

TOWN OF TRYON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SEPTEMBER 21, 2021
TRYON TOWN HALL – MCCOWN MEETING ROOM
6:00 P.M. WORK SESSION

Present: Mayor J. Alan Peoples Mayor Pro Tem Chrelle Booker

Commissioners: Crys Armbrust, Bill Crowell, Bill Ingham

Staff Present: Town Manager Zach Ollis Town Clerk Susan Bell

Public Works Director Jody Morse & Attorney William Morgan

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Peoples called the work session to order.

The following items were discussed:

Commissioner Ingham

1. Has received some complaints about someone wandering around about 3:00 a.m. in the morning. Town Manager Ollis asked if they had called the police. They have. Ingham was hoping to talk to Jeff about this tonight.
2. Has concerns about the supply shortage, what if the pump goes down, how soon could we get a new pump. PWD Morse will check on prices and find out how long it would take to get supplies.

Commissioner Armbrust

1. Has concerns over the letter from the state auditor's office-he would like to request council to set as their first priority-to be in compliance with the state's protocol. Ollis explained we have changed things as they have requested. We will stay on top of it. Water & Sewer is where the problem is. Admin services was changed per the states request and this is when the water & sewer started with their shortfall. The state required us to do a dam inspection and that cost money. We have debt on the water line going up the mountain that doesn't work. The CIP was done in 2012 and was put on a shelf and nothing was done. The water rates haven't been increased. We talked with the state and explained our situation. We have raised the rates and are working to get rid of some of this debt. He reiterated to them if they will give us a couple of years, he thinks we will be fine.

Mayor Peoples said we were told we had to have an engineer for the interconnect water line and we got one and it didn't work. Ollis explained we have some debt, a caterpillar that we are making payments on, two trucks, the emergency water line and the water plant. About three million in debt. Accrued most of debt in 2014. Original renovations were \$3.3 million. Met with

DEQ about the Braewick issue and they told us we should build another water plant. It shouldn't have been built that way. The chemicals are costly. They just recommended we build another plant while telling us we don't have enough money to fix Braewick. This comes on the tail end of the audit. They want us to turn our budget in early to them and the budget to actuals every three months. Once the accountants get caught up, he thinks we will be okay.

Mayor Peoples explained his concerns over the auditors being late. He asked what are they going to do to them. They have no control over them. This problem goes back probably twelve years. Ollis explained they are concerned with the budget amendments. Mayor Peoples asked about the sanitation, why we were \$108,000 over. We fixed that at the last meeting. Ollis will have the auditors come in and explain this. We did the follow up call as the board requested.

Commissioner Crowell

1. Expressed his concerns with the idea of the Rails to Trails. He had just gotten back from New England and road the Virginia Creeper. Had a wonderful time. Up there they put the trail right beside the tracks. They built about forty miles of trails along the riverbed. Spartanburg County Tourism is working on the idea. It increases property values and makes towns healthier. It brings tourism in that doesn't bring in trash. Commissioner Ingham replied the track is flat from Tryon to Landrum. Armbrust has ridden the tracks with the track manager. We have eighteen miles from Landrum to East Flat Rock that are not being utilized. The Virginia Creeper Trail produces \$59 million per year in economic development. Crowell explained the railroad wants dollars for the rails. We could do it beside the rails in case they need to use the tracks again.
2. How are we going to pay for the dam inspection? Ollis explained that it came out of fund balance. Basically, the rates are not going up today for that.

Mayor Peoples

1. Asked about the striping on Laurel. Ollis spoke to Mark Culbreth who does the striping and there is a shortage in paint. He has it ordered, but it may be a month.

Ollis

1. Add to the agenda the cell tower plans that are before you. Proposing to pay \$700 a month for the location. Armbrust requested the plans be put on the website. Ollis will put out a NIXLE.
2. Add the Historic Preservation Commission per Robert Lange. The missing 40 we lease to a land trust, part of the Norman Wilder Forest. It was up before COVID. You as a board have to tell him to advertise.
3. Wage discussion-only affects Public Works lifting minimum wage to \$15 an hour. He could pull the kudzu money to make this happen. He talked to Dr. Carson about the Polk County Community Foundation grants. He wants to know if the town will be willing to help churches to get the grants. We can help with the grant application along with paying the matching part. Armbrust explained that we have put massive amounts of money in the reserve fund. State requires eight percent, what is our percent? Would like the raise to start on Friday. Mayor Peoples explained that expenses are eating away at our fund balance. Armbrust replied our employees are our most valuable asset. Without them we are nothing. Can we put this to a vote tonight? Ollis replied it is on the agenda.

4. Insurance-Ollis explained that Attorney Morgan has information on this. He is looking into this. Employees were given something through the personnel policy, when the policy changes there may be the chance of being challenged. Morgan explained the personnel policy is not a contract, but the town needs to follow their policy. It was in place and the employees relied on this. It's 50/50. Mayor Peoples asked if the 401k match would have to be paid back. Ollis explained that you replaced the health insurance with the 401k match. Some of our employees don't even participate. Mayor Peoples asked if we adjusted this if we give the insurance. Ollis explained that we would not cover the employees that were hired after it was taken away. This issue is only with some of our employees.

Mayor Peoples asked if there would be a problem with the 401k we paid to the employees. Ollis replied it is over a half a million dollars and stretches out to 2044. He is of the opinion that we need to settle this once and for all. We have seven employees that we will be losing soon. There were two employees that received insurance as part of their exit agreement. Armbrust does not want us sued because we hadn't resolved the issue. Ollis will bring back at a later time.

Armbrust asked for a copy of the map of the missing 40. Town Clerk Bell will get that to you.

Town Clerk Bell asked to add to the agenda to close McCown Street this Saturday for the Feed the Foothills and to add the Audit Contract.

Armbrust explained there was a disturbing article in the newspaper about the new event fee assessments by Polk County for all festival events. Ollis understanding is this is for events over 5,000, but we provide our own fire and police protection.

ADJOURN

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Ingham so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

J. Alan Peoples, Mayor

Attest:

Susan B. Bell, Town Clerk