

**TOWN OF TRYON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 20, 2019 9:00 A.M.
TRYON TOWN HALL – MCCOWN ROOM
BUDGET WORK SESSION**

Present: Mayor Pro Tem Bill Ingham
Commissioners: Crys Armbrust, Bill Crowell
Staff Present: Town Manager Zach Ollis

Absent: Mayor J. Alan Peoples
Absent: Commissioner Chrelle Booker
Town Clerk Susan Bell

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Ingham called the budget work session meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Town Manager Ollis went over the revenues and expenditures and has them broken down by fund.

Sales tax has continued to climb, so we are finding out it is not just because of WEG. Sales tax has come in at \$122,000 as of today and we budgeted \$92,000. Some of the other ones have come in well also. Motor vehicle tax is coming in a little slow. The hold harmless continues to climb. He has adjusted the numbers to reflect the increases. He is fairly confident all will be reached. If the sales tax comes in like it has as of today, we should be able to put back \$99,000. Armbrust asked for the line numbers to be on the document. Ollis stated the main thing to take from this is the taxes have come in very well. The debt service is down and more manageable.

Ollis stated this is where the project list comes in. Armbrust asked about the debt total. Ollis will get that for you. Ollis stated the serious debt is the water plant and Howard Gap Road water line. Then we have the vehicle debt. The biggest downfall is our infrastructure. Ingham would like for the town to pick a section at a time and replace it. Ollis stated the CIP will showcase those items. Crowell asked if we are putting any money into savings in the water department. Ollis stated we put a little in.

Crowell would like to see the tax rate go back to what it was several years ago. Roads are deteriorating. Armbrust wants to see hard numbers so that we can approach the Polk County Community Foundation. Crowell stated they are not going to pave our roads. Armbrust stated they are sitting on \$154 million dollars. Crowell stated that's an entirely different animal. He can't believe how much the taxes are. The taxes are reasonable. He would like to see it go up and see the water rates for outside to go up. Ingham stated let's see how much money we have now. He doesn't want to see rates increased.

Armbrust stated he is running on merit not on raising taxes. Crowell stated we don't have what we need now to make repairs. More construction is going on Hogback Road. The roads are taking a hit. Ollis stated originally the tax rate was .5375 and now we are working off of .5028. Just under three cents is what it dropped. The town lost \$45,000 from revenue neutral. One penny is about \$15,000. We have grown based off sales tax. Crowell stated we are not spending enough on our roads.

Armbrust stated put in on a ballot and let the citizen's decide. Ingham stated we need to see where our money stands before we raise taxes. He and Crys want to get Erskine Bridge fixed. How do we do that and say we need to raise taxes to repair the roads. Crowell stated he would like to see Hogback fixed long before Erskine Bridge.

Ollis has talked with CYP about the water. They pay someone to come in and treat their water. They have a meter that we check every morning and bill them for the sewer only. The way their system is setup with all the rain it is telling them that they have millions of gallons of water going through the sewer. Basically they are losing money left and right. He told him that he could buy all of his water from the town for a basic rate. He doesn't envision them using much water in the future.

Crowell feels we need to increase the tax rate, so that we will have money to fix these major projects. Armbrust stated put it on the ballot and you will see who stands up. Crowell stated we are going to have to find out how to put it on the ballot. Ingham stated if you could show people how much their taxes would go up. Ollis stated \$200,000 home would go up about seventy dollars if the rate was increase to .5375.

Ingham stated infrastructure needs to be repaired. Ollis stated he could research floating a municipal bond. Ingham stated most don't understand how when you spend money downtown it comes back to us. Ollis stated the sales tax shows more usage happening in town. If breaks continue to happen it could deter businesses from wanting to come here. Crowell stated he knows of six homes being built now. Ollis will get that information back to you. Ingham stated it could be a non-binding vote.

Ollis asked about the average property value in town. Board said \$185,000. He feels we have done more with less. Trend has probably been going on for a number of years. Three cents for us is \$45,000. Depending on the CIP that may not be enough. Crowell asked when that would be out. Ollis stated interviewing will start soon. He asked if everyone could send him available dates.

Crowell asked about the utility franchise taxes. Ollis stated this is what we have to date. The problem with Tryon is that we offer services where other towns have quit. We have been behind this year, but we provide three times the services that other towns do. You can look at outsourcing services, but some towns that have done that will tell you that you don't come out any better.

Crowell asked what the hold harmless tax is. Ollis stated years ago the state repealed one of the sales taxes. They had to find a way to give it back. Crowell asked about the \$25,000 Lake Lanier tax. Ollis stated that is for the Fire Department.

Harmon Field Revenue is not the best, because of the issues. He thinks he is going to ask for permission to go to the county for a tax increase. Current tax is .035. Armbrust asked if anyone was pursuing grants. Ollis stated the only one is the current one for the Riverbank Restoration grant.

Ollis stated he is not sure that their budget is ready to start that process. At the time the riverbank work was started he was under the impression that Andrew and his crew were going to perform the work. They have not had the time.

Ollis stated Occupancy Taxes have come in fairly well.

Water is about the same as last year. Tommy is manually reading the meters to make sure they are reading correctly. Ingham asked if we are still replacing meters. Ollis stated 800 meters were not working and he is down to approximately 300 – 400 meters. We are going to be continuously replacing meters.

Armbrust asked about the Columbus/Saluda payment. Ollis stated this is for their portion of the Howard Gap water line (\$62,664). He is trying to get a qualified engineer to look at the line to see if it can be repaired and what type of damage was done by the mudslides.

Crowell stated Jamie Carpenter had texted him to find out about the lease for the historical museum. Ollis stated if you want it in the budget he can put it there. Armbrust asked if the monies were for the museum or for the visitor's center. Ollis stated when they approached us it was for the Tryon Museum. Linda Lee asked for \$500 a month, plus insurance (\$575) in exchange they would have the volunteers have it opened. Ingham asked if there was a restroom there. Ollis stated yes. Armbrust stated he would like to go with the museum's request. Ollis assumes it is liability only. Crowell suggested \$500 for them. He would like a sign on the wall with the town seal.

Sanitation-he will double check on raising twenty-five cents. Not sure about the years that were approved. The expenditures haven't changed much.

Armbrust asked about the salaries on Harmon Field. Ollis stated it covers Travis and one full time person. Then the part-time is under part-time salaries. On salaries that were discussed last time, there wasn't any opposition. He will keep those in there. He had sent the salaries to you.

Armbrust asked about the tenure of Deborah. Ollis stated he feels we can count on her for a while. Michael is doing well there. The more time that she is here, the better shape we are in. He is going to school and he is also learning where the meters are. He wants to learn.

Armbrust asked about continuing education for employees. Ollis will get that to them. He is looking at other educational opportunities for employees. If something happened to some of our people now we would be lost.

Crowell asked if he saw any more money coming from Powell Bill. Ollis stated no, it's based on mileage and we get \$60,000-\$67,000 a year.

Armbrust stated at the corner of Trade, Pacolet and Oak Streets are broken places, probably from a tremor. The pedestrian crosswalk is cracked. He said the asphalt was not very thick there. Ollis stated that's probably because of the elevation.

Armbrust asked about retaining ownership of property. Citizens should have access to lake. Ollis asked William to research. Ollis stated it would not cost much. Crowell stated a small area could be fixed for a fishing pier.

Ingham entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

J. Alan Peoples, Mayor

Attest:

Susan B. Bell, Town Clerk