

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
JANUARY 8, 2024
MINUTES**

The Rural Hall Town Council held their regular council meeting on January 8, 2024, at 7:00 PM in Town Hall Council Chambers. The following members were present: Mayor Terry M. Bennett - presiding; Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Horn; Councilman Mark Lane; Councilman Michael Woodcock; Interim Town Manager Ron Niland; Town Clerk Lynette E. Hendrick; Interim Finance Director Homer Dearmin; Finance Clerk Donna Watson; LPA Supervisor Dawn Tysor; PIO Alston Brown; and Fire Chief Mike Simone.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was led by Town Clerk Lynette E. Hendrick.

A moment of silence was held.

Adoption of Agenda:

Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Horn made the motion, seconded by Councilman Mark Lane to amend the agenda by adding a closed session per NCGS 143.318.11. (a) (6) personnel. Motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of Minutes

Councilman Mark Lane made the motion, seconded by Councilman Michael Woodcock, to approve the minutes from December 11, 2023, Regular Meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment Period:

Lyndall Payne, 111 Edwards Road, Rural Hall signed up to speak with her topic being "Town Manager".

Appointment of Council Position:

Mayor Terry Bennett stated that a lot of thought and time has been spent discussing the open Council position. This person has been a lifelong resident of Rural Hall, served on many committees with the Town and went through the first Citizens Academy course offered by the Town of Rural Hall. Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Horn made the recommendation, seconded by Councilman Mark Lane, to appoint Anita K. Ring, to the vacant Council position. Motion passed unanimously.

Oath of Office

Judge Eric Morgan, Forsyth County Superior Court, swore in Councilwoman Anita K. Ring assisted by her husband Jack.

Announcements and Meeting Updates:

January 15, Town Office Closed - MLK Holiday

The Fire Chief Mike Simone announced the firemen that had been promoted to engineers for each shift. Those firemen are Mark Thorpe, Chris Nowlin and Chad Stevens. Thomas Mabe has been promoted to Captain and Marcus Johnson has been hired to fill an open position.

Town of Rural Hall's 50th Anniversary Celebration - Public Information Officer Alston Brown stated the town will have events scheduled for the weekend of May 31-June 2. Alston asked the Council if they would like him to investigate the requirements for serving alcoholic drinks at the Saturday night event. The consensus from the Council was for him to research what would need to be done for this to happen and to bring the information back to the Council in March.

Unfinished Business

Councilman Michael Woodcock made the motion, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Horn, to change the Animal Ordinance # 294 Section 7 "Keeping of Fowl" item F to no more than 10 fowls, and also amending item G to also 10 fowls. Motion passed unanimously.

New Business/ Items of Discussion

Mayor Terry Bennett recommended the Council vote to make Homer Dearmin Finance Officer, and name him Interim Town Manager effective February 1, 2024. Councilman Mark Lane made the motion, seconded by Councilwoman Anita Ring to name Homer Dearmin's as the finance officer and Interim Town Manager. Homer Dearmin's annual pay will be 83,000.00. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Terry Bennett also recommended we keep Ron Niland on as Project Manager, Grant Writer, and Legislative liaison. His pay will remain the same. Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Horn made the motion, seconded by Councilman Michael Woodcock, to keep Ron Niland on staff as recommended by Mayor Terry Bennett. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Horn made the motion, seconded by Councilman Mark Lane, to authorize the Interim Town Manager to sign the Settlement Agreement and Release between Sanford Holshouser LLP and The Town of Rural Hall. Motion passed unanimously.

Fire Chief Mike Simone introduced Chad and Brian with Bobbitt Construction. Bobbitt had five posterboards with floor plans and different views of the proposed new station. Their design incorporates ideas given to them by the committee and firefighters. The Interim Town Manager spoke regarding what needed to happen to move forward with the plans to construct a new fire station. Interim Town Manager Ron Niland asked the Council to allow staff to research and bring back to the March Council meeting three different options to pay for the construction of the fire station. Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Horn made the motion, seconded by Councilwoman Anita Ring, to allow staff to research three different financing options for paying the new fire station and present it at the March Agenda Briefing. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Terry Bennett wanted to schedule a visioning retreat for the Town Council and members of the community. The Agenda Briefing is scheduled for February 7. At that meeting we will discuss what committees we would like to create and the responsibilities of each committee. The February 5th meeting will not be adjourned but recessed, and the Council will meet again on February 7, at 6:00 PM with the public to set up committees and appoint members. At the February 12, 2024, Council meeting, the committees will be finalized.

Mayor Terry Bennett stated at this time the board would need to vote to enter a closed session per NCGS 143-318.11(a) (6) Personnel. Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Horn made the motion, seconded by Councilman Michael Woodcock, to enter closed session per NCGS 143-318.11(a) (6). Motion passed unanimously at 8:17 PM.

Mayor Terry Bennett called the meeting back to order at 8:25 PM and stated there is no action to be taken at this time.

Board Comments/Questions

The Council members each thanked everyone for attending the meeting and staff for their hard work to prepare for the meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Horn made the motion to adjourn at 8:28 pm.

Lynette E. Hendrick
Town Clerk