



**OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
AUGUST 4, 2022 - 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, Town Clerk
Ashley Royal, Deputy 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/Moment of Silence.

Frank Kelleher, Oak Ridge Lions President, offered the invocation.

B. Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVE AGENDA

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

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Councilwoman Martha Pittman moved that the minutes of the July 7, 2022, regular meeting and the July 7, 2022, closed meeting be approved, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

4. RESOLUTIONS, PROCLAMATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Ann Schneider recognized the death of former Councilman Doug Nodine and said that time would be set aside during the September Town Council meeting in order for people to share their reminiscences about Doug.

Council members read a proclamation honoring the length of service to the Town for Parks & Recreation Director Terry Lannon, Town Clerk Sandra Smith, and Crew

Leader Brock Dunigan. The resolution is incorporated by reference and made a part of the minutes.

5. REPORT FROM GUILFORD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

No report

6. REPORT FROM OAK RIDGE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Engineer Ralph Galligan reported that there were 68 calls in July, including 27 medical-related calls. Galligan said that personnel had received 589 hours of training during the month of June.

7. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

A. Consideration/Approval of Phyllis Clodfelter for alternate on Parks & Recreation Advisory Board.

Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman made a motion to appoint Phyllis Clodfelter as an alternate on the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

B. Consideration/Approval of Finance Officer's Annual Engagement Letter.

Town Manager Bill Bruce told Council that he recommended the approval of the annual engagement letter at an hourly rate of \$110.00.

Councilwoman Martha Pittman made a motion to approve the Finance Officer's annual engagement letter with an hourly rate of \$110.00, and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

C. Any other business.

- Bruce announced that Town Council would hold a Strategic Planning Meeting on Thursday, August 18, 2022, at 10 a.m. in the conference room at Town Hall. He said that the public was invited to attend.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Discussion/Approval of Park Entrance Master Plan.

Bruce referred Council members to proposal from Hill Studio in their packets to prepare the Oak Ridge Town Park Entrance Master Plan and construction drawings. He said that the plan would include landscaping and sidewalks at the corner of Linville Road and Lisa Drive, as well as possible additional parking, a patio and other hardscape elements, and universal accessibility associated with the Farmhouse Community Center project. Bruce said that the proposal included preparation of construction drawings sufficient to bid the project. He said that the Farmhouse Community Center subcommittee reviewed two proposals for this project and supported staff's recommendation to approve the proposal from Hill Studio. Bruce

said that he requested that Council approve the proposal from Hill Studio for the Town Park Entrance Master Plan and construction drawings for \$25,010.

Councilman George McClellan made a motion to approve the proposal from Hill Studio for the Town Park Entrance Master Plan and construction drawings for \$25,010, and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded.

Council discussion:

Councilman McClellan said that this would be the gateway into the Town's recreation and that he had become more and more enamored with the project.

Mayor Pro Tem Kinneman said that he would vote in favor of approving this proposal but that he continued to have concerns about if this facility would be used. He said that many local churches would rent out their facilities to anyone, and that some do not charge a fee. He said that he had no issues with preserving the historic structure but asked the subcommittee to explain to him how the facility would be used. Kinneman said that there was no expectation that the Town would recoup any of the renovation costs. He said that he had serious safety concerns that needed to be addressed regardless of where the money to renovate the house came from. Kinneman said that the project was not a done deal and that the subcommittee had serious work still left to do as far as educating Council and the community about whether or not the facility would get used regularly and addressing the safety concerns. He said that his vote tonight on approving the master plan proposal does not mean that he was supportive of completing the project.

Councilwoman Pittman said that she felt like the project had three main components and its integration into the Town Park. She said that one component was the facility renovation, second was site plan for the actual facility and the overall site plan that addresses the outdoor uses of the structure, parking, and access. Pittman said that the third component would be the usage policies and fee structures which the subcommittee was working on. She said that Council was currently being asked to consider one part of that although it would be tempting to give comments on the overall project. Pittman said that the spotlight is on developing a site plan and a discussion of a proposal to develop a site plan that addresses safety, integration of the venue into the larger park, access, and parking. She said that the proposal said that five parking places would probably be required but that did not mean that we are limited to five spaces. Pittman said that the community center must have a related, clearly defined outdoor space but the overall project must also complement and integrate into the Oak Ridge Town Park as a whole. She said that safety at the Park would always be a big concern and that this would be an opportunity to take a good hard look at the location, the uses, and their safety considerations. Pittman said that part of this work would be to look for ways to make the site as safe as possible and work those solutions into the design. She said that by accepting and voting for the proposal to develop the comprehensive site plan Council will be taking a proactive step to address the concerns that have been raised for many months about the location, the site itself and to get answers to the questions that are being posed. Pittman said that this is not approving or disapproving a plan but actually sets us up on the path to getting some of the hard questions answered and the concerns addressed. She said that she planned on taking an active role in what she hope will be robust, in-depth discussions with the

subcommittee, Hill Studio, and staff so that we end up with a site plan that successfully addresses parking, safety, user needs, and makes our Park better.

Councilman Sullivan said that he had experienced a steep learning curve since returning to Council on some of the issues that Council had been considering over the past two years, and that this project was one of them. He said in reviewing the history of this project and where we are today that at times he was puzzled and disappointed in how this project had been approached and managed. Sullivan said that he hoped that the master plan would bring clarity, answer questions that he had to complete the vision that people have for this house, and pull the project together so that it can be put out to bid. He said that we won't know the total cost until we do that. Sullivan said that even if the Town does not do the Redmon House renovation that the corner property still needed improvement as it was the gateway to our parks which Sullivan said would be a worthy project.

