

City of High Shoals
Regular Council Meeting
September 10, 2024

- Call to Order
 - Mayor PJ Rathbone called to order the September 10, 2024, meeting at 6:31 p.m. In attendance were the following council members: Denese Cook, Dennis Cash, Bo Rhyne, Bobby Vassey, and Tim Eidson and Mayor PJ Rathbone. Kathy Rhyne was unable to attend.
- Invocation
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Approval of Agenda
 - Requested to add Autumn Ridge subdivision under old business by the Mayor.
 - Motion to add made by Dennis Cash, seconded by Bobby Vassey. All in favor.
 - Motion to approve made by Denese Cook, seconded by Bobby Vassey, all in favor.
- Approval of Minutes
 - Motion to approve made by Denese Cook, seconded by Bobby Vassey. All in favor.

Citizens' comments/concerns: The City of High Shoals Council offers citizens the opportunity for Public Expression issues per NCGS 160A-81.1 (limited to 3-5 minutes per speaker).

Brandi Strange asked to speak regarding the past emergency meeting:

Brian stated that "Ms. Brandi, I believe that he is being ripped apart by trying to please eight people. It puts her in a different position where she doesn't respond well and then communication fails. Ms. Brandi is the key for communication because she is the body in this building under the council's guidance and she will have to pass to us. It gets to the extreme to worry and then becomes offensive."

Brian likes to ramble. He got offended when I told him to please get to the point. I don't need to know every detail of how he plans to change out a vent or valve. He gets upset when I am with a customer or on the phone with a resident. Brian got upset with me when I told him he was doing too much in regard to the Lead/Copper. I needed streets completed (when I noticed it took 3 months to get 7 meters). He was changing out setters and what not. I asked him if it's something he believed needed worked on, then write it down and go back to it after the lead/copper was completed. He got mad and said he'd do it his way. But his way is inefficient since we are on a deadline. I laid out 4 copies of the same list and the directions of how to do it properly. Robert and Jerry have yet to see the instructions, as of 9/6/2024 I showed them. Brian took every copy home. No one used magnets to check the galvanized steel to see if they were lead. The papers that Robert and Jerry completed, Brian took home and rewrote them. I'm still waiting on the streets though Robert & Jerry said they were done already. Some of which must be redone.

I agree that in the beginning communication was doing quite well; however, it fell when Brian berated me for no reason other than to try to save his hide after the Ms. Ellis incident. Then, he continued to berate me in front of a council member. I refuse to allow anyone to talk to me in that manner nor allow them to lie and say that I was egging her on, when I was trying to calm her down. It puts me in a negative position when things are already aligned, and then Brian goes behind backs speaking to people individually and changing things without telling those who "COMMUNICATION IS KEY" with. The incident with Ms. Ellis was uncalled for, the incident of him yelling at me was uncalled for. That is when communication stopped. If you need a refresher of what happened during that time, I have printed copies of the requests for write ups that I drew up that day.

When Brian is not here, Jerry and Robert speak to me. They ask me questions and fill me in on things and how the day is going. When Brian is here, they are afraid to talk to me or ask me anything in fear of Brian getting upset and going

through a 30-minute sermon of how I'm horrible and "don't know how to do my job". On 9/6, Jerry said it is an entirely different atmosphere when Brian isn't here.

I've requested the employees to leave all their keys here, which the council said they should leave here anyway, they're not. They are, finally, leaving the truck keys. I've still not gotten the generator key back so that I can give it to Carolina Lift Stations. (That generator key was the only spare that I had). Speaking of them, they called and complained about Brian becoming irate with them, pushing them out of the way from them changing the emergency number to them. The gentleman from Carolina Lift Stations said that they had no reason to be called and that his number should be first in line.

I have had residents complain about Brian using the urinating on their property. When I spoke with him about it, he got irritated and said it was in the woods. I told him they have cameras and saw him do so and that it's their property, just don't do it. When someone calls and says that the workers didn't pick up their cans, it's always said that "it's their fault, they didn't bring it down." But these complaints are from the residents who always have their cans down, and I see them at the end of the road on my way in. For example, Mr. Ron Edwards.

