

The called meeting of the Great Falls Town Council was held on January 6, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at the Great Falls War Memorial Building. Attending were Mayor Brantley, Council Members Eagle, Craig, Worthy, Gonzalez, Dutton, and McManus. Also attending were Clerk Eubanks, Attorney Grier, Reporter Jenkins, and several interested citizens.

Mayor Brantley opened the meeting with Prayer.

Pledge of Allegiance.

A Question and Answer Session was held.

Jody Knight read a letter from County Council Member Mike Vaughn. He stated that he and the town council members swore an oath to commit themselves to represent the best interests of their constituents. In doing so they commit themselves to doing all the work to learn all of the information on an issue prior to voting. They face complex decisions that will seriously impact their constituents for years and it takes hard work to learn what is needed to best serve. In the recent past Council sought advice on Whitehorse from several respected experts in Economic Development. They were advised on what the town should require prior to any deal with Whitehorse. To date, Whitehorse has not met those requirements. He urges the current council to not enter into any deal with Whitehorse unless they comply with the requirements. He states that highly reputable developers, including the Sherbert Group, are interested in the town. Working with reputable developers can result in the revitalization of the community. He asked the council to please base decisions on fact, not personable grudges.

Jody Knight said a lot of stuff has been going on with council and the town. He has spoken to several council members privately. There has been a lot of personal vendettas. They are not respecting each other. How you expect the town to come together. Who would be re-elected now by the town residents? Research has been done on Whitehorse, they are not right for this town. Make the right decisions for the town.

Mayor Brantley stated that Whitehorse has been requested to be removed from the agenda.

Dr. Stephen Criswell said he is a resident of Lancaster County and is looking into moving to Great Falls. Great Falls received a 10-million-dollar grant, Fairfield County also got one. But Great Falls is giving 40% of the grant to a private company, why? He asked for Carolina Adventure World to give their financials to the town. Why do a deal that will take forty years to recoup the funds? Why couldn't it all be spent in Great Falls. Who negotiated the deal? Why did asking this on Facebook cause the Mayor and Council Member Craig to block him? Council Member Craig responded that the governor was involved with the grant. Mayor Brantley said the questions were answered at the last meeting. Officers were requested to control outbursts.

Darla Wynne said to stop with the bickering and get on with the meeting. It is unprofessional. She came for a meeting, not an argument.

Jimbo Mobley thanked the council for serving. Council is always going to make someone mad. We live in a democracy and have elections for a reason. Things look bad, we've been divided, and we need to come together. We need to coexist. The reason the town is divided is because council is divided. We shouldn't have personal agendas to get back at others. We need to do what is best for the town. When

JP Stevens left, they took all the jobs, don't give Whitehorse all the properties. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. He prays the council learns to work together.

Council Member Gonzalez said he had Jody Knight outside his house accusing him of stalking. Violence stems from the decisions they make. He has not perpetrated any violence. He has been threatened. Stop the violence.

Mayor Brantley threatened to adjourn the meeting if order was not kept.

Hope Sims said she moved here from Lancaster and always thought of Great Falls as a hick-town. But has found out that there are a lot of good people here and people tend to look out for one another. What is going on with council is not good. Stop the same disagreements. It is not all about Whitehorse, the Sherbert Group, or the grant the Carolina Adventure World. We all need to see a bigger picture. Instead of making all these problems, let's try to find a solution. We are not making Great Falls look good. We all want jobs, but nobody is going to want to come here with how things look now. Nobody is innocent in this. Council needs to work for the residents.

The meeting was interrupted by outbursts and arguing. Mayor Brantley said that the next person to interrupt would be escorted out by Officer Wood.

Taylor Lindsay asked where is the Rec Department at with basketball and spring soccer? Who is on the reinstated Rec Board? What is the town plans to recoup and recover the kids, coaches, and volunteers that were lost due to the drama with the Rec Department? Council Member Worthy stated that at the last meeting the Rec Board was reinstated. Taylor responded that nobody wants to do it because council can't make up their mind and keeps putting their input in where it is not needed. Where is it the council's right to dissolve the board? Council Member Craig responded that the council created it, that comes with the job. If she knew then what she knows now, she would have never voted to start a recreation department. Taylor said there is so much more to offer the kids and believe Town Council should completely stay out of the Rec Department. He said Council interferes every time they try to make progress. He does not know what the board did to get dissolved.

