

**Draft Minutes of the
Mineral Springs Town Council
Regular Meeting
December 12, 2024 – 7:30 p.m.**

The Town Council of the Town of Mineral Springs, North Carolina, met in Regular Session at the Mineral Springs Town Hall located at 3506 Potter Road S, Mineral Springs, North Carolina, at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 12, 2024.

Present: Mayor Frederick Becker III, Mayor Pro Tem Valerie Coffey, Councilman Jerry Countryman, Councilwoman Janet Critz, Councilwoman Lundeen Cureton Councilwoman Bettylyn Krafft, and Councilman Jim Muller.

Absent: None.

Staff Present: Town Clerk/Zoning Administrator Vicky Brooks, Attorney Bobby Griffin and Administrative Assistant/Deputy Town Clerk Sharelle Quick.

Visitors: Michael Marchuk.

1. Opening

With a quorum present at 7:30 p.m. on December 12, 2024, Mayor Frederick Becker called the regular meeting to order.

Councilwoman Cureton delivered the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Comments

Michael Marchuk – 2826 Harrington Place.

3. Consent Agenda – Action Item

Councilwoman Coffey motioned to approve the consent agenda containing the November 14, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes, the October 2024 Union County Tax Report, and the October 2024 Finance Report as presented, and Councilman Muller seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, Krafft, and Muller. Nays: None.

4. Selection of Council Members to Serve as the Delegate and Alternate to Centralina Council of Governments – Action Item

Mayor Becker explained this was the nomination of the delegate and alternate to the Centralina Council of Governments. Currently Councilman Muller is the delegate and Councilwoman Krafft is the alternate. Mayor Becker opened this up for volunteers or nominations.

Councilwoman Coffey nominated the two people serving to remain and Councilwoman Cureton seconded.

Mayor Becker asked if there were any objections from the nominees. Hearing none, Mayor Becker called for a vote on the motion to reappoint the two delegates. The motion passed unanimously. Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, Krafft, and Muller. Nays: None.

5. Consideration of Reappointing a Board of Adjustment Member – Action Item

Councilman Countryman motioned to reappoint Valerie Coffey to the Board of Adjustment and Councilwoman Krafft seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, Krafft, and Muller. Nays: None.

6. Discussion of Staff Succession Planning

Mayor Becker introduced a potentially major topic and referred to the memo from Ms. Vicky Brooks. Mayor Becker explained that Ms. Brooks and himself had kind of talked about these ideas in the past. The town has three staff members, one full-time, one half-time, and one approximately quarter-time (hourly employee). Both the full-time and half-time employees are getting close to retirement age; therefore, the council needs to start looking at how it will work and what the council sees. Mayor Becker commented that Ms. Brooks and himself were set in their ways, and their job descriptions had expanded and become non-standard. Mayor Becker commented that there were a couple of questions posed by Ms. Brooks in the memo that the council will need to go a little deeper into over the next few months. Salaries will need to be competitive to secure long-term employees. Mayor Becker noted that just a little bit of his study indicated that the long-term employees may be hard to replace at the same salary and the town may be looking at when both are retired there may be an increase in payroll and overhead.

Councilwoman Critz suggested contacting the Institute of Government and the League of Municipalities rather than just Union County, it would be good to broaden the net a little bit.

Mayor Becker responded that the comps come from the League.

Councilwoman Critz added that comps have also been gotten locally.

Mayor Becker responded that he has gotten the comps from the League statewide and by peer municipalities. Mayor Becker mentioned that Ms. Brooks had already spoken with the clerk/finance officer in Wesley Chapel; he did not think it was all that common to have that combination, but with a small town, it was probably more common than elsewhere. With the workload for the planning director and zoning administrator, Mayor Becker and Ms. Brooks were coming to the sense that the position should be a single full-time position. As Attorney Bobby Griffin has said over the years whenever the topic of zoning or planning expenditures comes up, he would say "that's your primary service." Mayor Becker pointed out that when he is in the office and the office is open, it is the primary service. If anybody comes to the door, they are not there to see Mayor Becker, because the finance office is a back-office job, people are there to see Ms. Brooks, they have a plat, or a question. Mayor Becker stated it probably needs to be a full-time planning job. Mayor Becker stated there were some good comps done for Ms. Brooks as a full-time employee where that could roll over and take the clerk duty away from her making it a full-time planning job with the salary being pretty much the same with whatever step increase the council would be looking at. Mayor Becker noted that he and Ms. Brooks talked about it, and it looked like it may roll over smoothly trying to go finance officer/clerk, but it may be harder to find the ideal employee, because they would need to have both skills, so it may cost a little more.

Councilwoman Critz asked Ms. Brooks (hypothetically) if she were the full-time zoning administrator and planning and there was no deputy clerk, just a full-time clerk and a part-time finance officer, would it be reasonable to divide it that way. Does Ms. Brooks still see that the town needed a deputy clerk if there was a full-time clerk that was not distracted with planning and zoning.

Ms. Brooks asked whether Councilwoman Critz was referring to the town clerk being a sole position and finance...

