

The regular meeting of the Great Falls Town Council was held on October 15, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Great Falls Memorial Building. Attending were Mayor Brantley, Council Members, Eagle, Craig, Worthy, Gonzalez, Dutton, and McManus. Also attending were Town Clerk Eubanks, Town Attorney Grier, 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 McManus seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Glinda Coleman gave an update on the Hometown Association. Scott Brown with Blue Ridge Trail Works us just about finished with the lower one mile of the rail bed trail and should be totally finished by Friday. They want to plan an opening for the trail with a ribbon cutting or ceremony in the near future. Bret Baronak, the director of trails for the Carolina Thread Trail will be hosting a short trail walk on Saturday at 10:00am. The group will be meeting in the parking lot across the street from Town Hall. Thomas Causey, who is working on the upper part of the rail be trail, said SCDES intends to provide a subgrant of approximately \$420,000 to complete the Brownsfield scope of the cleanup grant. They are not completely sure of the commitment date, but should know before the end of the month. A 10% match will be required by the town, but they are open to the use of the granite screening donation by Duke to serve as an in-kind match. Once funding is straightened out, the project can go to the contractor. The Scarecrow Contest ends at noon on October 16, 2024. You can still vote at the library, the pharmacy and on the online voting link. The winners will be announced at the Pop-Up Market that is on Thursday, October 17, 2024 from 5:00pm-7:00pm.

Darla Wynne is putting the town on notice. She doesn't know if it is coming from the council or police. An officer was on her property, walked to the gate but stopped when her dog came up. Her property is marked no-trespassing. If there is no warrant, or call to the property then the police do not need to be there. The Chief said he had no calls to come to her property. When police say they have no cause or calls to be there then they are being weaponized against her. Her grass is overgrown but has been working on getting it under control. She has a recording where some of council were discussing that they need a diversion and are using her. She has filed a complaint with the Department of Justice and knows that 17 more have been filed. No man speaks on her behalf. Council Member Craig apologized for anything that has happened.

Stephen Criswell offered his assistance with grant writing. He said no one is foolish enough to bank all of Great Falls' future on tourism. There are programs that can draw visitors in including: Celebrating Indigenous Peoples Day, support the history of the textile industry with a museum, and seeks funds to improve the appearance of the main streets of town. He urges council to always put Great Falls first, not other towns, counties or private businesses.

Ashlee Kim provided education on grants, criteria's of grants must be upheld. The RIA grants, like the one for Carolina Adventure World, is for infrastructure of water, sewer, etc. The grant can't be used for other projects. Carolina Adventure World is a great partnership, and the town needed them for the match for upgrade to the town. Carolina Adventure World is outside of town limits but it is the closest town to it and will benefit the most.

Cristy Knight would like to see the council continue forward with the trails and the scenic beauty of the town. He family utilizes the trails. They take friends and customers to the trails and every time they go they always meet people from out of town. The tourists need places to eat, and they need lodging. With more housing and lodging available, more people will come, which means more taxes and more services. The increase in people would mean more jobs. Everyone needs to come together.

Eric Owens said every story he has heard has three things in common: pride, love, and hope for a better life. The town's image is marred by in-fighting, drama and nastiness on social media. Social Media has a huge potential for good or harm. Our town looks toxic. Council was voted in to serve the community first and represent the town professionally, at the moment they are failing. Council is not the only guilty party, the citizens are also responsible for the toxic online image. Using facts and civility online is a much better way to reflect a positive image for our town. Everyone needs to practice civil conversation by presenting facts in a manner that is respectful to each other's opinions and beliefs. Healing takes hard work and time. Our town's image can improve but it is going to take all of us working together.

David Dutton the Chief of Fort Lawn Fire Department said that there have been rumors that Fort Lawn has refused to run calls in the Great Falls area or work with the staff of Great Falls since the transition of Chester County taking over the Great Falls Fire Department. He wants everyone to know that is a lie, he talks with Captain Edwards weekly and the fire agreement still stands. There have been no lapses in coverage.

Kristina Jones asked council to investigate a council member not being eligible to be on council. The mayor blocked her and her fiancé on Facebook when they asked questions about the Carolina Adventure World Grant. He is also blocking citizens from asking questions. The mayor is obligated to listen to citizen complaints because he is an elected official. His wife and sister-in-law have threatened and made false accusations. The town leaders have the duty to prevent violence, not fan the flames. She encourages council to consider a vote of no-confidence in the mayor.

Jody Knight said our town has been ravished by hateful words and comments. We need unity and must put aside hate and personal agendas. We must work together and compromise, and we need to quit running to social media. He encourages the council and the town to put the great back in Great Falls.

Tassey Leonhardt said that the mayor and the council are the foundation of the town. Council members and citizens are going against each other and we are bound for disaster. There is a council member going door to door spreading lies about the mayor and praises WhiteHorse. She has a signed affidavit showing that the same council member promised home repairs for votes. The same council member also walked into her on purpose at the last meeting and she was told to wait to file a police report. But less than an hour later he was able to file a report on a fellow council member. He also recorded executive session and gave it to the Police Chief. He claims to want what is best for the town but is spreading division.

