

City of High Shoals
Regular Council Meeting
June 11, 2024

- Call to Order
 - Mayor, PJ Rathbone, called to order the June 11th meeting at 6:32. In attendance are the following council members: Tim Eidson, Kathy Rhyne, Bobby Vassey, Bo Rhyne, Denese Cook, Dennis Cash, along with PJ Rathbone, Mayor.
- Invocation
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Approval of Agenda
 - Motion to approve made by Dense Cook, seconded by Dennis Cash. All in agreement.
- Approval of Minutes
 - Motion to approve made by Kathy Rhyne, seconded by Dense Cook, all in agreement.

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).

Judy Taylor requested to speak. Ms. Judy said at 221 N. Lincoln Street, there were Pit Bulls fighting beside the house. There were two other dogs tied out, but three or four were entangled in the chains and at least one was killed. Ms. Taylor called the non-emergency number, and the police and animal control came out. Ms. Taylor loves animals, and she was beside herself. She was worried about if a child had gotten near them. It was just bad. PJ thanks Ms. Taylor for actually acting and calling the police.

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.

➤ **Departmental Reports:**

- Police Report-Gaston County
 - No one in attendance to represent GC Police Department
- Financial-Dennis Cash
 - Checking: \$396,050.45
 - Savings 1: \$160,718.69
 - Savings 2: \$ 11,113.76
 - Cap mgmt.: \$ 47,747.62
 - Total \$615,630.52
- Cemetery-Denese Cook
 - We're good
- Water/Sewer-Bo Rhyne
 - We're good
- Streets/Maintenance/Sanitation-Kathy Rhyne
 - Everything is good.
- Parks/Recreation-Bobby Vassey
 - Yard of the Month: 108 N Lincoln Street –
 - Amber Webb
- Vehicles- Tim Eidson
 - We've got new running boards on both trucks

- There seems to be some more issues with HS1, needs brakes.
- We're trying to get the vinyl put on the vehicles.
- There is a hole in the new enclosed trailer, it was jack knifed. We're going to fix that piece.
- PJ did tell them to use spotters when backing up!

➤ Administration/Mayor Report-PJ Rathbone

- The vacant house-Followed up with Gaston County. What is the one thing that it takes that we don't have a lot of is money. The reason why is when you condemn a house, we take the responsibility for tear down cost and such. So, in order for us to start moving forward with this, we are going to have to start setting aside money to do such. If we do such, we have to be extremely careful, we have to do all or nothing. There are a lot of good candidates for it. If it isn't structural sound the firemen can't burn it down for training. A lot of these houses don't have even floors in the houses. Brian Sciba from Gaston County said he is going to come here and talk to us about the entire process. The County has a set of funds that they set aside. We purchased the line due to the sewer line; the property has a sewer line going straight through the property. We're looking for them to be here in July to tell us to move forward with these houses.
- Kathy asked if you could take possession and then sell it and allow someone else to bring it down. No, the city has to demolish the houses.
- We got a sample report back and need extended sampling for the Brownfield Grant. This request was made by the EPA of North Carolina.
- Kathy asked if we had an employee in the hospital. Indeed, Robert is in the hospital. PJ reached out to his wife, Robert answered and has possible double pneumonia. PJ told him to relax and get better. PJ will monitor his status.

➤ **Old Business:**

- Discussion/Action: HR manual
 - PJ requested the council continue to look into the manual and after the vote.
 - We're not too far off from entry-level hiring. We're just a little shy.
 - Motion to table made by Kathy Rhyne, seconded by Bobby Vassey. All in favor.
- Discussion/Action: Exempt or Non-Exempt for City Clerk/Administrator
 - Exempt is Salary, Non-Exempt is an hourly position.
 - If you'd like to vote for either one, we can do so now.
 - With either one, there is a significant gap between where our Administrator is.
 - At the very bottom of the recommendations the hiring range would be \$61,000. At the moment, the Clerk isn't even there. If you'd want to make this an exempt position, it will depend. Regardless, you'd save money in the long run.
 - The mayor's recommendation would to be at least the mid-point of the recommendations down on the bottom of page 13. The mid-point is around \$77,000. She is currently at \$58,240.
 - Long term wise, we have these maximums. PJ thinks for all employees, I think we can continue to give a 2.5% raise every 6 months. Every year, depending on the cost of living, based on inflation, we can then increase by percentage. In the end, we'll eventually get there and have a moving target.
 - Kathy said if they're not up-to-par, there should be something in their personnel policy.

