

# Town of Lake Santeetlah

## Special Called Meeting Minutes

May 28, 2016

Mayor Crabtree called the meeting to order at 10:04AM. Vice Mayor Jim Hager and Council Members Bob Wehr, Connie Gross and John Garland were present for the meeting. Town Administrator Kim Matheson and Clerk Emily Hooper were also present. There were 23 Town Residents in attendance.

The first order of business was the approval of the agenda. Mayor Crabtree asked to add an update to the Sewer Study as Item #3 under New Business.

### New Business

**#1 Water Meter Purchase/Plans to Proceed:** Councilman Bob Wehr provided an overview of the process that has been involved to purchase new water meters. Originally McGill & Associates was hired to assist with the bid process for the new water meter system. The company failed to produce the results TOLS hoped for and had included many unnecessary items that TOLS did not need causing the bids to be extremely high. Town Staff contacted several Towns within the area asking questions to determine the most recommended supplier. Through the research it seemed that Neptune was the best option for Lake Santeetlah. Councilman Bob Wehr has contacted a representative from HD Supply who is the largest supplier of Neptune meters in our area. The items suggested including new meters, reading equipment, and read software was priced from HD Supply at \$52,302.16. An automatic read meter was available for observation. Councilman Wehr explained the small amount of leakage that the new meters will detect and the ability to provide each customer with a 90 day data log. The plan is to proceed with research and purchase the new meters if the Budget allows.

**#2 Proposed Budget for 2016/17 Fiscal Year/Public Questions and Comments:** Finance Officer Jim Hager and Town Administrator Kim Matheson presented the proposed budget and began by explaining that the Town reserves have decreased over the last few years, and are now below the suggested reserve balance of NC Department of Treasury. One year of operating funds are recommended to be in the Towns reserves. The plan for the upcoming budget is to allot money in the appropriate areas while also allowing the reserves to be increased. The Town was established in 1989 and the roads were to be maintained by the Town. The roads did not deteriorate as quickly as anticipated and the reserves increased to a substantial amount. The decision was made at that time to decrease taxes. Over time the reserves have been used and now the funds are not available to repave the roads as needed. Currently the tax rate at Lake Santeetlah (.1850), which is the lowest of any town in Graham, Cherokee or Swain county.

COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES	YEAR OF LATEST REVALUATION	COUNTY-WIDE [\$]	CITY OR TOWN [\$]
GRAHAM	2015	.5850	

<b>FONTANA DAM</b>		<b>.5850</b>	<b>.5540</b>
<b>LAKE SANTEETLAH</b>		<b>.5850</b>	<b>.1850</b>
<b>ROBBINSVILLE</b>		<b>.5850</b>	<b>.6500</b>

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<b>CHEROKEE</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>.5200</b>	
<b>ANDREWS</b>		<b>.5200</b>	<b>.5150</b>
<b>BEAR PAW</b>		<b>.5200</b>	<b>.3500</b>
<b>MURPHY</b>		<b>.5200</b>	<b>.4200</b>

<b>SWAIN</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>.3600</b>	
<b>BRYSON CITY</b>		<b>.3600</b>	<b>.3500</b>

A proposed tax increase (.225) was presented that would bring an additional \$32,820.00 per year to the Town. This would increase each household's yearly tax bill by approximately \$164.10. A show of hands of all residents in attendance in favor was unanimous and there were none opposed to the increase.

**Discussion:**

The idea of collecting a 3% Occupancy Tax has been discussed for several months. Councilwoman Connie Gross shared her research of rentals within the Town and her concerns of how the Town will proceed to locate which homes are rentals. Those not rented through a realty company will have to be discovered by the TDA board and could cause conflict. The discussion continues as to whether the number of rentals, cost of the audit required, and time spent will produce the revenue to justify the tax. Councilman Bob Wehr stated that we still do not have "all the facts" and need to continue research prior to implementing this tax.

Legal fees for last year were increasingly high due to ongoing projects. The codification update and rewriting the Zoning Codes with the assistance of Attorney Ellen Davis have caused the increase.

An estimate to remove the danger trees and repave Santeetlah Point was provided by Clean Cut Tree Service HMC Paving for \$11,500. This is in the budget to complete in the 2016/17 fiscal year.

The donation to the Nantahala Regional Library was recently approved for \$1000 and more if the budget allows. TOLS withdrew from a ten year contract commitment of a \$5000 donation due to noncompliance of the Library Board to address Library personnel issues. The issues have since been resolved. \$3000 is in the budget as a donation to the Library but only \$1000 of that has been committed. In the past the Library had a large surplus of funds and a resident in attendance questioned if that was still the case did the Library need our donation? This surplus was clarified to be donations given for specific reasons and could not be used in the Library's operating funds. The Library Board has confirmed that any donations given from TOLS does remain in Graham County.

The TPOA will hold a dinner for all members at Tapoco June 10, 2016 at 4:30. All members are invited to attend. The TPOA also provided an update that a sign for the front entrance of Lake Santeetlah with all street names was in their budget for this year.

Town Resident Ken Wright explained his strong connection with Graham County and his desire to see the County grow and prosper. He encouraged all those present to participate and assist the County Travel and Tourism Board by sharing ideas of what would help to make the County better. Wright stressed the importance of tourism being a key factor in the future for Graham County.

Councilwoman Connie Gross shared an idea of preparing a “boat rescue list.” Gross explained that anyone interested could be on the list as a willing “rescuer” if a resident became stranded on the lake for some reason. As the coast guard is available in the Florida Keys where Gross once lived she would like to see some type of plan in place that would allow residents to have someone to call on in the case of an emergency. Gross asked for those present to keep the idea in mind and anyone willing to volunteer would be greatly appreciated.

**#3 Update of ongoing Sewer Study:** Mayor Crabtree provided an overview of the Sewer Study currently taking place by Tetra Tech, an engineering firm contracted by the Town. Tetra Tech has been looking at large systems for the correction of failed or failing sewer systems within the Town. Each lead seems to find a “dead end” and in reality unless additional grant funds were available it would not be feasible for the Town to fund such a large project. The Council has recently re-directed the firm to look into more individual solutions that can be offered to those with issues. This would allow the Town to provide a solution to Property Owners or those wishing to purchase at their expense. With this re-direction an extension was requested and approved for the study. Tetra Tech should be completed and a follow up report available by January 2017.

### **Announcements**

Mayor Crabtree announced that there would be a Planning Meeting June 16, 2016 and a Council Meeting June 21, 2016 both beginning at 10:00AM at Town Hall. With no further business at this time Mayor Crabtree adjourned the meeting at 11:20AM.

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Robert P. Crabtree, Mayor

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Emily Hooper, Town Clerk