

The regular meeting of the Great Falls Town Council was held on November 19, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Great Falls Memorial Building. Attending were Mayor Brantley, Council Members, Eagle, Gonzalez, Dutton, and McManus; absent were Council Members Worthy and Craig. Also attending were Town Clerk Eubanks, Town Attorney Grier, Report 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 Dutton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Glinda Coleman gave an update on the Hometown Association. They are planning a trail opening ceremony on Monday, December 9 at 10:30 am at the depot end of the trail. She will send more details when available. The plan is to have some people from the Town, the Carolina Thread Trail, the County, KVL, and other partners that have helped make the trail a reality. A ribbon cutting will be held. She had a meeting with Thomas Causey of Stantec and some of the EPA/Brownsfield people last week and they have verbal confirmation that we will receive the supplemental grant from SCDEC to be able to award the contract to begin work on the trail through the mill village and washouts area. The grant is approximately \$420,000. There is a match of 10% but they said it can be an in-kind match with the granite screening donated from Duke. She sent the invoices to Mr. Causey last week and he is submitting that paperwork. If things continue to progress, work should begin just after the first of the year. Their second Scarecrow contest was successful, and they had 19 scarecrows and hope to hold the contest again next year. They were honored to be able to assist with the rededication ceremony of the Blue Star By-Way Garden that Mrs. Jean Camp and Public Works Director Andy Marlow worked so hard to restore. It was held on Veteran's Day and had a pretty good crowd attending.

Kristina Jones spoke about the SCIP Grant. She said 40%, which is \$4 million, is going to Carolina Adventure World, however their accommodations and hospitality taxes are going to Fairfield County. She thinks council should focus on the town and Great Falls citizens were told to take a back seat. Great Falls look bad, it doesn't have signs directing people to tourist attractions. She urges the town to put citizens first.

Brandon Smith asked how the Recreation Board can be dissolved without all the council members being there. They dismissed the Recreation Director without having someone to step up, she thinks they should have thought about it more. Council should stop being in the spotlight and wanted to know where the money is that was raised by the Recreation Board.

Stephen Criswell said that Great Falls received the SCIP Grant, not Carolina Adventure World. The grant is for municipalities, not businesses. Carolina Adventure World is getting a 276% return on its investment. The money for the grant will take 40 years to recoup by the Town. This grant is not free money, it is paid by tax payers and the Great Falls could have received all of the money.

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

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

Christine Swartz, with Catawba Regional, gave an update on the #1 Mill Site Clean-Up. The goal was to clean-up asbestos, which was completed. There is remaining grant funds available that can be used to clean-up other areas surrounding the primary area. The reason there is more money is because when bids first came in, the project was way over budget. They asked for more money from the grant and because they were afraid of it being such a mess, they asked for additional contingent funding, and it was granted. That extra funding was never spent. There is an Engineering Report called a Storm Water Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that needs to be updated to include the new area. It costs \$13,200 and the grant will not cover it. So, for an additional \$200,000 the town would need to spend the \$13,200. If we don't have the report then engineering cannot do the clean-up.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve Stantec to complete a Storm Water Prevention Plan (SWPPP) in the amount of \$13,200 to be paid from Council Non-Budgeted. Council Member McManus seconded, and the motion passed with Mayor Brantley, Council Members Eagle, Dutton and McManus voting yes, and Council Member Gonzalez voting no. Council Member Gonzalez asked if the funding was available for residential areas. Christine Swartz responded that it was only available for the current project.

Grazier Rhea, with Catawba Regional, spoke about the SCIIP Grant. This money, during Covid & Build Back America, was allocated to every state for small towns for infrastructure and economic development. It is administered by the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority. There is a certain amount of time to spend the money, if not spent by June of 2026, then we lose it. There are four projects involved with the grant. The first is upgrades to the Wastewater Treatment Plant and pump stations. SCDES has been on the town to upgrade the plant. Two of the projects is to upgrade sewer lines to Mill #2 and Mill #3. The last is the lines to Carolina Adventure World, which the COG inherited. This grant is free money for the town and comes from Washington, all from the federal government. If this grant money doesn't go to Great Falls, it'll go somewhere else. Carolina Adventure World is paying all the local funds for the grant, which includes paying the engineering fees for town projects. The town is paying no money. It is a good deal for the town and it benefits the town. A lot of towns are trying to expand sewer systems, it is the only way to grow. Overall, the bids came in under budget allowing money for upgrades to the current pump station on Hwy 200. Council Member Gonzalez asked how this will impact the town residents, that lines are collapsing. Grazier Rhea said that you can only bite off a little at a time. If you don't have a functioning Wastewater Treatment Plant then it affects all. Main lines to Mills 2 & 3 will be replaced. Once we complete this project, we can get more grants for other projects.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to accept Tri-County Utilities Bid for \$2,132,587 for Project B of the SCIIP Grant contingent on RIA approval. Council Member Dutton made a motion to table the motion, to do more research. Council Members Dutton, Gonzalez, McManus and Eagle voted yes to table the motion; Mayor Brantley voted no.

