

**TOWN OF TRYON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORK SESSION
MAY 26, 2023 9:00 AM
TRYON DEPOT COMMUNITY ROOM**

Present: Mayor J. Alan Peoples 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 Deborah Bradley, WWTP Supervisor
 Randy Darley, Street Supervisor Phillip Miller, Sanitation Supervisor
 Brad Gordon, WTP Operator Andrew McCallister, WD/SC Supervisor
 Michelle Newman, TDDA Director Josh Connell, Fire Captain
 Patrick Corn, Fireman

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Peoples called the budget work session to order.

Manager Fatland thanked council for meeting today with staff to discuss the budget. He asked that if they have questions, please ask. He reported the budget calendar calls for a work session today and if we don't finish it today, then we will continue to Friday, June 2, 2023 at 9:00 am. The public hearing will be advertised for June 20. This is for you as a board to discuss with employees.

As you know the LGC is monitoring our finances for the last three to four years. He had to submit the budget document to them for their review. Yesterday they requested some changes. They requested the budget be cut by \$80,000. The fund balance appropriation reduced to 5% from 7.2%. The Governing Board budget was reduced by \$30,000. The Administration budget reduced by \$50,000. The General Budget was reduced from \$2.3 million to \$2,220,000. The fund balance appropriation went from \$180,000 down to \$100,000.

Mayor Peoples is sick of the state sticking their nose in our business. We have more money in the bank than we have ever had. Manager Fatland responded the budget is your budget, but they want us to increase fund balance.

During the budget discussion in May, he brought to your attention the following:

1. Recruitment has been an issue. The latest pay plan was done in 2014. He has updated it and it is covered in the budget.
2. Equipment replacement has fallen behind, causing high maintenance bills. Having the right equipment for employee

3. Town Assets. He has asked employees to bring things to his attention and don't hesitate to remind him. Moving the public works shed and expanding the fire department. Working on the Tryon Middle School building as a Community Center.
4. Water & Sewer System needs a lot of work. You have the Braewick Sewer that was approved before he got here and it is fully funded. Three projects he is working with Jake Johnson on is Oak Street, Hidden Hill and Markham/Grady, trying to get immediate funding for these.

ADMINISTRATION BUDGET

ZONING-He reported we retained Foothills Regional Commission to help with code enforcement, starting July, 1. Commissioner Armbrust asked if the boardwalk behind the South Trade Street buildings had been included. Manager Fatland asked what this is for. Armbrust reported the people don't use their downstairs. Manager Fatland reported we could ask the owners to donate the property to the town. Commissioner Crowell thinks the easement runs all the way through town. He feels they need to clean it up also. Mayor Peoples responded maybe the MSD program can help with this.

TDDA-Michelle Newman reported basically the same the day-to-day business. They will be looking at four pillars; 1) to help support business, 2) pursuit of businesses, 3) marketing as a whole-partnering along with the Tourism Board and 4) working with the town on physical beautification. She is working on the MSD program, looking into the ordinances, and deciding what the tax rate would be. It runs from ten cents to twenty cents per hundred throughout the state. Once TDDA has that in place then they will take to the property owners for comments. She will be getting something to you by the end of this year. Commissioner Armbrust reported Landrum made \$178,000 a year. This is what pays for their whole promotions. Fatland replied Michelle is working on the formation of the MSD and getting business owners own board, then next year setting the tax.

POLICE-Manager Fatland reported two cars were ordered last year and haven't come in yet. He included them in this year's budget. The police have lost several officers. More and more officers have take-home cars. He sat down with the chief and then sat down and figured the benefits, then he sat down again with the chief and tried to figure how to make this work. Give up the 2% match on 401k, then deduct \$100 a month from officer's payroll for gas. Looked at the maintenance cost. They have developed a plan for officers to have take-home cars. We are down one officer now.

Chief Hodge reported we hired an officer in August 2022 and he come to him in February 2023 and told him he was going to a neighboring town, Columbus Police Department. He said it was the hardest decision he had ever made, because he liked Tryon, the department, but he had to do what was best for his family. He received more on the salary, but what the difference was he received a take home car. Cost for the seven months of employment, not including the salary, \$4,300 to outfit him. Cost to get a rookie ready is \$13,000. Tryon benefits from getting officers from larger cities. Henderson County cars, Rutherford County cars sit in our county.

85% of the sheriff's department lives outside the county and have take-home cars, 100% of Columbus PD live outside of the town limits and 50% live outside of the county, 100% of Saluda Police live outside the city limits and 90% live outside of the county. There are not many selections of officers. He wants to select ones that he knows will fit in with Tryon, be a people person, be kind and also enforce the law when it comes time to enforce. Officer's safety comes in to play. Each officer has a rifle that has to be carried in and out of the cars. Sights can be easily changed by hitting the car in transport.

