

**MINUTES  
BUDGET WORK SESSION  
WINNSBORO TOWN COUNCIL  
APRIL 19, 2022**

**Present:** Mayor John McMeekin; Mayor Pro-Tem Demetrius Chatman; Janice Bartell Prather, Jae Burroughs, Council Members; Jason Taylor, Town Manager; Chris Clauson, Assistant Town Manager; Kathy Belton, Assistant Town Manager; Patti L. Davis, Town Clerk.

**Absent:** Danny Miller, Council Member

The Winnsboro Town Council met for a Budget Work Session on April 19, 2022, at 6:43 p.m. at the Winnsboro Women's Club (this work session began immediately after the Regular Meeting). In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80 (e), as amended, the following persons and/or organizations have been notified of the time, date and location of this meeting: The Independent Voice of Blythewood and Fairfield, The Country Chronicle and four hundred ninety-two other individuals.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor McMeekin called the Budget Work Session to order at 6:43 p.m.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman made a motion, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve the agenda. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

**3. INVOCATION**

Mayor McMeekin led the invocation.

**4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**A. FY 2022-2023 BUDGET**

Mr. Taylor stated at the last workshop, the budget was gone through essentially line item by line item. A broader concept will be used tonight. When the budget began, it was known that the Town got very close concerning the bond covenants. This year, staff is attempting to craft the budget to be sure this will be reversed, because this is not a situation the Town wants to be in. Administration met with the auditor at length today. The bond issue had been pointed out by the auditor. He gave some good advice as we attempt to reverse this trend. The Town's utilities need to not be over stressed in doing too much of a transfer from the utilities to the general fund operating budget. Therefore,

the attempt is being made to start pushing things in the other direction and start reinvesting in the utilities. This will keep the Town safe with its bonds, and it will also result in funds being reinvested in the utilities to get more of a return from them. Another suggestion the auditor made was that the millage rate should be raised each year. It appears the Town has been doing this, and the citizens do not see an effect because of the local option sales tax. Right now, the Town has a 43.35 mil. It is allowed to go up 4.7 mils due to the cap from the state unless there is a capital improvement project, which there is not in this current budget. This would put the recommended mil at 48.05.

The next biggest budget item is personnel. Recruiting personnel and keeping personnel is a challenge. Right now, a 3.5% cost of living is being proposed, and the Archer study has been reviewed to try to bring things back in line, especially looking at the lower end of the pay scale and to also look at fairness. Mr. Taylor then requested for Mrs. Edwards to discuss this further. Per Mrs. Edwards, the 3.5% cost of living will affect the total payroll in the amount of \$145,957.70. Bringing employees in the departments who were not quite to the midpoint will be another \$54,256.09. By department, this breaks down as follows:

- Department 93 (Grants): One person brought to midpoint.
- Department 62 (Sewer): One operator holds two licenses so was brought to midpoint.
- Department 52 (Water): Two employees were brought to midpoint.
- Department 70 (Streets): Four employees, including the director.
- Department 32 (Distribution): One employee.
- Department 20 (Public Safety): Three employees.

The impact to the total payroll would be \$200,203.79. In addition, overtime has been reduced in the water plant from 25 to 40 hours per pay period down to 4 to 8 hours, which will offset some of the increases.

- Capital requests: Per Mr. Clauson, the total for the general fund is \$872,000 that is being requested. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired concerning the Code Enforcement item. Per Mr. Taylor, there is the Comprehensive Plan and mapping and then Downtown Redevelopment Corp and Code Enforcement. The Comprehensive Plan is necessary to help with grants and, again, to provide a plan to move forward. Part of the plan must be to address the deterioration of the Town, with the dilapidated houses and downtown. This helps with quality of life but is also a business proposition in the fact that every building that is empty or every lot that is not developed is a building that is not paying for utilities. So, it is a business proposition just as much as a quality of life issue. The Town will not grow if it is not an attractive place that people

