

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
WINNSBORO TOWN COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 1, 2022**

Present: Mayor John McMeekin; Mayor Pro-Tem Demetrius Chatman; Danny Miller, Janice Bartell-Prather, Jae Burroughs, Council Members; Jason Taylor, Town Manager; Scott Elliott, Town Attorney; Chris Clauson and Kathy Belton, Assistant Town Managers; Patti Davis, Town Clerk.

The Winnsboro Town Council met in regular session on November 1, 2022, immediately following the Public Meeting concerning redistricting at the Winnsboro Women's Club. 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 Regular Meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. (immediately following the Public Meeting concerning redistricting).

2. INVOCATION

Council Member Miller led the invocation.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council Member Bartell Prather made a motion, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, to approve the agenda. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman made a motion, seconded by Council Member Bartell-Prather and Council Member Burroughs, to approve the Finance Committee minutes of October 18, 2022, and the Regular Meeting minutes of October 18, 2022. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

5. SPECIAL REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS

A. Representative Annie McDaniel – South Carolina Budget Appropriation of \$500,000 Granted to the Town of Winnsboro for Downtown Redevelopment. Mayor McMeekin stated this item will be rescheduled for a later date. Representative McDaniel deserves a fair amount of praise on this, and he understands she is busy. Mayor McMeekin trusts everyone has had an opportunity to see, either in the paper or on the television, that the Town was awarded \$500,000 from the State of South Carolina for downtown

redevelopment. Representative McDaniel has been working on this for several years, and a Committee will be set up in the near future with Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman serving as the Chairman.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT (3 MINUTES): THE TOTAL TIME ALLOCATED TO THIS PUBLIC COMMENT SEGMENT IS 30 MINUTES.

No one signed to speak.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. An Ordinance Repealing and Replacing All Provisions of the Town of Winnsboro Code of Ordinances: Chapter 90 Animals; and Other Matters Related Thereto. Mayor McMeekin opened the public hearing at 6:36 p.m. No one signed to speak; therefore, Mayor McMeekin then closed the public hearing at 6:36 p.m.

8. ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

A. First Reading Ordinance No. 63: An Ordinance Repealing and Replacing All Provisions of the Town of Winnsboro Code of Ordinances: Chapter 90 Animals; and Other Matters Related Thereto. Mr. Taylor stated the previous ordinance, which was passed in 1999 and amended slightly in 2014, is being replaced. This will bring the Town more in line and consistent with what the County enacted a while back. It is much better to be consistent across borders because animals do not recognize political boundaries. There is one small change recommended by our Town Attorney with one instance of unincorporated needing to be changed to incorporated. Mayor McMeekin stated this was presented to Town Council a few years ago but did not move forward. The Town will now be aligned with the County. Motion made by Council Member Burroughs, seconded by Council Member Bartell Prather, to approve First Reading of Ordinance No. 63. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

9. MANAGER'S REPORT

Before going into the Ongoing Projects, Mr. Taylor asked for Interim Chief Lawrence to introduce two new Public Safety Officers. It has been tough finding officers, and they are here tonight to be introduced to Council. Interim Chief Lawrence introduced Public Safety Officer Clemens who comes to the Town with a vast variety of experience over his close to 30 years of experience. In addition, Public Safety Officer Thompson is retired military and also has a wealth of knowledge. Interim Chief Lawrence thanked Council again for their

support. Mayor McMeekin and Council welcomed the two new officers. Council Member Miller also wished to recognize County Council Member Clarence Gilbert and thanked him for attending the meeting tonight.

A. Ongoing Projects

- AMI - Mr. Taylor reported clean-up is being done in Blythewood as was anticipated. The Town continues to wait on the vendors for the remainder of the equipment.
- Grant Applications – A \$400,000 grant was submitted for Fortune Springs on Monday.
- Code Enforcement – Per Mr. Taylor, staff has been meeting, given the new ordinance which just passed, and there has been some input from the public. Mr. Clauson stated staff is trying to nail down a process of how to proceed.
- Comprehensive Plan – The agreement was executed, and they are now gathering information, including capital improvements associated with the bond.
- Utility Expansions – The Town is still hindered by staffing, but per Mr. Peak, he has three interviews this week. There have been eight or ten customers added on the existing line with new houses.
- Ordinance Review and Update – Staff continues to go through this and has just finished up with the code ordinance and now moving into the animal ordinance and redistricting.

