

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
WINNSBORO TOWN COUNCIL
JANUARY 16, 2024**

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

Absent: Janice Bartell-Prather.

The Winnsboro Town Council met in regular session on January 16, 2024, at the Winnsboro Town Hall. 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 6:16 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 Burroughs, to approve the agenda. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman made a motion, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve the Regular Meeting minutes from January 2, 2024. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

5. SPECIAL REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS

A. Dr. Tracie Swilley, 2024 South Carolina Association of School Administrators (SCASA) 2024 South Carolina Secondary Principal of the Year. Mayor McMeekin read the Proclamation into the record and then presented it to Dr. Swilley. Photos were then taken with the Town Council and members of Dr. Swilley's family.

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

- A.** Second and Final Reading Ordinance No. 96: An Ordinance Annexing into the Town of Winnsboro a 0.18 Acre Tract of Land, Located at 202 Patton Street, Winnsboro, SC, Owned by Kristen Kruger and Devin Fowler, in Fairfield County, Not Already Within the Winnsboro Town Limits, and Including All Adjacent and Abutting Rights-of-Way. Tax Map No. 126-02-03-006-000. Motion made by Council Member Burroughs, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, to approve Second and Final Reading Ordinance No. 96. ***The motion carried 4-0.***
- B.** Second and Final Reading Ordinance No. 97: An Ordinance Annexing into the Town of Winnsboro a 0.31 Acre Tract of Land, Located at 604 ½ Hudson Street, Winnsboro, SC, Owned by Edna Rabb, in Fairfield County, Not Already Within the Winnsboro Town Limits, and Including All Adjacent and Abutting Rights-of-Way. Tax Map No. 126-02-09-039-000. Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve Second and Final Reading Ordinance No. 97. ***The motion carried 4-0.***
- C.** Second and Final Reading Ordinance No. 98: An Ordinance Annexing into the Town of Winnsboro a 0.73 Acre Tract of Land, Located on West 11th Street, Winnsboro, SC, Owned by Gordon Memorial United Methodist Church, in Fairfield County, Not Already Within the Winnsboro Town Limits, and Including All Adjacent and Abutting Rights-of-Way. Tax Map No. 145-01-30-006-000. Motion made by Council Member Burroughs, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, to approve Second and Final Reading Ordinance No. 98. ***The motion carried 4-0.***
- D.** First Reading Ordinance No. 99: An Ordinance Annexing into the Town of Winnsboro a 0.86 Acre Tract of Land, Located at 217 11th Street, Winnsboro, SC, Owned by Gordon Memorial United Methodist Church, Inc., in Fairfield County, Not Already Within the Winnsboro Town Limits, and Including All Adjacent and Abutting Rights-of-Way. Tax Map No.: 145-01-30-005-000. Motion made by Council Member Burroughs, seconded by

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, to approve First Reading Ordinance No. 99. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

9. MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Ongoing Projects:

Code Enforcement Presentation:

Mr. Clauson began the presentation by distributing handouts to Council. A lot of results have been realized, and Administration is proud of this progress. There have been successes and challenges. The violations are broken up by type and status. There have not been a huge number of complaints concerning abandoned vehicles. Mr. Taylor interjected there has been a truck and a bulldozer hauled away. Mr. Clauson stated there has been collaboration with Public Safety and is hoping to really see this take off. Dilapidated structures comprise the majority of complaints. There is a large number in the red area, which are needing further enforcement. The majority of these include absentee owners, but there are other individuals who are just not responding. However, the local property owners and landlords have been very responsive. There are also a large number of people in the yellow areas who are willing and want to help, but they just do not have the funds. A chunk of the yellow area is also in the process of being demolished, with some being a part of the Zion Hill cleanup grant. Public nuisance is mainly trash and debris cluttering yards, so citations will be threatened, and there has been fantastic response to this. The majority of those have been cleared. A majority of complaints and responses have come from the Zion Hill area, Ward 1 and Cemetery Street. The Mill Village has a lot of absentee landlords that Mr. Wilkes has come across in that area. Mr. Wilkes stated as shown on the map, activity has been spread all over Town, and the whole Town is being canvassed. Of course, there have been some outstanding issues from decades ago in Zion Hill, and the effort was to start off here because they were the most outstanding and the most visible. Two houses were taken care of on College Street and an old commercial building. On Frazier Street, one landowner was very easy to work with, and he only needed a list of contractors to contact. There was also an old trailer on the lot, which the owner was not aware of. The lot is now cleared and maintained. On Cemetery Street, the Town owns three structures, which have been removed and lots cleared. There is some maintenance work still to be done, but the structures are gone. To be such a short street, a lot of the activity has been on Cemetery Street, and there have been positive results. There was a combination of effort from the Town and the County on the

