

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
WINNSBORO TOWN COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 19, 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, Kathy Belton, Assistant Town Managers; Patti Davis, Town Clerk.

The Winnsboro Town Council met in regular session on September 19, 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 Voice of Blythewood and Fairfield, The Country Chronicle and other individuals associated with the distribution list of the Town of Winnsboro.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor McMeekin called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

2. INVOCATION

Council Member Burroughs 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 motion carried 5-0.***

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman made a motion, seconded by Council Member Bartell-Prather, to approve the Regular Meeting minutes from September 5, 2023. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

5. SPECIAL REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS

None.

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

➤ Yvette Howard - Utilities

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

8. ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

- A.** Second and Final Reading Ordinance No. 89: An Ordinance Annexing into the Town of Winnsboro a 0.27 Acre Tract of Land, Located at 425 A and B Poplar Street, Winnsboro, SC, Owned by Gregory and Marilyn Butler, in Fairfield County, Not Already Within the Winnsboro Town Limits, and Including All Adjacent and Abutting Rights-of-Way. Tax Map No. 145-01-03-002-000. Motion made by Council Member Burroughs, seconded by Council Member Bartell-Prather, to approve Second and Final Reading Ordinance No. 89. ***The motion carried 5-0.***
- B.** First Reading Ordinance No. 90: An Ordinance Annexing into the Town of Winnsboro an 89.01 Acre Tract of Land, address to be determined, Winnsboro, SC, Owned by William and Meg Ladd, in Fairfield County, Not Already Within the Winnsboro Town Limits, and Including All Adjacent and Abutting Rights-of-Way. Portion of Tax Map No.145-03-01-012-000 (new TMS number pending). Motion made by Council Member Burroughs, seconded by Council Member Bartell-Prather, to approve First Reading Ordinance No. 90. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if the property will meet the Town's standards, and Mr. Taylor stated this is primarily farmland at this point. An event center is being proposed on the site, and this is one of the largest sites to be annexed. A lot of the annexation that has been done in the past consists of small tracts, and the anticipation is to get some of the larger tracts to increase the size of the Town looking for potential development. ***The motion carried 5-0.***
- C.** First Reading Ordinance No. 91: An Ordinance Annexing into the Town of Winnsboro a 64.27 Acre Tract of Land, address to be determined, Winnsboro, SC, Owned by William and Meg Ladd, in Fairfield County, Not Already Within the Winnsboro Town Limits, and Including All Adjacent and Abutting Rights-of-Way. Tax Map Nos.: 144-04-06-002-000 and 145-03-01-012-000 (new TMS number pending). Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve First Reading Ordinance No. 91. ***The motion carried 5-0.***
- D.** Resolution No. 2023-10: A Resolution Committing the Town of Winnsboro to Providing a Local Match for a Rural Infrastructure Authority Basic Infrastructure Grant and Following its Procurement Policy When Securing Services and Products with Grant Funds. Mr. Taylor stated the Town is pursuing all possible grant money to improve the Town's utilities. A lot of cash is required to keep the utilities running and upgraded to where they need to be. The sewer plant is under consent order, and there is a lot of

pressure for potential growth headed this way. Staff is looking at ways to potentially squeeze a little more capacity out of the existing facility. This grant is being pursued to help with this process, and there is a \$76,500 match associated, which needs Council approval. Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve Resolution No. 2023-10. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if these funds were already allocated, and Mr. Taylor stated we probably did not allocate enough grant match funding, but there are funds that can be accessed in the Town's reserve funds to be able to do this match. Mayor McMeekin stated the Town has some money which is designated only for sewer, and Mr. Taylor stated this is part of an old bond. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

- E.** Resolution No. 2023-11: A Resolution Authorizing and Approving the Acceptance of Certain Loan Assistance Monies from the South Carolina Water Quality Revolving Fund Authority; Authorizing the Mayor to Execute that Certain Loan Assistance Agreement Between the Town of Winnsboro and the South Carolina Water Quality Revolving Fund Authority; and Other Matters Relating Thereto. Mr. Taylor stated there is no match associated with this request. The Town had previously applied for a grant, which it did not receive. In working with Representative McDaniel, the same project was switched over to a revolving loan fund as a forgivable loan. Mayor McMeekin stated Representative McDaniel is very helpful for the Town. Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Bartell-Prather, to approve Resolution No. 2023-11. ***The motion carried 5-0.***

9. MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Ongoing Projects

- AMI: Mr. Taylor reported the water meter installation has essentially been completed. Some are having to be switched out, and this is being fine-tuned. The hope was that the AMI initiation would help with some of the water loss issues and some of these problems could be identified. However, staff is not finding that this system is revealing these problem areas yet. The Town is pumping a lot more water than is being billed for. A staff meeting will be held tomorrow to address this issue. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if the billing was behind because of the installation of the water meters. Mr. Taylor stated he believes it was more due to the cut-offs, and Mrs. Belton agreed. Mr. Taylor further stated this has been re-evaluated in order to keep billing on time as the priority. Mayor McMeekin stated the newly installed meters will not have to be read anymore

thereby saving time, and Mr. Taylor agreed that this should help because reading the water meters represented the most labor-intensive part. Council Member Miller inquired if the new meters automatically read and then send the information to Finance. Mrs. Belton stated it has been a little trying for staff. We are thankful for the meters, but a problem can be posed due to where they are with the reading. This can result in some additional days on bills. Council Member Miller asked if the readings are accurate. He has been contacted by some citizens with different readings to include 5,000, 7,000 and 8,000. He wondered if this could be correct. Mrs. Belton inquired if he was referring to the actual reading or the usage, and Council Member Miller stated this is referring to the usage. Mrs. Belton stated the usage generally rounds up to thousands for water because it is billed in thousands. Sometimes the meters have to be calibrated, and if there is a new reading, the bill will be adjusted. Mr. Taylor stated some of the meter readers will transition over to becoming meter technicians because of these type issues, such as calibrating a meter or repairing a meter.

