

The regular meeting of the Murphy Town Council was held on May 4, 2020 at 5:00 pm in the Murphy Elementary School gym with the following present:

Town Manager: Chad Simons
Attorney: Mack Cowan

Mayor: Rick Ramsey
Council: Barry McClure Frank Dickey
Karen Watson Gail Stansell
Barbara Hughes Noland Smith

WKRR:
Cherokee Scout –

Mayor Ramsey led the Council with the pledge of allegiance.

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Stansell, seconded by Smith to approve the March 2, 2020 regular meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Water and Sewer Releases

Motion was made by Watson, seconded by Hughes to approve the water and sewer adjustments of \$707.30. Motion unanimously.

Acknowledge poll vote to temporarily suspend water and sewer disconnections and late payment fees effective March 16, 2020.

Town Manager Chad Simons informed the Council that they would need to confirm a poll vote taken by the Council via email in mid-March to suspend late payment fees and utility disconnects as a result of the pandemic. Mr. Simons said the vote was unanimous to approve the resolution.

Motion was made by McClure, seconded by Stansell to acknowledge the poll vote taken by the Murphy Town Council to suspend water and sewer disconnections and late payment fees on March 18, 2020. Motion carried unanimously.

A Resolution requiring bank deposits by the Town when moneys on hand amount to \$500.00 or more rather than daily bank deposits

Town Manager Chad Simons informed the Council that the presented Resolution could not be practiced most days of the month. Mr. Simons said the town had two to three days per month when moneys taken in amount to less than \$500.00. Mr. Simons said it would be useful to have this in place for those days when very little money is taken in, especially during the public health crisis. Mr. Simons said the Local Government Commission and the state budget act requires a resolution to be in place before towns can move forward.

Motion was made by Smith, seconded by Stansell to approve the Resolution requiring bank deposits by the Town when moneys on hand amount to \$500.00 or more rather than make daily bank deposits. Motion carried unanimously.

A Resolution authorizing the opening of a separate bank account in which to accumulate funds for the purpose of paying the law enforcement separation allowance benefit to police officers

Town Manager Chad Simons informed the Council that the Town could have three or five retired police officers in the next 5-7 years, in which a police separation allowance will have to be paid to them. Mr. Simons said the allowance is separate from the 401(k) and pension obligations. Mr. Simons said the obligation can be costly to small towns when they lose several police officers in a short amount of time. Mr. Simons said if the town started paying into this future obligation now, the burden will not be as severe financially.

Mr. Dickey said he believed the town's auditor recommend such a practice during the Great Recession. Ms. Stansell said it was very good of the town to start looking ahead.

Motion was made by McClure, seconded by Watson to approve of the Resolution authorizing the opening of a separate bank account in which to accumulate funds for the purpose of paying the law enforcement separation allowance benefit to police officers. Motion carried unanimously.

Amendment to the Water Supply and Distribution Ordinance concerning billing where more than one customer is served by the same meter

Town Manager Chad Simons asked the Council to delay voting on the matter this month, stating he wanted to review several accounts the proposed amendment would impact. Mr. Simons said the Town requires a base fee to be paid by all customers for each account, and that some grandfathered accounts share water meters. Mr. Simons explained that the base fee is important for budgetary reasons. Mr. Simons explained that approximately sixty accounts share a meter, and town staff spend a great deal of time every month evenly distributing their consumption between each account. Mr. Simons said it makes sense to have the owners do this, instead of town staff, especially since it is required to have a separate meter for each connection. Mr. Simons said the accounts were grandfathered in.

Amendment to the Sewage Collection and Disposal Ordinance requiring backflow prevention devices by April 30, 2022

Town Manager Chad Simons explained that sewer backflow devices would protect customers and the Town from liability issues. Mr. Simons said the Town could provide notices to customers that such devices would be required in two years through utility billing mail.

Mr. Frank Dickey had concerns about the timing of the proposed ordinance, saying some customers would have a hard time paying for backflow preventers on their side of the sewer system. Mr. Dickey advised to look for grant monies that could potentially help customers pay for backflow devices, much like the Town did with the radio read meters during the Great Recession. Mr. Dickey said two years is not enough time for customers. Mr. Dickey said he supports backflow devices, and although they are relatively cheap, some customers may have to pay a lot of money to have such devices installed. Mr. Dickey also said locating sewer lines could be problematic for many customers.

Mr. Noland Smith expressed reservations about the proposed ordinance as well, noting that some customers do not need such devices given their proximity to the town's gravity sewer system. Mr. Smith

asked for the Town to reconsider drafting the ordinance to ensure it is not a one size fits all type ordinance.

Town Manager Chad Simons said staff would address the concerns raised, consult with the Town attorney, and bring something back for the Council to consider in June.

Tentative Street Closure Request for July 4th Fireworks

Mayor Ramsey explained to the Council about his plans to boost downtown businesses for July 4th. Mayor Ramsey said the town would close downtown like they did during the Guinness Train event, and that the fireworks would be shot off at the pyramid, which would keep people in downtown. Mayor Ramsey said it would bring a lot of people into town. Mayor Ramsey said the town would need to closely monitor Governor Cooper's phase three plan, which hopefully will accommodate more gatherings by July 4th. Mayor Ramsey said the town could move the event to Labor Day.

Mrs. Gail Walker Stansell said the town would need to be careful in encouraging physical distancing, and keeping the community safe as planning for the event occurs.

Mr. Frank Dicky asked if the town would pay for the event, and if the town is sponsoring the event. Mayor Ramsey said the town is not funding the event, but is paying for the fireworks only.

Mrs. Karen Watson asked if the fireworks show would be cancelled if the downtown event cannot go on. Mayor Ramsey said he feels like the fireworks show can go on for July 4th at Konehete Park, even if the downtown event is cancelled.

Motion was made by McClure, seconded by Watson to approve of the tentative street closure request for July 4th downtown festival. Motion carried unanimously; Closure from Tennessee Street to Depot Street intersection, Valley River Avenue to the United Methodist Church, Peachtree Street to Central Street intersection, Hiawassee Street to the Town of Murphy Fire Department from 8 a.m. until 11 p.m. Saturday, July 4th. Lakeside Drive will be closed for thirty minutes for the fireworks show.

DAC Director Position and Classification Approval

Town Manager Chad Simons explained that the Downtown Associate Community Program requires the appointment of a director, and that the two Council members serving in this capacity right now are doing so temporarily. Mr. Simons said the Town is actively recruiting for the position, and currently have a good prospect. Mr. Simons said the position will place the town in a better position to move forward in the program. Mr. Simons informed the Council that the town's personnel policy requires all positions be approved by the Board, with a class title and pay grade. Mr. Simons said this is required even though the position would be part-time. Mr. Simons said the position is paid for with economic develop grant monies, and not by the taxpayers.

Motion was made by Smith, seconded by Stansell to approve the Downtown Development Director position as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Monthly Reports

Town Manager Chad Simons informed the Council about his request for North Carolina Rural Water to conduct a water audit.

Motion was made by Stansell, seconded by Smith, to approve the monthly reports as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion

Mayor Ramsey informed the public not to put anything down the drains with the exception of toilet paper and water.

Town Manager Chad Simons expressed his recommendation to conduct another rate study in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, and establish a water and sewer committee to help prioritize projects for the next ten years.

Adjourn

Motion was made by McClure, seconded by Watson to adjourn the meeting at 5:55 p.m. Motion carried unanimously

Clerk: Signed Chad Simons

Mayor: Signed David Rick Ramsey

