



Special Called Town Council Meeting

DATE: Tuesday, January 21, 2020

TIME: 6:00 PM

Stokesdale Town Hall

8325 Angel Pardue Road

Stokesdale, North Carolina

- I. **Call meeting to Order:** Mayor Flynt called the meeting to order at 6pm
- II. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Led by Mayor Flynt
- III. **Subject of the meeting: Park Grant Writer**

Attendees: Mayor Flynt, Thearon Hooks, Jimmy Landreth, Jim Rigsbee, Derek Foy, Clerk Alisa Houk, NWO Patti Stokes.

1. **Vote on Proposal for Park Grant Writer: Ron Shelton has been a Grant Writer for many years. When he heard that we were looking for assistance in applying for a Grant for Town Park Improvements, he agreed to put a proposal together to help us with the grant process.** Mayor Flynt presented Ron Shelton's proposal for a fee of \$1600.00. If it is voted on tonight council can have Mr. Medlin prepare a contract between Mr. Shelton and the Town to assist us in writing the grant.

Jimmy Landreth asked the Mayor here if we could add a Public Comments to the end of this meeting. Mayor Flynt asked if there were any objections. There was a unanimous agreement to add Public Comments to the end.

Mayor Flynt continued his presentation of Mr. Shelton's proposal by making a motion to approve his proposal. Jimmy Landreth seconded the motion to get it on the floor.

Jim Rigsbee said he thought he heard Alisa say there was a document in their folders about Mr. Shelton's qualifications. Alisa explained that the only document in the folder is his proposal. Jim Rigsbee asked if anyone knew his qualifications. Mayor Flynt said he thinks he previously worked at Southern Bell. When he retired, he took a job at Forsyth Tech as a Grant Writer and did that for 7 or 8 years. So, he has had extensive experience in grant writing. Jimmy Landreth said he's done it that long. Thearon Hooks answered yes. Thearon Hooks added that Mr. Shelton had written grants for the college to help them get grants. He was referred to us by his brother Powell Shelton. Alisa called him, he came in and met with her. Reviewed the Grant application and requirements and said he had no problem helping us put this grant together. Jimmy Landreth then asked if there were some things that the Town would have to do. Thearon Hooks answered yes, I'm sure there will be. Mayor Flynt then replied that the grant requires a list of things for us to do. We have to have public meetings, we have to compile the statistics from the survey we sent out, we have to get cost estimates for any items we propose to add to the park. We have to get a site plan done and show where our portion of the money will come from. Its all written in the application. Thearon Hooks asked Alisa what Mr. Shelton had discussed. Alisa told council that she

and Mr. Shelton went through some of the items. Mr. Shelton showed her that the Grant Application is set up on a points system. They give a list of requested items, some are required, some are for extra points. Every item you can provide goes toward a specification amount of points. The more points you have the better your chances are of acceptance. Jimmy Landreth asked where the \$1600. To pay him was coming from. He asked the Mayor if it was coming from the \$3,000. They voted on in the January meeting. Mayor Flynt told him yes that is where it coming from. Mayor Flynt said you will see in Item # 5, Rashawn King, from NC State Univer., He, Thearon, and Alisa met with Rashawn, he will be our grant underwriter from the State. We will need to send him our preliminary paper work by March 1, 2020 for his review. He will review it and come back to us with any advice, changes, additions we may need to help us. Mayor Flynt asked if there was any other discussion. There was not so he called to question.

VOTE:

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| Mayor Flynt: | AYE | Jim Rigsbee | AYE |
| Mayor Pro Tem Thearon Hooks | AYE | Derek Foy | AYE |
| Jimmy Landreth | AYE | | |

2. Discussion and possible vote on third signature card on file with banks. Tabled

3. Discussion and possible vote on change of new council member to approve invoices. Tabled

4. Discussion and possible vote on vendors leaving. Derek said he would start this out. He said this was difficult but he doesn't want to beat around the bush. In the council meeting a couple weeks back, we voted Tim Jones on the planning board, to be an alternate on the planning board. Leading up to that meeting Thearon and ...in that office in there, gesturing toward the inner-offices, you shared with me that if Tim was appointed to the planning board that you would resign your seat, but what really concerned Derek was that Thearon said that all of the Town vendors would leave, stop doing service for the Town of Stokesdale. Derek said he just wants to know, does Tim being on the planning board negatively impact our Town Vendors? Are we at risk of losing any of our Town Vendors? Thearon said if you are directly asking me, I will retract my statement. Thearon added that he ended up in the hospital two weeks prior to this meeting because of the some of the stress of this stuff. He didn't realize he was about to be in dire straits. He has never been on any kind of medication before. This was all happening during the planning of the meeting, and his body was in the transition of getting used to multiple medications, he feels like that affected his personality and rationale at the time. If he offended anybody he apologizes. He certainly plans to work with everybody. He will work with this council; he knows that they aren't going to agree on everything every time. Thearon asked if council would accept his apology. Jimmy Landreth said he understands and accepts Thearon's apology. Mr. Jordahl asked Thearon if he would publically apologize to Mr. Tim Jones. Thearon said sure, Tim Jones I apologize.

