



DECEMBER TOWN MEETING

Tuesday, January 16th, 2024, at 6:00 PM

RUTH TOWN HALL

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

David called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION

David offered an Invocation.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Guy, Commissioners Goode and Steppe, Manager Hanaway-all participating

AGENDA ADOPTION

William made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented, Nick seconded, passing unanimously.

GUEST SPEAKERS

No guest speakers preauthorized/signed up to present or speak.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Attendees are Jeff & Meghan Seals

Jeffery Seals reports the trash truck has released hydraulic fluid all throughout the neighborhood, all over the roads every time the arm was raised and lowered. Amie will contact them for reparation.

APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING'S MINUTES

No changes-additions or deletions to the minutes from last meeting, stand as presented and read.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Town of Ruth Sign: David wanted to circle back around to the progress on the sign changes. Amie will revisit now that the holiday is over and report back to the board at the next meeting.
2. Trail lighting and security: Amie communicated she is chasing information from Jason to circle back and tackle again for reference information prior to making any purchases. She will gather more intel and communicate as soon as she has the information.
3. Concrete pads for playground materials to be placed. The contractor will be out to meet with David by the end of January.
4. David reached out as a courtesy for signage at the trailhead; while initially terse, they returned without issues. David wants to place signage that violators will be towed, no mention of fines; he offers we haven't spoken with Tow Service companies yet. He feels signage will take care of most of the issues. David mentions he brings this back as a preventable measure rather than an enforceable one due to the horse trailers that blocked parking spaces recently. The board opts to forgo signage due to the enforcement challenge.
5. Acorn Street update-Amie informed the board of our paving companies' assessment is to extend the road by three feet or so all the way up to the water basin. This would give the buses a greater turning radius. Amie mentioned Nick had several good ideas and asked him to share. Nick suggested we talk to the school bus garage and ask if the school buses could turn broader (they are turning short and back end is exiting roadway) or if they could reverse their route go in from Youngs Drive and out via Acorn and avoid the corner all together. Amie feels if we tackle this as a two-prong approach and do both (extend the road and speak with school bus garage) if this doesn't repair the situation we will circle back and revisit another solution. William asked what the quote was to extend the road, Ame communicated \$400.00. Nick and William were pleased and shocked with the price as asphalt is high right now. Amie wanted to speak to something and share specifically with Jeff and Meghan our paving assessed there is no pothole

on Acorn and the undergirding/integrity of the roadway if fine. He attributed all the "damage" is totally bus related and has nothing to do with water flow, placement of the basin, etc. He even feels this extension will aid in the water basins utility. The board feels we should proceed with the twofold approach. William moves to approve the \$400.00 from 10-560-15 Maintenance/repair existing street, Nick seconded, passes unanimously.

6. DOT property maintenance update-Amie instructed David to launch the pictures supplied by Nick as Amie addressed the complaints. She communicated anything impeding line of sight would be addressed but beyond that they are not going to expend money and labor on a task that will be addressed when the intersection is modified. She communicated the example of the Bradford pears of once we knew they were going to be taken, we stopped expending money and labor to maintain them. She asked Jeff to verify his complaint area to ensure we were on the same page with the exact physical area of issue. Jeff communicates it's just an eyesore. David comments on our agreement with the job site and maintain a clean and orderly area; Amie communicated the delineation of the contractors The Wright Brothers versus the DOT. David agreed and Amie communicated she will continue to try. William mentions he doesn't want to get into a tit for tat with the DOT right before they are about to tear up our intersection. Amie wanted to ensure Jeff knew we were working on it. David says if it's not done by February he will go and incur the fine. The Board wants to take no action.
7. Clean up on Northview Dorsey-William wanted to communicate he enlisted Brad Hill to clean up the area. He wanted to share the example of neighbors helping neighbors. Amie asked if Meghan had noticed it, she had not.
8. Line of sight issue on 64 & Youngs drive. Amie referred to the photos regarding Norman's Arrowood property and how the line of sight as far as the state's right of way is clear and a letter to Norman will address his area. Regarding line of sight for the auto repair shop and the Carolina 64 quick mart, Amie is awaiting a return call from the State for line of sight (Nick believes up to the white line is State's responsibility. Amie is crafting a letter to Rosie to see if the soda delivery trucks can park other than parallel when deliveries are made. Amie referred to the Board having a conversation with her regarding marketing flag placement, when looking from the vantage point of the supplied photo, those flags are not blocking visibility. The feedback during this meeting was reported to predominately be the auto repair shop. Amie will craft a letter and forward it to David for signature. David reviewed the intersection plans with the group. Meghan mentioned the flags had been replaced and appeared to be placed further back from the road.
9. No Cost Solutions-Amie wants to know if the board wants to proceed. David asked for a reminder of what this company does. Amie communicated they are basically a utility auditing firm that has greater leverage than most to audit and review charges from utilities for their correctness and accuracy. They canvas and look for erroneous charges. They get a percentage of all successes they find. Amie wanted to earmark it as an item for review and is happy to Zoom him in on a call if the Board still has reservations about the contract. William is ready to move forward and makes a motion to do so, Nick seconds, passes unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Fire Tax