Brian said Communication is key yet doesn't let me (who does Payroll) know when he won't be at work. Doesn't tell me what they have planned for the day. So, I have no clue when I can get in contact with them, if I need something immediately. A lot of my supplies are missing from city hall.

Brian had previously requested that I text everyone as a group when I get work orders that need done. Then, he started fussing at me for texting everyone because he said that gave the other workers an "out". I told him that he was the one that requested I let everyone know there was an order that needed done, and it was on him, the "lead", to discern who was to come to City Hall to obtain & perform the duties of the order.

In regard to what Brian had said about Barbara. Barbara had just sat down while Chief and I were writing out duties for each day, so that I could make work orders. We had spoken about the CDLs since Chief had found a way around taking the entire CDL course and I found different implications of what would happen if Jerry were caught driving. When Jerry came in, Barbara reminded me (since I was writing notes) to tell Jerry to not drive the Big Trash truck again. If they're caught driving the big truck or the little truck overloaded, they will lose their regular driver's licenses, a considerable fine, and the city can be sued. PJ, Chief, and I have told Jerry & Robert NOT to drive the trash trucks at all. That it was on Brian to drive the trucks. Brian still forces the other guys to drive the truck while he tosses cans and tells me, chief, and PJ that it's because neither is capable of tossing cans.

Also, if the issue with the water plant were truly that big of a deal, then why, after being brought to the kitchen on August 27th, have the locks not been switched out?

I rented the dump truck, with approval of the mayor per HR manual, last weekend and the battery was dead. The lights were not cut off in the truck, it smelled strongly of cigarettes (I'm a smoker and noticed the smell), there's empty packs in the door, and it was told that Brian is the only one that drives that vehicle.

I've told Brian it would make more sense to leave the work truck, at least one big one, at City Hall, only having 1 personal vehicle at the water plant. That way, they can stagger lunch breaks, since Brian said it was a waste of time to pack up everything for everyone to leave for lunch. It hasn't been done. I have given ideas to save time and be more efficient, they be agreed upon and then ignored.

Work orders are laid out either in the mornings, before/after their lunch, and in the afternoons. Brian is the only one that goes through them because the other guys were told not to. Therefore, if something should be done after lunch, it doesn't get done until the following day, or if Brian is out, until he gets back.

Also, I have requested that if workers aren't able to work until 5 pm on Friday, due to hitting 40 hours early, then have someone come in later so that they can stay on Friday until closing. Split shift on Fridays for one employee, on rotation?

Furthermore, Brian has been making promises that he cannot keep to residents. WE cannot allow workers to do any work on their private property. This is A HUGE NO-NO, guided by state statutes! Brian has promised members of the community to do yard work for them, he was inside a resident's house moving furniture. He then, the following day, had our other two workers in her house moving out a couch and other furniture from her porch! This is extortion of taxpayer dollars!

Lastly, on this matter, he has the crew cut into peoples' yards and it changes each time. There is no set standard, and I believe that at least 2 council members should go out to each section and show them exactly how far to go out and where to go. There seems to be a disconnect and Robert and Jerry seem skittish to do things the proper way to avoid Brian's outbursts. It should be told to all that they are not to spray round up in the playground.

Judy Taylor wanted to thank Brandi for manhandling a deer and she and her son moved a deer for me. The second thing is the homeless people. I don't know what can be done but there seems to be more and more. There are more coming in behind the church. There is only one person that can do anything in this room, (points at the policeman sitting in the back).

Ms. Barbara addressed the council regarding the emergency meeting. The reason Barbara brought up the trash truck was wondering if Jerry knew the ramifications of driving a trash truck. Can an employee change the way work is being done when the council voted on it? I was not demanding Brandi to do anything; Jerry didn't hear the entirety. We had two employees here a long time ago and they had the city perfect. Your one employee is so disrespectful it is unreal. The trash truck that Mr. Cash asked Brian to drive (the big one) and Brian refused to drive it. So, and again, if I'm stirring the pot, by telling the residents to come speak to Dennis or you, Mr. Mayor, then I'm stirring the pot. If I talked to my manager the way Brian speaks to them, I'd be fired on the spot.

