

TOWN OF TALLULAH FALLS
STATE OF GEORGIA
REGULAR MEETING
April 11, 2018
MINUTES

The regular monthly meeting for April 11th, 2018 of the City Council of Tallulah Falls, Georgia was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Teri Dobbs.

PRESENT WERE: Mayor Teri Dobbs
Councilperson Deb Goatcher
Councilperson Larry Hamilton
Councilperson Mary Beth Hughes
Fire Chief Mike Early
Police Chief Bill Goatcher
Town Attorney Allyn Stockton
Town Clerk Jessica Robinson

OTHERS PRESENT: See attached sign-in list

Mayor Dobbs welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Reverend James Turpen to open the meeting with prayer.

The Mayor introduced Willard Ferguson as a Consultant with the Town of Tallulah Falls on the existing water system and the EPD Withdrawal Permit.

The Mayor introduced and welcomed Phil Sutton, County Manager for Habersham County.

A Motion was made by Councilperson Hughes to accept the agenda for the April 11th, 2018 Regular City Council Meeting. The Motion was seconded by Councilperson Goatcher and passed unanimously.

A Motion was made by Councilperson Hughes to accept the minutes for the March 8th, 2018 Regular City Council Meeting and Executive Session. The Motion was seconded by Councilperson Hamilton and passed unanimously.

Attorney Report:

Attorney Stockton addressed the communications policy and procedures for the town regarding mass emails being sent out by the Clerk or other City staff for private or public events. He advised that this is something that he would be against. However, if the Council decided to move forward with allowing mass emails that it be limited to City business. He noted that if the Council decided to allow this process, that they would not be able to be selective in who they sent out emails for.

Attorney Stockton made a statement regarding the presentations being made at the meeting. In the interest of time, he requested that the audience allow the presentations to be made without a question and answer session or turning the meeting into a public forum. The Mayor requested that Attorney Stockton act as a moderator if necessary.

Phil Sutton, County Manager of Habersham County, addressed the Council with information regarding events to celebrate the Bicentennial of Habersham County. Mr. Sutton provided an update of the current events and the planning of other future events. He requested the participation from the Council and residents of Tallulah Falls. He expressed his excitement to partner with the Town for the Founders Day event in October. He provided information for the website for the history of Habersham and the Bicentennial calendar of events.

Phil Sutton, County Manager of Habersham County, provided information regarding how SPLOST works. He stated that SPLOST is a one cent sales tax that is voted on in a public referendum. The current SPLOST is a 6-year SPLOST because of an intergovernmental agreement between Habersham County and the Cities. Within the intergovernmental agreement each city specifies their individual project list. Those projects are then presented to the voters as a whole not as pieces. Through the referendum, the voters will approve or deny SPLOST. Local governments must do what they state they are going to do within the project categories in the intergovernmental agreement. If a project is unfeasible, there is a process to declare a project unfeasible. A local jurisdiction is allowed to move funds between categories in the budget if a project has been completed and there are funds available to move to another project that is an approved category in the intergovernmental agreement. This decision is made by the local elected body. Mr. Sutton stated that each quarter he meets with the SPLOST Oversight Committee to report the expenditures for the County and all the Cities. This information is reported to the newspaper every six months for public transparency. He noted that the SPLOST funds in Habersham are being spent on projects by most local jurisdictions as fast as they are coming in. He stated that some jurisdictions are getting loans to advance the projects more quickly. Mayor Dobbs informed the Council and Mr. Sutton that there is a difference between the disbursement of funds from Rabun and Habersham. Habersham County funds are received monthly at a projected total amount of \$271,740 dollars. From the initial start point through the end of March 2018, the Town has received \$115,790 dollars for a monthly average of \$3,300. Whereas with Rabun, the funds were frontloaded to the City. Mr. Sutton stated that there is a lot of flexibility for a county to decided how to distribute SPLOST funds.

Mayor Dobbs discussed her attendance at the meeting in November with the Habersham County SPLOST Oversight Committee. She stated that the City will continue to report expenditures and attend the quarterly meeting. In addition, Mayor Dobbs discussed the meetings she has been in Habersham about the future TSPLOST and the upcoming SPLOST in Rabun County. Both Counties are committed to supporting the growth and improvements of the Tallulah Falls community because they understand that it impacts the entire region. Mayor Dobbs emphasized that both counties want to see funds used to improve infrastructure. Mr. Sutton stated that on Habersham County will be proposing a roads and bridges or Transportation SPLOST (TSPLOST).

Michell Moore, a resident of the Tallulah Falls community, provided a presentation regarding the EPD Water Withdrawal Application submitted by the Town of Tallulah Falls. (handouts presented are attached) Ms. Moore stated that she opposed to the plan for the Town to sell water from Tallulah Lake to Demorest and Habersham County. She requested that the Mayor and the Council to give serious due diligence to the potential adverse effects both environmentally and financially to the Town and the Savannah Watershed.

