



**OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
MAY 5, 2022 - 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

Ann Schneider, Mayor  
George McClellan  
Martha Pittman  
Spencer Sullivan

**Staff Present**

Bill Bruce, Town Manager  
Sandra Smith, Town Clerk  
Sam Anders, Finance Officer  
Michael Thomas, Town Attorney

**Members Absent**

Jim Kinneman, Mayor Pro Tem

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**A. Invocation/Moment of Silence.**

Summerfield Mayor Tim Sessoms offered the invocation.

**B. Pledge of Allegiance.**

**2. APPROVE AGENDA**

*Spencer Sullivan made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

*Councilwoman Martha Pittman moved that the minutes of the April 7, 2022 regular meeting be approved, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**4. RESOLUTIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Columbiettes of Holy Cross Catholic Church in Kernersville made an International Firefighter Day presentation of two baskets of snacks to the Oak Ridge Fire Department to honor past and present firefighters.

Schneider called forward all members of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Conservation Easement Committee while Councilwoman Pittman read a Historic Preservation Month proclamation, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

**5. REPORT FROM GUILFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Detective Russell reported that there were 128 calls with 10 resulting in reports for the month of April. He said that there had been an increase in thefts of construction materials from sites in the area, and he encouraged everyone to protect their properties. Russell said that three vehicles had recently been broken into at Oak Ridge Town Park. He reminded residents not to leave valuables in sight in their vehicles, and reminded residents if they are victim of such an incident to call the Sheriff's Office and then call their bank, who can flag debit/credit cards as stolen. He said catalytic converters continue to be stolen.

**6. REPORT FROM OAK RIDGE FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Lt. Hampton Staunton reported that there were 77 calls in April, including 34 medical-related call. Staunton said that personnel had received 556 hours of training during the month of April. He reminded residents to only use their outdoor grills if they are 20-25 feet from the house, as that is a cause of many fires.

**7. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

**A. Board/Committee appointments/reappointments.**

*Councilman George McClellan made a motion to approve the reappointment of Kyle Anders to the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**B. Proposed update of 2017 salary study.**

Town Manager Bill Bruce said that Council was aware that he had proposed that the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments update the salary study it had done in 2017 in order to make sure employee compensation to was in line with the current market. Since the results of the study could have implications on the proposed budget, he asked that Council approve the study.

*Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to approve the recommendation to update the 2017 salary study. Councilman George McClellan seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**C. Other business.**

Bruce announced that the Town had been selected as a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation for the sixth consecutive year. He thanked the Tree City Committee, as well as Planning Director Sean Taylor and Parks & Recreation Director Terry Lannon, for their work in obtaining the designation.

**8. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Presentation of 2022-23 Fiscal Year Budget.**

Town Manager Bruce announced that the proposed 2022-23 Fiscal Year Budget, which had been prepared with the Finance Officer and Finance Committee and with input from Town committees and citizens, was available for review. He said the budget reflects the ambitious strategic agenda of the Town Council along with state and federal grant monies earmarked for capital investments. He noted that major initiatives include Heritage Farm Park construction, establishment of a municipal water system and the acceptance of its first customers, and renovation of the Redmon House into meeting/event space. He pointed out other initiatives, and noted that the budget proposes no change to the property tax rate, which has been 8 cents per \$100 of assessed property value since 2017.

Councilman McClellan asked if Bruce if they had considered a revenue neutral tax rate since the County had revalued properties this year. Bruce said that had been considered by the Finance Committee, who recommended not to change the tax rate in order to fund capital projects and initiatives outlined in the budget message. McClellan said he was glad to see the Redmon House project had been included.

Councilwoman Pittman, who had served as a Council liaison on the Finance Committee, said the budget was financially sound and that it supports longtime projects and strategic initiatives. She said projects have been vetted and had been in the works for some time. She welcomed citizens to contact her with questions or comments.

Councilman Sullivan also said citizens should contact him with questions. He said the operating budget was being held at about a 15-percent increase which included an addition to staff; he said most of that 15 percent had already been eaten up by inflation.

Mayor Schneider said the budget reflected a great balance between cautious conservatism budgeting of revenue and frugal operating expenditures. She said Oak Ridge had the 17<sup>th</sup> lowest municipal tax rate among approximately 500 cities and towns in the state.

**B. Consideration/Approval of Commercial Village Core Design Guidebook.**

Bruce gave a PowerPoint presentation of the Guidebook and acknowledged the work of Planning Director Sean Taylor, on the project. He said the presentation had been given recently to both the Planning & Zoning Board and the Historic Preservation Commission. He said the plan was almost like a companion to the Historic District Design Standards. He pointed out that the designs shown for two of the larger undeveloped properties in the Town Core were simply visions, not zoning requirements. Bruce said that, if adopted by Council, staff would begin working on changes to the development ordinance.

*Councilman Spencer Sullivan made a motion to adopt the plan. Councilman George McClellan seconded.*

Bruce reminded Council that while not the plan did not require a public hearing, it had been advertised and that public comments would be accepted. Mayor Schneider then opened the floor for comments, but no citizens came forward to speak.

*Council's vote on the motion was unanimous (4-0).*

**C. Presentation of Illustrated Standards for Historic District.**

Town Clerk Sandra Smith gave a presentation of the Illustrated Design Standard for the Historic District, which was recently approved by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Council members commended Smith, Historic Preservation Commission chair Debbie Shoenfeld and other Commission members, and graphic artist Carol Key for their many hours of work on the project. Schneider said she knew the amount of work that had gone into the project, as she had also spent hundreds of hours on it.

