**Town of Lake Santeetlah**

**Council Meeting Minutes**

**June 8, 2023**

Mayor Connie Gross called the meeting to order at 5:30PM. Councilmembers Ralph Mitchell, Tina Emerson, Diana Simon, and Jim Hager were present for the meeting. Town Administrator Kim Matheson and Town Clerk Kala Farley were also present. Attorney Bo Carpenter was available by Zoom. Councilmember Hager made the motion to open the meeting. Councilmember Emerson seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Ralph Mitchell offered an Invocation and Councilmember Ralph Mitchell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Mayor Gross asked to amend the agenda. The TPOA holds meetings at Town Hall and asked to add to Discussion #4 the possibility of having a key to Town Hall available for TPOA to sign out and return when finished. Councilmember Hager made the motion to approve the agenda. Councilmember Simon seconded the motion. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of the May 4, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes:** Councilmember Mitchell made a motion to approve as presented. Councilmember Emerson seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Hager referenced that his motion in Closed Session Minutes did not include discussion of Clerk, Kala Farley, working from home and upon correction he would vote to approve the Closed Session Meeting Minutes.

**Approval of the May 4, Closed Session Meeting Minutes:** Mayor Gross made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Councilmember Mitchell seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Emerson made a motion to open the closed session meeting minutes. Mayor Gross seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Financial/Tax Report:** Matheson reported the tax collection for May was $237.76. Matheson stated the new reports came from Edmunds and look a little differently but everything was together. The new reports provide more information than the previous Quickbooks reports.

Emerson stated that the water training would be Monday, June 12 from 10AM-12PM, Tuesday, June 13 from 2:30PM-4:30PM, and Wednesday, June 14 All day and Town Hall office will be closed during that time. After training the water bills will be pulled and we will go live in July.

**Request for Public Comment:**

**Betty Lobue:** Lobue announced the TPOA meeting on Monday, June 12 at 7PM and litter pickup will be Tuesday, June 13 and meet at Town Hall at 9AM. Lobue stated she would like to commend the council for completing projects started by the proceeding council rather than stopping them and completing items of their own and thank you for putting the town first. Lobue had a question regarding the status of the problem with water during electric outages regarding property owners on top of the mountain and would like to know what progress has been made.

**Jack Gross:** Gross stated it was important to appoint alternates to the Planning Board to avoid problems such as the need to reschedule the upcoming variance hearing and spend additional advertising money for that change of date.

**Kevin Haag:** Haag pointed out that Ralph Mitchell was present and questioned how effective he could be at representing the needs of the town given his current condition and what activities had Mitchell been doing as a representative of the town.

**Alan Davidson:** Davidson stated he felt the question from Kevin Haag was inappropriate. Santeetlah is a seasonal community and many people that have served on the Council were not present during a portion of the year.

**Roger Carlton:** Carlton expressed the importance of a full council, 5 members, all year long. All members should be present at every meeting if possible.

**Tina Emerson:** Emersonstated that Mitchell had previously requested a Leave of Absence and was not able to get it approved, had it been approved the council would have been able to find a temporary person to step in make the council 5 members.

**Old Business:**

1. **Approval of FY-2023/2024 budget, budget ordinance and budget for capital reserve:** Emerson stated the county hasn’t updated on the final assessed value. The last number given by the county was $131,291,180. The millage rate went from 0.00296 to 0.00209 and the assessed value went from $84,860,640 to $131,291,180. Emerson explained the changes made since the May 27 Budget Hearing. See Attached

