



**OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
JUNE 2, 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.

Steve Sumner 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 May 5, 2022, regular meeting be approved, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

4. RESOLUTIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

5. REPORT FROM GUILFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Cpl. Swaringen reported that there were 104 calls including 38 calls that were medical related for the month of May. He said that there had been an increase of car break in incidents at Oak Ridge Town Park. Swaringen encouraged residents to lock their valuables up in their trunk or glove box while at the park. He said that when residents go on vacation that they should have someone to keep an eye on their houses and contact 911 if they see anything suspicious.

6. REPORT FROM OAK RIDGE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Firefighter Philip Lamendola reported that there were 80 calls in May including 38 calls that were medical related. He said that personnel had received 538 hours of training during the month of May. He reminded residents to be prepared for upcoming thunderstorms by having nonperishable food, flashlights with batteries and gas in the generator.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. 2022-23 Fiscal Year Budget and consideration/adoption of Ordinance O-2022-01 adopting the 2022-23 Fiscal Year Budget.

Town Manager Bill Bruce told Council that he had presented the budget last month. He said that the draft budget had been available for the public to view at Town Hall, on the Town's website, and on the back table for tonight's meeting. Bruce said that following public comments that the Council could deliberate and vote on the budget tonight.

Finance Chairman John Jenkins said that the Finance Committee meets every year to review the budget that is put together by Finance Director Sam Anders and Town Manager Bill Bruce. He said that the Committee had reviewed the tax rate and came to the conclusion that there was no basis for reducing or increasing the tax rate.

Mayor Schneider opened the public hearing.

Proponents:

The following citizens spoke in support of the budget:

- Ben Walraven, 5931 Pepper Road
- Stuart Mease, 1810 Wild Fern Drive
- Myra Blackburn, 2345 Oak Ridge Road
- Roger Howerton, 2106 Oak Ridge Road
- Laura Peoples, 1826 Oak Ridge Road
- Barbara Engel, 8524 Rosedale Drive
- Debbie Shoenfeld, 8501 San Siro Farm Court
- Courtenay Harton, 5901 Pepper Road
- Jim Harton, 5901 Pepper Road

Opponents:

The following citizen spoke in opposition of the budget:

- Chuck Salman, 8505 Merriman Farm Road
- Rob Alderson, 8401 Chartwell Drive

The following citizens spoke during the rebuttal period for the proponents:

- Debbie Shoenfeld, 8501 San Siro Farm Court
- John Browning, 8024 Linville Road

The following citizens spoke during the rebuttal period for the opponents:

- Chuck Salmon, 8505 Merriman Farm Road

Mayor Schneider closed the public hearing.

Councilman Spencer Sullivan moved to approve the 2022-23 fiscal year budget and Ordinance O-2022-01 adopting the 2022-23 fiscal year budget, and Councilwoman Pittman seconded.

Council discussion:

McClellan thanked the Finance Committee for their work on the budget. He said that he had asked the Committee to review a possible revenue neutral rate of 0.0674 but that the Committee had found that it would have been inadequate to fund the planned capital improvements, provide essential services, and maintain reserves. McClellan said even maintaining our current tax rate of 8 cents did not guarantee that we would be able to meet the timeline for planned capital improvements since the numbers used in the Capital Improvement Plan originated before the current spike in inflation. He said that Council would be monitoring the budget throughout the 2022-2023 fiscal year and would make adjustments on the timeline as needed. McClellan said that he was supportive of the budget.

Pittman said that she believed that this was a good budget with two items dominating the discussion which were the Redmon House and tax rates. She said that the Town owned the Redmon House property and was responsible for the property. She said that we must ensure that the property was preserved in a way that contributed to and strengthened the Historic District as well as giving a good value to the residents, relative to dollars spent, in the form of a community gathering place. Pittman said that regarding tax bills that on average Oak Ridge residents would pay an additional \$67 one-time increase to the Town that would stay the same for the next five years until another revaluation was done. She said that not everyone agreed on every line item in the budget but that she thought that the Finance Committee, Town Manager Bruce, and Finance Officer Sam Anders had done an excellent job on it that laid the foundation for future years.

Sullivan said that he had taken seriously the Finance Committee's recommendation including not offering a tax rate decrease. He said that he believed that even a minimal tax decrease had too many variables beyond the Town's control that made it not feasible to consider. Sullivan said that for most residents their tax bill for the Town would be no more than \$400 yearly which he thought was an incredible value. Sullivan said that Capital Improvement Projects represented a huge portion of the

budget and he said that he would keep a critical eye on those costs. He said that he was in favor of the budget and would vote in favor of it.

