

Town of Pinetops
Board of Commissioners
Regular Monthly Meeting (Also available via Zoom)
Minutes
November 3, 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, Fire Chief Steve Burress and Police Chief Stacy Harrell. Van Holland from the Tar River Times paper was also in attendance.

A. Call to Order

Mayor Harrell called the November 3rd 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

Commissioner Mabry recommended the items listed on the Agenda under (H) Items for Discussion be moved to Strategic Planning; this will include all items except (v) Implementing an Employee Performance Evaluation Process. Commissioner Sugg made a motion to approve the proposed agenda as amended. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Webb made a motion to approve the minutes from the Board Meeting held on October 6, 2020. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Sugg. Motion passed unanimously.

F. Public Comments

- 1) Administrator Bess informed the Board that she had received two letters at the office today requesting that they be read at the board meeting. The letters came from Jennifer Bryant and David Bryant from 212 N 12th Street. Both letters referenced wanting to know why the flat rate hasn't gone into effect as of yet and why is there not a breakdown of the rate schedule on the utility bills.
- 2) Kendrick Ransome Co-Founder of Freedom Organization
Kendrick Ransome was present at the meeting via ZOOM. He owns an organic farm off of Bynum-Farm Road. He just wanted to take a minute to introduce himself to the Board and stated that he would like an opportunity to work with the community especially as it pertains to agricultural and recreational. Commissioner Taylor asked for his contact information which he complied with by giving his cell # and email address. Cell#252-373-3694 and Email Kendrickransome.gom@gmail.com
- 3) Gregory Hedgepeth – "Pinetops Forward" Presentation
Mayor Harrell asked for a motion to extend the 3 minute public comment period limit to allow him time to give a presentation. Commissioner Sugg made a motion to extend the public comment period limit from 3 minutes to allow him time to give his presentation. Mr. Hedgepeth told the board that he would try not to exceed 5 minutes. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. He began by telling the Board that there is a lot of grant money available right now for rural towns that are looking into developing community projects such as building a community center. He explained there are grant possibilities through the NC Rural Center, Gold Leaf, and even some private organizations. He told the Board that he would be available to help them brainstorm, develop a plan, or put them in touch with perspective partners if this is something the town is interested in pursuing. Commissioner Mabry remarked that this goes hand in hand in what the town is trying to start through its strategic planning. He went on to add that he would like to see Mr. Hedgepeth partner with our strategic planning. He stated it would be his pleasure to do this but the first step is research. The Mayor and Board thanked Mr. Hedgepeth for taking the time to meet with them and giving such a nice presentation.

G. Departmental Reports

1. **Police Department.** Chief Harrell read over the police report for the month of October. The total calls answered or initiated during the month was 1167. There were 23 traffic stops and 9 citations issued. The police department is down to 5 full-time officers making the department short 2 officers. The dispatcher that has been out on sick leave is scheduled to return back to work on the 4th 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 around \$10,000 remaining on the current grant. The Chief also reported that the speed bumps have been installed around the park/ballfield area.

2. **Public Works Department.** (a) Phil Webb read over the water and sewer report for the month of October. The report shows the total million gallons of sewer flow and water discharge for the month. The sewer flow totaled 6.24 million gallons for the month of October. The water discharge totaled 5.02 million gallons for the month of October. For the month of October the western section of town was impacted on 10/29 by an electrical outage when a tree limb fell on a power line causing a fuse to blow on Van Street. The recovery time was approximately .50 hour. He also presented the Board with a list of items the maintenance department has been working on this month. The concrete has been poured for both the handicap ramp at the Town Gazebo and the sidewalk in front of the property purchased by Chester Lancaster. He told the Board that he is still seeking cost estimates for repairs at the Centennial House and Lion's Club Building. He has made a couple of inquiries but without success. Commissioner Webb stated that he knew of a contractor that might be willing to give an estimate on the work. He will speak to him tomorrow and if he is interested in giving an estimate he will contact Mr. Phil.