5. Discussion and possible vote on duties of Mayor Pro Temp/Deputy finance officer. Jimmy Landreth asked about the Deputy Finance Officer position. Alisa explained that Mr. Rouse suggested that we give Thearon the title of Dep. Finance Officer since he was already reviewing the invoices and signing checks. It has since been determined that this is just a title and not a position required by any general statutes. The Finance Officer pays the bills, cuts the checks, Mayor Pro Tem reviews those invoices, initials them and is the second signer on the checks. In the absence of the Finance Officer the Budget Officer can cut the checks, in the absence of the Mayor Pro Tem, the Mayor is the third signer and can review invoices

and sign checks. Mayor Flynt started to go over the duties of the Mayor Pro Tem. Jimmy Landreth said it wasn't necessary to go over those.

Comments from the floor:

Mark Jordahl: Said he somewhat agrees with Derek Foy on work orders. So, we don't relive the tree debacle. Is some way to appoint a second person or put a policy in place to prevent this happening again? He said this would prevent one person being stuck with something like this again. He said he may be misinformed or just doesn't understand the process so that is why he is asking. Thearon addressed Mr. Jordahl's question. He explained that in normal circumstances council would have called an emergency meeting like we did when we had the water line issue on Hwy 158 during Hurricane Florence. The tree issue was during the second Hurricane Michael, Frank as well as the Mayor and himself were out riding around as Hurricane Michael began to subside. They were checking throughout the town for any damages that the Council might have to address. Frank drove down into the park. Trees were down and laying across the walking trail, others were leaning and were at risk of falling. Frank stated to Council later that he had attempted to contact several tree companies to come and remove the trees before they fell on someone or kids who were already out in the park playing on the fallen tree trunks got hurt. None of the companies he called were available immediately. He called Beaver Outdoor Solutions (our landscaping vendor) and they were available to come immediately. Mayor Flynt reiterated that Frank Bruno was the chairman of the property committee at this time. He stressed that the trees posed a danger to injuring someone. He also read former John Bain's statement regarding when we are required to obtain bids, and when we are not required to obtain a bid. He said Frank did the best he could at the time. Mr. Jordahl said in defense of Frank he understands he just wanted to know if something has been put in place since then to avoid this happening to someone else. Jim Rigsbee brought up our Separation of Duties policy and said he has read in it that there are limits of spending by certain members of council and staff in place that addresses this type of issue.

Eileen Thiery: Addressed the Mayor, she said, "You disappoint me Mr. Mayor." She said she didn't know if we had a whistleblower that brought in something or what is going on, she doesn't know about. But she can say she has lived here long enough to say she has never heard a negative thing said about you. In fact, when he was running for Mayor during the election, her church was like Hallelulah! So, Eileen said she would make a suggestion to rethink stepping away from the powers that he has and should have as the Mayor. And She said also Thearon, I don't care what precipitated, I don't really care at this point. She is representing some of her friends that don't want you be giving and delegating some of your powers away. You ran for them, you've done a good job, and I think if you are going to do that, which I hope you don't. She said don't run away from something said by a whistleblower. She said she has been around long enough and done enough volunteer work to know how people in town feel about the new council, and how everyone is looking forward to this council working in unison.

Mayor Flynt answered Eileen by saying, his reputation is the most important thing in his life, other than his children and his religion. Eileen said your reputation is good. Mayor Flynt said, "I know it is, and its going to stay that way if I has anything to do with it." We have been accused in Council Meetings that the three of us when Frank was on Council, that we could go out and by Ferraris for everyone. Mayor Flynt said that is a slap to my face about my integrity. And I've seen what they did to Frank Bruno. The Mayor had members of the community come to him and tell him that one of the members of council

was going around town while he was running for council saying he had seen a check for \$2,000. And that Frank got a kick back. So, Mayor Flynt called Attorney Medlin and asked him to investigate this because 1. If Frank did it, we would prosecute to the full extent of the law. But if not, Frank came in with a stellar reputation and I think Council owes him the decency of leaving the same way. I don't want somebody accusing me of taking a kick back. We've had a discussion at least a dozen times about the Business Association, I'm not a member of a business association, but given a choice I'm going to give the business to a local business if I can, if the bids are anywhere close. I think that is the purpose of it, but I don't want anybody to accuse me of giving David Wrenn preferential treatment for buying coca-colas at the BiRite. I'm just trying to protect my reputation. My reputation means more than the job of Mayor. Now if we become a more civil environment in this town, I'll reconsider. But right now, I'll stay on the signature cards, but I'm telling you I'm not signing a check and I'm not approving invoices. Eileen asked if the person that brought this story to him has a name. Mayor said no he is not going to reveal that information. He has had four of five people come to him and say he needed to be concerned about Frank Bruno, when he has people in the community come to him and say Frank Bruno is a crook, he takes that as a serious allegation. Eileen ended by saying just reconsider and know that people hold him in high regards and respect. Mayor Flynt said he appreciates that. Eileen added that these people are people of integrity.

