TOWN OF TRYON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TRYON TOWN HALL - MCCOWN MEETING ROOM
MAY 21, 2024 7:00 PM

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

Commissioners: Bill Crowell, Crys Armbrust (arrived late)

Staff Present: Jim Fatland, Town Manager — Susan Bell, Town Clerk
Tim Daniels, Planning Director — Scott Holt, Police Chief
Greg McCool, Public Works Director — Josh Walton, Fire Chief
William Morgan, Town Attorney

CALL TO ORDER

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

AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Peoples asks for additions, deletions, or corrections. Being none, he entertained a motion to adopt the agenda. 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 includes the February 27, 2024 and March 19, 2024 Board minutes, Tax Reports, Financial Report, Grant Status Report and for information purposes only the Tourism Board, Harmon Field Board and Town Cemetery minutes from April 2024 and a letter from Amy Arledge thanking the Manager, Public Works Director, Andrew McCallister and Bobby Waters for being patient and helpful for the Parks Committee. Mayor Pro Tempore Booker so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR ENDED YEAR FOR JUNE 30 2023

Town Manager Jim Fatland said he has good news. He said, “Susan and I have been in touch with the auditors. The audit report is now finished. He couldn't make tonight's meeting. He could have gotten the statement before you, but I feel the auditors should be present. So, we're going to have the audit presentation at the May 31st budget work session. So, there'll be a special meeting. We'll do the audit presentation as well as the FY25 budget. Also, before you is a contract amendment. Turn your eyes on any June 23rd and extension of time. We need your approval on that.”

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to adopt the contract amendment. Mayor Pro Tem Booker so moved. The motion carried unanimously. Mayor Peoples officially set the date for the special meeting for May 31, 2024 in the Depot Committee Room. He entertained a motion to adopt the special meeting. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

PAVING CONTRACT AWARD

Town Manager Fatland reported the following:

“We've been accumulating funds the last couple of years. We only get around $68,000 each year for paving. And some of the roads you can't pave because of required water and sewer work and so forth. One of the areas is out by IGA so we're going to spend about $4,000 out of the water and sewer budget to repave the areas that have been cut by our utility crews to get them done. We're also going to pave a portion of Carolina Drive, a portion of Red Bird and Laurel Way. There will be new paving. And then Redbird Street itself. The road itself looks okay. You get to the very top of the street, the last three homes, it's like potholes everywhere. So we're going to pave that portion. Also, Laurel Way has reached a point where it's skinned down to the base so we're going to pave the entire Laurel Way. So the total cost is $154,600. Powell will pay for $130,000. The street budget will be $20,600. The water department will pay $4,000. And the good news is we've asked Darrell Price to get the work done. He gave us the week of June 10.”

Mayor Peoples entertained a motion to approve Darrell Price for patching the road by IGA and paving part of Carolina Drive and all of Laurel Way. The total cost is $154,600. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

FY24 BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT NO. SIX

Town Manager Jim Fatland reported that the town had more income this year in Powell Bill. He said, “We've got $76,120. I budgeted $68,000. So, I want to increase that revenue by $8,129 and appropriate about $9,500 of fund balance and I'll get enough money to cover the paving we just awarded. In the water meter fund, we were replacing several transmitters and meters throughout the year. I did share with you that years ago when I was here, we established the water meter fund. And I guess good news, bad news, and the good news is the money's been set aside in this fund all these years earning interest. But we're putting money to good use now and replacing the system that needs to be done. So, I'd like to appropriate another $21,000 to the fund to continue to replace water meters transmitted through now and June 30th. The third item is the tourism occupancy taxes. I don't think we're going to make the budget available. All we're going to do is lower the occupancy tax revenue by $2,500. Increase fund balance appropriate by $2,500. The total increase in the budget is zero. For those three items, I'm asking for approval for budget number six.”

Mayor People entertained a motion to adopt budget number six as proposed. Mayor Pro Tempore Booker so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

Town Manager Jim Fatland made a comment after adoption of the budget. He reported that there are no violations within the budget and when he decides to step down again for retirement, he will agree to stay on to make sure that the new manager understands the financials and how to prepare budget amendments in order to avoid future violations.

