

TOWN OF HOPE MILLS
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
Monday, May 17, 2021 5:00 P.M.-Continued to Monday, June 7, 2021 5:00 P.M.
BILL LUTHER BOARD MEETING ROOM

Mayor Jackie Warner called the regular meeting of the Hope Mills Board of Commissioners to order on Monday, May 17, 2021 at 5:04 p.m.

GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Jackie Warner, Mayor Pro Tem Kenjuana McCray, Commissioners Jessie Bellflowers, Pat Edwards, Bryan Marley, and Jerry Legge.

STAFF PRESENT

Interim Town Manager Bill Zell, Town Clerk Jane Starling, Finance Director Drew Holland, Police Chief Joel Acciardo, Parks & Recreation Director Lamarco Morrison, Stormwater Administrator Beth Brown, Planning & Economic Development Director Chancer McLaughlin, Chief Building Inspector Ray Reeves, Deputy Building Inspector Kenny Tatum, and Deputy Public Works Director Bruce Clark.

Interim Town Manager Bill Zell read and answered the questions that the Board of Commissioners had provided in preparation of the meeting with assistance by Finance Director Holland and various other staff members.

Commissioner Bellflowers questions were addressed first:

1. *Question: Is it possible to re-locate ALL town committees/commissions under Expenditures – Governing Body since they are approved by the Board?*
 - Sure, but when you adopt and approve the budget you have approved those expenditures, regardless of what department they are in. For efficiency it is better to leave funds in the department that is going to run the project.
2. *Question: What is the fund balance amount of unreserved, undersigned account after including the proposed \$598,000 amount?*
 - \$4,219,612.00 or 29 ½% of expenses.
3. *Question: What is the added amount of COLA funding from July 1, 2021 – Jan 1, 2021?*
 - \$56,428.51.
4. *Question: In line item 10-3921, Sponsorship, page 7, who are the sponsors and the reason(s) they need \$30,000?*
 - The \$30,000 is potential revenue not an expenditure.
5. *Question: Is it possible to move line item 10-490-8033, Special Events, page 9, to Parks & Recreation, Programs/Events 10-621-0000?*

- These events are run by Planning and Economic Development Director, Chancer McLaughlin so it is more efficient to have it in his department budget.
6. *Question: Under line item, 10-490-1278, Code Enforcement Contract, page 19, how does “Financial management workshops designed to provide potential business owners with educational opportunities in managing business finances” pertain to code enforcement personnel? I do not understand the justification request.*
 - Manager Zell and Finance Director Holland responded this was miscoded and is a code enforcement item to cover cleanup costs. The financial management workshops were denied in the budget and this item was mislabeled.
 7. *Question: Regarding Police Department Capital Outlay, page 22, why are two (2) police vehicles being recommended instead of three (3) police vehicles to stay in line with 2021 CIP, page 11?*
 - The CIP is a plan for if there is money. There was only enough for 2 vehicles.
 8. *Question: Regarding Police Department, Capital Outlay, page 22, Motorola Radios, the town will enter into a five (5) lease agreement. Should this lease agreement be listed and included on the town’s Debt Service Long-Range chart under Tab 2, page 19?*
 - For finance reporting purposes leases are not shown as debts. They are listed as liabilities.
 9. *Question: Regarding the Fire Department, how are the Air Packs (\$313,085.21) being funded? USDA Loan?*
 - They are being funded through the USDA loan for the new Safety Building.
 10. *Question: Regarding the Fire Department, how are the one SUV (\$50,000) being funded to stay in line with the 2021 CIP, page 12? USDA Loan?*
 - This item did not make the budget due to funding.
 11. *Question: Regarding Streets, Capital Outlay, page 22, Zero Turn Mower, the justification states the mower is over 20 years old and needs constant maintenance. How much have we spent on maintenance to date?*
 - In the last year and ½ roughly \$12,000.00.
 12. *Question: Regarding Parks & Recreation, New Line Item titled, Corporate Sponsorship Materials, page 19, what exactly is the request for? Over the past five (5) years, how much revenue has been generated in the 10-3921, Sponsorships, page 7, account?*
 - The request is for materials like banners, flyers, and printing for the sponsorships-marketing operating costs. If there are no sponsors it will not be needed. We are hoping to receive \$30,000.00 in sponsorships and to expand the program in the future.
 13. *Question: Regarding Parks & Recreation, New Line Item titled, Heritage Park, how is the remaining \$160,000 amount funded?*

