



The Town of Long View Board of Aldermen met in the Council Chambers of Town Hall at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, March 21, 2022 for a Special Meeting to discuss the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year Budget. Due to social distancing guidelines regarding COVID-19, the meeting was held over Zoom software. Attendees were physically present with the option to be electronically present.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (Physically): The following members of the Board were present: Mayor Marla Thompson, Mayor Pro Tempore / Alderman Randall Mays, Alderman Gary Lingerfelt, Alderman Dallas Tester.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT (Electronically): None

BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Alderman David Elder

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT (Physically): The following members of staff were present: Town Administrator David Draughn, Town Clerk Heather Minor, Finance Director James Cozart, Public Works Director Chris Eckard, Fire Chief James Brinkley, Police Chief TJ Bates.

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT (Electronically): None.

OTHERS PRESENT (Electronically): None

OTHERS PRESENT (Physically): None

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Mayor Marla Thompson called the meeting to order at 9:14 a.m.

INVOCATION: Finance Director James Cozart

OPENING COMMENTS BY TOWN ADMINISTRATOR DAVID DRAUGHN

Stated “This is not the first FY budget I have ever prepared with uncertainties related to expenses, revenues, or economic conditions. It is one of the most dynamic I have ever experienced requiring a similar response. The department heads have submitted spending requests, which have been reviewed. Since those initial meetings, our economic situation continues to change dramatically. With each passing day our jobs are being altered to a crisis management posture, in which we are still dealing with the effects of the pandemic with regards to our economy. Record setting inflation continues to pound our expenses for general service provision. Contract service amounts are rising, fuel costs are at an all-time high which impacts all budget areas. The current situation has caused labor shortages as we now face hiring and retention issues we have never encountered, which will require us to make some adjustments attempting to make ourselves more marketable. This situation is particularly a major concern for our Police department. We will be recommending changes for our starting pay with compression. Other recommendations we are making for our overall marketability situation will change our vacation accrual schedule and provide a COLA for all town employees. Our current schedule is not in line with other localities. We now believe this should be addressed for employee recruitment and retention. We are

continuing to improve the Fire Department staffing levels with a new position recommended this fiscal year and one next fiscal year or both this year if we believe revenues will allow. This gets us to the maximum operating level we can afford without a major tax increase, which I will not recommend for many reasons. We must be prepared to operate on our own with little assistance and limited resources. Some budgeting goals have been altered for the time being as we try to figure out real economic impact on revenues and expenditures.

The presentations we will be going over this morning are being presented with an eye on all these factors, with some revenue issues still unknown. Our sales tax revenue has been up, and we will adjust accordingly. We are recommending budget changes that we feel are important while adding the increases in expenses that we do not directly control such as insurance premiums which we are aggressively shopping with a new healthcare alliance, holiday pay and other increasing line items. We will adjust remaining expenses at current year actuals with some increase in areas to account for 7 percent and rising inflation. We will adjust our final budget recommendation by the May workshop with increases not currently in the budget draft or reduce further expenditures, depending to this economic situation. Our fund balance levels are good and need to continue to remain strong for future budget growth and unpredicted expenses. We are seeking Board guidance today on the issues we will present.”

DEPARTMENT BUDGET DISCUSSION

FIRE DEPARTMENT – PRESENTED BY FIRE CHIEF JAMES BRINKLEY

Town Administrator Draughn addressed the board saying he has talked to each member of the board about the fire department in the past couple of years, as well as recently. Town Administrator Draughn stated that there has been a reduction of volunteers and we continue to do everything we can to improve the fire department. Town Administrator Draughn stated that Fire Chief James Brinkley believes that we should have a full-time department. Town administration Draughn stated that he agreed with Fire Chief Brinkley, he just does not think we can afford it at current tax levels. Town Administrator Draughn stated that he is recommending that we help Fire Chief Brinkley get three (3) per shift over the next year, as well as another Fire Fighter next year. The Fire Department will be responsible for filling the remaining four (4) spots required by the state through volunteers or on call Fire Fighters. At this point, Town Administrator Draughn turned the floor over to Fire Chief Brinkley.

