

**TOWN OF TALLULAH FALLS
STATE OF GEORGIA
ORGANIZATIONAL & REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
January 9, 2020, 7:00 PM
MINUTES**

The meeting for January 9, 2020 of the Town Council of Tallulah Falls, Georgia was called to order at 7:05 PM by Mayor Mike Early.

PRESENT WERE: Mayor Mike Early
Councilperson Joey Fountain
Councilperson Deb Goatcher
Councilperson Larry Hamilton
Councilperson Craig Weatherly
Town Attorney Warren Tillery
Police Chief Tonya Elrod
Town Clerk Linda Lapeyrouse

OTHERS PRESENT: See attached sign-in sheet

Mayor Early welcomed everyone to the meeting. The invocation was given by Reverend Turpen.

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING:

Town Clerk Lapeyrouse performed the swearing-in ceremony for the newly elected officials.

Meeting dates were discussed for the upcoming year. Mayor Early requested that the February and March meetings be moved back one week due to conflicts. **A motion was made by Councilperson Weatherly, seconded by Councilperson Fountain and unanimously approved.**

Mayor Early asked for nominations for Mayor pro tem. Councilperson Weatherly nominated Councilperson Goatcher. She declined the nomination, stating that she did not plan to remain in office the entire year. **Councilperson Fountain nominated Councilperson Hamilton. The nomination was seconded by Councilperson Weatherly. Councilperson Hamilton accepted the nomination, and it was approved unanimously.**

REGULAR MEETING:

Mayor Early requested that the agenda be amended to consider New Business Item G prior to Items E and F. **A motion was made by Councilperson Weatherly to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Fountain and unanimously approved.**

After confirmation from Town Clerk Lapeyrouse and Attorney Tillery that it is acceptable to approve minutes of a meeting where you were not in attendance, a motion was made by Councilperson Goatcher to approve the minutes of the December 5 Work Session, Regular Meeting and Executive Sessions. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Fountain and unanimously approved.

REPORTS:

Attorney Report – The SDS Mediation follow-up session has been postponed. The County could not get a quorum together for the proposed date. Sanctions remain in abeyance. The agreement with Tallulah Falls will still have to be formalized. Another mediation session should be scheduled this month.

Mayor Early re-addressed the meeting dates and asked if the Council would like to entertain having the Council meetings at 6:00 PM and choosing another day for the work sessions. Attorney Tillery suggested another day for the work session allows the Council to have discussion on upcoming agenda items and make changes prior to the Council meeting. Councilperson Goatcher suggested keeping it on a Thursday night since that is what everyone is used to. **A motion was made by Councilperson Fountain to approve having work sessions, when necessary, two weeks prior to the Council meeting at 6:00 PM. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Weatherly and unanimously approved.**

Water Report – Attached hereto and made a part hereof.

A motion was made by Councilperson Fountain to amend the budget to approve the purchase of a back-up pump in the amount of \$5,669 from GWI to be paid from the Water Fund. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Weatherly and unanimously approved.

Public Safety Report – Attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Mayor Early stated that the Police SOP will be on the February agenda. This will give the new Public Safety Councilperson a chance to review the SOP with Chief Elrod before the next the meeting.

Street Report - None.

Town Clerk/Financial Report – Attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Town Clerk Lapeyrouse also reported that the OneGeorgia Grant was not approved at this time. It was suggested that the Town pursue a USDA Rural Business Grant or Downtown Revolving Loan Fund before considering OneGeorgia. The RBDG grant application will be due on March 31, 2020. The most challenging part of the application will be obtaining commitment letters from business owners wanting to locate in the Tallulah Center. Job creation will be the main determining factor in whether or not our application will be competitive. The grant is not limited to \$100,000, but anything more is a reduction in application scoring. Since the Mayor and Council were not able to attend the recent presentation by Bill Turk and Patrick Fulbright of UGA's Small Business Development Center, Lapeyrouse asked if they wanted to schedule a time for the presentation to see if they want to pursue the RBDG grant. Councilperson Goatcher suggested a joint meeting of the Council and DDA. No action was taken.

DDA Report – Keith Nelms, Chairman of the DDA will report back to the Council regarding the RBDG grant at the February meeting.

