

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
WINNSBORO TOWN COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 7, 2021**

Present: Mayor John McMeekin; Mayor Pro-Tem Demetrius Chatman; Janice Bartell Prather, James M. Burroughs, Council Members; Jason Taylor, Town Manager; Patti L. Davis, Town Clerk.

Absent: Danny Miller.

The Winnsboro Town Council met in regular session on September 7, 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 6:17 p.m.

2. INVOCATION

Council Member Bartell Prather led the invocation.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Bartell Prather, to approve the Finance Committee Minutes of August 17, 2021, and the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 17, 2021. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

5. MAYOR'S COMMENTS

Mayor McMeekin stated there continues to be questions concerning a mask mandate. At this time, he does not feel this is the proper thing to do. With the analogy of a hurricane, no one really gets ready to do anything until their neighbors start to move. Right now, 75% of the nation's adult population has been vaccinated with at least one shot and 50% plus has had two vaccinations. He believes this, along with natural immunity, will go a long way, and if a mandate was done at this time, it may push some people backward who are on the fence. He feels the best way to lead in this situation is not to bombard with statistics and try to force anyone into anything but, instead, try to lead

them by seeing what their neighbors do. Mayor McMeekin stated he has been vaccinated, and there is a low probability but he may still get sick. For this reason, he is careful and continues to wear a mask. However, he does not want a mask mandate for the Town at this time. He wants to lead people into getting vaccinations instead of forcing, allowing them to make the judgment call themselves, and he believes this will come in time. The more people that are vaccinated, the less probability there will be for variants in the United States. There are 4.4 million cases every day in the world, which is an opportunity for a variant. We cannot control what goes on everywhere, and we have to take care of ourselves.

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

No one signed to speak.

7. SPECIAL REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS

- A.** Gene Stephens, Chamber of Commerce – Rock Around the Clock. Mr. Stephens stated the Big Grab is this weekend, Friday and Saturday, and he requested permission for a food truck to park downtown on Friday in the Chamber parking lot. Mayor McMeekin directed Mr. Stephens to speak with Mr. Taylor and Chief Seibles concerning this request, and Mr. Taylor stated this can be worked out as long as Council has no objection. Mr. Stephens further stated Rock Around the Clock is scheduled for October 1 and 2. He would like to get Council's opinion/blessing concerning this festival since it is in Winnsboro. Mayor McMeekin stated today he received notice that the Municipal regional meetings in Columbia are being cancelled, and the Charleston Mayor has mandated vaccinations. Mayor McMeekin would not do this, but from his standpoint, he is not for proceeding with Rock Around the Clock right now. Fairfield County has about 14 to 15% of the population that has been infected. We are not as high as other counties, but if we have a large gathering with no masks, we could have a spread. Mr. Stephens stated on Friday night, the concert area will be packed, and Fairfield Central is also off that night. Saturday is a little different with everything being spread out over a quarter mile. His board is about half and half concerning the event. Some have said they do not want to accept the liability and the risk, and Mayor McMeekin stated he is waiting for litigation to start at some point. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman stated with no mask mandate, COVID would be rampant in the air, and he would not be for the festival proceeding with the numbers increasing at this point. Mayor McMeekin stated it is so infectious, and when you get a group of people together not wearing masks, it is not a

healthy situation. Council Member Bartell Prather stated she sits on the other side and would be for it going forward. Mr. Stephens stated in his personal opinion, he is all for it; however, as Chamber President, he is not for it because of the liability. Discussion ensued concerning liability. Mayor McMeekin stated he would recommend waiting another year. Mr. Stephens stated Blythewood is going forward with Oktoberfest. Council Member Burroughs inquired if Friday night could be cancelled since everyone would be in close proximity and just do Saturday since it is more spread out. Mr. Stephens stated this could be done, and any element of the weekend can be modified. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman inquired if the Friday night event could be more spread out, and Mr. Stephens stated it is a concert, but the food trucks could be spread out more. Mr. Taylor stated this would be challenging because the food trucks need power. Further questions concerning the location of the car show, and Mr. Stephens stated the festival stretches all the way from Moultrie down Main Street. Council Member Bartell Prather inquired if there is a good turnout planned as far as the vendors. Mr. Stephens stated there is a good vendor turnout. Again, Mayor McMeekin stated he is bothered the most by the litigation standpoint and does not want to put the Town in this position. A formal vote was not taken; however, the following thoughts were given: Mayor McMeekin – in favor of cancelling, Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman – in favor of cancelling, Council Member Bartell Prather – in favor of probably cancelling, Council Member Burroughs – reluctantly in favor of cancelling. Mayor McMeekin stated this is an unpleasant call that needs to be made. We are no longer in June when there was a lull in the virus. Mr. Stephens thanked Council for their thoughts, and he will communicate this to his board.

8. ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

- A.** Resolution No. 090721: A Resolution Designating an Authorized Representative and Contact Person for Purposes of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Mayor McMeekin stated he believes this was approved on August 30, and the Town should be receiving this soon. It will be put into a separate account and the funds will then go through the proper procedures to be sure it is correctly spent. Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, seconded by Council Member Burroughs, to approve Resolution No. 090721. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

9. MANAGER'S REPORT

- A.** AMI System Update. Per Mr. Taylor, Mr. Rob Watson has come tonight to update Council on the AMI System. Mr. Peak and Mr. Medlin are also here for any questions Council may have. Mr. Watson thanked Council for

allowing him to be here tonight to give this update. Concerning the Blythewood system, the Rite-Aid tank is being completed. The infrastructure of the Blythewood tank has been done about two weeks, and the Rite-Aid has been worked on. It will be completely done today. So, the two tanks that have been approved for Blythewood will be completed today. Mr. Medlin has been great with getting the electric signed up for it, so everything is ready to go. The crew will be brought in to power up the bay stations. Mrs. Belton and Melissa are being assisted to get the software set up in the server. The next process will be to start up the bay stations (in the next couple of weeks) and put about 10 transmitters out on the existing meters in Cobblestone, one at the new apartment complex, to see how those readings are coming across. There have been some delays in the product due to the computer chips, and this has slowed the shipment of transmitters. The water meters are coming in, and the transmitters are now needed to put on top. At least 1,000 should be received, which should be one more shipment, and then the contractor can be brought in (U.S. Bronco) to start installing Cobblestone. Mr. Watson knows this is important to the Town with the meter reader situation. The next phase would be the Town of Winnsboro's water, electric and gas. Blythewood was approved and is around 1,600 meters, so in 3-5 weeks this should be completed. Around 500 meters a week can be done, so it will not take too long once we are up and running. This will however, depend on if the product comes in. The next phase would be Winnsboro, and we would need to put up two more tanks, the 11th Street tank and the Great Falls Highway tank. This will probably begin in January or February with the product and then gas about the same time and then electric. With the long lead times, delivery is about 20 weeks out on some of the gas meters. The infrastructure does not take that long to get the other two tanks up, but the problem is getting the material in for the meters and the transmitters. Mr. Watson spoke with the gas distributor today who states we are about 12 weeks from now for delivery, which could change because some of the material is being shipped. Right now, Blythewood should be completed around January and then the next part of the project will be started. Mayor McMeekin has been reading about the supply problems that companies are experiencing, which is affecting the world's economy. There may also be some price increases expected. Mr. Watson agrees, and all the prices that were given in March are good until the end of the year, December 31, 2021. If the order is received by then, the material should be in hand to begin the project. Once U.S. Broncho comes in, it would be nice to roll them from Blythewood right over to Winnsboro to finish up the project. Whatever can be reached by the two existing towers will be installed, but getting the gas meters ordered is the question. There will be a price increase, anywhere from 10-15%.

