

## **Special Meeting Minutes of the Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners Meeting of March 5, 2020, at the First Presbyterian Church, 471 Main Street, Highlands, North Carolina**

Town Board Present: Commissioner John Dotson, Commissioner Amy Patterson, Mayor Pro Tempore Calloway, Commissioner Brian Stiehler, Commissioner Marc Hehn and Mayor Pat Taylor

Also Present: Town Manager Josh Ward, Town Attorney Jay Coward, Finance Director Rebecca Shuler, Public Works Director and Town Engineer Lamar Nix, MIS/GIS Director Matt Shuler, Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart, Police Chief Bill Harrell, Parks & Recreation Director Lester Norris, Computer Support Specialist Mark Hall and Town Clerk Gibby Shaheen

### **1. Meeting Called to Order**

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 9:00am.

### **2. Present and Approve the Agenda**

Commissioner Stiehler made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, which was seconded by Commissioner Dotson and the vote was unanimous.

### **3. Financial Matters – Midyear Update**

Town Manager Josh Ward reviewed the following Capital Projects from this year:

- Buckhorn Storage Tank Replacement – Tank is online and pumps installed in new pumphouse but not online yet. Once up and running the old house will be demolished. The erosion behind the tank will have to be addressed with heavier erosion matting and a retaining wall. The tank will be painted and landscaping will be completed. There will be a Budget Amendment presented to complete the project.
- Split Rail project was completed in the fall and the only thing remaining is the paving.
- Water Treatment Plant Filter #2 Rehab has been completed and is online.
- WTP Wastewater meter which was state mandated was tweaked to change the elevation and velocity of the flow rate. The WWTP serves 35-40% of the town.
- Reconductoring of Electrical Lines on US 64, North 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Horse Cove is completed.
- Commercial Bear Resistant Toters have replaced dumpsters on Oak Street and replaced other toters and seemed to be very effective in keeping the bears out of the garbage.
- Paving Hickory Hill, Cullasaja Drive/Oak Lane were complete and Satulah and Split Rail will be paved in April or May.
- Tennis Court Replacement was completed with the exception of striping because of the winter and the cold.

Finance Director Rebecca Shuler presented the following highlights of the FY19/20 budget at mid-year.

As of February 2020 property tax collections have decreased \$48,367.21 compared to February 2019. This represents a collection rate of 97.05% as of February 2020.

Sales tax revenue as of February 2020 has increased \$43,601.78 compared to February 2019.

Franchise Tax revenue as of February 2020 is \$15,007.75 less than in February 2019.

The amount of General Fund revenues collected as of February 2020, exclusive of \$237,802.50 in donations for Police projects, is \$602,012.50 more compared to General Fund revenues collected as of February 2019, and \$430,106.95 of this increase has come for the BB&T Fiber loan.

We anticipate meeting our budgeted revenue for General Fund with General Fund expenditures are 35% spent as of February 2020.

The Town had an original fund balance appropriation in General Fund at July 1, 2019 of \$660,692.00. As of February 2020, the Town has appropriated an additional \$637,627.16 in General Fund.

All utility funds should be at approximately 66.6% of budgeted revenue as of February 2020. The Water is at 60% with water charges. The Sewer is at 45%, Sanitation is at 68% and the Electric is at 39% for electric charges. We anticipate meeting our budgeted revenue for all utility funds.

#### **4. Public Works Department – Capital Needs**

Public Works Director and Town Engineer Lamar Nix presented the following outline:

### **RETREAT PUBLIC WORKS 2020**

#### **1. Street Dept. Paving**

- 1) Cullusaja Drive \$156,000
- 2) Chowan \$111,000
- 3) Church St. Alley \$17,000
- 4) Spring St. \$180,000
- 5) Hickory St. \$89,000
- 6) Pinecrest \$50,000

#### **Sidewalk Repair Projects**

- 1) US64 @Chandler Inn
  - a. With Wall \$251,000
  - b. Without Wall \$121,000
- 2) Main St. @Presbyterian Church \$64,000
- 3) Satulah \$11,000
- 4) Main St. @ Loafers Bench \$3,500
- 5) Pierson \$15,000

#### **Street Equipment**

- Flatbed Dump \$95,000

#### **2. Water/Sewer Dept.**

- 1) Moorewood Rd. Water Improvement \$628,000
- 2) Valentine Ln. Water Improvement \$192,000
- 3) Equipment- Replace 2010 Service Truck \$60,000