Armbrust responded he has no intentions of going with the Police Academy's strategy, "Police Warriors".

Most incentives for officers are:

- 1) 70.1 % take home car
- 2) 51.4% is medical coverage
- 3) 46% guaranteed 25-year retirement
- 4) 41% skills-based pay for special training
- 5) 40% longevity pay

Officers are willing to pay the \$50 a paycheck and giving up the 2% 401k match. Tryon is the only agency that doesn't provide cars for officers. This prevents officers from seeing new officers on a regular basis, long term will help the town, keeps us from spending unnecessary money.

Armbrust commented that it is obvious that Chief Hodge was in favor of take-home cars. Chief Hodge replied yes sir he is in favor. Armbrust does as well. They have been against take home cars, not because collectively they are against take home cars, but because of one particular commissioner that dug his heels in for a particular cause against a particular person, but that is in the past. Mayor Pro Tem Booker responded that she travels to Greenville every day and she sees what he is talking about with the cars. She feels it is more of ego. Commissioner Ingham feels we shouldn't be the only agency that doesn't allow take home cars. Chief Randall responded it will not affect the budget that much.

Mayor Peoples asked how many officers and how many cars. Chief Hodge responded seven and with the two that we are waiting on two. Once they arrive, we will have seven. Peoples asked how do we have in to replace them at the end of life. Chief Hodge will not dispose of them as soon. They currently have a few that have around 75,000 miles on them. He would like to see a formalized replacement program, but he doesn't currently have one.

Mayor Peoples loves seeing the officers walking downtown. Mayor Peoples asked if each how they feel about this. Armbrust, Ingham, Crowell and Booker were okay with the take home cars. Peoples would like to see AWD vehicles. Hodge responded most of their cars are AWD vehicles.

STREET-Manager Fatland reported he moved part of Sanitation wages to Street, because they no longer pick up garbage twice a week. The only equipment in the street department is a side mower. The last one was purchased when he was here the first time. Street Supervisor Darley responded it was here when he got here in 2008. Fatland recommends doing a loan for 10-year financing.

Darley reported at least one day a week they are working to patch the potholes. Mayor Peoples asked if we are going to sell the old side mower. Fatland recommends keeping it for a while. Booker asked when a tree falls, is it cut back right at the road. Darley responded when it falls, the Fire Department usually gets it out of the road. Then when we receive the work order we go back and get it off what they consider is the town right-of-way. Booker replied there was a tree on Peake and it is gone now. The buses come down and have to back up the hill. She appreciates that it is gone and is sure the bus driver is also. Darley commented that they usually try to get it up pretty quick. Sometimes things fall through the crack, like that tree.

POLICE PENSION FUND

Manager Fatland started this fund when he was here first, he started this fund. The Police Separation Allowance started by the state allows police officers to retire after 25 years. The fund will be depleted after next year. He met with the Capital Trust Fund and they are paying 5% interest rate. He is going to leave this in until the end of year, then make a transfer and clear out the fund.

CULTURAL & RECREATION FUND

Manager Fatland reported this is the fund that the auditors mentioned to you. This is to make improvements to Woodland & Rogers Park. Commissioner Armbrust asked to make the bench at the entrance to Rogers Park plum. Fatland responded okay and he is going to recommend replacing the wooden tables with metal tables. Armbrust suggested using the ones like at the Nina Simone Plaza.

POWELL BILL FUND

Manager Fatland reported one of the projects that he wanted to get done was paving Chestnut Street. WD/SC Supervisor McCallister reported the water lines are undersized and are very old. Need to replace the water lines and the sewer lines. He's afraid if we pave it, then he feels we will have to go and cut it back out. Armbrust asked for the estimated cost to replace both. McCallister responded that we don't have that yet. It will affect Lyncourt, Galax and Hideaway also. They are trying to get it all figured out. It would be a waist of money to go ahead and pave it. Fatland responded street crews are fixing the potholes. The second project will be Laurel Way going up to water plant.

McCallister added if you upgrade the line on Chesnutt, there is no fire protection. You have to pull from Melrose and 176. Needs to be one on Lyncourt and Galax.

WATER & SEWER

Water Plant-Manager Fatland reported he had sent in the proposed budget to the LGC. Their response was to reduce the Fund Balance allocation and the budget for the water plant was off \$1, so he has fixed that. PWD McCool reported the water plant supplies costs have really increased. Manager Fatland made the comment about retention. While Greg was out working on a sewer back up, a man came up to him talking and asked if the town was hiring. Greg told him yes, he applied and started working with us this week. It's nice to have someone local.

He has been working with Congressman Chuck Edwards. He has set up a meeting with SCDHEC, SCDOT, Army Corp of Engineers, the engineer from Cranston, the one that you hired to do the Dam inspection, himself, Greg and Andrew. They were bringing money to the table, so hopefully he will have a report to you on June 20.

