TOWN OF TRYON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TRYON TOWN HALL – MCCOWN MEETING ROOM
DECEMBER 17, 2024 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor J. Alan Peoples Mayor Pro Tem Skip Crowe

Commissioners Present: Bill Crowell, Tracie Morris, Julie Lambakis

Staff Present:	Jim Fatland, Town Manager	Susan Bell, Town Clerk
	Greg McCool, Public Works Director	Tim Daniels, Planning Director
	Brad Gordon, Harmon Field Superintendent	Scott Holt, Police Chief
	William Morgan, Town Attorney	Steven Siler, Fire Captain/Public Information Officer

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Peoples called the meeting to order.

II. INVOCATION

Mayor Peoples led the invocation with a moment of silence.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Pro Tem Crowe led with the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Peoples asked for any deletions, additions, or corrections to the agenda. Hearing none, Mayor Peoples made a motion of adopt. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

V. CONSENT AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Peoples asked for any questions, comments, thoughts, exclamations, or clarifications to the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Morris so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

VI. UPDATE ON TROPICAL STORM HELENE DAMAGES AND RESTORATION

Town Manager Fatland reported that December 6, 2024 was the official start date to identify to FEMA any areas in the community that were damaged by the storm, and this will continue for 90 days. The Town turned in one bill for reimbursement from ServPro. They cleaned out the cabin, two restrooms, and concession stand at Harmon Field. FEMA made it known that it will take up to 8 months to receive any

money back. A FEMA representative will set up an office in the conference room at Town Hall on January 3rd and work with Gina from Accounts Payable to load the invoices into their system from each of the project funds—water/sewer and Harmon Field.

Harmon Field Superintendent Brad Gordon received 3 proposals for removing the mud from the park, however, FEMA required that the Town make sure the soil that came down from the storm wasn't contaminated. SM&E was hired to test the soil, specifically from the playground. They took samples from several locations to test, and the results showed that none of the soil was not contaminated. Brad looked at the proposals and recommended that Jones Land Services clean up the mud and debris at Harmon Field for a cost of $170,600. The company proposed the job will take 4 weeks once they get the green light of approval. Once the mud is removed, a true assessment of what will need to be done to the playground can be made. The entire fencing around it was lost to the storm. Manager Fatland reported that FEMA is willing to pay for the extra cost of making the bathrooms and cabin ADA compliant. Furthermore, FEMA's historic preservation experts review every project prior to approval. Manager Fatland reported that the Town signed a contract a couple months ago with the county. They will take the lead on the debris in the rivers and streams and have been working with the Army Corp of Engineers.

Harmon Field Superintendent Gordon reported that the contractor hired will remove all the mud so that repairs can be made by the Town with the Town's equipment. The soccer field and other grassy areas will need sod in places where it's dead but nothing major.

Town Manager Fatland made a recommendation to approve Jones Land Services to clean up the mud and debris in Harmon Field for $170,600. Mayor Peoples made a motion to adopt. Commissioner Lambakis so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

VII. AMENDMENT TO AUDIT CONTRACT

Manager Fatland reported that the audit contract is being amended for a time extension only until the end of December. The auditors plan on submitting it to the local government commission for their review and approval. A presentation will be given in January at the next council meeting. Mayor Peoples made a motion to amend the audit contract for the time extension. Commission Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

VIII. FY 25 BUDGET ORDINANCE AMENDMENT NO. THREE

Manager Fatland reported that in December 2021 the Town Board approved adding a benefit to the personnel manual that 30 years employees would get medical benefits. He looked at the manager's report that was given to the council in December 2021. The previous manager showed a cash flow of the exact same monthly medical benefits of $583/month for the entire 20+ years of the benefit. Some employees who have retired, have been mistakenly given full medical premiums. He found out about it by accident because he looked up the agenda for December 2021 to see the format for newly elected officials and saw the personnel amendment on it. He didn't budget additional money for this benefit (over the $583/month) but calculated that it would cost $20,000 this year, and the cash flow becomes as high as $42,000 five

years from now. In talking with the auditors and Town Attorney, the police separation allowance is given to employees who retire from the Police Department. They get a stipend each month (the same amount) until they turn 62 years of age. The auditors suggested creating a line item in the budget, medical separation, so that each year when the budget is adopted by the council it includes money for this benefit. Manager Fatland wants to amend the budget this year. Next year he will budget what the Town needs to cover the cost of the benefit.

