

Town of Pinetops
Board of Commissioners
Regular Monthly Meeting (Also available via Zoom)
Minutes
September 7, 2021
Pinetops Town Hall

A. Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Harrell called the Meeting to Order.

B. Invocation

Invocation was given by Dennis Sugg.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Harrell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Proposed Agenda

Commissioners Mabry and Taylor asked that we add additional items under Items for Discussion. These items included street signage and speed bumps as well as policies that were mentioned in the last meeting. Commissioner Taylor made a motion to approve the proposed agenda as amended. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Sugg made a motion to consent and approve the August 3, 2021 minutes as written and submitted. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Taylor. Motion passed unanimously.

F. Public Comments

1. Commissioner Harrison (speaking for Darryl Harrison) – 206 S Martin Luther King
Commissioner Harrison spoke on behalf of the sinkholes around her yard especially in the front near her drainage tile. She mentioned every time it rains more and more dirt gets washed out from underneath creating sinkholes. Harrison advised that her husband no longer feels safe mowing the grass around that area because the holes are so big and wondered if the Town would take on that

responsibility. Phil Webb responds he would look at the sinkholes on her residence and agreed to take on the responsibility of mowing the grass as well as speaking to her husband for more information.

G. Departmental Reports

- 1. Police Department:** Chief Harrell read over the police report for the month of August. The total calls answered and/or initiated were 3081. A detailed copy of the police report is hereby attached to the minutes. The Chief told the Board that he has 7 full time officers and 1 officer was just sworn in so she won't be counted as a full-time officer as she will be training as well as seeking an additional dispatcher. Speed humps on S. SA Gilliam Street are doing good people are slowing down. Only 1 accident on 2nd & Hamlet St from the stoplight that was caught on camera which was a major help. Chief Harrell mentioned working with Governor Highway safety program for Labor Day which lasted for two weeks earning them more points for traffic stops. 46 traffic stops and 27 citations they've tried to step up traffic enforcement, but people still speed even past posted speed and the electronic speed readers. Chief Harrell is also working with the town attorney on additional properties that may need to be added to the demolition process. The house at 305 S. SA Gilliam Street is the last one left on the initial list from 2018. Commissioner Webb questioned the speed bump process for The Wells Family on Dunn Street. Chief Harrell explained that he would have to petition everyone on Dunn street to see if they want a speed bump put on the road and go through due process. Commissioner Webb follows up that there aren't many houses on that street and Mr. Stephen Wells was the only one who had requested one. Chief Harrell responded he would look more into it and come back with more information at the October meeting. Chief Harrell then asks if they would vote on 3 bids for the demolition of 305 S SA Gilliam St from Fleming Landscaping LLC, WW Landscaping Inc and O'Neal Grading Inc. O'Neal did two estimates for one with dirt to fill holes and one without. Commissioner Harrison asks about the process of choosing bids. Chief Harrell and Mayor Harrell both explain the due process of not needing a formal bid on any work less than \$10,000 and to be fair to other contractors that the Town isn't monopolizing one contractor. Mayor Harrell begins with the Fleming Landscaping bid for \$3,800, WW Landscaping bid for \$4,900, then O'Neal Grading the first bid without fill sand is \$5,814 and with 4 loads of fill sand \$6,414. Commissioner Sugg asks if the other two bids included the fill sand and grading. Commissioner Taylor asks if O'Neal has done work for the Town before and what he's done. Chief Harrell confirms he has on South 4th Street and all the Cotton Belt houses. Commissioner Mabry asks for confirmation on the bid prices rounding up to \$4,000 including everything, \$5,000 for just landscaping, and \$6,000 with sand. Once Mayor Harrell agrees Commissioner Mabry then comments we should go with the lowest price for the job at \$4,000 as it included everything needed. Commissioner Taylor made motion to accept the \$3,800.00 bid from Fleming Landscaping. Commissioner Sugg

seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Mabry asks for status on minimum housing policy spoke about on last meeting. Mayor Harrell replied that the Town Attorney, Brian Pridgen, was working on that policy.

