



**OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 10, 2021 - 2:00 P.M.
(Meeting held electronically via Zoom)**

This meeting was conducted remotely under N. C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.24 by use of simultaneous communication using the Zoom online platform and in which Town Council members participated by simultaneous communication. Town Council members were joined and participated in the entire meeting, unless otherwise noted.

MINUTES

Members Present

Ann Schneider, Mayor
Jim Kinneman, Mayor Pro Tem
George McClellan
Martha Pittman

Members Absent

Doug Nodine

Staff Present

Bill Bruce, Town Manager
Sandra Smith, Town Clerk
Sam Anders, Finance Officer
Terry Lannon, Parks & Recreation
Director
Sean Taylor, Planning Director

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ann Schneider called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. APPROVE AGENDA

Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman motioned to approve the meeting agenda, and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded. Via roll-call vote, the motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

Mayor Schneider mentioned that Councilman Doug Nodine was not feeling well and would not be attending the meeting.

Town Clerk Sandra Smith then conducted a roll call of those present at the meeting.

3. 5-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP)

Mayor Schneider said that the meeting was a working session to update the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). She asked that Council try to limit conversation to items that have a cost estimation. She said Council members each have projects that they like, but she asked that personal preferences be put aside and the focus be on what is best for the Town of Oak Ridge.

Town Manager Bill Bruce showed the Council the CIP which was adopted last year with updated figures added in red to summarize the status of some of the projects. The document is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. Bruce proceeded to go through each of the items listed and give an update. Because the Town did not receive the requested NCPARTF (NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund) grant it had applied for, Bruce said that the items approved on the CIP involving development of the Whitaker property had all been deferred to a subsequent budget year.

Council members then briefly discussed the possibility of moving forward with at least some development of the Whitaker property if a PARTF grant is not received in September 2021. Schneider commented that the Town would receive additional points on its PARTF application if it moves construction of the basketball court on the Whitaker property into the current year. Parks & Recreation Director Terry Lannon said that was a new element, and although he was unsure of how much difference it would make, it would add to the Town's numerical score.

Bruce then shared an Excel spreadsheet, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. Discussion ensued and at Council's instruction, he began updating the CIP by moving projects into different fiscal years.

Council's discussion then centered on whether some of the restricted funds should be adjusted or eliminated. Reducing or eliminating restricted fund items would increase the available cash flow in future years. Finance Officer Sam Anders explained the history of when the Town started restricting funds, saying that former Governor Mike Easley had seized some funds to make up the state budget shortfall. Anders said it could happen again, but he did not believe the current legislation would stand for the governor seizing sales tax monies. In response to a question about whether unrestricting funds needed to be made this year, Anders said that at any time the Council simply had to call the question and vote on whether to unrestrict funds at a Council meeting.

Councilman McClellan said he had noticed that there was no contribution in the CIP for the proposed veterans' memorial. Since fundraising would be done, he proposed the Town budget matching funds for the effort, up to a maximum of \$68,000, in FY 2021-22. Schneider said the project was estimated to cost \$150,000 and the Town had \$8,500 restricted for its construction. The Town had already committed \$5,000 for construction documents, leaving a balance of about \$136,000. The \$68,000 proposed by McClellan was half of that amount and should be the maximum needed. Councilwoman Pittman suggested that amount be spread out over two fiscal years since not all funds would be needed in the first year of construction.

Council's decision by consensus was to split the match into two budget years of \$34,000 each.

McClellan suggested, if the Town were to be eligible for another economic development grant from the state, that perhaps it could ask for funds for the veterans' memorial. Schneider and Pittman said perhaps a conversation could be started with Rep. John Faircloth, but Council agreed by consensus that any funding should be used for a project already on the horizon and that Council members would agree beforehand on how such funding would be used. McClellan said that sometimes a deal had to be agreed to in the moment it was proposed.

