

**TOWN OF TRYON  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
APRIL 19, 2022  
TRYON TOWN HALL – MCCOWN MEETING ROOM  
WORK SESSION  
6:00 P.M.**

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

Town Attorney William Morgan

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Peoples called the work session to order.

**INTERCONNECT WATER LINE**

Town Manager Ollis reported Dana Bolden with WithersRavenel is here to give a presentation on the interconnect line, along with the City of Saluda manager, Stephen Orr.

Mr. Orr reported WithersRavenel has made their presentation to the City of Saluda. Your board is now and then they will move to the Town of Columbus. Once all have heard the presentation, then we will make the decision on what to do.

Dana Bolden made a report on information so that the Board could make a decision on what would need to be done to put the line back into use. The objective of the report was to evaluate the existing water system interconnections, look at any operational issues that was experienced while it was operating, consider the current condition, see if the components in place are or are not operational, look at the storm damage and offer conclusions considering all the factors.

The system was designed to pump water from Columbus to Tryon, to allow gravity flow from Tryon to Columbus, to pump water from Tryon to Saluda and allow water to flow water from Saluda to Tryon by gravity. Ultimately it would be Hendersonville water flowing back to Tryon and potentially could be passed to Columbus. Hypothetically water could flow from Columbus to Saluda and from Hendersonville to Columbus through the system.

The key operational issues were, low pressure in the Saluda system, failure of coordination between booster pump stations and when pumping from Columbus to Tryon it was depleting Columbus storage. These were the initial problems with the system. The model and assessment of the operational issues show, three booster pump stations on the climb up the mountain, has no storage in between. The way it is intended to work and could work if the communication was good, the lowest pump comes on, provides water to the next pump, boosted onto the next pump, which boosts it on up the mountain. Any failure in the communication causes problems. If the pumps don't come on in the created proper sequence, the water at the next pump is not there to pump on up the mountain. The coordination of communication between the pumps is absolutely critical to function. They used software that is called

Bentley WaterGems to provide a basic model of the interconnect portion. They did not model the complete water system.

The model did reflect Saluda water coming to Tryon. It did predict rapid drawdown and low pressures at Saluda. The flow rates that the model showed were more than double what could be sustained by the Saluda system. Tryon pumping to Saluda the model confirmed it can work as it was noted to do in several cases. When they are properly synchronized water will move and fill the tank. Communication was likely the cause of the operational issues. They could not do any communication testing, because the system is not operational at this time. It's not practicable to put the system back in operation. The system would have to be replaced. Columbus pumping water to Tryon, the operating point that they system is installed exceeds the combined capacity of the well pumps. Again, that confirms when water is being pumped from town to town, there will be a continuous drop in the storage at Columbus. The pump can move water faster than the wells can replenish it.

The system can be operated manually, by monitoring and turning the interconnect off and allowing the tanks to refill. It could operate in an emergency situation to provide water from Columbus to Tryon. Water flowing from Tryon to Columbus there were no operational issues. It's basically opening a valve so that water can flow. Polk County can also supply water to Columbus. That's not a mode of operation that will be utilized unless there is a very unusual situation.

They went to each pump station and accessed the condition of the pumps, the valves and electrical equipment in each of the booster pump stations. Frankly, the real simple version is most of it is not operational and not likely to be made operational going forward. It has set for ten years dormant and unmaintained. The pumps and controls were damaged by moisture. All of that equipment must be kept in a noncondensing environment and obviously once the booster stations became inoperable, it is not safe to energize the electrical controls.

The pumps and valves perhaps are salvageable. The valves, as long as they are operational, could be salvaged. The pumps probably so as long as they haven't been seized up. They couldn't test them, because we couldn't energize the controls and the motors to see if the pumps will actually turn over.

The ventilation systems in the three stations up the mountain were not operational, so all that would have to be replaced. The ventilation system, as with the controls at the booster station closest to Saluda, at the tank, have been maintained and are operational, because they have a small number of customers at the immediate area that the pump provides service to. It has continued to receive maintenance and is operational.

Aside from the condition at the pump stations, the transmission line up Howard Gap Road was significantly damaged in 2018. There were punctures and it was exposed in numerous places down the road shoulder. Booster pump station 1 was covered by silt and debris. Before that could be addressed, there was the major slope failure in 2019. It has very likely moved upwards of 1,000 feet of transmission line. That most likely will need to be replaced. Its probably not worth spending a great deal of effort to go out there and try to examine it, because as the earth has moved in such a way, you would have to do so much testing, that you would spend as much money testing and repairing as you would simply to replace it at this point.