Dr. Frank Carl, Scientist, Savannah Riverkeepers, provided a presentation regarding the downstream water concerns with the EPD Water Withdrawal Application. For the sake of time, Mayor Dobbs encouraged Dr. Carl and Willard Ferguson to exchange contact information and to continue the dialogue they started at the close of the presentation.

Mayor Dobbs stated that the Town is going through the process with extreme caution and checking off every box and crossing every T that is required by EPD. Mayor Dobbs stated that the EPD application would not be as far along in the process as it currently is without the engineer, attorney, and consultant doing the due diligence necessary to address all of the concerns. Michelle Moore stated that one of the areas of concern that she had discussed with Dr. Carl was the cost benefit analysis and the proposed expense to build the system. Dr. Carl stated that he had not completed a cost benefit analysis. Mayor Dobbs stated that the engineers and the consultant hired by the Town have completed a cost benefit analysis and are planning to be on the agenda for the May 3rd meeting.

Buzz Williams, Chattooga Conservancy, provided a presentation regarding his opinion about the ethical concerns regarding the Tallulah Falls Water Withdrawal Permit Application.

Mayor Dobbs expressed her appreciation to Michelle Moore for asking the presenters to come and speak at the meeting. She stated that the Council does want to hear from the community as the Town continues in this process. As the Council makes the difficult decisions, they do understand that there is both positive and negative outcomes that may arise. There are a lot of checks and balances that are being completed with working with the EPD and Georgia Power. The process may seem fast, but it is a slow process. Examples are, EPD stating that we are okay to go to the next step and GA Power completing their modeling study and stating that it will not affect their program. The Town is completing all checks and impact while proceeding forward with the process.

Fire Report: Attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Chief Early provided a needs list for expenses to discuss at a later date.

Police Report: Attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Chief Goatcher asked the council to approve a new part-time officer and remove David Cannon off the Workers Comp. because of his limited ability to work. The new officer will be used as needed to provide time off for Chief Goatcher to reduce the amount of comp time while Officer

Mat Nall is on military leave.

A Motion was made by Councilperson Hughes to approve the part-time officer; seconded by Councilperson Hamilton. The Motion passed unanimously.

Water Report: Attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Chief Goatcher reported that there is a small leak losing an estimated 1,000 gallons per 24-hour period from the small tank. He requested approval from the Council to have Sam Davis Well Drilling to replace the back-flow preventer.

A Motion was made by Councilperson Hughes to approve the work for the back-flow preventer; seconded by Councilperson Hamilton. The Motion passed unanimously.

Financial Report: Attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Mayor Dobbs read the Financial Report and stated that the town continues to be debt-free. She expressed how critical funds from both Rabun and Habersham SPLOST are for the operation of the departments and to improve the infrastructure of the Town.

Street Report: Attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Chief Goatcher stated that he is still waiting to hear about the LMIG funds.

Public Safety Report:

Mayor's Comments:

- Mayor Dobbs stated that the Habersham County SDS plan is in the final stages of completion and will be ready to be signed.
- Mayor Dobbs announced that a Meet the Candidate Forum will be hosted by the League of women Voters on April 24th at 630pm in the City Hall Community Room.
- The Special Election will be held on May 22nd at City Hall.
- Keep Rabun Beautiful Day will be on April 21st for anyone who would like to volunteer and participate.
- Budget workshop meetings will begin in May.

A Motion was made by Councilperson Hughes to approve the advertisement of the April 24th Meet the Candidate Forum on the Town website; seconded by Councilperson Hamilton. The Motion passed unanimously.

A Motion was made by Councilperson Hamilton to approve the advertisement of the April 24th Meet the Candidate Forum on the marquee sign outside of City Hall; seconded by Councilperson Hughes. The Motion passed unanimously.

Open Comment:

Kim Gurtler, Candidate for the Rabun County Board of Commissioners, introduced herself, provided her background, and platform for the election.

Ray Morris, a resident on Hickory Nut Mtn., stated his appreciation for the assistance provided to him and his wife from Chief Early and Chief Goatcher.

A Motion was made by Councilperson Goatcher to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing real estate and potential litigation. Councilperson Hughes seconded the motion

Mayor Dobbs called the regular Council Meeting back to order at 8:15 p.m. and asked the Council to make any appropriate motions based on discussions in executive session. No action was necessary.

The Mayor stated that the Council needed to set dates for discussion of the employee handbook and budget workshop meetings. The Council agreed to conduct a budget workshop on May 7th at 1pm and May 25th at 10am. The Council decided to set dates to discuss the employee handbook at a later date.

A Motion was made by Councilperson Goatcher to adjourn; seconded by Councilperson Hughes. The Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

APPROVED:

MAYOR

COUNCIL MEMBER

CLERK

COUNCIL MEMBER

COUNCIL MEMBER

COUNCIL MEMBER