

The regular meeting of the Great Falls Town Council was held on December 17, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Great Falls Memorial Building. Attending were Mayor Brantley, Council Members Worthy, Craig, Eagle, Gonzalez, Dutton, and McManus. 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 Worthy seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Glinda Coleman gave an update on the Hometown Association. They had a great ribbon cutting and trail opening ceremony on Monday, December 9, 2024. About 20 people attended, including representatives from the State Park, SCPRT, Carolina Thread Trail, KVL, Duke Energy, Arras Foundation, and the Town. Duke Energy plans to begin construction on the pedestrian bridge and parking area as soon as they get the final approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The footprint of the bridge and parking area is slightly different from the area spelled out in the Final Agreement for relicensing. They are hoping to begin construction in February. Thomas Causey with Stantec, said they expect the subgrant to come in any time now. He has a meeting tomorrow about the grant and will let us know more then.

Kristina Jones requested the council to censor the mayor and if possible, relieve him of some or all of his duties. He has failed to fulfill his oaths. He has failed to act impartially and has shown no effort to preserve the peace. The attack on her at the last meeting was coordinated by the mayor's family members and possibly him. The mayor was not there during the altercation or the aftermath, neither was the interim chief. He has misused his power and has failed to follow procedures. He has illegally blocked her and other people on Facebook. His behavior and his unwillingness or inability to reign in the violent members of his family, is sufficient grounds for our town to no longer put our trust in the mayor. She asked the council to act accordingly.

Stephen Criswell said it appears council is revisiting the infrastructure grant. He doesn't think anyone is opposed to the grant being used to improve the Wastewater treatment of the town. He asked why 40% of the money is being gifted to Carolina Adventure World in Fairfield County. He doesn't believe anyone wants the town to fail. Some have concerns with town leadership. The town will have difficulty growing if something isn't done about the culture of violence. It starts at the top with one individual and one family, and it trickles down. Disagreements are met with threats, false accusations, slander and violence. Those that should be setting examples of unity are causing hostility. He asked questions months ago about the infrastructure grant and Whitehorse, and he has since gotten attacked. He urges everyone for peace.

Dean Runion talked about the use of the old Winn Dixie building. Because of its size and utilities like bathrooms and a kitchen, the Winn Dixie building could be used as a shelter. The building can have lots of uses, including a senior citizen center, weddings, graduations, parties and can be rented out. He knows it needs repairs and would need a grant to fix it up. Volunteers can come in to fix the inside. It could be used as a learning opportunity for students and kids.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve the contract award for Project B to Tri-County Utilities, Inc. in the amount of \$2,132,587.00. Council Member Dutton seconded, and the motion passed with Brantley, Dutton, Worthy, Gonzalez, Eagle and McManus voting yes, and Craig voting no.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve the contract award for Project C Mill 3 to Palmetto State Underground LLC in the amount of \$493,549. Council Member McManus seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve the contract award for Project C Mill 2 to Tri-County Utilities Inc in the amount of \$501,154. Council Member Dutton seconded, and the motion passed with Brantley, Dutton, Worthy, Gonzalez, Eagle and McManus voting yes, and Craig voting no.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to approve Change Order #1 in the amount of \$7,048 for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Clarifiers Project. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Gonzalez made a motion to recall the motion made on October 22, 2024, to resolve the Recreation Board. Council Member Dutton seconded, and the motion passed with Gonzalez, Dutton, Eagle and McManus voting yes, Brantley, Worthy and Craig voted no.

Supervisor Marlow gave an update on Public Works. They got the heaters fixed in both dump trucks. They need a new chipper, new ones have a lot of new safety features. Vermeer and Bandit looks about the same except Vermeer is cheaper and closer. They had a demo of a 7-inch Vermeer last Friday, they would like a 9-inch.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to purchase the Vermeer Chipper for \$34,974.72. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Brantley said there were no substantial issues with Wastewater.

Police Chief Benenhaley gave a report on the Police Department. They had 111 calls of service, 16 traffic tickets, 5 arrest warrants, 221 property checks, and 4 welfare checks. Code Enforcement has 64 cases, 7 pending, 24 complete and 4 new cases. The constables contract runs out at the end of December, they are working on the paperwork to keep them for extra support. They are meeting with dispatch so that property checks are documented. Chester County will be doing block training. The county will send officers while they are at training in Chester. They are working on getting the tasers fixed. The laptops are setup, but are having internet connection issues. They are working on docking stations for the laptops. Lawtrack just had a huge update and they are hoping it is more user friendly and functional. They are hoping to do e-tickets through the laptops. They are working on policies and have been in touch with Lexipol. They are trying to fill the open positions. They have started a new Facebook page for transparency.

Captain Edwards gave a report on the Fire Department. They had 42 calls for service with 3 structure fires. They are currently sitting at 27 calls for service. They have been working on the fire station renovations. In December 7th they had 18 volunteers for the alarm blitz, they put in 49 smoke detectors and 10 carbon monoxide detectors.

