

BUDGET HEARING and SPECIAL BOARD MEETING of June 28, 2000, with Mayor Buck Trott and Commissioners Amy Patterson, Zeke Sossomon, H. N. James, Mike Cavender, and Ron Sanders present.

Also present were Richard Betz, Lamar Nix, Bill Coward, Susan Rabold, Chuck Cooper, Rex Toothman, Kim LeWicki, Jack Brooks, Pat McKeon, Jody Cook, and many others.

A. Budget Hearing.

The Mayor called the Budget Hearing to order at 7:00 p.m., and stated that this was the time and place to receive comments from the public on the FY 00-01 Budget, as presented on May 31, 2000; notice had appeared in The Highlander newspaper pursuant to law.

There were no comments from the public on the proposed budget, and the Mayor declared the hearing closed at 7:02 p.m.

B. Special Board Meeting.

I. The Mayor called the Special Meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. Approval of Agenda.

Copies of the agenda had been distributed by mail. The Clerk requested that two items be added to the agenda: a report from the Town Administrator under Old Business, and a discussion of several budget items under New Business. The agenda was approved by consensus.

III. Old Business.

1. Susan Rabold was present from MetroSite Management to explain how her company had arrived at recommended lease amounts for current and new requested wireless communications. Ms. Rabold said that she was aware of the recent newspaper editorial and radio broadcasts, and she reiterated that she was not present to pressure the Board into accepting her recommendations; her objective was only to present information, and it was up to the Board to decide what it wanted to do. She briefly outlined the background of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which provided that communities cannot "zone out" towers and antennas; they can, however, develop standards like any other land use. MetroSite Management had developed a model ordinance and implemented strategies intended to let the industry develop while providing communities with standards. An inventory had been done in Highlands identifying infrastructure on public lands, and the industry was encouraged to co-locate on those facilities; the final stage of the process was identifying what the sites were worth. The pricing recommendations were based on the value of the "vertical real estate," what kind of equipment was used, how much space was used up, how much was available, how much ground space was used, the type of community, land values, and the availability of other sites. She submitted a spreadsheet showing all of MetroSite's lease amounts for North Carolina, none of which were less than \$200/month. She said that these were market rates based on thousands of leases executed across the country, and were tailored for similar types of real estate and property. She again reiterated that it was the Board's choice whether to agree to a higher or a lower rate than recommended.

Mayor Trott asked if propagation of the signal was a factor in pricing the site; Ms. Rabold said that it was. He also asked if she had any comments on the one-third commission that MetroSite took on leases it executed. Ms. Rabold said that she had not charged for any of her work so far, including the tremendous amount of up-front cost in preparing the Ordinance and several trips to Highlands; her business relied on profits down the road in the future.

Comm. Sossomon asked how much room was left on the Big Bearpen tower; Ms. Rabold said a minimal amount was left, that it was almost maxed out. Chuck Cooper asked whether there was room at that site for the 12 X 20 buildings typically required for cell phone antennas; Ms. Rabold did not think there was enough room, but PCS equipment did not require as much space. Jody Cook asked if regional rates were the basis of pricing. Ms. Rabold said yes, but the region consisted of the entire Southeast. Pat McKeon asked if MetroSite looked at the return on investment; Ms. Rabold said no, but that individual contractors paid less than wireless data companies.

Mayor Trott thanked Ms. Rabold and those present, and said that the Board would take this matter under advisement and obtain further information before making a final decision.

2. A plat had been prepared of a portion of Bob Morris's Satulah Vista subdivision showing the portion of paved turn-around on one of the lots, as discussed at previous meetings. The area had already been paved and the funds held in escrow returned.

MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. PATTERSON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ACCEPT THE PLAT. The Town Attorney was asked to have it recorded.

3. The Town Administrator had distributed copies of both the defendant's and the appellant's briefs in the Edwards et. al. case with the agenda package.

He also reported that Police Officer Dwayne Thomas had resigned.

He also reported that an offer of \$500 had been received from Steve Potts for purchase of the surplus 1986 F-700 garbage truck; the vehicle had been advertized at that minimum amount at a previous meeting but no bids had been received.

MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO SELL THE VEHICLE AT THE PRICE OFFERED.

IV. New Business.

1. Informal bids had been received on stone and river sand, pursuant to request, from Bryson's Grading & Trucking Inc. and from LBM Industries, and had been opened earlier in the day by the Clerk and the Town Engineer. Bryson's Grading & Trucking was the low bidder on all items.

MOVED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, SECONDED BY COMM. PATTERSON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO AWARD THE BID TO BRYSON'S GRADING & TRUCKING.

2. The Clerk reported that he had discussed the contract for communications equipment service from Western Carolina Communication with Tom Hixon, as requested at the previous meeting, after meeting with the Police Chief and Public Services Administrator. Mr. Hixon had confirmed that the increase from \$116.00 to \$275.50 per month was due to the expiration of warranties from Kenwood; under those warranties, Kenwood had provided all parts and labor. He and the Public Services Administrator both recommended renewing the two-year contract.

MOVED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, SECONDED BY COMM. PATTERSON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE THE CONTRACT.

3. A proposal had been received from Building Management & Controls Inc. for renewal of the preventive maintenance service agreement for the Highlands Civic Center in the amount of \$3,980 annually, the same amount as last year.

MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. CAVENDER, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE THE AGREEMENT.

4. The Board then discussed several items relating to the FY 00-01 budget as presented on May 31, as follows:

- The Board discussed at considerable length a proposal to increase garbage rates to compensate for the cost of an additional employee and a new truck; the expected increase in landfill tipping fees had not been adopted by the County, so the consensus was not to increase fees to the extent proposed. Comm. James said that he was not opposed to the increase, but felt that the Board should re-examine its electric rates.

MOVED BY COMM. JAMES, SECONDED BY COMM. CAVENDER, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING GARBAGE RATES EFFECTIVE JULY 1.

Residential Garbage Rates [Effective July 1, 2000]

Residential: \$9.00 per month

[Note: Residents qualifying for ad valorem property tax senior citizens exclusion shall not be charged for garbage collection.]

Commercial Garbage Rates [Effective July 1, 2000]

Commercial: \$10.00 per month for each weekly pickup, up to 6 pickups per week.

[Note: It is mandatory for businesses generating large amounts of garbage to pay for six pickups per week.]

In addition, the following charges apply based on the amount of cardboard generated:

<u>Type User</u>	<u>Added Fee</u>
Small	\$15.00
Medium	\$30.00
Large	\$60.00

Dumpster Fees [Effective July 1, 2000]:

\$24.00 per month for single business use.

For more than one business using a dumpster, the charge is \$24.00 per month divided by the number of users.

Dumpster fees are in addition to the current commercial garbage rates.

- The Board then discussed the budget requests from various organizations. The Town Administrator reported that he had received additional information from the Macon County Humane Society to the effect that only 42 of the 1776 animals in the County had come from Highlands, or 2.36%

MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO DONATE \$12,000 TO THE HUDSON LIBRARY INC.

MOVED BY COMM. CAVENDER, SECONDED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO DONATE \$3,000 TO THE MACON COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY.

MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. JAMES, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO DONATE \$10,000 TO THE HIGHLANDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

- The Board discussed additional employees in the Sanitation and the Street departments, as recommended by the Public Services Administrator.

MOVED BY COMM. CAVENDER, SECONDED BY COMM. SANDERS, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE FUNDING THE TWO POSITIONS, AND TO AUTHORIZE ADVERTIZING TO FILL THE POSITIONS.

- The Board discussed a cost of living adjustment of 4%, as recommended by the Town Administrator.

MOVED BY COMM. JAMES, SECONDED BY COMM. CAVENDER, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE A 4% COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT FOR ALL FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES.

- Comm. Patterson asked about the addition to the Capital Improvement Program of Construction of Poplar Street and 4½ Street in FY 02-03; she said that this was a controversial issue, and no decision had yet been made on whether to open these streets or not. Comm. Cavender agreed. Comm. James commented that, considering the amount the Town had already paid in legal fees, it should have been opened already. Comm. Cavender made a motion to delete it from the Capital Improvement Program, seconded by Comm. Patterson, but Mr. Cavender then agreed to withdraw his motion; the Board agreed to delete it by consensus.

5. MOVED BY COMM. PATTERSON, SECONDED BY COMM. CAVENDER, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADOPT AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE BUDGET OF THE TOWN OF HIGHLANDS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 1999 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2000. A copy is attached hereto and made a permanent part of this record.

6. MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS INDIVIDUAL SALARIES, PURSUANT TO G. S. §143-318.11(A)(6). All present left the meeting room except the Town Administrator and the Public Services Administrator.

The Board then reviewed merit and longevity increases for Town employees with the Town Administrator and the Public Services Administrator, who then left the meeting room while the Board discussed their salaries. Comm. James stated that salaries should be discussed earlier in the budget process in future years, and the Board agreed.

MOVED BY COMM. PATTERSON, SECONDED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO GO INTO OPEN SESSION.

7. The Board agreed by consensus to the following salary increases, in addition to the 4% Cost of Living Allowance approved earlier in the meeting:

<u>Employee</u>	<u>New Salary Grade-Step</u>
Geraldine Crowe	14-13
Richard Betz	Half-way between 25-8 & 25-9
Lamar Nix	24-10
Maureen Lackey	17-3
Jerry Cook	21-6
James McCall	15-4
Todd Ensley	13-4
R. L. Forrester	11-7
Willie Houston	16-3
Clifford Ammons	11-6
Gary Dalton	11-3
Jimmy Mull	14-2
Leroy McCall	15-12
Stanley Houston	12-8
Dale McMahan	9-5
Eugene Ramey	15-3
Larry Holt	14-2
John Smith	5-12
James Coffey	10-2
Craig McCall	19-13
Greg James	18-13

David Leffler	18-13
Matt Shuler	13-2
Steven Bryson	10-3
Selwyn Chalker	19-7
Bonnie Bryson	10-5
Gary McCall	5-3
Maxine Ramey	5-3
Mike Houston	16-12
Howard Brown	13-5

8. MOVED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, SECONDED BY COMM. CAVENDER, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADOPT THE TOWN OF HIGHLANDS BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2000 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2001, WITH AN AD VALOREM TAX RATE OF 0.18 PER \$100.00 VALUATION. A copy is attached hereto and made a permanent part of this record.

V. The Board agreed by consensus to adjourn.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was declared adjourned by the Mayor at 10:00 p.m.

Richard Betz, Town Clerk