Distribution & Collection-Fatland reported this department needs a lot of attention. As you know we got the grant for Braewick. WithersRavenel submitted a grant funding request for the entire water distribution and sewer collection system. The grant ranked very low and we were turned down. He will keep looking for grant funding. He will also continue to work with Jake Johnson and Tim Moffitt for next year's budget and try to get more of these projects funded. Commissioner Armbrust asked if he had made request. Fatland made a request for Hidden Hill, Markham and Oak Street. You already have a request in to pay the loan off for the debt for Columbus, Saluda and Tryon.

Sewer Plant-Manager Fatland reported Deborah is our ORC and works part time. Greg shared an idea with him to get Brad and the new hire to get them trained at both water and sewer plant. Mayor Pro Tem Booker asked about Adrian. McCool reported he is doing better, but has a way to go. Fatland replied programs at the state have no interest loans. All the infrastructure in Tryon has been there for many years.

WATER METER FUND-Fatland reported when he was first here, he established the water meter fund. He is re-establishing this fund, so that new meters can be purchased. It has \$104,000 in it.

SANITATION FUND-Fatland reported this fund is now back in the black. He recommends raising the rates from \$23 to \$24. This fund has an outstanding debt. He did look at the private sector to see what they charge. A lot of them charge \$28. At times people call and say their garbage wasn't picked up. Blake or Tara, dispatchers, will call Phillip and he will send someone back after it. That's what small town Tryon is all about, taking care of our citizens. If you had a private company do this, then you would have to wait until the next time. Commissioner Armbrust asked how much is the debt. Fatland reported it's for a new garbage truck financed for 15 years. Phillip Miller reported it is a 2019, but we got it in 2018.

Mayor Pro Tem Booker asked for a breakdown on the water bills. She has had several people to ask. Fatland has been working with Jordan on the water bills. People have fallen behind and some have a payment plan, but are still being billed the late fees. He terminated the late fee on payment plans. Booker asked if someone is remodeling their house, how do we handle the pickup. Sanitation Supervisor Miller responded he takes a picture and sends it to Jordan to bill them by the truck load. Booker explained residents are taking advantage of us.

HARMON FIELD-Fatland reported no tax increase. He spent time with the county manager and was told they can't really do a tax increase this year, so he asked them to cover part of the paving. This hasn't been approved yet, but hopefully hears something soon. The roads are in bad shape. Armbrust asked if it had been four years since a tax increase. Harmon Field Supervisor Aldred responded the only tax increase was maybe one-half cent. Fatland told Marche that no one complains about the county residents that use Harmon Field. The township of Tryon is paying for the maintenance of Harmon Field, no matter who uses it. The YMCA also uses our field and have helped with lobbying the county. The county sets the Harmon Field tax.

FIRE DEPARTMENT-Fatland reported he worked with the chief on their budget. Chief Walton presented a one-cent tax increase to FRAC. The penny will allow him to hire an additional fireman to have two full time firemen per shift. FRAC approved the request and will go to the county June 5th. Fatland wants to work with council to expand the fire station over the next couple of years. Walton reported this addition will allow for a ladder truck. They tweaked the preliminary drawings done by Chief Tennant to be a 30-40-year fix. Armbrust asked about appropriating the upstairs of the old building upstairs of the police for sleeping. Walton replied that room is used as a workout room. Booker asked about the sleeping quarters for a female. Walton has one bedroom. He was told the two rooms that were built were turned into offices. The one room that had a window in it, he turned into a bedroom with 2 beds. Fatland reported the Fire Department has no debt this year. They have ordered a truck that will come in next year. They put in \$40,000 for future debt.

Chief Walton wanted to take a minute and recognize Josh Connell and Patrick Corn. Patrick has come back around with us and created a Probationary Task Book. If they hire a new person, this person has to

complete all the task to get out of training. Josh Connell has created an Officer Academy and Task Book. So, if they are looking in the future to promote and continue to build this as a professional department, these are things that big cities have in place that are standard. They have created both and done a really super job with that. They are not excluding the volunteers, but are trying to keep them involved. When looking at the paid staff side of it, these two have been building it to 100% professionalism. Any questions that are asked, this is our training, how we train and training records. The hydrants are being painted. We are catching up on our pre plans, so when we are out of town. He credits these two beside him. We are trying to build this for the Town of Tryon. They have done a great job. Mayor Pro Tem Booker asked about the hydrants, the blue tops and how do you keep up with them. Connell responded he puts them in the computer. Technically, the cap tells them how much water they can get from the hydrant in case of a fire. Orange cap means will get 500-999 gallons per minute. A green top means 1000-1499. The hydrant he saw Booker at was a hydrant that had a black top on it which lets them know it is out of service and needs to be repaired. The hydrant that had a blue top on it, was good. He talked with Daniel Walker who knows a good bit about the hydrants and that hydrant was put it at a time they were deciding what threads to use. Daniel is going to see if we need to replace the whole hydrant or if there was a way to replace the thread pieces for it. Booker thanked him.

