



FEBRUARY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at 6:00 PM

RUTH TOWN HALL

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

David called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION

David offered the Invocation.

ROLL CALL

Participating:

Mayor Guy, Commissioners Goode & Steppe, Manager Hanaway

Citizens present: Jeff & Meghan Seals

AGENDA ADOPTION

David asked for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented; William offered the motion, Nick seconded. Agenda adopted as presented.

GUEST SPEAKERS

No guest speakers

COMMUNITY FORUM

No comments offered.

APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING'S MINUTES

David asked for any changes to the minutes as written, hearing none, the minutes were approved as written.

OLD BUSINESS

1. FEMA Responses

David will share his conversation with Frankie Hamrick from Rutherford County Emergency Services. Conversation details and FEMA brochure attached for review.

David reviewed the Trelleborg fire and action/inaction following. David shared his conversation with Mr. Hamrick who advised we review our contract with our fire service provider; review our South Mountains Mitigation Plan to tailor more specifically for Ruth's concerns; agreed the County's response to Ruth should and would be improved. They reviewed potential evacuation locations and such. David discovered a planning outline template from FEMA he felt would be helpful to address actions we might be able to take going forward in advance of a disaster. After the board's review of the attached planning guide, David feels then it would be a good time to have Mr. Hamrick attend a meeting with the board to discuss more details. Nick commented currently there is no language present of how or if the Town would respond during disaster. He suggested in addition to having Mr. Hamrick speak with the board the Fire Chief should be present too so everyone's expectations of responsibility are on the same page. David asked William for his thoughts, William shared he has not reviewed the planning outline/suggestions yet and would need to do so; he highlighted no matter what it all has to come back and be tied in a pretty bow with States' of Emergency and the like, emphasizing this is a long term planning endeavor. David wants to know what we as a Town need to do for preparedness.

2. Stray Dogs

David will share his concerns and findings-He might want to send the following letter to alleged offenders:

David reviews the dog dilemmas. David communicates he has had several citizens contact him regarding dogs roaming the neighborhood. He communicated his neighbor Rozanne Esparza rescues and maintains a stray cat colony through TNR (Trap, Neuter, Return); she reported the dogs are coming on her property, disturbing the cat bedding; one cat is missing, another she had to take to the veterinarian; she suspects it's the dogs causing the issues. David shared Damon Olivari reported seeing a woman walking dogs through the back of his property, which he believed to be the dogs in question. David shared another gentleman was walking his dog, they were both attacked, both sustained injuries. David shares these are multiple instances and he has witnessed it on his cameras from his yard, where they are trying to get into his fenced in area. David wrote a letter in an unofficial capacity to the owners he feels are involved; Amie attached the letter and he populated it on the screen along with the pictures of the dogs. David read the letter for those in attendance who couldn't read from the screen. David communicates in his letter homeowners have a right to defend themselves and would be justified in doing so. David shared he communicates this because one citizen said they had a pistol and were about to shoot a dog and he talked them out of shooting. David mentioned animal control had not been responsive; he discussed it with Steve Garrison (County Manager) at the last Mayors Managers meeting. Steve suggested he talk with the new leaders of animal control as management has changed from waste management to health management. David shared he had made the calls and hasn't heard back from them to date. He will follow up. David exclaimed of an experience from Rozanne who was instructed by animal control's voicemail to contact dispatch. Dispatch would not send anyone to the neighborhood. David had the same experience when he contacted dispatch with dogs in his yard without collars. Dispatch took no action. David brought this issue to Mr. Hamrick as well and he suggested the board have a contract with Rutherfordton Police to come out and dispatch the animal. Amie wanted to share a couple of thoughts and perspectives; the incidences have to be relevant and timely; you cannot cite examples of incidences from years before to address current animal situations. On top of the complicated instability of animal services management -which compounds the situation of response- she believes all of these agencies are reticent to respond due to the delicacy of the issues; it is an emotionally charged issue, frequently he said she said without documentation; you have to be careful as often it is based on subjective perception. She feels you should not encourage or endorse escalating measures to exterminating an animal. It is a volatile issue and she understands the trepidation with managing these services. She shares it has been an issue since she was a little girl growing up in Ruth. Nick mentions it is a civil issue; Amie says while it's civil, we don't want it to escalate to human lives taken over it. She feels it's an issue we have to be thoughtful about. David shares the statues deal with animals of owners, not of stray dogs. He does say the NC Statues do say if a dog that is not yours is on your property and you feel threatened, you may put the dog down. He goes on to say he doesn't want people gunning off in neighborhoods. Amie shares again the reluctance should be exercised because for example:how do you know it's stray/wild, how do you justify/qualify the dog is threatening, etc? Due diligence must be practiced. William shares there never a solid answer. William feels it is not reasonable for Rutherfordton to patrol for it, Nick shared it was better when under the Sheriff's department. The consensus is we are figuring this out and will continue to move forward. David will keep the board apprised while moving forward. David asked if there is any opposition to him sending the letter he drafted out in an unofficial citizen capacity? The board said they support it just as they would support any citizen trying to alleviate situations civilly. Amie suggested taking out the threatening language of addressing it through his official capacities. David agreed and emphasized addressing it like good neighbors.