The storm damage in addition to the operational issues is quite significant and requires a great deal of repair. The conclusions that they reached requires modification to work. The communication between

the booster stations would need to be improved significantly for them to work reliably. The pumps and various controls would have to be replaced-repaired. If you want to place the whole system in full operation, you would need the booster station between Columbus and Tryon to have a pump replaced of the size that can operate more sustainably. There are significant, both modifications and repairs to bring the system back in operation. The transmission line itself requires significant repair and then there are additional controls and storage needed in the Saluda system, such as when the valve opens to allow water to flow to Tryon, so it doesn't suck their system dry. You would have to throttle that flow to a more sustainable rate.

The total cost to do that work a year ago as they were finalizing this portion of this report exceeded \$2.1 million dollars. Between a year ago and now, cost increases of 25-30% and that's the least they are presuming have gone up, approaching 40-50% in many places for this type of work and equipment. You are likely looking at a number today to do this project somewhere around \$3 million dollars, to get the system fully operational.

It really comes down to how or if the three parties want the system to operate. Making the assumption that you do want it to operate, do you want it to operate in an emergency situation or would it be more reasonable to operate in a more routine fashion and potentially provide water to customers along the route. If it is an emergency operation and there is not water flowing through the system day in and day out, you really can't connect customers. If there are enough customers and you want to operate it, then you could have customers on that line, but that comes down to, is there enough desire to put the system back in operation and that requires direction from the three towns involved. That's something that you folks will have to discuss and come to a conclusion. There are some opportunities from ARP Funds, USDA and SRF funds. We would gladly assist you in this, if there is a desire to make this happen. He could talk about funding, but the feedback he is getting, it seems there is no interest in funding this project. He appreciates the opportunity for being here. The Board also thanked Mr. Bolden. Commissioner Ingham feels he has the right assessment of how they feel.

Town Manager Ollis replied just as a refresher to the board and the citizens, the project did not work from the first day. The Tryon-Saluda crews went to turn the system on and found instead of being able to push a button to shift so many gallons up the mountain, they had to go to each station individually and operate everything by hand. It just did not function as needed. Then, the mudslides happened and it is basically completely destroyed. He and Jon Cannon, when he was working in Saluda, started to get you guys together about the agreement we won in the lawsuit to hire an engineering firm. Withers was chosen. Tryon's goal, along with the others is to take this to the state and ask for forgiveness on the loan that we currently have over this system. He believes we have sent water to Columbus twice over the past five years. Commissioner Ingham responded we could do that before this new system was put in place. It started when we were in a drought situation.

Mayor Peoples replied this did start when we were in a drought. Lake Lanier was below the dam and we were rationing water. The manager at that time thought this system was a good idea. Each town could help the other. They hired an engineer, took it to the state, they had an engineer and all decided it would work. He was asked to make a presentation in Raleigh and he did. When it was finished, we were asked to push a button to start it and did so, but it never worked. It drained Saluda's tank, nothing worked. The cell phones that were installed didn't work. Just caused a lot of problems. The three towns sued the company. He was to testify in court, but the towns settled out of court. Two sets of engineers said it would work. Ollis reported it is a mess up there. The project was prepared by an

engineer, overlooked by other engineers and submitted to the state for construction. Their engineers looked over it and here we are today.

Mr. Bolden stated his number is in the packet. If you have any questions, please give him a call and thanked the board.

Stephen Orr replied in Saluda they have asked Jake Johnson to look into this information to start the process to do a bill to get this resolved for the three municipalities. There is still a chunk that we owe. Mayor Peoples mentioned this to him also. Mr. Orr stated this is on the table and we will talk to Senator Hise, just know we are working on this. He will keep Zach up to date on this. He will be going down there to talk with Jake the first of June to start this process.

#### **OTHER**

Mayor Pro Tem Booker had nothing.

