

Town of Pinetops
Board of Commissioners
Regular Monthly Meeting (Also available via Zoom)
Minutes
September 1, 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 September 1st 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 Phil Webb.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Harrell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Proposed Agenda

Commissioner Mabry requested two items be added to the agenda under Items for Consideration. The first item was the Pinetops Code of Ordinance and the second item was Recreational Opportunities. Administrator Bess stated that she did have recreation opportunities included already on her administrator report. Mayor Harrell called for a motion to approve the proposed agenda with the two

items added under the Items for Consideration. Commissioner Sugg made a motion to approve the proposed agenda as amended. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Mabry wanted to make sure that the flat rate is included in the rate study that will be conducted by the Rural Water Association. This was discussed at the last meeting but the rate study didn't specifically state that the flat rate would be part of the rate study process. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to approve the minutes from the Board Meeting held on August 11, 2020 as amended. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Sugg. Motion passed unanimously.

F. Public Comments

1) Bernice Anderson – 214 N. Martin Luther King

Administrator Bess told the board that she had been contacted by Bernice Anderson concerning the possibility of installing speed bumps in their neighborhood because of kids at play. Chief Harrell stated that it was the town's decision but they need to consider since it was for a neighborhood they may get additional requests from other neighborhoods. He also suggested talking to the neighbors in the area to get their input if they feel speed bumps are warranted or not. Commissioner Mabry suggested maybe Chief Harrell could run radar in neighborhood areas to see if he feels speed bumps are warranted. Chief Harrell told the board that he would speak to the neighbors in the area to get their consensus and report back at the October meeting.

2) Carolyn Hopkins – 314 N 6th St.

Administrator Bess was contacted by Carolyn Hopkins inquiring as to when the flat rate might become effective.

3) Commissioner Webb had a question concerning the sidewalk being pulled all the way to the Gazebo. He stated that he could see making it handicap accessible but did not support pulling an entire sidewalk up to the gazebo. The Public Works Director stated that the handicap ramp would have to be at least 6-8 ft. in order to achieve the right slope needed for wheelchair accessibility. After a brief discussion the board decided that any member interested could meet with the public works director immediately following the meeting at the Gazebo to discuss it further.

4) Shane Ireland – LOGICS Software

Commissioner Mabry explained that he was interested in being able to add or modify rate codes on the utility bill to show a breakdown in kWh levels. He never suggested the billing software be restructured. Shane explained this is a detail structure and would cost close to \$14,000 to

make these types of software changes. To make sure they were on the same page as far as to what was requested to be changed; Shane asked for another email or copy from Commissioner Mabry of the recommended format then he would report back with the price. Commissioner Mabry replied that he would email him directly with the format change that he was requesting.

G. Departmental Reports

1. **Police Department.** Chief Harrell read over the police report for the month of August. The total calls for the month was 662. There were 23 traffic stops and 14 citations issued. Major crimes have continued to slow down in the last month. 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. Commissioner Sugg requested a list of all grants received by each department, how much was received, and what the funds can be used for.

2. **Public Works Department.** (a) Phil Webb read over the water and sewer report for the month of August. The report shows the total million gallons of sewer flow and water discharge for the month. The sewer flow totaled 11.06 million gallons for the month of August. The water discharge totaled 5.60 million gallons for the month of August. As of last month he will also be presenting a power outage report for each month. For the month of August there was a lightning strike reported on Wilson's line. This impacted the town for approximately 1.50 hours. One customer was also impacted by a water leak which caused him to lose water service at his residence on NC Hwy. 258 South. The outages will be reported to the public through the All-Call system, town website, and monthly at the board meetings.
Phil Webb told the board that we may get our 3rd penalty violation for excessive water due to the unusually high amount of rain that we have received. Commissioner Sugg mentioned that hopefully the storm water run-off project will help alleviate these type of penalties in the future.

3. **Fire Department.** The Fire Chief presented the Fire report for the month of August. The total calls for the month of August was 1. The report consisted of 1 Medical Responder Call. Hours in Training & Meetings = 104. Total volunteer hours was 110. The Chief told Phil that he could print out how much rain we have received in a year or by the day if he needs that type of information for reports he has to file.

4. **Finance Officer.** Ms. Keesler gave the financial report for the month of August. The general fund had a negative balance of \$6,387.17. The electric fund had a negative balance of \$11,255.48 for the month of August while the water/sewer fund ended the month with a positive balance of

\$25,906.80. She presented the board with a Paid Check Report for the month of August 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. She told the board that she will do her best to get the minutes out quicker so they can have time to review them prior to the meeting. Due to the staff shortage time has been limited.

5. Town Administrator.

a) COVID-19 Updates.

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. She mentioned that a couple of customers have already left owing bills not paid during the COVID-19 period. The town can try to collect this money through debt set-off which basically puts a lien towards Tax Refunds and Lottery winnings.

b) FEMA/CARES Act.

The town was approved for \$10,000 funding through the FEMA/CARES Act. The town also qualifies for \$11,000 bringing the total to \$21,000. The second round should be available soon.

c) Town Policies/Closures.

The Town Hall lobby door is still closed due to COVID-19. We have been operating under normal business hours which are Monday-Friday 8:00 -5:00. Customers requiring personal service have been allowed to come inside if needed. Normally, customers requiring such service have either called ahead or knocked on the lobby door. One Commissioner suggested we may want to put a notice on the door letting customers know to knock if they need assistance.

As per the Governor's order parks will be allowed to reopen as of Friday.

d) Strategic Planning Update.

