

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING HELD JANUARY 4, 2021

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), this meeting of the Granite Falls Town Council was held in the Council Room and allowed for remote participation by members of the media, citizens and members of the general public, and all other interested parties. The media, citizens, members of the general public, and other interested parties were allowed to attend the Public Hearing in person.

REGULAR MEETING The Granite Falls Town Council held a Regular Meeting on January 4, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Administrative Building.

PRESENT The following members of the governing body were physically present: Mayor Barry Hayes, and Council Members Dr. Caryl B. Burns, Larry Knight, Jim Mackie, Mike Mackie, Martin Townsend, and Tracy Townsend. Mayor Hayes did a roll call of all members present.

ABSENT The following member of the governing body was absent: None

STAFF PRESENT The following staff members physically attended the meeting: Town Manager Jerry Church, Town Attorney Bruce Cannon, Town Clerk Paula Kirby, Town Finance Director Jana Williams, and Assistant Police Chief Brine Branham.

VISITORS None

NEWS MEDIA Garrett Stell, representing *The News-Topic*, attended the meeting by remote participation.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER Mayor Barry Hayes called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present.

INVOCATION Councilmember Larry Knight led in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Mayor Barry Hayes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA Mike Mackie made a motion the Council approve the agenda as presented. Tracy Townsend seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote determined by the Mayor individually polling each Councilmember.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD DECEMBER 14, 2020 Martin Townsend made a motion the Council approve the minutes from the special Council meeting held December 14, 2020 as presented. Dr. Caryl B. Burns seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote determined by the Mayor individually polling each Councilmember.

TOWN ATTORNEY REPORT Town Attorney Bruce Cannon did not have a report.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD No public comments were submitted.

PUBLIC HEARING

PUBLIC HEARING CALLED TO ORDER ON ASSESSMENT AGAINST REAL PROPERTY OF OWNERS FAILING TO PAY INVOICES TO THE TOWN OF GRANITE FALLS Mayor Barry Hayes called to order a public hearing on the preliminary assessment roll against real property owners failing to pay invoices to the Town of Granite Falls for services and fines rendered by the Town to abate public nuisances on said real property.

These abatement services consisted of mowing grass and/or removing refuse or solid waste and/or demolition of declared nuisance structures, and/or the issuance of fines for failure to abate nuisances, in accordance with Town Ordinances. At the public hearing, all real property owners of said property as well as other residents of the Town will be allowed to speak.

Following the public hearing, the Council will be asked to approve assessments and/or discounts from the preliminary assessment roll.

Notice of the public hearing was duly given in the News Topic as required by law.

No property owners attended the public hearing. Town Attorney Bruce Cannon informed the Council that the property owner of 15 North Highland Avenue was unable to attend the public hearing due to Covid-19 quarantine issues. Attorney Cannon requested the Council to continue the public hearing for 15 North Highland Avenue to the next Council meeting scheduled for February 1, 2021 to allow the property owner to appear before the Council.

PUBLIC HEARING ON ASSESSMENT AGAINST REAL PROPERTY OF OWNERS FAILING TO PAY INVOICES TO THE TOWN OF GRANITE FALLS CLOSED FOR ALL PROPERTIES EXCEPT FOR 15 NORTH HIGHLAND AVENUE. THE PUBLIC HEARING ON ASSESSMENTS FOR 15 NORTH HIGHLAND AVENUE WAS CONTINUED TO THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Mayor Hayes continued the public hearing for 15 North Highland Avenue as requested by Town Attorney Bruce Cannon and closed the public hearing on all other properties on the assessment roll.

NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

ASSESSMENTS WITHOUT DISCOUNTS FROM THE PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT ROLL APPROVED The Council was requested to approve the preliminary assessment roll, after determining whether or not to allow any discounts from the assessment roll, against real property of owners failing to pay invoices to the Town of Granite Falls for services rendered by the Town to abate public nuisances, or fines to abate nuisances, on said real property. These abatement services consisted of mowing grass and/or removing refuse or solid waste and/or demolition of declared nuisance structures, and/or the issuance of fines for failure to abate nuisances, in accordance with Town Ordinances.

Tracy Townsend made a motion the Council approve the preliminary assessment roll without discounts as requested with the exception of the 15 North Highland Avenue property which will be determined at the next Council meeting. Larry Knight seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote determined by the Mayor individually polling each Councilmember. A copy of the preliminary assessment roll is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE WATER AND SEWER COMMITTEE TO ISSUE A CONTINGENT AWARD OF A CONTRACT TO REPLACE THE WATER LINE FROM THE WATER TREATMENT PLANT TO LAUREL STREET APPROVED The Water & Sewer Committee met earlier today and reviewed a recommendation from The Wooten Company to issue a contingent award of a contract to replace the water line from the Water Treatment Plant to Laurel Street.

The background on this project is as follows:

On August 13, 2018, Council approved accepting a \$500,000 loan from the State Reserve Program (SRP) to replace a water line from the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) to Laurel Street. The 8-inch ductile iron line was installed in 1942 and will be replaced by a 12-inch line that will increase pump rates at the WTP and finished water flow into the Town's water distribution system. On July 15, 2019, as part of the paperwork required for the loan, Council approved a resolution accepting the offer and assuring the Town's compliance with the provisions of the Standard Conditions & Assurances for the State Reserve Program. The resolution also authorizes Town Manager Jerry Church to execute all documents required for the project. This project was included as project WD3 in the Town of Granite Falls Capital Improvement Plan approved by the Council on May 21, 2020 and in the 2021 fiscal year budget approved by the Town Council on June 22, 2020.

