

**TOWN OF NEWLAND
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING
APRIL 4TH, 2022**



ATTENDING:

Mayor: Derek Roberts

Alderman: Kenny Caraway, Gail Haller, Christie Hughes, James Johnson, Lauren Turbyfill

Guests: Ruth Ann Suttle, Ken Lang, Teresa Foxx, David Wright, Alena Stair, Sandy Lewis, Cobbie Palmer, Nathan Gittner

Staff: Town Administrator Bill Bailey, Finance Officer Jessica Buchanan, Town Clerk Jennifer Beam, Police Chief Byron Clawson, Public Works Supervisor Gary Lewis

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm, led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, and reminded everyone of ethics awareness.

James made a motion to approve the March minutes. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by show of hands and stating aye.

James made a motion to adopt the April Agenda. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by show of hands and stating aye.

Ken Lang with the Robert Taylor Group came before the board to discuss benefits and onboarding simplification for the town's employees. He briefed the board on how his company can help simplify medical benefits, policies and procedures, employee access to their benefit information, and cross training.

There was a brief discussion about the minutes from 2021 incorrectly stating the closure of A-Street. Bill stated the clerk would correct the minutes and let the board sign off on them.

The board discussed the current mowing contract with G&S Trees. Christie made a motion to not renew the mowing contract with G&S Trees and allow the public works department to do the mowing for the town. Gail seconded the motion. Lauren and Kenny agreed by show of hands and stating aye. James disagreed. The motion held.

Bill stated there are two companies that regularly access our septic system and they currently do not have an agreement in place if they negatively impact our line. One is Piedmont Natural Gas and the other is Duke Energy. Bill mentioned Gerald has looked over the agreement and he is fine with it. Kenny stated the agreement states if they damage our system they are liable to repair only the damage they caused. Christie made a motion to approve the sewer access agreement. Lauren seconded the motion. All agreed by show of hands and stating aye.

Bill mentioned since the town has had issues with our current bank, and the town had to move funds due to the other branch in Linville closing, he and Jessica would like for the board to approve moving funds to First Citizens Bank. Kenny asked if the security was internal rather than third-party like United does. Bill confirmed, there are security options that will work better for the town. James made a motion to move the accounts, Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by show of hands and stating aye.

Bill mentioned there has been a complaint about speed on Old Public Road and he would like for there to be a budget line for speed tables on this road. Kenny asked about the cost of the tables. Bill stated twelve to fifteen hundred depending on the size. James told Bill to put the tables in the budget and they would discuss it at the budget meeting. The Mayor asked why this street gets to have speed tables and all the others that people have asked about do not. James asked Bill to include speed deterrents on all roads that need them in his road report for budget.

Public Comments:

Nathan Gittner mentioned The Cranberry Street Cafe will be opening Monday, April 10th they will be open 6 a.m. until 12 p.m..

David Wright asked why the gas company will not locate their line or call them back and why they still can not get a stop sign put up at that intersection. The Mayor asked which gas company would be marking the line. Bill answered Piedmont Natural Gas. Alena Stair asked why the sign can't be placed right beside the existing pole. Gary mentioned the landowner would complain about the sign in her driveway. The Mayor stated the employees would work on the situation the next day.

Nathan Gittner asked when the waste management contract was up with the town. Bill said June 30th. Cobbie Palmer stated that if someone has a contract with Republic they would need to cancel it at least thirty days before Newland's contract ends. The Mayor asked when Appalachian Waste needs to have their bid in for waste management. Bill stated by next month's meeting.

Serenity Oaks, the part-time administrative assistant introduced herself.

Public Works Report

Gary mentioned that he saw a water truck filling up at the hydrant at the fire department. The Mayor asked whose truck, Bill stated Angelo Accetturo. It was unmetered and he does not know how much water was taken. Gary mentioned that well five has had an issue where it is running twenty to thirty thousand gallons a day when normally it runs around twelve thousand daily.

Kenny asked where the well is located. Gary said it is behind the old IRC building and it serves up to the high school.

Kenny asked Gary to explain the truck at the fire department. Gary stated though they did not get to meter the water the truck holds 1,500 gallons and Bill said we would bill the owner for what the truck would hold. Kenny asked if there is a way someone could be accessing the well at IRC. Gary stated they could possibly through fire hydrants.

