

**Town of Pinetops
Board of Commissioners
Regular Monthly Meeting (Also available via Zoom)
Minutes
May 2, 2023
Pinetops Town Hall**

A. Call Regular Meeting to Order

Mayor Harrell called the Regular Meeting to Order.

B. Invocation

Commissioner Harrison led the Invocation.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Harrell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Proposed Agenda

Commissioner Sugg requested that yard trash & fees be added to the proposed agenda. Commissioner Webb made a motion to approve the proposed agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mabry. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Sugg made a motion to approve the April 4, 2023 Regular Minutes and April 18, 2023, Budget Session Minutes as written. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

F. Public Comments

There were no public comments at this time.

G. Departmental Reports

1. **Police Department:** Chief Harrell read over the police report for the month of April 2023. The police department answered and/or initiated 1,048 official police actions. A detailed copy of the entire police report is hereby attached to the minutes.

2. **Public Works Department:** Cody Lancaster, Public Works Supervisor presented the water and sewer report for the month of April 2023. The total water produced for the month was 4.4 million and total wastewater treated was 6.7 million. There was 1 water line break for the month of April and 3 electrical outages.

Commissioner Sugg requested that the Board begin receiving a written report of the water line breaks and outages for the month.

3. **Fire Department:** Chief Burress presented a copy of the fire report for the month of April 2023. There were 9 service calls for the month. A detailed copy of the fire report is hereby attached to these minutes. A copy of the cemetery report for the month of April was also furnished. There were no lots sold for the month of April. A detailed copy of the cemetery report is hereby attached to the minutes.

Some of the Board members as well as the Town Administrator stated that they had received complaints about flowers and other items being removed from some of the cemetery lots. Chief Burress mentioned that on April 19th he had cleaned off the “out of season” flowers as well as other items that are not allowed on the grave sites. He went on to say that there is a sign posted at the cemetery informing the public that this is town policy. Commissioner Sugg suggested a notice or newsletter be sent out to let the public know exactly what the rules are pertaining to the cleaning of seasonal flowers. The Town Administrator stated that after reading the sign at the cemetery, he agrees that this issue needs to be readdressed and possibly the sign needs to be reworded. He went on to say that he will work on this and bring it back to the Board for review.

4. **Finance Department:** Ms. Keesler gave the financial report for the month of April 2023. The general fund had a gain of \$343,444.53 due to the transfer of the ARPA funds. The electric fund had a gain of \$17,680.86 for the month while the water/sewer fund ended the month with a loss of \$74,556.98 due to (2) debt payments. Ms. Keesler presented the Board with a Paid Check Report for the month along with a Budget to Actual Report. The adjusted ending balance for the month of April is \$3,700,449.79.

Commissioner Sugg stated that he would like to see the financial reports in a different format, so they don't just show the year-to-date figures. The Finance Officer said she could go back to presenting the expenditure and revenue reports as previously to include the monthly figures.

Ms. Keesler updated the Board on the ARPA Expenditure Report. The report for the period April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023, was due by April 30th and actually submitted on April 6, 2023.

The Budget to Actual worksheet for month 9 was completed and submitted to the Local Government Commission on April 6. The LGC has requested that the budget to actual reports and worksheets for months 8th, 9th, and 10th be submitted to them by the 15th of the month.

H. Items for Discussion

1. **Draft Copy of proposed 23-24 Budget submitted to LGC for Review.**

Ms. Keesler informed the Board that a draft copy of the proposed 23-24 budget was submitted to the LGC on April 18th per their request that it be received by May 16th. She also sent a copy of the proposed budget ordinance and budget message as requested by Natalie Rountree on April 25th. Natalie Rountree will review this information as part of

the UAL committee then this information will be forwarded to the LGC along with any comments from the committee for the LGC's final approval.

2. Medical Insurance Renewal.

Ms. Keesler forwarded the medical insurance coverage & rate comparison to the Board prior to this meeting for review. This information was not available at the budget session that was held on April 18, 2023. Based on the employee benefits offered and the cost to the town the Platinum 500 plan seems to be the best option to the plan we currently have. The plan comes with a 7.12% rate increase compared to keeping our same plan at a 23.08% rate increase. The proposed budget projects a 12% rate increase which would save the town around \$6,300 if they choose to go with the Platinum 500 plan. A decision needs to be made tonight or at least by June so a renewal contract can be signed to have the plan available to employees by July 1st.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to go with the BCBS Platinum 500 plan.

Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Any Other Business.

4. Solid Waste Collection Policy

The Town Administrator informed the Board that he had received some questions concerning exactly what the town will/will not pick up. The policy states the town wouldn't pick up mattresses, but he has been told by our sanitation department they can dispose of them; therefore, we should pick them up going forward. There have also been some questions about our customers needing a permit to dispose of items at the convenient centers which they do not have since they reside in town limits. Our customers can dispose of items at the landfill on Colonial Road but will be charged.