3. **Fire Department.** The Fire Chief presented the Fire report for the month of October. The total calls for the month of October was 5. Hours in Training & Meetings = 108. Commissioner Sugg told the Board that he had attended the fire department's monthly meeting and was very impressed with the number of volunteers that were there. He also reported that Pinetops was one of the few places in the State that had such a low fire rating for Commercial property which means these businesses receive lower insurance ratings. Residential property owners also have the best rating they can get. He said he would like to commend the Pinetops Volunteer Fire Department for the job they do and the number of dedicated volunteers they have on their roster.

4. **Finance Officer.** Ms. Keesler gave the financial report for the month of October. The general fund had a negative balance of \$20,338.12. The electric fund had a positive balance of \$76,362.62

for the month of October while the water/sewer fund ended the month with a positive balance of \$26,551.00. She presented the Board with a Paid Check Report for the month of October along with a Revenue and Expenditure Report. She told the Board that she did include an Adjusted Ending Balance which shows the payroll, payroll taxes, and State W-Holding that is being done by Paychex. This amount has not been posted to the books as of yet because she hasn't received the General Ledger from Paychex. The months of July, August, September, and October total approximately \$270,853.92. The adjusted ending balance for the month of October is \$1,290,751.13.

5. Town Administrator.

1) COVID-19 Updates.

The Town Administrator informed the Board that No-Cost COVID-19 Testing began taking place October 8, 2020, Monday-Friday in the Town Hall parking lot. The drive-thru testing that is being offered by appointment only has been extended through the month of November. The new times are Monday, Friday and Saturday from 10.00a.m. - 2.00p.m. On Tuesday and Thursday testing will be available from 3.00p.m. - 7.00p.m. The site will not be opened on November 11th, 25th, 26, and 27th. The new COVID-19 testing schedule will be advertised on the town's website as well as through the All-Call System.

Currently the town has an outstanding balance of \$41,312.39 on payment plans that were made as a result of COVID-19. The deadline for repayment on these accounts was supposed to end January 31st. Administrator Bess reported that most people have been honoring the payment plan arrangements or paying what they can but she felt like there will still be some sort of outstanding amount due at the end of January. There has been 4 or 5 residents that entered into payment plan arrangements that have up and moved.

At this time the lobby door remains closed but the staff is making arrangements to deal with Turn-On/Turn-Offs as well as collecting card payments and cash payments.

2) Staffing Update.

Administrator Bess told the Board that she did contact the Temporary Agency after the last meeting as they requested but the individual had already taken another job. After speaking with Chief Harrell they decided to try to share the duties of a daytime dispatcher with the office. This person will float between both departments as needed. By combining the duties this position did turn into full-time.

3) **Audit Update.**

Administrator Bess reported that the Auditor came on Friday, October 9, 2020 for the final site visit and walk-through. She contacted her today for an update and was told that they are finishing up and should have a draft in the next few days. The auditor is planning on coming to the December meeting to give the Audit Report for FYE 06/2020.

4) **Projects we are working on.**

a) **Well Rehabilitation Project** – We are basically waiting to hear back from the State so there is nothing new pertaining to the well rehabilitation project to report at this time.

b) **Demolitions-** Administrator Bess told the Board that a contractor from Wayne County is scheduled to come tomorrow to look at the properties in question to see if they would like to give an estimate. Commissioner Sugg suggested a contractor in Fountain that might be interested in given the town an estimate on the demolitions. Fire Chief Burress told Administrator Bess that he would try to get the phone number of this contractor for her. He stated the contractor's name was Eli O'Neal.

5) **NCRWA Rate Study** – Administrator Bess presented the Board with the rate study that was completed by the NC Rural Water Association. Commissioner Mabry commented that this will be helpful when it comes to the Waste Water Treatment Plant Assessment.

