

MAYOR

Jessie Bellflowers

MAYOR PRO TEM

Dr. Kenjuana McCray

TOWN MANAGER

Chancer McLaughlin



TOWN BOARD

Elyse Craver

Jerry Legge

Bryan Marley

Joanne Scarola

TOWN CLERK

Ashley Wyatt

TOWN OF HOPE MILLS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Minutes - May 20, 2024

5:00 p.m. Special Meeting- Budget Workshop

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers called the Special Budget Meeting of the Hope Mills Board of Commissioners to order on Monday, May 20, 2024 at 5:00 pm and welcomed those in attendance.

STAFF PRESENT

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin, Deputy Town Clerk Coronda Regan, Finance Director Drew Holland, Parks & Recreation Director Lamarco Morrison, Police Chief Stephen Dollinger, Police Captain Derwin Brayboy, Patrol Officer Suchomel, Planning Director Emily Weidner, Deputy Public Works Director Bruce Clark, Public Works Operation Manager Stephen Kessinger, Human Resource Director Leeanne Carlucci, Chief Building Official/Director Kenny Tatum, and Fire Chief Matthew Cain.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers led the pledge of allegiance

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS.

No changes to the agenda

BUDGET WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

Motion by Commissioner Joanne Scarola, seconded by Commissioner Jerry Legge, and carried unanimously to go into a brief recess.

Mayor Bellflowers called the meeting back to order at 6:05pm following brief recess.

Mayor Pro Tempore Dr McCray was absent, due to an educational trip to Japan with her students.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin acknowledged the Mayor, Elected Officials, Department heads, general staff and citizens watching the meeting and welcomed everyone to the budget workshop meeting. He then recognized Emily Weidner as the new Director of Planning.

Finance Director Drew Holland provided the board with an update regarding the FY 24-25 anticipated budget and GO Bond process. He stated that there was not a lot much that needed to happen and informed them as to what had been completed thus far. He further brought to their attention that the bond should be approved unanimously in order to move forward with a bond referendum for fall 2025. The Bond Counsel had already been secured as well as the financial advisors who would help facilitate some of the bond.

Commissioner Joanne Scarola asked if the vote was not in favor of approval, if the regular budget could be adopted.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated that was correct.

Commissioner Craver asked if taxes had to be increased every year in order to pay the bond back.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated that it was possible for taxes to increase annually in order to pay the bond back, but that was something the financial advisors could better advise along with other potential revenue options as well.

Commissioner Joanne Scarola asked about the bond schedule and the amount breakdown.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated that the repayment schedule and specified amount would depend on the project and cost. Presently the town did not have any funding for any projects, but suggested that it would be best to plan ahead in order to be prepared.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers stated that as preparation for the GO Bond would begin, the Town would be hosting a community forum in order to get feedback from residents.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated it would be a team effort with everybody involved to coordinate gauging the public interest so people would know why it was being done.

Lamarco Morrison, Parks and Recreation Director expressed his opinion regarding bonds. He stated when industries want to come to your town, infrastructure and streets are looked at first.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin commended the board for their focus of public engagement and provided an introductory message and discussed the added line items.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin discussed the summary of questions received since last board meeting that were directly tied to budget, informed them that there was a feedback link on the town's website which would remain open until the next board meeting June 3, 2024. He also noted that at present no public feedback had been given and advised anyone in the community with questions regarding proposed budget to visit the website.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin discussed the July 4th budget for the upcoming fiscal years.

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Commissioner Jerry Legge stated there was not anything showing in the budget for additional inspectors.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin stated those positions were not requested.

Commissioner Elyse Craver asked why the budget was not balanced.

Finance Director Drew Holland explained the details of the budget and how it was balanced.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated there was just over \$100,000.00 remaining from the public safety project fund, the project would be closed out as of June 30th 2024 and any funds would be transferred into the fund balance for the general fund. Remaining funds would go towards any debt.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers asked about the dam refinancing.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated the current year was the last year for the refinancing of the dam for the 10-year loan.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated that the Town had not acquired any additional debt in preparation for the GO Bond.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers stated that the debt structure had been managed exceptionally.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers asked if all the committees could be included in the line item for governing body and administration since they were all board appointed.

Finance Director Drew Holland explained that was possible, but if everything moved to the governing body, the administration department would be responsible for approving invoices.

Commissioner Joanne Scarola asked for clarification as to why the line items were separate for advertising and marketing.