3. Town Sign

This will be extended to next months meeting as I await revised renderings.

Amie attached renderings after revisions of their asks. She asked they take them, sit with them, respond in email the requests they may have for altering. Amie reviewed the first image is the steel one that would have to be floodlighted (moving away from floodlighting); second one lit from within; etc. She went through each of them and said really look at them and let me know if they want different color waves, different fonts, different orientation. David likes a more "stacked" vertical than horizontal. Jeff Seals asked a question regarding the sign and it's location. David responded even though public comments has expired. Jeff asked another question and David begin reviewing the history of this line item, which is again, beyond the scope of the meeting objectives and against our order of service. William intervened to keep the meeting on task and moving forward. He encouraged Jeff to sidebar with

David or Nick after the meeting or if he wanted to revisit it during public comments next meeting, to feel free to do so, however official business should commence. David spoke to Jeff and communicated he would share the details and history after the meeting.

4. Trail Lighting

This will serve as an earmark and extension into next month while research is gathered. One of the three layers we discussed necessary for successful surveillance has met with complication. Seeking out another solution or provider.

Amie shared a hiccup in our three layer process regarding wifi at the Town Mall area, different solution, different provider. It will continue.

5. Concrete Pad

Concrete Pad Quote-David

David does not have a quote back from the concrete contractor yet. He communicated as soon as he receives the quote he will forward it on.

6. Acorn Street

Update/remind board of Acorn Street activity.

Amie communicates she copied the board on the email correspondence between Jeff and herself, the update is this: they came out, did the job, left debris and damage to easement of property where debris was dragged to; the Town was threatened if the debris wasn't removed and the yard repaired by end of day next day the debris would be relocated by the property owner to the Town Hall. Amie reached out to the contractor who assured he would have the debris picked up that day and the yard repaired. He did so. Amie did contact the homeowner via phone as he does not use email after the complaint was received and after the repair was completed to ensure his satisfaction with the job. He was satisfied. Amie communicated to Jeff who was in attendance how much she appreciated his involvement and feedback; she shared if it wasn't for him she would not have known and been totally unaware. She is grateful for his assistance/participation/involvement in this matter, including taking pictures for review.

7. DOT Cleanup

This is still earmarked as I am carefully moving through this to hopefully arrive @ a solution making all parties happy.

Amie shared she is approaching this gently for several reasons, including the direction the board gave last meeting. She feels the change is coming quickly as Church Street is scheduled for closure on March 5th, so we are liable to see a lot of changes in the area soon. David and Amie communicated their gratefulness to Doug Barrick for looping us in on the closure. Amie and David both reached out to the Wright Brothers Project Manager Maddy Haneline who ensured us we would be in the loop going forward and to reach out if we have any questions. Amie reviewed with the group Maddy's estimations for the following:

Based on our current schedule I would anticipate Rock Road to be closed towards to end of April or beginning of May this year. We are allowed 21 days of complete closure. During that time residents will only be able to access the existing intersection at East Mountain Street from US-221. After the construction is complete residents will be able to access the intersection via US-221 or by taking new Rock Road to Long Street which will connect to US-64 near Camp Electric. Regarding East Mountain Street, we will not have any closures which will impact residents. Traffic will be able to access the new bridge before existing Mountain Street is Closed. There may be some nighttime lane closures to accommodate for utility construction and paving but access through the area will still be provided. We will inform you of a closure date for Rock Road closer to the time of the closure.

David referred to the cleanup of the brush and debris left by the removal of the Bradford pears. He shared from his recent Mayors Managers meeting other municipalities are experiencing the same problem; to the point Don Cason from TDA pitched an opportunity. Instead of the Keep Rutherford County Beautiful initiative only being two times per year, if the group agreed, they could eventually grow this to a full-time position awarded over \$100,000 a year to manage with grant monies support. David communicated the last thing we need is another organization siphoning off thousands of dollars to pick up trash on the sides of the road. David reminded the DOT comes by and cleans up the right of ways two times a year. Tim Moffit our Senator was there and highlighted several issues: adopt a highway

program, etc. David will forward the handout information to the board. Amie felt this is a different conversation than the rubbish in question by the tree debris. She feels they can't encroach on DOT property without the proper permissions and conditions just like we can't. Amie reminded with the timing of the project around the corner (March 5th) we should see more change and temporary disruption in addition to the tree debris.