want to come live and invest in. Mapping of the utilities is needed because as part of the Comprehensive Plan, we essentially do not know where a lot of the utilities are located. It is hard to plan and grow when you do not know what you have. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated he has seen houses that have meters, but they have not been located. Mr. Taylor stated surveying was just done for the CDBG grant, and it is estimated that about 20% of those surveyed were not getting water bills. The new meter system should yield a huge return on efficiencies. The Downtown Redevelopment Corp, as Mr. Taylor mentioned at previous meetings, Bishopville just received a half million CDBG grant along with a half million legislative appropriation for downtown redevelopment for the purpose of buying buildings, rehabbing buildings and then putting them back out for potential commercial/restaurant type use. This has also been successful in Ridgeway. A lot of towns have demonstrated that if they have a building and they put it out as an incentive, potential people can be lured. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired concerning who owns the buildings downtown and if it is that one person owns several, another person owns several, and so on. Mr. Taylor stated this is true, but the condition of a lot of the buildings would deter someone from investing in it. If the Town can get the buildings prepped, it will then have something to market. \$150,000 has been placed in the budget for potential grant match to see if a CDBG grant can be obtained. With these grants, or any of the grants, they are scored on a point system. The more match that is put up, the more likely you are to get the grant. Mr. Taylor stated he would love the opportunity to pursue getting some grant money to put into downtown. Code enforcement goes in hand with this because some of the buildings may need to be taken down. This would give the needed funding to do this. Code enforcement and tickets can be pursued, but this would drag on for six months to a year or longer depending on the court, or the Town can get more creative, such as with the Congress Street property. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if there would be a full-time code enforcement officer. Mr. Taylor stated this is not in the budget, but it could be added if it is something Council would like to do. He was trying to lighten the burden on general fund this year so there would not be as big a transfer. The Chief has been asked for someone who can write tickets, and Mr. Taylor along with Mr. Clauson would be the ones to target the properties. He would rather get more creative to deal with this situation instead of a traditional code enforcement officer. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated Aiken also wrapped their windows to improve the look. Mr. Taylor stated a plan without funding is just a dream, so the Town needs to put some money aside. All the details are not worked out yet, but if there is funding available, the strategies can be devised. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman also inquired

concerning the \$50,000 for HVAC for the armory and the fact that these units are very loud. Mr. Taylor stated this is solely in the budget for replacing the pipes and duct work. Hopefully, this will get us by for a while, but it can be increased if Council wishes. Mayor McMeekin stated we need to first be sure we have our house in order and that we have a solid foundation financially. Then, if some of these things do not come very fast, we may have more money to do them properly. Mr. Taylor also stated Wells Fargo is closing, and we could end up in the situation of having a ghost town downtown if some action is not taken to reverse this. In looking at towns who have succeeded in turning their downtowns, they have been heavily involved in doing it. This goes back to the philosophy of trying to get revenue coming in. The pump may have to be primed by putting some revenue out, but hopefully, it is strategically done so it will generate new revenue and new growth in the Town. Gas is the only one of the utilities that revenue has continued to rise.

Getting back to the capital requests, Mr. Clauson stated an electric bucket truck is requested in the amount of \$285,000, the water plant \$520,000 including repainting the Rite-Aid water tank (Ridgeway may also be able to secure a grant for this) and the wastewater plant in the amount of \$150,000 for a total of \$1.245M.

Maintenance for Town buildings and parks will be increased, not as much as is needed, but the Town buildings have been neglected for a long time. If the Town is going to try to encourage others to fix their buildings and take care of their properties, then it needs to take care of its own. There is a lot of need in regard to some of the Town buildings and also the parks. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired concerning the Municipal Court building. Some years ago when Judge Hollis was here, she requested for improvements and then she left. However, this request was placed in the budget yet none of the work was done with carpet remaining in the bathroom. Mr. Taylor agreed that the Public Safety/Court building needs a lot of work, especially the court section. Mr. Taylor spoke with Judge Goode, and he stated it is difficult to conduct court in the building. Mrs. Belton also remembers this. Mr. Taylor will put this on the list. The revenue will, of course, dictate what can be done, and some of this will need to be done incrementally.

