



TOWN OF
GRANITE FALLS
North Carolina

Barry Hayes Mayor • Dr. Caryl B. Burns Mayor Pro Tem • Jerry T. Church Town Manager
Council Members Larry Knight • Jim Mackie • Mike Mackie • Martin D. Townsend • Tracy Townsend

AGENDA
REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2021
4 SOUTH MAIN STREET
6:00 PM

Please note that due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), this regular meeting of the Granite Falls Town Council is being broadcast electronically to allow for remote participation by Town staff, members of the media, citizens and members of the general public, and all other interested parties. To provide adequate social distancing, only the Mayor, Town Council, Town Clerk, Town Manager, Town Finance Officer, ZOOM Meeting Administrator, Town Attorney, and a maximum of two members of the public at a time will be permitted to enter the Town Council Chambers. The meeting can be accessed by any other interested parties as follows:

visit www.granitefallsnc.com/meeting

Or by phone:

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 820 3671 6841

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|------|---|------------------------------|
| I. | WELCOME - CALL TO ORDER | MAYOR BARRY HAYES |
| II. | INVOCATION | COUNCILMEMBER TRACY TOWNSEND |
| III. | PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE | MAYOR BARRY HAYES |
| IV. | RECOGNITION OF VISITORS | |
| V. | SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS/INTRODUCTIONS/RECOGNITIONS-NONE SCHEDULED | |
| VI. | APPROVAL OF AGENDA | |

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD JANUARY 4, 2021.

VIII. TOWN ATTORNEY REPORT

BRUCE CANNON

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Public Comments may be submitted up until 4:00 p.m. on Monday, February 1, 2021, by US Mail to Public Comments, c/o The Town of Granite Falls, P.O. Drawer 10, Granite Falls, NC 28630, hand delivered to the drive-through window at the Town Administrative Office at 30 Park Square, Granite Falls, NC, or delivered by email to admin@granitefallsn.com.

The Public Comments submitted in advance of the Council meeting will be read into the minutes by the Town Manager during the Council Meeting and must follow the Public Comment Guidelines established by the Town Council. The Public Comment Period Guidelines are available upon request at the drive-through window at the Town Administrative Office located at 30 Park Square, Granite Falls, NC, or on-line at www.granitefallsn.com/councildocuments.

X. PUBLIC HEARINGS

CONTINUATION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING ON ASSESSMENT AGAINST REAL PROPERTY OF OWNER FAILING TO PAY INVOICES TO THE TOWN OF GRANITE FALLS

At the January 4, 2021 Council meeting, the Council held a public hearing on the preliminary assessment roll against real property owners failing to pay invoices to the Town of Granite Falls for services and fines rendered by the Town to abate public nuisances on said real property. One of the real property owners was quarantined due to COVID-19 and had informed Town staff that he would not be able to attend the public hearing. Town Attorney Bruce Cannon recommended that Mayor Barry Hayes continue the public hearing for the one real property owner who could not attend. Mayor Hayes continued the public hearing for this property owner.

This abatement service consisted of mowing grass and/or removing refuse or solid waste and/or demolition of declared nuisance structures, and/or the issuance of fines for failure to abate nuisances, in accordance with Town Ordinances. At the public hearing, the one real property owners of said property as well as other residents of the Town must be allowed to speak.

Following the public hearing, the Council will be asked to approve the assessment and/or discounts from the remaining item on the preliminary assessment roll. (See attachment #1.)

Notice of the public hearing was duly given in the News Topic as required by law.

XI. NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

1. APPROVE ASSESSMENTS AND/OR DISCOUNTS FROM THE PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT ROLL

Council is requested to approve the preliminary assessment roll, after determining whether or not to allow any discounts from the assessment roll, against the real property owner failing to pay invoices to the Town of Granite Falls for services rendered by the Town to abate public nuisances, or fines to abate nuisances, on said real property. These abatement services consisted of mowing grass and/or removing refuse or solid waste and/or demolition of declared nuisance structures, and/or the issuance of fines for failure to abate nuisances, in accordance with Town Ordinances. (See attachment #1.)

2. APPROVE GRANITE FALLS EMERGENCY PAID SICK LEAVE (GFEPSL) POLICY

As part of the Family First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA), employers were required to provide 80 hours of Emergency Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) to all Full-Time essential personnel that could be used between April 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020 that had to miss work due to COVID-19. At the May 21, 2020 Council Meeting, the Council approved that EPSL be extended to all Full-Time and to Full Time part-time Town employees on a pro-rata basis (Full-Time part-time EPSL hours are calculated on hours scheduled in a two-week period relative to 80 hours). The FFCRA expired December 31, 2020 and has not been extended at this point in time. At the time the FFCRA was passed, no one thought that the COVID-19 pandemic would last past the end of the year and now the peak in positive cases and hospitalizations is projected to be in February, 2021. Most citizens will not receive the COVID-19 vaccinations until late spring.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 does not pay any attention to what time of year it is and since Congress didn't extend the EPSL provision contained in the FFCRA, the Town is in the position of not treating employees equitably based on what date in time they had to use EPSL. For example, a Full-Time employee that contracted COVID-19, was exposed to someone with COVID-19, or had to care for a family member with COVID-19, or had young children whose school or day care closed would have received a maximum of 80 hours EPSL if they had to be out of work during April of 2020 but without this policy employees would not receive EPSL if one of these events occurred after December 31, 2020.