Emerson made a motion to approve Old Business #1. Hager seconded. Hager requested discussion of the salary and benefits package and made reference to a document he provided the council prior to the meeting, stating a 13.5% increase from the previous year. Hager asked Emerson if while preparing the draft budget if any comparison was done with other towns in terms of what the salary range is. Emerson stated she had and referenced a survey done by the League of Municipalities. Emerson stated what she looked at as far as salary increase was that Kim Matheson, Town Administrator and Scott Kamps, Town Technician, had not gotten a raise in the last 3 years even though cost of living had increased each year. Emerson reviewed and explained the Payroll Expenses increases. Hager stated he would like to comment on the Water Fund and referred to Line Item 62, there is $136.80 projected to go into reserves. Emerson stated the Water Fund is very, very tight. Hager agreed. Simon stated she was curious why it was changed from the 70/30 to 80/20 when it is now dropping the amount for the water fund. Emerson stated the change saves money in the water fund. Emerson referenced the Capital Outlay, Line Item 44, $6000 for the pressure water tanks and hope that will help with the top of the mountain problems, as well as $4000 for the Pump House Roof, totaling $10,000 for Capital Outlay which is the continuation of improving things around the Town. Emerson stated we are hoping the water consumption will come in higher as that will help the bottom line and even this year there was more money in the water fund at the end of the year than previously. Hager commented on the Capital Reserve Fund projecting 15% of the Ad Valorem Tax and question why wouldn’t it be 15% of all revenue because a 1/3 of our revenue comes from other sources than Ad Valorem. Emerson stated that when we passed a resolution to do the Capital Fund we set 15% of Ad Valorem. Hager stated that in his opinion it is not enough money.

Simon stated she would like to know about the library. Mayor Gross stated that Franklin Shook, Director of Nantahala Regional Library, was present on Zoom and questions could be asked of him. Simon stated that Line Item 70, $2400 but not explained how it is used. Shook expressed thanks for supporting the library. Shook stated they are trying to keep Graham County public library open on Mondays and the money coming to us shares with money we also put toward it. There has to be two staff members to keep the library open and the funding received goes toward one of those staff members. Last year, with the $1200, they funded a 4 hour employee at $12 an hour. If it is decided to increase the amount to $2400 it would be contributed toward that staff member. Any additional moneys would go directly to books or some other program the Town would like to focus on. Shook stated the employee they are paying is getting $8 and hour and all other part-time employees are paid at $10 an hour so an increase would be something he would like to consider and he is open to suggestions or discussions anyone would like to have. Simon stated she would like to see more classes at the library and the hourly person be increase to $10 an hour. Franklin stated in order to do the increase to $10 an hour it would be a little over $2000 and if they would like the money to go to programs, he would set aside a different budget item for programming and they could use that to create and fund programs.

Simon Objected to the Mayors Meeting Fee and stated it should be dropped the same as everybody else’s. Gross stated she offered to do that. Emerson stated she thinks the mayor fee should remain the same given the Mayor is the face of the Town and suggested to lower the Council fees if extra money is wanted to put toward other things rather than reduce the Mayors Fee.

Simon stated there was a need for kudzu removal and she had requested $200 in last year’s budget for kudzu removal but was denied and felt the money could be put toward little expenses such as this.

Gross stated there was a motion previously made to approve the budget and a second. Mitchell, Gross, and Emerson approved the motion. Hager and Simon opposed the motion. Motion passed 3-2.

