

**TOWN OF TRYON**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**TOWN HALL – MCCOWN ROOM**

**MAY 16, 2023 7:00 PM**

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

Commissioners: Crys Armbrust, Bill Crowell, Bill Ingham

Staff Present:    Jim Fatland, Town Manager                      Susan Bell, Town Clerk  
                         Tim Daniels, Planning Director                      Randall Hodge, Police Chief  
                         Greg McCool, Public Works Director                      Josh Walton, Fire Chief  
                         Travis Aldred, Harmon Field Supervisor                      William Morgan, Town Attorney

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Peoples called the meeting to order and asked for a moment of silence. Commissioner Ingham led the invocation.

**AGENDA ADOPTION**

Mayor Peoples asked for additions or deletions. Being none, he entertained a motion to adopt the agenda. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

**CONSENT AGENDA ADOPTION**

Mayor Peoples asked for additions, deletions or corrections. Being none, he entertained a motion to adopt the consent agenda. Commissioner Ingham so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

**AUTHORIZE ADVERTISEMENT FOR CONSTRUCTION BIDS FOR BRAEWICK SEWER REHAB PROJECT**

Manager Fatland reported the Braewick Sewer project is ready to go out to bid. The project is \$2.6 million, 100% grant funding. Three bids are needed. If we don't three bids, then we have to readvertise. It's a nine-month project. It is a little unique because the contractor is bidding two areas. One is to camera the lines to find out which ones they can do pipe bursting on and which ones will be dig and replace. Once they get that known, the bidders will give us quantities and cost of the manholes and per foot cost. The state has approved the advertisement.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to authorize advertisement for construction bids for the Braewick Sewer Construction project. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

**NOTICE OF VIOLATIONS FOR SEWER SYSTEM OVERFLOWS**

Manager Fatland reported he received an email from the NC Department of Quality that the Town hadn't paid fines, totaling \$19,475. They occurred between June 2020 through July 2022. On Braewick Sewer overflows the Town received points on the grant application.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to make payment of \$19,475 to DENR. Commissioner Ingham so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

## PROPOSED FY24 TOWN BUDGETS

Manager Fatland reported the budget you are receiving this evening is for \$5.7 million with 88% of the budget funds operations and maintenance. 6% funds capital equipment (the 2 patrol cars approved last year haven't come in yet, so we have to re-budget them). Also looking at a side arm mower and dump truck. He will go into more detail at the budget work session on May 26, 2023. Transfers are \$38,000 about 1% of the budget. Appropriating 5% of fund balance for the budget. Expenses are \$5.7 million with 86% of expenditures is for operations and maintenance

Total debt is \$377,000. Your General Fund debt is only \$16,000 (patrol cars) which is really low.

Water & Sewer has most of the debt \$307,000. On the water & sewer side, he has been working with House Member Jake Johnson, who is trying to get forgiveness of the loan that Tryon, Saluda and Columbus has. He hopes to accomplish that in this year's budget appropriation.

Sanitation Fund: the truck that was approved a couple of years ago debt payment is \$12,000.

The Fire Department doesn't have any debt this year, however one of the trucks is due to come in in FY25. He and the Chief recommended to the county to have \$40,000 in reserve for that debt.

Capital Outlay, equipment purchases for all budgets combined.

The highlights

The comments that you all have made has helped with this budget. As Commissioner Armbrust has said the Town wants to become proactive instead of reactive. There are five areas that need addressing.

1. Employee retention and recruitment
2. Equipment replacement
3. Maintaining the Town assets
4. Taking care of Town facilities
5. Water & Sewer Infrastructure

This town is blessed with employees that have been here for years. At the last meeting with WithersRavenel on Braewick Sewer. Their people had less than three years. On our side, the mayor has been here 20 years, Gary Walker had 34 years-retired, but going to help with the projects, Andrew McCallister 23 years, Greg McCool 21 years and Manager Fatland has over 40 years in finance. The experience and discussion are on the Town's side. This will help with the project.

The last pay plan was done in 2014. The cost of living has gone up tremendously over the last two years. He is surprised employees continue to stay here. This says a lot about the town and its employees. They want to work here. He would like to overhaul the pay plan, which he has done. He would like to reestablish the safety plan for the employees.

The second item is the town has fallen way behind on replacing equipment. He doesn't want to replace everything now, just the most needed items.

The third area is maintaining assets. It is sad to see the pergola falling apart. Going to get this fixed before year end. The clock tower lights are going to be repaired. One of the things he likes to see more of

is pressure washing the sidewalks. One of the projects is the deterioration at Harmon Field. He realizes Harmon Field hasn't had a tax increase for years. He went to the Middle School and the roof is falling in and water got into the building. He has been working with a non-profit from New York. After the last rain and the damages, basically they walked away from the deal. There is too much of expense. That building could be a great Community Center.

