



Town of HOLLY RIDGE

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HOLLY RIDGE TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING January 19th. 2023 5:30 P.M.

Mayor Jeff Wenzel called the Regular Meeting of the Holly Ridge Town Council to order at 5:31 p.m. at the Holly Ridge Town Hall. Council members present were Councilman Sholar, Councilman Hines, Councilwoman Stanley, Mayor Pro-Tem Hall, and Councilwoman Bragg. Also present were Town Manager, Heather Reynolds; Community Development Director Nate Rhue; Public Works Director Mike McFann; and Chief Mike Sorg

Invocation and Pledge

Councilman Hines gave the Invocation and Mayor Wenzel led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda

Mayor Wenzel asks that the agenda be amended to allow Mr. Vern Jones to speak under item four.

A motion was made by *Councilwoman Bragg* and seconded by *Councilwoman Stanley* to approve the agenda as amended. *All Agreed.*

Persons Wishing to Address the Town Council

Vern Jones – 215 Jones Street said he has been in OSHA for thirty-eight years. Mr. Jones said if you look at the map from one end of the building to the other, there is a straight walk with fire exits and no markings. Mr. Jones said the doors open from the inside and they should open from the outside, as well as the other doors in the hallway need to be able to open and not block traffic.

Mr. Jones said none of our fire department staff are qualified code inspectors. Mr. Jones said this is something we need to look into before starting this project.

New Business

Discussion on Possible Renovations to the Town Hall Facility

Manager Reynolds said this has been an ongoing discussion and at the last Town Council meeting, the consensus was to hold a workshop to discuss this topic.

Councilwoman Bragg said to add to Mr. Jones' comment, that the distance you can exit the building has to be in compliance as well.

Manager Reynolds said the plans that the Town Council is reviewing have a stamp indicating that the plans are not for construction. There will be more detailed plans when the permitting begins.

Mayor Wenzel said we have two or three options. option 1 is to go with what is proposed at the price that was given to us, option 2 is to not proceed with the plans, or option 3 is to amend the plans.

Councilman Hines asks how many bids were received. Manager Reynolds said multiple companies were asked to bid, but only one bid was received.

Councilman Hines asked where the money for this will come from. Manager Reynolds said it would require a fund balance appropriation. Councilman Hines said we did not budget an extra \$100,000.00 and this worries him. Councilman Hines said we do this and halfway through the year we have to say we are taken this from fund balance. Councilman Hines said that is why we do a budget every year and we only take if it is an emergency. Councilman Hines said this is not an emergency and we could work this into next year's budget. Councilman Hines said if we renovate this part, in the future we continue to grow, we will have to renovate yet again.

Councilwoman Bragg said we certainly can discuss it before the upcoming fiscal year.

Councilwoman Stanley said if we are going to spend \$125,000.00, she feels like the money should go on the addition to the building. We need to plan for this and put it in the budget.

Councilman Sholar said one of the main things he is concerned about is if we renovate this building to suit the employees we have now and one more employee is hired, we will be cramped again. The way Holly Ridge is growing, Councilman Sholar feels like Town Hall will have to grow with it. Councilman Sholar said he would look towards building on and doing the renovations to this area instead of adding on to make do.

Manager Reynolds said in July 2022, staff brought this proposal to the Town Council that utilized the Town Council chambers and there was discussion about moving the meetings to the Community Center and at the time the Town Council was not in agreement to do so. Town Council asked Manager Reynolds to go back to the drawing board and utilize the space we already have.

Councilman Sholar said he thinks he was against it at that point also. Councilman Sholar said he thought we should build on because he knew it was going to be higher than \$30,000.00.

Mayor Wenzel said he does not think the Community Center is a good venue because it is very hard to hear in the building.

Mayor Pro-Tem Hall said she can get onboard with not doing the renovation and she has a concern if we continually build on. Mayor Pro-Tem Hall said she thinks this would end up looking like a patch work quilt. Mayor Pro-Tem Hall said we need a study that will show what we need five years from now in the Town Hall. Mayor Pro-Tem Hall said we spoke a while back about combining the Town Hall and the Police Department together. Mayor Pro-Tem Hall said she is not sure if the Town Council will even know what will be needed in five years, but a study could be done with everyone's input and then we could start working towards the bigger project.

Mayor Wenzel said no one on the Town Council is in favor of spending \$130,000.00 now nor does it sound like there is a whole lot of support of spending that amount on this building.

