

**TOWN OF TRYON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TRYON TOWN HALL – MCCOWN MEETING ROOM
JUNE 20, 2023 7:00 PM**

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 William Morgan, Town Attorney

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Peoples called the meeting to order and asked for a moment of silence, due to the storms we are having and anything else you would like. Mayor Pro Tem Booker led the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Peoples asked for additions, deletions or corrections to the agenda. Town Manager Fatland asked the mayor if he wanted to add the Emergency Declaration. Peoples added it as item i. under the Consent Agenda. 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 to the consent agenda. Being none, he entertained a motion to adopt the consent agenda, which includes the Board minutes, financial report, tax reports, McCown Street-road closure for Gardening for Life and an Authorization for the Mayor to Declare State of Emergency. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously. Also included for information purposes is the Tourism Board Minutes, Harmon Field Board minutes, Planning Board minutes and Parks Committee minutes.

PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED FY24 BUDGET

Mayor Peoples opened the public hearing. Town Manager Fatland reported that he presented the budget at the May meeting. Then he scheduled a work session on May 26 with the Board, department heads and supervisors. The budget includes a five-cent tax increase. He has outlined the areas that are in need, addressing employee retention and recruitment. Looking at the public facility that has been deteriorating over the years. The water and sewer rates are set to increase five percent. This was set several years ago to last fifteen years to be able to address the shortfall in water and sewer. The rates are set through the capital improvement plan that was approved by this board a few years ago. The Town has been written up for the shortfall in the Sanitation Fund. Monday and Friday the sanitation crew helps the street department, so the street department should be paying for those days.

Mayor Peoples explained there will be a five-cent tax increase to balance our budget. Haven't raised taxes since 2013. The evaluation of property in the town has lost value. In 2015-2016 the evaluation was \$180 million, in 2016-2017 it was \$179 million and in 2017-2018 the value dropped to \$169 million.

Al Casavant asked if the five percent increase puts money in reserves or does it help with maintenance. Fatland responded water and sewer is a totally different fund. The water distribution and sewer collection systems were built back in the 1930's, by the citizens, not by grant monies. The sewer plant was built in 1969 and paid for by the citizens. The Clean Water Grant wasn't approved until the 70's. Mr. Casavant asked where do we get money from. Fatland responded the previous manager got grant money to rehab the Braewick Sewer. That's 100% grant money and won't cost the taxpayers a penny. We need to be aggressive after grants and no interest loans. The property tax has been fairly level over the years. The general fund is strong, but the revenue only covers the expenses. One of the things that he has noticed, as Commissioner Armbrust has said, the town has been reactive to its needs instead of being proactive. We are working to change that. The town needs to be replacing things instead of waiting to fix them. The other part of the tax increase is we are losing police officers to other towns and some of the other employees have moved on. There were seven vacancies when he came here on January 13th. We have been fortunate enough to hire five new people since he has been here. The town had no pay plan and if they pass this tonight, there will be a pay plan. Mr. Casavant asked if the five-cent increase was just for salaries or does it actually put money aside. Fatland responded the police, street, administration and finance all comes out of the general fund. The water & sewer fund comes from the water and sewer rates. Mr. Casavant asked if that was enough. Mayor Peoples replied no. Fatland responded if you asked the Local Government Commission about this, they would probably tell the board to raise rates 10-20%, but they don't live here in Tryon. It's important to get the five percent rate increase and to be aggressive on the grants. We have two projects that are fully funded by grant money now. The water mapping project and the sewer mapping project. He hired Gary Walker who worked for the town for thirty-four years and retired three to four years ago to help on the projects. He hates to have a project done that will not work or put up on a shelf to sit there. The employees felt good about the projects, because they were involved with it.

Mr. Casavant replied he is still confused and asked how much of the money that we pay now is put back for future use. How much money are we putting away now for the future? Mayor Peoples responded we have estimated \$15 million dollars in projects that need to be done. The first thing that will be done is the mapping. The money will go toward the upgrades that we are getting. Fatland replied the five percent pays for the operations and maintenance of the entire system and the existing debt along with future debt. He will be aggressive on working on grants and no interest loans. Also, since he has been here, he has been yelled at a lot, but when a negative happens, something good also happens. He went to a funeral in California and was receiving all these emails about going to Senator Moffitt with problems. When he returned, he contacted Senator Moffitt and told him we needed help. Moffitt agreed to put Hidden Hill, Markham-Grady Avenue and Oak Street into their budget. If we get approval the money will be available in August. They have also agreed to put the Saluda, Tryon, and Columbus water line in their appropriations to pay off the loan. That would also save the town money. He is impressed with this council. They are tired of being reactive instead of being proactive. People in town have a certain image of Tryon. This is a great community. He shared with council that your employees have been here a while. They could have left. Gary Walker 34 years, Andrew McCallister 23 years, Greg

McCool 21 years and Fatland has 45 years of experience. Along with the employees, council and citizens we can get a lot done.