Micheal Bowman: There is man on a forklift coming from Robby Ray's and goes two houses up from up. He is going to 413 N Lincoln St. and he'll come from Robby Ray's to go to the drug house. He lives in the camper behind Robby Ray's. He was riding a go-cart. We also have a bunch of new individuals walking up and down the road, but I don't like my son being outside because it keeps getting worse. Start out with 2, then to 4, then to 6, now more people are coming in. I've talked to people about other people coming in. Why does it seem like it is taking longer to do the ditch line than normal. Dennis said he has no idea because he's not spoken to them since the emergency meeting. Robby Ray's, if it's overgrown, it makes everything else look like crap. I've called the non-emergency line but there's been a couple of occasions, and no one has shown up nor come through. They have to disposition each call, though they may not have stopped. One of illustrious individuals knocked the back window out of my truck. It's getting ridiculous.

PJ said he understood and heard each and every one's concerns. You've got to call that number every time then we can get into the nuisance things and then we can do something about the houses. Just because they're walking up the street, but if you feel in your heart, please call and have them come out and at least check the area.

At 403 N Lincoln, the white four-runner and black Mercedes are now at River St. the new people now, the drug people purpose is to go to house to house. But when they keep asking for things, with the people walking up and down the sidewalk begging constantly. The red-hair and the tall guy are the main ones begging for things. Stephanie said she called and a guy laid something on the trash can, had a gun in his hand, it took the cops 55 minutes to come out, the cops didn't stop, they rode by and shined a light. The next morning, I Called again because there was a suitcase on top of my can and they came out and checked it but it is just crazy. One of the workers is completely rude and at first he was

nice. I've asked him if he was going to finish weed eating because he stopped at the driveway, and he said nope, my orders are to go across the street. I'm feeling bad for the new houses coming in. Wanting a small city vibe but the drug issues are rampant.

Aysel said he disrespected her as well in front of Brandi.

Good of the Order: This is a time set aside for members to offer comments or observations (without formal motion) about the organization and its work. The good of the order is also the time to offer resolution to bring disciplinary charges against a member for the offenses committed outside a meeting.

- PJ said he would like to say something for a couple of different things. I've been sitting in this chair since 2019, and it's been an honor and privilege to sit in this chair. This sitting council have been through 7 different employees and we either making it an unfriendly environment or just not the correct people. We have tried to make it better for our employees. PJ said he thinks that maybe he is the problem. If these people or this council thinks that way, he said he doesn't mind getting up. Please don't hesitate to tell me that I am the problem. I can handle constructive criticism. With the people in town, I see it, I understand it. I wish I could load them in the back of my truck and dump them out, but I can't. We can't just kick them out of the city, but we can't. The only options that we have are the folks that provide us services and help us each and every day. Call them, please call them. If you feel uneasy about someone or they look shady, please call them and tell them to check on the subject. I guarantee you the folks you're talking about don't want to interact with the police. This is called community policing. So, please, call them. Let me know if I am doing something wrong.
- Mr. Cook, said as a citizen, I Don't know why you feel that way. You're the best mayor we've had in that seat.
- PJ said you can't multitask, but I guarantee I can get it done. I'm analytical
- Stephanie asked in the future if it were possible to have a police department. PJ said it doesn't matter which service it is, police, fire, Ems service does not generate income for any municipality or county. It is a cost that does not make any money whatsoever. When it was abolished, it wasn't financially feasible. You're looking at least 1 million dollars for start-up. It isn't an easy process. I'm not going to rule it out, but financially, at this point, it can't happen right now. It depends on growth, but we don't have enough land to grow to that road.
- Denese said she thinks that, when you say you don't think our personnel and the willingness to work with the family, and them and they take advantage of your goodness. Dennis said you're being too nice. And they are GROWN men, you shouldn't have to say on a piece of paper, mow the grass, all the grass. The roadway at the cemetery there is creeping/wire grass coming across. But I do feel like they take advantage.
- Tim Eidson: for the residents, there is a website on Gaston County that they will make the neighbors do something.
- PJ said we live in a society where we want things now. Amazon has ruined us. Let me just say this. Anything to do with government is slow. The processes are slow. You have to go through 20 different people to get anything done. In the end it is worth it in the end.
- Judy Taylor said, PJ, you're doing an excellent job.
- Mr. Crotts says being a Christian and doing the job you do, and it is commended.

