



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

MINUTES

Members Present

Ann Schneider, Mayor
George McClellan
Martha Pittman
Spencer Sullivan

Staff Present

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

Members Absent

Jim Kinneman, Mayor Pro Tem

Staff Absent

Bill Bruce, Town Manager

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ann Schneider called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She announced that Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman and Town Manager Bill Bruce were unable to attend the meeting and expressed appreciation for Assistant Town Manager Sandra Smith for taking on Bruce's duties.

A. Invocation.

Gina Charles offered the invocation.

B. Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVE AGENDA

Spencer Sullivan made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Councilwoman Martha Pittman moved that the minutes of the February 2, 2023, regular meeting, February 22, 2023, special meeting, and the February 22, 2023, closed session be approved, and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

4. RESOLUTIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

Schneider recognized Oak Ridge resident Payne Stafford recently celebrated his 100th birthday.

5. REPORT FROM GUILFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sgt. N. Southern reported that 200 calls had been received for the month of February resulting in 15 formal case reports. He said that a vehicle was broken into at the Cascades Preserves and encouraged people to put valuables out of sight and to lock their vehicle doors.

6. REPORT FROM OAK RIDGE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Firefighter James Sechrist reported that there were 70 calls in February that included 32 medical calls. He said that personnel obtained 607.5 hours of training. The fire safety message was for residents to stay hydrated as warm weather approached.

7. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Consideration/Approval of reappointment of Patrick Fiorentino to Planning & Zoning Board and appointment of Tara Tillman as an alternate to Planning & Zoning Board.

Councilman George McClellan made a motion to reappoint Patrick Fiorentino to Planning & Zoning Board and appoint Tara Tillman as an alternate to Planning & Zoning Board and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

B. Consideration/Approval of Revision to Parks & Recreation Fee Schedule.

Assistant Town Manager Sandra Smith referred Council to the Area Picnic Shelter Reservation Fee Comparison report in the packet. She said that proposed increase for the Town Park shelter rentals would be the first since the Town established its rental fee structure in 2017. Smith reported that the increases take into consideration shelter rental rates charged by Summerfield, Stokesdale, Kernersville and Guilford County.

Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to approve the revision to the Parks & Recreation shelter rental fee schedule as requested by the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

C. Consideration/Approval of Urban Archery Season 2024 (January 13 – February 18, 2024).

Councilman Spencer Sullivan made a motion to approve Urban Archery Season for 2024, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

D. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

Smith announced that Council planned to hold its April meeting on Thursday, March 30, 2023, instead of on the first Thursday in April to avoid conflicts with Holy Week.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consideration/Approval of match for Land and Water Conservation Fund grant for purchase of property at 8250 E. Harrell Road.

Smith referred Council to the memo in the packet, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes. She said that the Piedmont Land Conservancy (PLC) had filed a grant application for the purchase of property located at 8250-8298 E. Harrell Road in Oak Ridge. If the grant application was successful, Smith said that the PLC intended to purchase the property at its appraised value of \$189,000 with total project costs totaling \$223,950. She said that match amounts were discretionary, but in order to submit a competitive application PLC had suggested \$40,000 from the Town of Oak Ridge. Smith said that following the purchase of the property, ownership would be transferred to the Town with a conservation easement in place. She said that the Conservation Easement Committee had strongly supported the preservation of this property.

Councilwoman Marth Pittman made a motion to approve a match of \$40,000 for a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant application for the purchase of the Alma Blaylock Property at 8250-8298 E. Harrell Road (Guilford County Tax Parcel #163465) and fund the match using a portion of the currently restricted fund balance for future land acquisition, and Councilman George McClellan seconded.

Council discussion:

Pittman said that she felt like this was a great opportunity to protect and preserve our environmentally sensitive wetlands and open space with the conservation easement that also allowed the Town to have future trail development along the Haw River Trail Corridor. She offered her appreciation to the Piedmont Land Conservancy for their leadership and advocacy in this acquisition and for working with the grant application which was supported by the Conservation Easement Committee as it furthered its core initiative which was conserving Oak Ridge through easements. Pittman said that the easement furthered the Strategic Plan Goal 2.1 that stated that the Town of Oak Ridge would use creative methods to preserve farmland, open space and historic resources.

McClellan said that agreed with Councilwoman Pittman that this easement would preserve not only open space but also valued wetlands. He said that he was supportive of the request.

Sullivan said that the easement was a terrific idea. He said that the wetlands on this property were the headwaters of the Haw River, and that water ran downhill. He said that the proposed easement would preserve and keep pollution free not only water, land and wetlands in Oak Ridge but that what happened on this property

could affect everybody downstream. He said that the project would help the Town but would also help the Haw River.

