

**River Bend Town Council  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
February 15, 2024  
Town Hall  
7:00 p.m.**

Present Council Members: Mayor John Kirkland  
Lisa Benton  
Brian Leonard  
Barbara Maurer  
Buddy Sheffield  
Jeff Weaver

Town Manager: Delane Jackson  
Police Chief: Sean Joll  
Finance Director: Mandy Gilbert  
Town Clerk: Kristie Nobles  
Town Attorney: David Baxter

Members of the Public Present: 17

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Kirkland called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 15, 2024, at the River Bend Town Hall with a quorum present.

**VOTE – APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Councilwoman Benton motioned to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**ADDRESSES to the COUNCIL**

Mr. Edwin Vargas – 119 Randomwood Lane – addressed the Council with a request for the Town to apply for a grant for sidewalks.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

The Mayor presented the Council with the Consent Agenda. Councilman Sheffield moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously. Within this motion, the following items were approved:

- A. Approve:  
*Minutes of the January 11, 2024, Work Session Meeting*  
*Minutes of the January 18, 2024, Regular Council Meeting*

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

The Manager gave the following updates:

- Wastewater Treatment Plant Grant Funding - the State of North Carolina has requested additional information, and he has submitted the requested documentation.
- Water Treatment Plant Grant Funding - the first milestone is April 1, 2025, to submit the plans, bid documents and specifications. He intends to submit those prior to the due date.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND WATERWAYS – COUNCILMAN LEONARD**

Councilman Leonard stated that he was sick and did not attend the February meeting but stated that the March meeting was canceled due to the date falling on the primary election date.

### **PARKS & RECREATION – COUNCILMAN WEAVER**

Councilman Weaver stated that Parks and Recreation met on February 7, 2024 and there will be a survey included in the next utility billing for residents to complete regarding the town's park amenities.

### **RIVER BEND COMMUNITY ORGANIC GARDEN**

Councilman Weaver gave the following report:

Garden volunteers held their regular meeting on February 5. Eleven gardeners were present. Eight volunteers made the first workday of 2024 a success. One new gardener attended. All the rows have been weeded. Both sheds and the greenhouse were cleaned out and reorganized. The fence project is almost complete. All the fence posts will be replaced, with new twelve-foot poles set in concrete. Four hundred feet of new deer netting will be installed. In mid-February 250 onions and 50 leeks will be planted and eighteen varieties of vegetable seeds will be started. A plant sale will be held at the garden on Saturday, April 27th. Plants, shrubs, vegetables, herbs and houseplants will be offered for sale. Garden ornaments and tools will also be available. More information will be posted on social media. The total number of volunteer hours for January was 75. The annual report for garden year 2023 has been submitted to the Town Council and the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. The next meeting is scheduled for March 11 at 1:30 pm in the Municipal building. Work hours are not regular yet so visitors should call ahead if they want to tour the garden. Everyone is welcome to attend and participate in monthly garden volunteer meetings and in the garden.

### **VOTE – Walking Trail Lighting**

Councilman Weaver motioned to hire Duke Energy to install 11 lights along the walking trail, as shown on the map, using the open traditional LED dark sky compliant fixtures. The motion carried unanimously.

### **CAC – COUNCILWOMAN MAURER**

Councilwoman Maurer presented the following report.

The CAC did not meet in February, but the members have been busy. The Arbor Day Celebration will be held on Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> from 10 am – noon. The Mayor will read a proclamation and attendees will participate in the official tree planting around the walking track. There will be a food truck and coffee. This year's celebration hopes to have a large turnout of families. The Girl Scouts will host a seed planting workshop and several planting projects to enhance the appearance near the dog park, the pond and the playground. The CAC will give away saplings that are indigenous to Eastern North Carolina and attractive to pollinators. Members are finalizing plans for an Independence Day Celebration workshop in June. Similar to the crab pot Christmas globes, this event will include making a star-shaped lighted wreath for front doors and mailboxes. They hope to encourage residents to decorate for River Bend's town celebration. The cost will be \$10 per wreath with all supplies included. CAC will hold their second annual Independence Day Festive Award Program that encourages residents to decorate for the holiday and publicly recognizes those exemplifying the festive atmosphere. The Beautification Award Program is starting its second year and will hold three award periods in April, May and June. The purpose of the award program is to be a catalyst for residents to beautify their homes and celebrate the holidays with appealing decorations. The program has drawn an increasing number of nominations each month. Two Christmas globe workshops will be offered in November. More information will follow. CAC members volunteered 253.5 hours of service from July 1 to December

31, 2023. The next meeting is scheduled for March 20, 2024 at 4 pm in the Municipal Building. The meeting is open to everyone. Please attend if you are interested. Guests and volunteers are always welcome. You don't have to be a board member to participate.