Finance Director Drew Holland explained advertising was for public notices and positions and marketing was to promote different town events making them two separate line items.

Commissioner Joanne Scarola asked for an explanation of the Non-Capital Equipment and Capital Outlet.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated Non-Capital Equipment was for anything that needed to be tracked, for equipment that was less than \$5000.00 while the Capital Outlet was for any single item that was over \$5000.00.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers stated that he wanted to see \$4500.00 go to marketing and to also move \$500.00 to the employee appreciation line item.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers stated he would like to add funds to the Historic Preservation Committee Budget to refurbish the doors of the Chapel.

Lamarco Morrison, Director of Parks and Recreation expressed that the Historic Preservation Committee had the door replacement scheduled and that the department was going to deduct funds from the building maintenance line item.

Commissioner Jerry Legge asked about any updates regarding the wing extension for Town Hall.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin expressed that there were no specifics regarding any large upgrades to the building.

Commissioner Joanne Scarola suggested adding a line item of \$500.00 for the Chamber of Commerce.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin expressed his support in making the Chamber of Commerce a regular committee.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers suggested the \$500.00 come out of the \$4500.00 used for marketing.

Commissioner Joanne Scarola requested \$300.00 for air quality to purchase equipment in order to test the particulates in the air.

Commissioner Joanne Scarola asked for more information regarding the Human Resource line item for employee engagement.

Leeanne Carlucci, Director of Human Resources explained the line item was the wellness account that was later changed to employee engagement.

Finance Director Drew Holland expressed ~~in accounting~~ the town had saved a lot on their property taxes; from \$85,000.00 to \$74,000.00.

Mayor Bellflowers asked the Planning Department why ~~was~~ the town was paying Cumberland County for services.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin stated the \$58,875.00 being paid to Cumberland County was tied to a long-range strategic plan which included the Southwest Plan. He advised that the fee was a flat rate for the past 10 years, but had plans to eventually cut it by 80%.

Commissioner Joanne Scarola inquired on the line item of \$5000.00 being requested by Planning for uniforms.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin stated that amount has been modified to \$2600.00.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers questioned item 10-500-1270 for the Public Buildings and Grounds and Service Garage as to why their budget increased by \$50,000.00.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin explained the increase was due to other contracts and services that pertained to the department.

Finance Director Drew Holland further elaborated on which contracts and services accounted for the increase.

Commissioner Joanne Scarola asked about Capital Outlet Equipment line item 505-9400 for a wheel balancer.

Deputy Director of Public Works Bruce Clark explained that the request was due to the vendor.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers asked the Town Manager what the plan was to replace all of the hanging lights in town hall.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin informed of all the lights that had been replaced.

Commissioner Elyse Craver noted that the town was spending \$8700.00 on janitorial services for the Public Works building.

Deputy Director of Public Works Bruce Clark stated they were the only building that did not have a janitorial contract and added the scope of what it took to cover the public works building.

Commissioner Bryan Marley inquired on the low training and travel budget for the police department.

Finance Director Drew Holland provided a breakdown of the training and travel budget for the police and fire department.

Police Chief Stephen Dollinger explained what training was being completed regarding that budgeted amount.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers asked if additional funding was needed or was the budgeted \$20,000.00 enough.

Police Chief Stephen Dollinger responded that as more officers were hired with the department additional funds would be welcomed.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers asked if the \$5000.00 budgeted for BLET was enough.

Police Chief Stephen Dollinger expressed \$5000.00 would only pay for 2 people.

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers requested an increase to \$10,000.00 for BLET training.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated that he would allocate the funds and add to the budget amendment for approval.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

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STAFF COMMENTS

Mayor Jessie Bellflowers, thanked staff for preparing the budget, as well as the board and Mayor Pro Tempore Dr McCray in her absence. He stated that the town had accomplished so much within the year.

Finance Director Drew Holland stated once the budget had been approved the following changes would be reflected; all committee accounts would be moved to government body, the employee appreciation line would total \$4500, an increase of \$500.00 to fire prevention, dixie youth baseball account name would be updated to the diamond youth baseball, \$15,000.00 from the cultural arts committee to the July 4th celebration for Parks and Recreation.

Town Manager Chancer McLaughlin stated staff would continue to monitor the transparency link on the town website for general comments from the public.

ADJOURNMENT.

Seeing no additional business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:36pm.

Motion by Commissioner Bryan Marley, seconded by Commissioner Jerry Legge and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

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