



**OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
FEBRUARY 2, 2023 - 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

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

**Staff Present**

Bill Bruce, Town Manager  
Sandra Smith, Asst. Town Mgr./Town Clerk  
Sean Taylor, Planning Director  
Sam Anders, Finance Officer  
Michael Thomas, Town Attorney

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**A. Invocation.**

Claudia Whitaker offered the invocation.

**B. Pledge of Allegiance.**

**2. APPROVE AGENDA**

Sullivan requested that the agenda be amended by exchanging item C with item D under New Business.

*Spencer Sullivan made a motion to approve the amended agenda as presented, and Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

*Councilwoman Martha Pittman moved that the minutes of the January 5, 2023, regular meeting be approved, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**4. RESOLUTIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS**

On behalf of the Town, Schneider offered condolences to the family of Oak Ridge resident Evelyn Peoples, who died on January 29, 2023.

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

Dep. Howes reported that 172 calls had been received for the month of January resulting in 16 formal case reports. He said that vehicle break-ins at Oak Ridge Town Park continued to be a problem and reported that two suspects had been arrested for theft involving 14 unlocked cars parked at various residences in the vicinity of NC 150 in late January. He encouraged people to put valuables out of sight and to lock their vehicle doors.

Schneider said that town staff had met recently with the Guilford County Sheriff's Office to discuss increasing their presence and the possibility of installing surveillance cameras to combat the smash-and-grab incidents at the park.

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

Firefighter Kyle Solomon reported that there were 69 calls in January that included 30 medical calls, three motor vehicle accidents, one cooking fire, and several fire alarms. He urged homeowners to operate indoor heaters with caution.

**7. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

**A. Consideration/Approval of appointment of Gigi Williams to Tree Board.**

*Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman made a motion to appoint Gigi Williams to the Tree Board for a one-year term, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**B. Announcement of Acceptance of Voluntary Annexation Applications.**

Bruce announced that the Town would be accepting voluntary annexations petitions from property owners through April 15, 2023. He noted that petitions held over from last year would be considered during this application cycle and that annexations would take effect on July 1, 2023. Bruce said that petitions and additional information would be available at Town Hall and on the website.

**C. Historic Heritage Grants Assessment Report.**

Smith reviewed an Assessment Report on the Historic Heritage Grant program from 2016-2022 and a financial summary, which are hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. A recommendation from the Historic Heritage Grant Committee included increasing the maximum annual grant amount for non-profit property owners to \$4,000 while increasing the maximum annual grant amount for all other applications to \$3,000. The grant committee also recommended increasing the flexibility for considering grant applications to other times of the year rather than just annually. The increased flexibility could occur if the applicant could prove a clear justification.

*Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to approve the recommendations made by the Historic Preservation Commission and the Heritage Grant Committee based on their Assessment Report of the Historic Heritage Grants from 2016 - 2022 dated January 27, 2023, and Councilman George McClellan seconded.*

*Council discussion:*

Pittman said that it would be hard to have a discussion about Oak Ridge without discussing preservation and conservation. She said that over the last seven years this very successful grant program had been a proactive way to help property owners maintain and preserve their historic properties. Pittman said that while acknowledging that the annual funding for the Heritage Grants must go through the annual budget process, Council could not guarantee that it would specify a certain amount. She believed that adopting these recommendations would only strengthen the program for future years.

McClellan said that he was pleased that Council was allowing for flexibility with out-of-cycle grant applications as well as increasing the amount of dollars per applications with private homeowners and non-profits.

Kinneman said that he would like to consider, in the future, if the program does not use all its funds that Council consider allowing them to roll them over to the next year. He said for instance if Council agreed to give the program \$8,500 and they don't use \$2,000 that we allow them to roll it over so that it is not a use-it-or-lose-it type of approach to increase flexibility.

Sullivan said that this was a wonderful program for the Town, and that he was pleased that Council was able to make the requested adjustments needed to keep this program going and healthy.

Schneider said that she had been contacted just this week by another historic small town who was interested in looking at all the materials about this program because they would like to emulate it. She said that this program was innovative for a small town to give out small high-impact grants like this.

*The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**D. Announcement of New Staff Member.**

Smith announced that Genevieve Geib had recently been hired as an Office Assistant.

**E. Haw River Road Safety.**

Bruce reported that the North Carolina Department of Transportation had released its summary of the accident that occurred on Haw River Road on October 31, 2022. NCDOT's investigation noted wet and foggy weather conditions on the night of the accident but concluded that speed was not a contributing factor. NCDOT conducted a speed and traffic analysis along the roadway that revealed that higher speeds were most prevalent in the largely non-residential areas west of Linville Road. NCDOT did not think a lower speed limit was warranted but did recommend that the Towns of Stokesdale and Oak Ridge install radar speed limit signs on Haw River Road, placed

east of Linville Road to help slow drivers as they approach the more residential portions of the road. He said that the Oak Ridge sign would be Town owned with an estimated cost of \$4,000 per sign. Bruce said the sign can be powered by the solar-charged batteries, and included software that can collect speed data and allowed the sign to be programmed from a remote location.