### **FINANCE – COUNCILMAN LEONARD**

Financial Report – Finance Director, Mandy Gilbert, presented to the Council the financial statement for the month of January. She stated the total of the Town's Cash and Investments as of January 31, 2024, were \$3,022,644 and Ad valorem tax collections for FY23-24 were \$774,185 and Vehicle Ad valorem tax collections were \$53,518.

### **VOTE – Audit Contract**

Councilman Leonard motioned to approve the FY23-24 Audit Contract with Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co. as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

### **MAYOR'S REPORT**

The Mayor presented the following report.

The title of this article could be "The Computer in 2024 and Beyond." There can be little argument made that the computer has changed how all work is conducted and little likelihood that it will disappear. Like many innovative inventions it has both positive and negative aspects of what it can do for us as individuals and organizations.

On the positive side:

- a. It can file many letters and reports and allows the recall and printing of anything that is retained in the computer's memory.
- b. It can maintain individual employee health and service records and allow fast recall whenever the need arises.
- c. It has allowed many organizations to go paperless.

On the negative side:

- a. It has been a distraction to many young students and moved them from school/college study and homework to game playing and posting letters to friends.
- b. There are many homes that still do not have computer capability and businesses and government tend to assume that everyone will be able to respond if they post some proposal online.
- c. Then there is the social media. A person sitting in front of a computer keyboard will post and transmit words and thoughts that if talking to a person face-to-face, they would probably never say in conversation.
- d. When posts are read, too many readers take the stated post as absolutely truth. In fact, it is more like the old parlor game of stating a whispered statement to the person next to you and continuing that process around a seated circle and then the last person speaks the statement of what he/she was told, and it generally turns out to be totally different from the original statement given to the first person in the circle.
- e. This fault is found in individuals relaying instructions by official looking documents and thus misleading the reader.
- f. (my opinion) The internet "social media" is killing our nation.
- g. This internet cancer has impacted every level of government from the Congress to State Legislatures, to local Municipal Government. There seems to be very little polite exchange between governing representatives at all levels and consequently little attempt to make the effort to work out compromise of positions so necessary in making Democracy work.

It is not the computer's fault it is the fault of the us humans at the keyboard.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Cruddy Cans- stated that they are a business in Craven County that does fleet pressure washing, trash can and dumpster cleaning. They also stated that the Town of River Bend can request to be removed from Craven County's Interlocal Waste Program.

Edwin Vargas – 119 Randomwood Lane– suggested five items to make River Bend better as a whole. He suggested road resurfacing, evaluating streetlights, studies on pumping stations for low lying areas, leasing town vehicles instead of purchasing and a 4% COLA for all employees.

James Crozier – 33 Pier Point – He stated that he wanted to speak about streetlights, but the Council had already voted before the Public Comment section of this meeting. He recommended having the Public Comment Period at the beginning of the meeting so the concerns can be addressed during the meeting.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

Councilwoman Maurer motioned to go into Closed Session under NCGS 143-318.11(a)(3)(5) to discuss the possible acquisition of land owned by Weldon Brown, Jr. and Naqueldon Brown for the location of a new water treatment facility. The motion carried unanimously. The Council entered Closed Session at 7:42 p.m.

### **OPEN SESSION**

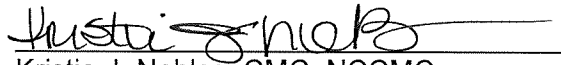
Councilman Sheffield moved to return to Open Session at 7:57 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

### **VOTE – Exercise of the Option to Purchase**

Councilman Sheffield moved to approve the Exercise of the Option to Purchase for the Brown Family property and to allow the Town Manager to expedite the minor subdivision process. The motion carried unanimously.

### **ADJOURNMENT/RECESS**

There being no further business, Councilman Sheffield moved to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

  
Kristie J. Nobles, CMC, NCCMC  
Town Clerk