James Parker said he had been asked by multiple people to come speak and said it's no offense to the Police Department. People come here to get certified then go somewhere else. What the Council did recently was set the Police Department up for failure, and a young officer up to fail. She will always be looked at negatively in the law enforcement community. One of the bigger mistakes is trying to explain it, because the explanation didn't make sense. You are a rookie until you have five years of experience, the whole department is rookie. People are voting yes or no based on what others are voting. The job posting asked for preferred fifteen years' experience. You set the Police Department up for failure. Make better decisions.

Sandy Black said she is a fifty-year resident and is embarrassed about what has been on social media and on TV. She is embarrassed that the people that our community elected seems to be in a dogfight with each other. We don't need pettiness and school yard bullying. If you are not woman or man enough to do the job, then resign. If you are in it for personal gain, then resign. When she was young they had a Recreation Department, a beautiful building, and swimming pools. They had football, baseball, and basketball. Kids don't have a place to go now. When her kids were young, David Minors

had a well-oiled running Rec Department. Need to stop the shitshow. Many know what is going on in the town and she's embarrassed. She thinks they need to have a new election and re-do the council.

Maria Rice said she used to be on the Council. It is sad to see what has happened to council. It is sad to see the personal vendettas on TV. It's not easy to be on Council. But they need to be professional and not redneck. In her six-years on council they had multiple companies interested in the mills. For the most part they were just interested in the tax credits. She said they did a pretty good job vetting them out. She gives Whitehorse credit for their community engagement. Whitehorse, in her opinion, a lot of smoke and pipe dreams. They had plenty of opportunities to prove her wrong but never did. They hire a professional who was to write up his findings into a report. She believes the public deserves to see what was in that report. Tax Dollars were used to pay for that report. Mayor Brantley said that copies of the report would be available to anyone who would like a copy.

Ashlee Kim said there has been a lot of drama the past six months and she has been a part of it and apologized. With all the mess, a lot hasn't been accomplished. When should FOIA requests be responded to? Attorney Grier responded fifteen days of receipt. She asked why is a council member waiting on financials still? Attorney Grier didn't think a FOIA request had been submitted. Ashlee said she thought it had. She said there is no working together, no communication, and constant bashing. There has been no follow thru with anybody, that needs to change. If you want to end some of the division, then stuff needs to be made public. Why isn't it on the website? Transparency is needed. How can anyone make informed decisions if no one know what is going on? She googled and found state audits. She asked if council was aware of them. No one is on the same page. You've got compliance issues. Is there compliance policies and procedures to help prevent some of this stuff? Little things can be done to help end the bashing and division.

Mayor Brantley said he asked Council Member Dutton to be on the Financial Committee, he declined. He tried to involve him in the financials because he seemed interested. Council Member Craig said she's always received what she asked for, even it she had to help herself to it. She wasn't aware anyone had been denied information. Council Member Dutton said he was not denied that the Clerk said she didn't have time, and he was offered to make copies himself, but he didn't not feel right doing so. He believes the clerk needs help. Ashlee Kim said there should always be a witness to prevent liability issues. Mayor Brantley said he believes that hiring a Town Administrator would help resolve issues. They we need someone with experience and knowledge. Council Member Craig said an administrator would do a lot of the work and that council would only have to make the decisions. Council Member Eagle said that all the bickering needs to stop.

Council Member Eagle opted not to make the motion to vote on the 2nd Reading of Ordinance for the repeal of Code 2-49 Chief Executive Officer and Establish Committees. She said that they are getting attacked on all fronts and that she wants to take with all the Council Members.

Council Member Craig said that they need to speed up the process with interviewing for the Town Administrator. She asked if they could set a salary so that interviewees know what to expect. Mayor Brantley said that they need to interview first and get an idea of what salary is expected.

Council Member Gonzalez said that he had been excited ant the Recreation program and that it had a good last year. There has been hiring and firing. Most counties and towns have a sports program coordinator and said that's where they need to begin. He believes the playgrounds aren't functioning

and are outdated. He got an estimate of \$234,000 to update playgrounds. They need to know what the cost would be for the development and improvement of recreation facilities. They need to give the kids the best. He has been trying to get the Recreation Board back engaged from the fracture of it being dissolved. He has a description for a Sports Program Coordinator and believes they need to hire from within the town. Conversations need to be had.

Council Member Dutton opted not to make the motion to vote on the 1st Reading of Ordinance to Amend Codes 2-148 & 2-149 for Appointment of Committees.

Council Member Craig made a motion to go into executive session for personnel matter concerning the Police Department. Council Member Dutton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Brantley stated there was no decisions made 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 Council Member Dutton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Craig seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted

Jessica Eubanks