



**OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 1, 2024 - 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, Town Clerk/Asst. Town Mgr.
Sean Taylor, Planning Director
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.

John Jenkins offered the invocation.

B. Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone made a motion to approve the agenda, and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2024, regular meeting, July 11, 2024, closed session meeting, and the July 15, 2024, Special Called meeting and Councilman Jim Harton seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

4. RESOLUTIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

5. REPORT FROM GUILFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

No representative from the Guilford County Sheriff's office was present, but the report for the month of July 2024 was included in the council meeting packet and made available at the back table of the chamber.

6. REPORT FROM OAK RIDGE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Firefighter John Nunez reported a total of 86 calls which were responded to during the month of July. Of these calls, 23 were for emergency medical services, seven were alarm systems activated with no fire, five motor vehicle incidents involving injury, two grass fires and the remaining calls were of various types. He reported a total of 467 hours in training.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Oak Ridge Military Academy representative Angie Williams announced the Historic Preservation Symposium scheduled on August 23, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. She explained that the event was a collaboration with the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) to raise funds for the restoration of Maple Glade. She pointed out that the first phase of the project was to reestablish the underpinning and foundation of the portico which was estimated to cost around \$30,000. She suggested that inquiries about the event could be directed to Mary Elizabeth Beale who was the chair of the DAR Guilford Battle Chapter of the Historic Preservation Committee. She encouraged donations of antiques to the silent auction.

8. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Consideration / Approval of Resolution R-2024-07: Addition of Monty Drive and Sir Williams Drive in the Shiloh subdivision to the N.C. State Maintenance System

Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve R-2024-07, and Councilman Michael Greeson seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

B. Consideration / Approval of Resolution R-2024-08: Addition of Bethel Ridge Drive, Skippers Trace and Lathans Trail in the Parkers View at Bethel Ridge subdivision to the N.C. State Maintenance System

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone made a motion to approve R-2024-08, and Councilman Jim Harton seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

C. Consideration / Approval of Resolution R-2024-09: Guilford County Animal Shelter and Animal Control Agreement

Town Manager Bill Bruce explained that the Interlocal Agreement with Guilford County Animal Shelter and Control was approved in the last Town Council meeting and that the county had requested an additional approval of the attending resolution.

Councilman Jim Harton made a motion to approve R-2024-09, and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

D. Any other business

None

9. OLD BUSINESS

A. Consideration / Approval of Resolution R-2024-10: Award of bid for Park Entrance Master Plan

Bruce explained that the current fiscal year budget allocated \$150,000 for the construction of the Town Park entrance. He noted that the bid request was separated into a base bid which included sidewalks, a parking lot and some major landscaping features, and an additive bid which included an expanded parking lot accessible from Lisa Drive. He stated that the lowest responsible bidder was WC Cockerham Construction Company with a base bid of \$208,000 and an additive bid of \$79,000. In negotiating a value engineered bid, Bruce remarked that removing the electrical scope would reduce the base bid cost by \$45,000 resulting in a total bid cost of \$163,000. He noted that the contractor suggested more reasonable costs for performing the electrical work could be sought elsewhere with local service providers. Additionally, at Councilman Mike Stone's inquiry, it was determined that an additional cost savings of approximately \$5,000 could be made in removing the inner loop of sidewalk next to the Farmhouse Community Center. In summary, Bruce offered four separate options outlined in his memo for Council to consider in awarding the bid, the memo being incorporated by reference and made a part of the record. He noted that the agreed upon contract price would be entered in the Resolution for approval and award.

Councilman Michael Greeson noted his favor of the \$163,000 bid option.

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone stated that all the bids received were over budget, contrary to Council's intent to work on getting projects at or below budget. He pointed out that removing the section of sidewalk he had identified would bring the bid within \$8,000 of the budget. He added that he had also recommended removing the patio feature on the Farmhouse but that doing so introduced issues with redesigning the structure. He repeated that the project was over budget despite his recommendations for savings.

Councilman Jim Harton stated his belief that the sidewalk earmarked for removal would likely be constructed in the future, so he favored the \$163,000 bid option.

Councilwoman Ann Schneider commented that items in a capital budget were added as estimates until they are bid out. She noted that the costs estimated were several years old and that price increases during an inflationary period were understandable. She supported the \$163,000 bid option.