TOURISM FUND-Fatland reported this is a component unit. This year the budget was for \$35,000 and he the occupancy tax has seen a decline. Not sure if it is because of the Pine Crest closing. TDDA Director Newman feels it is just getting back to the normalcy before COVID. He is budgeting \$28,000, along with appropriating \$2,500 from fund balance for their part of the EV Charging Station. Planning Director Daniels reported the parts have been ordered.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN-He has outlined plans capital improvements for the school at Harmon Field, Fire Station and the relocation of the Maintenance Shed. He is going out to do a request for architects to be interviewed. He will work with council on the architects for the three projects. Commissioner Armbrust made the comment we will then sell that property. Fatland responded yes, once we move it. Commissioner Crowell wants the property appraised before selling. Mayor Peoples responded restrictions are needed on the property.

EMPLOYEE PAY PLAN-Fatland reported employees are vital in carrying out the success of our community and the directions of the board. The pay plan hasn't been updated in years. With the help of the HR Directors of both Brevard and Hendersonville he updated the pay plan. This reflects the cost of living as well. It is already programmed in. For example, an entry level employee in a paygrade 10, hiring rate is \$33,000 a year or \$15.87 an hour. With all employees he doesn't want to get trained and leave us. The pay plan is an attempt to fix this. Salaries for police officers is behind everybody else. Now we won't be losing officers to Columbus. Then also you move employees up then he has to move the other employees to evenly balance. Armbrust commented everybody matters or nobody matters. Fatland replied look around this room. You look at the experience just in this rooms. He asked the mayor to sit in on a meeting with WithersRavenel. He asked them how long had they been with them. One said three months, one and a half years and one three years. Then you look at us, we had Gary Walker retired after 34 years has agreed to help, Greg McCool 21 years, Andrew McCallister 23 years and he has been around a while. This will help deliver a good product to help get a good product.

Also, Randy you started right after he left. Randy replied in 2008, 15 years. Phillip has been here 10 or 11 years. You have a lot of employees here. You don't want to lose them. The pay plan will show them

some appreciation and continue to move forward. You have asked him to be proactive instead of reactive and we have the team to make it happen. Armbrust asked if there could be a slight increase across the board. Fatland replied there will be an increase across the board. Mayor Pro Tem Booker responded that she and Crys wanted everybody to make at least \$15 an hour. As far as mapping the system, she thanked him for continuing the work on that.

Fatland thanked the council and recognizes the experience they have here. He congratulated Crys on the Nina Simone fundraising.

BUDGET ORDINANCE & FEE SCHEDULE

N.C. requires a budget ordinance. You take all the things that you have approved and put in this word document. The General Fund will raise taxes five cents. The fire tax will go up one penny. Harmon Field will stay the same. This board put up \$68,650 toward the paving, hoping the county will approve their part. The water and sewer rates will go up five percent. The sanitation rate will go up one dollar from \$23 to \$24. The fee schedule is included. Daniels wants to add \$25 fence permit. Booker asked how many ask to put up a fence. Daniels reported he had five last year. A lot of people don't know about the eight-foot height and this will get the information to them. He would also like to add \$250 for a special use permit.

Fatland reported the budget ordinance is the driving document if the ordinance is approved. He recommended five cents, two and a half cents are from moving the sanitation to street, where it should be. These departments have been asked to keep their budget where it is. The problem with that is, it is not realistic. The state budget people asked why last year he had only budgeted \$15,000 from fund balance and this year you are asking for \$170,000. Last year your budget left off a number of items. Fund balance should have been appropriated last year or the taxes increased. He recommended the tax increase. Ingham wants to think about it. Crowell is good with it. He's been saying for years we needed a tax increase. Booker wants to think it needs a little more discussion. Ingham agreed. Armbrust agreed, but understands it has been a long time since they have raised taxes. Aldred asked what a five-cent increase did to a piece of property that cost \$100,000. Crowell responded about \$50.

Fatland reported the dilemma for the town is you want to do things for the town to make it look better, but without having funds available. Last year you had low numbers for each department and makes it very difficult. You are appropriating fund balance to get there from here. Ingham responded when he came here twenty-five years ago, we didn't have the businesses we have now. The town is taking in more money than we were twenty-five years ago. Fatland responded the budget has stayed the same for years. He mentioned that Greg had told him, his numbers were the same year after year.

Lastly the water and sewer rates we are increasing five percent and the sanitation rates are going up one dollar to put them in the black. Mayor Peoples replied we need to add a penny year after year to keep up with inflation.

The board liked the setup that was done this year.

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