

**TOWN OF TRYON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TRYON TOWN HALL – MCCOWN MEETING ROOM
MARCH 19, 2024 7:00 PM**

Present: Mayor J. Alan Peoples Mayor Pro Tem Chrelle Booker
Commissioners Present: Bill Crowell Absent: Crys Armbrust
Staff Present: Jim Fatland, Town Manager Tim Daniels, Planning Director
 Scott Holt, Interim Police Chief Josh Walton, Fire Chief
 Greg McCool, Public Works Director
 William Morgan, Town Attorney

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Peoples called the meeting to order. Mayor Pro Tem Booker led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Peoples asked for a moment of silence.

AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Peoples asked for additions, deletions or corrections. Manager Fatland replied we need to cancel the closed session for personnel and add closed session for potential litigation pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3). Also, item 7 Animal Control Ordinance we would like to continue that at the next meeting. Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to adopt. Commissioner Crowell 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, which included the Tax Report, Grant Status Report and for information only the Tourism Board, Harmon Field Board and Planning Board minutes. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

UPDATE ON AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2023

Manager Fatland reported that he had talked with the auditors today. They are moving along. Working on the footnotes of the statements. He did share with them that the town board had approved a loan for \$600,000. He has worked with the LGC and once the audit is done, the loan will be on their agenda.

WATER AND SEWER PLANNING, DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Manager Fatland reported on Braewick Sewer Rehab. He met with the engineer WithersRavenel and the contractor. They signed the Notice to Proceed and will start this project next Monday the 25th. The date of substantial completion is October 2024 and the final completion date is November 2024. The Town received only one bid and had to readvertise. Received only one bid the second time. Even though the project came in higher, the engineer wanted to cut the project back. He told them we were

going to work with the staff at the state. They gave us a loan for the \$600,000 at no interest for 20 years. We are going to do the project as planned.

The next three projects are from our lobbying with our State Senator Tim Moffit and House Member Jake Johnson. We didn't find out we had funding until September last year. He wanted to thank the Town Board for letting us retain an engineer for the design. The projects are ready to go out for construction. (Hidden Hill, Markham/Grady, and Oak Street). Mayor Peoples asked if we needed a motion to move forward on those projects. Fatland responded yes. Commissioner Crowell made the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Manager Fatland reported last month he attended the mandatory meeting of the Department of Environmental Quality. One of the projects through the Bi-partisan infrastructure program was to replace lead pipes. It's a million-dollar grant, whether you are Charlotte or Tryon. The deadline for applying is October 24. He would like permission from council to move forward with this grant. Mayor Pro Tem Booker made the motion to approve. The motion carried unanimously.

Manager Fatland reported on the Jervey Road Sewer Rehab project. He received a proposal from Summit Engineering. Summit could do the design work for \$10,000. We do not have grant money for this project. We have had three system overflows since January in this area. This is the one that he was questioned about on Channel 7. State Senator Moffit told him the state has additional money. If this project is ready to go, this would be a good project to ask for money. Mayor Peoples entertained a motion have Summit Engineering get started on the design. Mayor Pro Tem Booker made the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Manager Fatland reported the next item is the Lake Lanier Dam Project Ordinance. North Carolina wants you to adopt a Project Ordinance, because it may go over several fiscal years. You recently approved hiring SDG Engineering to do the grant application and Cranston Engineering to do the Alternative Analysis. Later this year we will be applying for FEMA funds. South Carolina is going to oversee the process. He has attended the mandatory training class for FEMA. You are going to put these two projects into the project ordinance. Mayor Peoples attended a meeting last week that the S.C. State Senator was in and he mentioned this project to him. Fatland realizes that Cranston was hired before he was hired. He wants the citizens to know the \$200,000 spent on Cranston's report was not wasted money. That report is going to help us land the several million dollars to help rehab the dam. That project being done already is a big plus. The Army Corp of Engineers has looked at the report very intensely. The report will be submitted with the package. Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to add the Lake Lanier Dam Rehab Project Ordinance. Mayor Pro Tem Booker made the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Manager Fatland reported this Friday at the Depot Community Room the Town Board will have a work session dealing with all these projects. On the backside of your agenda is the Friday agenda. All the engineers for the town are going to be here to do an update on Braewick Sewer and to go over the process of how to notify neighbors when they get to various streets in Gillette Woods. We will talk about Lake Lanier Dam and the application process and the advertisement for Hidden Hill, Oak and Markham/Grady. This will be an opportunity for the community to hear from the engineers and ask questions. WithersRavenel, SDG Engineering, Summit Engineering and Cranston will be here. The meeting will last about two hours.