Mayor Brantley gave a financial report on all departments. Everything is on track.

Supervisor Marlow gave an update on Public Works. He had a scheduled vacation the week the storm hit, but came in Monday because the chipper was broken and is still in the shop. Brush is getting picked up as fast as possible. The backhoe is broken, and is down until they can get it fixed. Council Member Craig asked if he was planning on fixing the backhoe. Marlow said yes. Council Member Craig also asked

if the chainsaws were fixed, Marlow answered yes that they just needed chains. Marlow also said that he has been working in Wastewater because of Warren Skinner being out.

Mayor Brantley gave an update on Wastewater. No major issues. IKO has donated a belt press to help with the dry beds. If one was to be built it was cost around \$1 million. He thanked IKO.

Mayor Brantley gave a report on the Police Department. Olen Martin has put in his resignation and they will appoint an Interim Chief.

Teresa Fields gave a report on the Recreation Department. They are getting ready for basketball season, signs will be put out for sign-ups. There have been some issues about policy, with kids playing time and kids not being able to afford to play. Coaches wanted to know who had paid and that was connected to play time. They need more volunteers. They do have some sponsors and have sent out more sponsor forms. Sunset Park & David Minors Complex is going through some changes. They have discussed improvements with the walking areas near the baseball fields needing to be fixed. Council Member McManus said they are working on the restrooms. Soccer will start in the spring. Council Member McManus said that Clerk Eubanks will be ordering two new basketball goals for Sunset Park, the Mayor is getting with asphalt companies to see about paving the walking area, the bathrooms do need some work but are functional. Ms. Fields said that there is an issue with handicap access, Council Member McManus said they are working with the county to address those concerns. Ms. Fields said the fields need more dirt and the batting cage needs work.

Captain Edwards gave a report on the Fire Department. Last month they ran 78 calls with most being hurricane related and they checked on residents after the storm. In September our volunteers put in over 55 hours. They've had 25 calls this month so far and one structure fire. This month is fire prevention month, and they have been working on educating the community. They have 20 residents sign up for smoke alarms. They are planning a blitz in November for smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. This is the first year that Great Falls will receive Fire Safe SC designation. The Fire Department will also be participating in Halloween Trick-or-Treating and told everyone to stop by.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2024-06 for 621 Dearborn Street Purchase. Council Member McManus seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2024-07 to approve Public Access Use with Duke Energy. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to appoint Angie Black as Interim Police Chief with her salary being \$47,500. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Council Member McManus said he had gotten quotes for a pressure washer but don't think purchasing one will work with the budget. He would like to look into doing work on the old jetter

Council Member McManus said that on November 23, 2024 they will be having a BBQ Plate Sale as a fundraiser for the Recreation Department. Dale Langley will be cooking the BBQ.

Council Member Gonzalez has been reviewing the equipment with Public Works and how to best utilize the equipment. The chipper truck, the chipper, and the dump truck needs repair. We need a reliable dump truck. Public Works was not equipped to deal with the storm. Supervisor Marlow said that the dump truck requires two people to pull the tarp. Council Member Gonzalez said a new dump truck

would be more efficient. He recommends trashing old equipment, not surplussing. We are paying insurance for equipment that is not usable. He recommends buying new equipment and we need to find a way to get it done. It is a liability to the town.

Council Member Eagle said that Code Enforcement no longer does brown goods and that Supervisor Marlow has an updated price list and they have drafted a information letter to the citizens.

Council Member Eagle said that in 2020 Chief Rice asked for surveillance cameras but nothing was done. Sassy Scissors was broken into downtown, they have been broken into three times. Ms. Hopkins said they have cameras in the shop. A guy threw a rock in the window, came in and stole money, checks and cards. Amy also had a window broken on her door. She would like cameras downtown. Council Member Eagle said she has arranged a company to come in on Friday at 10:00am to see about installing cameras. To bring businesses in, we have to make it safer. Mayor Brantley said to definitely reach out and see what kind of options there are, he can't make it Friday but would welcome a proposal to put on the table to vote on.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Policy. Council Member McManus seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Craig said that the town should have an Employee social media Policy. The negativity is embarrassing. We can not control citizens, but we can control what employees post on social media.

Mayor Brantley gave an update. The Welcome Center is going to bid for construction. There was an emergency meeting to discuss mold, WhiteHorse and committees. A motion was made to send WhiteHorse a letter that the town is no longer interested in negotiations concerning the mill sites. They also dissolved committees to open communication. Executive session was recorded by Council Member Gonzalez and he believes it is unethical at best and raises trust issues. He said he has had his personal Facebook since he was in high school. He can use it to discuss whatever he wants. He was getting attacked on Facebook. Stephen Criswell interrupted and was escorted out. There was Council Members telling residents to come on town property to cut up firewood which is a liability. Council needs to come together and show respect towards one another. Council must communicate with each other before making decisions

There being no further business, Mayor Brantley made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed with Council Member Gonzalez's vote not being counted.

Respectfully Submitted

Jessica Eubanks