dilapidated structures on College Street. Mr. Wilkes has paperwork from 2016 where the Town had notified the landowners in attempts to get them to do something with this property. That project was started many years ago, and Mr. Wilkes stated he was very proud to get this accomplished. There is a lot more work to be done. One problem is multiple landowners who have inherited land and have different thoughts about it. A lot of these could have been on the Zion Hill project but were not included because all the heirs could not agree. Most people want to do what is being asked but cannot because of finances. They know the property needs to be cleaned up, but they are limited in finances. Hopefully, in the future, the Town could come up with some kind of program or plan to try to help the citizens with regard to this. Of course, there are those who will not do what is needed, and we will have to lean on Chief Lawrence and Public Safety to help with citations, etc. The Town must also maintain the property that it owns. Mr. Clauson stated he does not know what happened with the County with the coordination and working together. There were still another six lots or so to clear. They had said they needed a little time, but now the properties are being sold. It was working really well, and the County did a fantastic job with their crews, but that has stopped. It would be great if this could start again, especially for the ones who cannot afford it. The County also had a program in the past where they would bring dumpsters out after demolitions, and they would take off the debris. Citations with judgments would be on the tax roll for roughly 18 months before the Town would be paid. This is an investment but also a liability because the Town would have to wait to recover. Mayor McMeekin stated there was money for Mt. Zion School, and this was given to the Town free and clear. With this money just sitting there, some creative way to use it could be looked at. Mrs. Belton agreed that this would be up to the Council for this decision. However, at this point, her recommendation is to wait before committing these funds to something else. Mr. Taylor stated it is \$7,000 to \$8,000 to take a house down. Mayor McMeekin stated this money was going to be used to tear down Mt. Zion at one time, and these funds were given to the Town unencumbered in any way. If, in the future, the Town is in a comfortable position, these funds could be used for this purpose. Mrs. Belton stated there are some capital items needed, such as the computer system, Public Safety items, etc. She is not minimizing the importance of tearing down these homes; however, there are also some items at the top of the list that are needed. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated if someone has property, and they are not able to keep it up, what is the purpose of holding onto it with the property being run down. He does not understand this. Mr. Taylor stated Mr. Wilkes touched on this a little bit. When some of the owners are approached, such as brothers and sisters, they may have sentimental value and some just do not want to cooperate.

Time then passes and no one can agree, and the property just sits and declines. This situation is found over and over. It is not rational and is very frustrating. Mr. Clauson stated some of the houses have very minimal tax or no tax, and estates have not even been probated. Completing with the presentation, Mr. Wilkes stated there are roughly 100 locations that he is dealing with or has dealt with. Each one of the locations include many trips back and forth to the property and many conversations. There has been a lot of activity on these properties, and the Department has been very busy. However, there is a lot more to do. Mayor McMeekin inquired where the process stands with putting liens on properties. Mr. Elliott stated the Town has the authority to make the repairs or tear down and then place the lien. Mayor McMeekin further inquired if there is any way the Town could be hindered from getting a lien on a property. Mr. Elliott stated it would be a ministerial act on the part of the County Treasurer. Mayor McMeekin would like there to be no misunderstanding concerning this. Mr. Taylor states he believes they are viewing this as them being the Town's enforcement arm. However, if the Town issues taxes, the County cannot come in and say it is too high. As Mr. Elliott stated, it is a ministerial thing and is not a decision on their part to judge how the Town charges on any issue. If the taxpayer complains, it is clearly in the Town's favor and can be shown that the Town is entitled to get its investment back. Mr. Elliott will reach out to his counterpart at the County to further discuss. Council Member Miller stated Code Enforcement has done a magnificent job. It has been decades since anything has been done, and he appreciates their work. He knows some of the work is tedious and is work that the public and Council do not see, but we know there is a lot going on behind closed doors to make this happen. He has been on Council for many years, and Zion Hill/District One is very appreciative for the job that is being done. He further inquired as to how Mr. Taylor feels concerning the obstacles. Mr. Taylor stated the Town has limited resources, and there are a lot of needs. Code Enforcement is incredibly important, but the Town has to prioritize. There are a lot of grant matches coming up, and the utility systems have to be maintained in order to grow. There is not an incredibly large amount of money in this account, but he would also embrace a wait and see attitude. The audit is coming up shortly, which should reveal a lot, and he would like to see that before any decision is made. Council Member Miller stated beautification is important, and the Town definitely needs to find a way to continue the progress. The Town does not want to cut off the progress, and instead, continue to clear the dilapidated houses and abandoned cars to try to keep the Town clean. Mr. Taylor stated staff will continue to chew on this, and as Mr. Wilkes stated, the Town must look at some of its own facilities. For instance, Town Hall is experiencing some rot in places, the clock needs attention, etc. Council Member Miller suggested

maybe some grants can be found, and Mr. Taylor stated staff is constantly pursuing grant opportunities. Mr. Clauson also commented on the fire hydrants, and Mayor McMeekin inquired the number of hydrants. Mr. Taylor stated this goes along with the Town keeping up its own properties. Mr. Wilkes stated there are 364 hydrants, and wherever there is water, there are fire hydrants; meaning, there are fire hydrants all through Blythewood. The band around where the cap and barrel meet will be color-coded pertaining to the flow. A fireman approaching a hydrant will then know how much can be pulled out of that particular hydrant. Some hydrants are bad and will need to be replaced. Mr. Taylor stated these are not just for looks but ease the ISO ratings for the Town.