Jim Flynt: The Mayor is my brother; Frank Bruno is my friend. I worked diligently to get Frank re-elected. He's known Frank for 20+ years. He wants to go back to the tree thing just for one minute. He said he wasn't trying to be arrogant or anything. The isn't one single individual in this room and he dares to say there might be one in the community that knows more about the value of what it cost to clean up trees that have fallen. The reason he knows this is for the last 25 years he has been an Insurance Adjuster. He has handled some of the largest Hurricane claims ever in Florida. Last year we didn't have just one we had two Hurricanes, and he handled claims for both. He described how hard it was to find tree removal companies and, in some cases, it was up to three months before they could schedule one to handle a claim. When you have a Hurricane, the price is not going to be what it would normally cost. It's based on supply and demand. You can expect to pay two to three times what you normally would pay.

Bill Jones: Wanted to clarify a couple of things. Alisa Houk said work orders were done away with a long time ago, years ago. He said that is not the case. They were done away with August 9, 2018. He believes if work orders had still in practice the tree issue would have never happened. He will contest what Jim said because he doesn't know how many people have gone to the mountains after a storm but when they have storms, they closed down the roads. If they can close down the Blue Ridge Parkway, we can sure close down the Town of Stokesdale's Park. Unless a kid is hanging under the tree you don't have an emergency. You close down the park until you can get someone out there.

Mayor Flynt answered Bill. He said you can close down the park, close and lock the gates. But people can still get in and something like fallen trees is an attractive nuisance and the first kid that plays on a leaning tree and it falls, you are going to have a million-dollar lawsuit bodily injury or death. If we had closed the park, we would have had to pay an off-duty officer to sit down there everyday until we had been able to correct problem.

Mark Nadel: It is January 2020, are we not tired of hearing about the trees and past history? Growing up my mom did nothing but complain anytime there was a discussion about what happened in England when she was there in the 1940's. This is nonsense, you guys did the best you could do. Frank has done

a great job. We all make mistakes. We've got people that don't live in this town anymore that is still trying to drag on this situation. We need to be moving forward. This absolute nonsense to be having this discussion about something that happened three years ago, now, or whenever it happened. Can't you fix it? No. But he believes we can come together now and come up with something to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Jimmy Landreth addressed Mark Nadel and said as far as Mr. Nadel making a comment about someone who doesn't live in this town anymore, and dragging this on. Happened not to be the one that brought this up. There has been a lot of comments, before that. He has as much right to talk as anybody else. Anybody can come in this town and talk, no matter if they live here or not. He was just responding to all the conversations had. Mr. Nadel said he's just trying to say everyone needs to stop picking on each other. Jimmy agreed. He and Mr. Nadel had a bit more conversation and Jimmy said he had just as soon this subject be dropped as well. The money has been spent and nothing else can be done about it. If we are going to stop the picking on each other we all have to stop.

Mark Jordahl when he started this conversation it was not a controversy over how much a fricking tree cost or anything else. It was asking if there are checks and balances and making a suggestion. That's all. Mark apologized for opening this up. Jimmy Landreth agreed that he took it at what Mark meant it to be. Mayor Flynt agreed, point taken. Mark continued his apology that this turned in a re-drudge of the past. He ended by saying we need to move on.

Tim Jones asked to speak. Tim said he won't take up anymore to Town Council's time, but he would like to speak with Jimmy Landreth, Derek Foy, and Mr. Rigsbee at some point if you have time. If any of the three new councilmen have questions, he will be happy to answer them and provide any documentation that he has. He said we need to talk about our procedures that were used. The system broke down. He's just offering anytime the three new councilmembers want to discuss this he will be glad to talk to them.

John Flynt commented that if anyone wants a copy of our purchase procedures, he will be happy to provide them. Mr. Bain had reviewed them in April 17, 2018 and stated that these procedures met the statutory limitation.

Jim Rigsbee comment here that he doesn't want anything to do with anything that happened in the past. He wasn't interested in seeing or hearing anything about past issues. It is time to move on and forward.

Adjournment: Mayor Flynt motioned to adjourn at 7:10PM Jimmy Landreth seconded the motion. Vote was 5-0 to adjourn the meeting.

Approved by: , Mayor Pro Tem

Confirmed by: , Town Clerk, Budget & Finance Officer