

## **Town Council Meeting February 7, 2023**

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order with all council members present except Mrs. Strom and Mr. Sinard. Attorney Drinnon was present also.

Mr. Steve Raby, pastor of First Church of Love approached the board to ask about a water line extension to their church. They offer a box that is filled daily with food for those who need it. They also have a garden each year that offers food for the needy community.

Sarah Beth Phillips gave a report on the library updates. She asked if it is possible for the library to have some new lighting on their parking area and outdoor areas as well as a light for their sign. With the new later hours, this would help when it gets dark so quick.

Michael Cole, the new President and CEO of the chamber introduced himself to the board. He gave some updates on what the chamber is doing this year. Updating the website to make it more effective with members and community is a big goal. The board also does a "Lunch and Learn" class where they have different companies or different speakers help out with subjects such as work force development, economic development and business topics. The annual banquet will be March 9<sup>th</sup> at Lakeway Christian Academy.

On a motion from Mr. Woods, second from Mr. Marshall, the minutes of the January 4, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved.

Ordinance #1-23, rezoning the property at Agricultural Park Drive from C-2 to R-1, failed for lack of a motion. Property owner originally had it subdivided into five lots to put housing on, but later realized the property was a commercial zone. Mr. Marshall pointed out that the old school property owner had wanted to change to commercial as well and was told that they could not. After much discussion, the mayor asked for a motion to change the zone and no one agreed. The motion failed due to a lack of motion.

On a motion from Mr. Marshall, second from Mr. Woods, it was unanimously voted to hire Jonah Morie as the new Parks and Recreation director.

Attorney Drinnon informed the board about the Silicon ranch agreement, asking the town to delegate its right to zone, permit and give building matters, to the Jefferson County board. He explained he has reached out to MTAS and CTAS and found no statutory legal authority to transfer these powers to another board. The project can still be done, but the town would have no authority over any of the project. On a motion by Mr. Woods, second by Mr. Stump, it was unanimously voted not to accept the agreement for the Silicon Ranch Corporation.

On a motion from Mr. Stump, second from Mr. Woods, it was unanimously voted to accept the lease agreement with Norfolk Southern Corporation for \$1500 per year.

On a motion from Mr. Marshall, second from Mr. Woods, it was unanimously voted to increase the current employees a \$1 increase for having their commercial drivers license with the exception of newly hired Jason Bales.

On a motion from Mr. Stump, second from Mr. Marshall, it was unanimously approved to accept the TDOT offer on an easement for \$375 for a portion of property off Roy Messer Highway to install a traffic signal and improve safety at the intersection.

Under police news Mrs. Susong discussed the departments need for hiring an IT person or company. Bryan Stuart from Data Professionals had turned in a proposal that included anti-virus protection as well as firewall, monitoring, and email security. Chief Cotter also met with Don Devine about helping with them with various IT help and with installing a firewall and virus protection as well. Fire reports were given to the board also.

The board welcomed the new planning commission members, Ryan Winstead and Donna Wallin to the meeting.

Under recreation news, Mr. Morie gave a report on earnings on the ruritan building and had the board look at the different logos for the parks and recreation truck. The board liked the regular sign with "Parks and Recreation" spelled out underneath. The mayor also added that Brad was looking into getting logos printed that had the towns website to put on all the trucks.

For water and sewer Mr. Harnage reported the parts were here for the project at the Wastewater plant and he was hoping they would start next week. The wet well is too small and increasing size of the line out of the wet well would save some money.

Mayor Taylor reported on the consent order. The date of January 31, 2023 was the day it was put in place. Mr. Hodges and Mrs. Graves are in charge of making sure all is in line by keeping a large calendar with dates to be put up so deadlines will not be missed. Tana Benson from Dandridge wastewater will also be helping. The by-pass plans for TDOT may be adjusted since we were trying to coordinate with the moving of utility lines for the traffic signal.

