

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 21, 2022

Face coverings were optional for tonight's Council meeting but all attendees were encouraged to wear face coverings, and to social distance from other attendees who are not members of the same household, regardless of vaccination status. Individuals in high-risk groups, individuals who are completing isolation or were recently exposed, and residents at risk of infection should continue to wear face coverings in all public indoor settings.

REGULAR MEETING The Granite Falls Town Council held a Regular Meeting on February 21, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Administrative Building.

PRESENT The following members of the governing body were present: Mayor Dr. Caryl B. Burns and Council Members Ritch Bolick, Larry Knight, Jim Mackie, Mike Mackie, Martin Townsend, and Tracy Townsend.

ABSENT The following member of the governing body was absent: None

STAFF PRESENT The following staff members attended the meeting: Town Manager Jerry Church, Town Attorney Bruce Cannon, Town Clerk Paula Kirby, Finance Officer Jana Williams, Tax Collector/Finance Technician Kim Eckard, Police Chief Chris Jenkins, Assistant Police Chief Brine Branham, Patrol Officers Alicyn Sterken and Deovoney Hawley, Lieutenant Ricky Lail, Detective Sergeant Clint Ferguson, Sergeant Daniel Sharpe, and Fire Chief Brian Bennett.

VISITORS None

NEWS MEDIA No news media attended the meeting.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER Mayor Dr. Caryl B. Burns called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present.

INVOCATION Councilmember Ritch Bolick led in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE Councilmember Mike Mackie led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT Councilmember Martin Townsend read the Conflict of Interest Statement.

In accordance with the State Government Ethics Act, it is the duty of every Council member to avoid both conflicts of interest and appearance of conflicts. Does any Council member have any known conflict of interest or appearance of conflicts with respect to any matters coming before the Council today? If so,

*please identify the conflict or appearance of conflict and refrain from any undue participation in the particular matters involved.
(N.C.G.S. 14-234, N.C.G.S. 160A-479.11, & N.C.G.S. 160D-109)*

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS/INTRODUCTIONS/RECOGNITIONS

Assistant Town Manager Jana Williams introduced Tax Collector/Finance Technician Kim Eckard to the Council.

Police Chief Chris Jenkins introduced Patrol Officers Alicyn Sterken and Deovoney Hawley to the Council.

Police Chief Chris Jenkins recognized the following individuals who were recently promoted – A) Lieutenant Ricky Lail, B) Detective Sergeant Clint Ferguson, and C) Sergeant Daniel Sharpe.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA Martin Townsend made a motion the Council approve the agenda as presented. Mike Mackie seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2022 Tracy Townsend made a motion the Council approve the minutes from the Special Town Council meeting held Monday, January 10, 2022 as presented. Larry Knight seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.

TOWN ATTORNEY REPORT Town Attorney Bruce Cannon did not have a report.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD No one attended the meeting to speak.

PUBLIC HEARINGS No public hearings were scheduled.

NEW BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

APPOINTMENT OF TAX COLLECTOR At the December 6, 2021 Council meeting, the Council ratified the decision made by Town Manager Jerry Church to appoint Deputy Finance Director Ashley Presnell as Tax Collector until someone was permanently hired for this position. Town Manager Jerry Church appointed recent hire Kim Eckard to serve as Tax Collector and appointed Deputy Finance Director Ashley Presnell to serve as Deputy Tax Collector.

Mike Mackie made a motion the Council ratify the Town Manager's decisions to appoint recent hire Kim Eckard to serve as Tax Collector and appoint Deputy Finance Directory Ashley Presnell to serve as Deputy Tax Collector as requested. Martin Townsend seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.

ADVERTISEMENT OF TAX LIENS ON 2021 TAXES APPROVED Granite Falls Tax Collector Kim Eckard submitted a certified list of property owners who have unpaid taxes that represent an unpaid tax lien. It was requested that the Council set the date of Thursday, March 31, 2022 to advertise the 2021 unpaid taxes on real property as required by NCGS 105-369(c). Mike Mackie made a motion the Council set the date of Thursday, March 31, 2022 to advertise the 2021 unpaid taxes on real property as requested. Tracy Townsend seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote. A copy of the list is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

AUTHORIZATION TO APPROVE DISCOVERIES AND RELEASE TAXES APPROVED The Council was asked to authorize Granite Falls Tax Collector Kim Eckard to approve \$10.05 in property tax discoveries and to release taxes in the amount of \$114.69. Ms. Eckard 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 Eckard has reported that \$103.08, out of the \$114.69, in tax releases were for principal amounts of taxes due that were less than \$3.