As far as facilities management there are three areas that he would like to look at this year.

1. Relocate the public works garage and move it to the Sewer Plant.
2. Fire Station needs some growth. For a million dollars or less they are looking at adding on to the existing station.
3. Renovation of the Tryon Middle School.

Water & Sewer facilities were constructed in the 1920s and 1930s. The sewer plant was constructed in 1969 before the national clean water grant program was started and before OSHA was established. We need to look at finding more grant funding for water and sewer infrastructure. A couple of weeks ago, Summit Engineering, in less than a week's time, along with Greg McCool and Andrew McCallister submitted a grant application for \$1.2 million for rehab of Sourwood Ridge Road, US176 and North Trade Street. No guarantee we will get the grants, but if we don't ask, we will not get.

Also, our citizens have complained to our Congressman Chuck Edwards, State Senator Tim Moffitt and House Representative Jake Johnson on a number of overflows at Markham Road, Grady Avenue, Hidden Hill and Oak Street. Those projects we have shared with them. Senator Moffitt sent him an email yesterday that he was going to include all three of those projects in the budget. If we get those, the money will come to the town sooner than later. We also got approval for an Asset Inventory of mapping of Water and Sewer. He has hired Gary Walker to help them pinpoint locations of the things they can't find. He has also agreed to review the drafts of their mapping as it comes through to make sure it is correct. Thirdly he has asked him to review invoices, because he doesn't want us to pay more than what they have earned at that point. Gary will be an asset on this along with Andrew.

Last area on infrastructure, he went through the Lake Lanier dam assessment report that was done. He asked the engineer to come the first week of June to meet with the Army Corp of Engineers, SCDEHEC and a representative from Congressman Chuck Edwards office as we pursue opportunities for the rehab of Lake Lanier Dam.

Those are the five areas in the short time that he has been here. Employee Retention is very important. Recruitment is getting tougher and tougher, so the pay plan is vital. Equipment replacement affects employee morale. We need to be more proactive in maintaining our assets and not let things deteriorate. Need to start planning for our facilities and water and sewer infrastructure can be ongoing.

Commissioner Armbrust commented this board approved three years ago to rebuild the Rogers Park pergolas. Manager Fatland has challenged the employees and the citizens to bring things to him. He doesn't want things to fall in the black hole.

Getting into the budget discussion. He is presenting ten budgets where you had seven last year. He has listed the tax rates from 2012 to 2023. He doesn't know how the town is operating without raising taxes. His proposal recommends five cent tax increase. At the budget work session, you will be allowed to ask questions. This is just the presentation. When he was here the first time, there was a police pension that

he set up for our retiring police officers. Unfortunately, there has been no deposit since he left. The Separation Allowance was set up by the state years ago. When an officer retires with 25 years of service, they get a supplemental retirement up to the age of 62. The obligation is for our Police Chief that retired and another officer. At year end, he will transfer the funds and close out that fund.

The Culture and Recreation Department covers Woodland Park and Rogers Park. You were written up by the auditors for spending money that wasn't budgeted. He has amended this year's budget so we won't have that violation. He is recommending putting \$10,000 to help that fund to make some improvements.

Enterprise Funds: Water & Sewer Fund, Water Meter Fund and Sanitation Fund

Several citizens along with council asked what happened to the meter fund. He recommends separating the meter fund to account for all monies collected and replace meters as needed.

The CIP plan shows infrastructure needed and recommend a 5% rate increase each year for the next years to address items included in the CIP.

Sanitation Fund the auditors wrote us up for several years. The sanitation fund was losing money. You had to subsidize it with a transfer. We discontinued the pickup days from twice a week to once a week several years ago. We were still charging the sanitation fund for five days, when we should have been charging the street department for two of those days. He was notified by the county that they are going to increase their rates from \$55 to \$65 a ton. He is recommending to increase the rate from \$23 to \$24 per month. This will put us in the black and make this year's audit much favorable.

Special Revenue Funds: Harmon Field and Tryon Fire Department

The Harmon Field Fund has already been approved by the Town, as well as the Fire Department by the County. The Harmon Field is waiting to hear from the county if we get their support on the access roads. The Town has approved to put up \$68,650 for the paving and have asked the county to put up \$122,000. Marche Pittman has agreed to work with him on a tax increase for next year.

Tryon Fire Department had asked for a one-cent increase to allow for an additional firefighter. That will give us two per shift. They also asked them to not lower the budget, because of the debt, setting aside \$40,000 as a reserve for a new fire truck.

Tourism Budget

Last year the budget was \$35,000 and this year's budget he is proposing \$28,000 along with \$2,500 for the EV Charging Station.