- Revenues: A few more items need to be reconciled, but right now it is looking good. General fund revenues are currently at \$4,127,451 and expenses at \$3,801,451. Per Mrs. Belton, right now it does look like \$4.1M and the expense side at \$3.8M. For the utilities, the revenue is at \$18,541,000 and expenses of around \$17M. In the past, there were two transfers being done, one listed as overhead and another just a direct transfer. The overhead is still in question of about \$2M. Administration

will again be working with the auditor further concerning this to be sure there is not such a large transfer.

- The Town had been budgeting about \$700,000 for the City of Columbia and this is reduced to \$100,000. The auditor was very pleased with this.
- One other issue, The Town has \$1.5M in bond that is unspent, and this is off budget. This will need to be budgeted in order to put that money to work as opposed to letting it sit. It can only be used for sewer, gas and electric, and it will be primarily used on sewer and gas. There is an opportunity to expand gas with a request from Ridgeway and the new mine. With sewer, Mr. Wright needs maintenance on the sewer plant and filters to meet DHEC requirements.

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired concerning the Victims' Advocate funds. Mr. Taylor stated this money is very restrictive. In his past experience, he almost always just gave these funds away as it was very difficult to deal with. Per Mrs. Belton, the Chief has proposed to use a portion of this for a vehicle and some other things toward the victim advocate department. Now, the department is looking at having to replace computers being designated strictly for that purpose, and also a plan to donate to an organization. Mrs. Belton feels this is an excellent plan with the bulk of the funding being donated to an organization.

Mayor McMeekin inquired if there is any liability from an accounting standpoint from the transfers. Mrs. Belton stated yes and no in that it has put a strain on the utilities. Last year, we were in panic mode because of the threshold for the bond. If what we are looking at is correct, there was no need to be in panic mode. This information will be gone through again being very thorough. Mayor McMeekin stated there are many things that need to be done, and we must get the books in a condition where we know where the Town is and that revenue is on the plus side. Then, we will know what we can do.

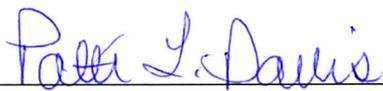
Mr. Taylor stated there is a potential of getting \$10M from the state, and right now, he understands it has a match associated with it. Therefore, the Town needs to have the ability to be able to come up with a \$1M match. Mrs. Belton stated the investment account is already committed for at least \$750,000 for each utility for the \$3.1M for the AMI system. She would hate to miss out on this opportunity, but we do not want to overburden the utilities or spend everything from the investment account. Mr. Taylor stated this will be geared toward utilities, and there is a debate back and forth on the match and who may or may not have to have a match.

Mr. Taylor stated there is the solid waste fee from the County, there is \$120,000 in and \$120,000 out which basically is a balance. If the Town does not prevail in the lawsuit, that would cost \$120,000 and we would end up having to bill the citizens, which would result in a pass through.

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if the flower contract is included. Mr. Clauson stated this item is under Streets and Sanitation professional services. Discussion ensued concerning the trial period and the quality of the flowers. Further discussion concerning phones and internet. Mr. Taylor stated this will be reviewed in the future. Council Member Bartell-Prather inquired if the armory will be able to be rented again and also inquired concerning the windows. Per Mr. Taylor, the floor is going in this week, and renting of the facility should start back shortly. Some of the duct work needs to be straightened up and some painting done. There is one window that someone knocked out, bricked in and put an air conditioning unit, and that is probably the worst thing across the front that needs to be repaired. The remaining windows can be sand blasted and painted. Also, some of the glass panes need to be replaced. One tree was lost across the front, so the other was cut down to keep it balanced. The trees really need to be removed because the roots are so close to the building. The roots retain moisture, and the roots will damage the brick. The Main Street trees are hit and miss. Some have had to be taken out, some have died and these need to all be replaced. Some of the trees really were not appropriate street trees. Landscaping will need to be budgeted.

## 5. ADJOURN

At 7:28 p.m., it was moved by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to adjourn. ***The motion carried 4-0.***



PATTI L. DAVIS  
TOWN CLERK



JOHN MCMEEKIN  
MAYOR