Tracy Townsend made a motion the Council authorize Tax Collector Kim Eckard to approve the \$10.05 property tax discoveries and to release taxes in the amount of \$114.69 as requested. Martin Townsend seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote. Copies of the property tax releases and discoveries are attached and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

FINANCIAL REPORT Town of Granite Falls Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Jana Williams presented the Financial Report for January, 2022. Fiscal year 2021-2022 is 58% completed.

- A) The Financial dashboard.
- B) Sales tax revenue versus prior year and budgeted revenues.
- C) Property tax revenue versus prior year and budgeted revenues.
- D) Analysis of past due property taxes collected and property tax payment plans.

A copy of the Financial Report is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

ABC FINANCIAL STATEMENT The Granite Falls ABC Board submitted the financial statement for the quarter ended December 31, 2021 for the Council's review and comments. A copy of the statement is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

BUDGET AMENDMENT #4 FY 2021-2022 APPROVED Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Jana Williams requested the Council approve Budget Amendment #4 for fiscal year 2022.

Increase General Fund Budgeted Revenue – ABC School Receipts	\$17,890.00
Increase General Fund Budgeted Expense – ABC Distribution to Schools	\$17,890.00

Mike Mackie made a motion the Council approve Budget Amendment #4 FY 2021-2022 as requested. Ritch Bolick seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.

2ND QUARTER ABC DISTRIBUTION AUTHORIZED Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Jana Williams requested the Council authorize the distribution of ABC funds for \$17,890.25 to the local schools as follows:

Granite Falls Elementary School	36%	\$6,440.49
Granite Falls Middle School	36%	\$6,440.49
Dudley Shoals Elementary School	28%	\$5,009.27
Total Distribution	100%	\$17,890.25

These funds represent the portion of the ABC Store profit distribution to schools for the second quarter ended 12/31/2021.

Martin Townsend made a motion the Council authorize the distribution of ABC funds as requested. Jim Mackie seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.

BUDGET AMENDMENT #5 – 2021-2022 APPROVED Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Jana Williams requested the Council approve Budget Amendment #5 for fiscal year 2022.

Increase General Fund Federal Substance Tax Revenue	\$4,100.00
Increase Police Department Federal Drug Tax Expense	\$4,100.00

Ritch Bolick made a motion the Council approve Budget Amendment #5-2021-2022 as requested. Larry Knight seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.

HIRING 4 ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTERS, BUDGET AMENDMENT #6-2021-2022 FOR THE COST OF THE 4 ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTERS AND A NEW HEADCOUNT BUDGET FOR THE TOWN OF GRANITE FALLS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022 APPROVED At the January 10, 2022 Council meeting, Council approved Town staff applying for three additional full-time firefighters through the FEMA Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant. Late in the grant application process, our grant writer informed us that our grant application would not be funded unless the Town applied for at least seven additional firefighters so the SAFER Grant application was not submitted. Even if the grant application had been filed for 7 additional firefighters, it may not have been approved for funding and if it had been approved, it would not have given us the immediate assistance we need at GFFD. Additionally, it would have been extremely difficult to hire and train 7 new employees at once.

Unfortunately, we are losing one of our part-time employees who received a promotion from his primary employer and is moving to Virginia. We are also losing two more volunteers as

one volunteer has taken full-time employment in Charlotte and another has decided he doesn't want to volunteer. We have two full-time firefighters that are retirement eligible now – one will be staying on through fiscal 2022-2023 and the other will retire shortly after 01/01/23 and will need to be replaced.

