**Town of Lake Santeetlah**

**Council Meeting Minutes**

**March 9, 2023**

Mayor Connie Gross called the meeting to order at 5:35PM. Councilmembers Tina Emerson, Diana Simon, and Jim Hager were present for the meeting. Town Administrator Kim Matheson, Town Clerk Emily Hooper and Town Technician Scott Kamps were also present. Attorney Bo Carpenter was available by Zoom. Councilmember Ralph Mitchell was not present.

Scott Kamps offered an Invocation and Mayor Gross led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Mayor Gross offered an amendment to the agenda to add Absentee and One Stop voting to New Business #5. Hager asked to add, Predmore letter to New Business #6. Simon asked to move Old Business #6 Council Ethics training to Old Business #1A. Councilmember Emerson made a motion to accept the agenda as amended. Simon seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of the February 2, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes:** Councilmember Simon made a motion to approve as presented. Hager seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of the February 9, 2023 Council Meeting Minutes:** Councilmember Hager made a motion to approve as presented. Emerson seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of the February 27, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes:** Councilmember Emerson made a motion to approve as presented. Simon seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Financial/Tax Report:** Matheson reported the tax collection for February was, $2,666.56. The overpayment for workman’s comp insurance was received ($1135.21) showing up in general fund revenue. There will be some budget amendments in April or May to “clean up” before the end of the fiscal year.

Emerson reported that we are moving forward with the new financial software and hope to go live in May.

**Request for Public Comment:**

Keith Predmore stated that on February 1, 2023 he submitted a letter regarding a recent LLC established in which he feels was a spurious attack on the Town government. Predmore had not received a response from the Council and would like to follow up to determine what action should be taken towards this issue.

Jack Gross made a reference to Ralph Mitchell’s recent request for a medical leave of absence and encouraged each Councilmember to grant him this request. Gross presented each Councilmember with a detailed breakdown of each meeting since the Council took office and the attendance of each member.

**Old Business:**

1. **A. Council Ethics Training:** Diana Simon pointed out that registration for ethics training ended February 2022 and the next registration is not until May 25, 2023. Alan Davidson submitted a letter of interest in serving on the planning board as well as the Town Council. Davidson also submitted a certificate showing completion of Ethics training on January 1, 2023. Davidson registered for this training June 16, 2022. Simon asked if the Town had any involvement in Mr. Davidson’s training and why he took a training for a municipal officer when he was not elected. Mrs. Matheson confirmed that the Town had not paid for the training for Mr. Davidson. A variety of classes and trainings from the school of government are available to anyone interested not only elected officials.

**B. Planning Board/Appoint new Board Member (action needed):** Three residents have submitted letters of interest for becoming an alternate member of the Planning Board: Jack Gross, Ralph Strunk and Alan Davidson. Each candidate offered background information and what they could offer to the planning board. Hager suggested that the candidates be presented to the Planning Board for a recommendation. Tina Emerson made a motion to postpone the appointment until next month. The Council will look at the Zoning Ordinance to determine if there could be more than one alternate appointed. This item will be on the April agenda for further action.

1. **Policy for Parking on Town Property:** This item will be tabled indefinitely. There is no policy needed at this time.
2. **Water pipe detection project/Update:** There has been no change since February. The Town of Robbinsville is short staffed and hasn’t had an employee that they could send to work with Scott. The contract (originally signed for four months) can be extended. Kamps follows up with them weekly to determine their availability.
3. **Set-up of Edmunds financial program/Update:** The Town is currently ahead of schedule and will likely go live in May instead of July as originally planned. Matheson works with Edmunds representatives almost weekly to transfer data and begin training. Staff training will begin within the next few weeks. Shannon Denninson, Town auditor, has also been involved with creating the chart of accounts to ensure we are uniform with NC State code.
4. **Water Reader Replacement:** Mike Wallace plans to visit Town Hall next week to discuss options for replacing the meter reader. The trimble we currently have is obsolete and cannot be updated. Wallace will provide information of updated equipment. Kamps will update at the April meeting.
5. **Council member Ethics Training:** This item was moved to #1A.
6. **Acceptance of Ralph Mitchell’s request for medical leave of absence (action needed):** Mayor Gross reviewed that Councilmember Mitchell has asked for a medical leave of absence and hopes that the Council will agree to grant this leave for him. Emerson made a motion to accept the request for medical leave from Mr. Mitchell. Gross seconded. Hager and Simon opposed. The motion failed. Hager stated that his reasoning to not accept is simply that the Council is divided 2/2 and neither would likely agree on a replacement for Mr. Mitchell. Emerson pointed out that this item is separate and despite if a new member is appointed the medical leave should be granted as requested. Simon feels that Mr. Mitchell should resign.
7. **Water Finance Training/Report from Kim Matheson:** Matheson attended a water finance training at the NC School of Government in Chapel Hill. During the training she learned that there can be no fee charged for vacant lots until a meter is in place. Each training always brings lots of new information and connections that can be used at a later time.

