

**TOWN OF STANTONSBURG**

DATE: January 10, 2022

Public Hearing

Mayor Rhodes called the Public Hearing to order at approximately 6:35 pm located at the Town Hall with the following Council members present: Donnie Bass, Ben Harper, Walt Bynum, Ken Horne, and Steve Mooring. Also present were Town Manager David Beaman, Town Clerk Cindy Rhodes, Deputy Town Clerk Tammy Webb, and Town Attorney Slade Rand. No members of the public were present.

**Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Prayer:** Mayor Rhodes led the Pledge of Allegiance and opened the hearing with prayer.

**Public Hearing of Annexation Hearing:** Town Manager David Beaman presented the Council with the petition for annexation of Briar Farm Phase 1. He indicated that the staff is recommending approval based on finalizing utilities. After some discussion Councilman Harper made the motion to accept the annexation. All were in favor, passed unanimously.

Mayor Coley Rhodes asked for a motion to recess the meeting to move to the Community Building for the regular meeting. The Public Hearing recessed at approximately 6:50 pm.

**TOWN OF STANTONSBURG**

DATE: January 10, 2022

Regular Meeting

The regular monthly meeting reconvened at the Community Center at approximately 7:10 pm. Mayor Coley Rhodes called the meeting to order with the following Council members were present: Donnie Bass, Ben Harper, Walt Bynum, Ken Horne, and Steve Mooring. Also present were Town Manager David Beaman, Town Clerk Cindy Rhodes, Deputy Town Clerk Tammy Webb, Town Attorney Slade Rand, and various members of the public.

**Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Prayer:** Mayor Rhodes led the Pledge of Allegiance and opened the meeting with prayer.

**A. Approval of December 2021 Minutes:** All Council members voted to approve the December regular and closed session minutes. Mr. Bill Edmundson questioned the council on the procedure for voting on approval of the minutes. Mayor Rhodes stated that they had been approved.

**B. Financial Report:**

*December: Receipts \$391,421.18 Disbursements \$194,762.55 Difference \$196,658.63*

**C. Invoices for Payment:** After some discussion Councilman Horne made a motion to approve the invoices for payment. All were in favor, passed unanimously.

#### **D. Departmental/Committee Reports:**

- **Police Department Report:** Police Chief Rosario was not present due to attending a conference. Sergeant Rivera had nothing to add to the report included in the council packet.
- **Parks & Recreation Committee:** Mayor Rhodes stated Eartha Butler is the chairperson for Parks & Recreation. They meet on the first Thursday of the month. Bill Edmundson gave a brief description of the what the Parks and Recreation Committee handles. He also wanted to make sure the community was aware of the \$65,000 grant the town received. He shared his concerns on how he thought the grant was being spent. He stated his understanding was the Town Manager, not the committee, was making the decisions on how to utilize the money. Mayor Rhodes addressed these concerns and explained what and the how the grant was written. She went on the explain how the money is to be spent and committee discussed this at their last meeting and participates in the decision process.
- **Appearance Committee:** Had nothing to report.
- **Events Committee:** Mayor Rhodes took this time to thank this committee for their participation, planning and guidance with the Christmas festivities and Tree Lighting.
- **Fire Department Report:** The Fire Chief gave a report from last quarter. He shared the number and types of calls the department toned out to. He added there was 29 on the roster and made the council aware of new equipment they had purchased.

**E. Public Present:** Mayor Rhodes welcomed everyone to the meeting. She explained the meeting dates and times are published on our website. She also shared other ways the community can keep up with events and any notices published by the town. As we were ready for the public comments the mayor explained the process for speaking.

- **Marie Edmundson:** Shared that the community center is a separate entity from the town. She also explained there is board, which she is the chairperson, who makes decisions for the center. Ms. Edmundson added that she is there from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm if you have any questions to please come to the center and she will help you. She went on to ask the council members if they know about a program called DEHC. She went on to explain a program called DEHC and that they help updating and weatherizing older homes. Our senior citizens need to know about this. She added she would like to see the town apply for these programs that will help them. Reminded the council that the railroad divides the town and that everyone on both sides vote and that they will be voting for people who stand for all people in the town. Speaking for herself and others she said that when people who have served the town leave, they should be recognized.
- **Barry Geller:** Shared his concerns about the police department and the sale of the building which the police department is in at present. He also shared his concerns about the mold remediation done in the old police department and how it was overseen. Mr. Geller went on to express his concerns about the council, their decision processes, and the fact that minutes are not available on website past September 2021. He said that he was going to start holding the council accountable for the decisions made for the town.