Mayor Jim Kinneman agreed that the electrical scope could be managed separately. He supported the sidewalks as designed in the plan believing that each had an important role in providing connectivity between the town and the park, and that the sidewalks could become main entrance points into the park depending on an individual's location. He admitted his reluctance to support the project initially, but believed that it would be important to finish the project properly to receive the best return on it.

Stone realized that costs were estimated during the planning of a budget but noted that the \$150,000 estimate was a total amount incorporated into the budget as a planned cost. Kinneman did not disagree that the bid was over budget and added that it would be reasonable to expect that project costs, such as for a kitchen remodel, would grow in excess of anticipated costs as the project unfolded.

Schneider pointed out that the submitted bid amounts were authentic based off the reliability of the companies who had submitted the bids. She considered the plan to have been carefully thought out and deemed each component of the plan to be essential in beautifying an important property in town. She pointed out that all recent project bids had not come in at or below budget due to continued rising costs. She supported seeking separate electrical services.

Greeson stated that all the work removed from the bid to get it in budget would be work that would need to be undertaken eventually making the project essentially over budget upon completion. Stone stated that the action of removing the electrical scope from the bid simply pushed the cost for the service out further. He stressed that the cost of the Farmhouse was \$630,000 and that adding the \$163,000 cost of the Town Park Entrance Master Plan would bring the total cost of the two projects to \$793,000. Schneider interjected that the total would be offset with \$380,000 in grant funds which Stone said was taxpayer money.

Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve Resolution R-2024-10 and include in the Resolution a contract cost of \$163,000 as outlined in option three on the Town Manager's memo. Councilman Jim Harton seconded the motion, and the motion passed (4-1, Stone voting against).

B. Consideration / Approval of Resolution R-2024-11: Award of bid for construction of elevated water tank

Bruce explained that three bids for construction of an elevated water tank were received and that the lowest responsive, responsible bid was received from Caldwell Tanks, Inc. at \$3,383,000. At the suggestion of an engineering consultant with Wooten Company, line work running from the water tank up Linville Road and ending at a fire hydrant by the fire department was negotiated off the contract and decreased the contract's total cost by approximately \$400,000. Bruce stated that the line work would instead be included in the overall water main construction project

for \$200,000 which would net a total savings of \$200,000. He stated that the negotiated contract price was \$2,989,250.

Harton noted his long-time attention to this project and believed the project to be a major component in providing the town with reliable water for consumption and fire suppression.

Schneider offered the reminder that construction costs for the water tank would be completely covered by remaining funds in the \$1.1 million state grant award for the regional water study as well as by the \$3.265 Guilford County ARPA fund award. She added that construction of the water main would also be largely covered by the \$4 million grant awarded by NC Representative Jon Faircloth from the NC State House and the \$500,000 grant awarded by Senator Phil Berger from The NC State Senate. She stated that having infrastructure in place for water would benefit the town in providing a source for consumption and fire suppression as well as in attracting new businesses to the Town which would boost the Town's revenue. She stated that state legislation required such criteria in its new towns and Oak Ridge would not only be elevated in status for having this infrastructure in place but also be a leader among small towns in pursuing this initiative.

Kinneman asked if a water line would be accessible to the fire department if the line work were removed from the contract. Bruce replied that the current project would terminate at an existing hydrant, which was sanctioned by Fire Chief Gibson. He added that the timing of the water main line work may circumvent the need to use this hydrant.

Kinneman asked for estimated costs to maintain the water tank without the water main. Bruce replied that a major concern of maintaining the water tank involved the cleaning of the interior of the tank every two to three years, and that this service would cost approximately \$15,000. He added that the tank would require repainting every twenty years at a cost of approximately \$100,000 to \$200,000. Other smaller, incidental costs included hydrants and valves which typically last fifty years, and electricals. Kinneman asked to verify the yearly \$5,000 maintenance cost and Bruce concurred.

Kinneman asked if a color selection for the tank had been made, and Bruce replied that it had.

Kinneman characterized the moment as a transformational event for the Town referring to the permanent nature of the project. He stated a benefit of having the water system would be in the greater ease for the fire department to fill its tankers from sources closer than Greensboro, Stokesdale, or Kernersville. Additionally, he pointed out that water consumed by residents would return to the ground to replenish its groundwater levels. He stated that, in the absence of a sewer system, water would be drawn from a well to a residence for use. Once used, that water would travel to the septic system and a portion of it would eventually return to the ground. In contrast, water consumed from the Town's water main would directly supplement its ground water. He pointed out that this would be an appealing feature to draw new businesses to the Town.

