

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
WINNSBORO TOWN COUNCIL
AUGUST 3, 2021**

Present: Mayor John McMeekin; Mayor Pro-Tem Demetrius Chatman (arrived at 6:21 p.m.); Danny Miller, Janice Bartell Prather, James M. Burroughs, Council Members; Jason Taylor, Town Manager; Scott Elliott, Town Attorney; Patti L. Davis, Town Clerk.

The Winnsboro Town Council met in regular session on August 3, 2021, at 6:15 p.m. at the Winnsboro Women's Club. 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 Independent Voice of Blythewood and Fairfield, The Country Chronicle and four hundred ninety-two other individuals.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor McMeekin called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:18 p.m.

2. INVOCATION

Council Member Burroughs led the invocation.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Council Member Bartell Prather, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the agenda. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Council Member Bartell Prather, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve the Finance Committee Minutes of July 20, 2021, and the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 20, 2021. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

5. MAYOR'S COMMENTS

Mayor McMeekin stated there was an article in the Post & Courier a while back, and this article included two facts that, although insignificant, were incorrect. One should always get their facts correct to begin with in order to disseminate clear information. Also, there have been comments concerning employees. The Town had four employees to leave and four employees were hired. No extra employees were hired. There were job positions that were reclassified, but another employee was not added. Further, because of the delta variant, Council is requiring masks again inside the public buildings of the Town of Winnsboro. Council has the ability to do an emergency ordinance if necessary, but at this point, this will not be done. Mayor McMeekin stated he is not

concerned so much about himself, but it is important that the proper standards be set to take care of the Town of Winnsboro employees. For this reason, masks are being required in the City buildings to protect the employees.

Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman arrived at 6:21 p.m.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT (3 MINUTES): THE TOTAL TIME ALLOCATED TO THIS PUBLIC COMMENT SEGMENT IS 30 MINUTES.

- Mary Anne Tolbert – Ms. Tolbert spoke concerning the zoning meeting which was held a couple of weeks ago in reference to the Battered But Not Broken request for a variance. Ms. Tolbert wanted to make sure Council is aware of the feelings of the neighbors in the vicinity of this request. Not one member of the immediate area is for this request. This is not to say that they are not for the service being provided, but not for this use in the proposed residence. The neighbors feel that the program participants will not change overnight, along with the recidivism rate, and the community and the children must be protected. The members of the community wanted to be sure that Council is aware of their feelings concerning this matter.

7. SPECIAL REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS

None.

8. ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

- A.** Resolution No. 080321: A Resolution by the Town of Winnsboro Authorizing the Town Manager to Pursue the Acceptance of 225 S. Congress Street for the Purpose of Main Street Improvements, and Matters Related Thereto. Per Mr. Taylor, there is a burned out house on Congress Street that is very unattractive and dangerous, and this is something that needs to be addressed. Mr. Taylor spoke with the owner with the assistance of Council Member Burroughs and his father, in an attempt to get a resolution to this matter. What is proposed is the owner will give the property to the Town and then the Town can take down the building and clean the lot to have a green space on Congress Street. The Town has the equipment in-house to be able to do this. There is not much left to the old structure, and it should come down fairly easily. The space can then be cleaned up. Motion made by Council Member Bartell Prather, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, to approve Resolution No. 080321. Council Member Miller questioned how the property will be disposed of. Per Mr. Taylor, the property will be donated and will be owned by the Town of Winnsboro. Mayor McMeekin

stated we would then be able to handle it as Council sees fit. In mentioning this, Mr. Taylor stated we would have to go through the process of getting a clean title so it can be accepted. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman questioned if the property would just be green space. Mr. Taylor stated there could be future plans if Council sees fit to do so. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired concerning the owner of the property and surmised that possibly he just did not have the resources to take care of the situation. Mr. Taylor agreed and stated this is the best solution for the owner. Mayor McMeekin stated the Resolution is to pursue the acceptance of the property, and once all the information is known, this will be brought back to Council. Mayor Pro Tem Chatman stated he did not want the Town to spend money to tear something down because someone else chose not to. Mr. Taylor stated no funds are being requested at this time. In speaking with the utilities, we have the necessary equipment, such as a trackhoe and a backhoe. There may, however, be a cost from the County due to the need for a dumpster to dispose of the material. **The motion carried 5-0.**