- Carla Davis: Expressed concerns about her neighbors on Thompson Avenue and how their property looks like a junk yard. She explained that the neighboring property has decreased her property value. She asked for the council members to drive by the property to see what it looks like. She added she will be at every meeting until something is done about this.
- JoAnn Lucas: Thanked Mr. Geller for his comments about the police department and shared her agreement with his concerns. She also shared concerns and a dislike about a tree that had cut down by one of the council members from when she was on the appearance committee.
- Hubert Tyson Jr.: Shared his concerns about the police departments budget and how they are getting new vehicles. He went on to share an incident where he had to call 911 three times and the county sheriff's department responded 12 minutes and 25 minutes for the town police department to arrive. He added the department does not need \$417,000 budget and new vehicles when the town does not have a decent garbage truck.
- Iris Batts: Discussed the high light bills and process for asking for an extension. She shared her thoughts that anyone should be able to ask for an extension anytime and not just twice a year since there is a cost to get an extension. There was agreement from the community present.
- Tabitha Bailey: Expressed her thanks to the community for coming and expressing their concerns about the town. She expressed her concerns about the 15% increase in the electric rates and that no phone calls went out to make everyone aware. She shared her concerns regarding the minutes on the website, as well as budgetary concerns. Ms. Bailey also discussed a time where the mayor and council took a tour of the old police department to see how bad the mold was and that the building should be torn down. She said the community should be paying attention to the budget.
- Doris Cox: Discussed her light bill and why it is so high because she is never home. She expressed concerns that the meters are not being read correctly. She went on to tell the council that she has fallen in her yard multiple times because of holes.
- Unknown Citizen: Expressed his thanks to the mayor and the council for the job they are doing. He said he has been in their shoes and that it is a thankless job.
- Bill Edmundson: Addressed three of the council members (not named) and asked what happened to the called meeting that was to happen to reverse the decision to sale the buildings that the police department is in. He said they could get with him after the meeting. He questioned why the town does not use the phone tree about power outages or something major that the town needs to know. Then he questioned the proper procedure to go into closed session from a town business part of town meeting. Also, he questioned why copies of the minutes were not handed out to the town at meetings. He added this used to be done, but not anymore. He questioned the ethics of the town council.
- Unknown Citizen: Stated he is in support of our police department. He also added that he agrees that there needs to be more business on Main Street. The town needs to do whatever it needs to get more business.
- Connie Wainwright Blythe: Expressed an understanding and support of why the electric rates went up. She said everything is going up, it is what is. She was also in

support of the new businesses coming into town. She expressed support for the mayor and council and said that the town is much better since the mayor and council were voted in. She called out others in the meeting for being rude and making this meeting a "witch hunt."

- Ruth Hall: Stated that she could see both sides the arguments tonight and it would be better if we could work together to solve the problems. She expressed her concerns about the electric rates going up so drastically, but she added that everything is going up. She also said as far as the police department goes about the incident with Mr. Tyson, if she needs to call the police, she hopes they will respond faster.

Due to multiple disruptions and outbursts Ms. JoAnn Lucas was removed from the meeting and Mr. Barry Gellar was reprimanded.

Mayor Rhodes thanked everyone for coming and she added that everyone who spoke will receive an acknowledgement from herself or the town manager.

**F. Town Manager's Report:** Town Manager, David Beaman, presented the following items:

- Requested the council appoint an alternate to the Upper Coastal Plains Council of Government. Currently the mayor serves as a board member, and we need to appoint an alternate. David said he did not mind doing this if the council agrees. Council Member Harper made the motion to appoint Town Manager David Beaman as alternate representative for the Upper Coastal Plains Council of Government. All were in favor, passed unanimously.
- This is just FYI. He informed the council about bids received for the surplus equipment. The bids were \$100 for each car and \$1,000 for the backhoe. It is my intent to sell these items.
- Requesting approval of contract amendment for FY2020-2021 audit completion. Council Member Harper made the motion approve the contract amendment. All were in favor, passed unanimously.

**G.** Discussion of offer to purchase 107 and 109 S. Main Street. He stated he did some research talked to a commercial realtor who said they have sold buildings for much less and we could counter if we wanted to. He got a quote for indoor air quality testing, visual mold inspection testing and mold sampling for the old police department for \$775.00. He also met with a contractor who very quickly turned around a full interior remodel. The quote of \$101,129.16 is in the packet. Town Manager informed the Council that this is just information for you to consider. Per legal requirements we did advertise for upset bids for the building, no further bids were received so we still have the offer on the table that the council needs to act on. There was more discussion regarding contractor and the quote and possible more costs with mold. Council Member Mooring questioned if there was a contingency plan for if mold was found or where to house employees while remediation was being done. David stated that more discussion would need to take place. Mayor Rhodes proceeded to remind the council of motions and votes from the December 2021 meeting. She stated if we proceed, there could be a closing date of February 10<sup>th</sup> and that the police department would have to move back to 114 E. Commercial Avenue.

