

**MINUTES  
BUDGET WORK SESSION  
WINNSBORO TOWN COUNCIL  
MAY 2, 2023**

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

**Others Present:** Calvin Johnson, Chief Kevin Lawrence, Trip Peak, Jeff Cisney, Russell Wright and Jennifer Edwards.

The Winnsboro Town Council met for a Budget Work Session on May 2, 2023, at 8:05 p.m. at the Winnsboro Women's Club (this work session began immediately after a 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 8:05 p.m.

**2. 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.***

**3. INVOCATION**

Council Member Burroughs led the invocation.

**4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**A. FY 2022-2023 BUDGET**

Mr. Taylor proceeded to give the process used to get the budget where it is today, and some assumptions have been made because the first budget workshop had not been held. Mrs. Belton, Mr. Clauson, Mrs. Edwards and Mr. Taylor have met a number of times and also have met with all department heads concerning their budget requests to try to compile a budget that would meet their needs. Council sets a millage and a tax rate. The millage will increase to 49.02 mils representing an increase of 3.63 mils or an 8% total. Increasing this does not really mean a lot because it is negated by the local option sales tax; however, it makes sense to take the increase that is allowed every year. Balancing the expenditures and revenue, the total budget is \$4,428,616 for the General Fund with the revenue the Town has right now. This is a drop from last

year of \$504,238. The Combined Utilities Fund has a balanced budget of revenues and expenditures of \$20,290,797 which is an increase of \$590,126. The total combined budget is \$24,719,413. This includes a 4% cost of living salary adjustment across the board for all employees. Council Members' salaries were increased by 6% plus \$1,000. The Mayor's salary was increased by 6%. Council Members' and the Mayor's salaries may only be increased during election years, which is every other year. Mr. Taylor also referenced the Fleet presentation, and this is something that needs to be considered. The Town must consider doing something like this, because it cannot continue with the current fleet. It would take the Town years to bring it up to speed. This is one way it can be done that would allow us to get 15-20 vehicles for the price of what we were buying 2 or 3 for. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated he knew this was coming at some point, but he did not know when. His agency also uses a lease program. He is concerned with the Police Department. Mr. Taylor stated this will be looked into in great detail and brought back to Council, but it needs to be seriously considered. At present, only the utility departments are being looked at because around 60% of the utility vehicles have over 150,000 miles. To clarify, Mayor McMeekin inquired if police vehicles are included, and Mr. Taylor stated in the initial talks, only utility vehicles are being reviewed.

Council also needs to be aware of the Joint Water and Sewer commitment of the 75/25 split with the County. This will benefit the entire community in the long run. A budget of \$100,000 has been tentatively accepted. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired who would pay this, and Mr. Taylor stated the County would pay 75% and the Town of Winnsboro would pay 25%. The budget essentially is a transfer payment, including \$25,000 from the Town and \$75,000 from the County. Mayor McMeekin stated this is solely for operations. The costs for the capital expense of building the sewer plant will come out of the settlement funds from Dominion that the County holds.

Grants: There is the large SCIIP grant that came in this year, and the Town will need to start funding this soon. However, the majority of this match would come next year and not this budget year. The Town now knows who its representative will be, and they will help walk us through this.

Mr. Taylor stated most of the budget involves tinkering around the edges, and there is not a huge change from last year. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if there would be a rate increase this year. Mr. Taylor stated a rate increase will probably be needed. In the budget, electricity and gas costs are high, so something must be done to adjust and cover these costs. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated the Town needs to let the customers know that we are not choosing to do the rate increase, and it is necessitated by the bond and the wholesale costs from Dominion. Mayor McMeekin stated Facebook needs to be utilized to get this out to as much of the public as possible.

