

Town of Mineral Springs  
Town Hall  
3506 S. Potter Road  
Town Council  
Regular Meeting  
May 14, 2015 ~ 7:30 PM

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Minutes

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The Town Council of the Town of Mineral Springs, North Carolina, met in Regular Session at the Mineral Springs Town Hall, Mineral Springs, North Carolina, at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, 2015.

**Present:** Mayor Frederick Becker III, Mayor Pro Tem Janet Critz, Councilwoman Valerie Coffey, Councilman Jerry Countryman, Councilwoman Lundeen Cureton, Councilwoman Melody LaMonica, Councilwoman Peggy Neill, Town Clerk/Zoning Administrator Vicky Brooks and Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector Janet Ridings.

**Absent:** Attorney Bobby Griffin.

**Visitors:** Dan Blackman, Leslie Boyd, Lisa Bratton and Meredith King.

With a quorum present Mayor Frederick Becker called the Regular Town Council Meeting of May 14, 2015 to order at 7:32 p.m.

1. **Opening**

- Councilwoman Neill delivered the invocation.
- Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **Public Comments**

- There were no public comments.

3. **Consent Agenda**

- **Councilwoman Coffey** made a **motion** to approve the consent agenda as presented containing the following:

- A. April 9, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. March 2015 Tax Collector's Report
- C. Tax Release
- D. March 2015 Finance Report

and **Councilwoman Cureton** seconded. The motion passed unanimously as follows:

Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill  
Nays: None

#### 4. **Downtown Park Conceptual Plan Review**

- Mr. Dan Blackman from Stewart was accompanied by Ms. Meredith King this evening, who will be joining him in putting together construction documents on the park. Mr. Blackman thanked the mayor and council members for having him back. There was a great turnout of positive support for the park at the public meeting. Mr. Blackman thought in many ways everything that Stewart had proposed was accepted with some additional items added both from the council and the public as well. Stewart has taken a look at modifying the plan in a couple different ways. One suggestion was that the water fountain be moved out towards the front (towards Potter Road) and they looked at the option and couldn't make it make sense. They liked the idea of expanding the opportunities for interaction and activity location nodes, but they started to realize that what was happening was really forcing a space out towards the street, which they weren't comfortable with. They looked at rearranging the site in a multitude of ways, but at the end of the day came back to the same conclusion; it is very similar in organization to what they had in the last go round. The major modifications (as requested) are adding a picnic table – one is down by the playground area and then there's another one that is accessible also in this area [pointing to a location on the map]. Mr. Blackman pointed out that the iteration that they had shown on the first pass was conceptual and they used an aerial photograph and GIS mapping to inform them about the base map. This new map is based on the new physical ground survey, so you will notice that that the line of trees (existing oak trees) that are out in the parking lot with the chain link fence going through them are a little bit farther away from the parking lot than they had originally anticipated, so they did modify the walkway. If they would have kept the same arrangement they would have been inside of the trees, but they felt they would be giving up a fair amount of land on the opposite side. With 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of an acre, they need to make as much of it as they can. They are keeping the loop as long as they can; it is still 390 linear feet and 13 ½ loops around gives you a mile. The little intersection has changed from the previous iteration; they still have the accessible access aisle where it was before (on the left of the tree), but what it's done is given an opportunity for more people to access the park along that driveway instead of just one isolated entrance. Then they took out one of the trellises, the last iteration had one dedicated entrance into the park, so this lends itself a little more to giving the opportunity to access it a little more freely. That little loop of a walk is not going to feel like you are walking along the parking lot, it's going to feel like you are walking underneath the oak trees, which is a nice setting and you gain the benefit of the shade from those oak trees on that section of trail. It was noted that the walkway will be gray concrete and not pavers as it appears to be on the graphic.
- They are “relooking” at the playground equipment, the arrangement (of the center focal point) has moved and shifted slightly, but Mr. Blackman thought that it's still very similar to what they had in the past where it does become the focal point as you walk in from the parking lot. It also gives an opportunity visually from three different sides within the park and it acts as a terminus for the walk around towards the portable toilet. Mr. Blackman stated that he did go back and double check the drawing that was shown in the previous version that included the portable restroom; it was drawn to scale for an accessible toilet. Mr. Blackman contacted RCS in Monroe and was provided with information, which is shown on the

maintenance portion of the cost estimate. The cost given was for what an accessible toilet would require on a monthly basis; they would come in once a week to clean it, replenish any sanitizer cleaner and vacuum it out. Mr. Blackman pointed out that there was no provision in the cost estimate for a hand sanitizer or a washing mechanism. RCS does have outdoor portable hand washing apparatus; it would cost \$75 a month for that to be added and it would be a unit that sits outside the restroom. Moving forward with the plans they could accommodate it. Mr. Blackman stated that he would like to hear from the council on that; it is a rental opportunity.

