

Town of Pinetops
Board of Commissioners
Regular Monthly Meeting (Also available via Zoom)
Minutes
June 2, 2020
Pinetops Town Hall

Present: Present for the meeting were Mayor Brenda Harrell, Commissioners Florence Pender, Donald Webb, Barbara Taylor, Dennis Sugg, and Oscar Mabry.

Also in attendance: Town Administrator Natalie Bess, Finance Officer Tammy Keesler, Public Works Director Phil Webb, 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 June 6 meeting to order at 6.00p.m. The Mayor took a moment to welcome everyone that was present via Zoom. She then requested they please mute their phones to help alleviate background noise.

B. Invocation

Invocation was given by Commissioner Taylor.

C. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Harrell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Proposed Agenda

Administrator Bess requested two items be added to the agenda under Items for Consideration. The first item was approval to advertise delinquent taxes in newspaper and the second item was declaring some vehicles/equipment as surplus property so they can be sold. Mayor Harrell called for a motion to approve the proposed agenda. Commissioner Taylor made a motion to approve the proposed agenda as amended. Commissioner Pender seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Consent Agenda

Commissioner Pender made a motion to approve the minutes from the Regular Board Meeting held on April 5, 2020 as well as the Budget Workshop Minutes from May 14, May 19, and May 27. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Sugg. Motion carried unanimously.

F. Public Comments

Administrator Bess informed the board that Dustin & Scott from the Summer Recreation League had asked to speak. They were inquiring about the status on using the 2 ballfields. The ballfields had been closed by the town board due to COVID-19 and the restrictions imposed on mass gatherings. They told the board they wanted to start their season this weekend since they are already a couple of months behind. Currently they have 20 teams signed up to play. The way it would be set up is that they would train on Saturday and Sunday then play games during the week. One of the Commissioners asked if they usually had permission to use the ballfields to which Administrator Bess replied, yes. They told the board that they will be following all guidelines from the CDC as it pertains to ball teams.

Administrator Bess informed the board that Van Holland also asked to speak on this issue. He told the board that he had spoken to the Top Gun organization which is travel ball about possibly using the 2 ballfields in Pinetops. Normally, they host their tournaments at sport complexes but with the COVID-19 situation some of those venues have been limited. He explained that if the board allowed them to use the ballfields they would receive some revenue as a result. Currently they would only need to use the ballfields this weekend from Friday-Sunday. They have 168 teams that have signed up for the event. Their organization has strict guidelines in place due to COVID-19. He went on to say that he didn't want to interfere with the Summer Recreation Program and that he only mentioned it because he knew it would bring in additional revenue for the town.

Administrator Bess asked the Summer Recreation Program if they required COVID-19 waivers to be signed in order for their players to be eligible to play ball. They responded that they don't but since they operate under the Babe Ruth Organization waivers are signed for regular personal liability.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to open the 2 ballfields but leave the playground closed. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Mabry made a motion to allow the Summer Recreation Program to begin using the two ballfields this weekend conditional on a COVID-19 waiver being in place prior to play. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. The Town Administrator told them that she would work with the town attorney to create a COVID-19 waiver to be signed and quickly forward them a copy so they can be in place by this weekend. The town will be given a copy of the roster as well as a COVID-19 waiver for each ball player listed.

G. Departmental Reports

1. **Police Department.** Chief Harrell read over the police report for the month of May. The total calls for the month was 1,461. There were 74 traffic stops and 28 citations issued. There were 2 vehicle accidents as well as several major crimes that occurred during the month. These included multiple shooting incidents and a home invasion. The police department is fully staffed with 7 full-time officers but 1 dispatcher is still out on medical leave. There is a balance of \$15,358.62 still remaining on the Governor's Crime Commission Grant. The Chief told the board that he heard from a reliable source that there may be a protest planned in Pinetops for this weekend. He stated that numerous officers will be working this weekend as well as some additional help being on stand-by if needed. Commissioner Sugg and Commissioner Mabry both remarked that the Fire Chief needs to be made aware of this so they can have a plan in place to respond if needed. Mayor Harrell took a moment to thank all the officers for the job they are doing especially during these uncertain times. Due to complaints received the board asked that contact be made with Abrams Barbecue to see if they can come up with an alternative drive-thru in order to keep vehicles out of the road. Mayor Harrell suggested that maybe if cars weren't allowed to park out front of the business and had to enter thru the 2nd Street side it might help alleviate some of these issues.
2. **Public Works Department.** (a) Phil Webb read over the water and sewer report for the month of May. The report shows the total million gallons of sewer flow and water discharge for the month. The sewer flow totaled 8.1 million gallons and the water discharge totaled 5.50 million gallons. He told the board that the company working on the Well #4 Project should be back in around 30 days to drill the well. He went on to say that at this time they told him they don't for-see any problems.
3. **Fire Department.** The board received a copy of the Fire report for the month of May. The Fire Chief was not present at this meeting. The total calls for the month of April was 4. The report consisted of Town Fire Calls = 2, Town Service Call = 1, and Medical Responder Calls = 1. Hours in Training & Meetings = 120. Hours worked in preparation for ISO Inspection by Fire Chief = 129. Administrator

Bess reported to the board that the Fire Chief told her the ISO Inspection went really well. She also informed the board that the Fire Chief had some minor surgery done last week.