*Councilman George McClellan made a motion for staff to purchase and install a digital speed sign on Haw River Road, and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded.*

*Council discussion:*

McClellan said that he thought that this was a good first step to help with lowering the speed on Haw River Road.

Kinneman said that the accident report indicated that the speed, on average, was being adhered to on Haw River Road, and clarified that the sign would be used to reduce the speed eastbound not westbound. He said he was supportive of purchasing and installing the digital speed sign but he was concerned that the sign would not make a tremendous difference because the accidents that had happened there would not have been prevented by the signs. He said that he thought pedestrian education would help prevent future accidents.

Schneider said that just west of Linville Road drivers were going up to 57 to 60 miles per hour so they are not really slowing down until they get to the really residential areas on the far east end of Haw River Road. She said that the idea was to place this sign a little bit east of Linville Road to start slowing them a little sooner. Schneider said that there is about a mile and a half before it hits the residential areas and that is where we would like to slow traffic. She said that both Oak Ridge and Stokesdale had agreed to investigate a pedestrian safety awareness program through social media and websites with input from NCDOT and Guilford County. She said that both towns wanted crosswalks added on Haw River Road on the Stokesdale side, but that NCDOT had recommended pedestrian warning signs instead.

Pittman said that when she saw a digital speed sign, she instinctively paid attention and added that she was glad that the sign would collect data.

Sullivan said that it was easy on a road that was designed for a higher speed to go at least that speed or even more. He said that he thought that placing this sign on Haw River Road would help remind people when they let their speed creep up.

Schneider said that she saw the installation of the radar speed sign as a pilot program explaining that the Town may place signs elsewhere such as on Linville Road near Oak Ridge Town Park where speeding was a problem.

*The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

#### **F. Special Meetings Announcement.**

Bruce announced that Town Council would hold a special called meeting on Monday, February 6, 2023, at 10 a.m. He said that the purpose of the meeting would be for Council to authorize staff to apply to the Local Government Commission to

borrow money for the Heritage Farm Park project and that it would also include a public hearing. Bruce said that Council would meet on Wednesday, February 15, 2023, at 2 p.m. for their annual Capital Improvement Plan (CTP) workshop. He said that both meetings were open to the public.

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

### A. **Consideration/Approval of Resolution R-2023-02 Heritage Farm Park Bid Award.**

Bruce referred Council to Resolution R-2023-02, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. Bruce said that the Town had advertised a Request for Proposals to be opened on January 10, 2023, and received one bid. He said that per statute the bid was returned unopened, the Town readvertised the project, and held a second bid opening on January 26, 2023, where one bid was received. Bruce said that bid was opened, and it was submitted by Bar Construction for a total of \$5,444,000. He said since that time, Town consultant McGill Associates had negotiated with the contractor and reduced the cost of the proposed contract to \$4,790,000. Bruce said a lot of that savings was on some of the excavation costs.

*Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman made a motion to approve Resolution R-2023-02 to accept the bid award submitted by Bar Construction for \$4,790,000 for construction of Heritage Farm Park Phase One, subject to the approval of financing by the North Carolina Local Government Commission and to instruct the Town Manager and Finance Officer to execute the proposed contract, and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded.*

#### *Council discussion:*

Kinneman asked if replacing the drainage pipe with plastic was prudent, and Bruce replied that the engineer recommended not using plastic but to keep the concrete pipe specifications.

McClellan said that this project was a big step forward and something that the Town had been anticipating.

Pittman said that she was in favor of this project and had thought back to the Capital Improvement Plan when Council did not know if the Town would receive the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant and decided that it would move forward with or without the grant. She said that she believed that the Town was in the same position financially as it had been two years ago when it had much lower cost estimates and no additional funding. Pittman said that she saw no compelling reason to wait on the project and risk higher costs and interest rates and potentially losing some of the funding.

Sullivan said that it had been almost five years since that Town had purchased the land for Heritage Farm Park. He said that it was very gratifying to see the Town finally at this stage that it could develop the property so that everyone would have much easier access to be able to use it in the future.

Schneider thanked Bruce for working with McGill and Barr Construction to negotiate a lower price. She said that the \$4,790,000 price tag was reasonable given the current economic climate and that the Town had allocated \$1,656,102 in direct American Rescue Plan Act funds to this high priority project that will continue to distinguish Oak Ridge as a wonderful place to live for families of all kinds.