- 2. Public Works Department:** Phil Webb read over the water and sewer report for the month of August. The August usage was about 190,970 gal/day, 5,920,100 gallons per month in water and 236,000 gal/day, 7,322,000 in wastewater as well as 3 water line repairs and a sewer line fixed on S 4th. A detailed copy of the water/sewer report is hereby attached to the minutes. Commissioner Sugg then asked if all the water line breaks that they had repaired were underground. Phil Webb responded that not all of them are inside the ground but usually once they find one, they find several sometimes they're in right of ways, meter boxes or underground it just depends. The sewer line they fixed on South 4th St was cut by Suddenlink as they placed some fiber optic lines. Commissioner Harrison asked if they would be penalized for such a thing. Mayor Harrell advised because there was an ongoing lawsuit with complaints filed against Suddenlink they likely would not. Mr. Webb also mentioned the transfer of contracting electric services to EMC would be finalized by the end of September. The NCWOA has suspended the in-person classes for 3 of his employees to get C-Well certified but they are able to take the course virtually. Mayor Harrell and Commissioner Mabry both chime in we have the perfect space for it to get done, being the board room since we already have everything they'd need set up. Commissioner Sugg then asks if the Town should start a search for a new Public Works director as its hard enough to find employees so we can start looking now. Mr. Webb mentions that June of 2022 would make 40 years of work for him and that's when he would fell most comfortable leaving. Mr. Webb also advised that in the meantime he'd teach all the other employees as much as he can, so they know just as much as he does before, he decides to go.
- 3. Fire Department:** Chief Burress presented the Fire report for the month of August. The total calls for the month was 9. A detailed copy of the Fire Report is hereby attached to the minutes. The Fire Department was able to raise \$18,275.00 for their new Lucas 3 CPR machine and training. The machine performs CPR mechanically. The Chief turned down about \$3,000.00 additional that was going to be donated after the reached their goal in only ten weeks. Chief Burress also mentioned they would be working with other fire departments in the county to use the CPR machine if needed as we have the only one within miles. Commissioner Mabry asks if other departments will use this machine should they also pitch in for maintenance. Chief Burress responded that he didn't think any other departments would get that much use out of it. Commissioner Sugg mentions that people don't know much about the fire department and their

inner workings to which Mr. Burress had provided him a copy of their latest meeting minutes. Commissioner Sugg asked if the Board would be receptive to getting the Fire meeting minutes at the Board meeting. Chief Burress also offered to review their 2020 ISO inspection to any board member that wanted to learn more about all aspects of the fire department which would take about 3 hours. He also invited all Town officials to the Fire Department's monthly meetings. Chief Burress presented the Cemetery report for the month of August. The total plots sold this month was 3. A detailed copy of the Cemetery report is hereby attached to the minutes. Chief Burress advised he cleaned up the property a bit trimming hedges and bushes around the cemetery sign. A cleanup of the entire cemetery was completed on September 29th.

4. **Finance Officer:** Ms. Keesler gave the financial report for the month of June & July. The adjusted ending balance for the month of July was \$1,943,238.81. A detail copy of the Financial report is hereby attached to the minutes. She presented the Board with a Paid Check Report for the months of June and July along with a Revenue and Expenditure Report for July. Ms. Keesler reported that the final amount transferred to the General Fund for the FYE 06/2021 was \$375,000 which is a decrease of \$59,211 from the previous year. The auditor has scheduled the first site visit for FYE 06/2021 for September 8-10.

H. Items for Discussion

1. Create Town Newspaper- Tar River Times

Mayor Harrell had been writing the Pinetops Newsletter herself until speaking with Van Holland about printing a real town newspaper. Unfortunately, Van Holland was not in attendance of this meeting.

2. Revisit Recycle Schedule

Commissioner Taylor told the Board that customers are getting confused with the newly implemented recycle schedule. After the change at last month's meeting to every other week instead of the 1st and 3rd Tuesday which also was said to be confusing. Commissioner Taylor says it's unrealistic to believe every single person would know the new schedule, hear it through the All Call System, read the newsletter, or even see it on the utility bill. It is noted a recycling schedule was to be sent out with the customers utility bill during August's billing to stop the confusion and hopefully provide customers with a way to stay on schedule themselves. Mayor Harrell suggests doing the schedule herself and Commissioner

3. IT Brief

Commissioner Mabry advised the board of the new server and three computers being sent in October and November respectively. We have only used about \$4,000 towards the IT update of what we budgeted. Commissioner Sugg asked how much we budgeted to which Commissioner Mabry replies \$25,000 meaning we should have plenty left for other updates and cemetery software.