4. **Finance Officer.** Ms. Keesler gave the financial report for the month of May. The general fund had a negative balance of \$14,666.41. The electric fund had a positive balance of \$45,997.29 for the month of May while the water/sewer fund ended the month with a negative balance of \$9,537.87. During the month of May the water/sewer fund make a transfer to the general fund in the amount of \$30,000. The electric fund also made a transfer to the general fund in the amount of \$130,000. In total the general fund received transfers of \$160,000 in the month of May. She presented the board with a Paid Check Report for the month of May along with a Revenue and Expenditure Report. She told the board that the Auditor came on June 1st and June 2nd for their first site visit as it pertains to the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020. They are currently scheduled to come back on August 4th to finish up.

5. **Town Administrator.**
 - a) The Town Administrator told the board that there were 7 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Pinetops as of June 1st. Edgecombe County had 190 confirmed cases which is up from 94 reported May 5, 2020.
 - b) The Town Administrator told the board that Executive Order 124 which was scheduled to expire at the end of May has now been extended through the end of July as per the Governor's Executive Order 142. This basically means the town still can't charge late fees, cut-off fees or disconnect services while the Executive Order is in effect. To date the town has loss \$13,780 in revenue from late fees and cut-off fees that can't be charged. The town currently has delinquent accounts totaling \$38,000.
 - c) The Town Hall lobby door is still closed due to COVID-19. We have been accepting credit card payments as needed but are still urging customers to drop cash, checks, or money orders in an envelope through the slot in the door. The office is still operating under normal hours, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Office staff is being staggered at this time. She inquired as to whether the board wanted to open back up the town lobby the customers. She did say that speaking for the office staff they are still a little weary about opening completely back up because it doesn't seem like cases of COVID-19 has begun declining as of yet. Commissioner Mabry remarked that he felt like the decision should be left up to the Administrator because he can understand the safety concerns of the office staff. Administrator Bess said we would leave the lobby door locked for a few more weeks then revisit the issue again in the near future to see if any changes may be warranted.

- d) Administrator Bess told the board she will continue to reach out to local business to make sure they are aware of funds that might be available to them to help offset loss sales as a result of COVID-19.
- e) Administrator Bess presented the board with a proposed Adoption timeline for Fiscal Year Budget 2020-2021. The proposed budget for fiscal year 2020-2021 will be presented later on tonight which is June 2, 2020. Then a public hearing on the adoption of the proposed budget will be held on June 23rd at 6.00 p.m. The town attorney stated that we could conduct the public hearing electronically if needed but the town would have to allow a 24 hour period for public comment prior to adoption of the budget. That would mean that the public hearing can take place on June 23rd but the board would have to recess that meeting until June 25th at 3.00 to allow time for public comment. At the June 25th meeting the board would reconvene and at that time could officially adopt the proposed budget for fiscal year 2020-2021.

Administrator Bess asked the board if it would be okay for the town office to close early on June 30, 2020 to allow time to close out the fiscal year and roll over to the newly adopted budget. The board had no problem with the office closing early in order to close-out. Administrator Bess told the board that we will plan to close at 3.00 p.m. then so we can close -out.

- f) Administrator Bess told the board that she had received a draft copy of the personnel manual from the attorney. She plans on meeting with the Police Chief as well as the Public Works Director to review the manual for any needed changes or corrections. Once that is done she will present it to the town board.
- g) Administrator Bess told the board that the current zoning stuff is outdated so she has reached out to LOGICS, the software company to see if they possibly have any programs dealing with zoning that can be used to update our system.
- h) Administrator Bess informed the board that she is scheduled to meet with an individual from Paychex concerning having our payroll outsourced.
- i) The walkability signs have been installed and the ribbon cutting has already taken place. The town will be receiving some bike racks free of charge. The police department has already received a couple.
- j) The preconstruction meeting on the well project took place on 04/14/2020. Testing on the Well was done in May and the project is scheduled to resume this week.
- k) The Town Administrator told the board that one of the properties slated for demolition has already been demolished and the attorney is busy working on preparing demolition orders. Demolition bid packages will be accepted until July 2, 2020.