Utilities – Mr. Taylor stated the Town has an old system with a lot of needs. It is possible to experience leaks in the lines as happened last year during the cold weather. If someone calls, please let staff know as soon as possible, because when it breaks, we fix it. Mayor McMeekin stated he has seen the areas where LED lights are being installed, and it makes the Town look safe and nice.

Redevelopment Efforts – This will be discussed in executive session.

Fairfield Joint Water & Sewer Service – Not a lot to report at this time.

Grants Update – In connection with the SCOR grant, Mr. Clauson stated a contractor was selected and today was the end of the public comment period for that selection. This grant is being managed by the State. The contract will be signed, and the engineer will be able to get started. Mr. Taylor stated the Town was awarded the money, and then it was essentially taken back to be managed by the State. Mayor McMeekin requested an explanation of what the grant is for, and Mr. Clauson stated this is funding from the ARPA funds for stormwater mitigation. Fortune Springs is in a flood zone, and this will be used to address that and to mitigate any impacts of runoff. It will not cover replacement of the fountain or any other aesthetic purpose but will solely be for stormwater mitigation. The contractor that was selected had given a much more robust presentation and brought the whole design into consideration. Mayor McMeekin stated he wanted to go into detail about what the grant is about and what it can be specifically used for so the citizens will understand. Mr. Clauson is optimistic about this project. Mayor McMeekin wanted to again thank Representative McDaniel, because she has been a tremendous friend to the Town and is trying to help us in any way possible. Mr. Taylor further stated that the Town will be applying for CDBG funding in the March round. Downtown stormwater also has issues, and this was evidenced after the

heavy rain. In the past, some catch basins were filled and blocked, and that forces water on the street as opposed to going into the collection system. Fortune Springs Park also had flooding during the recent heavy rain.

10. OLD BUSINESS

None.

11. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of 2024 Meeting Dates. Mayor McMeekin stated a couple of dates need to be discussed. February 6 is the Hometown Legislative Action Day. After discussion, this meeting will be moved to Thursday, February 8. September 3 is right after Labor Day, so after discussion, this meeting was moved to Tuesday, September 10. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman made a motion, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the 2024 Meeting Dates with the discussed changes. The Clerk will provide the updated 2024 Meeting Dates to Council at the next meeting. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

B. Request of Action: Request to Bid on Forfeited Land Commission Property within the Town Limits in Order to Secure Properties that Would be of Interest to the Public Benefit. Mr. Clauson stated the Forfeited Land Commission has around 22 properties, some of which the Town had been working with the County on; however, the County decided to sell the properties instead. Two of these properties are in the Zion Hill community that are gullies around Alexander Circle and are really not usable. One property on Zion Street is adjacent to one of the Town's properties. This was slated by the Town to be demolished, but the County decided to sell the property. The discussion in the Finance Committee was to not make these purchases at this time; however, the proposal was up to \$15,000 for the three properties. The properties will go through the bid process at auction. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated the general fund balance was discussed in the Finance Committee, which is rather low at this time. The questions was asked where would the money come from. Mr. Taylor stated it was discussed to potentially use the downtown redevelopment funds. Mayor McMeekin discussed the possibility of using these funds, tearing the structure down and then reselling the property to repay the fund. Council Member Burroughs stated he would agree with using the downtown redevelopment funds for this purpose. Mr. Taylor stated there has been some interest from developers in the Zion Street area. It would be nice to eventually get a fund for the whole downtown redevelopment and constantly replenish it

through rents or leases or sale of properties. This is something the Town can head toward, but it is a long return plan. Mayor McMeekin made a motion, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve the request for the funding to come from the downtown redevelopment fund with the house to be torn down and then resell the property. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

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.)

A. Economic Development/Contractual Matter - Discussion Concerning Downtown Revitalization Pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2).

B. Receipt of Legal Advice – Discussion Concerning Trash Dispute Pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2).

At 7:19 p.m., motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to exit regular session and enter into executive session for the above listed items. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

At 7:44 p.m., motion made by Council Member Burroughs, seconded by Council Member Miller, to exit executive session and return to regular session. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

Mayor McMeekin stated there was no action taken in executive session, and all discussions were for information only.

13. ADJOURN

At 7:45 p.m., Council Member Miller made a motion, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to adjourn. ***The motion carried 4-0.***



PATTI L. DAVIS
TOWN CLERK



JOHN MCMEEKIN
MAYOR