4. Food Truck Rodeo

Kendrick Pitt of Golden Organics Farm wanted to hold a food truck rodeo with 8-10 vendors, food, drinks and live music. Mr. Pitt explained he wanted to hold it on October 2, 2021 on 1st street between Hamlet & Burnette streets right in front of Southern Bank and Piggly Wiggly. Mayor Harrell asked if he had spoken to the Police Department about traffic control already. Mr. Pitt replied that he had already discussed traffic control with Chief Harrell and was excited to get everything set up. Commissioner Taylor asked what he really meant by a rodeo to which he responded it was just a way to make it sound good for an array of food trucks, vendors and entertainment offerings he decided to include. Commissioner Taylor then mentions that the cable company usually parks their trucks on that road. Mayor Harrell asked Mr. Pitt to get in touch with the cable company and Chief Harrell to have those trucks moved for a short time. Commissioner Taylor makes a motion to approve the food truck rodeo. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

I. New Business

1. Town Signage

Commissioner Harrison mentions that the stop sign, right in that area by Piggly Wiggly a lot of people run the stop sign because they can't see those signs around the cable trucks when they're parked there. Commissioner Taylor followed up that most of the signs around the Town are very hard to see in general. Mayor Harrell said that that was something Public Works would investigate getting new signs because they each must be specially made.

2. Christmas Parade/Tree Lighting

Mayor Harrell told the Board she and Christmas Parade committee coordinator Kirby Fuller had been getting a lot of phone calls about the annual Christmas Parade as restrictions under COVID-19 has been lifted. Mr. Fuller had explained to Mayor Harrell after meeting with the committee he didn't feel comfortable having the parade when a new strain of COVID-19 had come out not to mention there wouldn't be a way to enforce people to wear masks or stay social distanced. Mayor Harrell mentioned the Town didn't have a Christmas Parade last

year either just a Tree Lighting not even a real ceremony so people can't gather. There was mention of enlisting the businesses to decorate so the Town doesn't lose its festive aura around Christmas. Commissioner Taylor made a motion to not have the Christmas Parade and ask the businesses to decorate as well as do the tree lighting. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Appoint member to attend UPCOG meetings

Mayor Harrell told the Board she received a call from the UPCOG about appointing a new member to attend their meetings as Commissioner Sugg was the appointed member but has too much going on to continue attending the meetings. Mayor Harrell then asked if anyone would like to volunteer and questioned Commissioner Mabry. Commissioner Mabry denied her request and then Commissioner Harrison was questioned. As a new board member, she wasn't aware of what the meetings are for and they have a meeting every two months so that request was denied as well. Commissioner Taylor then says she would take on the responsibility. Commissioner Sugg made a motion to appoint Commissioner Taylor to attend UPCOG meetings. Commissioner Harrison seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

4. New Business

Commissioner Sugg stated to the Board he's noticed over the last couple of months and agenda packets that have been given out things have been said and motions have been passed on but the ball has been dropped or doesn't get done in a timely manner when it comes to action implementation. Commissioner Sugg mentioned he thinks there should be a backup plan that can remind them so that it doesn't fall through the cracks. Mayor Harrell said she appoint herself to that position to make sure everything was taken care of and asked if there was something, he wanted her to investigate. Commissioner Sugg replied the electric rate decrease they had been promising since 2018. Commissioner Mabry mentioned they had already started a strategic action plan a couple of years ago to list all the motions they've passed but haven't implemented that is in DropBox. Commissioner Sugg said he now understands why citizens complain about things never being done because that list is just sitting stagnant nothing is being done with it and that's why he brought it up. Commissioner Mabry follows up that he knows everything on that list is just a show of how its been left stagnant but a detailed list at least.

5. Profit Margins for Electrical Systems

Commissioner Sugg told the Board that although the Town has raised and lowered rates no one knows the true amount of profit the Town gets from Electric, Sewer and Water. For an accurate comparison in profit and loss to know if we are really helping or hurting ourselves when raising and lowering rates. Commissioner Sugg said the Town could be basically giving away free services if we don't know truly how much profit we make and how much we give back to EMC or City of Wilson so the services we provide are less than we pay for it. He mentioned that maybe we should try getting a rate study from another company that may show us our margins better. Commissioner Sugg said the Town has been going to some financial hardships because certain things weren't already in place before each new person on the Board or making decisions has come in blindly and just done what they thought was best. He said he would try to work with Ms. Tammy Keesler to create a profit margin work up for this to be implemented as soon as possible but there will come a time when someone from a place of authority comes asking for this. Commissioner Harrison asked if we as the Town even know where we want to be. Which Commissioner Sugg said we can figure it out but in order to do that accurately we need to know where we are now and where to move on from. He does tell the Board he would like to come back to the October meeting with more information.

6. Distressed Unit Letter

Mayor Harrell told the Board she received a letter from the state that said the Town was no longer on the watch list of distressed cities and town. She also mentioned the auditors wouldn't be coming until the end of the month since they now know the Town has everything in order and had already sent a few emails of things they'd need.

J. Adjournment

Commissioner Webb made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Date 10/5/2021

Brenda Harrell
Mayor Brenda Harrell

ATTESTED:

Tammy Keesler
Finance Officer/Town Clerk Tammy Keesler

10/5/2021