Council Member Miller inquired concerning the AMI system and when the work will begin in Winnsboro. Mr. Taylor stated the delay is getting the raw materials, and the Town is at the mercy of the vendors. Things are still slow with the supply chains, but the hope is to have what is needed by the first of the year to start in Winnsboro. Mayor McMeekin stated he was hopeful the supply chain would be better, but there are still problems in China. Council Member Miller also questioned if the Town will continue to tear down abandoned houses. Mr. Taylor stated this will continue to be done, and he is hopeful to work amicably with property owners. As Mr. Clauson alluded to, staff is trying to figure out the process moving forward now that the new ordinance is in place to be sure the correct process is being followed with full notification and exhausting every

avenue in an attempt to work with homeowners or property owners. Council Member Miller stated abandoned cars are also an eye sore and a hazard, and he wanted to commend the sanitation department for doing a good job in assisting with the clean-up of some of the abandoned lots. Mayor McMeekin agreed that they do an excellent job, and he tries to thank the sanitation department every time he sees them. Council Member Bartell Prather inquired how many houses have been taken down. Mr. Taylor stated not as many as is needed unfortunately, but the Town has taken down two and the County has taken down one. Mr. Clauson stated the County has two others that are under the Forfeited Land Commission in Zion Hill that will be taken down in association with the grant. There are three others in the Zion Hill area that have been signed off and agreed to. Mr. Taylor stated the Forfeited Land Trust is a novel new approach. When the County sold properties in the past, they were sold as is. However, doing this just perpetuated the problem. Instead of selling them off as is, the Town has requested that the County clean the properties and then sell a vacant lot. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if there is a way to look into some of the properties that are falling in. Mr. Taylor stated these are the absentee land owners, and those will be done pretty quickly as the strategy is developed with the new ordinance. Obviously, they are abandoned and the landowner does not care with usually having no attachment to the community. The Town will go through the notice process and move on these quickly as this is a liability to the landowner and also to the Town. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman also inquired concerning the work to be done in the park. Mr. Clauson stated this is again the grant which has been tied up with Commerce concerning Fortune Springs. Mr. Taylor stated Martin Park is tied up with the other grant involving the County. Mayor McMeekin and Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman agree that something must be done to have things for the citizens to use and reverse the census numbers. Council Member Miller stated the Town definitely needs another park. With Martin Park being at the bottom of the hill, one is needed at the top of the hill possibly working with Fairfield alumni and the School District. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman also stated if the Town looks better after the \$500,000 allocation is used, there will probably be more available funding in the future. We must show that we want to improve our Town and then people will come in.

10. OLD BUSINESS

None.

11. NEW BUSINESS

- A.** Request for Public Funds: Debra McDaniel – Community Thanksgiving Dinner (\$750.00). Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated this was approved in the Finance Committee, and this is a request from Debra McDaniel from the Ward 1 Association for a community Thanksgiving dinner. This is something that is done every year, and she provides all receipts. Council Member Bartell Prather made a motion, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve the request. ***The motion carried 5-0.***
- B.** Request of Action – Trip Peak, Director Gas, Water and Sewer Department – Request to Purchase Unbudgeted Item – Dodge Ram 1500 Crew Cab Truck from State Surplus (\$25,000). Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated this item was also approved in the Finance Committee. The department has an outdated truck with 300,000 plus miles. A comparable vehicle was located at State Surplus, which is on State contract, with a reasonable price. Mr. Peak stated the vehicle which needs replacing has around 315,000 miles, and the one that was found is a 2018 in fantastic condition. Motion made by Council Member Bartell Prather, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the request. ***The motion carried 5-0.***
- C.** Request of Action: Kathy Belton, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director – Request for Additional Allocation of Funds. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated the Finance Committee also received this request, in the amount of \$2,000 for full-time employees and \$1,000 for part-time with the need for a total of \$63,723.49 to come from the SCORBET money which was overfunded by \$126,000. This request failed in the Finance Committee. Mrs. Belton stated the amount of \$115,315 is currently in the budget for employee appreciation. Mrs. Belton then restated her request as noted in the Finance Committee. There is currently a line item in the budget for SCORBET, and that line item is overbudgeted at this point. This is done each year because it is unknown what the appraisal will be for that line item. Currently, there is \$165,000 overbudget in that line item. This is where the additional funds would come from, still leaving around \$108,000 in the account. Council Member Miller inquired the amount from last year, and Mrs. Belton stated \$4,000 was given last year. Mayor McMeekin stated this increased amount was due to the ARPA funds. Mrs. Belton stated ARPA funds were used, along with a portion of SCORBET in order to offset. Mayor McMeekin stated the year before that, SC Cares was used. It was \$1,000 each year for years before that. Mayor McMeekin stated it was decided with the ARPA funds that the easiest way to handle this was to go with the AMI system. The year before that was \$4,000 and the year before that was \$1,000. Mrs. Belton agreed that it went up from \$500 to \$750 to