Mayor Peoples asked if there were any more comments or questions. Being none, he closed the public hearing.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED FY24 BUDGET

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to adopt the proposed FY24 Budget, which includes a five-cent tax increase, five percent rate increase for water & sewer and a \$1 increase to the sanitation rates. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

FY23 BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT NO. 8

Town Manager Fatland reported next is budget amendment no. 8 on FY23. Rogers Park was in bad repair. We have weddings and concerts there. The sales tax is coming in better than we expected, so he recommended raising the sales tax line items by \$23,500. The Parks & Cemetery by \$3,500 and transfer to Culture and Recreation \$20,000 (repair the two pergolas at Rogers Park) to help with repair needs. He recommended raising the water and sewer by \$25,000 to cover the contracted services and the electricity.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to adopt FY23 Budget Ordinance Amendment No. 8. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT TO ASSIGNMENT OF LEASE FOR TRYON DEPOT

Town Manager Fatland reported this a routine item. As you know you have a long-term lease with Andy Millard, who wants sub lease the Depot and the name needs to be changed so it will need your approval. It's the same people working there, but they have changed the name of the firm. Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to approve the Consent to Assignment of Lease for the Tryon Depot. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING UPSET BID PROCESS TO DISPOSE OF REAL PROPERTY OWNED BY TOWN

Town Manager Fatland reported there is a piece of property that was given to the town years ago. There is no water or sewer infrastructure on it. The neighboring property owner would like to purchase it. In N.C. a town can't just sell property. It has to go before you, then it goes through a ten-day bid process. They have offered \$2,500. Planning Director Daniels said it is next to the property that is being cleaned up on Cleveland Road. Commissioner Crowell asked what size is the property. Commissioner Ingham responded it is not doing us any good. Fatland had all the departments to look at this to see if there was a reason for keeping it and there was none.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing the upset bid process to dispose of real property owned by the Town. Parcel Id T8-I3, Deed Book 420 Page 1174, 134 Cleveland Road. Commissioner Ingham so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING GRANT APPLICATION FOR HARMON FIELD OPEN AIR GYM

Town Manager Fatland reported the Harmon Field Board approved approaching the Polk County Community Foundation for a grant. They have been in discussion with Tryon Arts & Crafts to use the

front portion of the Open-air Gym as a photography lab classroom and the Board desires to develop the back half as a community kitchen and storage room for tables and chairs. On the back side of the room, they wish to build a screened-in porch. He met with the "Gather Community" program, that hold basketball clinics there and they gave their support for the improvements. He would like to make application to the Polk County Community Foundation as soon as possible.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing Grant Application for Harmon Field Open Air Gym Improvements. Commissioner Ingham so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

REQ ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES FOR TOWN FACILITIES

Town Manager Fatland reported that in N.C. if you want to relocate a building or do an addition to Town Hall you have to go through the selection process for architectural services. He would like to relocate the Public Works building and do an addition on to the Fire Station. He has been in touch with USDA this morning. The town is eligible for up to a 35% grant and for a low interest loan of 3% for 30 years. This just gives staff approval to issue RFQ for Architectural and Design Services to assist the Town in planning. He will bring back to you for approval of the architect.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to approve sending out RFQ's for architectural services for the Town facilities. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

TRYON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOARD APPOINTMENT(S)

Town Clerk Bell reported Commissioner Crowell, Maria Mason-Freeman, Allan Casavant and Jeff Fissel are all up for re-appointment to the TTDA Board and would like to be re-appointed for two-year terms, except Crowell and his term would be for one year.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to re-appoint members. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

SALUDA GRADE TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT(S)

Town Clerk Bell reported Katherine Fox has made application to be on the Saluda Grade Trail Committee. This is our first application. Commissioner Armbrust would also like to be on the committee. Commissioner Ingham made a motion to appoint Crys Armbrust and Katherine Fox to the committee. The motion carried unanimously.

