OAK RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
JANUARY 12, 2025 – 10:00 A.M.
OAK RIDGE TOWN HALL

MINUTES - REVISED

Members Present
Jim Harton, Mayor
Michael Greeson, Mayor Pro Tem
Ann Schneider
Mike Stone
Lindsey Clark

Staff Present
Bill Bruce, Town Manager
Sandra Smith, Asst. Town Mgr./ Town Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Jim Harton called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilman Mike Stone made a motion to approve the agenda. Councilman Michael Greeson seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

3. NEW BUSINESS

Consideration/Approval of appointment of Jim Kinneman as an alternate member on the Water Advisory Committee

Councilman Michael Greeson made a motion to approve the appointment. Councilwoman Lindsey Clark seconded, and the motion passed by a 4-1 vote (Stone against).

4. OLD BUSINESS

Consideration/Approval of Resolution R-2026-02 to hold a public hearing to close public trail easement in Ashford subdivision

The following motion was discussed by Council:

R-2026-02
RESOLUTION OF INTENT TO HOLD A PUBLIC HEARING TO CLOSE A PUBLIC TRAIL EASEMENT

WHEREAS, G.S. 160A-299 authorizes the Town Council to close streets and public alleys; and

WHEREAS, the same closing procedure outlined in G.S. 160-299 is applied to the closing of easements including public trail easements; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council considers it advisable to conduct a public hearing for the purpose of giving consideration to the closing of the trail easement in the Ashford subdivision; and

WHEREAS, a map of the proposed closing is available for public inspection with the Town Clerk at Oak Ridge Town Hall;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that it is the intent of this Council to hold a public hearing on the possible closure of said trail easement, and that a public hearing on this question will be held on the 22nd day of January, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall, Oak Ridge, North Carolina, at which time the Planning & Zoning Board will hear all interested citizens and make a recommendation to Town Council as to whether the trail easement shall be closed and removed from dedication. The Town Council will then hold a public hearing on the 5th day of February 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall, Oak Ridge, North Carolina, at which time a final determination of the trail easement closing will be made.

Adopted this the 12th day of January 2026.

Councilwoman Lindsey Clark made a motion to approve Resolution R-2026-02 to hold a Public Hearing to close a Public Trail Easement in the Ashford subdivision, and Councilman Mike Stone seconded.

Councilwoman Schneider said she would reiterate what she said at the regular Council meeting on January 8, 2026, which is that she thought it was unwise to consider such a move because it runs counter to the best interests of the Town and its citizens. She said the easement is consistent with the goals of neighborhood connectivity, and it is close to two other trails to which it could connect, although it might take a while to make those connections. She said the trail easement is an asset to the Town, valued conservatively at about $20,000. She added that she thought the lawsuit brought by Councilwoman Clark against the Town was winnable by the Town and to back down at this point was unwise.

Mayor Harton also said he felt the easement was an asset of the Town and that Council should be cautious of giving up Town assets that do not seem to be in the best interests of the Town.

Mayor Pro Tem Greeson said he had never waivered in his opinion and that he was not in favor of placing easements beside existing properties. He said if no one lived along the easement, he would not care, but in this case, he thought it was put in and the Bear Creek subdivision had no choice in the matter. He said he disagreed with that approach.

Schneider countered that the easement was not in the Bear Creek subdivision, only the Ashford subdivision, and Greeson said that it abuts Bear Creek. Schneider said one of the typical arguments people have to issues such as rezonings is when they say, “I don’t want that property turned into X or Y.” She said her response is always that she is sympathetic, but if they do not own the property, they do not have the right to deny a legal use and, in this case, one that is beneficial to the community,

particularly if something is legal, is offered by the developer, and that Town staff handles it legally and appropriately. She said she had reread everything associated with Clark's lawsuit and it was clear to her that everything had been done appropriately.

Greeson said it was not about the lawsuit to him, but about protecting the people who live there.

Councilman Stone said that the consideration being discussed was to hold a public hearing, not to have the public hearing during the current meeting, so there was no reason to debate the merits of the case at that time.

Schneider responded that Stone had an excellent point, but the whole reason she was against holding a public hearing is that she believed there is no merit in considering it. She said it was clear that there were enough Council votes to hold the public hearing, but she hoped that those on Council in favor of removing the easement would listen not only to citizens who agree with them, but those who do not.

Stone said he hoped the same thing for those on Council not in favor of removing the easement.

Schneider said, given the disagreement by Council on this matter, that she would prefer to see delay of any trail construction for two years and the lawsuit be dropped or won by the Town. Then the trails committee could work on plans for the trail and determine its feasibility and cost. She said she would prefer that and letting the issue play out to Council taking a legislative action.

Mayor Harton called for a vote on the motion, which passed 3-2 (Clark, Stone, and Greeson in favor; Schneider and Harton in opposition.)

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Frank Carroll, 1389 Forsyth Road, Kernersville, commented on the way the special called meeting was announced, saying he only got notice of it on Friday night. He said it appeared many people cared about the issue and most taxpayers are at work during the day.

  Mayor Pro Tem Greeson responded that the current meeting was only to decide whether to hold a public hearing, and Councilwoman Clark said that the issue had been discussed at the Council meeting the previous Thursday evening and, due to only four Council members being in attendance, the motion resulted in a 2-2 vote.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Michael Greeson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:11 a.m., and Councilman Mike Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully Submitted:

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

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James N. Harton
Mayor