\$1,000. Each year, whatever was available in the SCORBET line item was used and whatever is approved by Council. Mrs. Belton also pointed out that a request is not being made to increase the budget in any way as these funds are already in the budget. The request is for reappropriation of these funds. Mayor McMeekin stated this was not the amount approved in the budget. Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the request for \$2,000 for seventy-seven (77) full-time employees and \$1,000 for eleven (11) part-time employees for a total of \$63,723.49 coming from the overage in the SCORBET fund. Mayor McMeekin stated in the Finance Committee what he is concerned about is that a certain amount has been allocated in the budget, and this comes to \$1,436 per individual plus the \$500. Three years ago the amount was at \$1,000 and he is thinking about the fact that social security went up 3.5% and then 5.9% this year with next year at 8.7%. The Town is actually going up 43% from the \$1,000 where it was and going much beyond inflation. He has had a friend come to his house stating he is concerned about these bonuses. There was already enough in the budget for the \$1,436 per person. There are a lot of outstanding things the Town needs to take care of, and he would prefer to stick within the budget with what has already been appropriated. There are a number of pieces of equipment that must be taken care of along with pipes, truck, etc., and he would prefer to get the employees' salaries up to where they should be. Only 2.5% was done this year. He would like to stick with the approved budget which was agreed on at the first of the fiscal year. Mrs. Belton understands this and stated the Town was not in the position of raising salaries this fiscal year. She opined that this might be a way to still offer some incentive to the employees even though the additional increase could not be given. Mayor McMeekin stated in looking at the last three years of cost of living/social security, annually this is about 30%. The Town already did, with its budget, 43% and now we are doubling the amount. His opinion is to stick with the budget rather than reappropriating, take the extra money for use on the actual physical needs and then get going on the employee salaries. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated a salary study was done which was not a good study. Now, the whole process would have to be followed again, and the employees still will not have higher salaries. The money is available, and the Town is already losing employees, so something must be done for retention. The school district gives out a bonus and the State of South Carolina is giving a bonus. He feels we must do something to keep the employees here. Council Member Miller stated the Town went from \$4,000 last year to \$2,000 this year. He feels if the funds are available to do this, how can it not be supported. It is not overspending, and instead, it is under spending. We should be increasing and not decreasing. If the salaries had been increased, we would not have to worry about this increase. This is

something the Town can afford, and it is moving from \$4,000 last year to a decrease of \$2,000. Some of the families have been waiting on this money. Council Member Miller does not want to discuss this back and forth every year and stated it seems like we are going backward instead of forward. Employees go in the same stores that Council does, and they see the expensive costs. Mayor McMeekin stated Council needs to remember that the government was raining down money, and last year was an unusual year. If the ARPA funds had not been there, \$4,000 would not have been done. At first, it was set at \$2,000 and then went to \$4,000. That was supposed to be a one-time thing because it was based on those funds coming in, not to set a precedent to give \$4,000 every year. A long discussion was had concerning this, but this was not to set a precedent. It was actually \$1,000 plus \$3,000. The discussion was to do the same thing that was done the prior year, which was from SC Cares funding of \$3,000 and the \$1,000 which the Town gave. Now, traditionally the Town has done \$1,000 before the money started coming in from the government. The budget has been modeled on that. Now, because of fewer employees, we are giving a 40 something percent increase. There are so many things that need attending to in the Town, and the salaries do need to be raised for the employees. If a bonus is done, this needs to be discussed like was done this year so this does not occur again. Mayor McMeekin then stated everyone gets two chances to speak concerning this matter according to Robert's Rules of Order, and Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman should finish the discussion since he made the motion. Council Member Miller stated he appreciates Mayor McMeekin's frugality in trying to make sure there is enough in the budget to be able to provide bonuses as well as salary increases. He hopes that Council will vote to approve this request because it is important. Times are still hard, and the employees of the Town put their lives on the line. He supports the \$2,000 bonus 100%. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated everyone keeps referring to the salary study. Obviously, the correct company was not chosen for the salary study because everyone at the top were getting raises, and the people who get the praise for picking up the trash and doing the lawns, they were the ones getting the least increase in the salary study. This is why he voted to not go with it. He sees these employees on the streets working hard and cannot believe there is a question of giving them a \$2,000 bonus. With no further discussion, Mayor McMeekin called for the vote. ***The motion carried 3-2 with Mayor McMeekin and Council Member Burroughs voting nay.***

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION: (The following statement is provided in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act:

Subsequent to Executive Session, Council may take action on matters discussed in Executive Session.)

At 7:16 p.m., it was moved by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Bartell Prather, to enter into executive session for: (A) Personnel Matter – Discussion Concerning Winnsboro Municipal Court Pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(A)(1); (B) Economic Development/Contractual Matter – Discussion Concerning Downtown Revitalization Pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70 (a)(2); and (C) Contractual Matter – Discussion Concerning Pump Station Agreement Pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2). ***The motion carried 5-0.***


At 7:35 p.m., it was moved by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Bartell Prather, to come out of executive session and return to regular session. ***The motion carried 5-0.*** Mayor McMeekin stated Council received information only in reference to Item A.

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman made a motion, seconded by Council Member Burroughs and Council Member Prather, to authorize staff of the Town of Winnsboro to bid on property on North Congress Street at the upcoming tax sale. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

Mayor McMeekin made a motion, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, to pursue the pump station agreement with Luck Quarry. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

13. ADJOURN

At 7:37 p.m., it was moved by Council Member Burroughs, seconded by Council Member Miller, to adjourn. ***The motion carried 5-0.***



PATTI L. DAVIS
TOWN CLERK



JOHN MCMEEKIN
MAYOR