- Code Enforcement/Zion Hill: More properties have been identified and awaiting the County to have time to assist.
- Utilities: Mr. Taylor reported cut-offs are being processed. This is unfortunately something that is a necessity. The revenue fund must be run as a business. From years 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023-2024, these years were being ended with \$1,360,000 in unpaid bills up to now \$2,912,000. The Town cannot continue to tote this, because at any given time, the Town owes \$1M to \$1.2M to Dominion. It must collect and cannot allow such high unpaid balances. As the Mayor alluded to earlier, the Town has bond responsibilities and is prohibited from giving away service. Not collecting is tantamount to giving away that service. The cut-offs are generating these payments that the Town desperately has to have to maintain the utilities, maintain the bonds and keep from having rate increases, which would not be fair for paying customers to cover the cost for those who do not. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired concerning the cut-off process. Mr. Taylor stated cut-offs are a last resort. Customers are notified, given the opportunity to pay, there is a grace period, opportunity for payment plans, but if all this fails, they will ultimately get cut off. Because of the nature of rental properties, we are also potentially looking into credit checks. The Town will be pursuing debt set-off, which would mean tax liens, and also property liens will be sought if necessary. Mrs. Belton stated the department

does try to make this affordable because of the lower incomes, limited incomes and the seniors. Mayor McMeekin stated the Town has been more lenient than neighboring utility companies have been, but this must be dealt with seriously going forward. Mr. Taylor stated it is capital intensive to run the utilities. If the money is not collected, the systems start falling apart causing the Town not to be able to provide good quality water or to provide sewer to support growth. Therefore, there must be money to make sure the systems themselves are healthy and that a good service is being provided for the citizens. Mayor McMeekin agreed that it takes a lot of money to run the system along with equipment wearing out, depreciation, etc. Mr. Taylor stated it is an inefficient system, and there is a cost to being inefficient. The Town is pumping twice as much water as it is billing for, so we must figure out why this is happening. Council Member Miller inquired how many meter readers are employed and if there is a way to be more consistent with the days in the billing cycle. Mrs. Belton stated there are four meter readers. Mr. Taylor stated some employees in the Finance Department were directed to work on the cut-offs when this process was started; however, getting the bills out on time is the priority. Cut-offs have to be done, but the billing must be taken care of first. Mrs. Belton stated there were also issues with the information received for billing. Sometimes the system works perfectly. However, the billing information does not come directly to Finance, and instead, it goes to another company to convert the information to send to the Town. When there is a problem on their end, that will delay the billing.

- **Redevelopment Efforts:** Mr. Taylor stated people want to see downtown revitalized with restaurants and things such as that. Staff has tried to identify a couple of buildings to use for the redevelopment efforts. A couple of offers have been received from landowners, which are high. Appraisals will be done on some of these properties to give a basis for a counteroffer. The old bank building is up for auction, and we should consider this as a core of the redevelopment effort. It is a prominent corner and would be good for the Town to protect its interest in this area. Mayor McMeekin suggested he and Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman meet with Mr. Taylor concerning this. Mr. Taylor stated this would be great as there are a set of draft plans to identify the best route for the initial effort. It will be a multi-staged effort, but there must be a starting point.
- **Fairfield Joint Water and Sewer Service:** Mr. Taylor stated the next meeting should be next Wednesday, September 27. At this meeting,

a list of qualifications will be reviewed for a potential General Manager position.

- Grants Update: Mr. Taylor stated Mr. Clauson attended the meeting concerning the SCOR grant for Fortune Springs. Mr. Clauson reported there was a panel made up predominantly of the S.C. Office of Resilience (three members and staff attorney), Mr. Clauson and Mrs. Gawronski. Three applicants were interviewed. These consist of engineering firms who put together teams of surveyors, arborists, storm water consultants, landscape architects, etc. At the end of the process, McCormick Taylor was selected, and they put together a very impressive team. They had understanding of the history and had historical pictures of what the park looked like originally. They want to do as much as they can to honor that and also honor the history. SCOR is managing the process and the funding. They will put together public meetings in the near future, and tomorrow is the first kick-off meeting. Mayor McMeekin stated the same architect who did our park also did Finley Park in Columbia, and they are getting ready to redo this park. Mr. Clauson stated the firm said there may be more funding available in the future, and they want to create a masterplan to be done in phases with the highest priority items. Mayor McMeekin stated it would be good to honor Pompey Fortune for having lived there.

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.)

No executive session needed.

13. ADJOURN

Council Member Miller requested for everyone to remember Ms. Edwina Armstrong in prayer. She is very ill and has been an outstanding citizen for many, many years. Mayor McMeekin then said a special prayer.

At 6:54 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