David had asked if we could separate out our fire tax separately on the tax bill. Amie reviewed with those in attendance of the increase to our fire tax because of reappraisals, the board's decision not to levy taxes to accommodate because of property value hikes, etc. This causes the Town to absorb this difference. This created a flag with the Local Government Commission highlighting we address the issue because if we continue, we would eventually be at a significant disadvantage. At the time of this review with the Auditor, David asked if the fire tax could be separated out so it's clearer to the citizens. Amie has performed due diligence by consulting with the SOG, the LGC, NCDOR, etc. and all things being reviewed, Amie feels it is better for the Town and its citizens to keep the tax together and not separate it out. Amie shared there are checks and balances-extensive requirements from the NCDOR to separate it out. It's doable, but not a simple task. Operationally it's more restrictive. Lastly and most importantly, our sales tax dividends are based on our tax rate, the higher the rate, the higher our dividend. If we separate the fire tax out, it lowers our tax rate and hence lowers our dividends. Amie will forward all the documentation of her reconnaissance to the board and would advise NOT separating out the fire tax. We have from May to June to assess and Amie will sus it out running the numbers both ways to see where we land. Amie will provide multiple templates during budget workshop so the board can see the complexion of separated versus not separated. The bottom-line message here is we are going to have to do something. David feels if we are clear in our budget message these increases are

beyond the board's control; our bills have been raised and we cannot continue to operate under the same tax structure. William communicated it's the same message we have always sent and should be understood from not having raised taxes for several years. More as budget workshopping nears.

NEW BUSINESS

3. David wants to discuss contacting 828Services for quoting garbage services. Amie interjected quickly to say our contract just renewed with GDS and it's a five-year contract. William asked who 828Services is, David said Ellenboro had contracted them and was pleased. William asked Amie if this isn't the service she had heard was not up to par? Amie shared she feels perspectives are subjective because the feedback she heard was Ellenboro was not pleased and had experienced some issues. Perhaps those have all been ironed out and she will reach out for more information from Ellenboro. Amie shared she has reached out to multiple outfits for competitive bidding and has always met with reluctance. Amie shared nightmare stories. Amie assures the group no outfit is perfect and not everyone is going to be happy. It is, however, a decision that should be thoughtfully and carefully analyzed and certain of before taking a leap. We should explore but be mindful of the pitfalls. Amie shared with David she feels all garbage haulers charge the CPI rate; she mentioned she doesn't know if it's institutionalized in the industry or not, but she thinks it's hard to escape regardless of the provider. She says perhaps smaller outfits don't charge it but she's unsure. She continues it's a unique avenue/unique service for sure. Amie mentions it can't hurt to call them and will continue to investigate even though we are under contract for five years. William suggests we keep them on the radar for five years and gather performance metrics during that time. No action to be taken.
4. Rutherford County, Rutherfordton, Spindale, Bostic, Ellenboro etc. all submitted for grant monies and the county was awarded around \$2 million dollars (collective agencies). David wants the Town to put their hat in the ring for grant monies. David mentions Town Hall improvements-he commends the previous boards for their diligence in improving the Town Hall. David wants to encourage the board to seek out grants if there's any availability and would like the board to be specific about what they would like to see improved. David mentioned storm water drainage and the side hall room so it could be finished out, etc. Town beautification, signage, etc. David mentions he knows it is adding to Amie's plate and he offers to assist any way he can, mentions the time sensitivity. William would love to see Town beautification (any at the mall area) open to other ideas, but the grant process has been involved and over his head and would lean to David's contacts for support. Amie wanted to speak to grant writing and her previous success, she said were not talking a little bit to the plate, it's AN ENORMOUS undertaking; she suggests most small towns hire grant writers, William concurred and said there you go. Amie reviewed that even if you hire grant writers, the clerical performative reporting is after award and handled internally. Amie suggests utilizing Foothills Regional (formerly IPDC) for support. Amie shared she knows Foothills offers these services and has communicated so; it comes at a cost, but all should pay for itself. Amie communicated so everyone is on the same turf- there are many intricacies with grants and the board should be mindful when searching; for example, a lot of grants are matching grants (a financial share), some have performance markers and requirements, so the specifics should be clear when applying. For example, beautification versus public safety and how grant writer expertise is key in allowance. Like PARTF for parks and recreation and use of our playground equipment. She's happy to reach out to those who were successful for guidance if David would supply those contacts for who, how and when. David shares he has a list and will provide it. David will do some back-end research on his part as a board member with Foothills, and Amie says once David shares the awarded list it will give her enough "meat on the bone" to do some research. David communicates he will share his list.

Entered Closed Session

ADJOURNMENT

Nick made a motion to adjourn, William seconded, passes unanimously.

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.