Mr. Hodges informed the board that he had met with M & M construction and they will be starting on March 1, 2023. They will start on Roy Messer Highway at Lakeway Christian Academy. They hope to have everything cleaned within seven to eight months. They will give a daily report of problems and findings, and then the board will be informed monthly.

Mayor Taylor shared a resume from Douglas McClure. He has license for WW4 and has contacted Fleming Training Center who will decide when they meet in April if the license will transfer. He moved to Newport from Delaware five months ago and wanted to make this area his home. Another prospect has been interviewed by phone for the water licensed position. He presently works for Town of Smyrna and has license for water treatment and water distribution grade two. He is concerned with our present insurance and the cost and the mayor said that he is trying to find something more affordable as well. Mr. Woods asked about losing Bob Hardy, a home town person. The mayor asked Mr. Hardy if he would like to address the board on his reason for leaving. Mr. Hardy mentioned several instances where Mr. Harnage was interfering with him doing his job as the water licensed employee, and stated he did not interfere with the former sewer operator when he was working. Mr. Glen Warren asked to speak and mentioned when he was mayor they had used the camera and done the smoke tests quite often. And now it is rarely done since Mr. Harnage was over the wastewater. Mr. Harnage then stood and expressed the reason they had not done much with sewer line camera/smoke testing is that several employees had been absent, but they had fixed several problems that were found. He turned to address Mr. Hardy concerning the interference of the monthly report, and the board asked him to address them instead. A lengthy discussion between all parties took place with Mr. Hardy offering to stay until the end of February until they found someone else, but the mayor said he would not tolerate being talked to in a disrespectful way.

Under street news Mr. Collier reported the last day for leaf pick up at the curb would be February 15<sup>th</sup> and then they would have to be placed in bags at curb. This was put on social media and website. All the patching on roads has been caught up too.

Under financial reports the recorder gave all members an up-to-date expense report. It was noted that with all the additional future hires there would definitely be overage. Mr. Stump asked if we are at a net gain or loss and the mayor seemed to think we would have the needed funds to cover the extra spending.

Unfinished business took place at this time. Mayor Taylor reported that insurance is being looked at. He said the current plan is going up over 20% and he has reached out to several other companies to get quotes and that we simply could not afford the increase.

New business brought a motion from Mr. Marshall and a second by Mr. Stump, to review the entire zoning map and change to reflect current situations and to see if property owner would like to see changes made too. Mrs. Susong reminded them that this would have to be done by the planning commission and would be sure they could work together. The motion passed unanimously.

On a motion from Mr. Stump, second from Mr. Woods, it was unanimously voted to hire Doug McClure as a wastewater operator.


Discussions started again with the mayor asking the board if they would approve Garrett Conrad to be hired as a water operator providing that the in-person interview went well. Mr. Conrad had expressed the need to do a thirty-day notice for his employer if hired. With this position vacant the state will more than likely not let us continue and water would have to be purchased according to the mayor. Mr. Marshall asked for clarification on the past having a operator for water and a operator for sewer, and taking off the public works job from the water and sewer operators. The mayor said that Brad had been hired to take on the public works director and that he will be cross training the guys on the backhoe. Mr. Stump mentioned if this candidate declined the offer that we are still in the same position. And the mayor stated he does not want to obligate this person till he is interviewed in person. He has all three license and if he leaves current job, he is giving up an 8% raise. On a motion from Mr. Marshall, second from Mr. Woods, it was unanimously voted to hire Garrett Conrad based on his final in person interview as a water plant operator.

On a motion from Mr. Stump, second from Mr. Woods, it was unanimously voted to hire Don Devine to work as an IT person on a "as need" basis.

On a motion from Mr. Stump, second from Mr. Marshall, it was unanimously voted to pay bills.

On a motion from Mr. Wood, second from Mr. Marshall, it was unanimously voted to set the date for Pine Fest as September 23. A council member representative will be appointed at the next meeting.

On a motion from Mr. Wood, second from Mr. Marshall, it was unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:54 pm

  
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Fred Taylor, Mayor

  
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Alyson P. Susong, Recorder