8. No Cost Solutions

This is still earmarked as I am carefully moving through this to hopefully arrive @ a solution making all parties happy.

Amie reported we have enlisted them and they are already at work. She anticipates we will have feedback at the next meeting.

9. Grant recipients

David to provide list of awarded grant recipients. This is a placeholder as a reminder to supply list.

Amie communicated this is just an earmark/reminder for David to forward his list of grant recipients to her for contact.

10. Mike Cranford Meta Communications

Will update as soon as I have made contact with him.

Amie is still looking to speak with Mike and will provide feedback as soon as she has more information to disseminate to the board.

11. Christmas Decorations and Repairs

Amie will review with the board. See attachments for two specific items of discussion.

Amie wanted to review with the board on reparations that are not necessarily actionable item at this point, however she wanted to share the estimates. Older decorations since we've had since 2003.

Carousel horses \$5,000.00 to have rust removed, powder coated, garland replaced. Manager Scene \$3,600.00; Train \$6,000.00 without garland, \$7,700.00 with garland and sandblasting, remote timer switch for smokestack \$600. Amie instructed to look at the walk through wreath with it's dimensions- especially since the vandalism of our wreath-She feels we can get away with the 9ft wreath which is \$12,000.00, and could be less if we remove ribbon and glitter balls as they don't weather well. Amie will send the gingerbread house and one other one already with LED's for the board to think about. Amie highlighted the snowflake tree pictures (previously hand drawn) to have Camp locate as it has been missing since the decorations were moved to Camp's facility. Now there is a picture. Amie communicated the anchors in the ground for this tree as it was almost 12 feet tall. The Lovelaces went to Camp to look for the parts, they found some of the frame, one or two snowflakes, the rest is still missing. Amie wanted the board to be reminded of the piece; the board didn't remember from her hand drawn version, but totally remembers it from the picture. David highlighted where this is/was on the mall area. Amie communicates her pause with storage even though she feels it's the best option, as the condition they are stored in is variable from who puts them away. They of course aren't handled as carefully as if we had put them away ourselves. Amie wants to label and adhere fixed asset tags to them. She emphasized the chain of custody went from us to them and that is it, so where are some of the missing pieces? Amie shared in the lifetime of the Town and it's decorations they have been two places, the Town Hall and the current facility. Literally two places. The Lovelaces went through the shop for the Town and most of the missing pieces are not locatable.

William asked if we are pushing the LED's through, Amie said yes as we are seeing the dividends on the back end from our power usage, less power grid issues, etc. Yes, more expensive on the front end, but there is a payoff.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

12. Financial Reporting

Financial Reports have been attached and will be reviewed. It is an actionable item tonight.

Amie communicated for the board to review the budget vs actual in particular the legend along with her recommendations for reclasses and amendments and the respective offsets. She attached a proposed

ordinance and asked for comments or support. William made a motion to accept the ordinance, Nick seconded, passes unanimously.

13. TR-2 Reporting

Update the board on the yearly challenges of the TR-2 Report to the NCDOR.

Annual report we have to submit. It is an enormous report with lots of tentacles. Amie communicated the challenges in working through these documents with an change in the staffing learning and familiarizing themselves with supporting data. Amie will stay on it and get it in before the deadline. She will report back her findings at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

14. Jerry Davis

David wants to discuss hiring Jerry Davis for trash pickup and odd jobs along the trail.

David shares of a homeless person in our area he would like to help by employing him to do some odd jobs for the Town. The board feels the liability is to great and if unofficially they want to take up donations to help him out they would be happy to contribute. Amie communicates she's relatively confident statutorily he would have to be insured and our internal practice is not to employ uninsured for Town contracted jobs. William suggests directing him to one of the local outreach programs or churches where he might find assistance. To help him find resources so he can get back to where he used to be. David feels the County's homeless services are overwhelmed. He is a proud person and doesn't want a handout.

ADJOURNMENT

Nick makes a motion to adjourn, William seconds, we are adjourned.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons who need accommodation to attend or participate in this meeting should contact Town Hall at (828) 287-7943 within 48 hours prior to the meeting to request such assistance.