➤ **Departmental Reports:**

- Police Report-Gaston County

- Sgt. Said the code enforcement is a great thing. If you make a complaint to them and they refuse, they give them some time, but they do charge for it. I've been a police officer for 15 years and majority of my time was High Shoals. There used to be a lot more violent crimes but there is a lot more people walking around and drugs but it's nationwide at this point. We can't do anything about them walking on sidewalks, we can't do anything. Do not feel bad about calling us. If the drug houses, things can be going on that you don't see. There could be unmarked or undercover things going on. He asked questions. Ms. Ellis says it is stressful but still nothing is being done yet.
 - Financial-Dennis Cash
 - CHECKING 1: \$365,373.82
 - CHECKING 2: \$ 11,116.61
 - SAVINGS 1: \$160,838.57
 - CAP MGMT: \$ 48,378.77

 - TOTAL: \$585,707.77
- Cemetery-Denese Cook
 - The issue at the cemetery has been fixed. IF you have issues with work done just send it to me, I don't mind.
 - Ms. Denese has walkers when I went over the weekend, I haven't seen this man, but he's homeless, bearded big man with dark hair. He's tall and toned. But as far as where they were sleeping, they're gone.
- Water/Sewer-Bo Rhyne
 - The water leak and sewer stop up have been fixed. Everything else seems good. The jetter was brought in at the main, and the service line was stopped up.
- Streets/Maintenance/Sanitation-Kathy Rhyne
 - SANITATION
 - The small truck was running the route today with Jerry driving and Robert on the back. Somewhere throughout the route, the small truck had a hydraulic line rupture. I told them to take the truck back and they took the large truck with Robert on the back to finish the route. The small truck is scheduled for its yearly oil change this month. By the end of month hope to be targeting at least 2 roads outside of city limits with opportunities to participate in our trash collection.
 - Streets and Maintenance
 - Monitoring areas where gravel has been added to ensure no more sinkage. We have a spot on North Street which we are in the process of putting speed devices on that road. That is the only cutout to my knowledge that needs fixed soon.
 - Banners will be changed to military banners no later than 9/27/24. New military banners have not yet been ordered. Waiting on better pictures. If they come in while these are up, we will add them to the bridge when they arrive. Military will be removed, and our Christmas banners will be put up the week before Thanksgiving depending on schedule and weather.
- Parks/Recreation-Bobby Vassey
 - Yard of the Month:— 133 Dayton Road
 - Stephanie Messer

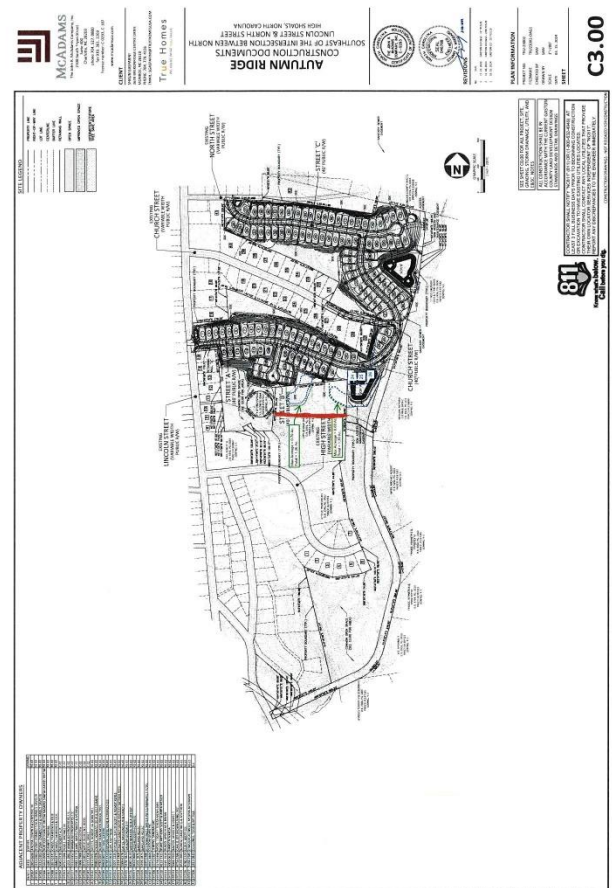
Movie night this Saturday at 6 p.m. We're doing two movies back-to-back on October 19th.