Planning & Zoning Report – Van Knighton, Chairman of the Planning & Zoning Commission, reported that there was a quorum of three at their recent meeting. They unanimously agreed to recommend to the Council that Hickory Nut Mountain Estates be added to the new zoning map as R1. They also recommend to the Council that Short-Term Rentals be allowed in all zoning districts except R1, Flood and Sensitive with conditions. They recommend the moratorium be extended for 90-180 days to give them a chance to study some sample ordinances. Attorney Tillery said that the moratorium could be extended for a reasonable amount of time and suggested starting with 90 days at a time. **A motion**

was made by Councilperson Weatherly to extend the existing moratorium on licensing, permitting, regulation and fees associated with new short-term rentals in R-1, R-2, A and PUD zoning districts for an additional 90 days to begin February 4, 2020. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Fountain and unanimously approved.

Mayor's Report- Mayor Early stated he is honored and humbled by the voter turn-out and to be able to serve the town. He announced a Superbowl Party gathering to take place at River Falls Campground on February 2, 2020, at 6:30 PM. Early also reminded everyone of the upcoming Census starting April 1st. Mayor Early stated that residents have told him that they want a second full-time officer to work with the Chief, and he will be bringing ideas for how to fund that. He is also hoping to coordinate a monthly Saturday breakfast for people to come together and talk.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

New banking signatories were discussed. **A motion was made by Councilperson Fountain to approve Larry Hamilton, Joey Fountain, Mike Early and Linda Lapeyrouse as signatories on the Town's bank accounts. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Goatcher and unanimously approved.**

Mayor Early requested postponing the appointment of the City Auditor and City Attorney to February. Councilperson Hamilton said he would like Attorney Tillery and Auditor Mixon to both continue if they are interested in continuing. Attorney Tillery said that he would like to make a change to the proposal. Currently, his firm has a special rate for doing special counsel work and a lower rate for all other services. He proposes to do all work at the lower rate of \$150.00/hour for all attorneys in his firm and \$75.00/hour for paralegals. The appointment is for one year, but the Council can terminate the contract at any time and only owe for the work done to that date. Councilperson Goatcher stated that she was very comfortable moving forward with the appointment of the attorney. Councilperson Hamilton agreed. Mayor Early stated that he had reached out to a couple of attorneys close by but had not received any bids yet. **A motion was made by Councilperson Hamilton to appoint Warren Tillery and the firm of Smith, Welch, Webb and White pursuant to the new contract as stated. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Goatcher and unanimously approved.**

Auditor Mixon has not been able to confirm her firm's interest in continuing with audit services at this time. The appointment will be postponed until a later date.

Department liaisons were discussed. **A motion was made by Councilperson Weatherly to approve Councilperson Hamilton for water, Councilperson Fountain for public safety, Councilperson Weatherly for streets and Councilperson Goatcher as co-zoning administrator. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Fountain and unanimously approved.**

Mike Early resigned from the Planning & Zoning Commission effective December 31, 2019. Mayor Early made a recommendation to fill his seat with one of the following individuals: Bill Goatcher, Michael Urpschot, Stan Griffis, Jennifer Jones (if approved by her supervisor) or Scott Augustine. A Charter Amendment would be necessary in order for Bill Goatcher to serve as long as Deb is still on the Council. No motions were made pending discussion of the Charter Amendment.

Mayor Early said that it might be better to make several changes all at once, and it would require a motion from the Council to authorize Attorney Tillery to begin the process. Attorney Tillery said that there were three main things to be cleaned-up. 1. The filling of a vacancy – the intent was to appoint a member to fill a vacancy until someone could be elected during the next November election. 2. Anti-nepotism policy needs to be reworded. 3. Elected officials can't serve on any other boards or commission but enabling legislation for DDA allows one council member to serve. Attorney Tillery recommends making all changes at once time through legislative act. **A motion was made by Councilperson Goatcher to authorize Warren Tillery to work on the Charter Amendment as discussed. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Weatherly and unanimously approved.**

Mayor Early stated that he is not opposed to the water withdrawal permit, but we have already expended at least \$70,000 in the process and wants to talk with our attorney and EPD before getting authorization from Council to continue in the negotiations with GA Power and Cornelia.

A motion to postpone the remaining agenda items under New Business until next month was made by Councilperson Fountain. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Weatherly and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Marcia Brock asked who will be the new Fire Chief? Mayor Early responded that it would probably be Assistant Chief Paul Marsteller.

Councilperson Goatcher stated that she is still planning to retire, but she agreed to stay on to resolve the Charter Amendment.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion was made by Councilperson Fountain to go into executive session to discuss potential litigation with the Attorney. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Goatcher Hamilton and unanimously approved at 8:55 PM.

The meeting was re-opened at 9:22 PM. No action items came out of the Executive Session.

There being no other business before the Council, a motion was made by Councilperson Fountain to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Weatherly and unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:22 PM.


Linda Lapeyrouse, Town Clerk