9. MANAGER'S REPORT

- A.** American Rescue Plan Update. Per Mr. Taylor, this is continuing to be researched since this will have a major impact on some of the projects the Town is looking to do. It is a moving target as to the actual amount. Currently, it is listed on the Municipal Association's site at a higher amount than what was originally anticipated of \$1.58M. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated that during one of the recent sessions, it was stated that the amount would be increased. Mayor McMeekin states the amount to some of the larger cities was decreased giving more to the smaller cities. Mr. Taylor stated copies have been provided to Council of the presentation at the recent Conference, and this can also be found online. A priority list has been started of possible things to use the money toward. The bulk will go toward the meter reading system, but there are also some in-house needs, especially at the water plant, and Mr. Cisney has prioritized a list of items that are needed. Some of these items are regulated by DHEC, and these will need to be addressed in the near future.
- B.** Animal Control. Mr. Taylor stated there has been an issue with a rabid fox in town that did bite a citizen, and they are now undergoing treatment for rabies. There have been a lot of requests for traps to be placed, and this issue is being monitored on an ongoing basis. To that end, he has also spoken with Mr. Bob Innes from the County's Animal Control along with Kathy Faulk with Hoof & Paw. The Hoof & Paw organization donates a lot of money for the care of animals, and they are willing to help cover the cost of a mobile rabies clinic. Mr. Innes tells us that most of the pets in the

County are not vaccinated for rabies, so everyone will be encouraged to get their pets vaccinated. The hope is that this will be a free service, however, at most, it would be \$10. We are also considering bringing the City's ordinance back before Council to hopefully have it mirror the County's ordinance. This will be more consistent and make it easier for Animal Control and everyone else. Mayor McMeekin feels this would be an excellent idea. This was looked at before, and there were obstacles. It would make more sense for the City and the County to have the same codes. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated he was just speaking with a constituent who stated there is another fox in the area roaming around. Mr. Taylor has heard that there is a fairly large population.

- C.** Update on the Zion Hill Project – Mr. Taylor stated Mr. Clauson took the lead on this project while working for the County. Mr. Clauson stated the project was sidelined by COVID, but it is now getting more traction. The game plan was to tear down 40 structures, but there were also a lot of improvements included for public facilities. At that time, the County was working in partnership with the Town. The funding has now been received, and we are presently looking at potentially more funding to be available for improvements. Right now, we should be able to bring down at least 15 structures, and this could fluctuate up to 25 on the high end. However, this is a voluntary program, and the citizens must be willing to participate. Mr. Clauson stated three structures have been torn down during this time by the residents. The other improvements include security lighting and cameras for Martin Park and also Fortune Springs. The lighting would be throughout the neighborhood, and we will be working closely with Mr. Medlin. All street lights would be replaced with LED, which would significantly brighten up the areas, with a couple of gaps being filled that are currently without lighting. This is relatively inexpensive, and \$12,000 is set aside for lighting. Public safety signage will be improved to better navigate in the area. Around \$11,000 is included for landscaping in Martin Park and some in Fortune Springs. The hope is to update this with possibly more funds available to update Martin Park with new playground equipment. Mr. Clauson has been working closely with County Council Member Robinson and Shelly Fentress, the Grants Coordinator, for the County. A meeting is expected shortly to nail down the cost figures. Council Member Miller suggested to coordinate a meeting with the residents to get their input and also to provide them with an update. Mr. Clauson stated this is the goal of the current meetings, and the hope is to set up a citizen meeting in the near future, possibly September or early October. Council Member Miller questioned the enforcement piece. Per Mr. Clauson, he has been trying to get a handle on whether the Town has adopted this,

because towns unlike counties can actually tear down structures and then put a lien on the property. However, this has to be included in the ordinance, and he has not been able to find the latest ordinance in order to dig into it. Mayor McMeekin stated he has not been able to find it either. This would, of course, give us more teeth if this language is in the ordinance. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated the City does need to strengthen its ordinance with more fines, etc. Mr. Clauson stated as long as due process is followed, if it goes through the courts and there is failure to act, then we proceed. Another great opportunity is Habitat for Humanity, and they have already come out to a number of the community meetings in the past. Mr. Kramer was with the organization for 30+ years and has recently retired, so they are in the process of getting another Executive Director. They are still dedicated to coming into the community and assisting residents with renovations. This is the piece the State does not like to do. Mayor McMeekin inquired if there is any other money available for neighborhood improvement. Mr. Clauson remembers a pocket of funding back in 2014-2015 when he was with the Santee Lynch COG, but he has not seen anything of this nature since. Council Member Miller inquired if any of the funding can be utilized for other neighborhoods. Mr. Clauson stated this particular fund is designed for the Zion Hill neighborhood restructuring plan.