The majority of the increase in the General Fund is resulting from the salary increases. Some funding has been maintained for building maintenance and downtown revitalization. Mrs. Belton agreed that the bulk of the increases represent the salaries. She feels the directors have done a very good job of going through their budgets. Mr. Taylor stated historical data is looked at to come up with the numbers with trending over the last three years, looking to see if what the Town budgeted was what was actually spent or if it needs to be adjusted based on what the actual revenue or expenditure was. Mayor McMeekin stated there will be a better operating service once the new meters are installed. He would like to get to the position to take care of the employees. Mrs. Belton stated this is the highest rate the employees are being raised since she has worked for the Town, and she is sure the employees will appreciate this. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated he agrees concerning the employees, because people have options to go other places. Mr. Taylor stated the labor market is highly competitive, and also, with all the grants and deadlines, the Town must maintain a stable workforce to be sure the deadlines and requirements can be met. Mayor McMeekin also feels there will be more government funding coming down. Mr. Taylor stated he is very optimistic, and there are companies and subdivision developers calling. We need to be ready and able to meet these needs. He believes the State also recognizes this. Mayor McMeekin stated the Town is being looked at more favorably, and this will enable us to have a better community, better Town and better County. Council Member Miller inquired concerning the Teacher Village. Mr. Taylor stated he believes they are struggling with some of the engineering, and he and Mr. Clauson have spoken to the engineer a number of times. Mr. Clauson stated he is awaiting confirmation that the permits have been received from DHEC for land disturbance, etc. The zoning compliance was already issued. Mr. Taylor stated they, like everyone, are struggling to get all the permits lined up. Mr. Medlin was not able to be here tonight, but he put a fair amount of money in the budget to cover the cost of the utilities. This is a lot for the Town to absorb, and we must put thought into this. Council Member Miller inquired if the Town would be reimbursed once built, and Mr. Taylor stated no. Mr. Clauson stated the \$300,000 would be the full build out of the 30 homes, but the way it is structured, they will need a number of transformers. Also, to serve the site efficiently, it should be underground. This will also play into the cost because wire right now is very costly. Mr. Taylor stated the Town ate a lot of the costs of some developments, but it must reconsider doing a cost share with a developer. The Town's existing customer base should not bear the cost of new development. At 8-10 homes, it would take a long time to recoup any type of return. As new development coming to the area is being looked at, Mr. Taylor has asked the Department Directors to take a look at the Town's fees and policies in order to protect the Town as far as the associated costs. According to Mr. Wright, impact fees for surrounding areas are: Richland County \$3,900; City of Columbia \$3,940; Chapin \$3,900; Great

Falls increasing to \$3,000. The Town's impact fee is \$2,100. Mr. Taylor stated this needs to be increased, and this will be money to invest back into our own utilities. This would enable us to provide good service to that new development as well as our existing customers and also would allow expansion. Any changes in fees will be brought back to Council. Mayor McMeekin stated we do not want to hurt ourselves in this process. Great Falls is obviously getting ready for what is coming, and we need to get ready also. Mr. Taylor stated this money would go back into the operation of the Town's facilities.

Mrs. Belton referred to Page 2 – garbage service. A decision needs to be made concerning this fee, and this would be another determining factor in the overall General Fund. This is in reference to the lawsuit with the County, and Mr. Taylor stated it is a problem if this is projected in the revenue and is not being collected.

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired of the credit card convenience fees. Mrs. Belton stated the actual credit card fees cannot be determined, because with the current program, an actual credit card report cannot be generated.

Mrs. Belton stated there is a slight increase in the transfer from Combined Utilities. On page 3, the grant matches are lower compared to last year. The total for this year is \$694,111 compared to \$1.3M last year. In Combined Utilities, there has been an increase in electric by \$100,402 but also gas as well. Mr. Taylor stated this is the majority of the drop in the General Fund. Mrs. Belton agreed and stated it costs more to do business.

Mr. Taylor moved into the utilities with revenues and expenditures, which represents the biggest part of the budget. Overall, it is \$20,290,000 in Combined Utilities. Page 21 represents the utility fund revenues and expenditures.

- Gas is the biggest moneymaker and continues to be. The anticipation is \$514,000 in new revenue coming in this line item. Again, it is expensive to operate these utilities, so some of the cost is also going up.
- Electric is the second biggest moneymaker. The anticipation is about \$300,000 increase in new revenue.
- Water is actually still losing a little bit. The Town has gotten away from Columbia, but it took a lot of money to infuse into that, which will continue. Mr. Taylor stated he is glad the Town got the SCIIP grant because this is desperately needed to upgrade the antiquated facility. The Town should be making money on water.
- Sewer is losing money also, \$192,000. This is the nature of sewer; however, sewer is needed to support the rest. There is a lot of deferred maintenance associated with all the plants, sewer and water in particular. The Town got a \$500,000 smaller grant to help with water and a \$640,000

grant to help with sewer in the form of a generator that DHEC required. Water and sewer are heavily regulated by DHEC, and there could be more requirements in the future. An extension will probably be needed on the generator grant, because the materials cannot be received in the timeframe allowed by the grant. Mr. Wright stated the lead time on the generator for diesel is 75 weeks and natural gas just over 2 years. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated he just got an extension on a grant that was to expire 2 years ago. Mr. Taylor stated the extensions are usually granted; however, with CDBG grants and some of the others, you are limited to two grants. Because of the supply chain, the Town will be disqualified from getting future grants because it still has open grants.

