TOWN OF TALLULAH FALLS

STATE OF GEORGIA

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

April 4, 2019

MINUTES

The meeting for April 4, 2019 of the City Council of Tallulah Falls, Georgia was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor Teri Dobbs.

PRESENT WERE: Mayor Teri Dobbs

Councilperson Deb Goatcher

Councilperson Larry Hamilton

Councilperson Mary Beth Hughes

Councilperson Carol Nelms

Town Clerk Linda Lapeyrouse

Police Chief Tonya Elrod

City Attorney Warren Tillery

OTHERS PRESENT: See attached sign-in list

Mayor Dobbs welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Reverend Turpen gave the invocation.

Mayor Dobbs asked if anyone was present for the bid openings.  There was one party in attendance, Mr. Lee Bowen, who submitted a proposal for the sand filtration bed.

Mayor Dobbs requested that the agenda be amended to include an update on the water withdrawal permit and to move the bid opening for the sand filtration bed to the top of the agenda after the approval of the minutes.  **A motion was made by Councilperson Nelms to approve the agenda as amended.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Hughes and unanimously approved.**

**A motion was made by Councilperson Goatcher to approve the minutes of Work Session of March 7, the Council Meeting of March 7 and the March 26 Special Called Meeting.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Nelms and unanimously approved.**

There was one bid received for the Request for Proposals for the Sand Filtration Bed.  The bid was opened from Bowen Utilities, Inc. All requested documents were included with the bid with a price proposal of $27,300.  Bill Goatcher asked if the city could act as the contractor and do the job using subcontractors. Councilperson Hamilton recommended getting more bids.  Mr. Bowen explained his bid and agreed that if the Town could do the job or the job could be done with block instead of poured walls, it could be done less expensively.  A **motion was made by Councilperson Hamilton to table the bid as presented.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Nelms and unanimously approved. Mayor Dobbs then asked for a motion to authorize Councilperson Hamilton and Bill Goatcher to do the due diligence on the cost to construct the sand bed.  The motion was made by Councilperson Hamilton, seconded by Councilperson Nelms and unanimously approved.** Mayor Dobbs thanked Mr. Bowen and his wife for submitting a bid and attending the meeting.

**REPORTS:**

**Attorney Report –** City Attorney, Warren Tillery reported on Chief Early’s e-mail inquiry regarding Dalmation’s bankruptcy filing.  After researching, Attorney Tillery did not think the Town had a claim against Dalmation, and even if it did, he believed it would be cost prohibitive to pursue.

Attorney Tillery further reported that at the last meeting, there was a request for the use of SPLOST funds for fire resistant coveralls for the fire department in the amount of $200 each.  Based on the auditor’s opinion, it did not meet the threshold for a capital expenditure. He agreed based on the Town’s policy and stated that other cities and counties could have different thresholds.

Following a discussion of normal protocol for contacting professional services staff, Attorney Tillery stated that contact with his firm is normally initiated through the Mayor and City Manager, or in our case, the Clerk.  Attorney Tillery stated this could include all professional services staff such as attorneys, auditors and engineers. This helps to create a filter and avoid unnecessary costs. **A motion was made by Councilperson Hamilton to formalize the process for contacting all professional services staff by routing the communication through the Mayor and Clerk.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Nelms and unanimously approved.**

**Water Report -** Attached hereto and made a part hereof.  Councilperson Hamilton reported that the Cornelia City Council had approved a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the City’s interest in purchasing raw water from the Town of Tallulah Falls through a surface water withdrawal permit from Tallulah Lake.  The Town of Tallulah Falls would be the broker with residual income. **A motion was made by Councilperson Nelms to authorize the Mayor to sign the Memorandum of Understanding.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Hamilton. The motion passed with Councilperson Hughes casting the only no vote.**Mayor Dobbs stated that we have a long way to go in the process and thanked former Mayor Dan Hayes for getting the process started.

**Public Safety Report –** Attached hereto and made a part hereof. Councilperson Hughes called special attention to the clarification from Fire Chief Early regarding Chief Dixon’s assistance with the ISO rating.  In the January minutes, it was stated that Chief Dixon’s services would be at no charge. There has been no charge to the Town for communications with Chief Dixon thus far, but should the Town employ Chief Dixon’s company, SEFCCo, in the future, there would be a fee. Verisk is another company that will work closely with the Town in preparing for our upcoming ISO audit and tanker shuttle test. Verisk’s services will be provided at no cost.

**Street Report-** Councilperson Nelms deferred the street report to the proposals for right-of-way maintenance under New Business.

**DDA Report**- Councilperson Hughes reported that the DDA has signed an agreement with Bill Turk for an exploratory look at the Tallulah Center to see what is the best use for the building.  This is a six-month agreement. She further reported on a meeting with Dan Macrae. Meetings are held the third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m.

**Town Clerk/Financial Report –** Attached hereto and made a part hereof.  Town Clerk Lapeyrouse reported on the need to begin working on the comprehensive plan.  The Short-Term Work Program needs to be reviewed with a status of each project reported and new projects added.  Each department and Councilperson will have a capital outlay/project form to complete.

A comprehensive planning meeting was scheduled by the Mayor and Council for 3 p.m. on May 9, 2019, at Town Hall to begin working on the update.

Town Clerk Lapeyrouse also reminded the Mayor and Council to file their Financial Disclosure Statement prior to July 1.   Tammy Whitmire’s office can help you to get that filed.