- D.** Code Enforcement Presentation – Mr. Jeter explained the process of the code enforcement system. A complaint will come in, and the officer will investigate. If the person is not at home, a red tag will be posted with instructions on how they are to proceed. This is then followed up with a certified letter. Mr. Jeter has been concentrating on the upkeep of lots in various areas of the City and making sure the lots are being cut. He is keeping an eye on some neighborhood areas and also dealing with unlicensed vehicles parked on the side of the road that could impede emergency vehicles. Mr. Jeter also discussed the 225 S. Congress Street property and the big house near Well's Fargo. He is concentrating with making sure the City looks decent. Mayor McMeekin stated the citizens should lodge a complaint in writing and inquired if citizens are indeed putting their complaints in writing. Mr. Jeter stated they usually call. Mayor McMeekin then stated we should be following the proper procedure, and the ordinance states that the complaint should be put in writing. Chief Seibles stated the department does prefer the complaint to be in writing, and this can also be done through the Town's website. Mr. Jeter stated the department does have forms, and some of these can be dropped off at Town Hall. Mayor McMeekin stated this would be a good idea to make it as easy for the citizens as we can. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if there

is follow up done on the complaints, giving example of the high grass on the vacant lot on Cemetery Street. Mr. Jeter stated periodic follow up and monitoring is done, and the vacant lot is dealing with an LLC. Also, Mr. Jeter stated he is part-time and does what he can during those hours. Chief Seibles stated the department also tries to support Mr. Jeter since he is part-time. Lately, with so many officers out, the department is struggling with the manpower issue. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired how many hours Mr. Jeter works, and Mr. Jeter stated it can vary between 16 to 32 hours.

Council Member Miller referred back to the Manager's Report concerning the Rescue Plan Update and believes there was a previously set amount in the budget for the meter read system. Mr. Taylor stated previously Council had dedicated the bulk of the money toward the radio read meter system (AMI system) which is a good thing to spend it on making us more efficient and resolving the issue of the meter reading problem. Mayor McMeekin stated there was discussion on this, and \$800,000 was allocated in that budget with Council waiting to see what would be allowable under the Rescue Plan. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman also believes this was set aside previously from other sources. Mayor McMeekin further stated everything that is used for the Rescue Plan must be approved. Council Member Miller stated information gleaned from the Municipal Association's meetings stated priorities need to be set, such as broadband, wastewater improvements, water, etc. Mr. Taylor stated he has asked the department heads, primarily water and then sewer, to prepare priority lists. The money from the American Recovery Act will probably be allowed to be used for this, and this is what we need to concentrate on. These priorities will be presented to Council prior to allocating any money toward them. Mayor McMeekin stated the City will hopefully make some improvements that will be beneficial to the citizens and reduce some costs. The Town can then divert these saved resources to other needed areas. Council Member Miller hopes that broadband can be achieved with the Town working together with the School District and the County. Mr. Taylor stated the Department of Commerce has allocated a fair amount of money with 17 counties having been targeted and Fairfield County being one of these counties, to improve broadband. Hopefully, this will be covered, but we will be looking to see if there are gaps as this is also very important.

Mayor McMeekin also stated concerning the Main Street Business Façade Grants, it is stated six were done; however, he believes there were only five.

10. OLD BUSINESS

None.

11. NEW BUSINESS

A. Finance Committee – Recommendation to purchase non-budgeted Capital item WWTP Alarm System not to exceed \$11,000. Mayor McMeekin stated the Finance Committee was held earlier and deferred to Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman for this item. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated Mr. Culbreth was present at the meeting requesting repair of the alarm system for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Mr. Culbreth provided one quote; and he was asked, if possible, to provide more quotes and then bring this item back to Council for consideration.

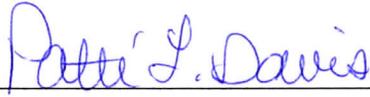
Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman also stated he has been driving through downtown and some of the buildings look horrible. At the Municipal Conference, some of the cities were discussing how their towns are putting wrapping on the windows to make them look better. He would like for the Town to begin reaching out to businesses and others so that we can make downtown look better. We need to strive to make downtown look better for the citizens and also when visitors drive through to make them want to stop and be a part of Winnsboro and what it has to offer. This would be part of the Code Enforcement piece with some of the buildings actually being storage units downtown. Council Member Miller agreed, and he understands it will take a while. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman believes at one time the façade grants were set at \$500, and he thought it was stated to increase this to \$700. However, he does not think this increase ever materialized. In speaking with some of the downtown businesses, \$500 will not go far since the owner of the building has to be the one to do this. Mayor McMeekin believes last year there were only four requests for the façade grants. He also believes our ordinances, at this time, are not strong enough, and this will be looked at going forward in order for the ordinances to be strengthened. Council must set the tone, and he commends the Town Manager for the plants which were recently planted at Town Hall. He also hears the planters are doing an excellent job. Tackling this will be a difficult process, but we must have more teeth in the ordinances.

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.)

No executive session.

13. ADJOURN

At 7:14 p.m., it was moved by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Miller, to adjourn. ***The motion carried 5-0.***



PATTI L. DAVIS
TOWN CLERK



JOHN MCMEEKIN
MAYOR