1. **Planning Board/The Council will appoint 2 new Alternate Board Member (action needed):** Mayor Gross made amotion to appoint Jack Gross as one alternate member on the planning board and another person as the second alternate member separately. Simon stated she would like to make a motion for Ralph Strunk as he still showed interest in the position. Emerson stated there was already a motion on the table. Mayor Gross made the motion to vote Jack Gross in as alternate member. Mitchell seconded. Hager requested discussion and stated it was ludicrous to appoint someone who, openly, for 3 years or longer, has opposed every effort of the Planning Board to create the zoning ordinance. Hager stated he thinks they should appoint people who support the Town and there was a hearing scheduled to do away with the ordinance and had overwhelming support to keep the zoning as it was. Gross, Emerson, and Mitchell approved the motion. Hager and Simon opposed. The motion passed 3-2. Gross made a motion to appoint Alan Davidson. Simon objected and made a motion to appoint Ralph Strunk. There was no second to Simon’s motion. The motion failed. Gross made a motion to appoint Alan Davidson as the second alternate member to the Planning Board. Emerson seconded. Hager stated, same discussion as before that Davidson had been vehemently opposed to the zoning ordinance so it’s ridiculous to appoint him. Simon asked if Davidson owned property. Gross provided proof of ownership of a parcel of land in the Town of Lake Santeetlah for Davidson. Emerson stated she don’t think in the meeting they had last year that half of the people said they wanted to keep zoning, half said they wanted to keep zoning but would like to see some change made. Some people said they didn’t want zoning at all but most people would like to have zoning, but it just needs to be a workable zoning. Hager disagreed with Emersons characterization of that meeting. Simon stated the meeting was in April and the minutes for the meeting did not mention anyone objecting to the expense of zoning and the zoning is working fine except when they don’t have a zoning administrator. Emerson stated the Jack Gross had stated at the last meeting he is not against zoning, it is just that it needs to be workable so having a couple people as alternates that might have a different idea to try to make it workable for our Town is not a bad thing. Simon stated that ordinance was based on the requirements by the state and had a real zoning attorney work with the planning board on that and the attorneys they have now are not zoning attorneys nor are they municipal attorneys. Hager suggested lets move on. Emerson stated there is a motion on the table to appoint Alan Davidson made by Mayor Gross. Mitchell seconded. Gross, Emerson, and Mitchell approved the motion. Simon and Hager opposed. The motion passed 3-2.
2. **Edmunds financial program/Live Update:** Matheson stated that the water system training will start the following week on Monday June 12 10AM-12PM, Tuesday June 13 2:30PM-4:30PM, and Wednesday, June 14, 10Am-12PM and 1PM-4PM. Matheson explained we will bill early in June out of the old system and then have the potential to go live with Edmunds probably after July 4th.
3. **Updated Election Board Agreement:** Attorney Bo Carpenter stated that Jay Howard, Attorney for Town of Robbinsville had signed the agreement and returned it to him but the members of the Board of Elections have not signed it and recommended to contact the county to check the status of it. Emerson pointed out that the Town was not in line with the county as far as election schedule and it may be beneficial to the budget to get on the same schedule. Hager stated that this had been discussed before as well as going from 2 year terms to 4 year terms, saving a lot more money. Hager pointed out if would require a charter amendment. Emerson stated it would be beneficial to look into so we are not spending money every other year on election expenses.

**New Business:**

1. **Governing Body Resolution for League of Municipalities:** A generic resolution to allow us to become members of the League to join in the Insurance pool for the short/long term disability, dental, and vision. Gross made a motion to pass the governing body resolution for the League of Municipalities. Emerson seconded. All approved.
2. **Water Due To Due From/Forgiveness from Water account to the General account from previous years (action needed):** Matheson explained that the Town had been carrying the water Due To Due From amount in our audit for several years and had been pulled over into the new Edmunds software. Shannon, the auditor, has said we can vote to forgive that or take the amount from Water and put it into General. Since the Water Fund is tight it might be better for the council to vote if they wanted to forgive it. Roger Carlton opposed, saying they should get the auditor to tell them exactly how to do this rather than rush into a vote. Gross stated they had talked to the auditor and got the instructions in order to do it in the correct way. Roger Carlton stated for the record he thinks that is a cover-up of $13,000 and feels they need to come up with the correct accounting to remove it. Matheson stated they will make sure they do that when the time comes to do so with the instruction from Shannon on how it must happen. Kevin Haag asked if the process as to how it happens would be made transparent. Matheson confirmed it would. Gross stated they will follow the instructions of the auditor and go from there. Gross made a motion to get a resolution drawn up for the mayor to sign. Matheson added that they would get the accountant’s instructions on how to do that the proper way. Emerson seconded. All Approved. The motion passed unanimously.
3. **Adopt new Rules of Procedure for City Council (action needed):** Gross presented The Suggested Rules of Procedure for a City Council, Fourth Edition, 2017 as the book that we have been following and stated they have been ordered. Matheson stated she had ordered every member of the council a copy plus one extra. Hager asked if they would remain the property of the Town. Matheson stated that would be good, it could be arranged that people could check the book out and bring it back or however the council would like to handle the situation. Gross made a motion to adopt The Suggested Rules of Procedure for a City Council, Fourth Edition, 2017. Mitchell Seconded. Hager stated he would have liked to see what it says prior to the meeting but sure it would be fine. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.
4. **Budget Amendment for FY-2022/2023:** Matheson stated that everyone had seen big one from cleaning up everything the way that it transferred over from Quickbooks into the Edmunds program. Matheson said we reduced the consumption charge to $15,000 to bring that down to $18,000 and took all the increases in the General Fund from Danger Tree Removal and then from the Water Fund we took money from Capital Outlay. Matheson pointed out there was one addition, for all insurance for the town council and its being taken from Continuing Education for $500. A claim had to be filed following a water main break that did damage to the property of Michael Colt.The deductible of $500 had to be paid in order to file the claim. Hager made a motion to approve the budget amendments. Mitchell seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Final Public Comment**

**Jack Gross:** Gross stated in regards to the water main break that it should be considered to determine and make sure that whatever was damaged during the break wasn’t actually on town property because the leak will happen again.

