

**TOWN OF HOPE MILLS
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY MARCH 5, 2021, 8:30 A.M.
ROCKFISH CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER**

Mayor Jackie Warner called the special meeting of the Hope Mills Board of Commissioners to order on Friday, March 5, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.

GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jackie Warner, Mayor Pro Tem Kenjuana McCray, Commissioners Jessie Bellflowers, Pat Edwards, Bryan Marley, and Jerry Legge.

STAFF PRESENT

Town Manager Melissa Adams, Interim Town Manager Bill Zell, Town Clerk Jane Starling, Finance Director Drew Holland, Police Chief Joel Acciardo, Parks & Recreation Director Lamarco Morrison, Human Resources Director Laticia Daniels-Black, Planning & Economic Development Director Chancer McLaughlin, Stormwater Administrator Beth Brown, and Deputy Stormwater Administrator Tyler Riddle.

1. MEETING START – INTRODUCTION

Mayor Warner opened the meeting at 8:30, Commissioner Legge provided an invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Warner. Finance Director Drew Holland introduced Bill Zell the Interim Town Manager. Staff members all introduced themselves. Mr. Zell made comments that he officially starts on March 15, and he is looking forward to working with everyone.

2. CIP OVERVIEW

Finance Director Drew Holland explained that the Capital Improvement Plan, which he distributed, contains everything the Town would like to do in the next five years. He stated it is a planning tool and there is no way to complete everything in the list. He invited the Commissioners to call him with any questions.

3. FINANCIAL UPDATE

Finance Director Drew Holland introduced the item and stated he does not have all the information he normally provides in the update due to Cumberland County changing software which delayed him receiving the reports.

- Property Tax - for the next fiscal year is estimated at \$4,960,728 however may not be accurate due to issues with the Counties' new software.
- Motor Vehicle Tax - for the next fiscal year is estimated at \$621,071.
- Recreation Tax for the next fiscal year is estimated at \$607,158.
- Sales Tax – for the next fiscal year is estimated at \$3,837,513.

This item is provided for information only.

4. **GENERAL OBLIGATION (GO) BONDS FOR PARKS & REC/STREETS**

Finance Director Drew Holland introduced this item and provided a schedule that if followed would allow for GO bonds to be included in a voter referendum in 2023.

- Spring 2021 – Town Board to instruct Town Staff to pursue projects for possible GO bond financing.
- Fall 2021 – Town Staff to start process of debt capacity affordability and funding analysis contract with Davenport & Company.
- Spring 2022 – Projects finalized, present initial debt capacity affordability and fund options for consideration and guidance.
- Fall 2022 – Refine/update debt capacity and funding options to develop a preliminary plan of financing.
- Spring 2023 – Present preliminary plan of financing and finalize dept capacity affordability and funding options and consider selection of a preferred funding option.
- Fall 2023 – Referendum for vote if preferred action is GO Bonds and begin legal action to effect bond referendum.
- Spring 2024 – Finalize projects bids and permitting before issuance of GO Bonds.

Discussion ensued.

Consensus was to ask staff to pursue GO Bonds for Parks and Recreation and Streets.

5. **TOWN POSITIONS**

Finance Director Drew Holland introduced this item and explained there are several topics under this category.

- **Code Enforcement** – 1 Code Enforcement position was added this fiscal year Planning and Economic Development Director Chancer McLaughlin is requesting two additional Code Enforcement officers and digitizing code enforcement, stormwater and permitting software. Discussion ensued.
- **New Town Inspector** – Finance Director Drew Holland explained that the inspection department is asking for another inspector in the budget. Director Holland stated until there is an increase in the amount of development, he does not recommend increasing staff in this area. Once development increases the additional fees collected would allow for hiring another person and that could be brought before the Board as a budget amendment if needed.
- **Grants Writer Position** – Parks and Recreation Director Lamarco Morrison stated that in his experience grant writers should be a company or contractor rather than an employee. A lot of time grant writers have worked with those organizations that the Town would be applying to. Director Holland proposes to include hiring firms or grant writers for specific grants in the next budget year. Discussion ensued.
- **Assistant Town Manager** – Finance Director Drew Holland stated that this position was approved a few years ago but was never funded. He went on to say

that he has been acting in this role for the last couple of years. Town Manager Melissa Adams stated that this arrangement has worked well.

- **Police Department Salary Study** – Finance Director Drew Holland stated that when he started there was a Town Salary Study being done. When Ms. Adams was named Town Manager; she, Drew, and HR. Director Black took over from the consultant and completed the study. Afterwards, it was decided that going forward every four years a department would be studied in house and this year was the beginning of the cycle and started with the Police Department. Human Resources Director Laticia Black stated that she has researched and found that we are in line with other municipalities for our hiring range. Mr. Holland passed out a copy of a training agreement which Police Chief Joel Acciaro explained. It allows the Town to bring recruits on prior to being certified. The agreement pays the recruit wages and provides benefits during paid training and in turn the recruit commits work for a specific period from the date the recruit begins attendance in the Basic Law Enforcement course. The recruit is required to pay the Town a penalty if terminated or they resign prior to fulfilling the time requirement. Where the Town is competitive with its hiring range other municipalities have pay scales for officers who have been on the force for specific periods of time. These “step plans” prevent an officer who has been on the force for a few years making the same rate as a newly hired officer.

Consensus was to move forward with the Town Position plan as discussed.

6. 15 MIN BREAK

Mayor Warner called for a break from 10:53 am to 11:10 am.

7. THOMAS CAMPBELL OAKMAN CHAPEL/MUSEUM

Planning & Economic Development Director Chancer McLaughlin presented the Historic Preservation Committee budget requests for the upcoming year. They requested \$49,300 for work on the Thomas Oakman Chapel plus \$5,000 for a consultant to conduct the nomination of the chapel as a National Historic Landmark. The Committee did not include work on the museum until 2023. Discussion ensued.