- In the previous plan the playground area was isolated from the sidewalk and the sidewalk turned into just a walk that led to the portable toilet and then onto a future element that would be associated with the community building. What they did was place a fence in there to sort of corral small children, but with some of the comments back about making sure they included the property to the south (lawn and grass field) and made openings to accommodate free flow between the two, they felt the same would happen at the playground; the children would run off the playground to play in the lawn and then run back into the playground. They still felt the need to sort of restrain children from getting mixed in with the traffic in the parking lot, so they kept that split rail fence; it's a nice decorative item. Just as you enter into the park there is a drinking fountain and a trash can. There is a question of whether or not there will be a pet waste station at that location, so you can manage all aspects of it right at one location. The question is whether or not there will be dogs allowed in the park or if there is a leash law ordinance. They have depicted boulders in the playground as shown on the 3D rendering, which shows a couple of apparatus that are not in the budget. There are Glass Reinforced Concrete Structures (GFCR) that are included in the rendering (i.e. log steps and mushroom caps), but in order to keep the budget where we were initially those things will not be added in. As we move forward in refining the plans and our contingency number gets a little bit lower we can either keep those in as alternates or take them out. Mr. Blackman stated that he thought this structure was a little more in character with what was recommended. In doing their research over the opportunity to include only wood or synthetic wood composite what they found was that this particular structure has a metal grate as flooring, but it does have a very similar product as some of the railing and some of the roofing that gives it that rural character. They have found that all wood structures tend to come from the west coast and they get a little bit more expensive and that pressure treated pine materials may not be quite as long lasting requiring a little bit more maintenance. The opportunity here for this play structure is a nice compromise, you have the durability and it fits in nicely with the character and theming of the playground and the slogan "Conservation by Design".
- Mr. Blackman commented that we do have the exercise equipment and what they have done was based on the budget and where we want to fall and some other research going back into what opportunities there were for exercise equipment for the "young-at-heart" visitors to the park. There was a recommendation that Stewart look for stationery exercise equipment and they found that there are very few stationery items that provided upper body exercises (most of the upper body ones require some sort of movement of the apparatus itself). Most of the stationery items were stepping up or balancing on. The ones that Stewart selected were a

balance beam with assistance bars on either side and then a step-up/step-down apparatus that has a seat as well as opportunities to lean into a bar and push yourself off. These give us the opportunity to use all body parts (upper and lower), but then it is also static equipment. Mr. Blackman would like to get the council's opinion on these. Mr. Blackman noted that there was one recommendation that they look for something that is made of wood and they were not able to find them; all of the equipment they have found is made of steel and aluminum. It was also noted that wheelchairs may not be able to access this equipment unless the council would like for Mr. Blackman to modify the plan otherwise.

- Mr. Blackman referred to the map and pointed out the areas on the map (playground, fountain, benches, exercise apparatus, trees, etc.).
- Mr. Blackman pointed out that he had given the council the new cost estimates based on this plan; we are just a few hundred dollars over with the contingency added in. As they move forward they will be sharpening their pencils and trying to make sure they follow within the allocated budget with the 10% contingency.
- Mr. Blackman described the plan for the water line, which will follow the easement line where they would put a hose bib in between the benches and the exercise apparatus so that it will give the opportunity to water the entire left side of the park with a 100' hose. There would be another hose bib for filling the fountain and to water any landscape material on that end. The electricity will come from the stone building. The drinking fountain that has been chosen falls in line with whether or not we have a pet cleaning station, which is a new item that has not been discussed. Mayor Becker commented that we have never said that we want to have no dogs, so if we are going to have people bringing dogs we really have to have the waste station, because otherwise they have an excuse not to clean up. Mayor Becker thought people could be trained pretty quickly to clean up and it's not an expensive item.
- Mayor Becker mentioned that he had the opportunity to speak with Delores [Taylor] from Taylor & Sons while she was planting the marigolds [at the town hall sign] and he was able to show her and walk with her [around the park area], because she had been confused about what was what. Mayor Becker commented that he didn't want to give the council any false hope, but the landscaping maintenance may not change, especially in the first year since there won't be any trimming of the plants. Mayor Becker had pointed out to Ms. Taylor that there would be a lot of edging in the walkways and she said they can get that done very quickly. Mayor Becker also asked her if the laborers would have a problem with emptying the trash barrels with plastic bags and putting them in the roll off containers. Ms. Taylor responded "oh no, of course not".
- It was noted that the water fountain will be bolted down on a concrete pad and there will be a sand filter behind it in the landscaping.
- Mr. Blackman mentioned that there were a few comments on the comment cards about a recommendation that we look locally for a fountain manufacturer/supplier for the decorative fountain. Stewart is showing this as a target/idea/concept to shoot for; it is their intent to look locally to see if there are opportunities for that decorative fountain.
- Mr. Blackman referred back to the plan and pointed out that at the base of the water fountain there is a ring of brick pavers. If there is an opportunity for donor pavers and we move forward with the donor pavers or the benches, etc. there is an