**Kevin Haag**: Haag inquired if Beautification Funds were currently in the budget and if there was enough funding to allocate for other things that needed attention around the Town.

Matheson responded saying there has always been funds for beautification in the budget but Aura has taken care of a lot of the beautification for the Town in the past. Gross acknowledged Aura’s continued work around the Town and as appreciation to Aura, the Town presented her with a gift as a Thank You.

**Roger Carlton**: Carlton referenced the two appointed alternate members of the Planning Board and stated that perhaps they should request legal advice if they can participate before they take the ethics class and what is the limitation on an alternate in terms of participation.

Emerson stated that as far as zoning if you look inthe general statues it is very detailed as to what the Alternate Planning Board and Planning Board can do and it says when they are allowed to vote and when they are allowed to participate so we should follow the General Statues. Carlton suggested they get some advice on what the alternates can do during the meeting if they are not sitting in a seat if somebody is absent. Emerson referred to the General Statues and says it is included in them what the alternates are allowed to do and under what circumstances they can do them. Hager stated he thinks the chairperson of the Planning Board will be able to handle the situation. Gross stated she thought she was quite sure that the people on the Planning Board now will work very well and try to be very professional and carry on meetings the way they should and take all personal animosity out of everything.

**Alan Davidson:** Davidson stated he wanted to reiterate that the Zoning Ordinance needs to be cleaned up and is sorry if that hurts others feelings. Davidson expressed he feels there are two classes of homes and properties as they are classified by the zoning ordinance, Conforming and Non-conforming, and Non-Conforming properties are treated as second class properties and Conforming are treated normally and it’s important to fix that issue and move on. Davidson stated it has be rectified that he is property owner in the Town.

**Bebe Bradley**: The bump coming down the hill in Lakeside has come loose from its affixed position and needs to be repaired.

**Diana Simon:** Simon stated that TDA is having their public hearing for budget on June 21st at 3:00PM at Town Hall. Simon said Graham County is celebrating the Azaleas for the next couple weeks and there are all kinds of things going on for that.

**Betty Lobue**: Lobue stated that the Welcome party for TPOA is the 17th of June at 5PM at Chalet Village. Food and Drink will be provided and bring your own chairs.

**Jack Gross:** Gross stated that the speed bumps at the bottom of Little Falls trail are poorly placed and that is why they are being torn loose. He would like the Council to consider mounting a second mirror to assist traffic coming up Nantahala Trail.

**Discussion:**

1. **Plans for Block Party on Saturday, June 17, 2023**. Gross stated this had already been announced.
2. **Thank You to Frontier for repairing the downed lines.** Mayor Gross expressed she was thankful that it got repaired.
3. **Graham County Offices are closed on Monday, July 3 and Tuesday, July 4, Town Hall will follow the same schedule.** Gross stated we would follow the same schedule as the County so Town Hall will be closed Monday, July 3 and Tuesday, July 4.
4. **Town Hall key available to sign out.** Gross asked to have the discussion with the Council Members if they would be alright to have Betty Lobue sign out a key to Town Hall for the TPOA meetings.

**Announcements:**

* The next regular scheduled Council Meeting will be held July 13, 2023 at 5:30PM. This meeting will be held at Town Hall and by Zoom.
* Graham County Heritage Festival/July 3rd and 4th
* First Responders Meet and Greet BBQ in August. Gross stated it would be a fundraiser and will be held at Ernie Meunier Park on one of these dates, 17th or the 24th depending on the best choice for the firefighters.

**Motion to Adjourn.**

Councilmember Hager made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Emerson seconded. All approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:55PM.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Connie Gross, Mayor Kala Farley, Town Clerk