PROPOSED FY25 TOWN BUDGETS

Town Manager Mr. Fatland reported, “The managers are required to present the budget audit report June 1st. We will be having a budget work session, like we said earlier, on Friday, May

31st. This gives you 10 days to look at the budget, go through any additional questions, and look at the same format we did last year where we had all the department heads and division supervisors around the table. So, if there's any questions you may have, even non-financial, you talk to the street supervisor and so forth about priorities, efficacy, etc."

"Basically, employee retention and recruitment has been a challenge for municipalities throughout our country. And for no exception, as you know that I came before you last month, and the police department was down two officers, but I didn't see any additional shrinkage. We increased the police officer salaries 10% to be competitive. Columbus was paying more at the time, we're now in line with Columbus. We do have the two vacant positions. One of the positions, we have an individual going through the basic law enforcement program, and graduation will be around the end of June, and then we're still recruiting for the remaining officer. And also in the budget, we're putting a cost living adjustment of 2.5%. I did contact the county manager and he's including 2.5% of the county budget. I think Columbus is including 3% of their budget. We're very similar to what they're doing."

"One of the challenges we had this past year, the equipment in this town is very old. Much of it was purchased when I was here the first time. And I we went out last year to buy a dump truck, and a new lawnmower with a sidearm attachment, and we can't get the equipment even delivered. So, I've asked the division supervisors and public work directors to be prepared to discuss with you at the work session about looking into used equipment instead, rather than waiting and waiting. As you know, the three police cars that you approved three years ago are almost ready, and I guess by June 30th we'll have the three cars on the street. They're close. It's taken that long to get the good things. Equipment, as you know, when you have bad equipment, it does affect the morale of employees, and when you think you're breaking down, you spend a lot of money on maintaining equipment. And that's embarrassing in some respects, we'd like to talk to you about a different strategy."

"Also, too, last year the big effort was for the town to be proactive on maintenance, and we continued that, this last year. We still want to make sure that we don't let facilities fall behind. I think Rogers Park, Woodland Park, Bryan Park, Harmon Field in particular have all shown improvements. We want to continue that."

"I'm waiting for a number of projects to come from committees to share with the town board. So I did not include it in the budget, but we are prepared to make appropriations from fund balance. One is the public restroom for downtown. I think that will happen this year. We've got money to pay for it. We're just waiting for the location and cost." The other projects he mentioned include a public works garage, street light replacement for downtown, and making sidewalks a priority throughout the town with Markham being first.

As far as water and sewer projects, Town Manager Jim Fatland reported that a number of project ordinances have already been approved including Braewick, Hidden Hill, Oak Street, Markham, Grady, and Jervey Road so they are not really a part of the budget. A grant application for Lake Lanier is in the works.

He reported that the total budget for all the funds combined is about $6.6 million. The funds included are the: General, Police Pension, Cultural and Recreation, Powell Bill, Water and Sewer, Water Meter, Sanitation, Harmon Field, Fire Department, and Tourism funds. He recommended a 2.5% general fund tax rate increase to primarily cover the cost of increases in payroll. He said that opportunities for economic growth need to be a priority for next

year. Looking at the entire budget, 83% is operations and 13% is loan proceeds, primarily the fire department. They are replacing an engine that's already been ordered by the council a year and a half ago. Delivery is expected in late August or early September. Appropriation fund balance is $196,100, about 3% of the budget. Inter-fund transfer is only $33,000, 1% of the total budget. On the expense side, 81% is going to the operation expenditures. Debt is 4%. Capital equipment is $949,500. That's primarily the fire department."

"One fund that was created years ago, I created a Police Pension Fund to put money away to pay for police officers who retire. Because when they retire under 62 years old, they can get an additional pension in addition to the state retirement. They're not eligible for social security yet. Anyway, we didn't use that fund all these years. And so, the revenue coming in is greater than the expenses this year, and Susan and I don't feel the need to take money out of the pension, we're going to leave that in there for this year. And then we'll transfer $28,000 out to pay for the two police officers that have retired. The audit report for this year just ended June 2023. We budgeted over $240,000 appropriation fund balance last year. And we took in revenue greater than $70,000. So we didn't have to use any of that fund balance. So, I think, why tap into the Police Pension Fund? Just let it stay there for another year."