- This will probably be a year and one-half project, the remain half will be in next year's budget and a PARTIF Grant capitol project fund will be created.
14. *Question: Regarding Parks & Recreation, line item 10-620-7300, Museum Project, the recommended amount is zero funding. The Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) recommended in their proposed budget to begin work on the existing Trade Street House. The HPC stated they would remodel one (1) room at a time. Therefore, they requested at least \$30,000 to begin this project. Why was this funding request not included in the proposed budget, given fund balance is still available from prior year "approved" funding under Historical Committee Reserve Funds – Accounts: 10-620-7300 & 10-620-7301 in previous years for the Museum Project? Note: the museum project is tied directly to the Corps issued Dam Permit.*
- In your packet you will see a copy of the budget request from the committee, and they did not recommend anything for the Museum/Trade St. house in it.
15. *Question: Regarding Parks & Recreation, 10-622-9300, C/O Vehicles, requested amount of \$27,000, I must ask if there is a used truck from another department in the inventory? We have a small fleet of trucks between all departments!*
- All the vehicles are assigned and there are no extras.
16. *Question: Regarding Parks & Recreation, under Request for New Position: Maintenance Tech I, the justification for request states, "We also intend to take over the mowing of the golf course property if we receive the requested tractor." Is the requested tractor the John Deere Tractor (5055E) in the amount of \$26,052.22? And, under what budget line item is the current mowing contract for the Golf Course located?*
- The tractor did not make the budget consequently the position was not filled either. That line item is 10-622-4012 with \$8,475.00 dollars in it and probably needs to be bumped up another \$2,000.00.
17. *Question: Regarding the Parks & Recreation, I did not see where the Municipal Park All-Inclusive Playground was recommended for funding according to the CIP 2021, page 27, proposed funding amount \$20,000. Note: Funds have been received/donated from the Cumberland County Community Foundation and Reid's Journey in the amount of \$18,513. Plan would have 3 Phases and completed over 3 years.*
- Same answer, there are not enough funds.

Mayor Pro Tem McCray's questions were addressed next:

1. *I guess I have an broad questions about the budget. From my understanding there are several police officers' positions open, what happens with the money from unfunded positions? Realistically all these positions will not be filled by January. Are we able to use some of that funding to fund some other positions?*
 - Good thinking, we used these funds to help balance the budget.

2. *We collected taxes at 98 percent, had no major events last year to include the 4th of July and Old Mill Day, more businesses and residential growth, several million dollars under budget with the public safety building but we have no funding for any major projects or positions.*
 - In not having those events we also did not have the revenue they normally provide. When all budgets from the departments came in, we were 3.8 million above what our revenue was. That amount had to come out of the budget and a lot of hard decisions had to be made. Including no mowers or new positions.

3. *We have a balanced budget but from the look of the notebook we have several unmet needs/wants. I am concerned that by the time we address some of these issues they will cost us even more money in the end. What is it that we are funding that causes us to be able to not fund so many other things, in short why are we in this position?*
 - Basically, your budget is an operational budget, there are the things we know we must do. For the luxuries we must derive more revenue. Part of the reason our property taxes have not grown has to do with the way the county assesses property taxes. When property is developed and built on the county continues to assess it as vacant until the next assessment cycle.

4. *I am interested in discussing and infrastructure/parks and Rec bond. Our infrastructure is a mess, and we have no money for many of the needed improvements. The parks and Rec bond may help us with other things that will have a direct economic impact for Hope Mills.*
 - The board approved that during the March 5 work session to put in place for the 2023 election. Taxes were last raised in 2012 or 2014, one cent of property tax increase raises approximately \$125,000 in revenue.

5. *The main specific I guess I had, is the cost of the Cotton Pageant. I spoke with someone who does pageants that stated for a pageant of that caliber it should be about half the cost.*
 - Parks and Recreation Director Lamarco Morrison stated, “Costs were based on two years ago when we spent about \$10,000 and made \$3,000. Because we moved the pageant to Jack Britt, we had greater expenses to include an insurance policy in the amount of \$3,500.00 plus numerous other fees/expenses required by the school.