Schneider said that she believed that this was an excellent budget. She said that the Town continued to be ambitious in its vision but also cautious and conservative in the execution of Town projects. Schneider said that she was concerned that inflation would probably leave a lot of our budget items already in the dust, and may result in significantly higher costs across the board. She agreed that it was prudent not to change the tax rate at this point. Schneider pointed out that when you decrease the tax rate there is a ripple effect over multiple years unless you decide to raise taxes which was a difficult thing to do. She said that the ripple effect would affect the Town's reserves and how quickly we can rebuild them. Schneider said that the Town did a survey three years ago that did address the Redmon House, now tentatively named Farmhouse Community Center, which she said would be a two-pronged approach with restoration and preservation for posterity and new use as an affordable indoor space. She said that there was multiple funding sources available to help offset the costs of the proposed project. Schneider said that she was strongly in favor of the budget and was deeply appreciative to those who had worked on it.

The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

B. Petitions for Voluntary Annexation and Consideration/Approval of Ordinance O-2022-2023 to Extend the Town's Corporate Limits.

Town Manager Bill Bruce said that this was the second year that the Town had solicited voluntary applications for annexation as a part of Council's strategic initiative to review the corporate boundaries and to accept voluntary petitions where they were eligible. He said that 21 properties had been deemed eligible for annexation.

Mayor Schneider opened the public hearing.

Proponents:

None

Opponents:

None

Mayor Schneider closed the public hearing.

Councilman George McClellan made a motion to adopt Ordinance O-2022-01 to extend the Town's Corporate Limits, and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

8. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Consideration/appointment of Steve Sumner as Historic Preservation Commission.

Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to approve the appoint Steve Sumner to the Historic Preservation Commission, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

B. Request to surplus 2008 Yamaha golf cart.

Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to surplus a 2008 Yamaha golf cart, and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

C. Update on Heritage Farm Park/PARTF grant.

Bruce said that construction plans for Heritage Farm Park was complete pending a final resolution on the search for sufficient water supply. He said that the Town had investigated the use of two existing wells, had drilled one new well, and had one new well pending. Bruce said that the Town was looking for a supply that would be sufficient for irrigation as well as restroom use. Once a new well is identified, Bruce said that construction documents would be completed and that the project would be sent out for bid. Bruce said that that project was still well within the time constraints reimbursement from the American Rescue Plan and the PARTF grant.

D. Update on NC 68/NC 150 intersection project.

Bruce said that this would be big project that would be begin in spring of 2023.

E. Update on extension of school zone at Oak Ridge Military Academy.

Bruce announced that the expansion of the Oak Ridge Military Academy school zone was complete. He said that the new school zone now incorporates the campus in the front and the baseball field.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion/Approval of R-2022-05 A Resolution Adopting the Town of Oak Ridge Water System Fees and Charges Schedule.

Brue said that the Town had taken several steps to further the establishment of the Town of Oak Ridge municipal water system. He said that Water Advisory Board had adopted rules, contracted with the provider, and had monthly meetings. He said that the first customers would be homeowners in Honeycutt Reserve subdivision. Bruce said that the Town planned to take ownership of their water system later this summer. He said that the next steps would be to adopt the water rates which had been recommended by the contracted provider and vetted by the Water Advisory Board. Bruce said that the recommended rates would be for a resident to pay a base charge of \$21.00 per month and an additional \$6.50 per 1,000 gallons of water.

Councilman Spencer Sullivan made a motion to adopt Resolution 2022-05, adopting the Town of Oak Ridge water system fees and charges schedule, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

B. Discussion/Approval of 2023 Music in the Park Sponsorship Program.

John Garrett, co-chair of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, said that the Board had formed a subcommittee to determine how Music in the Park could be improved. He said that the subcommittee had suggested that in 2023 that Music in the Park that corporate sponsorships be made available for four of the six concerts. Garrett also said that the subcommittee had recommended the sale of beer and wine at the sponsored events along with the addition of food trucks. He said that the subcommittee would be working on an alcohol policy that would be presented to Council in July for these four events only.

Councilwoman Pittman asked Garrett if he was looking for approval from Council for the concept of the four sponsored events, the addition of food trucks and the sale of alcohol in the park, and Garrett replied yes.

Schneider said that she wanted to be clear that this would not be approving the use of alcohol for the park, but just for the four sponsored events.

Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to give the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board permission to proceed and develop a policy to provide sponsorships for four events during the 2023 Music in the Park Series that would also include food trucks and alcohol, and Councilman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Chris Pickett, 7804 Robinson Road, Summerfield said that Guilford County Schools was using a social and emotional learning curriculum that puts wedges between our children that did not exist before.
- Maria Adams, 5999 Morganshire Drive, Summerfield, said that she was an active member of the Oak Ridge community and lived in Summerfield She said that she disagreed with a recent decision by a Northern High School advisory committee to retain “Salvage the Bones,” which included sexually explicit content, as an optional AP literature reading list. She said while town councils did not dictate Guilford County School policies, but that elected officials had a voice and an interest in the county schools.
- Oak Ridge’s assistant fire chief Sam Anders, Oak Ridge Road, praised Arlington National Cemetery staff which last month reinterred the remains of Lance Cpl. Andrew Russoli. Russoli was killed in action in 2005 and had hoped to join the Oak Ridge Fire Department after ending his military service.
- Myra Blackburn, 2345 Oak Ridge Road, Oak Ridge, said that she was thrilled with the extension of the school zone. She said that theoretically the new zone would slow traffic, but it had not yet. Blackburn said that she hoped that the Town would work with the Sheriff’s office about increasing their patrols in that area.
- Patti Dmuchowski, 7320 Hidden View Drive, Oak Ridge, thanked the Council for their support of the proposed sponsorships for some of 2023 Music in the Park events.

10. MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Finance Officer Sam Anders requested approval from Council to authorize him to transfer \$50,000 from the undesignated fund balance to establish the water enterprise fund. He said that this fund would be treated as a business and would be a stand-alone account.

Councilman George McClellan made a motion to approve the establishment of the water enterprise fund and to seed it with \$50,000 to be transferred from the general fund, and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

Anders requested that Council grant him the authority to balance the budget through June 30, 2022 and that he would report to Council regarding those adjustments at the July 7, 2022, Town Council meeting.

Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to grant Finance Office Sam Anders authority to adjust the budget through June 30, 2022, to ensure a balanced budget to be reported to Council at their July 7, 2022, Town Council meeting, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

Anders requested that Council approved a minor budget amendment in the amount of \$13,492 for increases in providing meals for senior citizens through Senior Resources, disability insurance, professional services, office supplies, an equipment lease, liability insurance and security monitoring.

Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to approve a budget amendment for \$13,492 as requested by Finance Office Sam Anders, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

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 Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

Committee Co-Chair John Browning reported that the Board met on May 19, 2022, and approved a movie night in the amphitheater for the Northwest High School Band Boosters. He also said that The Summit Church would be hosting a community movie night on June 3, 2022. Browning announced that Never Too Late would be performing on June 11, 2022, as a part of the Music in the Park series.

B. Finance Committee

Chair John Jenkins said that he was appreciative that the 2022-2023 fiscal year budget had been approved by Council.

C. Water Advisory Committee

Spencer Sullivan reported that the Committee met on May 19, 2022, and voted on and approved the major work from the last meeting. He said that their June meeting would focus on the evaluation of the fire suppression study with Oak Ridge Fire Department Chief Gibson and possibly a representative from The Wooten Company.

D. Historic Preservation Commission

Commission chair Debbie Shoenfeld said that the Commission had met on May 18, 2022, and had approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for Ryan Welborn and Mary & Adrienne Garvey for a detached accessory storage building at 8508 Merriman Farm Road. She said that Historic Heritage Grants had been approved for a project at Oak Ridge Military Academy and for Drew Donnell's stone house.

E. Planning & Zoning Board

No meeting

F. Mountains-to-Sea Trail Committee

Committee member Stephanie Ferrell reported that the Committee had met on May 24, 2022, via Zoom. She announced that a workday would be held on Saturday, June 11, 2022, from 9 a.m. – noon to install a rail fence at the entrance to the trailhead at the parking lot on Linville Road.

G. Conservation Easement Committee

Chair Stephanie Ferrell reported that the Committee had met on May 18, 2022, to review the list of properties that had been identified as potential candidates for open space easements. She said that the owners of the properties on the final list would receive an outreach letter with basic information on the Core Grant Initiative and an invitation to meet with members of the Committee to learn more about conservation easements, the process, and how the Town of Oak Ridge would help facilitate both. Ferrell said that the Committee would meet on June 15, 2022, to repeat the same process by reviewing a list of historic structures and properties. She said that draft letters that would be sent to prospective property owners would be finalized at the June meeting.

H. Special Events Committee

Committee Chair Patti Dmuchowski said that the Committee sponsored Memorial Day event was a success, and thanked the local scouts who participated. She said that the Committee continued to receive donations for the Veteran Honor Green. She announced that the Committee was currently planning for the luminary event in December and a Veterans Day program in November.

12. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPORTS

A. Oak Ridge Elementary School

No report

B. Oak Ridge Youth Association

No report

C. Oak Ridge Military Academy

No report

13. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sam Anders, 1829 Oak Ridge Road, said that the reinterment of Lance Cpl. Andrew Russoli at Arlington National Cemetery went well. Anders said that this year's educational scholarship, in Russoli's name, had been awarded to Haley Hill and Amber Long.

Micah Spencer, 6315 Nesting Way, said that he liked the idea of renovating the Redmon House, and hoped that it could be used for more than just a senior center. He said that he liked the idea of it being used for hosting lectures on the history of Oak Ridge.

14. COUNCIL COMMENTS

15. ADJOURNMENT

Councilman George McClellan moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 p.m., and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

Sandra B. Smith, CMC, NCCMC
Town Clerk

Ann K. Schneider
Mayor