Schneider said that the PLC was purchasing the project and if the Town received the grant that it would be committing the matching funds. She said that a protective easement on the property was almost irreversible protection of these properties as open space in perpetuity which meant that even the eight acres that were suitable for development would never be anything but something that is protected by the easements.

The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

B. Consideration/Approval of Strategic Plan 2023 Update.

Councilman George McClellan made a motion to approve the Strategic Plan 2023 Update, and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded.

Council discussion:

Pittman said that the Strategic Plan was one of several plans that Council used as guiding documents. She said that that it was a dynamic plan that would continue to evolve.

Schneider encouraged everyone to read the updated 2023 Strategic plan. She said that strategic plans were only helpful and useful if they were realistic, addressed what an organization wanted to be in the future and be based on vision.

The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

C. Consideration/Approval of Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Councilman George McClellan made a motion to approve the Capital Improvement Plan, and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded.

Council discussion:

McClellan said that he was still committed to breaking ground this year for the first phase at Heritage Farm Park, and if the funds were available to build the elevated water tank to help with fire suppression. He said that in the future a main water line would come through Kernersville. McClellan said Council had to make tough decisions and had to rethink sports because costs had gone up. He said that the Council was committed to putting in sidewalks.

Pittman agreed that the Council had to make tough decisions but did so because it was important to maintain a healthy fund balance. She said that with additional funding she was hopeful that some of the projects that were pushed back could be reevaluated. Pittman said that all the projects that had been selected were worthy and were compatible with Council's long-term strategic plans.

Sullivan said the Town found itself in a really good position despite the rising costs and the other challenges that it faced. He said that the Town had always been fiscally responsible, kept the tax rates low and had been very frugal in spending so that balances had been accumulated that allowed the Town to undertake major Capital Projects as they were available. Sullivan said that it was important to keep a healthy fund balance in case there were unexpected expenses.

Schneider said that the way Council chose to spend money on Capital Improvement Projects was guided closely by the Strategic Plan and by Council's priorities. She said that the priorities were based around things that benefit residents like preservation, recreation, growth and development and infrastructure.

The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Michael Logan, 5902 Rambling Road in Greensboro, said that he was a Republican appointed nominee seeking to fill the vacant District 3 seat on the county's school board.

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.

Anders requested that Council approve that requested Mountains-to-Sea trail funds be moved to a restricted fund.

Councilwoman Marth Pittman made a motion to approve the creation of a restricted fund for the Mountain-to-Sea Trail revenues, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

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

John Browning reported that the Board met on February 16, 2023, and approved a 5K event for ORYA Teen Leadership. He said that the Board approved a rain date for RidgeFest which would be at the end of the October 14, 2023, Music in the Park event. Browning said that the Board had agreed that they would like the new playground at Heritage Farm Park to be an inclusive playground.

B. Finance Committee

First meeting will be on Monday, March 6, 2023, at 7 p.m.

C. Water Advisory Committee

No meeting

D. Historic Preservation Commission

Chair Debbie Shoenfeld said that the Commission met on February 15, 2023, and had re-elected herself as chair and Caroline Ruch as vice chair. She said that the Board had approved a site plan for 2102 Oak Ridge Road and had prepared and submitted the 2023-2024 budget. Shoenfeld that Historic Heritage Grant Program mailings had recently been mailed out and had been advertised in the *Northwest Observer*.

E. Planning & Zoning Board

Chair Jason Streck reported that the Board met on February 26, 2023, and had approved a site plan for 2102 Oak Ridge Road.

F. Mountains-to-Sea Trail Committee

Committee member Stephanie Ferrell said that the Committee had met via Zoom on February 28, 2023. She announced that two trail workdays would be held in March.

G. Conservation Easement Committee

No meeting

H. Special Events Committee

Committee member Ben Walraven reported that the Committee met on February 14, 2023, and discussed the Veteran Honor Green fundraiser. He said that the Town's 25th anniversary catered dinner would be held on Saturday, January 20, 2024, in the Family Life Center at Oak Ridge United Methodist Church.

I. Tree Committee

The Committee met today but had no report.

12. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPORTS

A. Oak Ridge Military Academy

No report

B. Oak Ridge Elementary School

Interim principal Jim Smith reported that the school's PTO had purchased picnic tables and that The Summit Church – Oak Ridge volunteered once a month to cover cafeteria duty and brought coffee and treats for the staff. He said that the school

was thriving with over 700 students enrolled and that principal Penny Loschin would return from medical leave in three weeks.

C. Oak Ridge Youth Association

No report

13. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

14. COUNCIL COMMENTS

15. ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Spencer Sullivan moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 p.m., and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

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

Ann K. Schneider
Mayor