- On the expenditure side of the utilities, costs are increasing. Although it is a moneymaker, gas is expensive. The anticipation is \$561,000 in new expenditures over last year. The anticipation for electric is \$286,000. Only about \$8,000 is anticipated for water; however, the water plant is about \$273,000. There is a difference between the collection system, the distribution system and the actual plant. The anticipation for sewer collection is \$253,000 in additional expenditures. The sewer plant is at \$118,000 less. Electric is an additional \$286,625 and gas is \$561,089.

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if the bond covenants will be met based on the budget that is being set forth. Mrs. Belton stated the bond covenants will be met if the projected revenues are met. Mr. Taylor stated the numbers are conservative, and the meters should be fully online soon. Hopefully, this will catch a lot of missing revenue. Council Member Burroughs inquired of the number of meter readers that will be kept. Mr. Taylor stated probably two or three will need to be kept. For the most part, the bills are in good shape.

Mrs. Belton stated the capital budget is on page 44. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated he wants to be sure the courthouse is done, because this will be the second time it has been placed in the budget. Mr. Taylor stated working with Judge Goode, that particular room will need to be assessed. A design professional will be utilized instead of an architect to assist with this project. Also, capital is not usually funded and is instead a placeholder and brought back to Council. Mrs. Belton stated some of these items are essential and need to move forward. Mr. Taylor stated this is why the Town needs to look at the lease program, because the only way he can get vehicles is potentially through that program. This list is an acknowledgment of the needs of the departments. The Town has also developed a good relationship with State Surplus and have picked up a few good vehicles from there at a reasonable price.

Council Member Burroughs inquired concerning the salaries of some of the directors. Mrs. Belton stated, not to minimize the importance of anyone's position, the skillset for each position needs to be considered that is required for those jobs. The population size also has to be factored in. Finally, how much funds are actually being brought in must be looked at. Regardless, the Town has requirements it must meet. She would like to see everyone get what they want, but the Town must be realistic in dealing with the actual finances. Benchmarks can be set to where we want to go and how to achieve that, but the skillset that is required for a particular position must be taken into consideration. There is a lot of overhead expense to run the Town of Winnsboro, and a lot of people do not understand this. Once some things, such as insurance, are set, they only increase unless through attrition positions will be eliminated. Then there is the operating expense, and this has increased tremendously. The Town knows where it is and where it wants to go, but we must do this carefully and strategically and not cause things to spin out. Mrs. Belton advised Council to make their decisions cautiously. Mayor McMeekin stated the Town is not like many other towns. We have police, sanitation, electric, natural gas, sewer and water, along with staff and a lot of expenses. Services need to be expanded wisely and carefully in order to bring in more revenue so we can do the things we want to do. Council Member Miller stated he agrees with Council Member Burroughs, and this has nothing to do with skillset. He believes all the directors should be the same. Mr. Taylor inquired what the Class and Comp Study said on the various departments, because he believes we used this as a guideline. He also quite often looks at the Municipal Association's site to see the salary surveys. He then looks at other towns similar in size to see what they pay for the various different positions. We do need to be fair based on the job they are doing and what they would get paid in other jurisdictions. We are not perfect, but we do try to stay in line with this. There is a 500-unit subdivision considering to locate on the Town's utilities, and this would generate \$2.5M to \$3M up front in impact fees, but it would also generate \$250,000 to \$300,000 per month in utility revenue. These types of things will generate the needed revenue to do a lot of the other things. The Town is on the cusp of a lot of opportunity. Some of the annexations that are being done are all with an eye toward revenue and expanding the Town's budget in a positive way. If expansion occurs and 500 new houses are picked up, the Town's aid to subdivision would go up and other different kinds of revenues would start coming in. We are trying to keep an eye on how to increase our revenue so we can pay our people even better. You cannot cut your way to a better budget, you cannot tax your way or put fees in place, you must grow your way. Mrs. Belton stated the Town is a unique organization, a municipality, but technically it is a utility company. Our directors are a different type of directors because we are a utility company. Further discussion ensued