opportunity for us in that ring. They looked at other arrangements where the entire circle was brick, but they really need to have a hard strong edge particularly in the playground area, but also it helps on the lawn. They didn't want to stop with just a band, but with all of it being brick pavers they wanted to make sure there is enough in their budget. There is six square yards of brick pavers to be placed in there now with the opportunity for them to be switched out; it gives us a lot of flexibility at this juncture in the planning stage to either expand it, shrink it, to start selling bricks, to do whatever we need to, but there is a place holder in our budget and a location on the plan to incorporate those. There will be better than 200 bricks, but less than 500. In addition, there will be nine benches and two picnic tables, as well as the opportunity for donor trees that could have a plaque underneath them.

- Mr. Blackman commented that it was their hope this evening, if there aren't any other major design changes that they can discuss, to start moving forward with putting these plans into AutoCAD and getting them sharpened up, nailed down and turned into construction plans. Stewart will meet again with the council when they reach the 50% design level to share with them the specifics (manufacturers, product names, numbers, etc. for each item). Councilwoman LaMonica asked Mr. Blackman what he needed from the council. Mr. Blackman responded approval to move forward with the plan as it is or any modifications that they might have.
- After a lengthy discussion about a concrete culvert [as a playground item] it was determined that there could be some shared liability if Mr. Blackman were to spec something like that, because the playground industry is very tricky; however, he will research it further.
- **Councilman Countryman made a motion to move forward and Councilwoman Coffey seconded. The motion passed unanimously as follows:**

*Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill*

*Nays: None*

- Mayor Becker asked the council for clarification for Mr. Blackman that on some of these aesthetic things [the GFCR items] that we want to have as much of a functional aspect as we can, "let's look at the numbers as you move along". Is that the sense of direction that Mr. Blackman needs? Councilman Countryman and Councilwoman Critz responded yes. Councilman Countryman added that Mr. Blackman should look for opportunities for concrete. Councilwoman Coffey asked if the council clarified that we will have the hand washing station. Mayor Becker responded that we didn't mention that either way. Councilwoman Coffey commented that we absolutely need to have that. Mr. Blackman asked if it were to be a hand washing station (with water, towels and soap) and not a sanitizer station. Councilwoman Coffey responded that felt better to her than a hand sanitizing station.

## **5. Turning Point**

- Ms. Lisa Bratton from Turning Point introduced herself and noted that Ashley Lantz is her Executive Director. Many of the council know Ashley and she wanted Ms. Bratton to tell the council "hello" and "sorry she couldn't be here". Ms. Bratton shared a "little bit" about Turning Point. It is a domestic violence shelter here in

Union County serving women and children that are suffering with domestic violence. Whether it's a counseling service that they need or court advocacy or to learn skills to get them back on their feet that's what Turning Point is here for; to meet them where they are and to help them. Turning Point is an 11,000 square foot facility with 42 beds, which works out to be 10 rooms; they serve three meals a day and two snacks. It is not just to come and play or a place to hang out, it is a program and they have to really work through the program to get back on their feet. Turning Point has a lot of great counselors to help them and a lot of great people.

- Ms. Bratton explained that she was here tonight asking for some funds; the town has been very generous in the past. Turning Point thinks in thirds; a third of their money is fundraising and private donations; a third of their money comes from grants, donations from communities and the State; and a third of their money comes from their stores. They have "Second Chance Boutique" in Waxhaw and two stores in Monroe, one is also "Second Chance Boutique" and the other is "Second Chance Home Décor", which has more furniture.
- Turning Points motto is "Love Shouldn't Hurt" and their goal is to stop domestic violence through education and awareness; they spend quite a bit of time doing that through the community.