Harton added that the water system would continuously evolve over several decades before completion, but that residents would benefit from having access to a consistent and safe water source.

Kinneman noted that existing neighborhoods would have the option to connect to the water line as it is developed but that there will be no requirement to relinquish use of operating wells.

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone made a motion to approve Resolution R-2024-11 and award the bid to Caldwell Tanks, Inc. for the construction of an elevated water tank. Councilman Jim Harton seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

Kinneman remarked on the importance of the decision and expressed his wish that Roger Howerton had been there to witness the moment.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Consideration / Approval to Adopt Resolution R-2024-12 Capital Project Ordinance for the construction of elevated water tank

Kinneman stated that this resolution was a supporting action to the contract award for the construction of the elevated water tank. He asked Bruce to explain the nature of a resolution. Bruce explained that resolutions serve to clearly state Council actions, and that the practice of presenting most of Council's decisions in resolution form would improve record and reporting abilities. Kinneman stated that approving a resolution would enable action without having to wait for the meeting's minutes to be approved first.

Bruce explained that Resolution R-2024-12 would establish a capital project budget ordinance for construction of the elevated water tank which would be valid through the life of the project. He noted that such action was standard for large projects expected to continue through multiple fiscal years, preventing remaining funds from returning to the general fund at the fiscal year's end only to be re-budgeted for the following fiscal year. He stated that the proposed capital project budget ordinance would include the recently approved \$2,989,250 contract price plus a five percent contingency amount of \$146,000 and an additional cost for construction administration fees from Wooten Company. He summarized that the total funds appropriated under this budget ordinance would be \$3,345,450. He added that \$3.265 million from the Guilford County ARPA fund and \$80,000 from the \$1.1 million state grant would be budgeted as revenue to match the expenditures.

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone made a motion to approve Resolution R-2024-12 and Councilman Michael Greeson seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

11. MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Finance Officer Sam Anders reported that the Town was in a stable financial position on the first month of the new fiscal year. He pointed out that the first large

payment towards the Veterans Honor Green project was drawn from a restricted fund in July. Anders stated that \$280,000 was budgeted for the project during Fiscal Year 2023-24, out of which only \$805 was drawn from this budget owing to delays in construction due to supply chain interruptions. He requested a budget amendment be approved to transfer a net remaining cost of \$236,955 of unspent funds into a restricted fund in the current fiscal year.

Councilman Jim Harton made a motion to approve the financial report as presented by the Finance Officer, and Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

Councilwoman Ann Schneider made a motion to approve the budget amendment as described in the Finance Officer's report which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of the records. Councilman Jim Harton seconded the motion, and it was passed unanimously (5-0).

12. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Special Events Committee

Chair Patti Dmuchowski shared photos to show the current progress being made in construction of the Veterans Honor Green. She reported that the first order for engraved brick pavers was expected to ship the next day, and that work was proceeding in compiling a second order. Dmuchowski stated that the committee was working on a ribbon cutting event for the Veterans Honor Green and on the Veteran's Day ceremony which would occur on November 11 at 10:00 a.m. She added that blue lights would light the flag at Oak Ridge Town Park from September 8 through September 15 in recognition of the events on 9/11. Dmuchowski noted that proceeds from the committee's fruit pie contest on Heritage Day would benefit the Veterans Honor Green and that information on the contest could be found on the Town's website, social media, on the back table of the chambers and at Town Hall. She concluded by reporting that plans for Light Up the Night were underway with several vendors and entertainers already confirmed.

B. Tree Committee

No report.

C. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

Phyllis Anders reported that the board did not meet in July and offered a reminder of the upcoming Music in the Park event on August 10 which would feature the band Radio Revolvers. Kinneman added an encouragement to volunteer for the event.

D. Finance Committee

No report.

E. Water Advisory Committee

Previously discussed.

