



**OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
FEBRUARY 6, 2025 - 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

Jim Kinneman, Mayor  
Mike Stone, Mayor Pro Tem  
Ann Schneider  
Michael Greeson  
Jim Harton

**Staff Present**

Bill Bruce, Town Manager  
Sandra Smith, Asst. Town Mgr./Town Clerk  
Sean Taylor, Planning Director

**Staff Absent**

Sam Anders, Finance Officer  
Michael Thomas, Town Attorney

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Jim Kinneman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**A. Invocation**

Dee Hall offered the invocation.

**B. Pledge of Allegiance**

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Jim Kinneman stated that Agenda Item 13, Closed Session, would be removed due to the absence of the Town Attorney and Agenda Item 3B, Approval of the January 7, 2025, Special Meeting Minutes, would also be removed.

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the agenda as amended and Councilman Jim Harton seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).*

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

This item was inadvertently omitted. The minutes will be approved at the next Town Council meeting.

**4. RESOLUTIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None

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

Midway through the Public Comments section, Deputy Lankford of the Guilford County Sheriff's Office District 14 reported on crime statistics in Oak Ridge for January 2025.

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

Oak Ridge Firefighter John Nunez reported on call statistics for January 2025.

**7. PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPORTS**

- Joanne Morris, 6727 Brookbank Road, presented handouts to Council, which are hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. She requested the Town require the developer of the Ashford subdivision replant trees in accordance with the Town's Tree Preservation Ordinance. She stated that the developer was in violation of the 30-foot tree preservation area when he removed trees from within the buffer zone. Mayor Jim Kinneman suggested that she seek input from Town Planning Director Sean Taylor.
- Ron Ray, 8474 Stafford Mill Road, requested passage of a resolution opposing the Transco Southeastern Supply Enhancement Project (SSEP) multi-state high pressure methane gas project which would run through the Town's core.
- Chris Annunziato, 8231 Stafford Mill Road, echoed Ray's comments in opposition to the Transco pipeline project.
- Jimm Barberry, 7903 Quiet Place, presented the quarterly ABC report citing a fourth quarter alcoholic beverages distribution of \$99,328 to the Town. He commented on the potential imposition of tariffs on Canadian and Chinese goods which could reduce liquor sales margins.
- Bob Yarbrough, 2801 Lockland Drive, expressed his concern regarding the possibility of pipeline breakage.
- Terry Hammond, 1815 Oak Ridge Road, stated her opposition to the Williams-Transco project, citing the need to protect the Town's water resources as well as its National Register historic landmarks impacted by the pipeline's proposed installation.
- Mandy Byrd, 2711 Currieton Court, stated her opposition to the pipeline project and advocated for a full environmental impact study over the abbreviated assessment currently planned for the project.

- Robin Johnson, Beeson Road, stated her opposition to the pipeline project and pointed out that the impacts and risks of the proposed project would be borne by the community which would also absorb the operating costs as consumers. She pointed out that the pipeline project was incongruent with the Town's vision and strategic plan for a safe and livable community.
- Brenda Chaney, 5811 Billet Road, distributed photographs of a gas pipeline explosion at Appomattox, Virginia in 2008 to Council, which are hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. She described the destructive impact of the incident, stating that it was caused by the natural corrosion of two 30-inch pipes that were 50 years old. She contrasted the incident at Appomattox with the proposed pipeline expansion through Oak Ridge, which includes the installation of a fourth pipeline alongside three existing 42-inch, 75-year-old pipes. She urged Council to pass a resolution opposing the pipeline expansion.
- Emily Sutton, Haw River Keeper and Executive Director of the Haw River Assembly, which protects the water quality of the Haw River watershed including Lake Jordan, expressed concern for groundwater contamination by coatings and lubricants on the pipes and for the destruction of stream habitats caused by the pipe installation process. She offered herself as a resource to support the Town's efforts to oppose the proposed pipeline expansion through Oak Ridge.
- Diana Garrison, Oak Ridge Landing, stated her opposition to the pipeline project while expressing concern for affected areas such as the Oak Ridge Methodist Church preschool.
- Claire Spear of Hillsboro, NC, Community Advocate for Seven Directions of Service, spoke about the lack of need for the SSEP, citing a study performed by Synapse Energy Economic that reported sufficient energy resources for the next five years. She stated that the project was targeted to support Artificial Intelligence data centers but pointed out that AI technology, specifically DeepSeek, was capable of running on minimal energy resources so that increasing the energy infrastructure would not be necessary.
- Patricia Annunziato, 8231 Stafford Mill Road, identified herself as an attorney specializing in aviation and jet fuel, saying the need to conduct a full environmental impact study before voting on the pipeline project because of the increased risk for groundwater contamination was important.
- Greg Anderson, 5697 Wolf Ridge Road, stated his concern for damage to his property caused by the pipeline construction and urged Council to pass a resolution in opposition to the pipeline expansion.
- Peter Molnar, 2802 Lockland Drive, revealed the proximity of his home to the proposed pipeline and urged Council to pass a resolution opposing it.