FY24 BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT NO. 5

Manager Fatland reported we are looking at adjusting the Police Department budget \$32,000, for the cost of the vehicles that was not included in the budget. Interest earnings last year was \$5,000 and this year we are looking at making \$110,000. That income is going to cover this additional cost. Harmon Field we are making great strides with a lot of maintenance. Prior taxes came in a lot higher this year and this along with fund balance will cover the \$44,600 increase. The lawnmower that was purchased with loan proceeds, the principal and interest payments had to be added. On the Fire Department we had to appropriate from fund balance \$109,000 and prior taxes over \$30,000 came in, which is going to help with their increased \$164,500 costs. The budgets for Fire and Harmon Field have to be done sooner to present to the county. The water and sewer increased, because of the water plant expenditures, items costing a lot more. The water income is coming in better than budgeted so we are using that income and part of fund balance. Their total increase was \$243,220.

He will present the budget at the May meeting. There will be three budget work sessions this year. The first one is March 22 for capital projects. Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to adopt Budget Ordinance Amendment No. Five. Mayor Pro Tem Booker made the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

PAY PLAN SALARY ADJUSTMENTS FOR TRYON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Manager Fatland reported currently the Police Department has seven positions budgeted and we are down two officers. He thought our salaries set last year were okay and now he has learned that Columbus starting salary is \$46,132. We are currently at \$42,122. We are currently sending a town employee, an African American 21-year-old that grew up in Tryon to Blue Ridge Community College for Basic Law Enforcement Training and will graduate in June. He is sending text messages to the Chief every week that he is enjoying the class. He has agreed when he graduates to come back and work for the town for three years. He and the Chief are recommending moving the pay grade for a new officer from paygrade 15 to paygrade 17, which would take it to \$46,440. Then the other positions, Sergeant, Lieutenant and Captain, have to be adjusted accordingly. If we don't do this, we are going to continue to lose officers. The officer that left loved Tryon, it was just strictly a money issue.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to approve the Pay Plan Salary Adjustments for the Police Department. Commissioner Crowell made the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

UPSET BID PROCESS FOR SALE OF TOWN OWNED PROPERTY

Planning Director Daniels reported the upset bid process was initiated at the last meeting. He is unaware of any bids and suggested the board make a motion to allow it contingent upon finding that no bids have been received and town attorney approval. This is the sliver of property at the corner of Academy Street and W. Howard Street to add to parcel T11-G7. Commissioner Crowell made the motion to sale the property for \$10.00. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTUION DECLARING SURPLUS PROPERTY

Fire Chief Walton reported council had approved the sale of the 1993 Freightliner Tanker to Ebb's Chapel Fire Department. Ebb's Chapel has backed out. This resolution is to be able to post the tanker on

Govdeals.com for the bid process. Mayor Peoples entertained motion to approve the Resolution. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

ROAD CLOSURE ON SOUTH TRADE STREET JUNE 1, 2024 "TASTE OF TRYON"

Planning Director Daniels reported the application was in front of them. They are in the process of finalizing the procedure to get these things passed. Christine is here to answer questions. Mayor Peoples asked about the "Guiding Reins". Christine explained it is a Polk County non-profit organization that works with veterans, first responders and front-line workers of Polk County to do equine therapy. Commissioner Crowell asked if they were going to set the tables closer to the walls and when is this happening. Christine responded June 1 and they are moving the tables back towards this way if the event is allowed. Commissioner Crowell asked about leaving the road open later for traffic. Christine is going to talk to the safety people to see what works best. Commissioner Crowell asked what time the event starts. Christine replied the event will start at 4:00pm and setup will start at 10:00am. This is so the tables can be setup and the vendors can get setup. She is trying to condense the time down. She has talked to some of the merchants, but didn't want to talk to all of them until they got approval for the event. One merchant is concerned because it is one of her busiest days and another merchant wanted us to keep it between the water fountain and Carrie Bass, so they have shortened it to that little strip. Mayor Pro Tem Booker asked how many people did she expect and how many people were helping her. Last time she had 80 volunteers and could seat 350 people. This time the numbers depend on the sale of tickets. Commissioner Crowell is okay with the twelve hours, but if you could close the street later in the day that would be better. Christine thinks it is doable. She will have to check on putting up signage and barricades. Commissioner Crowell suggested putting up signs that state parking until 3:00 only. Mayor Pro Tem Booker clarified there was no parking at all on the street. Christine responded last time they closed the street from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm. Commissioner Crowell would like to keep all the merchants happy.