He recommends that you set June 20, 2023 at 7:00 pm for be the Public Hearing. He is scheduling a work session for Friday, May 26, 2023 at 9:00 am and if necessary, another one on June 2, 2023 at 9:00 am. The format he would like to have this year is to have council sitting around a table with the department heads and division supervisors. You will have a lot of experience. He wants you all to ask questions. The budget discussion will be carried over to May 26, 2023.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion set June 20, 2023 for the public hearing and set May 26, 2023 at 9:00 am and June 2, 2023 at 9:00 am for budget work sessions. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

### **FY23 BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT NO. 7**

Manager Fatland reported this budget amendment amend the budget to cover the \$19,475 fines and to delete the line item "increase from fund balance" totaling \$10,660 and moving that money up into another line item. The only increase in the budget will be the \$19,475.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to adopt Budget Amendment No. 7. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

### **DONATIONS FOR PICKLE BALL AT HARMON FIELD**

Manager Fatland reported we have a number of people here for Pickle Ball. Most communities these courts are hard to find. You have citizens that wish to go out and raise money for the courts. The Harmon Field Board would like to amend their master plan to allow for Pickle Ball courts to be built in the grassy area near the gym. The grants have to come through this board for them to make application. Mayor Peoples asked who the speaker was. Luke Harkey serving as the convener for the group they have been calling the Pickle Ball Advisory Committee. They met with the Harmon Field Board and they approved for us to apply for grants for Pickle Ball at Harmon Field. For us to apply for this, we have to have approval from you. The mayor will have sign the application. They are asking for them to be allowed to raise the money and seek grants. Once completed the maintenance will be turned over to Travis and Harmon Field.

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

### **RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING SALUDA GRADE TRAIL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Commissioner Crowell reported at the last Tourism meeting they approved a resolution supporting the Saluda Grade Trail, by a unanimous vote. They want to start a committee to start looking at today, tomorrow and into the future. Manager Fatland asked Michelle Newman to put together a list of names that can get the committee going. TDDA Director Newman reported ones for the committee is the Town Manager, Director of TDDA, Town Planning Director, Chair of the Parks Committee, Chair of the TTDA, Chair of the Board of Planning and Adjustment, and a Tryon Board of Commissioner representative, two Business or Property Owners and two residents of the Town of Tryon.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to adopt the proposal and list of appointees. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

### **TDDA UPDATE**

TDDA Director Newman reported TDDA held their annual retreat as well as their site visit with NC Main Street, in which they have been fully accredited for NC Main Street. They remain the second smallest in the state. They are moving forward with that. At their board meeting Thursday, they will be making plans for coming year. They will be working on the MSD, looking at the numbers to see what the potential income could be and then she will come back with recommendations from there. Next Wednesday they have a seminar here in town at the Tryon Depot from 5:30 to 7:30, directed toward marketing businesses. It will be run by Mary Hisey who is an expert on this type of seminars. Following that on the 26<sup>th</sup> is the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month. He asked Jim to be there so if you haven't met Jim, please stop by. On the June 26<sup>th</sup> they will hold their annual meeting.

Mayor Peoples reported Small Town Main Street, when you walk through that door look to the right and you will see eight awards for this little town over the last 15 years. It's not us it's you the citizens. Commissioner Armbrust reported he added a Jazz Trio to the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday at the Nina Simone Plaza. He will send her an email.

### **MINIMUM HOUSING/PLANNING UPDATE**

Planning Director Daniels reported:

1. 51 Shepherd Street-he has spoken to Paul Miller to receive permission to do inspections. This will be done by the end of the week and then the hearing.
2. 136 Cleveland-the Owner said he is starting cleanup next week. He is trying to get the neighbor to get in touch so they can get cleaned up.
3. 161 Peake Street-he is meeting with the owner this Monday to discuss going forward with demolition. He will have more details after the meeting.

He has contacted Pace and Mitch Contracting for demolition estimates just to keep the ball rolling. He will be calling SVR for a third option.

He also reported we did get the grant for the EV Charging station. Becker Electric is in the process of ordering the equipment. The total cost is \$17,000. The grant is for \$10,000 and the difference will be split between the Town, TTDA and TDDA.

### **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

Manager Fatland thanked the board, department heads and supervisors for their work on the budget. The Main Street program is going strong. The program gave us high marks.

### **COUNCIL/MAYOR REPORT**

Commissioner Crowell thanked all the citizens for coming out today. He told Ms. Day he really would like for her to be on the Saluda Grade Trail Committee. You have lived in this town 40 years and have a lot of knowledge. It's okay to have opposition sitting on the board. Ms. Day responded she is not necessarily the opposition. Commissioner Crowell also thanked the staff.

Commissioner Ingham thanked the staff and Jim for his hard work on the budget. He also thanked the rest of the staff. The Town looks really good. He thanked the citizens.