Supervisor Marlow gave an update on Public Works. The backhoe is fixed. The chipper is still in the shop and they think the fuel injector pump must have been bad and needs replacing. They are going to state cleaning up the parking lot behind the basketball courts and they are starting to put up Christmas decorations.

Mayor Brantley gave an update on Wastewater. The Clarifier project has started construction. There have been no major issues in the past thirty days.

Interim Police Chief Black gave a report on the Police Department. There were 52 incident reports, 83 traffic stops, 4 traffic accidents, 2 escorts, 14 assist other agencies, 1 animal complaint, 5 alarms, 317

property checks, 2 welfare checks, 23 follow up investigations, and 7 arrest warrants served. In Code Enforcement they have 5 new cases totaling 60, 20 cases completed and 4 going to court. They have been awarded the Body Worn Camera Grant through SC Department of Public Safety Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs for \$20,028.77. This is a reimbursable grant, and they will be turning in receipts for the body worn camera's and system purchased this year. We will receive the funds when they are made available to the state. They have received Gold Level status for the 2024 SC Law Enforcement Network Challenge. When she started volunteering in January, there were reports that have not been sent in since 2017. With gold level status, our agency will be entered into a drawing for a fully equipped patrol vehicle along with 48 other agencies from across the state.

Mayor Brantley gave a report on the Recreation Department. Football has ended and they are working on an end of year banquet. Basketball signups are going on now. There will be a coaches meeting on December 2. They are running an ad for a Recreation Director.

Captain Edwards gave a report on the Fire Department. There were 49 calls for October with 2 structure fires. So far this month there have been 23 calls with 3 structure fires. Volunteers have put in 24 station hours. They are working on updating the fire station. They are finalizing the details for the Smoke Alarm Blitz, it will be December 7th in the Walnut Street area, anyone can participate just reach out to the Fire Department. Smoke Alarms are free of charge.

Council Member Eagle said that there is an extreme lack of communication. The council needs to find common ground and to get along. They need to have a new council orientation. Phone calls, texts and emails should not be ignored. When one member asks for something, they should all get it. They need to put their differences aside.

Council Member Gonzalez followed up on the last report he gave on October 15 about Public Works. We've got two trash trucks that are parked that we are paying insurance on, a dump truck falling apart and other equipment not using. He is trying to figure out the best way to handle it and get rid of it. Tommy Jones has offered \$8,000 for the equipment. They need to work with Public Works to help clean up the town. He found two gas powered street sweepers for \$3,000. They need to purchase new equipment to help Public Works employees do the job right. They need a dump truck with a grappling hook, and a trailer. He asked how they can access funding to purchase equipment. Mayor Brantley said that they just closed out the USDA grant for \$50,000 and can now apply for a new grant, previously a motion was made to surplus to govdeals.com the unused equipment. Council Member Gonzalez asked about getting the other equipment like the streetsweepers, brooms, brushes, rakes, etc. Mayor Brantley said they need to look at the estimates and if Marlow thinks it is needed it can be put on the table. Council Member Gonzalez asked Marlow for his thoughts. Marlow said whatever we need to do and that he needs to look it over. Mayor Brantley said they'll look over and revisit.

Council Member McManus stated he didn't find anything in the by-laws saying they have to do anything to be able to hire in-house. He made a motion to hire Kim Benenhaley as Police Chief. Council Member Dutton seconded the motion. Mayor Brantley asked Council Member McManus how many applicants there were, McManus responded 9 and most were from out of town and that the Mayor had previously said he didn't want anyone from outside. Mayor Brantley then stated he would like to have someone with South Carolina experience. Council Member McManus said he has spoken to higher officials in Richland County and other departments that are willing to help Benenhaley. Mayor Brantley asked how much experience Benenhaley has, and Council Member McManus responded 3 years. Mayor Brantley said they need someone with experience and he thinks they are jumping the gun. He thinks they need to interview and select the best candidate, that they are sitting themselves up for failure. The motion

passed with Council Members Gonzalez, Dutton and McManus voting yes, Mayor Brantley and Council Member Eagle voting no.

Mayor Brantley gave an update. The Welcome center, for \$2.65 million, is out for bid, with the bid opening in December. The Seaboard grant is finished and cost \$92,500. The Rail Trail from Seaboard to Hwy 200/21, \$650,000 funding received, and the town is matching with granite screenings. The construction is underway for the Clarifier grant which costs about \$1.3 million and net out of pocket is around \$22,000. Almost \$1 million has been allocated from Senator Fanning for the Fishing Creek Pedestrian Bridge. The Wayfinding, \$30,000, for signage is still being worked on. The \$35,000 PARD grant is in the process of getting closed out, they have ordered basketball goals for Sunset Park. The reimbursement for the \$50,000 USDA should be received soon. Streetscaped, \$250,000, is under final inspection by DOT and should be closing out soon. The town has approximately \$17.8 million in projects with the out of pocket for the town being around \$250,000.

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

Respectfully Submitted

Jessica Eubanks