Daniels reported they are trying to schedule an Event Committee meeting. Gutierrez is trying for March 28th to get the details and talk with Fire and Police as well. Daniels responded he wanted to get this out there with the road closing. He will bring back more at the next meeting.

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to approve the road closure. Mayor Pro Tem Booker is not sure about this and would like more concrete information. Peoples recommended approving it based on the Town Manager's approval of the final details. Booker asked if they need to make the decision now. Manager Fatland will work with the Planning Director and Downtown Director to work out the details. Booker is okay with it then. Commissioner Crowell made the motion to approve. The motion carried unanimously.

DOWNTOWN/TDDA UPDATE

Downtown Director Gutierrez reported that we had the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Sunday and it seems to have gone off without a hitch. The April Fool's Day Parade is still on schedule. She attended the N.C. Main Street Conference last week in Goldsboro. The big thing is Rodger Walker from Tryon was named the N.C. Main Street Champion for his volunteer work and his commitment to small towns. She posted the link to the Facebook page if you would like to view it. She has two new business owners. One is going to be appointed to the board. They both attended the conference with her and Rodger came up

the last day. Each attended different sessions. She learned a lot of things she didn't know, especially pertaining to our Social District. She's excited to bring what she learned at the workshops to Tryon.

MINIMUM HOUSING/PLANNING UPDATE

Planning Director Daniels reported:

1. Shepherd Street - sent letter to the church, addressed to the church and all interested parties. It was purchased under the churches name, along with the pastor. Waiting on the return of the certified letter sheet.
2. Peake Street – the owners have the paper work, he is just waiting on the lack of or proof of no insurance before they burn it down.

Working to get both of these properties done at the same time.

As far as the planning goes, they had preliminary discussion about some ordinance changes. Some changes with the Social District he will have more information next month and will post on-line.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Fatland reminded everyone of the meeting Friday, dealing water and sewer only. Also reminded everyone that April 2nd at 5:30 the Harmon Field Board meets. They have scheduled three public input sessions. This will be the 3rd and final one. In May the Harmon Field Board will look at all the request and amend the master plan for Harmon Field that will allow us to look for grants. He shared with the Harmon Field staff pictures of the Community Gardens built in Brevard. He will be meeting with the county manager to discuss Pickle Ball courts. The key thing is, if the county is not able to build them at the YMCA, Harmon Field may be the location if we can get some financial help. Getting community input has been fantastic, big turnout. Draft from Mark Byington to bring before you for adoption in May. We have retained a grant writer, Debra Torrence, who is working on each project for Harmon Field. Looking for best sources to go after. The Fire Department budget will go to the County in April. Pickle Ball courts cost about \$200,000 to build. Mayor Pro Tem Booker believes Pickle Ball is an Olympic game now. They have been playing at Stearn's Gym.

COUNCIL/MAYOR REPORT

Commissioner Crowell thanked the crowd for being here tonight. The St. Paddy's Day Parade was a fun time. He couldn't believe the turnout. He hiked through Woodland Park the other day and it is looking really nice. He thanked the staff. He thanked Jim for all the water and sewer grants. Manager Fatland thanked the Parks Committee for Woodland Park.

Mayor Pro Tem Booker thanked everyone for the support given to her family. She has been reading and hearing about how people enjoy coming to Tryon, how different it is than Landrum and Saluda. She suggested we keep working on our quaintness. Great job to all the workers, all employees and to all that came out tonight. Everyone take care of yourselves and each other and she thinks we will be okay.

Mayor Peoples reported that three Friday's ago he went with the guy who runs Big Guns Coffee to Isothermal. He wants to make hydroponic coffee. The agriculture man was there, along with a man from Appalachian State University, Senator Ted Budd, Representative from NASA and two

representatives from USDA. Big Guns Coffee is headquartered here in downtown Tryon and has good coffee.

