

**River Bend Town Council
Work Session Minutes
March 11, 2021
Town Hall
5:00 p.m.**

Present Council Members:

Mayor John Kirkland
Don Fogle
Brian Leonard
Bud Van Slyke
Barbara Maurer
Buddy Sheffield

Town Manager: Delane Jackson
Town Clerk: Kristie Nobles
Town Attorney: Dave Baxter
Finance Administrator: Margaret Theis

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kirkland at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 11, 2021 at the River Bend Town Hall with a quorum present.

Discussion– Municipal Election Costs

Ms. Meloni Wray from Craven County Board of Elections presented the cost estimate for the 2021 Municipal Election for the Town of River Bend. Ms. Wray stated that the cost estimate for the election this year would be around \$3,500 without absentee voting. She stated that if the Town elected to utilize absentee voting the cost would increase by \$5,800. She stated that in the past elections there were very few residents who participated in absentee voting. Ms. Wray stated that if the Town changed the election date to even years the cost would decrease to an estimate of \$1,000 per election, which includes absentee voting. Councilman Leonard asked what the process is if the Town wished to change the election year. Ms. Wray stated that the Town of Trent Woods is currently in the process of changing their election years and she felt it might be possible to be included in their legislative bill for the possible change. The Manager asked the Council if they would like the Town Attorney to contact Senator Sanderson about being added to the Trent Woods bill.

Vote – Authorize Town Attorney

Councilman Sheffield motioned to authorize the Town Attorney to take necessary steps to add River Bend to the Trent Woods bill to change River Bend's Municipal Election year. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion – Audit Contract

The Manager stated that the Audit Committee met on March 3, 2021 to discuss two vacancies on the committee and the Audit Contract Proposal for 2021. The Manager stated that the Audit Committee recommends the current proposal for 2021 with Petway, Mills & Pearson, PA in the amount of \$14,500. Councilwoman Maurer asked the Manager if he was satisfied with the work of Petway, Mills & Pearson, PA. The Manager stated that the Town is currently pleased with the work of Petway, Mills & Pearson, PA but next year the Town will accept bids for the audit. The Manager stated that in the past the Deputy Finance Officer was appointed to the Audit Committee, since the resignation of Bud McClard that vacancy has not been filled. The Audit Committee suggested filling one of the vacancies with the Deputy Finance Officer. Councilman Leonard was appointed as the Deputy Finance Officer after the resignation of Bud McClard.

Discussion – Position Classification / Pay Plan

The Manager stated that a few years ago the Council approved a salary adjustment based on an annual state-wide peer group salary comparison conducted by NCLM. He stated that since that adjustment there has been an ongoing discussion regarding the need for a possible adjustment to the Town's Salary Grade and Step Plan. The Manager presented three different plan modifications for Council to review and discuss. The three proposals were as follows:

1. A 5-step modification that would eliminate the five lowest steps on the current plan and add five new steps at the high end of the current plan. The estimated cost of implementation, of this plan versus the current plan, without steps and COLA for the next fiscal year is \$992.
2. A modification that will keep the percentages the same between grades in the current plan but adjust the starting rate for entry-level positions and change the Police Department to depict the 2,184 hour work year that they work. The estimated cost of implementation is \$71,000.
3. A blended modification that updates the overall methodology of the pay plan to include: more uniform changes between pay grades, increase minimum entry-level pay for all three departments, show the Police Department as a 2,184 hour work year and keep the other departments at a 2,080 hour work year. The estimated cost of implementation is \$7,700.

The Manager stated that of the three different pay plans he would suggest option 3, which would be included in the 21-22 budget and not become effective until July 1, 2021. He pointed out that in option 3 a few positions held by newly hired or promoted employees would continue to be paid by the current plan and slowly transition to the new plan when their pay level advanced within the new plan. Otherwise, those employees would be receiving large pay increases. Councilman Leonard stated that he was in agreement with the proposed plan except for the change in the salary grades of department heads. There was a lengthy discussion about the details of the proposal. Councilman Fogle said that he thought the proposal made sense and he was in favor of it as presented.

Vote – Approve Position Classification / Pay Plan

Councilman Fogle motioned to approve the Position Classification / Pay Plan modification OPTION 3 as presented. The motion passed with four ayes (Sheffield, Maurer, Fogle, Van Slyke) and one nay (Leonard).

Discussion – Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Recommendation

Councilwoman Maurer stated that she attended the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board meeting on February 19, 2021. She stated that at this meeting the Red Caboose Library requested \$2,500 from the Town for a one time emergency contribution, with \$1,000 of that amount to cover rent. She stated that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board does not support the request for \$2,500 but is willing designate \$1,000 to the Library from the current Parks and Recreation budget for their rent. The Manager stated that he would need Council action to transfer the funds from Parks and Recreation to the Library because that was not a part of the previous agreement. Councilman Sheffield stated that he approves the move of funds from Parks and Recreation to the Library. Councilman Fogle asked Councilwoman Maurer how many volunteers the Library currently has. She stated 40-50. Councilman Fogle stated that he felt that the Library was stable until it was added to the Parks and Recreation Department. He also stated that it appears that not all of the volunteers are supporting the Library. He stated that if every volunteer purchased a coupon book during the last fundraiser that there would not be any coupon books remaining. Councilman Fogle asked if the Library was limited on fundraising. The Manager stated that the Council had previously agreed that soliciting any funds by any Advisory Board / Town Group is prohibited. Councilman Leonard stated that this would be a one-time request and that he approves the transfer. He stated that the Library has suffered due to no fault of their own with the current Covid-19 Pandemic. He suggested that the Library consider a new location.

Councilwoman Maurer stated that the Library has been discussing that possibility. Councilman Fogle stated that he did not feel the Town should fund the Library because on October 2, 2019, when the Library requested official recognition as a Parks and Recreation activity, it said that no Town funding would be requested. Councilman Fogle then asked the two other Councilmen (Van Slyke and Sheffield), who were on the Council at the time the Library was approved as a Parks and Recreation activity, if they would personally join him to split the \$1,000 requested for the Library. Each declined. Councilman Sheffield said that a permanent solution needed to be found for the Library.

Vote – Approve Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Recommendation

Councilman Leonard motioned to approve the Parks and Recreation Recommendation of transferring \$1,000 from Parks and Recreation Budget to the Red Caboose Library. The motion passed with four ayes (Sheffield, Maurer, Leonard, Van Slyke) and one nay (Fogle).


REVIEW AGENDA FOR THE MARCH 18, 2021 COUNCIL MEETING

The Council reviewed the Agenda for the March 18, 2021, Council meeting.

CLOSED SESSION was postponed until regular meeting March 18, 2021

ADJOURNMENT/RECESS

There being no further business, Councilwoman Maurer **moved to adjourn**. The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.



Kristie J. Nobles
Town Clerk

