

## **MINUTES OF SPECIAL BUDGET WORK SESSION HELD MAY 29, 2025**

**SPECIAL MEETING** The Granite Falls Town Council held a Special Budget Work Session Thursday, May 29, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Administrative Building.

**PRESENT** The following members of the governing body were present: Mayor Dr. Caryl B. Burns and Council Members Ritch Bolick, Larry Knight, Jim Mackie, Mike Mackie, Martin Townsend, and Tracy Townsend.

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

**STAFF PRESENT** The following staff members attended the meeting: Town Manager Daniel Cobb, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Ashley Presnell, Town Clerk Paula Kirby, Parks and Recreation Director Chad Raby, Police Chief Brine Branham, Fire Chief Brian Bennett, Electric Services Director Rick Sisk, Water Resources Director/Public Works Director Randy Smith, Police Lieutenant Kalem Kirby, and Assistant Fire Chief Kevin Kerley.

**VISITORS** None

**NEWS MEDIA** Miya Banks, representing the News-Topic, attended the meeting.

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER** Budget Committee Chairman Tracy Townsend called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA** Mike Mackie made a motion the Council approve the agenda as presented. Martin Townsend seconded the motion, which was followed by a unanimous affirmative vote.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**2025-2026 BUDGET REVIEWED** Town Manager Daniel Cobb reviewed the 2025-2026 budget highlights with the Council. He presented the Council with a comparison chart of proposed tax, COLA, and 401K rates from other towns, cities, and municipalities. Town Manager Cobb also presented and reviewed with the Council an Existing Employee – Plus New Positions spreadsheet. Copies of these documents are attached and are hereby made a part of these minutes. A copy of the proposed budget can be viewed at the Town Office.

Budget Committee Chairman Tracy Townsend asked Manager Cobb how often the Capital Outlay Land Use Plan needs to be updated. Manager Cobb stated that it is typically updated every 5 years and that the Town is due an update. He encouraged an update if the Town is to precede with the Downtown Program.

**TAX RATES, COLA, AND 401K DISCUSSED** Chairman Townsend stated that he opposed a tax increase due to the recent County revaluations. He recommended keeping the tax rate flat at \$.4485. Ritch Bolick agreed but was concerned about how to make up the \$140,000 which was to be used to purchase a fire truck. It was noted that revenue will be increased just from the revaluation increases.

After further discussion, the Council was in consensus to keep the tax rate flat at \$.4485.

The recommended COLA rate is 4%. Ritch Bolick stated that the Town recently conducted a Pay Rate Study and has worked hard to pay employees at a competitive rate. Chairman Townsend wants the COLA rate to be merit based. Mike Mackie stated that he wants to make sure the Town can afford to reinstate the 401K contribution. Manager Cobb stated that the Town could afford it and that it was in the budget.

After further discussion, the Council was in consensus to lower the COLA rate to 3.5% with no 401K contribution.

### **GENERAL/ENTERPRISE FUNDS**

- **Administration**

The Administration Department requested the addition of one full-time employee to be a Special Projects Manager.

- **Police**

The Police Department requested two Sergeant/Supervisor positions due to a very young and inexperienced Police Force. This would also allow more officers to be out in the field.

New radios are needed. The radios we now have are obsolete. The existing radios will be utilized for means of communication during Town festivals and events.

Gun replacements will cost approximately \$13,000.

Flock cameras are requested and will be beneficial for public safety.

- **Fire**

New Fire Station

The Fire Department requested four positions, and the recommended budget includes one. Fire Chief Brian Bennett stated that 4 new positions were actually needed to meet OSHA standards.

Ritch Bolick stated that he thinks the South Caldwell Fire Tax monies should be earmarked for the Fire Department. This will be decided on at a later date and will not be implemented in the 2025-2026 budget.

- **Street**

Two new positions were requested, but the recommended budget does not include these.

Water Resources Director/Public Works Director Randy Smith stated that bids were being obtained for mowing the Town cemeteries. Mowing and weed eating the cemeteries is very tedious and costly.

The Cemetery Master Plan proposal was approximately \$21,000 and initial negotiations have reduced it to approximately \$15,000. It is needed for upgrades and adding more plots to the cemetery.

- **Recreation**

The Recreation Department requested one full-time and one part-time employee to assist with outside grounds maintenance. The recommended budget includes one full-time employee.

Parks and Recreation Director Chad Raby stated that pool repairs were needed this coming budget year but the restroom at Neighborhood Park can be postponed until FY 2026-2027. The Town Council, by consensus, agreed to postpone construction until next budget year.

- **Water/Sewer**

The Water/Sewer Department requested two full-time employees.

Water Resources Director/Public Works Director Randy Smith is in the process of obtaining a maintenance contract for the Town's water tanks.

- **Electric**

No new employee positions requested.

Electric Substation – The Town is in the process of working with an engineer exploring the options of already owned Town property verses obtaining new property.

## **DISCUSSION**

Budget Committee Chairman Tracy Townsend asked the Council if there were any questions or concerns. After a brief discussion, the Council was in consensus of the following:

- No tax increase – remain flat at \$.4485
- Lower COLA from recommended 4% to 3.5%
- No 401k contribution
- Approve new employee requests
- Postpone ADA restroom construction at Neighborhood Park until FY 2026-2027

**MEETING CONTINUED** Mayor Caryl B. Burns made a motion the Council continue the meeting on Monday, June 2 2025 at 4:00 p.m. Jim Mackie seconded the motion, which was followed by a unanimous affirmative vote. Town Manager Cobb will make the recommended changes and present the updated budget to the Council at that time.

**MEETING CONTINUED** Ritch Bolick made a motion the Council adjourn the meeting. Jim Mackie seconded the motion, which was followed by a unanimous affirmative vote.