- l) Administrator Bess gave a quick overview of the Code Enforcement. She told the board that some of the property owners have already been in contact with the attorney.
- m) The Town Administrator told the board that we had received several grass complaints. She explained that our normal policy was to send out letters instructing the property owner of the complaint and giving them a certain time in which to comply. If they do not comply or if it is a vacant lot then the town will have the property cut and a tax lien will be put on the property.
- n) Administrator Bess informed the board that she as well as the police department has received complaints about speeding near the ballfield. After discussing the issue with the police chief they have discussed installing speed bumps and signage near the baseball field to help deter speeding. The Chief suggested putting 2 speed bumps down on each side of the ballfield which will mean 4 speed bumps total. These items can be purchased through Powell Bill funds. The Chief also requested permission to order some signs for out front of the post office. The board had no problem with these 2 requests so the speed bumps and signage will be ordered.

H. Items for Discussion

1. Open Projects Update – Storm water Run-Off Management Project.

Commissioner Sugg presented the board with Project Plan Minutes that he had taken from a meeting held on May 27, 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to scope the Storm water Runoff Management Project. The individuals present at the meeting were Commissioners Dennis Sugg and Oscar Mabry as well as the Public Works Director, Phil Webb and Jameson Wooten, Pinetops utility department. Derrick Smith and Will Larson from The Wooten Company was also in attendance. The Wooten Company agreed to function in the role of consultant/engineering with Derrick Smith being the person of contact. They will provide a project plan by June 3rd. Once the project report is received from them the project team will reconvene to review prior to presenting to the Board of Commissioners.

2. Wastewater Treatment Plant

Commissioner Mabry took a few moments to speak on having an Asset Inventory Plan prepared for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Currently Commissioner Mabry is waiting for the data collection to present to the engineer. He also wanted to thank Administrator Bess for setting up the Drop Box folder on the town computer that can be used as a shared folder for reports, pictures, etc. on proposed projects.

3. Utilities.

Commissioner Mabry requested that the transparent billing and electric sales flat rate be tabled at least 90 days.

4. Delinquent Tax Listing.

Commissioner Sugg made a motion to advertise the delinquent 2019 property taxes in the local paper as per General 105.369. Commissioner Pender seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Declare Surplus Property.

Commissioner Webb made a motion to declare the salvage police car as surplus along with some miscellaneous equipment upstairs no longer used by the police department. Chief Harrell asked that these items be declared surplus so they can be advertised on Gov. Deals. Commissioner Pender seconded the motion. Passed unanimously. Commissioner Webb made a motion to also declare a few items in the maintenance department as requested by the public works director. The items are as following, 2003 Bucket Truck, 2004 knuckle-boom truck, and the caterpillar backhoe. Commissioner Pender seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

I. Items for Consideration

A. 2020-2021 Proposed Budget

The Finance Officer prepared and presented a proposed Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Town of Pinetops budget at the June 2, 2020 board meeting. A public hearing on the proposed budget will be held on June 23rd at 6.00 at which time public comments will be received. The public hearing will be advertised in the local paper. A copy of the proposed budget is available for public inspection in the town hall for all citizens to review. A copy will also be available on the website. The Finance Officer presented the highlights of the proposed budget to the board. The budget is balanced in its entirety as is required by the N.C.G.S. The budget does not include an increase in our property tax rate. The tax rate for Pinetops will remain at \$.46 per hundred dollars of assessed valuation. The tax rate did increase for \$.36 to \$.46 in fiscal year 2019-2020. The budget does not include any increase in the electric rates at this time. The last electric rate increase was 2015. The budget does not include any increase in the water/sewer rates at this time. The last water/sewer rate increase was 2017. The budget does not include any increase in the garbage/recycle rates at this time. The last increase was \$1.00 when it was imposed in fiscal year 2019-2020. The proposed budget does include a 2% COLA for employees. Employees have not received a COLA since 2018. The total proposed budget for fiscal year 2020-2021 is \$4,661,064 which is an

increase of \$160,380. Transfers to the general fund are also projected to increase by \$74,898. The projected annual debt payments for fiscal year 2020-2021 is \$74,486. The finance officer closed by saying that due to the uncertainty of the implications from COVID-19 as to how it will impact the expected revenue of the town in this budget; management urges council to be conservative of any increases and consider cutting any expenditures where they may see fit to help offset the expected impact. The adoption of the fiscal year 2020-2021 budget is scheduled for June 25, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

J. Adjournment

Commissioner Pender made a motion to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Date: June 23, 2020


Mayor Brenda Harrell

ATTESTED.


Finance Officer/Town Clerk Tammy Keesler