

**TOWN OF TRYON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MARCH 14, 2022 7:00 P.M.
TRYON TOWN HALL – MCCOWN MEETING ROOM
BUDGET 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
 Fire Chief Josh Walton

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Peoples called the meeting to order.

Town Manager Ollis reported you have copies of our proposed budget. He is still predicting the revenues to be about the same. The Harmon Field Board was not receptive to a tax increase. He will have to cut their budget and he will show them next week. He is recognizing water rates as the same for now, even though we are going up. Sanitation is about the same. On line 75, under government, you will see other. He put in \$5,000 for a kayak dock at Lake Lanier, \$2,000 is for the dock and \$3,000 for a gravel parking lot and reshaping our fence so that you can get into the dock, but not our shed. There is \$27,000 for Pacolet sidewalks and we will be pulling the difference out of Powell bill. It is \$43,000 for the bricks to be added to match Trade Street. This takes it from the old dentist office to just passed the stone building. In the future, when we know what is going to happen with the Bank of America building, we can do that side. He also put \$9,000 in for signs, to update them around town.

Admin, line 98 property liability insurance, also includes workers comp. Same in the Police, Street and Water/Sewer. Nothing has changed in Police. In Streets with your approval, we are looking at two floaters, between street and w/s. They will be helping with meters. Within the next five years, he hopes to have meters that can be read without driving around. Not much else has changed in streets. Parks/cemetery same. Zoning has \$30,000 to cover the demolition of derelict homes. That's down from the \$40,000 from last year.

Powell Bill will be \$16,000 for Pacolet and another \$40,000 towards paving. The next street to be paved on the list is Vista Terrace, then we could look at doing a smaller street. There is just not enough for paving two streets. We could rollover the balance in Powell Bill to next year and do a larger street or we could use it to make some repairs, like at Harmon Field. Commissioner Ingham would like to see entrance at Harmon Field fixed. Ollis has estimates of resurfacing at Harmon Field. They have half a million dollars in resurfacing to do. He will take back to them to discuss.

Fire is the same as he presented before. He has taken the savings from not paying the town and for the brush truck and have thrown that toward materials. All of the air packs are going out of date. Cost is \$10,000 an air pack. You have to use the air packs for insurance purposes. Everything else is pretty standard.

Harmon Field-he made some cuts in the building repairs and maintenance and supply line item.

Tourism is up this year and he is hoping the board will come up with a strategy for advertising, whether it be with the "Our State" magazine or "Garden and Guns", do a real print strategy. They have upped the social media advertising and marketing.

Water/Sewer Distribution the salaries are lower. They were paying a portion of Pam's salary and a portion of Jordan's. Now that Pam is retiring, they will only have a portion of Jordan's salary. Everything is standard around the water plant and sewer plant. Supplies and materials are \$75,000, but he can't guarantee chemicals will not go higher and higher, just with the way the world is with gas. Sewer plant is in line with what you saw last time. Collections is the same. Debt service has been updated. Hopefully we will get some good news next month from Withers on the emergency line going up the mountain that doesn't work. It will take more money to replace than what we originally paid. We are in hopes the State will forgive our debt.

Sanitation not much has changed. We hired D.J. who has expressed an interest in the sewer side. Originally, he was hired to work with Sanitation and Harmon Field. May look in the future at putting him under Michael for training. He hasn't updated the tipping charges as of yet. Could be extremely high.

He has \$9,000 plugged in for Summer Tracks that will cover the bands. This will be off of our books after this year.

This budget includes a 2% COLA for the staff. If you went by the typical IRS stuff, the COLA would be a lot higher, but we simply just can't afford it, given what we are trying to do with our budget. If you want it to happen, he can do away with the projects. Just trying to make it and still provide services.

Mayor Peoples asked where Chestnut Street is on the paving list. Ollis will have to check on it. Peoples explained that if we make repairs to the road, then need water line repairs, we would have to tear the road up.

Ollis reported the money is in there for one police car. Are you interested in another one, because of the cost that was presented? Ingham replied he knows it is from a cost savings. Ollis replied the FORD's hold up better than the DODGE. If you are open to it, we can find the money to purchase another one. We have lowered our budget, because the FORDs are working better. Ingham replied we are buying local. Peoples asked Ollis to thank them for getting four-wheel drives. We can provide a service when there is snow on the ground. Crowell asked are we buying two now and two later. Ollis replied the last ones we purchased were \$31,000, they are going to \$38,000. This will save some money. Crowell asked about the lease for the Fire Chief and Police Chief. Ollis replied the Fire Chief is getting a stipend. His goal is to put Randall on it also, but he can drive the current one until the wheels fall off.

