

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
WINNSBORO TOWN COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 21, 2023**

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

The Winnsboro Town Council met in regular session on February 21, 2023, at the Winnsboro Women's Club Building. 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 6:19 p.m.

2. INVOCATION

Council Member Miller led the invocation.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Bartell Prather made a motion, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve the Finance Committee minutes of February 7, 2023, and the Regular Meeting minutes of February 7, 2023. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

5. SPECIAL REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS

A. Proclamation Honoring Johnnie Ruth McCroery for 100th Birthday. Mayor McMeekin stated Mrs. McCroery was not feeling well, and this item will be moved to the next meeting on March 7, 2023.

B. Annual Audit Report – FY 2021-2022, Mr. Bill Hancock, The Brittingham Group. Mr. Hancock stated the Town has received an unmodified opinion, and the information can be relied upon and is materially correct. In addition, the internal controls over the financial reporting were found to be adequate, and there were no instances found for noncompliance with externally imposed rules and regulations.

- Page 19 – Schedule of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in General Fund Balance. The original and final budget amounts are shown. There was a \$2.8M deficit last year in the General Fund. In years past, profits were used from the Utility Fund to subsidize operations in the General Fund. Two years ago, the Utility Fund began to struggle, and the Town made a decision not to make transfers out of the Utility Fund into the General Fund.
- Page 21 – Utility Fund. This page shows how revenue was generated from natural gas sales, electricity, water and sewer service. Money was also spent on the systems to provide these services. The Utility Fund ended with a positive \$1.9M. This represents a roughly \$900,000 overall deficit for the Town. With the General Fund, there are very few ways to generate more revenue. Additional property taxes are hard to increase with limitations set by statute. A rate study was done several years ago, and this probably needs to be revisited, which will take into account the need for a transfer from the Utility Fund to the General Fund along with a capital improvement plan. Historically, the General Fund has floated by because of substantial transfers from the Utility Fund. This year, the Town did not do that transfer.
- Page 57 – As discussed in the Finance Committee, the Town has excess Victims’ Assistance Funds, and it must find an inter-agency or other partner to provide services for victims of crimes. The State is very specific about how the funds must be used and that it must be used or it could be forfeited to the State.

Mr. Taylor stated as he had just received the audit, he has not had time to digest it. It is always good to look at the trend study, looking at where the Town was last year and the previous three years, in order to understand if we are going in the right direction. Mayor McMeekin agreed that the trendline does need to be reviewed, and the Town must operate in a fiscally sound manner. Council Member Miller inquired if basically the audit is in good shape. Mr. Hancock stated the audit and books are in good shape. However, fiscally there is a \$900,000 deficit. Mr. Hancock stated he would be glad to meet with administration concerning the audit.

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

None.

8. ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

None.

9. MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Ongoing Projects

- AMI: Mr. Taylor stated there is not a lot of change on these items from last time. At the last meeting, it was stated that the AMI system would be rolled out in Winnsboro in two to three weeks, and this is still on track to occur.
- Code Enforcement – In addition to Zion Hill, Zion and Cemetery Streets are also being looked at. There are about eight houses that have come into the Town's ownership, and those are being secured (making sure all utilities are cut off) and vetted. A major impact can be made to this community by taking these houses down.
- Comprehensive Plan – No new update at this time.
- Utilities – Administration met with a number of customers who wished to be contacted from the last meeting.
- Ordinance Review and Update – No new update at this time.
- Redevelopment Efforts – Mr. Taylor stated he is still awaiting the Downtown Revitalization legal framework from Mr. Elliott. In the meantime, Administration is continuing to speak with downtown business/land owners. There is one more property Mr. Taylor would like to put an option on and then do the due diligence. This property is the old dry cleaner adjacent to Town Hall.
- Fairfield Joint Water and Sewer Service – Mayor McMeekin stated this is something that should have been on the agenda before to keep Council up-to-date on what this Service is doing. This has been an ongoing attempt for several years. Mr. Taylor is Treasurer and Mayor McMeekin is Chairman. The Town is involved, and this is a County project. The Town participates because it is a member of Fairfield County. It should be a win-win situation for the County and the Town. The Town would benefit because we would sell water. There are some basic things being handled now that should have been handled earlier, to include the financial operating structure.

