

Town of Stantonsburg
Regular Board Meeting & Budget Hearing
June 17, 2024

Mayor Coley Rhodes called the monthly Town Council meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The following council members were present: Donnie Bass, Ben Harper, Jackie Grice, Eartha Butler, and Steve Mooring. Also present was Town Manager Brian Hawley, Town Clerk Alexis Whitley, and Town Attorney Slade Rand.

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

Approval of Agenda: Mayor Rhodes requested to amend the agenda by adding item #9 “July Board Meeting” under New Business. Town Manager Hawley requested to amend the agenda to add discussion on a Workshop for June 27th. Councilman Mooring made a motion to approve the agenda. Passed unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes: Councilman Mooring requested the word “draft” be watermarked across the drafted minutes. He also verified the 85-percentage amount for the principal forgiveness on page 5. May 13th Regular Board Meeting Minutes were approved as written. May 13th Closed Session Minutes were approved as written.

Budget Hearing

Mayor Rhodes opened the Budget Hearing for the 2024/2025 Budget.

Town Manager Hawley presented the 2024/2025 Budget. He was able to make a modification to the tax rate dropping it by 10 cents at 50 cents per \$100.00.

Councilman Mooring had concerns regarding the Local and State Sales Tax Refund budgeted amount and where the reimbursement of those funds will come from. Manager Hawley stated that audits will not prohibit reimbursement of all funds and the town is awaiting a response on their appeal letter to LGC.

All services have gone up approximately 5%. A 3% cost-of-living adjustment will be given to all employees, the mayor and council. Councilman Mooring requested the total amount of increase in pay with the 3%.

Councilman Mooring stated that in 2016 a transfer of \$250,000.00 from the electric fund to the general fund. Our last audit 2021, \$398,000.00 was transferred from the electric fund to the general fund. The state recommended to not transfer money from the electric fund. Councilman Mooring was hoping the town could go revenue neutral, which did not occur. He discussed tax increases, vehicle tax fees, the county fire district tax, and the town needing to cut expenses. He is concerned about the citizens of this town.

Councilwoman Grice asked the council how they would feel not taking their 3% raise. It was the consensus of the board to decline their 3% cost of living adjustment.

Councilman Mooring requested Wilson County's water usage. He is concerned that the bulk rate is not listed on the rate/fee schedule and that it may not have been adjusted recently. Councilman Mooring reiterated the ARP funds and the need for a specific line item for those funds.

Mayor Rhodes declared the Public Hearing closed. Councilman Harper made a motion to pass the 2024-2025 budget ordinance. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

Katherine Horton of Tyson Drive reiterated her complaint from the last meeting regarding the former committee and commission member's letter. She wanted to follow up on her complaint, Mayor Rhodes to recuse herself, and Councilman Harper to be the deciding vote on the former committee/commission members removal. She stated there was not a formal vote to remove these members. She requested a reply in writing.

Town Attorney Slade Rand stated the town did not do anything illegal and Mayor Rhodes should not recuse herself from the vote. He advised the board not to respond any further to the situation.

Judy Owens recognized the Police Department and everything they do. Sergeant Rivera assisted with a major money scandal she got into.

Presentations: None

Financial Reports:

May: Monthly Receipts: \$254,851.68 Disbursements: \$262,082.54 Difference: -\$7,230.86. Report referred to our auditors.

Councilman Bass questioned the negative difference. Manager Hawley has not analyzed it completely, but the town did have a few expenditures that were not anticipated. Councilwoman Grice requested an email follow up once analyzed. Councilman Mooring stated that last month the negative difference was from the purchase of 312 S. Main Street property.

Invoices for Payment:

Councilman Mooring questioned the purchase for Adobe. Manager Hawley stated that staff needed Adobe to complete documents and other paperwork.

Councilman Harper made a motion to approve invoices. Passed unanimously.

Old Business:

The Rate and Fee schedule for Fiscal Year 24/25 was presented. Manager Hawley discussed some of the increases that were made such as permit fees, late fees, reconnection fees, etc.

Councilman Harper made a motion to approve the fiscal year 2024-2025 Rate and Fee Schedule. Passed unanimously.

Fuel bids were discussed. Councilwoman Grice requested a breakdown of services that Summerlin Oil Company provides. The other 2 fuel companies did not provide emergency services. Councilwoman Grice made a motion to stay with Summerlin Oil Company for fuel. Vote 4 to 1 with Councilwoman Butler opposed. Motion Carried.

Councilman Mooring asked if the GPS reports are available yet. Manager Hawley stated he does not have access to reports. Councilman Mooring requested an update on NCDOT. They did not call 811 before digging but are refusing to pay for waterline repairs. He requested an update on the electric bill for an account that had services terminated. Councilwoman Grice asked if that customer is on a payment plan. Manager Hawley stated the customer is not on a payment plan. Councilman Mooring asked about the municipal vehicle tax and if it will be credited back. \$1,205.00 will be credited back to the individuals. He asked for an update on the contract with Carr, Riggs, and Ingram. Manager Hawley is waiting for a response from the corporate office.

Councilman Mooring is concerned about the 911 costs. Manager Hawley explained how 911 does their invoicing. Finance Officer, Victoria Lucas, provided the totals paid to Wilson County for 911 Communications. Manager Hawley will provide the council with a spreadsheet listing the number of calls made to 911.

Councilwoman Grice discussed an account that is in arrears.