Mayor Pro Tem Booker asked how many miles was on the red vehicle. Ollis replied 60,000. Usually, it is just a few miles a day. Booker asked if anyone wants to go to the conference. Ollis is thinking about sending Paige. Ingham responded we have something on April 5th that we have to go to. Ollis reported most of us need to attend the classes. One is the LGC class they are requiring us to do. Then there is the Viable Utility Reserve class. This allows us \$400,000 out of the governor's budget and we are going to attempt to transition all of the loan for the ASADRA funding (\$1.2 million in loan and \$1 million in grant) into forgiven. That's why he is pushing for all of you to be there. There are online components. Peoples thought there was something else that they needed to do. It will look best if everyone attends.

Ollis, do you want me to look into a second car. Crowell yes, Ingham yes.

The second thing he had is do you want to look at changing Paige's title or not bothering with it. Ingham doesn't want to change her title. Give her a raise. Peoples sees where you are coming from. Some move in that direction and we will have her another three to five years. Without it he feels in the next year or so, we will lose her.

Ollis reported the fire budget is made representing a four-cent tax increase for the fire department. Property values are higher. In the township it's \$449,000. In the city it's \$241,000. Motor vehicles are up \$35,000. This brings you to \$816,000. He presented the breakdown. Fire Chief Walton explained they went to FRAC last year and told them they were not going to request anything. Chief Tennant had a deal five years ago that he wouldn't request anything within the next five years. Last year he told them they weren't going to ask for an increase, but they were going to hit them hard this year. Through the discussion, they are looking at four cents. They are looking at adding three more full time people. One per shift. The reason for this, is the number of calls. The number of calls has increased by 20 over last year's quarter. Last year they were at 186. This year we are already at 206. Saturday, they ran 20 calls within a 24-hour shift with one person on shift. Dated equipment needs replacing. Air packs are at the fifteen-year mark. If you replace them all at once, you are looking at \$150,000. They are not asking for that right now. He will be applying for grants. This will be in the next budget. He has a few other things that are not as important as the air packs. Looking at the numbers, we are the second busiest department in the county. Columbus has four during the day and two at night.

They have had back-to-back calls. Three working fires already. A four-year old boy fell off of Melrose Falls about forty feet off the trail. They had to go in and bring him out. They also had to get the dad out. Helped Saluda twice already at Big Bradley Falls this month. Want to keep someone in Tryon and be able to send someone to help out other departments.

Mayor Peoples asked how many hours a week are your man getting, because your guys are worn out, he can tell. Walton explained the fifty-six-hour work week. Most are getting 60-70 hours a week. Peoples want people to understand what they do. Walton explained the state is making it harder on the volunteers. He is thankful for the Saturday help from a couple of the volunteers. The reality during the day is, they don't have the help. The paid guys work really hard. The month of February, they were up one to three times a night after midnight, about everyday of the month on medical calls. Saturday night, he and Kemper didn't go to bed until 3:00 am. All the guys face that too. Commissioner Crowell asked if this is the first request for an increase in six years. Walton responded, yes sir. Peoples replied considering all the calls and help with EMS, there shouldn't be any question. Walton bragged on the department. EMS calls us when they need backup. They have a good report with Landrum Fire department. Peoples asked how many are certified (emergency medical)? Walton responded ten. Peoples responded when he came here in 2001, he was pushing for this.

Walton showed the number of calls for the year, comparing to last year. They will definitely go over the number of calls this year with people climbing on Hogback, he sees the number of calls increasing with the number of climbers. They have doubled the wreck calls from last year.

Ollis presented all the tax rates within the county. Tryon is the lowest in the County. The way it works, if you guys are okay with it, he will present it to the county, then they have to say yes or no. Tryon is looking to hire three firefighters and the extra money will go toward supplies and materials to purchase air packs. Peoples asked does EMS replace our materials when we help. Walton responded no issues as

of yet. Peoples replied, that's because of you and thanked him. Ollis asked do you want to move forward. It's not a guarantee that we get it. All agreed.

Harmon Field he doesn't think will change, but he will let them know.

Crowell stated we need to find out how to get more money for paving. Peoples blamed the state on how they come up with the money given to help. Ollis responded Mills River has one street in town, four tenths of a mile long, that they are responsible for. They received more money than we do. Just as a reminder we have paved more roads in the past five years than we had before and we have a lot more to go.

Peoples asked if there was anything else.

Ingham asked if we included raises for employees. Ollis included two percent for all employees. In the town's defense we have done two percent a year since he has been here. The salaries of firefighters are a little different because of their schedule. Questions were asked about the \$15 an hour. Everyone is making a minimum of \$31,200 a year.

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