



**OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
MARCH 7, 2024 - 7:00 P.M.  
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present**

Jim Kinneman, Mayor  
Ann Schneider  
Michael Greeson  
Jim Harton

**Staff Present**

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

**Members Absent**

Mike Stone, Mayor Pro Tem

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**A. Invocation.**

Phyllis Anders offered the invocation.

**B. Pledge of Allegiance.**

Mayor Jim Kinneman recognized representatives of Northwest Middle School Student Ambassadors.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*Councilman Jim Harton made a motion to approve the agenda and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2024, regular meeting, and February 14, 2024, special meeting. Councilman Jim Harton seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**4. RESOLUTIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mayor Kinneman read a proclamation recognizing the tenure of Parks & Recreation Director Terry Lannon at his retirement after 17 years of employment which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

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

No representative from the Guilford County Sheriff's office was present to give a report which was available at the back table of the chamber.

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

No report was available, however Deputy Chief Sam Anders offered advice on safety measures to take during the impending time and weather changes. He encouraged individuals to check the battery life of their smoke alarms when Daylight Savings times occurred. Anders cautioned against open burning of yard waste and encouraged individuals to obtain burn permits through the fire department's or state forestry department's websites. And lastly, he advised individuals to look both ways before entering an intersection to avoid collisions.

**7. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Debbie Shoenfeld, 8501 San Siro Farm Court, asked where Terry Lannon would live during his retirement. Mayor Kinneman responded that Lannon would be returning to live in Georgia.

Ben Walraven, 5931 Pepper Road, asked that Phase Two of the Veterans Honor Green, which includes the shaded walkway, not be overlooked during the monument's development.

**8. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

**A. Consideration / Approval of Board / Committee appointments:**

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the appointment of Caroline Ruch as a regular member on the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and Councilman Jim Harton seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

Councilwoman Schneider noted that Ruch had already been performing successfully as an alternate on the Board in securing sponsorships for Music in the Park.

*Councilman Jim Harton made a motion to appoint John Garrett as an alternate on the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and Councilman Michael Greeson seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

Mayor Kinneman noted that Garrett was an asset to the board.

**B. Consideration / Approval of Parks Superintendent position**

Town Manager Bill Bruce requested the approval of a new Parks Superintendent position in the Parks and Recreation Department. He explained that the position was designed to assume many of the daily supervisory, facility management, and equipment management tasks relating to the operation of Town Park, Heritage Farm Park, and all other Town-owned properties. He noted that the Parks & Recreation Director position would remain unfilled due to the inability to find a suitable candidate and that the tasks not included in the Parks Superintendent job description would be assumed by Town Staff until such time that a long-term management structure could be put in place. Bruce stated that the position would be classified at pay grade 14.

Mayor Kinneman asked if a candidate existed to fill the position proposed and Bruce replied that a promotion from within staff had been identified for the position.

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the Parks Superintendent position at pay grade 14 and Councilman Jim Harton seconded.*

Councilwoman Schneider indicated that the creation of the Parks Superintendent position was a well thought out staffing adjustment to address the interim needs of the department. She noted the difficulty in filling the vacant Parks & Recreation Director's position was attributed to the wide and varied span of responsibilities formerly managed by Lannon as well as to the incompatibility of the salary range offered. She urged a salary survey be conducted in the next budget year.

Councilman Harton expressed his confidence in the individual identified to assume the Parks Superintendent position and noted his capacity to advance in skill and experience once in the position.

Mayor Kinneman agreed with the interim solution to share the Parks & Recreation Director's responsibilities between the Superintendent and staff members. He cautioned against over burdening the current load of responsibilities on existing staff while a search is conducted for a long-term solution.

*The motion was passed unanimously, (4-0).*

**C. Consideration / Approval of Urban Archery Season 2025 (Jan. 11-Feb. 16, 2025)**

Bruce explained that the Urban Archery Season extends past the normal deer hunting season and offered the reminder that public land does not exist on which to hunt. He said that hunters must first seek permission from private landowners to hunt on their property in accordance with state wildlife management guidelines.

*Councilman Jim Harton made a motion to approve Urban Archery Season 2024 and Councilman Mike Greeson seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**D. Announcement of Town Council Special Called Meeting – March 11, 2024.**

Town Manager Bruce stated that a Special Called Meeting was scheduled for March 11, 2024, at Town Hall at 11:00 a.m. to discuss various policies relating to Council, staff, and committees.

**E. Any other business**

None

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Consideration / Approval of O-2024-01 Solid Waste Franchise Ordinance (First Reading).**

Bruce stated that the exclusive franchise agreement with GFL, formerly Waste Industries, would expire on March 31, 2024. He noted that the agreement allowed for rate increases or decreases in proportion to percentage changes in the consumer price index, and that a rate increase could not exceed three percent. He pointed out that the Town had maintained an agreement with GFL since 2009 and had been satisfied with their quality of service. He reported that the rate for trash collection would increase to \$19.21 monthly and recycling would increase to \$1.16 monthly. He explained that increases in operational costs outside of GFL's control would not be defined in the ordinance. He explained that the ordinance required two separate readings and that if approved, the second reading would be added to the Council's next meeting agenda.