TDDA UPDATE

TDDA Director Newman reported they have a lot planned in wrapping up their year. Unfortunately, the Summer Soltis planned for tomorrow evening at Rogers Park has been cancelled due to the weather. Will look at doing something later in the summer. Thank you to Ms. Sanchez with A Soul Edit and Back Alley Boutique for their help with planning the event. They are going to push ahead with the 4th Friday event. The rain should be cleared out by then. TDDA is partnering with the Nina Simone project for the event. Several non-profits are joining us on the Nina Simone Plaza. On Monday, June 26 at 6:00 pm TDDA is going to hold their annual meeting at the Tryon Country Club. Special guest speaker coming in from the Great Trails Coalition to speak to us on how Tryon can make the most of their recreation. This is open to the public. On the 27th they have a performance by the Air Force National Guard at Rogers Park. Free event. Rock and patriotic songs. Also, at the end of this month, Roger Walker, TDDA President will

come to the end of his term. She appreciates everything he has done getting her up to date on everything. Ian Grigg has been voted in as president. She also has shared a marketing study with you, that is just off the press from NC Main Street. It's a look at what business Tryon is lacking and what type of businesses are a good fit for downtown. This will be the cornerstone of the redesign of the TDDA website. She is requesting a road closure of McCown Street from 3:00 pm Thursday, October 5th until 10:00 am on Monday, October 9th for the Tryon International Film Festival. She will need barriers placed at both ends of the street. Mayor Peoples entertained a motion for the road closure. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

MINIMUM HOUSING UPDATE

Planning Director Daniels updated the Board:

1. 51 Shepherd-has been inspected and a minimum housing hearing will be held on July 6th
2. 136 Cleveland-has been cleaned, the bricks he allowed to leave for infill for a future retaining wall that the owner has interest in putting up, when he rebuilds
3. 144 Cleveland-notice has been sent, he has the demo company penciled in when his time expires next month, unless he cleans it up first
4. 160 Cleveland-resident and owners have been sent the Notice of Violation with specific items to remedy, fines will commence on July 1st, if not complete
5. West Livingston Street-talked about the cars at the last meeting. Some of the items in cars, along with some white goods and a boat have already been removed, the Police Chief has spoken to the owner of the other car and that will be moved soon

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Fatland thanked the Mayor and Commissioners for working with the supervisors on the budget. The work session went really well. Employee morale seems to be better. He will keep you posted on the Lake Lanier Dam Assessment. Thank you for your help this year. Mayor Peoples thanked him for getting all the department heads together with them.

COUNCIL/MAYOR REPORT

Commissioner Ingham welcomed everybody for coming out tonight. Thank you to our staff for all the hard work they have been doing, especially during this bad weather and possibly going to work again tonight. Thank you all for being here.

Commissioner Armbrust asked who is the author or administrator of the Tryon Wikipedia page. Manager Fatland will have to look into that. TDDA Director Newman responded that is kind of a community edit, so it's probably pulled from an almanac to get it started. She will look into this. Armbrust would love to know.

Commissioner Crowell thanked the citizens for being here and thanks to the new TDDA president. Chrelle and he did ask about a list of all the properties that the town owns and the properties that have liens on them. He appreciates the first responders and poor old Howard Gap Road (mudslides).

Mayor Pro Tem Booker thanked all who work for the town and those of you who came out tonight. For the Police and Fire Chiefs, Mr. Wingo wants to hold the game on 9/10. You all take care of yourselves and stay safe.

Mayor Peoples reported the surveyors for “Harriett’s Garden” will be here on the 24th of July. This property is contiguous to Woodland Park. He got a gentleman to donate 1.33 acres to the town. He is putting in a trail, gazebo and going to plant sunflowers, because that is what she likes. Demetre at Harmon Field is interested in putting up a cover over the picnic tables so that people can sit and eat out of the sun. He told him he would pass it along.

CITIZEN COMMENTS & RESPONSES

Ian Griggs presented his proposal on parking and pedestrian safety at the intersection of Palmer and Trade Street. Mr. Fatland will meet with Mr. Griggs to discuss. Joyce Kimpton responded that parking is the biggest drawback in this town.

Dr. Carson acknowledged the very fine work of the street crew. Often, they go over and beyond what they are asked to do. The Police Chief also goes over and beyond. They were recently victimized with graffiti. The chief came out with paint and a roller and took care of it. Obviously, improvements are happening on Cleveland Road. At Bryan Park, the second bench needs to be leveled. There were three concrete planters with flowers, but someone has taken them and he would like to see flowers put back. The sale of property on Cleveland Road should have been brought to the citizens. This would help with the open lines of communication. Mayor Pro Tem Booker acknowledged Shawn, Randy and Wade who uncovered Mr. Bryan’s steps that have been covered for years.

CLOSED SESSION: POTENTIAL LITIGATION

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to enter into closed session for the purpose of potential litigation. Commissioner Ingham so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

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