She proceeded to explain the work that has been completed in that building. She asked if there was a motion to move forward with the renovation of the 114 E. Commercial Avenue building. David added just to make sure the mayor and council was aware to complete that work we do have to advertise to get sealed bids with a scope of work to be done. More discussion ensued regarding the work to be done and that issues have not been fixed. Mayor Pro-Tem Bass share pictures of water standing and seeping into the building and stated that the mold will come back. There was more discussion of water proofing and work that still needed to be done. Mayor Rhodes asked what the pleasure of the council was. Mayor Pro-Tem asked are we talking about renovations or to accept the offer of \$50,000.00. Town Attorney Slade Rand gave direction on how make the motion as far as with conditions and whether to accept the offer and the terms. More discussion ensued about the timeline and conditions to accept offer. Council Member Bynum feels that more evaluation for mold needs to take place. David shared that we have a quote for \$2600.00 for air quality testing on various Town buildings. Council Member Bynum made the motion to have mold testing completed at the Library, Police Department, Old Police Department Building, Town Hall and Wastewater Treatment Plant lab by HomeWorks NC. All were in favor, passed unanimously. Council Member Mooring made a motion to accept the offer for the building based upon complete and total mold remediation. With no further discussion the mayor asked for a vote. The vote was 2 yes votes (Council Member Bynum and Council Member Mooring) with 3 no votes (Council Member Harper, Council Member Horne, and Mayor Pro-Tem Bass). Mayor Rhodes asked the Town Attorney to contact Mr. Palumbo to inform the sale is no longer an option. Mr. Rand stated he would contact him.

- Requested to go into closed session to discuss personnel merit raises at the end of the meeting.

**H. Councilman Mooring:** Had nothing to discuss.

**I. Mayor Pro-Tem Bass:** Asked how we do get information out to the community? David stated that the one-call system is best and easiest way to get information out. There was more discussion with ideas on how to reach out and share information with the public. David to investigate ideas such as brochures and other ways to get information out. Options discussed were website, flyers at the front desk, and posted on the bulletin board.

**J. Councilman Bynum:** Had nothing to discuss.

**K. Councilman Horne:** Noticed the park signs and stated they look good but is concerned that goals are still crooked. He stated that we need to decide who is going to do the upkeep on the park, is it going to be the Parks and Recreation Committee or the town.

**L. Councilman Harper:** Had nothing to discuss.

**M. Mayor Rhodes:** Discussed the Thompson Avenue property discussed during the public comments. The mayor shared this is the property she has asked the council to go by and look at. If drugs are involved this is a police matter. She also asked the police department

to go by there and talk to them. Reports have been completed but nothing is enforced. She has pictures and keeps asking for our ordinances to be enforced. Why are our ordinances not being enforced? Mr. Rand gave some legal direction on how proceed. Any future correspondence and next steps should come out of Town Manager's office. David and Mr. Rand to discuss further. She added that she addressed the Board of Education, and she shared the letter she has sent to have read at the next meeting. As far as the equipment by the railroad tracks, she spoke with someone with the railroad, and they are going to be replacing ties at each one of the crossings. They will be sending in crews to get this done. She asked him about the trash at one of the crossings and he took a front loader and hauled it off. The gentleman explained that they are aware of the piece of equipment and will be removing it but are not sure when.

**N. Closed Session:** Council Member Horne motion to go into closed session at 9:15 pm to discuss personnel issues. All were in favor, passed unanimously.

**O. Open Session:**

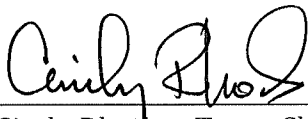
Open session resumed at 9:30 pm.

Council Member Harper made the motion to approve the December 2021 minutes as read. All were in favor, passed unanimously.

Mayor Pro-Tem Bass made the motion to approve employee merit raises. All were in favor, passed unanimously.

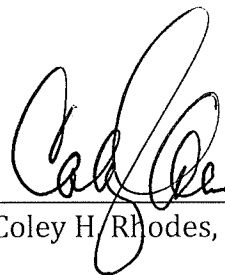
With no further business Mayor Rhodes asked for a motion to adjourn. Council Member Bynum made the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:33 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



---

Cindy Rhodes, Town Clerk



---

Coley H. Rhodes, Mayor