F. Historic Preservation Commission

Chair Debbie Shoenfeld reported that the Commission met on July 17 to discuss a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the HC Gardner House at 2204 Oak Ridge Road. She explained that the structure was a contributing historical structure, and that consideration of the COA was continued to their meeting scheduled for September 18. She added that discussions with the applicant included considerations to incorporate the building into development plans or to move the house to a different location. She noted that the applicant was open to discussion and would consider helping to finance the move of the house. She stated that a public hearing would be held in the future to solicit public comment. Shoenfeld added that the Historic Oak Ridge book was being reviewed prior to submission to the graphic designer. She concluded by noting the Commission's participation in the Historic Preservation Symposium sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution Guilford Battle chapter to help raise funds to preserve Maple Glade at Oak Ridge Military Academy.

G. Planning & Zoning Board

No report.

H. Mountains-to-Sea-Trail Committee

A report was previously emailed to Council.

I. Conservation Easement Committee

No report.

13. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPORTS

A. Triad Municipal ABC Board

Jimm Barbery, 7903 Quiet Place, reported that sales during the last quarter were flat, stating that earnings of \$59,000 from that quarter was recently distributed. He stated that pay increases for employees were planned to take place in phases to remain competitive with the market. Kinneman asked for information on the possibility of a store being located in Stokesdale, and Barbery replied that he had no information.

B. Oak Ridge Military Academy

Previously discussed.

C. Oak Ridge Elementary School

No report.

D. Oak Ridge Youth Association

No report.

14. PUBLIC COMMENTS

George McClellan, 2806 Oak Ridge Road, acknowledged the far-reaching benefits of a water system for the Town. He offered appreciation for approving the Town Park Master Entrance Plan.

Spencer Sullivan, 7917 Quiet Place, reflected on the almost twenty-five-year journey in planning a water system for the Town and expressed appreciation for the important first step taken towards manifesting that goal.

15. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone commented that the \$1.3 million in the fund balance designated for capital projects did not include \$300,000 in additional funds earmarked for construction of pickleball courts. He stressed that funds for the water system were independent from the funds for these capital projects. He estimated a total of \$750,000 to construct all sports courts being considered for phase 2 of Heritage Farm Park. Stone noted that construction of these courts could occur in phases or all at once. He added that the Town's parks did not currently offer any recreation beyond ORYA athletics for youth and that pickleball was a fast-growing social sport among 18- to 35-year-olds. He expressed that while all Council members supported the development of sports courts for the park only two were in favor of proceeding with the project directly.

Councilman Jim Harton revealed his long-time interest in following and actively participating in the development of a reliable water system for the Town. He acknowledged that though the system would take decades to fully develop, he was pleased with the current action taking place to move the project forward.

Councilwoman Ann Schneider recognized past council members and staff, notably Spencer Sullivan and George McClellan, for their work in planning for a reliable water system. She emphasized the importance of the action taken presently to initiate this system for the Town and underscored how these first steps in the system's development were being fully funded by state and county grants. Schneider addressed the Town Park's recreational opportunities as extending beyond ORYA youth athletics by pointing to activities such as adult softball leagues, trails for hiking, walking and biking, and open space for activities of varied natures for various age groups. She stressed the need to carefully plan for the installation of pickleball courts, keeping in mind that many citizens also support basketball and tennis. She added that the need to maintain a fund balance above \$1 million was also crucial to the Town, and she would not support hastening the construction of

pickleball courts at the expense of other initiatives critical to the Town such as developing water system infrastructure and promoting sidewalk connectivity into the Town's commercial core. She emphasized the need to do what would be right for all citizens and be fiscally prudent. Schneider concluded by describing her recent attendance at an alumni event for the Hunt Institute State Fellows Program which focuses on education. She noted that discussion took place at the event about a pertinent topic that focused on bridging ideological divides.

Mayor Jim Kinneman reflected on former Mayor Pro Tem Roger Howerton's dedication to planning a reliable water source for the Town. He invoked the quote that we are "basically planting trees that we're not going to sit in the shade of" to describe how the Town at present would not comprehend the full benefits of having a reliable water source, but that future generations would. Kinneman reinforced the belief that all council members supported the installation of sports courts but added that like Schneider he believed a complete solution with a clear plan to fund the project was necessary to avoid jeopardizing the Town's fiscal standing. He advocated working towards a right solution that would last for the foreseeable future.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Stone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m., and Councilwoman Ann Schneider seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

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

Jim A. Kinneman
Mayor