

REGULAR BOARD MEETING of November 6, 2002, with Mayor Buck Trott and Commissioners H. N. James, Mike Cavender, Hank Ross, and Amy Patterson present; Comm. Ron Sanders was not present.

Also present were Richard Betz, Lamar Nix, Jerry Cook, Selwyn Chalker, Larry Gantenbein, Eric Morris, Steve Lucas, Howard Shannon, James Manley, Erin Bronk, Karen Hawk, Marc Pittman, and Kim Lewicki.

I. Call to Order.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Approval of Agenda.

Copies of the agenda had been distributed by mail.

MOVED BY COMM. PATTERSON, SECONDED BY COMM. CAVENDER, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS DISTRIBUTED.

III. Approval of Minutes.

Copies of the minutes of the October 16 Regular Board Meeting had been distributed by mail.

MOVED BY COMM. PATTERSON, SECONDED BY COMM. CAVENDER, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS DISTRIBUTED.

IV. Reports.

1. The Mayor commended the Chamber of Commerce, Recreation Department, and Fire Department for the Main Street "Trick or Treat" event the previous week. He also congratulated all of the candidates who had won the elections the previous day. He felt the Board should schedule an informal joint dinner meeting with the County Commissioners next month in Highlands; the Board agreed by consensus.

The Mayor also reported that he understood the Magistrate's position in Highlands would be filled, but not until after the first of the year due to a freeze on hiring.

2. Each Board member had received a copy of the Public Services Administrator's written report for the month. Lamar Nix was present and reviewed the report. He also said that he had been asked by the Mayor and Comm. James to review the cost estimates for the proposed water line to the Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. He had contacted a qualified contractor, and they had determined that the estimates were still valid, except that the cost of the 10" pipe might be \$10 less per foot today, a savings of \$120,000; he also noted that the contingencies seemed higher than usual. The Mayor added that there had still been no official confirmation of the \$500,000 congressional appropriation for the water line which the Town understood had been approved last month.

Comm. Ross asked about the discussion at the previous meeting about the possibility of improving the Town's portion of Bowery Road and paving it, section by section; he wondered what costs would be involved, and also what the road would look like, its width and character. Comm. James felt that the Town should first check and determine if the Town had a valid right-of-way on the road. The Town Administrator agreed to investigate the question of right-of-way. Comm. James also said that he did not think that the Town would be saving any money having the Street Department work on the road, rather than a contractor, if it was taking them away from their other work.

MOVED BY COMM. ROSS, SECONDED BY COMM. CAVENDER, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO PREPARE A COST ESTIMATE AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED ON THE TOWN PORTION OF BOWERY ROAD.

3. Each Board member had received a copy of the Police Chief's written report for the month. Jerry Cook was present and noted that the training hours were up this month--176 hours--due to recent special firearms training.

4. Each Board member had received a copy of the Recreation Director's report for the month. Selwyn Chalker was present and reported that the Recreation Committee would meet at 6:00 p.m. on November 19.

5. Each Board member had received a copy of the Town Planner/Zoning Administrator's report for the month. Larry Gantenbein was present, and noted that he had issued four permits for draining impoundments, including two out of Town. He also said that he had learned that Division of Water Quality official Milt Rhodes was leaving that agency for the private sector; he understood that the letter from the Mayor concerning the 100-foot buffer had been referred to the State Attorney-General's office, and the request for the list of other local governments being required to amend their ordinances would be responded to in time.

Mr. Gantenbein also reported that the Land Use Planning Committee had decided to appoint a Survey Committee to develop a survey of the community, to be approved by the Town Board; the Committee consisted of Bob Wright, Dennis DeWolf, and Dixie Barton. A Data Committee had also been appointed, consisting of Thomas Craig, Brooks Bennett, and James Tate, to accumulate existing data for the Committee. The goal was to have the survey ready for approval by January, mail it out, and have the results tabulated by March or April. He said that the Committee had decided it needed input from the community, similar to the survey done in 1988, to determine if it was on track and to support the conclusions in its report. The questions would focus on the Land Use Plan, and would be short and concise.

He also reported that the upcoming Zoning Board meeting would consider a Special Use Permit for the First Presbyterian Church, an appeal by the Highlands Biological Station of his denial of a permit, and a request for a variance from the County School Board for the new gymnasium at Highlands School.

6. Each Board member had received a copy of the Treasurer's Report for the month. The Treasurer noted that ad valorem property collection to date was down over previous years, which he speculated was due to the elimination of the County's discount for early payment.

MOVED BY COMM. JAMES, SECONDED BY COMM. ROSS, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ACCEPT THE TREASURER'S REPORT.

7. The Town Administrator reported that the owners of Old Edwards Inn would be grateful for installation of a 15-minute parking space on the east side of Fourth Street closest to Main Street, as discussed at the previous meeting. Comm. Patterson noted that there was a fire hydrant at this intersection, and she wondered whether there would be adequate clearance if delivery trucks were parked in the space; the Town Administrator agreed to check with the Fire Department.