James asked Gary how long it takes to do the well checks and check the water treatment plant. Gary said from one hour to one and a half hours. James asked about an employee not locking the locks. Gary stated that it is true the employee has been making them appear to be locked.

The Mayor asked if the town will be mowing from Wes Brewer to Watauga. Bill gave the Mayor a list of locations to be mowed based off of the mowing contract with G&S Trees. The Mayor asked about the plan to keep the culverts clean. Gary stated he is working on finding a work order system so he will be able to delegate duties as needed. The Mayor asked about purchasing a walk behind blower. Bill stated we could add it to the minor equipment line in the budget. Gary stated they may need a chipper for the brush that they collect throughout the town. The Mayor stated that renting a chipper may be a better option. James asked if any of the public works employees are working on new certifications. Gary mentioned he would be going to take a c-well test in May, other than him no one else is as of right now.

Finance Officers Report

Jessica asked for a budget amendment due to the increase of the court fee income and revenue of one dollar, as well as the Public Work Salaries increasing one dollar when switching from Excel budget sheets to Southern Software. James made a motion for the budget amendment, Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by show of hands and stating aye.

Jessica asked the board for an amended budget ordinance because the first time the ARP money was included in the regular budget, however the ARP actually is a separate budget. Jessica also asked the board to approve a separate budget amendment from where the town moved the ARP money into the general account. James made a motion to approve moving the ARP funds as well as approve the budget amendment ordinance, Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by show of hand and stating aye.

Jessica asked for one more budget amendment to move \$25,000 of the ARP funds into the delegated budget lines such as the money spent on Christmas lights goes into the Events, Entertainment and Decor budget line and the \$90,000 spent on the grinder goes into the Repairs and Maintenance budget line. James made a motion, Lauren seconded the motion and all agreed by show of hands and stating aye.

Jessica mentioned that she left the remaining \$103,626 of the ARPA funds for street lights and the dog park in the ARPA budget line because it has not been spent yet. She mentioned that the town has until 2026 to use the funds.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Clawson stated that Dylan Isaacs is currently in field training and they are waiting on his paperwork to come back. The Mayor asked about putting the patrol car back out beside Carolina BBQ.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Bill mentioned the clerk is going through utility billing accounts, making sure everyone is up-to-date and reaching out to customers to get payments. Bill mentioned there are several deals throughout town where people receive free water from the town. The Mayor stated that Kenny has a report that totals \$7,722 in delinquent water bills. Jennifer explained that there are customers who have been paying down their amount due through payments. Also, there are several inactive accounts that came over from the previous system that have remaining balances. James agreed we would need to release some accounts in Southern so that the inactive accounts no longer show up in reports. Bill stated the inactive accounts would be brought back to the board in the May meeting. The Mayor stated that the amount of money that is actually delinquent should be around \$800. Christie said that yesterday that amount was fifteen thousand dollars. The Mayor stated that was not correct because of the old accounts that have been brought over. Kenny stated that the policy states that the water can be cut off if the account is twenty days past due. Kenny continued that the employees need to go by the policies set by the town.

The Mayor asked about the current tax situation with Carver and High Country Polaris. Bill stated Carver is making payments. High Country Polaris attempted to make one payment that was not what the board agreed too and the clerk has held that check. The Mayor asked how much High Country owes. Jennifer stated right at eleven thousand.

Bill stated the employees have been working on an equipment inventory. The doors at Sokassa will be around \$12,600. Bill is working on getting a quote for fencing for an impound yard at Sokassa. The building should be fully functional by the end of the summer.

Kenny asked about the attorney and how the board has asked for three months to issue a foreclosure on High Country Polaris. With what the board is paying the attorney, Kenny asked if they are satisfied with the response from the attorney and are there other avenues for the town to get the service needed. Kenny continued that running the board is a business and the town needs to get what they are paying for. The Mayor mentioned that the six thousand dollar invoice is because we have not had an invoice for a while however, he agreed with Kenny, the board has been asking for this for months. Bill stated he has made a few calls in preparation for what the board would like to do and if someone would be willing to take over the duties of attorney. James asked if the attorney was wanting to step down. Bill stated he has not talked to Gerald. James made a motion to go into closed session. Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by show of hand and stating aye.

No decision was made during the closed session. The Mayor asked for a motion to adjourn.

James made a motion to adjourn, Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by show of hand and stating aye.

MEETING ADJOURNED.