Administrator Bess told the board that there has been a meeting tentatively scheduled for September. She will let the board know when a definite date has been set. Commissioner Mabry mentioned that some of the items we are currently working on are perfect to be included in the strategic planning.

e) **Personnel Manual Update.**

Administrator Bess presented the board with a copy of the personnel policy to review at the last meeting and asked them to note any changes they feel may be needed. The Administrator Bess stated that she had received good feedback from both the police chief and board members. Commissioner Sugg mentioned he would like to see job descriptions included in the appendix.

f) **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.

g) **Weapons Ordinance Implementation/Signage.**

The Town Administrator has currently ordered 4 signs but can purchase additional ones plus mounting hardware if needed. Commissioner Sugg suggested ordering additional ones for the ballfield area. Chief Harrell suggested an additional 6 signs for that area; 4 around the ballfield plus 2 on the concession stands.

h) **AIA Progress.**

Administrator Bess will send them a certified copy of the rate sheet for the town as requested.

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. The town should receive the 1st pay request funds on September 11th and the 2nd pay request funds on September 24th.
- 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) **Grass Cutting Update** – Administrator Bess has been sending out letters concerning the grass ordinance as needed.

USDA Loan Progress – Police Cars and Utility Truck

Administrator Bess has been getting USDA all information requested for the purchase of police cars and a utility truck.

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. Administrator Bess told the board that they

are currently scheduled to come on September 17 but she still needs to get them a copy of 1 years' worth of utility bills.

Town Computers – Administrator Bess told the board that she had met with the computer guy from MRL about prioritizing the town's computer system. The town is currently having issues with available disk space. He explained during that meeting that a lot of the town system is outdated so he is going to try to prioritize the needs. This will be part of our strategic planning.

Residential Concerns.

- 1) **Grass Cutting Complaints.**
- 2) **Speed Bumps by Ballfield.** The Police Chief recommended that speed bumps be put down near the baseball field since we have received complaints. During the last meeting the maintenance department looked into the cost to get this done and stated it would be about \$5,000. Administrator Bess told the board that 31 speed bumps had been ordered for use by the ballfields.
- 3) **Recreational Opportunities.** Commissioner Mabry suggested this topic be included in our strategic planning. The virtual meeting referenced to by Ben Farmer is with Bruce, the prosperity zone planner, and the Town of Stantonsburg. He suggested the board meet first to see what items need to be identified and prioritized as it relates to the town's strategic planning. The board scheduled a special call meeting (planning session) on September 23rd at 1.30 to discuss this issue further.
- 4) **Handicap Access.**

Upcoming Events.

- 1) **Christmas Parade.** The Christmas parade meeting scheduled for Monday was cancelled so Administrator Bess had nothing to report to the board at this time.

H. Items for Discussion

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

Commissioner Sugg mentioned at last meeting town approved spending \$15,100 to get The Wooten Company to gather estimates on our storm water run-off project.

2. **Electrical Service Quality Process.**

Commissioner Sugg reported that the electrical service quality process was implemented on August 27th. Moving forward this process will be used to keep citizens informed of power outages, leaks, etc. This process will be available for all the main services provided such as electric, water, and sewer.

3. WWTP Update.

Commissioner Mabry reported there are no changes and the board is just waiting for feedback from The Wooten Company as it pertains to the WWTP assessment.

4. Economic Development Plan.

Commissioner Mabry wants to make sure the Code of Ordinance and Recreational Opportunities get included in the Strategic Planning. Commissioner Sugg suggested we wait to discuss the economic development plan in more detail at our strategic planning session.

I. Items for Consideration

a. Chester Lancaster – Proposal

Administrator Bess presented the board with 3 estimates she received on installing a 4" thick sidewalk on N E First Street in front of Chester Lancaster's property. The sidewalk would be approximately 12' x 56'. The estimates ranged from \$3,600 to \$4,875. The estimates were to replace the existing sidewalk as it currently is but would include an additional driveway. The public works director told the board that he felt like the towns maintenance crew could do the job for around \$1,500 which would be the cost of the concrete. The property owner, Chester Lancaster had no problem with the town pulling the sidewalk but did suggest it be done prior to construction beginning so the sidewalk doesn't get damaged. He also stated that he realized once the sidewalk is pulled and if it is damaged in any way during construction the repairs will be his responsibility. Commissioner Sugg made a motion that the town provide the sidewalk before construction is scheduled to begin and the maintenance crew will be responsible for pulling the sidewalk. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. The motion passed.

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

Administrator Bess reported that the Finance Officer had presented the board with a cost comparison between town services and contracted services on solid waste collection as requested at the last meeting. Commissioner Sugg stated that after reviewing the agreement he felt we would need an early withdraw coverage provision so either side could get out early when there is a written agreement submitted by an agreed upon time frame.

Commissioner Sugg and Commissioner Mabry wanted to check on what price the town could get for the garbage truck and also see if Waste Industries would be interested in purchasing it.

c. **Community Event – September 29, 2020**

Administrator Bess told the board that she had seen a flyer advertising an event scheduled to be held in Pinetops on September 19th in a residential area but the town had not been contacted about it. The flyer stated that the event would be held from around 3.00 p.m. – 7.00 p.m. Chief Harrell explained that he had spoken to one of the gentlemen hosting the event and was told that it would be held on private property. He went on to say that they had not requested any street closure for the event. The Governor's order which becomes effective this Friday will allow up to 50 people gathering outside.

J. **Closed Session for Personnel Matters**

Commissioner Sugg made a motion to go out of Regular Session and into Closed Session to discuss Personnel Matters. Commissioner Webb 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.

K. **Adjournment**

Commissioner Webb made a motion to adjourn at 8,10 p.m. Commissioner Mabry seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Date, 10/5/2020


Mayor Brenda Harrell

ATTESTED:


Finance Officer/Town Clerk Tammy Keesler