*The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**B. Consideration/Approval of Resolution R-2023-03 Approval of Financing Terms.**

Bruce referred Council to Resolution R-2023-03, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. He said that the Town had received a proposal from Truist Bank that met the terms that Council had requested with a \$3 million installment contract over a term of 15 years at 3.94% interest rate.

*Councilman George McClellan made a motion to approve Resolution 2023-03 for the financing terms through Truist Bank for the construction of Heritage Farm Park not to exceed \$3 million in the amount financed, with an annual interest rate not to exceed 3.94% and the financing term shall not exceed 15 years from closing, and Councilwoman Marth Pittman seconded.*

*Council discussion:*

McClellan said that the loan offered a low interest rate and allowed the Town to keep a healthy fund balance.

Kinneman asked Anders for clarification in the Truist financing proposal regarding prepayment terms involving partial payments, and Anders replied that if the Town borrowed \$3 million and could only use \$2.9 million that it could immediately use the other \$100,000 for payment on the loan. Anders said that he did not think that scenario would happen, but that clause was included as a safety in case other funding or costs ran lower so that we could reduce the loan.

Pittman said that she thought the financing proposal looked smart to her. She said that it allowed the Town to complete phase one construction as one project and manage our cash flow. Pittman said Heritage Farm Park would be available to use for generations to come and she did not have a problem with financing the project over time.

Schneider said that she was grateful to Anders for finding the Town such a low rate. She said that the Town had only four years to pay for the original purchase of the park property which will leave this loan as our only debt after that point.

*The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**C. Consideration/Approval of Purchase Contract with Musco Sports Lighting for Heritage Farm Park athletic field lighting.**

Bruce referred Council members to the purchase agreement in their packet from Musco Sports Lighting, LLC, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a

part of the minutes, for \$422,500 for athletic field lighting at Heritage Farm Park that included design, layout, and installation.

*Councilman Spencer Sullivan made a motion to approve the purchase agreement with Musco Sports Lighting, LLC, with addendum as finalized by staff, for \$422,500, and Councilman George McClellan seconded.*

Town Attorney Michael Thomas said that the addendum that Council had received was the first draft and had been changed. He said that Council approval should be for the basic installation contract and the addendum as finalized by staff with the vendor.

*Council discussion:*

Kinneman said that he noticed that the agreement indicated that LED lights would be used and assumed that the Town would see less electrical consumption, and Bruce replied that he imagined that would be true.

*The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**D. Consideration/Approval of Resolution R-2023-04 Adoption of Capital Project Ordinance for Heritage Farm Park.**

Bruce referred Council to Resolution R-2023-04, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. Bruce said that since these are long-term projects that will exceed one budget year, staff was proposing a Capital Project Ordinance which was a tool that local governments can use for projects that extend past one fiscal year. He said that the ordinance allocated the two contacts that Council just approved totaling \$5,212,500. He said that the Town was using \$1,656,102 in ARPA funds, \$490,000 in PARTF grant money, \$3 million in proceeds from the contract with Truist, and \$66,398 appropriation from the fund balance.

*Councilman Spencer Sullivan made a motion to approve R-2023-04 for the adoption of the Capital Project Ordinance for the construction of Phase One of Heritage Farm Park, and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded.*

*Council discussion:*

McClellan asked if the fund balance appropriation was \$66,398 and the total cost of the project would be \$5,212,500 and Schneider replied yes.

Kinneman asked if a contingency fund needed to be added to the Ordinance, and Anders said that a Capital Project Fund was designed so that it would span the years and was based upon defined estimates. He said if the contingency fund was added, the Town would be locked in the Capital Project Fund until the end of the project when the fund would be terminated. He suggested that the contingency fund be designated on the financial statements and be restricted in the fund balance so it was not locked in until the project closed.

Kinneman said that he felt like it was important to clearly identify that the Town would be allocating \$300,000 in a reserved fund and that identifying it during the normal budget process would be fine with him.

*The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**E. Consideration/Approval of contracts with Guilford County regarding ARPA Funds for storage tank/water main and Farmhouse Community Center.**

Bruce referred Council members to two contracts with Guilford County, which are hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes, for disbursement of ARPA funds for \$3,265,000 to be applied toward the construction of a 250,000-gallon water storage tank and a portion of the construction of a 12-inch water main to connect the storage tank to Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Utilities, and \$305,000 to be applied toward renovation and new construction of the proposed Farmhouse Community Center. He said that both contracts had been approved by Guilford County, Town Attorney Michael Thomas, and Finance Officer Sam Anders.

*Councilman George McClellan made a motion to approve the Oak Ridge Water Agreement and the Oak Ridge Farmhouse Community Center Agreement, and Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman seconded.*

*Council discussion:*

Kinneman clarified that both agreements only make it clear that this was how the Town would use the money if the Town used it and did not obligate us to any of these projects, and Bruce replied yes and that it was reimbursement based.