The Town received approval of the engineering design plans for the project by NC DEQ which allowed the Town to solicit bids for the project and on July 20, 2020, the Town Council approved the solicitation of formal bids for this project. The Town advertised for bids and held the formal bid opening on Thursday, December 17, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. in the Council Room. After the opening, tabulation, and subsequent review of bids, The Wooten Company has determined that M&M Construction of Banner Elk, NC is the apparent low bidder with a bid price of \$339,140.00. The Water & Sewer Committee is requested to review the certified bid tabulation and make a recommendation to the Town Council to issue a contingent award to M&M Construction. The award is contingent upon completion and

submittal of the Project Bid Information Form to the Division of Water Infrastructure (DWI) for approval. After DWI reviews and approves this information, DWI will authorize the Town to make the proposed award by issuing the Authority to Award.

The Water & Sewer Committee recommended the Council issue a contingent award of a contract to replace the water line from the Water Treatment Plant to Laurel Street to M&M Construction of Banner Elk, NC in the amount of \$339,140.00.

Mike Mackie made a motion the Council approve issuing a contingent award of a contract to replace the water line from the Water Treatment Plant to Laurel Street to M&M Construction of Banner Elk, NC in the amount of \$339,140.00. Martin Townsend seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote determined by the Mayor individually polling each Councilmember. Copies of the project bid information are attached and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

PROGRESSIVE ENGINEERING CONTRACT APPROVED The Council was requested to approve the Engineering Services Contract with Progressive Engineering Consultants, Inc. for calendar 2021 and to authorize the Town Manager to execute the contract on behalf of the Town. The contract establishes compensation, obligations, and insurance requirements, etc. The 2021 rates reflect no increase from the previous year's rates which brings the average rate increase for the past 10 years to 1.94%.

Mike Mackie made a motion the Council approve the contract and authorize the Town Manager to execute the contract on behalf of the Town as requested. Tracy Townsend seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote determined by the Mayor individually polling each Councilmember. A copy of the contract is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY GOALS FROM THE NORTH CAROLINA LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES (NCLM) APPROVED The NCLM has completed the preliminary legislative advocacy priority goals for this year's legislature session. The NCLM submitted 17 proposed goals after seeking input from 114 municipalities. Town Manager Jerry Church served as a member of the NCLM Policy Committee's "focus group" for municipalities of similar population to the population of Granite Falls. The NCLM requests that each municipality appoint a voting delegate by January 14, 2021 and that the voting delegate complete the online ballot by January 15, 2021 by voting on the Town's top 10 legislative advocacy goals out of the 17 proposed goals. Town Manager Church marked the ten goals he feels are the most important to the Town of Granite Falls but the Council needs to make the final decision.

Mike Mackie made a motion the Council elect Town Manager Jerry Church as the voting delegate and approve the 10 goals that Town Manager Church selected. Larry Knight seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote determined by the Mayor individually polling each Councilmember. A copy of the legislative goals list is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

COUNCIL PREFERENCE FOR PRESENTATION OF DEPARTMENT HEAD ANNUAL REPORTS TO COUNCIL

During the first quarter of each calendar year, Town of Granite Falls Department Heads normally present annual reports to the Town Council covering statistics and accomplishments of the previous calendar year. Unfortunately, the last 9 and a half months of 2020 have been abnormal, and it appears that this trend may continue for the foreseeable future. Guidance from the CDC and NC DHHS still dictates limiting the number of people that can safely gather indoors while social distancing and wearing face coverings. Town Manager Jerry Church requested the Council's input on how and when the Council would like to receive these reports. Options are as follows:

- a) In person presentations as normal. This would require "staging" Department Heads so one Department Head at a time appears before the Council and limiting the presentations to around 10 minutes each. Hard copies would be included in the Council agenda packages.
- b) Pre-recorded presentations. These could be played during the Council meetings. Hard copies would be included in the Council agenda packages.
- c) Include hard copies of all presentations in the Council meetings along with a one-page summary focusing on the highlights from each department. The one-page summary could be read into the minutes and the summary would become part of the minutes as part of the annual reports.
- d) Live presentations using ZOOM. Hard copies would be included in the Council agenda packages. There could be technology challenges or issues if this option is chosen.
- e) Have the Town Manager do all of the presentations. Hard copies would be included in the Council meeting agendas.
- f) Postpone the presentation of the Department Head annual reports until early summer.

Jim Mackie made a motion the Council choose option "A" and leave it to Town Manager Church's discretion of the time and date of each presentation. Tracy Townsend seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote determined by the Mayor individually polling each Councilmember.

TOWN HOLIDAY SCHEDULE The Town of Granite Falls Administrative Office, the Recreation Center, and the Public Works and Electric Departments will be closed Monday, January 18th in observance of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day holiday. The Police and Fire Departments and the Water and Wastewater Facilities will be on duty as scheduled and those employees scheduled to work this holiday receive alternate time off with pay. Republic Services will pick up garbage and recycling on their regular schedule.

MANAGER UPDATE Town Manager Jerry Church updated the Council on the following:

1. Enclosed with the Council's agenda package was a calendar of events through the end of January, 2022. Revisions since the last calendar were highlighted in yellow.

Note: Members of the Town Council may attend events that are, or are not, sponsored by the Town but there will be no Council business conducted at any of these events in instances where a quorum of the Council may be present.

2. Also enclosed with the Council's agenda package was the Internal Revenue Service 2021 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes. The Town reimburses the Council and Town employees for the use of their personal vehicles for preapproved Town business at the IRS standard mileage rates for business miles driven. The reimbursement rate for business miles effective January 1, 2021 is 56 cents per mile.

MEETING ADJOURNED Tracy Townsend made a motion the Council adjourn the meeting. Dr. Caryl B. Burns seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote determined by the Mayor individually polling each Councilmember.