Last year we started the pumpkins on the bridge. I invite everyone to carve a pumpkin and on Halloween night, we will come down and light those. We invite the residents to bring the pumpkins to city hall and we will move them to the bridge on Halloween night.

- Vehicles- Tim Eidson
 - I did an inspection on the trucks. The new trucks only. I didn't do an inspection on the old trucks. I told them to clean the trucks out on Fridays.
- Administration/Mayor Report-PJ Rathbone
 - We're continuing to work on the Mill Property. We've reached out to the old mayor of Cramerton. Steve is looking for funds to help pay for that.

➤ **Old Business:**

- Discussion/Action: True Homes/Autumn Ridge-- Jarod said that they've just gotten sewer up to the model. Our goal is to get to the model home in November. We've spoken to the police department, and we'll be able to trespass people while we're building. We look to open in the first quarter of next year. January/February. We'll have a monument in the front, past 419 N Lincoln St. it will be right behind it. This is the same exhibit; the two ponds will be a permanent pond will have less blasting that will need done. We're actively pursuing getting the house that was burned $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to have it removed. We may need a dedicated easement. We need a revision to the original plan to push the drainage area. We have to condition the water before it leaves the site, the top pond is a temporary (was) we're adding that in there to be able to reduce the pond at the bottom to get away from the rock. The goal is to transition to sand-filter ponds to shorten it, so it shouldn't hold water after 72 hours of rain fall.
 - Tim Eidson made motion to donate the property, seconded by Bo Rhyne. All in favor.



• **New Business:**

- Discussion/Action: Updated Gaston County Interlocal Agreement
 - Amendment to the interlocal agreement for comprehensive land use plan and codes for High Shoals. This agreement allows the county to have enforcement capabilities. A nuisance is a nuisance house, but if they're living in a residence that has multiple calls to the county police. When I tell you to call them, call them. Here's the kicker. If someone calls on house A and there is a true nuisance, they will

enforce it. IF they call on your cousin for a car that's been in sitting there, the county has to do something about this. That leads me to the next portion, the city is responsible for the cost of condemning a property, the city is responsible for the cost incurred to tear that property down. Can that get costly, yes; however, we have friends *fire department* that can assist but there is still cost associated with it. I hear you when you say we've got to do something about this, but I want you to understand, we have to do it the right way and will cost the city some money. Last year the county had 264 cases of minimum housing and nuisance, this year from January 1 until now, they're at 270 cases and they have the rest of the year to go. The county is out of money and they're having to



RESOLUTION TITLE: AMENDMENT TO THE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF GASTON COUNTY'S UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE, COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN, & NORTH CAROLINA STATE BUILDING CODES FOR THE TOWN OF HIGH SHOALS

WHEREAS, Article 20 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes of North Carolina authorizes, among other things, units of local government to enter into a contract in order to execute an undertaking providing for the contractual exercise by one unit of any power, function, and right of another, and,

WHEREAS, Gaston County and the Town of High Shoals (referred to herein as a "Party" or "Parties" entered an interlocal agreement (hereinafter referred to as the "Agreement") under resolution 2021-325, approved on December 14, 2021,

WHEREAS, The Parties desire to amend the Agreement to include Gaston County's Code of Ordinances so that the Minimum Housing (Articles 5 and 6) and Public Nuisance (Article 7) sections and regulations may be enforced within the municipal limits of High Shoals,

WHEREAS, The Town of High Shoals shall be responsible for any costs incurred by the County for the abatement of public nuisance and minimum housing cases,