New Business:

Manager Hawley presented and discussed the architect contract with Turpentine Design.

Councilwoman Grice asked what Councilman Mooring thought since he has attended the meetings. Councilman Mooring reiterated how good they have been through this whole process and that he does highly recommend them. Councilman Harper discussed alternate options for the Town to think about such as a contractor. He is concerned the estimate will exceed funds. Turpentine Design made modifications to save costs.

Manager Hawley stated he is unsure if The Minnie Brooks Act would allow other options. Town Attorney Slade Rand stated that public funds have a threshold amount, and plans/specs must be prepared by an Architect and/or Engineer when that amount is met. The entire plan will be prepared, but the project can be split however the town decides to do so when construction starts.

Councilwoman Butler made a motion to move forward with the contract agreement with Turpentine Design. Passed unanimously.

The 2024/2025 pay schedule was presented and discussed. The previous pay schedule was adjusted based on inflation rates and cross referenced with what they were. Pay grades are not defined. Councilman Mooring reiterated the consensus of the board for Manager Hawley to hold off on the 3rd hire for the electric department at this time. Councilman Mooring discussed the 5% increase after the probation period. Manager Hawley stated that the 5% increase is in the personnel policy.

Councilman Mooring asked if it was the consensus of the board to remove the 5% increase after the probation period. Councilwoman Grice stated that it is a great idea. Councilman Harper made a motion to accept the list of classes arranged by grades for 2024-2025 taking out the 5% increase after probation. Passed unanimously.

Manager Hawley discussed the workshop date of June 27th and the council could possibly discuss repealing the ordinance for the 5%.

Mayor Rhodes asked if June 27th was good for another budget workshop. Manager Hawley will send an email to follow up on that date with all council members.

Councilman Mooring reiterated the 3% cost-of-living adjustment for all employees. He questioned a few of the positions that were listed on the pay schedule and whether the town has those positions. Councilman Mooring made a motion to amend the payroll increase of 3% cost-of-living adjustment only. No merit raises. Passed unanimously.

The Sanitation Ordinance was presented and discussed.

Councilman Mooring has concerns about our employees picking up biohazard materials. He also discussed the disposal of tires, and commercial businesses using residential trash bins. Councilman Harper made a motion to accept the updated Sanitation Ordinance with the recommended changes to Item D. Bulk Items amending the language of every two weeks to "The town will pick up bulk items in accordance with town policy." Under 4.2.6 adding Section (D) "The Town is not responsible for the collection, removal and disposition of any materials related to home improvements including but not limited to carpet, lumber, electrical, or other building materials".

The Bulk Goods Policy was presented and discussed. The Bulk Goods Policy was tabled until July.

The 13/24 Budget Amendment was presented and discussed by Manager Hawley adding a specific line item for ARP Supported Capital Project. Today, June 17th, was cut off for departments to spend money for the rest of fiscal year 2023-2024. The \$50,000.00 for line-item ARP Supported Capital Project could possibly increase before month end for funds to go toward next fiscal year which is planned to be discussed in the June 27th meeting. Manager Hawley estimated revenues to be \$300,000.00 surplus in general fund with the ARP funding in there. For the Water and Sewer Department estimated revenues are going to be \$150,000.00 over what was projected.

For the Electric Fund Sales Tax Remit, the town had more taxes than anticipated so it is recommended to take the Electric Prior Year Deficit funds and move them to the other areas.

Councilwoman Butler made a motion to accept the 13/24 Budget Amendment. Passed unanimously.

Replacements for the CDBG Housing Selection Committee was discussed. The initial housing committee needed replacements. Mayor Rhodes, Eartha Butler, Brian Hawley, Edwin Bynum, and Walt Bynum's names were presented as the New Housing Selection Committee. Councilwoman Grice questioned how this committee was pre-selected. At the minimum, the list requires the mayor, a council member, the town manager, and two citizens and must be in place to move forward with the grant process. Councilwoman Butler took the council member place of Walt Bynum as he moved into the position of a citizen. One of the previously listed citizens was no longer available so that citizen was removed. Councilwoman Grice requested that two other citizens be added to the list, and she will let Manager Hawley know those names.

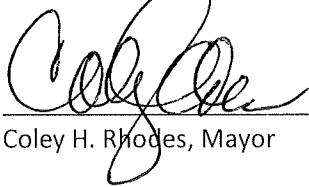
Councilman Harper made a motion that we accept the 5 new members pending the addition of two more citizens by Councilwoman Grice bringing the committee to 7 members.

The Lead Service Line Inventory Request for Qualifications Consideration for the Municipal Engineering was presented and discussed. Municipal Engineering were the only ones to submit a Request for Qualifications for the LSLI grant. Councilwoman Butler made a motion that we accept the Lead Service Line Inventory Construction Management resolution with Municipal Engineering. Passed unanimously.

The estimate for 20 American flags and flag poles for the town were discussed. The old flags will be disposed of properly at American Legion. Councilman Harper made a motion to purchase the 20 American flags and flag poles pending the flag poles chosen will fit the insert in the sidewalk.

Mayor Rhodes requested that the July Board Meeting be moved to Monday, July 15th instead of July 8th. It was the consensus of the board to move the July Board Meeting to Monday, July 15th.

Councilman Harper made a motion to continue this meeting on Monday, July 27th at 7:00pm at Town Hall. Passed unanimously.



Coley H. Rhodes, Mayor



Alexis L. Whitley, Town Clerk