

Regular Meeting

Town of Cooleemee

August 21, 2023

Minutes

Mayor Almond called the meeting to order at 6:00PM
Commissioner Fleming led the room in the Invocation.
Mayor Almond led the Pledge of Allegiance.
Mayor Almond welcomed a room full of guests.

Seeing no needed changes to the agenda
Motion made by Commissioner Almond to adopt the agenda and consent agenda which only included the current Financial Report.

Motion Seconded by Commissioner Fleming; motion passed (4-0)

The meeting was turned over to the Interim Clerk for reading rules on Public Comment he stated those that have signed up was to have 3 minutes each, if there was a person selected to speak on behalf of a group of people, they could request 5 minutes to speak. He reminded the public and the board that the board had a right to end the public comment period after 30 minutes but giving the circumstances and with 9 citizens signed up that there should not be any issue with that. He then called on the first signed up citizen.

Josh Ijames, Mr. Ijames reported to the board concerns with the mowing contract asking if rumors maybe true that the board had already had to asked that they keep the Park with weeds and such in better condition. He also asked when he was at a meeting in March and heard of up to \$55,000 missing from a potential glitch within the software; why did it take the board so long to verify no such glitch occurred?

Carolyn Overcash, Ms. Overcash has lived here for 46 years and thanked the board for cutting bushes around Junction Rd. area to make more visible when driving. She has concerns with a speed bump on Davie St. is it causing damage to roadway and or culvert running under the road next to it. Questioned why someone was asked to remove a wheelchair ramp in front yard but yet the Town allows basketball goals up against the roadway.

Bobby Rycroft, Mr. Rycroft states he feels the mayor should step aside from her duties until she can be cleared of any potential wrongdoings during the investigation. He thinks the board should table all voting matters until the investigation is over. Looks forward as a taxpayer to getting this behind the Town so we can move on and continue.

KC Smith, Ms. Smith stated board meetings anymore left people feeling confused on discussions and decisions as folks can't hear when they appear to whisper and lean into one another to talk during a board meeting. There is no need for a lack of communication with the board to the public.

Josh Nail, Mr. Nail questions how so many checks were cleared with only one signature is there not some type of policy that prohibits this and the bank or Town level?

Walter Ferrell, Mr. Ferrell just hopes the Town has enough funds to keep its charter and continue. He feels the Town is strong enough to overcome this situation and just hopes the funds are there to get through it all and continue.

Ellen Herbert, Ms. Herbert questions if the board has a plan in place to keep the remaining finances safe and keep future finances safe from this happening again? She also thinks the board should refrain from voting on financial situations until the investigation is complete.

Teresa Bivens, Ms. Bivens read an email from the Lynch Group about storage for equipment and dirt during the work at the new Water Treatment Facility on Main St. Questions rather the board was fully aware of that email as it was appeared to be sent to the former Clerk and Board members. Ask for more transparency from the Town.

Ron Bivens Mr. Bivens followed up the reading of the email asking if anyone from the Lynch Group or walk the property in question for storage, Questions if the board ever discussed or voted to negotiate a deal with the Group. Why was the River Park never informed? A deal was eventually reached with a neighboring property that could have been made with the Town.

Commissioner Almond gave an update from the Sheriff Dept. on town coverage. The Sheriff Dept. logged 586 hours of coverage for the Town in July, with 134 events within Town Limits taking place that needed Police attention. Commissioner Almond and the board thanked the Sheriff and his Dept. for their continued support and work.

The Interim Finance Officer spoke to the board about speaking with Ms. Sharon Edmondson from LGC there is no formal process for extending the annual audit for the Town. She agreed with the Finance Officer in moving forward as normal in hopes of getting a more rounded figure and if for some reason the Auditor or SBI agent Smith ultimately decided to make the call to stop or postpone then it would be easier for one of them to make the call back to her and the process could begin to push dates back. She did ask me to contact Ms. Smith once more and make sure she was OK with proceeding as Ms. Edmondson had suggested so I made that call and Agent Smith said yes proceed.

Motion made by Commissioner Almond to proceed with annual audit as planned to attempt to verify numbers the investigation may need.

Seconded by Commissioner Fleming; motion passed (4-0)

The Interim Clerk gave an update to the board on the software. Southern Software he stated and been most helpful in retrieving missing items, documents, and past phone conversations. As well as reeducation myself as I have been away for 2.5 years and needed some refreshing.

Also, CitiPak is their old version of their Software. They have newer version called FMS that is more up to date easier to research past history and offers more up to date updates where CitiPak offers nor further updates and is 40 years older at this time. There is no cost for the switch, only cost would be from training situations and such. The Interim Clerk stated no need to vote tonight on this as Southern Software is gathering information on that for me to go over and show you all soon, for now however our focus was on the situation at hand.

RiverPark Update, Mr. Bivens gave an update to the board about the RiverPark, new gate house, with camera system in place. Flag system in place to alert visitors of water conditions Green Good, Yellow Caution, Red Don't swim. New kayak ramp.

100 ton of gravel added to RiverPark, Month of July saw 12,500 visitors, the past week alone saw 1600 visitors 12 total workers currently doubled from last year. Currently working on revenue items for winter time.

Mr. Bivens thanks officer Fleming for his continued work and support to the Park.

Upon discussions the board was hearing from the guest.

Commissioner Reavis made a motion to table all but emergency business until after the investigation.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Fleming; motion passed (4-0)

Motion made by Commissioner Fleming to enter into closed session for 143*318.11 (3) attorney client privileges.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Almond; motion carried (4-0)

Guest were asked to leave the building for the closed session they were assured no further actions would be taken this night if they chose not to wait for session to reopen. But they were absolutely welcome to stay around for the meeting to open.

Upon going back into open session no further discussions where to take place

Motion by Commissioner Almond to Adjourn the meeting.

Motion seconded by Commissioner Reavis; motion carried (4-0)

1 Hour 1 Minute

Mayor, Jessica Almond

Interim Clerk, Steven Corriher