In order to treat all Town employees equitably for absences from work due to COVID-19, Town Manager Jerry Church implemented a new Policy, Granite Falls Emergency Paid Sick Leave (GFEPSL) effective January 1, 2021. GFEPSL would extend the EPSL provisions until June 30, 2021 or when the Federal, State, and Local Emergency Declarations have ended based on whichever happens first. The policy is written so that all Full-Time employees that used the 80 EPSL hours on or before December 31, 2020 would not be eligible for additional time off under GFEPSL. Conversely, Full-Time employees that did not use any EPSL hours on or before December 31, 2020 would be eligible for 80 hours GFEPSL starting January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021 or when the Emergency Declarations have ended based on which end date comes first. Since Full-time employees would not receive more than 80 hours of emergency paid sick leave in total, the total cost exposure to the Town would not increase. (See attachment #2.)

Action requested: Council is requested to approve the GFEPSL Policy with an effective date of January 1, 2021.

3. APPROVE PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING MARCH 2021 AS AMERICAN RED CROSS MONTH

Council is requested to approve a proclamation approving March 2021 as American Red Cross month. (See attachment #3.)

4. APPROVE NEW SALES TAX REINVESTMENT AGREEMENT

Council is requested to approve a new Sales Tax Reinvestment Agreement with Caldwell County. In 2007, the Council approved the Town of Granite Falls entering into an Interlocal agreement with Caldwell County, from the start of fiscal 2008 through the end of fiscal 2012, to reinvest sales and use tax monies from the Town to be used for economic development efforts in Caldwell County. The City of Lenoir, the Town of Hudson, the Town of Sawmills, the Town of Gamewell and the Town of Cahah’s Mountain also entered into the same agreement. The Council and the governing bodies of the other municipalities approved an amendment on June 15, 2009, which extended the agreement through fiscal 2013 and doubled the amount of contributions to the Sales Tax Reinvestment Fund from the amounts required under the original agreement signed in 2007. On October 17, 2011, the Caldwell County Commissioners and the Caldwell County municipalities noted above approved an agreement to extend the agreement through the end of fiscal 2017. On May 22, 2017, the Caldwell County Commissioners and the Caldwell County municipalities noted above approved an agreement to extend the agreement through the end of fiscal 2021. Caldwell County has submitted a new Sales Tax Reinvestment Agreement that would be effective July 1, 2021 through the end of fiscal 2025. Under the new agreement, the annual contributions by municipalities would remain as follows:

Town of Gamewell	- \$189,000
Town of Sawmills	- \$194,000
Town of Granite Falls	- \$27,500
Town of Hudson	- \$27,500
Town of Cahah’s Mountain	- \$155,000
City of Lenoir	- \$7,000

The agreement still allows the County Commissioners to spend up to \$350,000 per year out of the Sales Tax Reinvestment Fund for “public purposes” other than economic development. In return for signing the new Sales Tax Reinvestment Agreement, the County agreed to continue distributing sales and use tax dollars on a per capita basis instead of electing to distribute sales and use tax dollars using the ad valorem method. If the County were to switch from the per capita basis to the ad valorem basis of distributing sales and use tax monies, the municipalities with no property taxes would lose all of their sales and use tax distribution. The Town of Granite Falls would lose approximately 20% of the Town sales and use tax distribution if the County changes the method of distributing sales and use tax monies. (See attachment # 4.)

5. FINANCIAL REPORT

Enclosed is the Financial Report for December 2020. The revenue and expense report, the financial dashboard, and an analysis of current year sales tax revenue and current year property tax revenue versus prior year and budgeted revenues, for the six months ended December 31, 2020, are enclosed for Council review. These reports represent 50% of the current 2020 – 2021 fiscal year budget. (See attachment #5.)

6. ADVERTISE TAX LIENS ON 2020 TAXES

Granite Falls Tax Collector Kim Anderson has submitted a certified list of property owners who have unpaid taxes that represent an unpaid tax lien. It is requested that Council set the date of Thursday, April 1, 2021 to advertise the 2020 unpaid taxes on real property as required by NCGS 105-369(c). (See attachment #6.)