Mayor Becker clarified the finance would be a half-time position, but for a new person.

Councilwoman Critz explained she was just asking if Ms. Brooks thought that would divide it enough as far as time and energy and then for finance the town could find who they were looking for and they would not feel overwhelmed, because a lot of this "we're learning on the go," and she understood the reasoning and agreed 100%.

Mayor Becker commented that was a good question by Councilwoman Critz and he thought it did bear looking at, because Ms. Brooks and himself have said combining the clerk/finance position like Wesley Chapel has done successfully, a receptionist would still be needed doing what Deputy Clerk Sharelle Quick was doing, just because of the duties of that job. If the town had a single full-time

clerk that could obviate the need for a part-time receptionist. Positions will be more expensive that way, because you would have two full-time positions and a half-time position at finance. Mayor Becker thought that it would be reasonable to look at.

Councilwoman Coffey stated that a study needed to be done, rather than these hypothetical situations and assessments need to be made, documented, and to have something to compare.

Councilwoman Critz commented that the advantage of doing this would be that the League of Municipalities, as well as the Institute of Governments has the statistics that would be helpful, but they don't live here. Councilwoman Critz felt that one of the benefits of doing this would be to take the statistics as an outline (a guiding template), but Ms. Brooks, Ms. Quick, and Mayor Becker know more of the ins and outs of what happens every day, every week, every month, and what changes they may foresee; therefore, she would not want to see the council just do this.

Councilman Countryman asked Mayor Becker, from a financial officer standpoint, how much time during the month or week was dedicated to that activity.

Mayor Becker responded that when he did the month-long study last time for the finance officer, it was close to 25 hours a week. The finance officer for Mineral Springs has a few additional duties, such as building maintenance, etc. and that may just not have to happen, because "you're not going to find that weird person like me."

Councilman Countryman commented a 25-hour week is a good part-time job for somebody that has a numbers background (an accountant type).

Mayor Becker responded that it might be easier to get another part-time finance officer that only does finance and then worry about the clerk.

Councilwoman Critz commented that the finance officer could do almost all of it from home.

Mayor Becker responded that you could, but he liked to have the stuff at the office. That is something else for the council to look at, with all the attention being focused now on workplace, on remote work, with the town "we did it the way we do it." Mayor Becker thought the town needed to revisit that – does the council want to have more time required in the office? Staff does not know anything about the laws of municipal employees as they relate to the Fair Labor Standards Act, so advice will be needed on that. Mayor Becker agreed that Councilman Countryman and Councilwoman Critz had a good point that finance is a standalone job that doesn't have to deal with the public; it could continue to be a separate job, and it doesn't require someone being a Certified Public Accountant. Mayor Becker thought Ms. Brooks would recommend that the clerk take a master class to be able to become a Certified Municipal Clerk (or already have it). Both positions are statutory.

Councilman Countryman asked if the town would potentially be looking at four people instead of three.

Mayor Becker responded that if there was a full-time clerk, they would not need a separate receptionist, finance would be half time, planning/zoning would be full-time. It may be a more expensive way of doing it.

Councilman Countryman commented that the council appreciated the fact that current staff were talented people, but the community is growing, and things aren't any cheaper.

Mayor Becker mentioned that Ms. Brooks had pointed out that to attract a long-term employee, the town may need to enhance the benefits package. Currently, the town does not provide medical [insurance] to staff, because the council did not feel that the town budget justified it; however, it could be like any other employer where the town doesn't have to pay the full premium. It could be offered via the League's group and be partly the responsibility of the employee, but it probably needs to be made available and there will be a cost increase for that.

Mayor Becker explained that staff wanted to make sure the council knew that the process was starting. Mayor Becker could not speak for Ms. Brooks on how long she wants to remain, but he would like to be able to wrap it up in a year or so as finance officer. Mayor Becker did not know if he would run for mayor again, but that was a whole separate thing.

Councilwoman Coffey commented that a year was not a long time.

Mayor Becker agreed and explained that was why staff wanted to bring it up now even though they did not have anything specific. It was to let the council know this is where we are going.

Councilman Countryman stated the council will probably need to start talking seriously about it after Christmas.

Mayor Becker noted he would get in touch with the League and/or the School of Government to see about the services they could provide and if they have any kind of consulting services available on municipal employment practices.

This item will be put on the February agenda for further discussion. The council will discuss the budget, looking for a clerk, transitioning Ms. Brooks' position (in July), increasing zoning fees, a potential increase of \$50,000 annually for employee costs, etc.

7. Staff Reports

None.

8. Other Business

Councilwoman Critz announced that she would not be able to attend the February 2025 meeting.

9. Adjournment – Action Item

At 7:55 p.m. Councilwoman Coffey motioned to adjourn the meeting and Councilman Countryman seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, Krafft, and Muller. Nays: None.

The next regular meeting will be on Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. at the Mineral Springs Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted by:

Vicky A. Brooks, CMC, NCCMC, Town Clerk

Frederick Becker, Mayor