6. *Did the delegates help us get any funding for anything?*
 - Representative Szoka is still working to get us \$350,000 in state funding for our Stormwater project, but the State has not passed its budget yet.

Commissioner Legge stated that he submitted a question which was:

1. *I would like to see us sent some money a back for development of the golf course. We know we are going to have to do that in phases. Is it possible that we put money in the budget to do the grading?*
 - If we begin grading it could damage the walking trails that are in current use and even though we have a master plan we do not have any construction drawings so we would not know where to grade.

Town manager Zell stated that one thing to look at is bringing planning and zoning back to Hope Mills from the County. All the planning and development fees go to the County.

Consensus was to ask the Town Manager to do a feasibility study and find out the up front and ongoing cost to do this.

Commissioner Bellflower had a second set of questions which Chief Acciaro responded to.

In preparation for the budget workshop, could you please provide the following information:

1. *Several months ago, Police Chief Joel Acciaro addressed current vacancies in the police department. I believe he said we have 40 budgeted officer positions and 10 vacancies. "It has become apparent that the pool of quality candidates has become very competitive, which in turn, makes filling the current vacancies more challenging," said Acciaro.*

- Chief Acciaro, responded that the idea of a step plan was brought up during the March 5, budget retreat but we are not able to move forward due to funding shortfalls.

With this said,

a. *What is the recruitment and retention plan to address these and future vacancies?*

- We have moved forward with funding cadets and currently have 1 in the academy and 2 on a wait list.

b. *Do we have a pay step increase plan and provide incentives as examples of efforts to retain officers?*

- Manager Zell stated, "Step plans are a thing of the past."

c. *Request a current copy of the Pay Step Plan for the Police Department.*

- There is not a current step plan to provide.

d. *What town full-time positions are salary and hourly?*

- Finance Director Holland provided lists for this question and the next two.

e. *Request a copy of the current Position Vacancy Report.*

f. *Request a breakdown by FTE pertaining to budgeted positions.*

g. *Drew: Please answer the following question: Projected available General Fund balance at the end of FY2021 is \$ _____ or _____% of FY 2022 budgeted expenditures.*

- \$110,000 or 4.98%

h. *Policy is 10%. Balance beyond 10% is \$ _____*

i. *Goal is 12%. Balance beyond 12% is \$ _____*

- 1.4 is 10% of Budget.

Discussion ensued.

Manager Zell and Finance Director Holland facilitated discussion through tab 11 in the proposed budget book and staff answered any questions that arose.

Commissioner Legge invited Chief Inspector Ray Reeves to come to the podium and speak on his need for an additional employee. Discussion ensued.

Director Holland explained to add a full-time position something else in the budget would have to be cut or property taxes would have to increase. No inspection fees are lost if an inspector must cover the front desk, however inspections may be slightly delayed. The inspections department revenue for next year is projected to be \$289,000 and their expenditures are projected to be \$370,000. Discussion ensued.

Mayor Warner recessed the meeting at 7:15 p.m. until after the regular meeting.

Mayor Warner called the meeting back to order at 9:03 p.m.

Discussion of funding additional full-time employees continued.

Manager Zell and Finance Director Holland continued leading discussion through tab 15 in the proposed budget book and staff answered questions that arose.

A discussion of the Basketball Court and options for fencing it to control violence ensued, also a discussion of whether it could be moved. Parks and Recreation Director Lamarco was asked to research if LWCF funding was originally used for the court and if it allowed it to be moved. His staff is researching cameras for recording activities on the court. Right now, only 3 cameras are functioning due to squirrel damage. Staff is working to have the wiring placed inside conduit and make the recordings available to multiple Parks and Recreation staff members. Discussion ensued.

Stormwater Administrator Beth Brown explained that the old street sweeper was costing a lot in upkeep because it was not suited to sweep sandy soil. Multiple staff members participated in choosing the proposed new machine including the operators. Discussion ensued.

There was no consensus on what needs to be discussed at the next meeting.

Mayor Warner recessed the meeting at 10:10 p.m. to be continued on June 7, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

Jackie Warner, Mayor

ATTEST:

Jane G. Starling CMC, NCCMC
Town Clerk