6) **Tax Collection Update** – Administrator Bess reported that Edgecombe County has collected around \$33,000 so far in taxes on behalf of the town. Edgecombe County does provide the town with a monthly detail along with the check which shows a breakdown between property taxes and NC vehicle taxes.

Upcoming Events.

1) **Christmas Parade.** Since the Christmas parade has been cancelled this year due to COVID-19 the parade committee has been looking into some type of alternative such as having the business's in town decorate their store fronts for the holidays. They have even suggested given out prizes for first, second, and third place. Administrator Bess told the Board that she had spoken to Kirby Fuller who said they would have a virtual tree lighting on December 3rd. The town will put up Christmas decorations immediately following the Thanksgiving holiday.

H. Items for Discussion

1. Implementing an Employee Performance Evaluation Process.

Commissioner Sugg told the Board that he had spoken to Administrator Bess about establishing job descriptions so a merit system can be implemented. He went on to say that hopefully the development of the job descriptions can be completed by the December meeting. He also suggested looking into creating a 3 person committee to take on the tasks of creating the job descriptions. He explained that he would like to see a performance management program put into place to help the Board decide which employees go beyond their job performance expectations and thus might warrant a merit raise. This system will also help employees understand what is expected of them, areas they might need to improve on, and the benefits of striving to improve job performance.

I. Items for Consideration

1. Donation of Property to Town – E. Phillips Street

Administrator Bess told the board that she had been approached by an attorney for the Carlton Estate wishing to donate a piece of property located on E. Phillip Street. The tax value on the piece of property is \$7,500. If the Board wishes to accept the donation of property Administrator Bess said she would contact the town attorney who would in turn contact the Carlton Estate attorney to enact the transfer. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to accept the donation of property located on E. Phillips Street to the town. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. A copy of the for-mentioned parcel is hereby attached to the minutes.

2. N. Third Street – Potential Interest in Purchase

Administrator Bess told the Board she was contacted by an individual who was interested in purchasing the property at N. Third Street. During this discussion it was made known that they thought the property was owned by the Town of Pinetops. After a brief discussion among the Town Board it was discovered that the property in question was not owned by the town but Florence Pender's son.

3. Edgecombe County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Commissioner Sugg made a motion to adopt the N.E.W. (Nash, Edgecombe, Wilson) Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and agrees to take such other official action as may be reasonably necessary to carry out the proposed actions of the Plan. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. 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.

5. Strategic Planning – Memorandum of Understanding

Commissioner Sugg made a motion to adopt the strategic planning memorandum of understanding. This item was brought up at the October meeting but the Board wanted to have time to review the document before making any motion. Commissioner Mabry stated that this is the first step in moving forward with the strategic planning.

Commissioner Mabry seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

6. Planning Board Recommendation – Frank Belcher

Administrator Bess presented the board with a recommendation she received from the planning board requesting that Frank Belcher be approved to store recreational vehicles such as motor homes, boats, etc. on a piece of his property located off of Cotton Farm Rd. A copy of this parcel is hereby attached to these minutes. Administrator Bess told the board that the property is zoned RA-20 and is located in Pinetops ETJ. Mr. Belcher was present at the meeting via ZOOM. Mayor Harrell suggested it be researched further to see if this is a permitted use or would he need to ask for a conditional use permit or variance which would require a public hearing be held. Mr. Belcher told the Board that was fine because he wants to make sure everything is done the correct way.

7. Right of Way Permit Policy/Application

Administrator Bess presented the Board with a right of way permit policy and application to review. This item was previously discussed at the October meeting. Commissioner Webb made a motion to accept the Right of Way Permit Policy and Application including the permit fee of \$10. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously. Commissioner Sugg stated that he would like to see an insert included in the utility bill envelopes informing residents of this new policy.

J. Adjournment

Commissioner Webb made a motion to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Date. 12/01/2020



Mayor Brenda Harrell

ATTESTED:



Finance Officer/Town Clerk Tammy Keesler