- Deborah Cimbala, 6698 Currieton Drive, described a blast zone as three-miles wide and urged Council to pass a resolution opposing the pipeline expansion.
- Greg Tart, Wolf Ridge Development, expressed concern for persistent objectionable outdoor burning occurring near his property. Kinneman suggested that he seek assistance from Town Manager Bill Bruce or Planning Director Sean Taylor.
- Cameron Ligon, the owner of Destination Arts, expressed her opposition to the pipeline expansion project due to the risk to safety of children at Oak Ridge Elementary School and at her dance studio, both of which are in the blast zone.
- Paul Partyka, 6402 Ashton Park Drive, expressed his dissatisfaction with the pipeline company's lack of responsiveness to reports of odor and irregularities in road surfaces, which he believed were attributable to the pipeline pump station. He voiced his opposition to the pipeline expansion.

## 8. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

### A. Consideration/Approval of:

- **Appointments**
  - Patrick Fiorentino as a full member of Board of Adjustment
  - Craig Rosenfeld as a full member of Planning & Zoning Board
  - Holly Stewart as a full member of Finance Committee
  - Todd Dean as alternate on Finance Committee

*Councilman Jim Harton made a motion to approve all appointments as stated, and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

- **Reappointments**
  - Stuart Mease as a full member of Finance Committee
  - Edyie Bryant as a full member of Finance Committee
  - Danielle Walraven as an alternate on Finance Committee
  - Debbie Shoenfeld as a full member of Historic Preservation Commission

*Councilman Jim Harton made a motion to approve all reappointments as stated, and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded. The motion passed (3-2) with Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone and Councilman Michael Greeson voting in opposition.*

### B. Update on elevated water tank

Town Manager Bill Bruce reported that the groundbreaking ceremony for the elevated water tank occurred on January 23, 2025, with NC Representative John Blust in attendance. He stated that Caldwell Tank Company would begin foundation work in March while fabricating the material for the water tower remotely. He said the anticipated completion of the project would be January 31, 2026. He noted that efforts to bid out the water main project would occur concurrently with the tank's construction.

**C. Any Other Business**

**Announcement of Upcoming Meeting**

Bruce reported that a Town Council Special Called Meeting had been scheduled for February 12, 2025, for the purpose of planning for capital improvement projects.

**Request for Sponsorship**

Bruce stated that the Oak Ridge Horse Show had requested Council's sponsorship in the amount of \$300. Kinneman opened a discussion of the request.

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone brought up the term "stolen valor" which in military circles referred to individuals who falsely claim military service or honors. He stated that in everyday terms, stolen valor meant fraud or stolen heritage. He stated that the Oak Ridge Horse Show was a perfect example of stolen valor. He shared a brief history of the origins of the Oak Ridge Horse Show as an annual fundraising event to benefit Oak Ridge. He pointed out that in recent years, the Horse Show event had ceased, and the Oak Ridge Horse Show Association had relocated to Summerfield and later to Stokesdale while retaining the name "Oak Ridge Horse Show." He disapproved of the group's request for sponsorship contending that the organization's name was a misnomer, and its activities did not benefit Oak Ridge.

Councilman Jim Harton considered the Oak Ridge Horse Show Association to be an homage to the Town's history and believed the request to be reasonable.

Councilwoman Ann Schneider expressed reluctance to agree to support organizations outside of Oak Ridge and added that Oak Ridge Elementary School had also requested monetary support in recognition of its 100-year anniversary.

Mayor Jim Kinneman stated that the horse show organization had unsuccessfully tried to remain in Oak Ridge and that he would be in favor of supporting an organization that would benefit the area around Oak Ridge if not Oak Ridge specifically.

Councilman Michael Greeson stated that he would favor giving money to Oak Ridge Elementary School, but would vote against giving money to an organization which did not directly benefit the Town,

Schneider stated that that non-profit organizations can have far reaching benefits and that the request was for a small amount. Stone retorted that the amount of money was not as significant a concern as the mislabeling of the organization as an Oak Ridge designee.

*Councilman Michael Greeson made a motion to deny the request for \$300 to support the Oak Ridge Horse Show Association. Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone seconded, and the motion failed (2-3) with Mayor Jim Kinneman, Councilwoman Ann Schneider and Councilman Jim Harton voting against.*

Greeson directed attention to the Council members who had voted to give the Town's money to an outside organization and urged voters to remember their actions during their bids for re-election. Kinneman agreed that voters should judge

the Town's elected officials on the decisions they make, and he added that he stood by the decisions he makes.