WHEREAS, The Town of High Shoals elected board shall act in the same capacity that the Gaston County Board of Commissioners are instructed to do so in Section 4-137 (Procedures for Enforcement) of the County Code of Ordinances for Minimum Housing cases within the municipal limits of High Shoals,

WHEREAS, The County Planning and Zoning staff shall coordinate and attend all meetings, hearings, and appeals regarding active code cases,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Gaston County Board of Commissioners that after consideration of the amendment to the Agreement:

DO NOT TYPE BELOW THIS LINE

I, Donna S. Buff, Clerk to the County Commission, do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of action taken by the Board of Commissioners as follows:

A=AYE, N=NAY, AB=ABSENT, ABS=ABSTAIN, U=UNANIMOUS

take money from other areas to provide the services. Those houses aren't up to minimum housing standards, and this will force him to bring them up to standard or we will take the property. With the cost, Steve said there may be money to help with the costs of removal of the houses. If the council wants to move forward to update the agreement, we need a motion and second. Then it will go to the county for approval.

- Motion made by Denese Cook to adopt the interlocal agreement, seconded by Dennis Cash, all in favor.

Amendment To The Interlocal Agreement For The Enforcement Of Gaston County's Unified Development Ordinance, Comprehensive Land Use Plan, & North Carolina State Building Codes For The Town Of High Shoals

- 2) Except as amended herein, all other terms of the Agreement shall remain in full force and effect and are hereby ratified and confirmed by the Parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned municipal corporations and governmental entities have caused this First Amendment to be executed on their behalf by their duly authorized representatives, having hereunto affixed their signatures and seals, the day and year first above written.

RJ. Rathbone

Mayor
9/10/24

- Discussion/Action: Project Budget Ordinance adjustment
 - Denese made motion to accept the CDBG grant project budget revision, seconded by Bobby Vassey. All in favor.



**Rural Economic Development Division
Community Development Block Grant Program
Funding Approval**

1. Name and Address of Recipient	2. Grant Number and Funding Approval Date
City of High Shoals Post Office Box 6 High Shoals, North Carolina 28077	Grant Number: 17-D-4014 Date of Original Funding Approval: 5/31/24 Date of Amended Funding Approval: 8/2/24
3. Approved Projects	Approved Amount
C1 High Shoals Additional Funds Additional Funds Second Request	\$45,065.00 \$250,000.00
Total Grant Award	\$295,065.00

4. Funding Approval Conditions

The following conditions must be removed in writing by the Rural Economic Development Division in order for all funds to be released for the approved project (s) listed in item (3), above:

A. Citizen Participation and Compliance Condition:

No funds may be obligated or expended in any project activity except for the administration activity until REDD is provided with the following documentation of compliance with citizen participation requirements in the application process [4NCA 19L.1002(b)]: publisher's affidavit of notice for and minutes signed by the city clerk of the one required public hearing for the program amendment.

B. Companion Grant Condition:

No funds may be obligated or expended in any project activity except for the administration activity in the C-1 activity until the recipient provides a written acknowledgement that this grant is a companion grant to complete the project assigned as **21-C-4014**. The City must also acknowledge that all funds will be requisitioned by **September 19, 2024**.

5. Signature of Authorized Official

Valerie Fegans

Name

Valerie Fegans

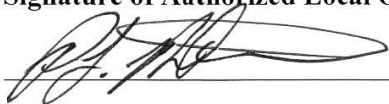
8-2-2024

Date

Director

Title

6. Signature of Authorized Local Official

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "R. J. [unclear]", written over a horizontal line.

Name

Date

The word "Mayor" written in a cursive, handwritten style in black ink, positioned above a horizontal line.

Title

- Discussion/Action: Trees
 - Based on the power outage we had that affected the entire city after the storm, we have figured out a way to pay for a lot of this, where it comes out of different funds. It would cost around \$12,000-\$14,000 to trim the entire city away from power lines. This is to trim and haul off debris.

➤ Action: Motion to adjourn

- Denese Cook made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Bobby Vassey. All in favor.