Manager Fatland explained that the previous manager showed it would cost the Town $536,000 over the life of the program to provide health insurance benefits to 30-year employees. However, if the costs were escalated, for example a 10% increase in medical costs, it would cost the Town of Tryon $2 million, which would require .09 cent tax increase 6 years from now to cover it. The previous manager presented a straight-line amount without consideration to rising healthcare costs. He continued to say that he's looking at the long-haul and what is good for the organization. The Town needs money to take care of its current employees. Currently, the cost of this benefit has increased from $583/month to between $1000-$1100 per month for each 30+year employee which is a 77% increase from the time the previous manager presented it to today. The Town of Tryon can't afford to pay 2 million dollars/year—it would cripple the Town.

Town Manager Fatland will continue to include the $536,000 in the budget for 30+ year employees to receive a healthcare benefit until the year 2044 since it was voted for by the Council in December 2021 honoring the original spreadsheet presented by the previous manager. Mayor Alan Peoples made a motion to adopt FY25 Budget Ordinance Amendment No. Three. Commissioner Morris so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

Town Clerk Bell asked how the Town is going to handle this change for 30+ year employees. Town Manager Fatland responded starting in January, the Town will pay $583/month to 30+ years employees for their healthcare coverage and the employees will be billed for any cost exceeding that amount (roughly $500).

IX. INSTALLMENT FINANCING FOR PURCHASE OF USED EQUIPMENT

Town Manager Fatland reported that during the last BOC meeting, 2 used trucks were purchased—one for $49,500 and the other for $30,000. In 2022 after he retired, some rules were changed. LGC now requires that a loan extending beyond 35 months must be approved by LGC. Therefore, he asked Town Clerk Bell to revise the loan for 35 months to negate the need for involving their approval. It will make the payment larger, but the Town will be able to manage it.

Mayor Alan Peoples made a motion to accept Installment Financing for the Purchase of Used Equipment. Mayor Pro Tem Crowe so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

X. CONTRACT AWARD FOR GRADY AVE WATER LINE

Town Manager Fatland reported that the money received from the State Legislature thanks to Tim Moffitt and Jake Johnson $2.23 million for projects identified on Hidden Hill, Oak Street, Markham, and Grady. The State approved the first project to be the water line portion on Grady Avenue. One bid was secured for the project for $496,000, however, the State requires 3 bids since the project was estimated to cost over $500,000. The State approved the bid since it was under the $500,000 mark. A contract from Carolina Specialties in Hendersonville, NC was obtained. The recommendation presented by Fatland is to proceed with the one bid since it meets the requirements of the State.

Mayor Peoples made a motion to approve the Contract Award for Grady Avenue Water Line after having a discussion with the engineer and with final approval from the attorney. Mayor Pro Tem Crowe so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

XI. CONSTRUCTION BID OPENING FOR HIDDEN HILL, OAK STREET, GRADY AVE SEWER PROJECT

Town Manager Fatland informed the Council that the Town got State Approval to proceed with the advertisement for Hidden Hill, Oak Street, and Markham Sewer Project. Advertising will start in mid-January and open bids in February. This one will more than likely exceed $500,000 so 3 bids are needed. The goal is to award the project March 15, 2025 and complete it by October 15, 2025.

XII. CELEBRATION OF TRYON'S 140TH ANNIVERSARY 1885-2025

Town Manager Fatland suggested the organization of a task force of citizens to address Tryon's 140th Anniversary by next month. Mayor Peoples said something is already underway with the reactivation of the Cemetery Commission which met yesterday, 12/16/24. The anniversary was mentioned during the meeting and plans for a celebration were discussed. Commissioner Crowell asked if they have a set day for the celebration? The response was, yes—in April.

XIII. ESTABLISHMENT AND APPOINTMENTS TO TOWN COMMITTEES

Town Manager Fatland informed the Council that the key to appointing people to committees is finding people who have an interest in and desire to be on a particular committee. He reported two new ones this year—Public Works and Finance Committees—will be very beneficial to the Town. The Town will choose meeting times that work with the elected officials to ensure attendance.

XIV. DOWNTOWN/TDDA UPDATE

Planning Director Daniels reported that the Tryon Christmas Stroll was well attended. The petting zoo at the Depot Plaza was well received. He thanked Kiwanis Club of Tryon for hosting the campfire and s'mores at Mirrorball Gallery. The Town Christmas décor was finalized. He thanked the Harmon Field and Street Department crew for all of their hard work. He thanked Steven Siler for lighting up the Nina Simone Plaza and Morris's tree amongst other projects completed.

Steven Siler reported that the Christmas Parade was flawless. He said a couple of changes were made this year which included the following:

- Moving the parade from 5:00 to 6:00PM
- More individual rigs took part

Planning Director Daniels thanked Joyce Kipton for accenting the office Christmas Tree with memorial photos of those the Town has lost. TDDA hosted a silent auction that was coordinated by Alex of Mirrorball Gallery. Multiple businesses participated and $3,260 was raised to finish the lighting up of Trade Street. TDDA will be working with Denny and the Design Committee to coordinate the lighting. Tryon Elementary 5th grade students decorated Morris's Christmas Tree; they handmade all the ornaments. He thanked Ms. Rogers and Steven Siler for their assistance. Daniels expressed his desire to see everyone at Tryon Midnight for the ball drop, festivities, and music.