concerning director compensation. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated he was not pleased with the salary study last year. Mrs. Belton stated the Town did try to meet the midpoint of the recommendations, and it is trying to be fair, equitable and making sure it stays within the guidelines of the budget to meet the requirements of the bond. Mr. Taylor stated we are dependent on the revenues that come from utilities, and we also have to be cognizant of the bond requirements. This is why we are trying to move away from transferring any more than is needed from utilities to support the General Fund. Mayor McMeekin stated we know where we want to go, we just have to figure out how to get there. Frankly, a lot of things have been neglected over the last 10+ years, and we have to dig out of this hole. The Town is in the utilities business, and this must be planned well to make money off of it, so we can then do the things we want to do; however, we cannot sink the ship in the process. Mr. Taylor stated the working conditions must also be addressed, in addition to salaries. The condition of the Public Safety building and most of the cars is terrible. To recruit and keep good people, good working conditions is required. Chief Lawrence stated since he has been here, he has gotten some good people. It is hard enough to find someone to do one job, but we require people to do fire and police work. Chief Lawrence also discussed the cars, vests and weapons. Mayor McMeekin stated there is a steep hill to climb, and this should have been done a lot earlier than now. Everyone must be fully equipped. However, if development does not come to the County and money is not made on the utilities, it will just go on like this. The County has a large industrial tract of land. Mr. Taylor stated this is the mega site, and this is the only mega site owned by a local government or the State left in South Carolina. Mayor McMeekin stated the Governor said we have a window of opportunity, and it is closing. Time cannot be wasted with the interconnection line, water and sewer. With all this, we can plan and take care of salaries and get the department needs met. Mrs. Belton inquired if some of these items needed are in the supply line item, and Chief Lawrence stated there is not enough available in this line item. Mrs. Belton suggested reassessing the capital. Chief Lawrence further stated he believes a grant can be applied for that would be 100% reimbursable. He was also just listing some of the struggles the department is going through. Council Member Miller would like for administration to look at the salaries closer, and Mr. Taylor stated this will be looked at to see what can be done. Mayor McMeekin stated we all have the same goal, and we must put it in Mrs. Belton's hands to make sure we do not sink the ship.

Council Member Bartell Prather stated she remembers the Police Department's building being discussed at the last budget workshop and nothing has been done. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated funding had been put toward the courtroom, but this work was never done. This is the first time

Council is hearing about the actual Police Department. Mr. Taylor stated this is not an easy or cheap fix. That building has been modified many times, electrical systems have been laid over top of others, etc. It will be a heavy lift to get this taken care of. Mrs. Belton suggested adding something in for possible repairs to Public Safety. Mayor McMeekin agreed that this needs to be looked at, but we must keep in mind the match for the SCIIP grant.

Mr. Taylor stated the Department Directors are present tonight and asked each if they had anything to discuss:

- Russell Wright, Wastewater Plant – He has a roof that needs to be repaired and other needed maintenance. As the Mayor said, we are trying to play catchup. The department does not have a vehicle, and the workers have to use their personal vehicles. This is included in the capital requests. Council Member Burroughs suggested possibly using the money that was received from the code enforcement vehicle, and Mrs. Belton stated this has been moved to another line. Mr. Taylor stated there are roofs that are in need of repair, no vehicle and the Town is under an order from DHEC to install a generator. Grant funding has been received to take care of this, but we are also under an order to repair the filter system, which we are attempting to do in-house. Mr. Wright stated the estimated cost to repair/replace the filter system is \$1.5M.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired why the phone charges are so high. Mr. Taylor stated this needs to be looked at across the board, and he believes they are too high, also.
- Jeff Cisney, Water Plant – Mr. Taylor stated the \$10M SCIIP grant has been received to rebuild the facility, and this is great news because the Town was on the verge of running out of treatment capacity. The current water plant has many needs. Mr. Cisney stated a lot of improvements have been made in the last year, and hopefully, this will continue. Mr. Taylor stated the clear well was full of sludge, and this has been removed. There have been other improvements, also. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired concerning the request for employees. Mrs. Edwards stated this was requested because the plant is now running 24 hours.
- Trip Peak, Gas, Water and Sewer – Currently, the department shares space with Mr. Cisney at the water plant. He would like to gradually move once more space is acquired, possibly the school property. He could then start relocating some of his department to the new location. The department has moved around four times in the past. The department has also grown over this past year, and Mr. Peak is now looking toward expansion. There are a lot of areas,