An e-mail was circulated throughout the town regarding the website, and Town Clerk Lapeyrouse requested that her response be sent to the same distribution list.  Lapeyrouse is responsible for the website, not the Town’s IT company. If there are any problems with the website, Lapeyrouse asked that she be contacted so that it can be corrected.  Work on the website is often done from home and notifications may come out at odd times. If you are not receiving notifications of the website being updated, please let Town Clerk Lapeyrouse know so that you can be added to the list.

**Mayor Report-** Mayor Dobbs stated that the public notice to inform residents and area stakeholders that the Town of Tallulah Falls has begun working with other communities in the development of the State required update to the Rabun County Joint Comprehensive Plan was read at the last meeting and was available on the Town’s web site.  A survey will be sent out by Adam Hazell of the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission.

She further reported meeting with Rabun County regarding the use of the recycle center by Habersham County residents of Tallulah Falls.  We are going to get them a list of those property owners. They will work with us to get this permitted.

Georgia Power is planning a community workday on April 18th.  They will be doing some community service labor trimming small trees and picking up litter.

The Frozen Palm Tree will be opening this weekend. Mayor Dobbs encouraged everyone to show their support to this new restaurant in town.

Mayor Dobbs reminded Habersham County residents to go vote on Tuesday, April 9th, at the aquatic center.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Town Clerk Lapeyrouse reported that she had reached out to Donna Verdino and Kristi Early regarding plans for Founder’s Day.  They both responded with questions which she answered based on the information she had, but there were decisions that needed to be made by the Council with regarding to camping at City Hall.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Mayor Dobbs presented a Great American Cleanup Proclamation.**

Proposals for the Right-of-Way Maintenance Services were opened by Town Clerk Lapeyrouse and read aloud.  Proposals were received from Graham County Land Company, Premier Tree Solutions and ProTurf and Landscape Maintenance. ProTurf was significantly lower than the other proposals and provided all of the required documents. **A motion was made by Councilperson Nelms to accept the proposal by ProTurf.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Hamilton and unanimously approved.**

Town Clerk Lapeyrouse opened the Qualification Packets for engineering services provided by Pond & Company (Pond) and BM&K Construction & Engineering.  **A motion to table the engineering services to allow time to review the qualifications was made by Councilperson Nelms.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Hamilton and unanimously approved.**

Police Chief Elrod presented the quotes for a firearm.  Attorney Tillery explained the benefit of having city-issued weapons for liability reasons.  **A motion was made by Councilperson Hughes to approve the proposal for the firearm and streamlight from GT Distributors. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Nelms and unanimously approved.**

Police Chief Elrod presented the quotes for a police vehicle.  Councilperson Goatcher made the point that the need for a new police vehicle had been discussed prior to Chief Elrod coming to work for the Town, but they wanted to allow the new Chief to make the determination of what type of vehicle would be most beneficial. Three quotes were obtained.  Jacky Jones, Hayes and Hardy Chevrolet provided similar bids. Hardy Chevrolet holds the state contract and has the vehicle in stock. **Following discussion of the possible trade-ins of the 2012 Chevrolet 2500 and the Dodge 3500 diesel, a motion was made by Councilperson Hughes to authorize up to $36,194 through Hardy Chevrolet for the purchase of a 2019 Chevrolet Tahoe police package and look at trading the 2012 Chevrolet 2500 and Dodge 3500 subject to approval by the city attorney.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Goatcher and unanimously approved.**

A land disturbing permit for J & D Holdings, LLC was presented.  A motion to approve the permit as presented was made by Councilperson Goatcher. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Hamilton and unanimously approved.

Mayor Dobbs stated that an amended water ordinance would be forthcoming but was not being presented at this meeting.  A public hearing will be held May 9th to received public comment on the business plan and rate structure presented by the Georgia Rural Water Association.

Garbage collection in the town has been discussed in prior meetings and Councilperson Hamilton explained that it may have outlived its usefulness.  Town Clerk Lapeyrouse stated that there are current nine residential users and two commercial users. Based on the current revenue, the Town is losing $1,440 per year to provide the service to these eleven customers.  **A motion was made by Councilperson Hamilton to discontinue the service beginning May 1st.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Nelms and unanimously approved.** Notice will be sent, and people can make their own decision on whether to contract for curbside pick-up directly with the provider.

Mayor Dobbs read from the Town’s existing code which prohibits camping in undesignated areas and further prohibits anyone from occupying a recreational vehicle or travel trailer for more than thirty days in any year.  Attorney Tillery explained the zoning districts that permit campgrounds. Mayor Dobbs stated how much we appreciate any volunteers of the Town and very much appreciate the past services of the Verdinos. **A motion to table the camping issue was made by Councilperson Nelms.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Hughes and unanimously approved.**The other issue of Mike Hamilton living in a recreational vehicle while he was building his house has already been addressed, and he is no longer living there and has moved into his house.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

**There was a motion made to enter executive session at 9:56 p.m. There was a motion made by Councilperson Nelms to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing potential litigation with the City Attorney was made by Councilperson Nelms. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Hamilton and unanimously approved**. Police Chief Elrod was invited into the Executive Session for code enforcement purposes.

**RECONVENE OPEN SESSION:**

**The meeting was re-opened at 11:20 p.m.**

**No action items came out of the Executive Session.**

The public notice to be mailed to all taxpayers regarding the public hearing for water rates was read by Mayor Dobbs.  **A motion to approve the notice and approve mailing to all taxpayers and water customers was made by Councilperson Nelms.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Goatcher and unanimously approved.**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Keith Nelms requested that photos and justification be given for purchase requests in the future.

**A motion was made by Councilperson Nelms to adjourn the meeting.  The motion was seconded by Councilperson Goatcher and unanimously approved.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:27 p.m.

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*Teri Dobbs, Mayor*

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*Linda Lapeyrouse, Clerk*