5. Yard Trash & Fees

Commissioner Sugg suggested changing the current garbage/recycle fee to just a sanitation fee as discussed at the last budget work session. The main reason for this is because the sanitation fee will not only cover garbage/recycle but also bulk and yard trash. The second part of his suggestion was to raise the sanitation fee to a flat fee of \$25 which will cover all the items mentioned above. In the past the town has only been charging for garbage and recycle pickup and not the other items even though the town has added expenses for offering these services. He then recommended that the additional \$26,000 revenue raised from the \$4 increase could be set aside in a capital reserve to be used towards the purchase of a fire truck.

Commissioner Taylor expressed she had further questions and concerns as it pertains to the above recommendations and for that reason suggested this be discussed further at the next budget meeting. Mayor Harrell explained that at this time another budget work session has not been scheduled since most items were wrapped up at the last session. There is also a time frame issue if the town does need to schedule another budget session and get an amended copy to the LGC by their deadline of May 16th, but we can do that if the Board agrees this is what we need to do.

Commissioner Mabry stated that this was just put on the agenda tonight and he doesn't feel the Board has all the imperative information needed to make an informative motion right now. He then proceeded to say that he knew he was not comfortable at this time due to the town's current financial situation with the entire amount going towards the purchase of a fire truck, but he may be okay with a portion of the revenue being put in reserve.

Commissioner Taylor again suggested this be tabled until more thought could be given.

Mayor Harrell asked if there was a motion to change the garbage/recycle fee to a sanitation fee that will cover all debris pickup and increase the fee by \$4 which will make the Sanitation Fee a flat \$25 to be effective on the July 2023 billing. Commissioner Mabry made the above motion with the notation that it does not include the additional revenue raised to be set aside in a reserve account to be used towards the purchase of a fire truck. Commissioner Sugg seconded the motion. Commissioner Taylor voted against the motion. The vote passed 4 to 1.

I. Action Items/New Business

1. Speed Bump Request – 307 S Martin Luther King.

The Town Administrator explained that he had been approached by Mary Chapman requesting that a speed bump be installed at 307 S Martin Luther King. Chief Harrell recommended following the current policy which states residents in the area will be petitioned to see if they agree a speed bump is needed or not. The Chief stated that in his opinion a better option would be installing a stop sign but he would have to figure out the best location if this option is chosen.

2. Library Building Rental Contract Renewal.

Administrator Ventresco informed the Board that he received a renewal copy of the Library Rental Contract. The contract covers a 3-year period, and the rental price remains the same at \$1750.00. Commissioner Webb made a motion to approve the Library Building Rental Contract Renewal as written. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Electric Flat Rate.

Commissioner Mabry requested that the electric flat rate issue be brought back up so that a decision can finally be made. He mentioned that this has been going on since 2019 without a decision being made yet. He went on to say that he knows the town needs to remain revenue neutral, but this can still happen if the town moves residential customers to a flat electric rate. During the last budget meeting a couple of options were presented to the Board for their review. After reviewing the options, Commissioner Mabry remarked that he feels the Board has enough information for a decision finally to be made on this topic. Commissioner Mabry made a motion to go with Option 3 which changes all residential users to a flat electric rate of 0.1360 per kwh with a base charge of \$13.66. This option will most closely keep the town revenue neutral. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion carried.

4. Any Other Business

Commissioner Taylor inquired if any progress has been made on the houses she mentioned at the last meeting. During that meeting she informed the Board that there were numerous houses in and around Pinetops that needed to be cleaned up. The Town Administrator replied that he is going to contact the homeowners first to see if they will take care of the problem on their own. Commissioner Mabry remarked that the Town Ordinance needs to be followed. Administrator Ventresco said he is looking into it. Commissioner Taylor told the Administrator he needed to look at Pitt Street.

5. Lions Club Renovation.

The Town Administrator reported that the Lions Club Renovation is almost completed. There are a couple of small items that the town is going to go ahead and take care of out of this year's budget. The Board discussed changing the sign from the Lions Club to "Pinetops Community Center".

6. Dispatcher System Update.

The Town Administrator asked the Board for a couple of volunteers to sit in on the dispatcher system talks between him and the Sheriff. Commissioner Mabry and Commissioner Sugg both said they would volunteer if no one else was interested. The Town Administrator stated again that in no way are these talks targeting any specific department he is merely meeting with them to see what options the town may have moving forward.

7. Benefit Update.

The Town Administrator informed the Board that he was contacted by Bethany Hershey, a combined insurance representative pertaining to offering individual insurance coverage to employees. Administrator Ventresco stated he would make the final decision whether to allow her to meet with the employees, but he wanted to make sure the Board was informed. Any coverage an employee purchases would be paid through payroll deduction. The Town of Pinetops is not obliged to incur any cost associated with this type of coverage. The Board told the Administrator it was his decision.

J. Adjournment

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

Date: 6/6/2023

Brenda Harrell
Mayor Brenda Harrell

ATTESTED:

Tammy Keesler
Finance Officer/Town Clerk Tammy Keesler