**New Business:**

1. **Mowing Bids (action needed):** There were three bids received for mowing, Waldroup Landscaping, Powell’s Lawn Service and Matt Brooks. Mayor Gross made a motion to accept Matt Brooks bid for mowing. Hager seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously. Matheson suggested adding a phrase in the mowing contract that mowing should be completed before each holiday to ensure that the Town looks good during those busy times. The Council agreed to this addition. This will remain a two year contract. Matheson will confirm that Brooks has the insurance required.
2. **Leaf Removal Bids (action needed):** There were two bids received for leaf removal, Jonathan Holder and Waldroup Landscaping. Holder had the lower bid. Mayor Gross made a motion to accept Jonathan Holder’s bid for leaf removal. Hager seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously. Matheson suggested that an addition be added to the contract, when leaf removal is requested the contractor has one week to begin pick up. This will be added. Leaf removal will remain a two year contract.
3. **Federal RAISE Grant/Letter of Support (action needed):** The NCDOT is applying for a federal grant and is reaching out for a letter of support from Lake Santeetlah for Corridor K road. Hager made a motion to send the letter of support. Simon seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.
4. **Golden Leaf Flood Mitigation Program/work list for water drainage improvements:** Senator Corbin provided Mayor Gross with the information for this grant available through the Golden Leaf program. Gross asked Emerson and Town Technician Kamps to research the grant and determine if it was something our Town could benefit from. Emerson provided detail of the grant. The grant program is through the NC legislature. The funds were given to the Golden Leaf Program to award to municipalities and counties. The Flood Mitigation program is $250,000 to be awarded to alleviate flooding. There is no match to this grant. If the Council decides to move forward, Emerson and Kamps will draft a list and develop a package detailing our needs. This would be submitted to the program to be considered for the grant. We could request culverts to be paved, pipes installed to divert the flood water. The request cannot be made for debris removal, construction of buildings, acquire land or to purchase a generator. Emerson confirmed with the Golden Leaf foundation that it is not a matching grant. Emerson also spoke with the auditor about the grant and will receive assistance if the grant is received allocating the funds as they should be for audit purposes. Hager made a motion to pursue a request for grant funds. Gross seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.
5. **Absentee/One Stop Voting:** Hager made a motion to approve a resolution to hold absentee and one stop voting for the 2023 TOLS election. Simon seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.
6. **Predmore Letter regarding of registration of Town of Lake Santeetlah LLC:** Hager asked for Attorney Carpenter to provide his opinion on the LLC formed in the name of the Town. Carpenter recommended to monitor the newly established LLC closely to see if it was used improperly, however no further action was necessary. A complaint could be filed to the Secretary of State, however Carpenter was uncertain that this would make a difference in any way.

**Motion for Closed Session:** Councilmember Emerson read the motion to move into closed Session. Hager seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Return to Open Session:** Hager made a motion to return to open session. Emerson seconded. All others approved. The motion passed unanimously. The Council returned to open session.

**Action from Closed Session:** Hager made a motion for Bo Carpenter, Town Attorney to negotiate an agreement with the Graham County Board of Elections. Simon seconded. All approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion:**

1. **Update Website/Volunteer needed:** Mayor Gross is looking for one more volunteer to help update the website.
2. **Graham County Road Dedication:** The Town of Robbinsville has asked for Lake Santeetlah to participate in the Road dedication. The Town will help to hang flags up the roadway for all branches of the military.

**Final Public Comment:**

Joe Simon asked Mr. Davidson to explain the Town of Lake Santeetlah LLC he recently established.

Alan Davidson explained that the Town’s name was vulnerable and he took the steps to protect it by creating an LLC. By creating the LLC the name is now protected from being misused in any way.

Jack Gross stressed his concern with the Town Council not granting Ralph Mitchell’s request for leave of absence. Mr. Mitchell being awarded a leave of absence has no connection with the Council not being able to agree on a replacement. Gross is concerned with the Council “playing games” and feels it’s disrespectful not to grant the medical leave.

**Announcements:**

* The next regular scheduled Council Meeting will be held April 13, 2023 at 5:30PM. This meeting will be held at Town Hall and by Zoom.

**Motion to Adjourn.**

Councilmember Hager made a motion to adjourn the meeting. seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:07PM.

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Connie Gross, Mayor Emily Hooper, Town Clerk