Mr. Watson does not want to see this, but today he was told there is a priority list, and orders will be filled for those high on the priority list. The vendors will not negotiate as in the past on a yearly basis, and now it is negotiated for three months. We will be good as long as the order is in by December 31, keeping in mind that we are 20 weeks out on delivery of some things. Mayor McMeekin stated as the money comes in, this needs to be re-evaluated, working with Mr. Peak and Mr. Medlin, to see what needs to be done. Mr. Watson estimates there could be a price increase on the remaining \$2.5M. Mayor McMeekin surmises this could be an additional \$250,000 to \$375,000, and further stated we need to take a hard look at this and move as fast as we can. Mr. Watson stated the goal at the onset was to fully automate the Town of Winnsboro and Blythewood with water, electric and gas and then other things could be added in, such as remote shut off meters and other aspects looking at pressure sensors, etc. Once the network is up, it will do wonders for the utilities and the customer service. Mayor McMeekin agrees that customer service needs to be improved right now. Mr. Watson stated he can provide the prices with labor, taxes, etc. if needed. Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman questioned if the quote from some months ago was still good, and Mr. Watson stated that quote is still good with the material prices and the labor prices. At the time this was given, tax was not added. Mayor McMeekin inquired if Mr. Peak has anything to add. Mr. Peak stated it would be good if we can move on this quickly and get everything ordered this year. Mr. Taylor stated the other thing to keep in mind with the American Rescue Plan funding is that it can be used for the water/sewer part but not for the gas and power part. This will have to be pulled from the Town's funds. Mayor McMeekin inquired if any of the initial amount can be recovered. Mr. Taylor will look into this further and inquired when Blythewood will go live. Per Mr. Watson, the meters will be tested within the next month, and hopefully billing and everything else will look good. Then, once U.S. Broncho comes in, the rest of the transmitters will be installed. This will include around 1,660 meters. There were some larger meters already changed out to the new census meter, so they will just need a transmitter installed. Mr. Peak has already been putting the electronic water meter in the ground and a transmitter will need to be installed with this. Mr. Taylor inquired of the percentage that will be complete once Blythewood is done. Per Mr. Peak, the total is around 5,000 and this will take care of about 1,600. Mr. Watson then passed out some handouts to Council to give an idea of the breakdown. A large meter survey will need to be done in Winnsboro, and this service is provided free of charge. Mr. Taylor thanked Mr. Watson for the information.

- B.** Wastewater Plant Interim Director Kirk Culbreth. Mr. Taylor stated Mr. Sammie Robinson, the Town's long-time sewer plant operator, will be retiring in a couple of weeks, and Mr. Kirk Culbreth, who was at our last workshop, will be Interim Director. The position will be advertised in the near future. Mayor McMeekin stated Mr. Robinson has done a wonderful job for many years and has been a dedicated employee to the Town of Winnsboro.

Mayor McMeekin stated he hoped everyone saw our Town Manager on the front page of The Voice newspaper. This is a nice piece of news for the Town of Winnsboro and our Manager.

10. OLD BUSINESS

None.

11. NEW BUSINESS

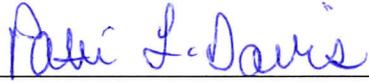
- A.** Request to Use Friendship Park – Fairfield One Step, October 7, 2021, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Per Mr. Clauson, he is presenting tonight on behalf of the organization. Fairfield One Step is a local group that was formed out of the Serve and Connect Movement. The organization is headed by Ms. Kassy Ray and was founded after Ms. Ray's husband was shot and killed in the Forest Acres neighborhood in 2015. She created this organization to focus on how community relations can be improved to better the relationships between law enforcement and the broader public safety as well and the community. This event is bringing out a number of local providers, including the Sheriff's Department, EMS, SLED, Winnsboro Public Safety, Behavioral Health, etc. Four different events will be held across the County, but one of the early events is planned for Friendship Park. The hope is to have about 25 individuals along with a number of representatives from the Town and County, etc. They will need some power usage, and for this reason the request was brought before Council. It is a good opportunity for Council to market it. Motion made by Council Member Bartell Prather, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, to approve the request by Fairfield One Step to use Friendship Park on the above stated date. ***The motion carried 4-0.***

- 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.)**

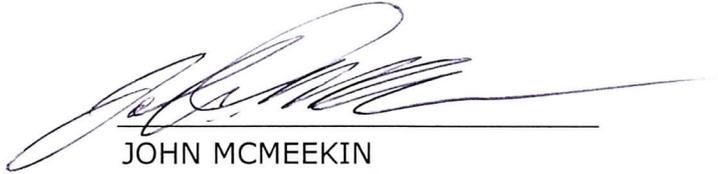
No executive session needed.

13. ADJOURN

At 7:00 p.m., it was moved by Council Member Burroughs, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Chatman, to adjourn. ***The motion carried 4-0.***



PATTI L. DAVIS
TOWN CLERK



JOHN MCMEEKIN
MAYOR