 17, 2020. Administrator Bess and Public Works Director Webb showed Natalie from the NC Rural Water Association all of the town facilities when she came down. Administrator Bess also had to provide Natalie with a year's worth of utility bills for the town facilities.

Upcoming Events.

- 1) Christmas Parade. The Christmas parade has been cancelled this year due to COVID-19 but Kirby is looking into some type of alternative such as business's decorating their store fronts.
- 2) Trick or Treat. Mayor Harrell asked the Board's thoughts as it pertains to Trick or Treat this year since COVID-19 is still an issue. She explained that the CDC is recommending no house to house this year. The Board suggested sending out an All-Call stating if you choose to trick or treat please make sure to follow COVID guidelines and be safe.

H. Items for Discussion

1. Open Projects Update

i. Storm water Run-Off Management Project.

Commissioner Sugg stated they are going to keep getting assessments on cost of needed projects. The town will try to repair/fix what they can themselves first before calling in contractors. James Wooten proceeded to give the Board a report on doing some jobs in house so not all has to be outsourced. The town workers have been trying to clear out overgrown ditches of vegetation. They have also been busy cleaning off some of the curbing. Drainage pipes have been installed in outflow ditch #2. He did ask if the town could begin enforcing the yard waste ordinance to help alleviate the amount of yard debris going into the storm system. Commissioner Mabry suggested the Board implement a street easement permit application which would require residents to apply for the permit prior to doing any improvements to ditches and drainages which will hold them accountable. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Sugg wanted the residents to be educated on what is and is not allowed. One suggestion was that the in town right-of-way permit could go directly to the utility department so they could go out and advise residents.

ii. **WWTP Update.**

Commissioner Mabry reported the application for grant funds has been picked up and the Board is just waiting for feedback from The Wooten Company as it pertains to the WWTP assessment.

iii. **Utilities– Transparent Billing & Electric Sales Flat Rate.**

Commissioner Mabry suggested these be added and discussed under the strategic planning.

iv. **Economic Development Plan.**

Commissioner Sugg suggested this also be added and discussed under the strategic planning.

2. **Board Oversight of Financial Operations.**

Commissioner Sugg stated he wants to know more about the financial operations of the town. He is a financial person and he would like to get familiar with the daily operations. He told Administrator Bess that he will try to schedule a time with her to discuss this further.

I. Items for Consideration

1. **Proposed Solid Waste Collection, Recycling, Collection Agreement.**

Commissioner Sugg prepared a cost analysis on residential curbside trash and recyclable collection as it relates to considering keeping it in-house or outsourcing it to Waste Industries. The cost analysis shows that the town would be saving money by keeping it in-house at this time. Commissioner Webb made a motion to keep the trash and recycle collection in-house. Commissioner Mabry seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. **Potential Board Vacancy.**

Administrator Bess told the Board that Commissioner Florence Pender suggested she will be resigning but to date we have not officially received a resignation letter so it is not certain yet.

3. **Scheduled Strategic Planning Meeting.**

This item was already discussed earlier during this meeting. The Board decided to meet at 5:00 p.m. in November, December, and January prior to the regularly scheduled Board Meetings to discuss strategic planning. The earlier time will be considered a special call meeting.

J. Closed Session for Personnel Matters

Commissioner Mabry made a motion to go out of Regular Session and into Closed Session to discuss Personnel Matters. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to go out of Closed Session and back into Regular Session. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. Motion passed.

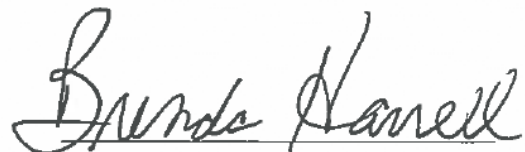
Commissioner Webb made a motion to increase David Phillip's pay from \$22.51 to \$25.00 per hour. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Commissioner Mabry opposed the motion. Motion passed.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to increase Jameson Wooten's pay from \$14.35 to \$16.35 per hour. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. Commissioner Mabry opposed the motion. Motion passed.

K. Adjournment

Commissioner Webb made a motion to adjourn at 8:54 p.m. Commissioner Mabry seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Date, 11/3/2020



Mayor Brenda Harrell

ATTESTED.


Finance Officer/Town Clerk Tammy Keesler