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the request for \$300 to support the Oak Ridge Horse Show Association, and Councilman Jim Harton seconded. The motion passed (3-2) with Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone and Councilman Michael Greeson voting against.*

## **9. MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE**

In the Finance Officer's absence, Town Manager Bill Bruce presented the financial report for the month of January 2025, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. In his report, Bruce included for consideration a resolution which would update the fidelity bond requirements of the Town's Finance Officer and two Assistant Finance Officers from \$200,000 to \$500,000.

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the finance report as presented by the Town Manager, and Councilman Jim Harton seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

*Councilman Jim Harton made a motion to approve Resolution R-2025-01, updating the fidelity bond requirements from \$200,000 to \$500,000. Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded the motion.*

Mayor Pro Tem Stone reiterated his request to receive meeting material further in advance of the meeting to allow time to review the information. Bruce explained that sometimes uncontrollable matters arise which impact the timing of the material's distribution, but that staff consistently tried to disseminate information in advance of meetings.

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

## **10. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **A.&B. Planning & Zoning Board / Board of Adjustment**

BOA Chair Patti Paslaru reported that the first of a two-part training of quasi-judicial procedures for new members of the BOA had been completed. She noted that she had been approved as chair of BOA and Patrick Fiorentino would be elected vice chair at the Board's next meeting. She reported that Jason Streck had been elected as chair of the Planning & Zoning Board and she was elected vice chair.

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

No report

### **D. Conservation Easement Committee**

Schneider reported that the committee discussed ongoing projects with no action taken.

**E. Special Events**

Schneider reported that the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) had requested the committee collaborate on a Flag Day celebration at the Veterans Honor Green on June 14, 2025, along with a recognition of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Army.

**F. Tree Board**

No report

**G. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board**

Adrian Eckenrod reported that he, along with John Browning, had been elected to continue as co-chairs of the Board. He presented a list of items approved by the Board and discussed upcoming activities and projects. He noted recent violations of leash laws at the park, which staff is attempting to address.

**H. Finance Committee**

No report

**I. Water Advisory Committee**

No report

**J. Historic Preservation Commission**

No report

**11. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- Patti Paslaru, 8543 Linville Road, noted that during her tenure as former president of the Oak Ridge Horse Show, her organization donated significant funds to various entities such as \$35,000 to Bandera Farms and \$2,500 to the fire department. She pointed out that the current horse show raises a lot of funds, and she questioned how these funds were currently being managed by the other group that is presently operating as Oak Ridge Horse Show.
- Shelby Taylor, 2805 Norwell Court, stated her membership with the Oak Ridge Horse Show Association and directed attention to the association's website, which lists organizations to which the association has donated. She stressed that the association strove to concentrate its fundraising efforts within the community.
- Teresa Wellendorf, 7910 Pate Drive, stated her membership with the Oak Ridge Horse Show Association and referred attendees to its website. She explained that

the show was not located in Oak Ridge because there was no available venue in Oak Ridge which could serve its needs.

- Claire Spear, 2410 Timber Oaks Drive in Hillsboro, described how a resolution in opposition to SSEP passed at the local level could escalate to state level authorities who would have the power to shut down further efforts of the SSEP.
- Brenda Chaney, 5811 Billet Road, submitted information detailing 20 years of Williams-Transco incidents, 98 percent of which detailed gas leaks reported by citizens. The information is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

## **12. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Greeson said that he would not be in favor of giving money to an organization neither located in nor directly contributing to Oak Ridge. He encouraged the citizenry to remember the council members' stances on the issue at the next election.

Stone pointed out that Council was limited in its capacity to effect change on a federal project, but he emphasized his willingness to listen to citizens' concerns.

Harton offered condolences to Debbie Shoenfeld on the death of her spouse. He emphasized his desire to listen and understand citizens' concerns on any topic.

Schneider mentioned the breadth of Debbie Shoenfeld's volunteer service to the Town. She attributed votes cast earlier in the meeting against committee and commission reappointments to personal animus, elaborating that volunteers should be appointed for their potential to make contributions to the Town. She expressed surprise at the negative comments made about the Oak Ridge Horse Show.

Kinneman stated that he would be attending the Mayor's Association meeting the following week and that he would present information about it at the next Council meeting. He said he recognized the value of supporting neighboring towns and considered the scholarship established by the Oak Ridge Horse Show for students at Northwest High School as a benefit to Oak Ridge indirectly. Kinneman expressed his belief that he had received nearly enough feedback on the pipeline expansion project to afford serious consideration of a resolution in opposition to the project from Council.

Stone addressed an earlier comment made regarding appointments of volunteers and stated that volunteer appointments had always been politically motivated. He stated that he should not be treated like the enemy because he expressed disagreement on certain points.

## **13. CLOSED SESSION**

Removed from agenda



**14. ADJOURNMENT**

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m., and Councilman Michael Greeson seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).*

Respectfully Submitted:

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

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Jim A. Kinneman  
Mayor