"The Culture and Recreation Fund is budgeted at $19,500. That funds Rogers Park and Woodland Park. And so, this year I'm recommending that we appropriate money for those two parks. And we have Harriet's Garden this year. And then we have some improvements at Rogers Park. Peter Eisenbrown has agreed to go with me to try and get some money from the Polk County Community Foundation for some much, needed improvements for Rogers Park."

The Powell Bill received $76,000 last year and the Town Manager expects to receive the same this year. He thinks that it should be used for sidewalks.

The Water and Sewer Fund - The council approved a capital improvements program in March 2020 which called for a 5% rate increase for the next 15 years, so Mr. Fatland points out a 5% rate increase which has occurred for the past 3 years.

"The Water Meter Fund, I'm bringing in about $46,000 a year with $4,000 in investment earnings. The total is $50,000. So that fund will be here to continue to help out to replace meters.

The Sanitation Fund-I spoke to the county manager last week and I discussed it yesterday with the county commissioners. They're increasing the tipping fees at the landfill from $60 to $75. That's a 25% increase. So, I don't recommend increasing our rates for our homeowners by 25%. My recommendation is to increase the residential rates from the current $24 per month to $25 a month. So, it'll be a $1 increase here."

Mr. Fatland is recommending a 1% tax increase this year and 1% tax increase next year for the Harmon Field Special Revenue Fund. He reported that there's a lot of major maintenance that needs to be done. Therefore, the fees collected along with grants and working with the county commissioners and Tryon board for additional money can cover the cost of maintenance projects to avoid major decay.

The Fire Rescue Advisory Board "FRAC" is recommending a 1% increase this year and a 1% increase next year for the Fire Department.

Mr. Fatland reported that the Tourism budget is down, but they still have a healthy fund balance of around $60,000 or so. He is budgeting $20,000 for next year.

He concluded his presentation by mentioning that the first budget work session took place on March 22nd. They spent time talking about all the water and sewer projects and got the opportunity to meet all of the engineers. The second budget work session will be Friday, May 31st at 9 a.m. at the Tryon Depot Community Room and if needed June 7, 2024 at 9AM. He would like to set the Public Hearing for June 18, 2024 at 7PM.

BOARD VACANCIES

Town Clerk Bell reported we have several vacancies on our boards; Harmon Field Board, ABC Board and the Tourism Board. If anyone would like to apply, please come by Town Hall.

DOWNTOWN/TDDA UPDATE

Director of TDDA Lourdes Gutierrez asked for closure of Depot St. and Pacolet St. during the Tryon Beer Festival on November 2, 2024 from 8AM to 9PM.

Director of TDDA Lourdes Gutierrez asked for closure of McCown St. on September 21, 2024 from 7AM to 8PM for a food event similar to the Chili Cook Off setup called the “Barbeque Brawl” where attendees are offered sample size portions of chicken, beef, pork, or other barbeque dishes. Attendees can then cast a vote of their favorites.

Mayor Alan Peoples confirmed the closure of both streets with the attorney. He entertained a motion to adopt the closures as presented by the TDDA Director. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

The TDDA Director reported in June of the Global Food Fest taking place on Fourth Friday of that month. PacJam will be set up in the Plaza on May and June Fourth Fridays.

MINIMUM HOUSING/PLANNING

Planning Director Daniels reported the following: “A big update. The Shepherd Street property, it went back up for auction because the original bidders did not go for it, but we're not waiting on that one. So I posted the notice to the newspaper. I don't know if it's run yet. We're going to move forward on that one. And then Peak Street, the current owner got married and went on a honeymoon. He is back now, and he told me his wife will get that paperwork to me by the end of the week. We'll be moving on that. Again, we're trying to get them both to burn at the same time for the fire department for education. But if it gets too long, we'll just move on forward with what we need to do.”

TOWN MANAGERS REPORT

Town Manager Jim Fatland didn’t have anything to add other than to say thank you to the finance staff for putting the budget together.

COUNCIL/MAYOR REPORT

Commissioner Crys Armbrust expressed his gratitude to the staff and attendees.

Commissioner Bill Crowell thanked the staff and expressed his gratitude for the audience. He thanked the Harmon Field staff as well. He made a comment about the need for paint on the road by Morris.