Council members agreed by consensus to leave proposed Whitaker property projects in the budget years where they are currently. Council still plans to apply for a PARTF grant this year and can make adjustments to the amounts and the budget year depending on whether the grant becomes a reality.

Since last year's PARTF grant request included engineering, which the Town now plans to move forward with, Schneider suggested moving the basketball court project into this year's grant application.

Parks & Recreation Director Lannon said that would be considered changing the adopted Master Plan since that element was currently considered as a future addition.

Town Manager Bruce said he thought there was a difference between moving forward with engineering and adding a new element to the grant request. He said he did not want to risk the application looking like a new application for the benefit that might be received, or for the Town to be penalized for doing public outreach on a proposed plan and then changing that plan.

Schneider withdrew her suggestion about the basketball court. She said that to her, the next question was the \$700,000 slated for Year 4 in the current CIP for tennis courts. She said she saw no reason to move it now, but asked for Council member's opinions.

Council agreed by consensus to leave the \$700,000 for tennis courts in Year 4 (FY 2024-25).

Mayor Pro Tem Kinneman proposed moving the \$60,000 being allocated for security cameras in the park to Year 4 since Council had decided to wait and consider security at both the Whitaker property and Oak Ridge Town Park at the same time. He also suggested the description be changed from "security cameras" to "security," and the rest of Council agreed to the suggestions.

Kinneman then suggested having an engineering study done to see if energy costs for Town Hall could be reduced. Money for the study could perhaps be put into the budget now and, if savings could be realized, money could then be included in future CIPs to implement the plan.

McClellan suggested looking into solar power, and Kinneman agreed.

Bruce then said that \$30,000 was included in Year 1 (FY 2021-22) of the current CIP under Large Equipment for Park Maintenance for a new pickup truck. He said that Lannon had another proposed capital expense, and asked Lannon to explain.

Lannon said two of the roofs on the existing baseball/softball field dugouts are sagging and beginning to fail. Lannon said players are on top of each other in the dugouts due to the way sports had changed over the years and the individual equipment each player brings in – particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the current dugouts, Lannon said it was almost a safety issue, and he proposed adding 5 feet to each of the four dugouts. In addition, the concrete slab would be extended, and his estimated cost had also included chain link fencing and new metal

roofs for the dugouts rather than asphalt shingles. The cost would be roughly \$30,000, Lannon said.

Discussion ensued, and Councilwoman Pittman suggested putting that additional expense into Year 1 and then moving the shade structures for the existing playgrounds to a future year. As discussion continued, Council's decision by consensus was to follow Pittman's suggestion and then add \$30,000 for a shade structure in the larger playground in Year 2 and \$20,000 for a shade structure for the smaller playground at Shelter #2 into Year 3.

Lannon commented that the shade structures were also a safety issue.

Kinneman reminded fellow Council members that the shade structures have a lifespan and will have to be replaced from time to time.

Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman moved to approve the CIP as amended, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. Via roll-call vote, the motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

The approved CIP is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

4. PROPOSAL FOR ENGINEERING / DESIGN FOR NEW PARK PROPERTY

Councilman George McClellan made a motion to enter into an agreement for engineering services with McGill and Associates, PA, as presented in the amount of \$214,500. Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded.

Pittman then pointed out that that on page 4, item 2.3.3, of the contract says the total engineering contract time was assumed to be seven months, and she asked if that was correct. Bruce said McGill may be under the assumption that all projects would be done at once, but the Town had the construction spread out over a period of three years. He said he would discuss that with McGill and that each of the clauses in the contract would be closely monitored.

Councilwoman Pittman asked for a friendly amendment to the motion to include pending review by the Town Attorney and Finance Officer, with final review by McGill. Councilman McClellan agreed to the amendment, and Councilwoman Pittman seconded. Via roll-call vote, the motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:30 p.m., and Councilman George McClellan seconded. Via roll-call vote, the motion was passed unanimously (4-0).