Mayor Brantley made a motion to hire Pervis Quarles as Recreation Director for the salary of \$20,000. Council Member Eagle seconded the motion and the motion failed with Brantley, Craig and Worthy

voting yes, and Eagle, Gonzalez, Dutton, McManus voting no. Gonzalez said they don't need a director. They need to hire a coordinator and to extend the interview process. They need to hire someone who has the experience and knows the parents and kids and the leadership. The board was functioning and he doesn't know why it was dissolved. Mayor Brantley said the majority of council voted to dissolve the Recreation Board. Gonzalez said the board shouldn't have been dissolved. Brantley asked what was the difference between a director and coordinator? Gonzalez said a coordinator would coordinate all the sports programs. A director isn't needed because we aren't ready for a director. We have no recreation center. Craig said when she was first on council there was no recreation department. If she had to do so again she wouldn't. It has been chaos every since. Brantley believes the town should be involved in youth recreation activities. All children should have an opportunity. Someone needs to be in control of the Recreation Department for liability issues. Dutton said he isn't sure how they can afford \$20,000. Gonzalez said they can bring Madison in for the old \$5,000 salary. In resolving the board, it broke the spirit of the community. We need leadership.

Council Member Craig made a motion to allocate the remaining ARPA funds to town beautification projects. Mayor Brantley seconded, and the motion passed with Craig, Brantley, Eagle, Worthy, Dutton, and McManus voting yes, and Gonzalez voting no.

Council Member Dutton made a motion to approve the Ordinance to Repeal Code 2-49 which designates the Mayor as CEO and Establish Committees. Council Member Eagle seconded, the motion passed with Eagle, Dutton, Gonzalez and McManus voting yes, and Brantley, Craig and Worthy voting no. Mayor Brantley asked what has made them bring this to the table? Dutton said it was him jumping on employees and cussing them out. Craig asked what exactly does this mean? Attorney Grier said normally towns have an administrator, the town didn't have one so council designated the Mayor CEO. Craig asked if this is a good idea without an administrator? Brier responded that it is best to have an administrator. Gonzalez said they had committees, and they were functioning well, the oversight was there. Craig said they need to do what is best for the well-being of Great Falls and doing what is recommended. Gonzalez said they are supposed to be a strong council, weak mayor. Brantley asked what decisions did he make that took decisions from council. Gonzalez said he eliminated committees. Brantley responded that council eliminated committees. There has to be a chain of command, that is why he wants to bring in an experienced administrator. Grier said a good town administrator would be helpful to the town. Gonzalez questioned being able to afford an administrator. Brantley said starting in the 2025-2026 budget the town would have more funds available. Gonzalez said we need to do more for the kids instead. Dutton said committees could run everything until they can hire an administrator.

Council Member McManus said that when he first got on council they were told there was a forensic audit, they haven't seen anything else about it. He said in the annual audit there was findings of cash transactions occurring and not being accurately documented, and new bank accounts were opened without the council being made aware. Council members were not given the opportunity to review. When Dutton asked for financials, he was told the clerk was too busy. Not all council members were made aware even though it states that town officials agreed with the findings. Why wasn't any of this discussed in council meetings. While Dutton was reviewing a few of the checks, he discovered that the Mayor wrote two checks to himself and signed them for \$792.6 & \$702.83. Council and citizens of this town have the right to know what they were for. They have not received any invoices that were requested. Brantley responded that those were invoices to purchase items for the recreation department during football season to fund the concession stand. Clerk Eubanks said Dutton was asking

for four years of invoices, that's why he hasn't received them. He has received copies of all checks he has asked for. Brantley said he pulled a forensic audit to review documents to make sure he had a clean slate. He said the town has cost him more than anyone could imagine. Dutton wanted to know where the money went. Brantley said the money is all there. Craig said the forensic audit isn't complete. There are a lot of things that haven't been done right over the years (in her opinion). When she first got on council she pulled twelve years of audits, the audits have said the same thing for years. With the forensic audit there are a lot of things they can't find. The old police chief was made aware. Brantley said the audit was handed to SLED.

Council Member McManus passed on his transparency concerns. Brantley said he had transparency concerns. That for the last meeting McManus put police department concerns on the agenda last minute. He talked with McManus and that personnel issues do not go in public session, that McManus didn't say anything about hiring. There are huge trust issues and no respect. Gonzalez questioned Craig catering the Christmas Party. Craig responded she has catered it for twenty years and had discussed with Eubanks about finding someone else.

Council Member McManus passed on his Police Department Concerns. Craig said she had concerns that and that they should consider turning over the Police Department to the county. Brantley responded that the Fire Department has worked out giving to the county, with better fire service. He is not opposed to negotiations with the County. Craig said the Police Department is a liability.

Mayor Brantley said that the Belks Building came up short on bids and is working with the county to get more funding.

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