Commissioner Armbrust thanked the staff and the citizens who make their work much easier.

Mayor Peoples thanked Chief Walton. He had been praying and hoping for a full-time fire department. This will give us two on each shift. We have good people, but we don't get the volunteers like we used to. We have people that step up. People are walking around this town today because of them. His hat is off to y'all.

## CITIZEN COMMENTS & RESPONSES

Anne Day reported

1. A sink hole is forming on Broadway
2. The road is eroding at the corner of Broadway and New Market
3. Two potholes on Whitney Avenue
4. Ordinance says when you come to an intersection you need three feet so that you can see to turn-off of Whitney turning left onto Second Street the bushes are growing out into the road
5. At the corner Broadway and Second Street the Japanese Maple is growing out into the road
6. The sidewalk on Whitney Avenue is torn up in front of her dog pen
7. Any word on replacing the fire hydrant on Carson Street that is painted black-Fire Chief Walton only test them-they don't replace.
8. Any progress on replacing the fence on New Market
9. Michelle's idea to meet the Town Manager is a great idea, but she feels the Fire Chief and Police Chief need to be there also

She thanked everyone for what they do.

Terry Parker asked about the ordinances. The lot next door was sold about two months ago. Is there not a site plan or land development plan that was approved. Who is the Planning Director? Tim Daniels. They have built a pit on the property. They went over her property using an easement that they didn't know was there. Why wasn't a survey required? She met with Tim yesterday and there is a zoning application that he has approved. The garage wasn't approved, because of the setbacks. She is left with just a pit that someone could fall into. Mayor Peoples replied it looks like it is something that you need to talk with Tim and our attorney. They will look at and give her a call. Ms. Parker responded it looks like she is going to hire an attorney. This will bring down her property. It is a safety issue. No fence up. She is very concerned about this. Mayor Peoples asked if our ordinances are online. Daniels replied yes. Mayor Peoples responded sounds like you will have to get an attorney. Ms. Parker replied said it is up to you to protect us and our land. Mayor Peoples replied the attorney will speak with Tim and respond to you.

Dr. Carson reported his extreme displeasure over the condition of Cleveland Road. He has spoken to the mayor and spoken to the Town Manager and the report made by the Planning Director is almost word for word the same report as last month and before. Those houses were finally burned on February 25<sup>th</sup>. It has been more than sixty days. It is an embarrassment to the town. The ones that were burned, the one still standing, it is a horror story. Time after time same report, nothing happens. Mayor Peoples reported he doesn't have the answer. If the houses were on his road, he wouldn't like it either. We have placed liens on properties that we have cleaned up before, but we don't get the money back too often. Commissioner Armbrust responded he doesn't understand the cleanup of the burned properties. Those remaining houses are an utter embarrassment, because a junk yard is being started at those houses. Why can we not charge him per day for not cleaning up the properties. Daniels responded the man cleans up a portion and then it gets covered back up. Armbrust drives by that property and it has not been cleaned up. When did we first send notice to him. It would take one day to clear that yard. Mayor Peoples drove by that property when he was cleaning it up and two weeks later it was covered again. Attorney Morgan will talk with Tim tomorrow and they could issue a civil penalty. In his experience, they help very little. Once they get so high, you can threaten to sue them, then you get an order of

abatement. You can waive the penalties. He will talk with Tim. Manager Fatland told Tim to get an estimate to clean up the property. Daniels reminded the board that they had approved part time help from Foothills Regional to handle these issues. You will see progress.

Steve King thanked Mr. Fatland for the presentation. He also wanted to thank the road people for their help. Are the budget work sessions open to the public. Manager Fatland replied yes you can come and observe. If you have questions, you can ask at the public hearing on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Mr. King replied the Middle School came up and Travis Aldred thinks it needs to be torn down. Manager Fatland replied it is a matter of opinion, but based on the architect, the foundation and walls are solid. He feels it will make a valuable asset for the town as a Community Center.

Joyce Kimpton asked if the fire truck can travel Carson Street from 176 to the Martin property on Carson Street, why can't their dump trucks go that way? One day she counted ten dump trucks, that revved up their engines and bounced over the speed bumps. They make a terrible noise all day long. They are going to tear up the road. Mayor Peoples doesn't have an answer for her on that. She also asked about the minutes for March and April minutes when would they be done. Town Clerk Bell responded all she can tell you is when she gets them done. She then asked about the neighbors above ground pool. This person still doesn't have an electrical permit for that pool. She asked why? Daniels will forward his permit to the county. Manager Fatland asked him to forward it to the county and copy him and the county manager.

#### **ADJOURN**

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

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J. Alan Peoples, Mayor

Attest:

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Susan B. Bell, Town Clerk