7. AUTHORIZATION TO APPROVE DISCOVERIES AND RELEASE TAXES

Council is asked to authorize Granite Falls Tax Collector Kim Anderson to approve \$1.57 in property tax discoveries and to release taxes in the amount of \$116.13. Ms. Anderson submitted a certified request and the Caldwell County Tax Office verified the discoveries and releases.

At a regular Council meeting held on Monday, February 20, 2012, the Town Council approved a resolution allowing the Tax Collector not to bill a taxpayer, or otherwise attempt to collect property taxes when the principal amount of the property taxes due does not exceed \$3.00. The resolution requires the Tax Collector to keep a record of the amount of minimal taxes and report this to the governing body. Tax Collector Kim Anderson has reported that \$104.04, out of the \$116.13, in tax releases were for principal amounts of taxes due that were less than \$3. (See attachment #7.)

8. ASPLUNDH TREE EXPERT COMPANY AGREEMENT

Council is requested to approve the General Agreement with Asplundh Tree Expert Co. for March 1, 2021 through February 28, 2022 and to authorize the Town Manager to execute the agreement on behalf of the Town. The agreement establishes compensation, obligations and insurance requirements, etc. There are no significant changes to the terms and conditions and the agreement includes rate increases of approximately 3% per hour or approximately \$1,800 per year. Asplundh's rates are still lower than the labor rate quotes we received from other tree trimming companies. (See attachment #8.)

9. ASPLUNDH STORM EMERGENCY PROCEDURE - TREE CREWS

Council is requested to approve the Storm Emergency Procedure – Tree Crews Terms and Conditions with Asplundh Tree Expert Co. for March 1, 2021 through February 28, 2022 and to authorize the Town Manager to execute the contract on behalf of the Town. The terms, rates and conditions haven't changed since the 2013 contract. (See attachment #9.)

10. APPROVE CAPITAL PROJECTS BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR THE GRANITE FALLS RECREATION DEPARTMENT NC PARKS AND RECREATION TRUST FUND (PARTF GRANT) TOWN OF GRANITE FALLS RECREATION CENTER ACTIVITIES EXPANSION PROJECT

Council is requested to approve a capital projects budget ordinance for the Granite Falls Recreation Department NC Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) Grant. The Town of Granite Falls Recreation Center Activities Expansion Project is for a new picnic shelter between the playgrounds, new adult outdoor exercise equipment, a new splash pad, a new pool slide, two additional outdoor ADA restrooms, an additional batting cage, ADA playground equipment for 6 to 12-year-olds, and ADA playground equipment for 2 to 5-year-olds. The total estimated cost of the project is \$536,000 with \$250,000 from the PARTF Grant and \$286,000 from Town matching funds. (See attachment #10.)

11. APPROVE CHANGE TO THE COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

The Town Council is requested to cancel the regular Council meeting scheduled for Monday, February 15, 2021 and call for a special Council meeting on Monday, February 15, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council room.

XII. OTHER BUSINESS NOT LISTED

XIII. MANAGER UPDATE

Town Manager Jerry Church shall update the Council on the following:

1. Enclosed with your Agenda package is a calendar of events through the end of February, 2022. Revisions since the last calendar are highlighted in yellow.

Note: Members of the Town Council may attend events that are, or are not, sponsored by the Town but there will be no Council business conducted at any of these events in instances where a quorum of the Council may be present.

2. COVID-19 Update.

XIV. COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. WPCOG Policy Board
2. Caldwell County Railroad Policy Board
3. Sales Tax Reinvestment Committee
4. Catawba River Study Committee
5. Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Technical Coordinating
6. Caldwell County Economic Development Commission (EDC)
7. Corporate Circle – sponsored by Caldwell Chamber of Commerce
8. NC Municipal Power Agency # 1 Board of Commissioners
9. Caldwell County Manager’s bi-monthly meeting
10. ElectriCities Grassroots Committee
11. Caldwell County’s Green Commission

INFORMATION ITEMS:

1. The Granite Falls Board of Adjustment, the Granite Falls Planning Board, the Granite Falls Recreation Advisory Board, the Granite Falls Merchants’ Association, and the Granite Falls History Committee meetings are cancelled until further notice due to COVID-19.
2. The Granite Falls Land Use Plan Steering Committee will meet virtually on Tuesday, February 23rd at 5:00 p.m.
3. The WPCOG MPO/RPO will meet electronically on Wednesday, February 17th at 1:00 p.m.
4. The Granite Falls ABC Board will meet Monday, February 15th at 5:30 p.m. at the ABC store.

In accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, neither the Town of Granite Falls, nor the Granite Falls ABC Board, discriminates on the basis of disability in conducting its meetings. Individuals with disabilities who require auxiliary aids or services or other accommodations for effective communication and participating in a meeting may contact the Town Clerk at (828) 396-3131. Requests should be made at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Reminder: The next Town Council Meeting is a special meeting on Monday, February 15, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Participation for this meeting will be done electronically due to COVID-19.