6. **Union County Board of Education Liaison Leslie Boyd**

- Ms. Leslie Boyd from the Union County Board of Education came to give a brief quarterly update to the council. Last year the school budget was \$87,000,000 that they asked for from the county (that's the county appropriation) and this year they are asking for \$17,000,000 more. Ms. Boyd commented that seemed like a lot, but she would explain why.
  - Increases in utility costs that they have seen across the State and County (\$700,000).
  - Charter school payments.
  - The governor's budget has included a \$2,000 base pay increase for the lower scale teachers (teachers zero to four years), which has to come from our local budget.
  - Increase in benefits.  
*(The above totals \$1,000,000)*
  - A cost of living increase for noncertified personnel (\$868,000).
  - Teachers' base salary increases from \$33,000 to \$35,000 if the governor's budget is approved and the local supplement is about 6.5 to 7%. (Increases in Fort Mill, Mecklenburg and Rock Hill are anywhere from 14 to 18%, so Union County is losing a lot of our great teachers).
  - Providing Driver's Ed, which is an unfunded mandate by the State (\$750,000).
  - Operational expenses.
- Ms. Boyd commented that they've got their capital outlay and if the council remembered the whole law suit – the school board sued and the bill that came out said that the county would have to provide the school board \$20,000,000 a year, but the county appealed the law suit and now they don't have to give them the \$20,000,000, but the school board is working with the county. Ms. Boyd stated that was their capital outlay, which will be in the EJ; their budget is due to the County

Commissioners on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Boyd noted that their capital improvement plan shows their needs at a little over \$300,000,000 for between now and “years out”, but all they are asking for in 2015 is \$20,000,000.

- Mayor Becker thanked Ms. Boyd and mentioned that graduations were coming up. Ms. Boyd responded that they were in the week of June 4<sup>th</sup> and there were several of them. Mayor Becker commented that he was happy to say he would be attending the Parkwood graduation.

**7. Consideration of the Proposed 2015-2016 Budget and Calling for a Public Hearing**

- Mayor Becker commented that he had analyzed the reevaluation in depth and noted that it was also mentioned in the budget message. Mineral Springs did lose approximately 8% based on the property declining from its overinflated value in 2008. Mayor Becker stated that he could recommend that we be revenue neutral and raise the tax rate from 2.5 cents to 2.7 cents, but he thought it might be better to just look at what’s going to capital where there is some flexibility and just not raise the tax rate. Especially when it’s just a small amount; it’s just a lot of effort and angst in the public for a very little return. “We can find ourselves saving the money and pinching pennies, which this board is very good at doing”.
- The highlights are in the budget message. Mayor Becker found that electricity is going up, we are calling it a “sales tax” now, but we’ve again survived the hit from the Legislature; there doesn’t seem to be any movement afoot to take that tax and start distributing it as a sales tax, which is when we really get beat up, because it is based on what the property tax is. It looks like that is safe again for another year, so on the revenue side we are actually going to have more than we had last year even with keeping the tax rate the same and watching our property taxes drop \$5,000 or \$6,000. Mayor Becker stated that he didn’t have any qualms about presenting the budget at this level.
- Mayor Becker explained the few major inputs were that we have asked for more money for Park and Rec Maintenance, because we are going to be kicking off the new park. Under Departmental Appropriations, Mayor Becker suggested budgeting money on a regular basis for meeting security; we don’t have to use it, but if we feel that we’re ....., so that was added based above and beyond what was in the Departmental Appropriations last month. We aren’t cutting into our Capital Budget much at all; as the council knows we don’t spend all of the Capital in a given year anyway.
- Our big projects at the park are transferred out of fund balance, which is \$700,000 right now. The park is going to be \$130,000, but we are still going to have a pretty good cushion to move forward with the community center in the next couple of fiscal years.
- Mayor Becker asked if the council had any questions or suggestions on the budget at this time. The budget wasn’t being adopted tonight; the council is just going to call for a public hearing and order it turned over to the clerk. Councilwoman Critz commented that she appreciated the hard work and the detail. Councilwoman Cureton concurred. Mayor Becker thanked them and added that he was confident that there are no math errors in the salary increases.
- Mayor Becker noted that the complication of the revenue neutral tax rate is always an “eyes glaze over” analysis and it’s all just such an approximate thing, because

it's all based on conjecture, but he has it in there and he does find that because our sales tax money is so high, property taxes both current year and prior year are only 19% of our entire budget, so as long as we keep getting electric money we are in good shape.

- **Councilwoman Neill** made a **motion** to call for a Public Hearing for the 2015/2016 Proposed Budget on June 11, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. at the Mineral Springs Town Hall and **Councilwoman LaMonica** seconded. The motion passed unanimously as follows:

Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill  
Nays: None

8. **Staff Reports**

- There were no staff reports.

9. **Other Business**

- There was no other business.

10. **Adjournment**

- **Councilwoman Coffey** made a **motion** to adjourn and **Councilman Countryman** seconded. The motion passed unanimously as follows:

Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill  
Nays: None

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.
- The next regular meeting will be on Thursday, June 11, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. at the Mineral Springs Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Vicky A. Brooks, CMC, NCCMC, Town Clerk

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Frederick Becker III, Mayor