- We've not had any structure before, to put us where we need to be. Perhaps, not today, but five years from now. To get us in line with employers across the board.
 - With the money we budgeted with the employees, we'd still be ok.
 - We will get there when we start with the implementation phase and when we get there. And this will allow us to better budget for the progression of pay.
 - PJ's recommendation is for the 3 new employees at the new entry level, a 7% raise will get them just above the initial hire.
 - Where Brian is at on the scale, he is currently at the mid-point. So, my recommendation would be to put in line with 2.5% since he is at the mid-point.
 - If you would like to go with Making the clerk an exempt position/salary, I would say \$77,000. If you would make it an hourly position, it would be around \$38.00 hourly. Mid-point of where she should be and should be above the mid-point honestly.
 - Dennis Cash motion made by Dennis Cash, seconded by Bobby Vassey to make the Clerk-exempt and have the clerk on salary at \$77,000 per year. If over 50 hours, an allotment shall be given as Over Time.
- Discussion/Action: COLA
 - Jerry, Jacob, & Robert are at \$17.00 per hour. Their overall would be just above the initial hiring mark that we are wanting to get to. \$37,835.20.
 - Brian is currently at \$50,960.00 which is in the mid-range of his position. A 2.5% increase would still keep him below maximum and in the midpoint.
 - Kathy asked if there was a cap. Can we ensure there is a notated and told to the employees what is going on. An employee meeting will be needed.
 - Kathy asked how we got the numbers we did. We got in between those two numbers.
 - Kathy asked if I am going to the
 - We have voted to make City Administrator a salary position at
 - Lead Service Specialist is at the mid-point at \$59,600.
 - Dennis Cash made motion to give a 2% cost of living as of July 1, seconded by Bo Rhyne, all in favor.
 - Motion to, at end of probationary period, to bring them to \$37,835.20 (Jacob, Jerry, and Robert). 7% increase from where they are currently. Seconded by Bobby Vassey. All in favor.
 - City Administrator/Clerk, now an exempt/salary position-Motion made to bring the salary as of July 1, to \$77,000 by Denese Cook, seconded by Bo Rhyne. All in favor.

➤ New Business:

- Discussion/Action: Autumn Ridge Development
 - Jared Barr from True Homes. A synopsis they're in the process of erosion control. Phase 1 stops at Church St to North St. Phase 2 is Church St. to N. Lincoln St. 30,000 cubic yards of rock. 1.3 million dollars to blast that rock. The first thing we had was asbestos water line from Old Foundry to the Water Tower. 1500 linear feet of asbestos pipe costs \$80,000 to remove it. We are trying to break phase 1 to get the model on the ground by January 1st, on lot 1 right off of N. Lincoln St. What we

are proposing (though with due diligence) we can put our basins in those pieces of property. We have talked about being able to partner with the city to put in a city gymnasium. PJ asked how much acreage would be needed, Mr. Barr said perhaps 2-3 acres. There is a sewer line right behind where lot 31 is. They want the bottom of the drop-off. There is also a creek, we can't compromise the creek. A basin is stormwater and goes to the basin before going to runoff. The basin is a dry pond, and the county has to sign off on it. PJ said we can give up the sliver at the bottom of the cliff, if it's suitable for them. They can either agree to purchase the land from us, or we can partner with them (where the old ballfield is) we can construct some sort of community center or gymnasium.

- Would you be open to be open to some options to help alleviate the costs to them.
 - Dennis yes
 - Denese yes
 - Bo yes
 - Bobby yes
 - Kathy yes
 - Tim yes
 - Council agreed that they don't foresee the City ever using those lands.
 - Dennis Cash made motion for True Homes to start with their due diligence with the proposed land, seconded by Tim Eidson, all in favor.
- Discussion/Action: Batting Cages (WOW factor)
 - We voted and agreed on the batting cages and the outside of the fence, is suitable.
 - They did ask if they installed this enhancement to the Park, if they could get a credit for the baseball field.
 - It will be a concrete pad, with poles dug in and netting strung.
 - Motion made to keep at current rate for this coming year made by Dennis Cash, seconded by Kathy Rhyne, all in favor.
- Discussion/Action: CDBG-I- Grant Project Budget Ordinance
 - Dennis Cash made motion to adopt, seconded by Bo Rhyne. All in favor.
- Discussion/Action: Approve Contract for Revitalization Grant
 - We must have an administrator and posted two different times. Stephen Austin was the only administrator that put in for this position. This is for the second round on the 2nd round of CDBG revitalization grant.
 - Denese Cook made motion to approve, seconded by Bobby Vassey, all in favor.
- Discussion/Action: Budget Ordinance (to be adopted during June 18th resumed meeting)
 - Motion to Recess the meeting to June 18th, after the Public Hearing made by Dennis Cash, seconded by Bobby Vassey, all in favor.

City of High Shoals
Council Meeting
Public Hearing & Reconvene 6/11/2024 Recessed Meeting
June 18, 2024

Call to order: Mayor Pro-tempore, Dennis Cash called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were the following council members: Denese Cook, Bo Rhyne, Dennis Cash, Bobby Vassey, Kathy Rhyne, and Tim Eidson. Mayor PJ Rathbone was absent (excused).

➤ Open Public Hearing:

- Motion to Open Public Hearing made by Tim Eidson, seconded by Bo Rhyne. All in favor.
- ❖ Anyone who wishes to be heard on the budget must be given an opportunity to speak.
No one showed up to the Public Hearing.
- Close Public Hearing
 - Motion to Close Public Hearing made by Kathy Rhyne seconded by Denese Cook. All in favor.
- Motion to come out of the 11th of June's Recessed Council Meeting made by Kathy Rhyne seconded by Tim Eidson, all in favor.
 - Discussion/Action: Adopt the budget ordinance
 - Motion to adopt the budget ordinance made by Kathy Rhyne, seconded by Denese Cook. All in favor.
- Motion to adjourn the meeting:
 - Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Kathy Rhyne, seconded by Denese Cook, all in favor.