#### **3. Sanitation Dept.**

- 1) Replace Dumpsters \$30,000
- 2) Replace 2004 Peterbuilt \$172,000

#### **4. Electric Dept.**

- 1) Replace 2004 Yanmar Excavator \$73,000
- 2) Replace 2004 Hudson Trailer \$8,000
- 3) Replace 2009 International/Altec Bucket Truck \$246,000
- 4) Replace 2010 Vermeer Chipper \$85,000

#### **5. Waste Water Plant**

- 1) Belt Press Upgrades/Repair \$55,000

#### **6. Capital Improvement Plan**

**5. Break**

**6. Parks & Recreation Department – Capital Needs**

Parks & Recreation Director Lester Norris stated the Tennis Courts will be complete with striping once we have had 48-72 hours of temperatures above 50 and clear weather.

The Parks and Recreation Department requests a total of \$131,500.

(a) Tennis Court Replacement is \$120,000, which includes white lines for tennis and black for pickleball and will include the strap and drop net; and

(b) Dog Park Pavilion has to replace the rotting post (16), pressure wash and stain - \$11,500.

Norris continued future projects worth mentioning included new ball field lights and repairs or replacement of the Houston House to increase aerobic classes, meeting rooms with a kitchen for birthday parties and a general space for afterschool and Rec. Camp in the summer.

**7. Police Department – Capital Needs**

Police Chief Bill Harrell requests \$85,000 for Viper Radio System and a garage/storage building for the SERV Truck & UTV Speed Trailer.

(a) Viper Radio System - \$34,000; and

(b) Garage/Storage Building - \$51,000.

**8. Fire Department – Capital Needs**

Fire Chief Ryan Gearhart Department requests for one vehicle and equipment is \$64,272.

(a) Assistant Chief Replacement vehicle - \$31,951;

(b) Equipment for Vehicle - \$7,600; and

(c) Viper Radio Equipment - \$24,721.

**9. Lunch**

Mayor Taylor recessed the meeting for lunch at 11:52am.

The meeting was reconvened at 1:00pm

**10. Chamber of Commerce Update**

Chamber of Commerce Director Kay McHan updated on the Chamber and the ongoing plans with different activities, campaigns and projects. McHan wants to increase partnership with the Town to expand the overall experience of Highlands.

**11. Performing Arts Center Update**

Cindy Trevathan thanked the Board for their work in helping the Performing Arts Center and for the support in its endeavors.

The Performing Arts Center would've ideally completed the construction of the new building, but with the increase in construction it has been delayed and the nonprofit only wants to build what can be afforded. Going back and looking at the different options for a way to decrease costs. Trevathan appealed to the Board to consider helping with ongoing cost.

**12. Closed Session: Pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(1): To protect confidential or privileged information. WideOpen Networks Contract Review**

Mayor Pro Tempore Calloway made a motion to go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11(a)(1) To protect confidential or privileged information at 1:53pm, which was seconded by Commissioner Patterson and the vote was unanimous.

Once discussion was held, Mayor Pro Tempore Calloway made a motion to go back into open session at 3:09pm, which was seconded by Commissioner Stiehler and the vote was unanimous.

**13. WideOpen Networks Contract Discussion/Decision**

MAYOR PRO TEMPORE CALLOWAY MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONTRACT AS PRESENTED, WHICH WAS SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STIEHLER AND THE VOTE WAS 3 YEAS AND 1 NAY, WITH COMMISSIONER HEHN VOTING NAY.

**14. Session Wrap Up: Mayor and Council Comments**

Mayor Taylor thanked the Presbyterian Church for hosting the Retreat and staff for their hard work with good presentations and a successful budget.

Commissioner Stiehler thanked the Chamber and PAC for their perspectives.

Mayor Taylor thanked MIS/GIS Director Matt Shuler for his work with Attorney Baller and 6 years of the Fiber Project.

**15. Adjournment**

As there were no further matters to come before the Board of Commissioners, Commissioner Patterson moved to adjourn which was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Calloway and upon a unanimous vote, the Town Board adjourned at 3:20pm.

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Patrick Taylor  
Mayor

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Gilberta B. Shaheen  
Town Clerk