Commissioner Armbrust asked Zach if he could get the concrete at 55 Melrose ground down. Zach will contact them. Armbrust asked Zach if he could tell him why three sets of tables and chairs are on St. Luke's Plaza that belong to Huckleberry's. Zach does not know. Armbrust replied this issue is a continual issue. He asked Zach to make contact with the ownership and have those chairs removed and also asked him to develop a fine for the next time it occurs. When they are called out, they present themselves as a victim to the community. Commissioner Ingham asked what the real problem was with them using those tables. Armbrust replied it is a public plaza and it doesn't seem reasonable to him for them to put their personal tables and chairs on that plaza. He has no qualms with them using it and encourages them to use it as much as possible, but the town provides those tables and chairs for all citizens. Ingham doesn't see an issue if they are allowing anyone to use them. Commissioner Crowell responded if they put tables and chairs across that line and he has a piece of pizza, he feels he can sit at any table on the public seating place. Armbrust just doesn't want to see a situation arise.

Also, we use to have a quarterly meeting with the towns and county to give all of awareness of what is going on beyond our borders. All agreed a good idea. Ollis will contact the other towns and county. Last thing, during Super Saturday, the rock wall on Chestnut Street was struck by a vehicle. Ollis was aware.

Commissioner Crowell wants an explanation of why the transmission in a brand-new garbage truck went out. Ollis does not have one. Crowell asked about a warranty. PWD Morse replied it has a twenty-four-month warranty and that time has passed.

Ollis notified the board that he has a couple of items that he needs added to the agenda. A Resolution to surplus some items. The crews went through the items and have an old tractor, 70 fluorescent lights, when Duke Energy came through and switched all the lights out, an old ditch witch, old ballfield lights and an old boring machine. Peoples will make it c. under the consent agenda. Ollis also added about the Itinerant Merchant, Peddlers and Hawkers ordinance. He would like to discuss and then bring back to you for approval. Armbrust asked that copies be made for the public. Ollis will take a count and make them during the break. Huckleberry's wants to do their concerts again this year and would like to use the plaza. He has a concert application. Please look at it and let him know your thoughts. Concerts run from April to November, night hours are 6-9 and the day events are 12-3. They are aware of the nights that we are doing events downtown for 4<sup>th</sup> Friday. Crowell asked about the Summer Tracks. Ollis

reported it looks like some will coincide. Crowell doesn't want both bands on the same day. Tryon Fine Arts Center also is having concerts. Ollis reported the 4<sup>th</sup> Fridays that we are not providing music they can have music those dates. TDDA Director Henderson has already talked to them about the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday events. Do you want her to compare with Summer Tracks and TFAC? Ollis replied yes. Crowell asked Henderson to check on November 5<sup>th</sup> for Beerfest.

Ollis has also provided the budget papers also.

Armbrust asked about the Duke Energy blue lights on Melrose and on Carson Street. Ollis will check on the lights.

Mayor Peoples reported he has reworked Harriett's Garden. He has moved the parking down to Woodland Park and he is moving the gazebo down lower also. He is having a new drawing made up.

TDDA Director Henderson introduced the new interim president for TDDA, Roger Loffer. Mr. Loffer and his wife own and run Custom Workroom Technical Center at 104 Palmer. He is looking forward to working with you all and making Tryon a better place for business. Everyone welcomed him. Ollis replied Roger has been helping out a lot now and previously. He is an assume guy, he is a firefighter. He's done some really cool terrifying things and proud that he is in town. He has helped us many times in the past.

John Wilson will be happy to donate part of his property as part of Woodland Park. Wouldn't it be great to have the first park for the handicap? This would completely honor the entire concept of the park. They want to embrace the entire town. Ollis replied the mayor had donated to Harmon Field a handicap accessible swing so that people in wheelchairs could swing also. Mr. Wilson responded even better for us to make this park more accessible to create an even better opportunity for another part of our community. He thinks it is great and thanked the mayor. Commissioner Armbrust replied it pleases him to see such wisdom to conquer and play in this meeting. Mayor Peoples stated they will still put flowers where the gazebo was originally thought about. The gazebo will be moved and not placed there.

It was asked if something could be done about the intersection at Melrose, Chestnut and Lyncourt. A man was almost runover earlier. Town Manager Ollis will get our police to watch the intersection. Several reported the Lyncourt sign is missing and asked about a drive slowly sign. It was asked if the speed limit sign could be changed on Lyncourt. Ollis will add it to the agenda.

#### **ADJOURN**

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
J. Alan Peoples, Mayor

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan B. Bell, Town Clerk