

October 25, 2021

Working Session

At 6:30 PM Mayor McNinch called the Working Session of the Denton Town Council to order on this date, leading everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and thanked everyone for joining.

Attendance:

Mayor McNinch asked for the record to reflect that Councilman Johnson was participating virtually, and all the rest of the Council members were in attendance in person.

Staff in attendance included Mr. Don Mulrine, Town Administrator, Chief George Bacorn, Phil Clark, David Renshaw, and Karen Monteith.

Discussion was held on the following items:

Double Hills Farm

Follow up discussion was held on the County Double Hills Rd. Property. As the County continues working on plans for developing, they would like an opportunity to talk with the Town Council about possibly annexing into the Town.

Town Council members discussed concerns about the affect annexation may have on existing taxpayers, what is the benefit to the Town, and during discussion with the County to make sure any decisions are in the best interest of our residents and the community.

Staff was instructed to set up a joint meeting for some time after the holidays, in early 2022.

Tax Differential

The annual request for Municipalities to seek a tax differential from Counties for the tax year beginning July 1, 2022 is coming due.

Discussion was held and staff will draft a letter for November meeting for consideration.

ARPA Proposed Budget

Mr. Mulrine shared the Preliminary Budget and discussion was held on how best to use the American Rescue Plan Funds the Town received. The ARP monies are primarily to be used for cost associated with water and sewer infrastructure improvements. The funds can also be used for broadband, loss of revenue, premium pay for employees, and to hire consultants to assist with the programs.

The Budget discussed includes premium pay, AV/IT infrastructure, marketing, water and wastewater treatment plant equipment upgrades, installing new water & sewer lines in areas where service is not available and replacing some older infrastructure, broadband support and hiring a consultant to assist with the management of the grant requirements and reporting.

Staff shared a proposal received from Mann and Mann Grant Solutions to assist with the grants management and banking.

The Council supported adding a line item to the Budget for hiring an outside consultant to assist staff with monitoring the ARP Program allowable uses and managing the grant reports.

The Council discussed funding water meters, looking for ways to provide a tax holiday and ways to improve on marketing the community.

Staff will prioritize the Budget items to present at the next meeting for additional discussion and consideration of approval to move forward with the top items.

Safehouse Security System – Visitor Center

Mr. Mulrine shared and estimate with the Council and discussed moving forward with upgrading and replacing the security and camera system at the visitor center.

2021-21

Audio/Video Estimates – System for the Council Meeting Room

Mr. Mulrine shared estimates received from Televic and Washington Professional Systems for acquiring a multimedia system to improve the public meeting recordings and online access.

Councilman Johnson and staff recently participated in a demo of the equipment.

Councilman Johnson talked about the system, suggested needing more microphones and audio-visual screens than what is included in the estimates.

Mayor McNinch confirmed that Councilman Johnson wants to designate the ARPA funds to cover the cost for this project and the Council can participate in some demonstrations and select a vendor later.

Caroline County Arts Council Lease – 6 N. 4th St.

Mr. Mulrine presented the lease discussed earlier this month that has been drafted by the Town Attorney. The lease will be on the November agenda for consideration.

Family Courts Awareness Month

Mr. Mulrine shared a draft Proclamation in support for November being Family Court Awareness Month that will be on the November meeting agenda for consideration.

MDOT Non-Metropolitan Area Comments Form

Mr. Mulrine share a letter received from the Maryland Department of Transportation announcing the “Draft 2021 Non-Metropolitan Area Consultative Process” brochure has been released and they are seeking public comments to be submitted by November 22,2021.

2022 Town Council Meeting & Holiday Schedule

Staff presented a draft of the 2022 Town Council meeting schedule and the 2022 Holiday Schedule.

Discussion was held, the Council asked staff to add a working session to be held in July to the meeting scheduled.

Mayor McNinch requested to schedule an executive session to be held on November 10, 2021 at 3:00PM to discuss personnel, and conduct the Town Administrator’s Annual Performance Evaluation.

2022 Health Benefit Open Enrollment

Discussion was held on the Employee 2022 Health Benefit Open Enrollment that ends November 12, 2021. Staff shared that a 7% increase was included in the adopted budget, the rates are actually increasing 5% for health care coverage and 10% for prescription coverage and will still fall within the budgeted allowance.

LGIT Certificate of Membership

Mr. Mulrine shared correspondences received from the Local Government Insurance Trust, one thanking the Town for being a member for 34 years, and the other announcing that LGIT will be returning approximately \$3,750,000 to its members in the form of premium credit in FY22.

Mayor McNinch serves on the LGIT Board and shared highlights of the program and ways being a member benefits the Town.

Commerce Road Development

Discussion was held pertaining to future development of Commerce Road, previously referred to the “Road to No Where” and JPA Venture’s quest to enter into a Right-of-Way Agreement with the Town for the portion of the road that they would construct on the property they own. Try to negotiate with the owner of Brodie Holdings to commit to signing an agreement on the portion of road that would be on their property to provide connectivity to west bound 404.

2021-22

Ordinance #723 – Water Meter Rate Increase

Mr. Phil Clark, Superintendent of Public Works presented a draft Ordinance as previously discussed based on the Utility Commissions recommendation to begin the process to increase the fees collected for purchasing water meters to cover the cost for buying the meters.

Discussion was held pertaining to the Utility Commission’s recommendation to increase the quarter water meter replacement fee from \$4.00 per quarter to \$6.00, and for new home constructions to raise the cost from \$350 per meter to \$600.

Staff shared they have about 200 water meters left to replace and upgrade to the new Kamstrup Meters using the funds that have already been allocated in budget. The Kamstrup Meters have a 10–12-year life expectancy and the water meter fees are assessed to offset the cost for when the meters need to be replaced when they start to fail and not register correctly.

Discussion continued on using the general fund monies to purchase meters; whether the new fees will actually cover the cost of meter replacements when they are needed; finding creative ways to reduce tax burdens.

Staff will adjust to increase the fee to \$10 per quarter to fully offset the cost for new meters at the end of their life span as recommended by Councilman Lister and place this item on the November agenda for consideration.

Ordinance #724 – Building Code Adoption

Mr. David Renshaw, Senior Codes Enforcement Officer, presented a draft Ordinance for adopting the 2021 International Building Code, Residential Code and Mechanical Codes as required by the State of Maryland, with some Town Amendments.

Mr. Renshaw and Councilman Lister explained changes proposed to adjust the Town’s Code to be similar to the International Code regarding sprinklers in businesses. This item will be placed on the November agenda for consideration.

Ordinance #725 – International Property Maintenance Code

Mr. David Renshaw, Senior Codes Enforcement Officer, presented a draft Ordinance for adopting the 2021 International Property Maintenance Code as required by the State of Maryland, with some amendments. Mr. Renshaw said there were no drastic changes.

Councilman Lister shared that draft meets the minimum IPMC.

Miscellaneous

Mayor McNinch shared updates on the Legislative Redistricting being done by at the State level in which it appears that Caroline County may lose a representative.

Discussion was held on the hiring situations for law enforcement, benefits, and salaries.

Mr. Renshaw reminded everyone that the cluster mailboxes have been installed in Sandy Meadows and Fairfield. All property owners have been notified that effective November 1st the USPS will begin using the cluster boxes to deliver their mail.

Chief George Bacorn shared for the safety of the communities, it has been decided to make Sage Drive one-way travel, and Briarwood Circle will remain two-way with no on street parking.

With no further comments, Mayor McNinch adjourned the Working Session at 8:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Karen L. Monteith,
Clerk-Treasurer*