He also reported that replies had still not been received from Milt Rhodes or Harold Saylor, and that the Schifflli Parking Ordinance case was scheduled for November 18.

V. Old Business - None.

VI. New Business.

1. Each Board member had received a copy of the audit for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2002, prepared by Lucas & Keener, PA, together

with the Management Letter dated October 4. Steve Lucas was present and reported that the audit indicated the Town had made significant improvements in its enterprise funds this year without going into debt; he also noted that the General Fund had come close to breaking even. The Town was in good financial condition and was not in debt. He asked the Board to call him if they had any questions concerning the audit.

The Mayor asked about the new accounting standards going into effect. Mr. Lucas said these would go into effect beginning in June of 2003, and would require the Town to establish a depreciation schedule for infrastructure. The Treasurer said that he felt it would not be difficult to meet the new "GASB-34" standards; all of the Town property had been recently appraised, and the Town's GIS system could provide detailed information on infrastructure.

2. Each Board member had received a copy of a petition for rezoning from C. Howard Shannon for a 0.49-acre tract on the Dillard Road a short distance west of the Rhodes Superette property. Comm. James wondered why the petition would not be considered spot zoning. The Mayor noted that the Board could either deny the request or send it to the Planning Board for a recommendation. He also remembered that the Board had denied petitions to re-zone the property between this property and Rhodes Superette at least twice. Comm. James said he did not see any way that the Town could approve more strip highway commercial zoning, which had been largely eliminated in 1989 and 1990. Comm. Cavender asked if the Land Use Planning Committee would be reviewing zoning districts; Larry Gantenbein said that it would, and that the surveys would also be providing input.

Howard Shannon was present, and said that he also had a letter from Steve Powers, owner of the adjoining property between him and Rhodes Superette; Mr. Powers had intended to be present with a petition of his own but had been unable to attend the meeting. The letter said that approving the re-zoning would be reasonable, logical, and the proper course, since all of the property along the highway between there and the downtown area had already been zoned for commercial use.

MOVED BY COMM. JAMES, SECONDED BY COMM. PATTERSON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO DENY THE PETITION FOR RE-ZONING.

3. Karen Hawk was present, representing the Leadership Highlands Class of 2002, with a proposal for landscaping the south side of Maple Street. She said the Class had wanted to create a tangible connection to the community by restoring the original natural beauty of the road; although the Town had gained an alternate route by widening the street, it had lost the cool, tree-shaded street that it once was. The plan called for natural landscaping, which would require minimal maintenance; it included large maple trees, hemlocks or a similar evergreen, white fringetrees, and American mountain ash. A cost estimate was also submitted with the plan; the total cost would be \$3,155, with labor provided by Leadership Highlands. A second phase of the plan called planting azaleas and perennial wildflowers; it was hoped that these plants would be donated. The Town crew would also be requested to assist in digging holes.

Comm. James asked about sight distance, and Comm. Ross, who had prepared the drawing with several other members of the Class, said that it would not be impeded; no shrubs were proposed at the intersections. Comm. James said that he wanted the opportunity to review the plans, and also for the Town Engineer to review them. The Board agreed by consensus to take the proposal under advisement until the next meeting.

4. MOVED BY COMM. CAVENDER, SECONDED BY COMM. PATTERSON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

**RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING
NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY IN HIGHLANDS**

WHEREAS, philanthropy is an essential part of our country's tradition and is essential to its spirit; and

WHEREAS, it is ever more in evidence that our nation's greatest resource is its people and their willingness to give; and

WHEREAS, philanthropists have shown that they truly care and share generously of themselves and their resources; and

WHEREAS, we are seeking even more donations from our citizens and better application of these valuable contributions.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Allen L. Trott, Mayor of the Town of Highlands, wish to honor and thank the dedicated citizens of Highlands who give so freely of their valuable time, energy, and money by proclaiming **November 15, 2002** to be officially designated as

NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY IN HIGHLANDS;

and in doing so, I call upon all citizens to help to renew and sustain the spirit and vitality of this great nation by committing a portion of their resources to addressing the needs of their communities through generous giving.

5. MOVED BY COMM. CAVENDER, SECONDED BY COMM. ROSS, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION PURSUANT TO G. S. §143-318.11(A)(6) TO REVIEW APPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR METER READER. All present left the room except the Clerk and the Public Services Administrator.

The Board reviewed eleven applications for employment. The Public Services Administrator recommended employing Keith Stanley Hicks in the position.

MOVED BY COMM. CAVENDER, SECONDED BY COMM. PATTERSON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO GO INTO OPEN SESSION. The public was invited back into the room but nobody was present.

6. MOVED BY COMM. JAMES, SECONDED BY COMM. CAVENDER, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO EMPLOY KEITH HICKS AS METER READER AT A SALARY OF 8-1 (\$19,007).

VII. MOVED BY COMM. PATTERSON AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADJOURN.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was declared adjourned by the Mayor at 8:12 p.m.

Richard Betz, Town Clerk