CITIZEN COMMENTS & RESPONSES

Richard Norton reported he hadn't attended many meetings. He wanted to address building a house. He feels we are going to have to pay more for taxes, but we need a plan. Sewer and water have been bad for years. Can't rely on the state grants to make all the repairs to the water and sewer lines. In 2012, you have a 20-year plan and now a 15-year plan. What is it going to cost in 15-years? And now you want Pickle Ball courts and we can't afford them. Commissioner Crowell responded we can raise the water and sewer rates, but we can't use tax money from the general fund to pay for water and sewer. Mr. Norton replied this man wants to fix it, but all we hear is, we are going to fix it with grants. He asked what is plan B. The revenues are going up, but nothing is being done. How many property owners have adversely been affected. This Board is not the Town of Tryon, the people and taxpayers are the Town of Tryon. He suggested taking their town back. Commissioner Crowell responded we have three openings coming up. Mr. Norton asked how many properties have been adversely affected. You can't tell him, because you don't care. He reported you drive up behind your building and you will fix that sewer line. Mr. Armbrust is not here. You can fix the sewage line in front of the Frog & Swan. He doesn't even know if he lives in town anymore. Take five percent from the taxes and fix everything. He can't tell you it is a spending problem, but it is a decision problem. You don't have enough people working on the problems so you are not repairing the problems. You don't care about it and you are saying you will get grants to fix it. Commissioner Crowell responded they do care. They are spending every dime that comes in to repair the system. The ground is falling out from under us. They got the first tax increase in 14-years. Water rates have been trickling up a little. They can't slam the town with a \$200 a month water bill. Mr. Norton responded you are managing by chaos. Manager Fatland reported he can go back into retirement. This man called me to come back. This board adopted a capital improvement plan in 2020 that includes \$25,000,000 dollars in projects. Rates are to be raised five percent each year for fifteen years. They could borrow the money to pay for it, but he would like to maximize the grants. This council has received \$6,000,000 in grants that doesn't have to be paid back. You keep yelling at them, because you feel they haven't done anything. What do you want us to do? Mayor Peoples responded in 2012 the state came in and told us we had to have a new water plant that cost \$3.8 million. When he was elected in 2001 smoke testing was being done to find the problems. You can come in here after the fact and yell and scream all you want to. This board has worked hard. That man has worked hard. These people have worked hard and you want to come in here and bang on us. He has heard enough from you sir. He understands that you are unhappy and he accepts that. Please have a seat. Thank you. Mr. Norton responded you are not done hearing from him.

Commissioner Crowell feels for you. He and Anne Day lived with their basement being flooded with sewage every Sunday for how many years, five or six.

Denny Crowe asked what are you doing about public restrooms? The Town is facing change within the next five to ten years. Mayor Peoples responded several years ago, we found what we thought was the perfect place and the first thing that happened was people can't walk to them, so that one got lost. Then we talked about cutting into the bank and that one got lost. He tried eighteen years ago to buy the space beside the theater, but no one wanted to buy it. He is proposing the brick building that we already own at the maintenance shed. There is parking all around the building. The first thing he hears, it is not

a good place, people can't get to it. He agrees with you, but he doesn't know what it will take to please people. The Town has public restrooms at Rogers Park. He asked where would you put it. Ms. Crowe responded the building across from Sidestreet would make a nice restroom. You are not going to please everybody. She is not sure that she is going to get consensus. Let's not tell people to go into our retail shops to use their restrooms. This town is going to change and if we don't take the reins it is going to change without us. She thanked Manager Fatland for all of his work on the sewage. It is true grants are not going to fix our problems. His thoughts were if we finance the entire CIP, getting more grants would help to lower the amount needed. As far as the public restrooms, this board has worked on it. Last month he wanted to re-establish the Town of Tryon Committee for downtown. We want to look at locations, price tags and bring back to council. He is waiting on TDDA to make appointments. This committee will talk about public restrooms, landscaping and other improvements for downtown. Ms. Crowe feels we need to look forward and not to the past. Change is coming. Mayor Peoples responded we need to be ready for when the rails to trails gets here in five to ten years. Ms. Crowe replied twenty years ago, she drove through here and saw the precious vision, before any of the new sidewalks. It looks cute, but a lot of work needs to be done underground. We have to prioritize. Can we really afford to bring people here or Harmon Field? Manager Fatland responded the community came to the public meetings that was held with ideas. The Town does need additional parking. Ms. Crowe was at the first meeting and she loves pickle ball. A lot of the people that came to the community meetings were not from Tryon proper. You need to remember that. She is disappointed in the yelling tonight.

Joyce Kimpton reported she was born here, lives here and will probably die here, because she loves this town. The biggest problem is all the people that drive through, think it is cute and they want to live here. Once they get here, they start wanting to change us and turn us into the big city, turn us into Greenville. We will never be a big city. You just need to leave us alone and quit trying to change everything there is about this town that the people that are natives love about this town. Just stop. If it was so good from where you came from, why don't you just move back.

CLOSED SESSION FOR POTENTIAL LITIGATION N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(A)(3)

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to go into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) to discuss potential litigation. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURN

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Booker so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

J. Alan Peoples, Mayor

Attest:

Susan B. Bell, Town Clerk