*Councilman Mike Greeson made a motion to approve the Solid Waste Franchise Ordinance and Councilman Jim Harton seconded.*

Councilwoman Schneider and Mayor Kinneman agreed on the satisfactory quality of service delivered by GFL.

*The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**B. Consideration / Approval of FY 2024-29 Capital Improvement Program (CIP)**

Bruce noted that the 2024-29 CIP presented contained the details approved at the CIP special meeting previously held on February 14, 2024.

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the FY 2024-29 Capital Improvement Program and Mayor Jim Kinneman seconded.*

Councilwoman Schneider explained that the CIP outlined five or more years of planned capital projects for the Town. She pointed out that the costs programmed into the CIP were a result of conscientious planning for project costs in successive years while maintaining sufficient funds in the general funds for normal operational costs.

Mayor Kinneman pointed out that the budget for Phase Two of the Veterans Honor Green project was dependent on cost. He explained that to maintain financial stability the Town must exercise prudence in undertaking projects. He recognized that there were many projects left to pursue, and that efforts would be made to seek grants and other funding sources for these projects. Kinneman stressed the need to maintain a fund balance while being respectful of spending tax dollars.

*The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**C. Consideration / Approval of Priority List of Funding for Projects to be submitted to Senator Phil Berger**

Mayor Kinneman noted that the list comprised requests for funding a water line in the Town Core loop, Phase Two of Heritage Farm Park, sidewalks, and a potential recreational community center.

*Councilman Mike Greeson made a motion to approve the priority list of funding for projects to be submitted to Senator Phil Berger, and Mayor Jim Kinneman seconded.*

Councilman Harton reiterated the list of funding requests and noted that the request for a recreation community center was an exploratory project to take place over the next several years.

Councilwoman Schneider reflected that three of the five council members had voted in favor of adding a request for the recreation center at the CIP special meeting. She stressed her disfavor of adding the item to the list as the project had not yet been properly vetted. She emphasized that discussions of the project's funding and operational costs had not been studied, nor had the impact of the project on residents' taxes been analyzed, noting that the suggestion to seek bond funding would increase taxes.

Mayor Kinneman expressed his favor of including the recreation center in the list of priorities as a long-term project, indicating that Senator Berger was aware of the pending exploratory nature of the project.

Schneider added that public opinion had not been sought to indicate the project's desirability.

*The motion failed (2-2), with Mayor Jim Kinneman and Councilman Mike Greeson voting for and Councilwoman Ann Schneider and Councilman Jim Harton voting against the motion.*

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to revise the list removing the request for funding of a recreation community center off the list. Councilman Jim Harton seconded the motion and it passed (3-1) with Councilman Mike Greeson voting against the motion.*

**11. MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE**

Finance Officer Sam Anders presented the financial report for the month of February, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the budget amendment as presented and Councilman Jim Harton seconded. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).*

Anders shared his positive experience having worked with retiring Parks & Recreation Director Lannon and pointed out the thousands of dollars that he had saved the Town due to his foresight in managing operational costs and turf maintenance.

*Councilman Jim Harton made a motion to approve the financial report as presented by the Finance Officer, and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

**12. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**A. Water Advisory Committee**

No report.

**B. Historic Preservation Commission**

Chair Debbie Shoenfeld reported that the commission elected her as chair and Denise Sacks as Vice Chair at their meeting on February 21, 2024. At this meeting the Commission approved a Historic Heritage Grant for the Old Mill of Guilford and discussed their FY2024-25 budget. Shoenfeld noted that work on the Oak Ridge Historic book was progressing well.

**C. Planning & Zoning**

No report.

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

No report.

**E. Conservation Easement Committee**

Planning Director Sean Taylor stated that the committee had received two applications for CORE grants to cover legal or outside expenses related to preservation or conservation easements on properties or structures. He indicated that the two applications were for adjacent properties on the west side of Town. Taylor noted that the committee would be creating a checklist to guide the process to obtain Council's approval of CORE grants. Taylor added that the grant from Piedmont Land Conservancy to purchase approximately 40-acres of property on

East Harrell Road had been recently approved. He reminded Council that the Town had previously approved a \$40,000 matching grant for the property's purchase. He noted that eight-acres of the property being purchased would be developable as recreational or Park space at minimal cost to the Town.