The Town pays 25% of all costs and the County pays 75% of all costs. An attempt is being made to establish an agreement stating that this will constitute a loan, and once the project gets off the ground, the Town will be repaid. As this process goes forward, Mayor McMeekin will bring Council up-to-date on what is going on. The Town is involved, so Council should know. Mr. Taylor stated there is something called a Participation Agreement, which is very important to the Town. This was initially a County projected funded by the funds from the Dominion settlement. This is earmarked specifically for the building of a sewer plant. The Town, while this is a County project, will also receive benefit with potentially stepping in as the operator. That has to be worked out to see if this is something the Town can or wants to do. The Town is the utility provider in the County, and this is something that will be coming before Town Council in the future to be discussed. Utilities are the foundation for growth in the County to improve the quality of life for the citizens, help the County with their budget in that they grow through tax dollars and help the Town grow through utility sales, but this will be a very complicated aspect of this process, and it will be brought to Town Council. Mayor McMeekin stated this is not the Town pitted against the County, and instead, we are there to join hands and work together. There is a window of opportunity to get some things done, and time is slipping away. It is extraordinarily important to get this project completed. Lexington, Richland and other counties are growing while this area has been declining in population. Industry is not coming, and in order for the industry to come, this must go forward. The sole intention will never be adversarial. The Town and the County are all joined at the hip with this, and we will all go forward together. Council Member Bartell Prather inquired who has been in attendance at the meetings. Mayor McMeekin stated the Commission is made up of seven members, two from Ridgeway, two from the County, two from the Town and one citizen representative. The citizen representative brings an expertise to the Commission because he works in this area. There is also an attorney involved. The Commission has had to keep going back to ground zero, and it is time to stop that. This has been going on for seven years. Mr. Taylor stated when it was initially started, there was no funding available. That was the major obstacle as the estimates have always been in the \$50M range for a sewer plant. With the Dominion settlement, that gave the County money to do it. Once the funding was not an issue, then where to locate the plant has to be figured out, what process to use in terms of the treatment of sewage, the permitting and the engineering. We are back to that again because

there were different opinions as to where it would be located, different opinions about the processes, etc. We are trying to bring those things into focus now and make a commitment. There will be financial considerations, engineering considerations and permit considerations on what needs to be done. The Commission is now trying to finalize the numbers. Mayor McMeekin stated we cannot afford to make a mistake with this. Some of the members have gone to visit other plants to see what functions best, and due diligence is being done. Per Mr. Taylor, beyond the consideration of what it will cost to build the plant and where to locate it is the operation/maintenance of it. If the Town will be handling the operation and maintenance, it has to be one that we can afford to run on the County's behalf. It is a very complicated process, and Mayor McMeekin stated there are a lot of ramifications. We must be very careful how to proceed. Because the Town is involved, this item should be on the agenda to keep the Town Council updated. Council Member Miller inquired concerning the Intergovernmental Meetings, and Mayor McMeekin stated these need to be started again. Covid separated us, and we need to come back together, because face-to-face is better. We are a small County, and we need to work together.

10. OLD BUSINESS

None.

11. NEW BUSINESS

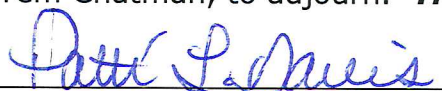
None.

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.)

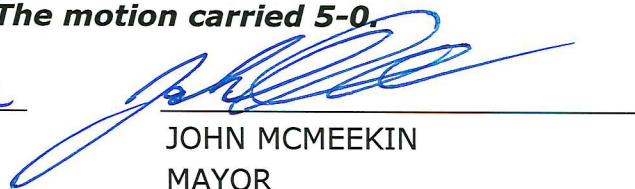
Not needed.

13. ADJOURN

At 6:45 p.m., it was moved by Council Member Miller, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, to adjourn. ***The motion carried 5-0.***



PATTI L. DAVIS
TOWN CLERK



JOHN MCMEEKIN
MAYOR