Councilman Hines said there is a huge lot behind the Council Chambers that we could build the new Council Chambers on and attach it to the existing Town Hall, converting the existing Town Hall into offices. Councilman Hines said we had to pull teeth to get our tax rate reduced two cents and it would be hard for Councilman Hines to look at the citizens and say now we are going to spend \$130,000.00. Councilman Hines said he thinks we need to get a plan for next year's budget.

Mayor Wenzel said we have a recommendation from Mayor Pro-Tem Hall to have a study to look at what our future needs would be. Mayor Wenzel asks what the steps would be to come up with a plan.

Mayor Pro-Tem Hall said Manager Reynolds can input a lot of what we would need by what she has currently and Chief Sorg can add on what his department is going to need and both of those could be combined efforts.

Mayor Wenzel asks what type of grants or funding we could receive if we decided to build a new building.

Manager Reynolds said her suggestion would be to look at building a completely new complex and bring the Police Department back under the Town Hall, but also have it function as the Emergency Operations Center. We could then possibly apply for monies for hazard mitigation purposes and infrastructure funds. Manager Reynolds said the existing Town Hall is residential grade and we have run into issues when we upgraded our computers during the pandemic where we tried to go more electronic. This is why we can not stream even with a fiber drop because we do not have the commercial grade in the foundation and walls.

Manager Reynolds said Golden Leaf has a new site program and they were up to \$500,000.00 for the drawings, engineering, site work and grading. Manager Reynolds said if we were to incorporate the Emergency Operations Center, it may be easier to qualify for funds especially if we make it where it is rated for category storms.

Councilman Hines asked what would we do with the employees when the old building is torn down and the new building is being built. Manager Reynolds said that is a valid question but maybe we could utilize mobile trailer or the community center.

Councilman Hines asked what would happen with the existing Police Department building. Manager Reynolds said she thinks the Police Department building would make a great recreation center.

Councilman Hines asked Chief Sorg if he would have a problem being in the same building as the Town Hall. Chief Sorg said he did not have a problem with being in the same building in fact most of the places he has worked have been set up like that.

Mayor Pro-Tem Hall said she thinks what Manager Reynolds has just described deserves looking into. Manager Reynolds said moving forward thinks this would help with the way the town is growing because it would give a more community feel. Manager Reynolds said technology has changed so much since the building was built and the whole capabilities of the town would shift based on the advances that have been made for the past few decades. Councilman Hines said this is a tremendous step up compared to years past.

Mayor Wenzel thinks Surf City did a great job with the building of their new building. Manager Reynolds said Surf City's building is very functional, especially having the Police Department, Town Hall and the Emergency Operations Center in the same building.

Councilman Hines asked Chief Sorg if he would need or want holding cells in the new building. Chief Sorg said he would want one and it would be a temporary facility because there is no need for overnight stays.

Mayor Wenzel asked Manager Reynolds if there was anything she needed from the Town Council. Manager Reynolds said a cohesive idea of what the Town Council would like to see. Mayor Wenzel asked Manager Reynolds if she would set up a tour of Surf City's Town Hall facility. Manager Reynolds stated she would ask if the tour could take place after the scheduled Four Town meeting.

Councilwoman Stanley asked if anyone has seen North Topsail Beach's new office. Councilwoman Stanley said she went last summer when they had their grand opening, and it is very nice.

Mayor Pro-Tem Hall asked Manager Reynolds if she is going to lead the project to figure out what we need for Town Hall and also look into different types of funding.

Manager Reynolds said absolutely she will check with Surf City to schedule a tour of their Town Hall and look into future needs as far out as twenty five years because of the cost of building. Manager Reynolds said she would have department head input to evaluate the future need as far as expanding personnel and functions of the building.

Councilwoman Stanley said she does not like the idea of tearing the existing Town Hall down. Councilman Sholar said there would not be enough room to leave the existing Town Hall and build a new building.

Manager Reynolds said the current Police Department could be utilized as a recreation center. Mayor Wenzel said a welcome center could also be part of the recreation center.

Manager Reynolds stated Coastal Elementary contacted the Town Hall and their fourth grade is learning about local Government, and they would like for the mayor and or Town Council to come and speak to their class. Mayor Wenzel said he would be glad to go and speak to the class.

Adjournment

A motion was made by **Councilman Sholar** and seconded by **Mayor Pro-Tem Hall** to adjourn at 6:09 p.m. **All Agreed.**

Attest:

Jeff Wenzel, Mayor

Tracy Martin, Deputy Clerk

These minutes were recorded and prepared by Deputy Town Clerk, Tracy Martin.

DRAFT