Schneider said that she was grateful to the Guilford County Commissioners for supporting these two key projects.

*The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**F. Consideration/Approval of Municipal Agreement with Department of Transportation for NC 68/NC 150 Intersection Project.**

Bruce referred Council members to the proposed NCDOT Municipal Agreement, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes, for the NC 68 and NC 150 intersection project in their packet. He said that this was an estimate only and it provided an opportunity for the Town to review and make adjustments for this cost sharing project. Bruce said that the total cost to the Town was estimated at \$326,700 that would not be contributed until the project was over which would likely be September of 2025.

*Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to approve the NCDOT Municipal Agreement for the NC 68 and NC 150 intersection project, and Councilman George McClellan seconded.*

*Council discussion:*



Pittman said that she liked being able to work in conjunction with the DOT for the NC 68 and NC 150 intersection project because it gave the Town the opportunity to implement items in the Town's Streetscape and Village Feel Plans. She said that this project should expand safe pedestrian access across the town core while sharing the cost with NCDOT. She said that she was in favor of enhancing safety, walkability, and beautifying the town core for a reasonable expenditure.

McClellan said that he was happy that the Town was closer to reality on this project.

Kinneman said that the Town would be getting more sidewalks because of our Pedestrian Plan and that 95% of the sidewalks would be paid for by NCDOT. He said that the project would allow more houses to get to the Town Park and core. Kinneman said that for the next two years getting through the center of Town would be difficult due to the construction being done.

Schneider said that this project had been on the book for 15 years and that it was bad that the Town had to wait so long but that she was pleased that the DOT would be sharing the cost.

Sullivan said that he was especially interested in this project because it would provide additional sidewalks and accessibility from east to west through the Town.

*The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**10. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**11. 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 Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**12. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**A. Tree Board**

Chair Nancy Stoudemire reported that the Board met on February 2, 2023, and had elected officers. She thanked Council members for approving Gigi Williams' appointment to the Board.

**B. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board**

John Garrett reported that the Board met on January 19, 2023 and John Browning and he were re-elected to serve as co-chairs. He said that the Board approved two non-profit organization events and approved the Special Events Committee's

request to use the Park for five events during 2023. Garrett said that the Board reviewed its Capital Improvement Plan priority list and had submitted 15 projects for Council's consideration.

**C. Finance Committee**

No meeting

**D. Water Advisory Committee**

Chair Jim Harton reported that the Committee met on January 25, 2023, to focus on preparing for a meeting with Wooten to discuss engineering and the building of the water tower and possibly surface water mains from Winston-Salem. He said that that the first project would be the water tower.

**E. Historic Preservation Commission**

Chair Debbie Shoenfeld said that there was no meeting during the month of January but that several members had participated in a design review meeting for the proposed water tower. She said that Commission members had also worked on the new Historic Heritage Grant Program recommendations and that she appreciated Council's support for increased funding.

**F. Planning & Zoning Board**

Chair Jason Streck reported that the Board met on January 26, 2023 and had re-elected himself as chair and Nancy Stoudemire as vice chair He said that they Board approved a subdivision plan for 23.5 acres of property that would be subdivided into four lots and owned by Oak Ridge Presbyterian Church.

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

Chair Ann Steele reported that the committee met on January 24, 2023, hosted a guided hike on January 21, 2023 and a trail workday on January 28, 2023. She said that two trail workdays were being planned in February 2023.

**H. Conservation Easement Committee**

Chair Stephanie Farrell said two property owners had approached the Piedmont Land Conservancy regarding potential easements. She said that PLC would be working on the grant application for one parcel and that the Town would support it. Farrell said that the other property owner had agreed to a trail easement and that a Memorandum of Understanding would be drafted.

**I. Special Events Committee**

Chair Patti Dmuchowski reported that the committee was planning a dinner to celebrate the Town's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary to be held at Oak Ridge Methodist Church and for an event to be held at the Charles Benbow House honoring its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**13. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPORTS**

**A. Oak Ridge Youth Association**

No report

**B. Triad Municipal ABC Board**

Town representative Jimm Barbery reported that sales and profits were up at the Oak Ridge store. He said that the 2022 fourth quarter check to the Town totaled \$103,592 which was an increase compared to the same quarter in 2021 when the Town received an \$86,400 check.

**C. Oak Ridge Military Academy**

No report

**D. Oak Ridge Elementary School**

The report was read by Councilwoman Pittman and is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

**14. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**15. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

**16. ADJOURNMENT**

*Mayor Pro Jim Kinneman moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m., and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

Respectfully Submitted:

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Sandra B. Smith, CMC, NCCMC  
Asst. Town Mgr./ Town Clerk

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Ann K. Schneider  
Mayor