Mayor Pro Tempore Chrelle Booker thanked the audience and for attending the meeting and the staff. She thanked the Town Manager for the wonderful report.

Mayor Alan Peoples mentioned that his wife passed away 3 weeks ago. He invited everyone to a celebration of her life on June 2 from 2 PM - 5 PM at the cabin down beside IGA. He thanked the audience for attending.

CITIZEN COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Allen Casavant: “Jim, when you're talking about the sidewalks, it's probably not a bad idea to try to coordinate with Duke Energy to put the various conduit lines in first. So, like, on Pacolet St., if they had done that before, it would have cost very little money to put conduits in there. So someday when Duke Energy or the town decides to bury the lines, all those sidewalks don't need to be torn up. Because, like, Pacolet Street, all that would have to be torn up. It costs such little money to do that. And then also, I think a lot of the homeowners and building owners don't know about galvanized lines where the water comes through. We have to replace galvanized line after galvanized line. And so, wherever those sidewalks are, I would probably talk to those homeowners and also, of course with Greg, try to make sure underneath the sidewalk, all the galvanized lines are taken out. So, it doesn't have to be torn back up. Because, again, on Pacolet Street, cutting sidewalks, none of that was done. And I think people just don't know about it. You know? So, but the town could inform people, so it's a lot cheaper to do it at that point and after that.”

Ann Day: “I have a couple of questions. First would be, when the town TDDA plans events for the family, do you look at the community calendar that Carol Browning puts out monthly that goes for years in advance? I know this has come up because I was contacted about it with the Barbeque Fest being on McCown St. It's also the same day as the Offer of Remembrance at Harmon Field. And I do think that there are people that would like to be at both, and they may not be able to do that. I would just request that you look at that community calendar because that walk has been planned for that date since November of last year. The second thing I'm going to ask is about the status of the Whitney Avenue sidewalk.”

Town Manager Jim Fatland answered, “The frustration I've had is we try to find a contractor and then they come out and then they don't show up. So, we've got that sidewalk along Markham that we are looking to get done. The sidewalk over here in the corner has to get redone as you come into town. The money is there for sidewalk repairs and placement. The goal is to get a good contractor to work with our street staff. We do the demolition and hauling away.” Greg confirmed that he found two other contractors to complete the job.

Ann Day: “My other question is about your priorities on repaving roads. Is there a reason why the bottom of New Market was never considered with three or four potholes right there as you

turn on New Market? Three of those potholes have been built at least four times in the last two years."

Town Manager Jim Fatland reported that he has street crews going out to work on the potholes on the town roads. He said the town gets around $70,000 per year for roads and that they're spending $154,000 on road improvements now.

Ann Day responded, "It's just dangerous with those parking places there because when it rains, they're filled with water and it's like a lake. And if you drive through one of those, you're going to tear your car up." Lastly, she thanked Brad and the Town of Tryon at Harmon Field for always being amenable to whatever the Board of Elections may need out there on Election Day.

Town Manager Jim Fatland reported that the Powell Bill map now includes Harmon Field so that they'll be eligible for Powell Bill money for future paving.

Joyce Kimpton asked, "I would like to know if the town has anyone certified to spray weed killer."

Answer: There are two - Brad and Philip.

"Because I was told by several different landscape people that the only way that ditch on 2nd Street is going to be brought back to life is if they go in and kill everything in that ditch, clean it out with rakes and shovels or whatever, and then as it grows back, put it on a regular mowing system. The guy mows Carson Street, he crosses a railroad track and he mows around that sign, he does not even look at the ditch on the opposite side of the road. And it has not been done in forever. Brad did come out. Greg came out and dug out the culvert on Second Street, just in case we got a big rain. The problem in this county is one day we're going to get what Texas is getting. And we're going to be in deep trouble because all the culverts I've looked at on Godshaw Hill are clogged up and nobody's making any effort to clean them out. The ones at the corner of Whitney and Second Street, the ones that go under the road at the railroad tracks, the ones that come off Second Street, they're all in terrible shape. Last year it backed up so bad we had a swamp along the railroad track. We don't need it for snakes. We don't need it for mosquitoes. It needs to all be cleaned up. Thank you."

ADJOURN

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

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J. Alan Peoples, Mayor

Attest:

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Susan B. Bell, Town Clerk