**9. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- Patti Dmuchowski, 7320 Hidden View Drive, said she supported the renovation of the Redmon House because it was one of the first buildings that people see when they enter the park. She asked Council for their support of the Redmon House renovation project.
- Ron Simpson, 8022 Fogleman Road, spoke about the importance of historic preservation in Oak Ridge.
- Phyllis Anders, 1837 Oak Ridge Road, said that she was asked to read a letter of support of the Redmon House from Deborah J. Watson, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.
- Caroline Ruch, 1976 Beeson Road, spoke in support of the renovation of the Redmon House. She said that the Town and the Historic Preservation Commission asks historic homeowners and businesses to follow the Design Standards and that demolition was usually not at the top of the list. Ruch said that the Redmon House should be preserved through adaptive reuse, meaning that it would give the structure a new purpose.
- John Garrett, 8604 Broomfield Road, spoke about the importance of preserving the Redmon House and spoke about the generations of people who had lived in the house. He said that the proposed renovations could repurpose it for a new use.
- Aleksandra Gill, 8548 Benbow-Merrill Road, spoke about the importance of historic preservation and expressed her desire to see the Redmon House restored.
- Mike Stone, 8112 Hunting Cog Drive, said nobody had ever suggested that the Redmon House be demolished. He said that the proposed budget of \$455,000 was to renovate a house with a tax value of \$35,000. Stone said that proposed project was not fiscally responsible and asked Council to consider that when looking at the tax neutral rate. He said that half of the amount of extra money that the Town would be paying would be going into Redmon House.

**10. MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE**

Finance Officer Sam Anders presented the financial report, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

*Councilman George McClellan made a motion to accept the financial report as presented, and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

## **11. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **A. Special Events Committee**

Committee Chair Patti Dmuchowski said that the paver sale had started and that an ad about the program was recently in the Northwest Observer. She announced that the Committee would be hosting a Memorial Day ceremony on May 30, 2022 at the amphitheater. Dmuchowski said that the new projected cost for the Veterans Honor Green was \$194,000.

### **B. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board**

Committee Co-Chair John Browning reported that the Board met on April 21, 2022 and adopted new project guidelines to assist them with approving proposed projects in the park. He said that that Board approved an Eagle Scout project consisting of a 5K event to benefit the Veterans Honor Green and a request from an Odyssey of the Mind team to sell drinks and snacks at the park to fund their trip to Iowa for a competition.

### **C. Finance Committee**

Chair John Jenkins reported that the Finance Committee had begun working on the budget in February and was pleased to present the draft budget for review tonight. He said that is believed that the proposed budget was fiscally conservative.

### **D. Water Advisory Committee**

Spencer Sullivan reported that the Committee met on April 21, 2022 and met with the president of Envirolink. He said that the bulk of the meeting was dedicated to reviewing water rate and fee recommendations which are needed for the town to operate and maintain a water system.

### **E. Historic Preservation Commission**

Commission member Barbara Engel reported that the Commission had approved the new Illustrated Standards at their last meeting and had heard a presentation on the Village Core Design Guidebook.

### **F. Planning & Zoning Board**

Board Chair Jason Streck reported that the Board had recommended that Council approve the Village Core Design Guidebook at their last meeting.

### **G. Mountains-to-Sea Trail Committee**

Council liaison Martha Pittman reported that the Committee had met on April 26, 2022 via Zoom. She said that the Committee was working with Friends of the MST on the installation of the new kiosk at the trailhead parking lot on Linville Road.

**H. Conservation Easement Committee**

Chair Stephanie Ferrell reported that the committee had met on April 21, 2022 and discussed hosting an Open House but determined that it was not the appropriate time. She said that the committee wanted to engage with property owners who had expressed an interest in easements to determine what their questions were first. Ferrell said that two letters would be developed and sent to homeowners of historic structures and to landowners. Ferrell said that a press release regarding the Core Initiative was issued on April 27, 2022.

**12. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPORTS**

**A. Oak Ridge Military Academy**

No report

**B. Oak Ridge Elementary School**

No report

**C. Oak Ridge Youth Association**

No report

**13. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Sam Anders, 1829 Oak Ridge Road, announced that Oak Ridge Fire Department would soon be selecting a 2022 recipient for the Strength and Honor Scholarship named in the memory of Lance Cpl. Andrew Russoli. He said that Russoli died almost 17 years ago during military service and that his family was having him disinterred in Greensboro and reinterred at Arlington National Cemetery. Anders said that the educational scholarship had provided almost \$50,000 by the Russoli family to recipients.

Mike Stone, 8112 Hunting Cog Road, said that the Finance Committee had done a great job on the budget proposal. He said that the current budget proposal included a 20% tax increase on the citizens of Oak Ridge. Stone said that he usually asks Council to reduce taxes but this year he was asking Council to consider no tax increase.

**14. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Council members shared their thoughts regarding the Redmon House renovation project.

**15. ADJOURNMENT**

*Councilwoman Martha Pittman moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:11 p.m., and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

Respectfully Submitted:

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Sandra B. Smith, CMC, NCCMC  
Town Clerk

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Ann K. Schneider  
Mayor