XV. MINIMUM HOUSING/PLANNING UPDATE

Planning Director Daniels reported that the house on Peak and Sheppard was burned down thanks to the Fire Department and cleanup was taken care of. 160 Cleveland has been inspected, pictures were taken, and a report is being compiled; he should have a hearing for the owner in January.

XVI. TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager Fatland remined the Council of the employee Christmas Luncheon this Friday (12/20) from 11:30-2:00 at the Tryon Presbyterian Church. Steven Siler is cooking the meal.

XVII. COUNCIL/MAYOR REPORT

i. Commissioner Crowell: He thanked everyone for attending and wished them all a Merry Christmas and Happy Holiday. He said the Town and Downtown look great and that the Street Department is doing their best with the resources they have.
ii. Commissioner Morris: She thanked the staff for all their hard work this year.
iii. Commissioner Lambakis: She thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She said the parade was a great time and wished everyone happy holidays.
iv. Mayor Pro Tem Crowe: He said it was an honor to be there and looks forward to next year.
v. Mayor Peoples: He reported that he bought $140 worth of candy for the Christmas Parade and called a woman with 3 little girls to help throw the candy from his bus. When he got home, he noticed his jacket felt heavy; both pockets were stuffed with candy. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

XVIII. CITIZEN COMMENTS/RESPONSES

Jody Morse: Mr. Morse said that he spent 35 years dedicated to Tryon, and he was told when he was hired, he would have his insurance paid until Medicare started. It was taken away the first time by Town

Manager Fatland and now for a second time. He said the 7-8 employees affected by the change are the ones suffering.

Xan Morse: Mrs. Morse said that she did some math during the meeting. She asked Town Manager Fatland if the cost of insuring 30+ employees would cost over 2 million dollars over 22 years. He replied that if healthcare increase 10% each year, it would cost over 2 million dollars and that it has already increased 77% in only 2 years. She mentioned that there is 1 employee who will start receiving Medicare in roughly 2 years. Three of the 7 employees will be Medicaid eligible in 6-7 years. One employee will be Medicaid eligible in 12 years, she thinks. And there are 2 employees who will be eligible in about 20 years. By her estimates, it should cost less than 1 million dollars. She went on to say that in only 14 days, the employees affected will have to pay over $500/month.

Mr. Fatland responded that the only mistake that was made was overpaying employees after the vote from Council 2 years ago when the Council voted to pay $583/month for 30+ year employees health insurance. She then read from a copy of the December 21, 2021 BOC minutes.

> Insurance Adoption for Employees Hired Under Previous Personnel Policy: Town Manager Ollis explained the Board has discussed the previous personnel policy many times this for those employees hired during that time. The previous personnel policy covered health insurance for employees who worked 30 years until they reached the age of 65 (not 62 as you said). Attorney Morgan would like to go in closed session if you would like to discuss legalities. Mayor Peoples explained he feels we are all in agreement so he entertained a motion to approve the health insurance for those 7 or 8 employees hired under the previous personnel policy that covered health insurance for employees that had worked for 30 for the Town of Tryon. Commissioner Armbrust so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

She pointed out that no amount was specified. Manager Fatland responded that the report presented by the manager was clear—the same amount would be paid per month until the employee is eligible for Medicare. However, the previous manager didn't account for any escalation of health care costs. He asked where is the money going to come from? She said the manager's mistake is not the employees' fault, but they are the ones being penalized which is not fair. She also expressed that it was wrong to notify employees today at the lunch of the changes and to expect them to start paying over $500/month starting in January.

Mr. Morse asked Town Manager Fatland how long he knew about the discrepancy. Town Manager Fatland said he discovered it in the last 30 days. He went on the say that the only people present during that meeting that are also here today are Mayor Peoples, Commissioner Crowell, and Attorney Morgan. Mr. Jody Morse addressed Mayor Peoples and Commissioner Crowell and asked if they honestly didn't know that insurance costs would rise at the time the changes were made in December 2021. They responded no, not 70+%.

Jeff Arrowood, Retired Chief of Police, expressed his disappointment in everyone.

XIX. CLOSED SESSION PERSONNEL—TOWN MANAGER EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

Mayor Alan Peoples entertained a motion to go into closed session to discuss personnel—Town Manager Employment contract. Commissioner Crowell entertained the motion. The motion carried unanimously.