Motion made by Commissioner Bellflowers, seconded by Commissioner Legge, and passed unanimously to use current funding to finish the chapel and begin designing a freestanding bathroom project with the completion of the bathroom to be in the FY21/22 budget.

8. LUNCH 12:00 noon

Mayor Warner called the meeting back to order at 12:45 PM. Finance Director Drew Holland gave a status update on the key fob access to town hall, the recreation building, the desk in the board room, and the digital sign at the lake.

9. C WAYNE COLLIER SCHOOL/ROCKFISH RD

Stormwater Administrator Beth Brown and Deputy Stormwater Administrator Tyler Riddle presented this item. Ms. Brown began by requesting any stormwater concerns be conveyed to herself or Mr. Riddle so they can investigate them. Administrator Brown went on to explain stormwater staff does not monitor social media and if the public has a complaint or concern, they should call town hall.

Staff requested from DOT their plan to address flooding in the school area. The DOT has been doing better maintaining the ditches, but they cannot be dug deeper due to public safety issues. Oct 2023 is the date projected for NCDOT to begin road upgrades in the area. During flooding events staff blockades the area to prevent vehicles becoming stranded in standing water.

Deputy Stormwater Administrator Tyler Riddle explained the logistical process that NCDOT will be required to use to install piping to resolve the flooding. Discussion ensued.

Stormwater Administrator Beth Brown explained the existing stormwater master plan and stated the plan has been in use since 2011 and is due to be updated. She explained the reason stormwater control exists is, to clean water and improve water quality, not to control flooding. Staff is requesting funds in the next budget to complete the plan update. Discussion ensued.

Consensus was to include an update to the Stormwater Management Plan in the next fiscal year budget.

10. POLICE & FIRE RADIO REPLACEMENT

This item was presented by Finance Director Drew Holland and Police Chief Joel Acciardo. The FCC has mandated that all emergency response units have radios that are capable of operation on the 700-megahertz bandwidth, the police department has 52 radios to replace, and the Fire department has 30. Chief Acciardo explained the current radios have been in use fifteen years and have reached the end of their usefulness. In another 24 months the old radios will cease to operate.

Additionally, the Fire department must replace its current 32 air packs (self-contained breathing apparatus).

Staff is requesting these items be a top priority in any request for funding from the state. If we don't receive state funding staff will be forced to purchase them from the Town's budget. Discussion ensued.

Consensus was to move forward with the request to the state.

Chief Acciardo informed the Board that on the next regular meeting agenda he would bring an item not to exceed \$25,000 to pay the consolidated dispatch and records service with the county. The Town consolidated service with Cumberland County in

2010. Because of the virus that infected Spring Lake the County cut off access to its systems until proper safety protocols could be put in place. We are now reconnected to the County but not at 100% capacity yet. The County has provided technical, computer services, software enhancements and updates for the past five months. Moving forward improvements will make our system secure. The County informed the Town they can no longer provide this level of service for free. The money is already in police department existing funds but needs to be moved to be available when the invoice comes due. Discussion ensued.

Motion made by Commissioner Marley, seconded by Commissioner Bellflowers, and passed unanimously to approve the budget amendment.

11. PARKS & RECREATION.

This item was presented by Parks and Recreation Director Lamarco Morrison. He provided a PowerPoint presentation.

The projects for discussion included:

- Transportation
- Splash Pad
- Heritage Park – PARTF Grant
- Golfview Greenway

Director Morrison described the research he has done on transportation. He explained that there is currently a system for rural residents through the Cumberland County Community Transportation Program (CTP). To be eligible you must be a medical client, a rural resident, or an urban resident. Town of Hope Mills residents are the highest user of this system the reasons you can use are limited. Other than medical reasons the cost is two dollars and fifty cents each way. Several sources stated it is best to have something in place prior to apply for transportation grants. The Town may opt to budget for transit service as part of the annual fiscal budget process and be reimbursed if grant funding becomes available. Based on the Hope Mills expanded MTA a budget of \$120,000 is recommended and an hourly rate of \$48. is proposed for transit service. Staff recommends partial funding to provide a trial run for a period of one-year while staff consults with a grant writer to investigate grant options. Discussion ensued.

Consensus on transportation was to do a trial run.

Director Morrison went over two concepts for the proposed splashpad at the Municipal Park created by Carolina Parks and Plan. If the splashpad is included in the budget, it can be ready by the spring of 2022. Discussion ensued.

Consensus on the splashpad was to include concept #two with an inclusive playground.

Director Morrison continued with a discussion of the Heritage Park Phase I Development. The architectural survey has been completed and construction documents have begun. The phase one state will include an outdoor classroom, a naturally surfaced trail, lawn event

space and other items. We can break ground in the fall of this year if bids come in as anticipated. Finance Director Drew Holland explained that we would establish a project fund for phase I and it would remain open until the phase is completed. Discussion ensued.

Consensus was to begin in the next years budget.

The final item for discussion was Golfview Greenway improvements. Parks and Recreation Director Morrison explained staff will install benches in the areas where there are already trash and recycling bins and water stations. In addition, staff would like to add picnic tables and bike racks. All will be consistent with other items already in use in the park system. Story boards will also be installed by staff in both the greenway and the municipal park to be used rather than yard signs. A long-term goal would be to install an outdoor fitness circuit.

Consensus was to move forward with adding these amenities.

12. ADJOURNMENT.

Motion made by Commissioner Legge, seconded by Commissioner Edwards, and carried unanimously, to adjourn the meeting.

Mayor Warner adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

Jackie Warner, Mayor

ATTEST:

Jane G. Starling CMC, NCCMC
Town Clerk