

The regular meeting of the Great Falls Town Council was held on September 17, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Town Hall. Attending were Mayor Brantley, Council Members, Eagle, Craig, Dutton, McManus and Gonzalez, Worthy was absent. Also attending were Clerk of Court Collins, Town Attorney Grier, Reporter Jenkins, and several interested citizens.

Mayor Brantley opened the meeting with Prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to accept and dispense with the reading of the minutes. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Glinda Coleman gave an update on the Hometown Association. Scott Brown with Blue Ridge Trail Works started putting the top layer of the granite screenings on the lower railbed trail. He should be finished by the end of the month depending on the weather. Had a meeting with Thomas Causey from Stantec about the grant and work for the upper part of the railbed trail. They spoke with an EPA grant administrator and have applied for an additional grant. A commitment letter from SCDES is anticipated soon. Funding and timeline for the grant is yet to be determined but is looking hopeful. We have also approached the ARRAS Foundation for additional funding. Bolton & Menk will be here to give a report. They continue to work on the Scarecrow Contest for this year, The submission form is on our website. People interested in entering the contest should go to [www.visitgreatfallssc.com](http://www.visitgreatfallssc.com) to fill out the form. There will be places around town for people to vote on the entries. We are also planning a Pop-Up Market for October 17 where they will announce the winners of the contest, and they are seeking vendors for that event.

Brian McGrath said that two of Great Falls' greatest assets are our people and natural resources. The existing mill sites could be an asset of liability depending on how they are redeveloped. Collectively, the mill sites represent upwards of \$20 million in tax credits. Any redevelopment should consider enhancing the town's quality of life by supporting economic development, safety, jobs, attracting visitors, retail, dining, lodging, recreation, entertainment and nature-based tourism. The Community Master Plan prepared in 2006-2007 address three overall recommendations including cleanup, nature-based tourism and housing. It also included a retail market study showing the town losing money spend on sales spent by residents outside of the Great Falls area. Focusing on the right retail categories, we could recapture a percentage of those leaking sales. Whitehorse R&D presented their plan and a MOU was drafted. It would be reasonable to provide some or all of the following to secure confidence: detailed plan, financial information, identification of any financial backing, arrangement information between Whitehorse and the Catawba Indian Nation, developer information, personnel information assigned, and a conceptual work plan. If this hasn't happened, it may be time to step back and seek an interested, qualified partner who can improve on that plan and execute it.

Jody Knight said Whitehorse lists 6 core values on their website including integrity and honesty. But if you research the company they have judgements against them. Many big companies get judgements, but with the lack of financial statements given to the town, we have no proof of what they can do. If they are not going to handle themselves with pride and integrity then we don't need them here. They don't want the millsites, they want the mill credits. From threats, to bad business dealings, they have not done their supposed core values. Chesterfield County said to fully vet the company.

Ashlee Kim said that Whitehorse has not one positive review that she could find. She has found their financial records and has them for anyone's review. The MOU states they will not provide their financial statements but will provide letters from financial institutions to give the town the security they need. But she found that Benard Lathan is the owner, not Beau Markolf, and he has several debt collections against them. They are trying to take us a vulnerable and desperate from jobs. We deserve developers who are going to come in and bring us life again. We need to stand by the Town Council and we need experienced developers. We also need to capitalize on existing opportunities like the traffic that comes through town for Carolina Adventure World.

Kristina Jones said that the community has been led to believe that tourism, whitewater, and parks are the salvation of the town. The past and present leadership has not brought any success to our town. Instead, they are shattering the dreams of this community. Our leaders have misled the public and have destroyed dreams of success by neglecting the neediest of Great Falls. Whitehorse is offering a step in the right direction. Do not add the failure to bring in Whitehorse to the long line of bad decisions. She has a petition signed by over 400 voting-aged individuals proving many if not most agree that Whitehorse is good for Great Falls. The plan to bring in luxury apartments will destroy Great Falls. The plan to run sewer lines to Carolina Adventure World is unethical at best, they need to be focused on the town's residents instead of a tourist attraction in another county. The town is in need of jobs.

Stephen Criswell said he is a newcomer to town and is a professor at USC-Lancaster and is the director of the Native American Studies Center in downtown Lancaster. He has an interest in small town economic development and was intrigued with Whitehorse's interest in Great Falls. He is curious about what has changed since the council signed the MOU with Whitehorse (almost unanimously) and now. He can't find any information on why the council now can't agree on Whitehorse. He has spoken with many people and believes the council should reconsider Whitehorse and what is best for the community. Based on the petition, he thinks 20-25% of the community wants Whitehorse to come to Great Falls. Assuming other companies want to come in is a mistake. Whitehorse has publicly declared their support for outdoor tourism and a diversified economy. Citizens of this town want and need jobs. Council should continue to negotiate with Whitehorse.

Donna Rollins says needs to be a clear communication of fees to residents, She would like to know how fees are determined and how invoices are coded. Her questions stem from a \$100 charge she received for pickup of limbs. At no time prior to receiving the invoice was she told there was a fee. They did not violate any of the ordinances relating to size. She wants to know how the \$100 fee was determined.

