

MINUTES

The Rural Hall Town Council electronically held an agenda briefing on April 6, 2020 at 10:00 AM. The following members were present: Mayor Timothy M. Flinchum - presiding; Mayor Pro Tem John N. McDermon; Councilwoman Susan H. Gordon; Councilman Ricky S. Plunkett; Councilman Jesse A. Stigall; Town Manager Megan M. Garner; and Town Clerk Dora K. Moore.

Fire Chief Andy Marshall and Finance Director Wade Gilley were also in attendance.

Councilman Ricky S. Plunkett made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mayor Pro Tem John N. McDermon seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

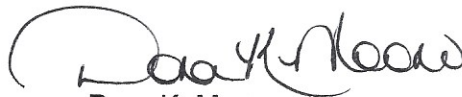
The following items were discussed:

- There will be no community National Day of Prayer service due to COVID-19.
- Manager Garner shared the proposed audit contract with Eddie Carrick, CPA, is the same as last year.
- Manager Garner shared a proposed interlocal agreement with the City of King for fire inspections and investigations within our town limits beginning July 1, 2020. During the second year, the Town takes over these services and the City of King provides support. The agreement is nearly identical to Forsyth County's proposal, but the cost to the Town is significantly less at an estimated \$15,000-\$16,000. Mayor Flinchum assured Council that all discussions with Forsyth County have been civil. Staff is currently working on the logistics of an additional person so the Town will be ready for year two. Manager Garner noted there is a possibility the Town of Walkertown may want to contract with us after the first year. Attorney Burge had some potential changes to the agreement that have been shared with the City of King.
- Typically, the Town budgets \$1,600 for municipal elections. This year, the fee nearly tripled due to a new pollbook process and temporary staff services. Forsyth County Board of Elections has indicated this is the fee we should expect in future years.
- Manager Garner and Councilwoman Gordon electronically attended a session on evaluating the manager and board. The session stressed the importance of the accountability of the governing board and manager. Manager Garner shared a proposed manager evaluation form with the Council noting it can be revised as needed. It is important that each Councilmember participates in the evaluation process. Per her contract, Manager Garner's evaluation is supposed to be conducted in May. Due to COVID-19, it is understandable if the process is delayed. Council members were in agreement with the evaluation form as presented, noting additional changes may be needed once it's been in use.
- Proposed changes to the Town's Concealed Weapons and Parks and Recreation ordinances were presented to Council. North Carolina General Statutes permits limited restrictions of concealed carry at recreational facilities. Staff has worked on the revisions with Attorney Burge, who believes this will bring the Town in compliance with statutes. The ball field is the only area of the park that can be regulated.
- At this time, no employee has requested emergency FMLA or emergency paid sick leave. Offices remain closed to the public and staff is still reporting onsite while attempting to remain 6 feet apart.
- Staff requested direction on how to handle Council requests for articles in the newsletter and/or social media. Clerk Moore received a request for a very positive, uplifting message to be placed in the Town newsletter. The newsletter had already been printed so it was discussed potentially placing the message on social media. This was the first request by a councilmember, and since a precedence would be set, staff requested guidance. Mayor

Flinchum stated he saw nothing wrong with publishing generic, neutral articles that were from the entire Council. If an individual member wants to share a message, it may be best to do such on their personal social media. Consensus was to do "feel good" segments on the Town's social media during COVID-19. If a Councilmember has something they would like to share on the Town's social media, it will be submitted to Clerk Moore and reviewed by the entire Council prior to publication. Mayor Pro Tem McDermon cautioned Council to not allow a political grandstand.

- Manager Garner requested Council consider a one-cent fire tax increase for FY 2020-2021. At this point, the Fire Department is approximately \$67,000 out of balance and early indications have suggested a decrease in property taxes as well as a 20% decrease in sales tax revenue. Last year between the April and May value estimates, the Fire Department lost nearly \$27 million in tax value due to Siemens moving a tremendous amount of equipment from the facility. It was hoped tax valuations would increase to recoup this loss. However, the April 1st estimates showed a decrease in both the Town and suburban fire district and a more significant decrease is expected in May. A one-cent fire tax increase would generate approximately \$42,000 in Town and \$46,000 in the suburban area. Staff has informed Forsyth County there was a possibility the Fire Department would request a tax increase, but staff had not been able to discuss with Council yet. The Forsyth County fund balance was drained last year, and funds were requested from the Stokes County fund balance as well. Mayor Flinchum inquired if the Town could shift one cent to the Fire Department so not to increase Town taxes at this time. Manager Garner said it was a possibility for the funds to come from the Town's appropriated fund balance. Councilwoman Gordon inquired if the License Plate Agency (LPA) revenue could help offset. Manager Garner explained there is no way for the Town to know how much revenue will be generated from the LPA and explained further that the funds would have to come from appropriated fund balance because the Town and Fire Department funds are separate. Mayor Pro Tem McDermon expressed concern about pulling funds from the Town on a regular basis. After much discussion, Councilman Ricky S. Plunkett made a motion to request a one-cent tax increase in the suburban fire district, maintain the Town's current fire tax rate, and the Town give the Fire Department additional revenue to equal 11.5 cents in FY 2020-2021. Councilman Jesse A. Stigall seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. It was noted the funding will be reviewed again next budget year.
- Clerk Moore will develop a plan for receiving public comments electronically for the April 13 Council meeting.

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilman Ricky S. Plunkett to adjourn at 11:28 AM.



Dora K. Moore
Town Clerk