tracts of land, that developers have already started looking at. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired of the one position Mr. Peak has open. Mr. Peak stated there is one position open, and he would like to keep this open. Mrs. Edwards stated there were seven openings, and now, there is only one opening. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if we have thought about partnering with the vocational schools to fill some of these key positions. Mr. Taylor stated to get people to move into utilities and get the licenses they need, there must be a feeder system. Mr. Wright stated he is currently the First Vice President for the S.C. Water and Environmental Association. This Association has a workforce development group who goes around to the schools to try and promote the water and wastewater fields. The average age of an operator for water/wastewater is 60 years of age. There are currently about 1,800 in the State. The organization is trying to get people into the field with educational events at the schools. Right now, Southwest Water is doing an apprenticeship program. This is something that must be worked through. Mayor McMeekin recalled the meeting at Town Hall in Blythewood, and it was stated that they would be working with the schools to get people trained for the Scout plant and any other businesses that would apply to this. Mr. Wright stated his organization is trying to get involved with all the surrounding colleges to provide training. Council Member Miller stated there is a program in Fairfield County to hire kids between the ages of 18 and 24. Mrs. Edwards stated she has been speaking with Mr. Cisney concerning this program. Mr. Wright stated to be an operator it takes one year experience before you can get a license. You would start off with a training program and would then take a year of experience to get a D license. Mr. Wright has several difference licenses which took him several years to obtain. Mrs. Edwards stated the Town was in dire need for the upper end employees and did not have time to do the apprentice programs. Now, the upper end employees are in place, and this program can now be looked into. Mr. Cisney stated one thing that keeps people from being interested in these vocations is that you are expected to be there in rain, sleet, snow, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. People do not want to do this and do not want to be working on Christmas, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 12:00 at night or 2:00 in the morning. It is not as easy as people think, and it took Mr. Cisney ten years to be qualified. It takes a special mindset to want to do this, and it is just not there. Mr. Wright stated the permits that the wastewater and water plants operate off of requires them to have certain operators for every shift.

- Calvin Johnson, Streets and Sanitation Department – When talking about the Street Department, Mr. Johnson stated it does not take a lot of skill or training to run a weed eater or to ride on the back of a garbage truck. However, it does take someone who is willing to work. Cutting grass does not take a lot of training, but it takes someone who is willing to work in the heat. He was concerned about paying meter readers \$22/hour, because he lost two of his best people due to this. It is very difficult to find people. He can depend on his department, and he feels they need to be compensated for what they do. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman brought up the CDL license, and Mr. Johnson stated it is almost impossible because there is not a route that the worker would only drive. They must be willing to do other things. When they are expected to get out of the truck to cut grass or mop a floor, they do not want to do it. Mr. Johnson tries to promote from within and get his existing employees to get their CDL. He has one CDL driver age 63 and the other is 67. He also has a 70-year-old, a 71-year-old and another 71-year-old. He would ask Council to take into consideration the other things that bring value to people. Mayor McMeekin agreed that this is a long hard day's work, and just like any department, you need someone to show up. Council Member Miller stated Mr. Johnson is the best Streets and Sanitation Director the Town has ever had. Mr. Johnson states his workers take pride in their work. Mayor McMeekin stated the department does a great job, and he feels the Town has a great team of employees.
- Chief Kevin Lawrence, Public Safety Department – His department cannot just go home and cannot just work Monday through Friday. They have to come Saturday and Sunday and stay late to get the job done. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if there are any new positions, and Mr. Taylor stated an administrative type position is being looked at. Chief Lawrence would also like to get rid of the three part-time positions and instead have one full-time position that is dedicated to the Town. Mr. Taylor suggested moving one of the part-time salaries over to the admin position, because it is good to have an administrative person in that position. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired who on the staff is handling the Victims' Advocate duties. Chief Lawrence stated this money was never used before and \$74,000 was given back to the State. There are only certain things this money can be spent on. He has one officer that is going through the training now. He will try to send one more person and add that to their duties. Preferably, he will have a male and a female. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated he has stressed in the past to deal with this money, because there are organizations

the money could be sent to versus sending it back to the State. Mr. Taylor stated it is really tough to spend that money. Mr. Taylor also stated the department is doing more traffic enforcement; however, this is not a revenue center. A lot of people think money can be made this way, but the majority of these funds go back to the State.

- Jennifer Edwards, Human Resource Department – Mrs. Edwards reported that Public Safety is pretty much full staffed, Mr. Peak’s department is pretty much full staffed and the Town is getting close to 100 employees. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated the Town had 104 employees when he first got on Council. Mrs. Edwards stated one slot was taken away from the Electric Department because Mr. Medlin asked for an increase for his guys. It is hard to get applicants for the water and wastewater. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired concerning the Code Enforcement Officer, and Mr. Taylor stated this position is under his budget. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman also inquired concerning the Payroll Clerk, and Mrs. Edwards stated she would like to keep this position, and she has been a wonderful asset. Council Member Miller inquired concerning special meetings for Council. Mr. Taylor stated the vote was taken on that to equalize payments. Mayor McMeekin stated there were two separate ordinances, and the way Mr. Wood had handled this was having four payroll periods set out. It was very confusing for payroll, so everything was put together and it went on the same schedule as regular payroll of every two weeks. Council Members get paid for meetings whether they come or not, and there is no payment for extra meetings. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated he feels Council is grossly underpaid, and Mayor McMeekin said comparisons can be made through the Municipal Association.

## 5. ADJOURN

At 10:09 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