Schneider told Sullivan that she was sorry that he had been puzzled and disappointed about the project. She said that she had been working to answer Sullivan's questions, as well as any questions residents have, and would continue to do so. Schneider said that the subcommittee and staff have established firmly that there is a need for this in our community because we did have a pretty comprehensive set of questions on a survey on which the entire new park was based. She said that the subcommittee has a draft of a very reasonable rate schedule and policies that address safety concerns. Schneider said that we have intentionally taken this project at a pretty slow pace and so this is the next logical step. She said that once this step was done, we will know how to beautify this corner either with or without the proposed Farmhouse Community Center project. Schneider said that we do anticipate that with some decent marketing, we can expect consistent use year-round. She said that she looked forward to seeing what the options were for parking and noted that in a master plan you could phase certain aspects of the site improvement including the parking. Schneider said that completing this master plan would allow us to explore all of the options and move forward.

Kinneman said that the subcommittee might benefit by making their case publicly. He said that they had been working on this project for two years and he felt that he would be unfair that for Council and the public to consume something in a short presentation. He said that all committees should give incremental reports to Council telling them where they are going so Council will know if we need to redirect them.

Schneider replied that Kinneman's suggestion was good, and that the Farmhouse Community Center subcommittee included three staff members and two members of the public. She said that the subcommittee was considering adding a member from the Park & Recreation Advisory Board because their input would be important.

Council's vote on the motion was unanimous (5-0).

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Linda Green, 1514 Peeples Road, said that she was elated about the Farmhouse Community Project and offered her support in providing marketing help once the project becomes a reality.

- Mike Stone, 8112 Hunting Cog Road, said that the Town should not compete against private businesses. He said that the Town should support private industry and non-profits ahead of the Town.
- Debbie Shoenfeld, 8501 San Siro Farm Court, said that she completely supported the Farmhouse Community Center Project, and felt like the proposed renovations were the best solution.
- Andy Michaels, 8216 Hunting Cog Road, said that the idea of a community center was totally fine to him. He said that the only number that he had seen as a cost for the Farmhouse Community Center was \$400,000. Michaels said that if the final cost was that high that he did not think that was good for taxpayers.
- Patti Dmuchowski, 7320 Hidden View Drive, expressed her appreciation to Town staff, especially Sandra Smith, for their assistance to her since she started volunteering for the Town.

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.

Councilman Spencer Sullivan made a motion to accept the financial report as presented, and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Water Advisory Board

No meeting

B. Historic Preservation Commission

Chair Debbie Shoenfeld said that the commission had met on July 20, 2022, and approved a COA for Frank and Linda Kelleher to install a fence. She said that Conservation Easement Committee Chair Stephanie Ferrell presented the CORE program to the commission.

C. Planning & Zoning Board

Vice Chair Nancy Stoudemire said that the board had met on July 28, 2022, and approved a site plan for Northwest Animal Hospital.

D. Mountains-to-Sea Trail Committee

Committee member Mike Kimel said that on the committee had toured the easements in Pemberly Estates and Carriage Cove to explore possible MST routes on July 6, 2022. He said that the committee was excited to begin trail building in

September with the intent to get trails from HWY 150 to Bandara Farm. Kimel said that the committee was currently working with the Friends of MST on a final draft of a display that will go on the Linville Road kiosk.

E. Conservation Easement Committee

No meeting

F. Special Events Committee

Chair Patti Dmuchowski reported that the committee continues to receive brick paver orders. She said that Light up the Night, scheduled for Saturday, December 3, 2022, would include craft and food vendors. She said that committee members would serve food in the Town's concession trailer at RidgeFest. Dmuchowski said that the committee would also be hosting a pound cake contest at Heritage Day, and that plans were being made to host a Veterans Day ceremony at the amphitheater on Thursday, November 10, 2022.

G. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

Co-chair John Browning reported that 80z Nation would be performing at Music in the Park on Saturday, August 13, 2022, from 6:30 – 8 p.m.

H. Finance Committee

No meeting

12. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION REPORTS

A. Oak Ridge Military Academy

No report

B. Oak Ridge Elementary School

No report

C. Oak Ridge Youth Association

Randy Collins thanked the Town for its support on behalf of the Oak Ridge Youth Association. He said that fall softball registration had begun, and that ORYA would have a tent at RidgeFest.

D. Triad Municipal ABC Board

Representative Jim Barbery reported that the board met on Tuesday, July 19, 2022, and elected a new chair. He said that the State of North Carolina had put in a new law that the local ABC Boards would have to distribute alcohol to bars and

restaurants but provided no funding for it. Barbery said that DOT was buying land from the Oak Ridge ABC store and would be paying them \$28,000 for it.

13. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Mike Stone, 8112 Hunting Cog Road, said that having transparency, honesty, and integrity were crucial in small, local government. He said that for two months since the budget passed unanimously that there had been an ongoing debate about the budget being played on in every edition of the *Northwest Observer* by some Council members and a lot by citizens. Stone said that whether the citizens oppose or support the budget or whether they agree or disagree with the vote or the projects that it is incumbent that Council lay this issue to rest. He said that he hoped that each Council member would publicly state that Town Council did indeed vote, as part of the annual budget, to raise taxes on the citizens of Oak Ridge. Stone said that if this issue was laid to rest that it would lead to a better conversation about the value of tax dollars and how they are being used.

14. COUNCIL COMMENTS

15. CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman made a motion to go into closed session to establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease at 8:12 p.m., and Councilman George McClellan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

Mayor Pro Tem Jim Kinneman made a motion to return to open session at 8:25 p.m., and Councilman Spencer Sullivan seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

16. ADJOURNMENT

Councilman George McClellan moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m., and Councilwoman Martha Pittman seconded. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

Ashley R. Royal
Deputy Town Clerk

Ann K. Schneider
Mayor