

MINUTES

TOWN OF WEAVERVILLE
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP
TUESDAY, May 9, 2017

The Town Council for the Town of Weaverville met on Tuesday, May 9, 2017, at 5:30 p.m. in the Training Room within Weaverville Fire Department at 3 Monticello Road, Weaverville, North Carolina.

Council members present were: Mayor Dottie Sherrill, Vice Mayor/Councilman John Penley, Councilman Doug Jackson, Councilman Doug Dearth, Councilman Andrew Nagle and Councilman Patrick Fitzsimmons.

Staff present were: Town Attorney Jennifer Jackson, Town Manager Selena Coffey, Town Clerk Derek Huninghake, Fire Chief Ted Williams, Finance Officer Tonya Dozier, Public Works Director Tony Laughter and Planning Director James Eller. Police Chief Greg Stephens was absent.

1. Call to Order

Mayor Sherrill called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Town Manager Selena Coffey distributed out to Town Council, Town of Weaverville mugs as a token of appreciation for Public Service Appreciation week.

2. Retiree Health Insurance Discussion

Town Council determined that since health insurance has become significantly more expensive in recent years and with future costs for current employees alone being uncertain, it would be irresponsible for the Town of Weaverville to continue to provide this undefined benefit (retiree health insurance) to future employees. Based on Town Council's discussion, Town Manager Selena Coffey recommended that the personnel policy be revised to reflect that future employees not be offered retiree health insurance. Town Council came to a consensus that as of July 1, 2017, new Town of Weaverville employees will not be eligible for retiree health insurance. There was consensus among Councilmen to have the Town Manager and Town Attorney work on a revision to the Town's Personnel Policy to eliminate the benefit for anyone hired after July 1, 2017.

3. Domestic Partnership Insurance

Town Manager Selena Coffey discussed the option of allowing domestic partners to be covered under the Town of Weaverville's insurance just like a spouse. The current requirement that if an employee's spouse has insurance available through his or her employer than the spouse is not eligible for health insurance through the Town. The same would apply for domestic partners. At this time it appears that only one employee has said they could possibly benefit this option. Town Attorney Jennifer Jackson suggests the following definition a domestic partnership: Two individuals who reached the age of majority and live together in a non-marital but a long term relationship of indefinite duration with exclusive mutual commitment in which the partners share the necessities of life and are financially interdependent. Town Council came to a 4-1 consensus that domestic partnership insurance should be allowed at this time. Councilman Jackson opposed expanding this benefit at this time and would prefer to see it presented in a broader review of the Town's compensation package. The Town Attorney and Town Manager will work together for an appropriate revision to the Town's Personnel Policy and bring back the same for Council's consideration.

4. Additional Funding for Relief Firefighters

Town Manager Selena Coffey proposed in this year's budget extra funds for additional relief firefighters. These funds would allow the Weaverville Fire Department to maintain shifts of 5 personnel each day if a fulltime employee is out, otherwise it would allow for 6 employees on each shift. Fire Chief Ted Williams mentioned that if the Town receives the SAFER grant then they would only need half the amount requested in this year's budget for relief firefighters. As of right now there are 5 relief firefighters, who get paid an hourly rate of \$10. At least 3 of the relief firefighters would like to become fulltime. With the additional relief firefighters from these funds, it will help increase the amount of coverage and services provided to the residents of the Town of Weaverville. Fire Chief Williams believes that the county fire tax will not be changed. No consensus was made on the additional funding and the Town Manager proposed bringing the SAFER grant back for discussion at a future budget workshop.

5. Legal Services Funding

Town Manager Selena Coffey informed Town Council that she has included an additional \$10,000 to this year's budget for legal services. She reviewed prior years' cost of legal services and discussed some of the ways in which it has been beneficial to have an in-house attorney. Town Manager recommended that Council have a performance review with Town Attorney Jennifer Jackson to determine what they think is the best option. Town Attorney Jackson mentioned that last year was kind of an experiment for the Town, since there has never been an in house attorney employed. She thinks that the project lists coming up in the next year would justify having an in-house attorney, including specifically the re-codification project which will comprehensively look at the Town's Code of Ordinance which has not been done since 1998. Councilman Fitzsimmons stated that having an in-house attorney has been significantly beneficial with a cost comparable to prior years. Councilman Penley shared the same view noting that having an in-house attorney has been very crucial with helping maintain operations going on in the Town. Town Manager Coffey also, suggested that there could be other ways to compensate the Town Attorney outside of providing the full \$10,000 in salary, including a potential match to a 401k program, offsetting some of her legal expenses, etc. Town Attorney Jackson indicated that she was happy to place a closed session on Council's agenda at any time that they would like to conduct a review and the consensus was to do that at the Council's May 15, 2017 regular meeting agenda.

6. Stipend for Town Council Special-Called Meetings

Town Manager Selena Coffey discussed her analysis of comparable towns' governing body stipend with Council. Her research showed that, compared to other comparable towns, the Weaverville Mayor stipend is 21.6% below average and the Weaverville Town Council is 21.5% below average. Town Manager proposed an additional stipend total of \$3,600 for fiscal year or \$50 per special-called meeting for council members, which would still remain below average. Councilman Nagle stated that, while it is appreciated, the stipend is more of a gesture and that it would be better off going to the firefighters. Councilman Jackson mentioned that additional stipends for Council would be appreciated and are well deserved but thinks that right now it isn't good timing with the possibility of taxes increasing. Councilman Dearth noted that having this stipend be calculated based on the number of special called meetings might not be the best option. Conversation was leaning toward excluding the stipend, however no consensus was made.

7. Other Personnel Related Discussions raised by Town Council

None

8. Other Discussion/Action

Town Council discussed the proposed tax rate and where it should be set since tax assessments have increased this year. Councilman Nagle noted that the Town of Weaverville is becoming an expensive community where only the wealthiest people can reside and he doesn't agree with the proposed tax rate of 40 cents. Councilman Fitzsimmons stated that this proposed tax rate would make us one of the highest tax rates in the state and that with county taxes increasing, the Town of Weaverville might think to lower the rate to the revenue neutral rate. Councilman Jackson mentioned that the capital expenditures could come out of the Capital Reserve Fund instead of the General Fund, which would allow for the tax rate to be lowered. Councilman Penley suggested that this might be a good year to get caught up on all the capital expenditures and improvements. Town Manager Selena Coffey noted that the budget is continuing to evolve and stated that she would be working to finalize the budget with each of the councilmembers comments in mind. She recommended another budget workshop to be held and suggested June 1, 2017 for the workshop.

After consulting their schedules Council set a special called budget workshop for Thursday, June 1 at 5:30 p.m. at the Fire Department Training Room.

9. Adjournment

Councilman Penley made the motion to adjourn; Councilman Nagle seconded and all voted to adjourn the Council's meeting at 6:53 p.m.



DEREK K. HUNINGHAKE, Town Clerk