After discussing options extensively with Fire Chief Brian Bennett, Chief Bennett believes we will be able to provide adequate protection and response to fires and other emergencies by immediately hiring 4 additional firefighters. These new hires will make sure we have enough firefighters to comply with OSHA regulations that require us to have 5 firefighters on the scene (“2 in and 2 out” before we can make an interior attack or conduct a rescue, plus 1 pump operator). Under normal conditions, these new hires would have been requested at the start of a new budget year. The estimated cost of hiring 4 additional firefighters for fiscal 2021-2022 is \$59,000 which computes to an annualized cost of \$236,000. The revenue side of the budget amendment is for the Council to authorize spending sales tax revenue collected over budget. The headcount budget for full-time employees would increase from 63 to 67 employees. As a side note, if future circumstances require the Town add 3 or more firefighters above and beyond these 4, the Town will have a better chance of obtaining a SAFER Grant.

Tracy Townsend made a motion the Council approve the request to add 4 full-time firefighters, to approve Budget Amendment #6 – 2021-2022 for the estimated costs for the 4 additional firefighters, and to approve the revised headcount budget for fiscal year 2021-2022. Ritch Bolick seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote. A copy of Budget Amendment #6-2022 and the revised headcount are attached and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

BUDGET AMENDMENT #7 – 2021-2022 APPROVED Assistant Town manager/Finance Director Jana Williams requested the Council approve Budget Amendment #7 for fiscal year 2022.

Increase Water/Sewer Fund Miscellaneous Revenue	\$28,334.00
Increase Water/Sewer M&R Equipment - Water Plant	\$28,334.00

Martin Townsend made motion the Council approve Budget Amendment #7 – 2021-2022 as requested. Jim Mackie seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.

PREMIUM PAY PLAN FOR TOWN EMPLOYEES APPROVED On January 10, 2022, Council agreed to use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to provide premium pay to the dedicated Town employees who continued to provide exemplary service to Town citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council was requested to approve the formal Town of Granite Falls Premium Pay Policy.

Martin Townsend made a motion the Council approve the policy as requested. Jim Mackie seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote. A copy of the policy is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

BUDGET AMENDMENT #8 2021-2022 AND THE TRANSFER OF ARPA FUNDS TO PAY PREMIUM PAY PER THE TOWN OF GRANITE FALLS PREMIUM PAY POLICY AND A REVISED AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE APPROVED Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Jana Williams requested the Council approve budget amendment #8 and the transfer of ARPA funds to the Town General Fund and Enterprise Funds per the Town of Granite Falls Premium Pay Policy and to also approve a revised American Rescue Plan Act Grant Ordinance.

Mike Mackie made a motion the Council approve Budget Amendment #8 2021-2022, the transfer of ARPA funds to the Town General Fund and Enterprise Funds per the Town of Granite Falls Premium Pay Policy, and to also approve a revised American Rescue Plan Act Grant Ordinance as requested. Tracy Townsend seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote. Copies of each are attached and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

STATE CAPITAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (SCIF) DIRECTED GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE FOR THE GRANITE FALLS RECREATION CENTER & SIDEWALKS PROJECT APPROVED The Town received confirmation for two State Capital and Infrastructure Fund Directed Grants (SCIF) totaling \$330,000. The first SCIF grant is for \$150,000 (CIP #R40) for the addition of ADA compliant sidewalk to the walking path at the Recreation Center from the pool area/multipurpose field #3 to the back parking lot and to the sidewalk at the ADA playgrounds. The Council was requested to approve a Grant Project Ordinance of \$150,000 for this project.

Larry Knight made a motion the Council approve the Grant Project Ordinance as requested. Ritch Bolick seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote. A copy of the ordinance is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

STATE CAPITAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND (SCIF) DIRECTED GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE FOR THE GRANITE FALLS RECREATION CENTER PARKING LOT PROJECT APPROVED The Town received confirmation for two State Capital and Infrastructure Fund Directed Grants (SCIF) totaling \$330,000. The second SCIF grant is for \$180,000 (CIP #R51) for the construction of a new parking lot at the Recreation Center in the area between the former civic building and the water tank. The Council was requested to approve a Grant Project Ordinance of \$180,000 for this project.