Neil Rollins said the equivalent of what they paid would be five truck loads according the ordinance. Because of his age, he can't keep up with the yard work and needs to hire help.

Council Member Gonzalez made a motion to accept the amended version of the Recreation Board Resolution 2024-104. Council Member Dutton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Council Member Gonzalez stated that meetings are held on a monthly basis, and he attends the meetings.

Abby Williams with Bolten & Menk gave a presentation on the Rocky Creek Feasibility Study. The study was done to look at connecting the Rocky Creek Trail to the Railbed Trail. Connecting the trails will have an economic development by being more tourism. There are four different sub-projects: sidewalk, picnic area, soft surface trail and repairs to exiting Rock Creek Trail. The Purpose of the study is to get an idea of the money needed for grants. These projects can be done altogether or broken up into projects, The

best thing is that Great Falls is eligible for federal grant money without putting any local money in. Council Member Dutto asked how many jobs would this bring in and shouldn't we be worried about fixing existing sidewalks. He doesn't see anyone using the trails. Glinda Coleman responded that there are a lot of people that use the Rocky Creek Trail and the Carolina Thread Trail has a counter that counts the people using the trail. Council Member Dutton asked when are we going to do something to make the town look better, he is tired of seeing tax payer money going to the woods. Glinda responded that the trails are not being paid for by local money. Council Member Gonzalez asked if this was the only trail being worked on and what about the other problems affecting the town.

Mayor Brantley gave a financial report on all departments. All are in the green.

Mayor Brantley gave an update on Public Works. Supervisor Marlow was sick. The court ordered cleanup of Holly Street is still going on and has put Public Works behind.

Mayor Brantley gave an update on Wastewater. All is good.

Chief Martin gave a report on the Police Department. They had 117 incidents and reports, 241 premises checks, 33 traffic stops, 13 citations, total of 6 felony arrests and 5 warrants. Officer Wood graduates on October 4, 2024 from the academy. Code Enforcement has had 117 investigations to date, 5 properties have been completed, 15 are working with the code inspector, 8 are in the process of being summoned to court for non-compliance. They have worked three days at the Holly Street property and need one more day. They are waiting on responses for 18 properties. After a meeting with the Mayor, Code Enforcement will be helping handle brown goods. Prices were determined through consultants with the Mayor and townhall. They need to look at parking. It is illegal to park left to the curb and will issue citations. The trailer camera at the basketball courts is a pilot project at no cost to the town. He is looking into finding grant money to keep it. The poles at Sunset Park do not fit the criteria for the flock cameras. The basketball court camera is waiting on an electrician. The vender hired to do the sewer work at the police department backed out. They consulted with Wilson Septic who does not agree with the previous assessment, they believe to start with cleaning all the lines. The county received a complaint about mold at the police department and the townhall. The air quality at the police station is better than townhall. The mold at the police department needs remediation. They need a plan to keep up with operations incase the building isn't accessible. Council Member McManus requested to look into renting the old First Citizens bank, Council Member Dutton said they are willing to lease the building. Chief Martin has not yet gotten the numbers together for the surplus vehicles.

Glenn Gladden gave a report on the Recreation Department. They have the schedule set for football season. They have 15 kids playing flag, 20 kids playing 10U, 20 kids playing 12U. They had a late start to the season. They are going to start doing more community events and being involved. Basketball is coming November 1.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to amend the agenda to add a updated for the Fire Department. Council Member Dutton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Captain Edwards gave a report on the Fire Department. They had 38 calls in July, 52 in August, 22 so far in September. They are doing ongoing training. They are working on updating fire hydrants. They are giving out smoke alarms free of charge to the community. They currently have 11 volunteers and just

received 5 additional certified fire fighter applications. In August they have done 30 hours of training. They are working with multiple organizations for public education.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve Resolution 2024-105 MASC Grant to update the comprehensive plant. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve a CPA Agreement with Montgomery & Yarbrough, PA for \$200.00 per month. Council Member Gonzalez seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Eagle looked at the towns ordinances about tree limbs and shrubs. Shrubs was not listed so looks like its free. Section 3430 says the town limits pickup to 10 cubic pounds. Section 3630 says that if someone cuts your trees you have to pay \$20.00 per load. The Rollins were charged to much. She is losing faith and believes the Rollins' should be refunded. They need to work on the fees charged to residents. The \$100 is to be refunded to the Rollins'.

Mayor Brantley gave an update on the Town Administrator position. We have about 20 applicants with mor to come and they will start reviewing applications. He thinks they should start exploring other options for the millsites. Whitehorse has caused animosity among the community.

Council Member Craig said she was all in favor of entertaining Whitehorse in the beginning. They hired someone to help, but now believes all avenues have been exhausted. Council Member Dutton said why would you have a contract then back out of it. Council Member Gonzalez aid if they are willing to invest in the town then let them. Council Member McManus thinks they shouldn't tie-up all three millsites with one company.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to go into executive session. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Brantley stated there was no action taken in the executive session.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to go back into public session. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, Mayor Brantley made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted

Jessica Eubanks