**F. Special Events Committee**

Chair Patti Dmuchowski reported that work was progressing on the Veterans Honor Green with a database having been created to log all brick paver orders. She noted that the committee was studying the database for accuracy. She stated that the sale of brick pavers was being promoted through social media and the Northwest Observer. Dmuchowski reported that a total of \$8,800 had been raised since January 2024 for Phase Two of the Veterans Honor Green project. She reported that she had attended the CIP meeting to discuss the committee's 2025 proposed budget and added that the committee's next event was scheduled at Town Hall to commemorate Memorial Day.

**G. Tree Committee**

John Browning reported that the committee had attended a pruning seminar presented by two representatives from the Guilford County Cooperative Extension Agency in lieu of a formal meeting. He noted that committee members as well as park staff were present to receive training in best practices for planting, watering, and caring for trees. A future pruning seminar tailored to homeowners was discussed.

**H. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board**

Co-Chair John Browning reported that a vendor had been approved to operate the Park Concession stand during the spring sports season. The operating hours would be Mondays through Fridays, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. He noted that an Eagle Scout Project to build a Hammock Garden in the lower back field of the park was approved and was slated to be installed by the spring. In addition, approvals to install an information kiosk by the MST campsite, and a 5K Fun Run sponsored by the H.E.L.P. organization were made by the Board. Browning noted that the tentative opening of Heritage Farm Park was scheduled for May 4, and that the first concert event of Music in the Park was scheduled for April 13 featuring the band Barefoot Modern.

**I. Finance Committee**

Mayor Kinneman noted that the committee conducted its first meeting during which a basic review of the current budget year and projections for year end were made. Town Manager Bruce added that the committee would meet next on March 18. Kinneman stated that the meetings were open to the public and were a good way to learn about the Town's finances.

**13. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPORTS**

**A. Oak Ridge Military Academy**

No report.

**B. Oak Ridge Elementary School**

No report.

**C. Oak Ridge Youth Association**

No report.

**14. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Michael Logan, 5202 Rambling Road, encouraged participation in the school board meeting at 6:00 p.m. on March 19, the County Commissioners meeting at 6:30 p.m. at Page High School where Pat Tillman was expected to be in attendance, the County Commissioners meeting at Harrison High School on March 11, and the County Commissioners meeting at the High Point Newcomers School (date not given).

Sam Anders, 1829 Oak Ridge Road, owner of SKA Properties, gave a report on the status of his property at the corner of Linville Road and Hwy 150. He reported that the NC Department of Environmental Quality had injected a powder solution into areas of the property at varying depths in order to neutralize the gas contamination that had been present for almost twenty-seven years.

**15. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Councilman Harton addressed the incident caught on recording during the previous month's Council meeting by first referencing verbatim the words spoken by former councilman George McClellan during the public comments section of the meeting. He continued to reference the disparaging remarks directed at McClellan spoken by Mayor Pro Tem Stone which were unintended for public consumption but recorded during the livestreaming of the public meeting. Harton expressed strong disapproval of the behavior noting that the comments were unsuitable for any council member to speak of a citizen and portrayed disrespect for the office of Town Council. He further expressed disappointment that a belated apology had been published in social media which deferred ownership of the offending behavior onto those who had reacted with offense to the remark. He said that he found the apology to be insincere and incomplete. Harton invoked a censure resolution to be prepared for the following month's Council meeting against Mayor Pro Tem Stone.

Councilwoman Schneider reinforced Harton's sentiments on the issue and asked that a censure resolution be included in the April 4, 2024, Town Council agenda. She provided the levels of violation against the Town's Code of Ethics adopted on September 2, 2010, by Mayor Pro Tem Stone's remarks, specifically listing violations to public confidence, trust, integrity, independence, responsiveness, ethical conduct,



high standards of behavior, patience, dignity, and courtesy. Schneider drew contrast between the incident which transpired during the public meeting with a similar incident which transpired in a smaller public meeting between council members where inappropriate remarks were made. She pointed out that apologies for that offense were quickly and sincerely dispensed whereas no suitable apology had yet been made by Stone. She noted that a prompt and sincere apology would change the landscape of the offending situation. Schneider requested Stone make a complete and sincere written apology to McClellan, Town Council, and to the citizens of Oak Ridge. She emphasized her intent to support the resolution of censure unless an apology were to be submitted and Stone were to step down as Mayor Pro Tem.

Mayor Kinneman similarly deemed the incident being discussed as inappropriate and inexcusable regardless of its intent to not be heard by others. He expressed conflict with the inequity of applying Code of Ethic violations to all situations evenly and fairly. He referenced past incidents where ethically offensive behavior had occurred between council members as well as with a citizen but had not been met with procedural correction per the Code of Ethics. He stressed the need for an even application of the Code of Ethics while offering his support for a motion to censure in the next month's meeting.

Councilman Greeson offered no comments.

## **16. ADJOURNMENT**

*Councilwoman Ann Schneider moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:19 p.m., and Councilman Mike Greeson seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (4-0).*

Respectfully Submitted:

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

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Jim A. Kinneman  
Mayor