



Ollis stated the fire department no longer takes their budget to the Polk County Board of Commissioners. It has to be taken to the FRAC fire committee. The committee approves or denies it, then it goes to the Polk County Board of Commissioners. Chief Tennant included a salary for him. He is getting the department ready so that when he leaves it will be ready to cover that. He is asking for a tax increase. There is a line item for WEG. He will bring a few more people in to help cover for the world games.

Mayor Peoples came in at 4:25 p.m. Ollis gave him a brief update on where we are at.

In Harmon Field there will be some changes. He has shifted Wade to public works. We are going to hire part timers to work there. This should be a savings in the department. He is going to ask the county for a tax increase. Crowell asked how under budgeted is Harmon Field. Ollis stated it is under-funded, not in dire need. Crowell suggested collecting parking pass fees. Ingham stated it takes away from the Friendliest Town. He has never liked the idea. Ollis stated this may affect the way the county feels about taxes for Harmon Field. Ingham would rather ask the county for help.

Ollis stated tourism tax is next. Mayor Peoples asked how the tourism tax would work. Ollis stated the option that you chose in the letter states we would like to begin discussions. We get the five cents and can do what we want as long as it is okay with the state. Armbrust stated you need in the document to include infrastructure that supports tourist related activities. Ollis stated he doesn't feel like that will happen. Crowell asked what he meant by infrastructure. Armbrust stated sidewalks and office. Greenville and Spartanburg has just redid there's to include this. Crowell stated they have the prepared food and beverage tax and have plenty of money. Ollis stated state legislature restricts what monies can be spent on. Crowell sees that as being abused right away. Mayor Peoples asked to pose the question to the League. They can help us with that.

Ollis stated as far as water goes he is going to lower some of our projections. We are still coming in where we budgeted, but we budgeted very conservatively. We have a water loss problem. He has had Rural Water come out and do a water test and a leak study. The pipes are not necessarily leaking. The pipes are old and healthy. The meter fees have not been kept up with or taken care of. Last year he pulled money to put toward purchasing new meters and budgeted money this fiscal year also. Probably the first time in ten years. If the meter is not working we can't bill properly so we have to charge the minimum rate. A lady knew she had a leak and didn't repair it because the meter was not working and she was only paying the minimum rate. We fixed the meter and now she is going to have to fix the leak. We have about 668 meters that are bad. Ingham stated the meters were supposed to save us money and all it saved us was an employee. Ollis stated the program does work. It just hasn't been managed correctly. We are going to get this corrected.

Sanitation is going to be adjusted some to play it safe. He is going to increase travel and schools, because he is going to beg council to attend some classes. This coming year the league conference will be in Hickory and hopes that each of you will attend.

Salaries are blank, but he is looking at bringing a handful of employees that make very low wages up some. He is looking at a 2% COLA for most of the town. He will have some savings with the open position. Armbrust asked for salaries of positions and their employee benefit package. Ollis will send that out. Benefits are included in the sheet. Mayor Peoples stated he is not sure if we can afford dental and vision. Ollis is trying to get costs savings across the board. A lot of people work for benefits now.

Armbrust told him not to scrap, as the town manager, anything for us to make up for benefits. Ollis stated benefits mean a lot to employees. Mayor Peoples stated people don't understand, you can replace people or vehicles or something along that line. Ollis stated you can't replace some people, some you can. The reason we lost Daniel isn't because of insurance, it's because of salary. This insurance may make a difference to some employees. It means a lot in the public sector where you don't provide the salary that you can in the private sector. He will do what the board wants.

Armbrust asked him to present to him his ideal budget. Ollis stated he understands what you are saying. We are wasting a lot of money where we don't need to. He is looking at replacing the phone system, where we can save about \$10,000. We are going to be smarter about things we are replacing. The town has been doing more with less. There is no room for projects. He is looking at a healthier positive budget for retention of employees. Not going with revenue neutral this year, the tax revenue is down. Peoples asked if we could raise taxes three cents and designate each penny to a project so that people know exactly what we are spending it on. Ollis stated that citizens expect more in Tryon. We can list what the tax increase is going to.

Ollis is working to make some cuts and he will get the salaries plugged in. Hopefully he can cut some debt service and make the budget a little more fit. He is going to monitor the revenues coming in.

Mayor Peoples asked if the board would give thought to his idea of raising customer's water bill payment to the next dollar for projects. Everyone agreed to think about it. This would be voluntary.

Ollis is trying to get with Scott Dadson from IPDC to schedule a board retreat for the next session.

Armbrust asked if anyone knew about the group that is coming from N.C. State University to do an economic development study on February 22-24. Their focus is economic viability of an arts related community. The arts related community geographically is Polk and Rutherford Counties. He has asked, who asked for this and what organization is funding this study. He has not yet been provided an answer. There is about a dozen people coming here for the study. Ingham stated most of the art is in this town. Crowell stated we are the only county that doesn't have an arts council. Armbrust stated TFAC has been designated as the defacto arts council by Polk County Commissioners. Armbrust stated that would be a good document to have for grant funding request. The board had several ideas, but on one knew for sure.

### **ADJOURN**

Commissioner Ingham made a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

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J. Alan Peoples, Mayor

Attest:

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Susan B. Bell, Town Clerk