Tracy Townsend made a motion the Council approve the Grant Project Ordinance as requested. Larry Knight seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote. A copy of the ordinance is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

SELECTION OF TGS ENGINEERS FOR ENGINEERING OF THE BIRCH STREET STORMWATER PIPE REPLACEMENT APPROVED The Council approved the replacement of stormwater drainage pipe underneath Birch Street (CIP-S41) as part of the 2021-2022 budget using Powell Bill Funds. Town staff has solicited quotes for engineering services for survey, design, bid letting, bid recommendation, contract administration, and construction observation and the lowest quote was from TGS Engineers, Shelby, NC (TGS)

for \$25,000. The Council was requested to approve the hiring of TGS to perform the engineering services for this project and to approve the Town Manager to finalize the Engineering Services Agreement and to execute the agreement on behalf of the Town.

Tracy Townsend made a motion the Council approve the hiring of TGS to perform the engineering services for this project, approve the Town Manager finalizing the Engineering Services Agreement, and to execute the agreement on behalf of the Town as requested. Mike Mackie seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.

PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING MARCH 2022 AS AMERICAN RED CROSS MONTH APPROVED The Council was requested to approve a proclamation approving March 2022 as American Red Cross month. Town Manager Jerry Church informed the Council of a needed revision to the fourth paragraph.

Martin Townsend made a motion the Council approve the proclamation with the added revision. Jim Mackie seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote. A copy of the revised proclamation is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes.

CHANGE TO THE COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE APPROVED The Council was requested to cancel the regular Council Meeting scheduled for Monday, March 7, 2022 in the Council Chambers and call for a special Council Meeting for Monday, March 7, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers located at 4 South Main Street.

Mike Mackie made a motion the Council approve the meeting schedule change as requested. Larry Knight seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.

MANAGER UPDATE Town Manager Jerry Church updated the Council on the following:

1. Enclosed with the Council's agenda package was a calendar of events through the end of March 2023. Revisions since the last calendar were highlighted in yellow.
2. The next Council meeting will be held March 7, 2022. Department Annual Reports will be given at this time.
3. COVID-19 Update Town Manager Church informed the Council that COVID protocols changed to optional face coverings in all Town facilities as of 2/21/2022. The Town is suggesting that employees wear masks when riding together in vehicles and when social distancing is not possible.
4. Town Manager Church participated in roundtable discussions with approximately 24 members of the Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Caldwell Program.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. WPCOG Policy Board – Mayor Burns, Town Manager Church, and Mayor Pro Tem Tracy Townsend attended the WPCOG Policy Board meeting held at the Broyhill Civic Center. Ben Willis has been hired by the WPCOG to eventually take Sherry Long’s position. Mr. Townsend encouraged everyone to visit the WPCOG website to see all of the programs they offer.
2. Caldwell County Railroad Policy Board – Met January 14, 2022. Jim Mackie stated there were no issues to discuss.
3. Sales Tax Reinvestment Committee – Met by Zoom. SERVPRO was approved to receive funds for a local jobs incentive at \$2,000 per new job created.
4. Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Technical Coordinating – Martin Townsend stated that no new highway projects will be added to the NC DOT plan until 2040 due to lack of money. They will meet this Wednesday, February 23, 2022.
5. Caldwell County Economic Development Commission (EDC) - Met January 11, 2022. Jerry Church reported that the EDC continues to focus on COVID and its impact on businesses. Some relief has occurred in the supply chain issues but backlogs are still a problem for furniture companies. Unemployment is fairly low at this time. Potential housing developments were also discussed.
6. NC Municipal Power Agency # 1 Board of Commissioners – Met January 25, 2022. The NCMPA1 Rate Committee will meet Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. in Concord, NC.
7. Caldwell County Manager’s – Met Friday, February 18, 2022. The homeless encampment in Sawmills is in the process of being broken down. Face masks mandates were also discussed.

INFORMATION ITEMS

1. A ribbon cutting was held for The Rock Store on Friday, February 18, 2022. Mayor Burns encouraged Councilmembers that weren’t able to attend the ribbon cutting to stop by and introduce themselves and check out the store.
2. Mayor Burns stated that she was going to represent the Town at the grand opening event for the Blue Ridge Energies solar farm in Grace Chapel.

MEETING ADJOURNED Tracy Townsend made a motion the Council adjourn the meeting. Larry Knight seconded the motion, with a unanimous affirmative vote.