Fire Chief James Brinkley addressed the Madame Mayor and Board. Fire Chief James Brinkley stated that additional personnel are the Fire Department's greatest need right now. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that currently they have fifteen and this is the state minimum. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that one of the members did not meet their training requirements for this year, so when the state comes in, they are at 14 people on the roster. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that 2024 is the fire department's next big year. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that fifteen people minimum is what will always be needed to maintain the fire department to keep the ISO rating for the residents of the Town of Long View. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that if that is what is chosen to do, then that is fine, the Town can do that, however, that will hurt economics on people coming in, new businesses, and the residents will pay the highest insurance premium. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that another issue he is concerned about is an engine and four (4) people are required on a structure fire call. Fire Chief Brinkley stated he believes that this issue will get the department before the 15-person minimum does. Fire Chief Brinkley stated if you have three (3) structure fire calls with less than 3 people there, the state will put the department on probation. The state monitors every structure fire call from the time you are placed on probation, forward. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that the times of volunteering has decreased. Using Conover as an example; Conover has a roster of fifty-nine people. When the shifts are put together for people to work, open shifts are still needed to be filled. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that will the population of Long View, being majority transient, older populations, he could easily have the number of people on the roster, but he would not have the people to do it. Fire Chief Brinkley used Chris Riley as an example, stating he was their strongest call runner. Chris is getting ready to get married and will start a family. Chris Riley ran 101 calls last year out of 775 calls total, contributing to 13% of additional help Long View received when running calls. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that Fire is a little different than Public Utilities and Police, stating that when someone needs the fire department, they are needed 100 % of the time and are needed with in 4-6 minutes, where the police department can put off calls if there are multiple calls at once. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that people's survivability rate is dependent on Fire Fighters getting to the call.

Fire Chief Brinkley stated that what he is wanting and what Town Administrator Draughn has recommended is potentially reclassifying the 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. fire fighter into a position to make 3 (people) per shift. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that when he initially talked to Town Administrator Draughn about the 3 (people) and going to two (people), the 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. position always offered them a fill in spot. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that Kelvin Gregory (KC-Fire Fighter who works the 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. position) will be out for 6 months recovering from shoulder surgery. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that if we hire these people,

(two), we would still be “lopsided” a little bit, so the request is to somehow get to six (6) before 2024. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that if they get the two this year, they can reclassify and have 3 (people) all the time except for someone being off. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that he only has Mike Cates and Pete Weinrich to fill in now. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that this was scary for him, and he looks for any feed back or questions from the board. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that he wanted the board to be hard on him and to ask him whatever is on their minds.

Alderman Dallas Tester asked what the fire department was doing with the community colleges, but that he also knows Fire Chief Brinkley well enough to know that he has already pounded that avenue. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that the problem is that North Carolina is moving towards once a fire fighter gets into the door, it will take them two years to become fully trained. In Long View, there is not a lot of buy in because of the demographics of the population. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that people are not working for money and are not going to give their time. Recently, at the Rotary Club which has over one hundred members, the 80- and 90-year-old people are carrying the weight of these civic organizations now. Approximately 1800 churches are closing a year because you do not have that sense of pride in your community anymore. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that the other thing he was going to add is that the State is working towards a state fire academy which will require a new fire fighter to go to Raleigh to take their test. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that even though volunteering, recruitment, and retention are hot topics, it is not the fix now, but it may be a fix in two, five, or seven years down the road, but it will not fix the current problem. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that this is not a Long View issue. It is a Catawba County issue, and everyone has these same problems. Alderman Dallas Tester stated that he knew that Lincoln County had gotten so bad that one department had been taken over and is going county wide.

Fire Chief Brinkley stated he had two other items that he would like to request. The first being radio replacement. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that first round of eight hundred radios that were bought are not phase II compliant for the trucks and is approximately \$9500.00, which will get the trucks up to Phase II Compliance. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that the fire department has eight SCBA cylinders (air pack bottles) that are almost out of service from their 15-year life span and need to be replaced. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that he could try and purchase half this year and half next year if he was not able to purchase all of them this year, which is why his estimate was lower.

Fire Chief Brinkley stated that was all the requests he had. Their biggest need is people because they have good equipment. The Fire Department just needs the people to use it.

Mayor Marla Thompson asked if he was finding it hard to find people to be fire fighters. Fire Chief Brinkley asked if she meant for the service or for Long View. Mayor Thompson stated she was referring to Long View. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that he is bias, but he feels like Long View has the best fire department that they have ever had. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that he is not boasting on himself, but he has handpicked everyone on the fire department except for one person because they believe in the mission and they trusted him, so they left organizations that had full time staffing because they believed in where Long View was going. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that it has not been hard for him to find people and that people are happy at Long View Fire Department. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that people are not leaving because they are not happy, it is the retention of keeping them. He did not want to see them come to Long View and then leave. Fire Chief Brinkley reiterated that he did not feel that he has had an issue of getting people on the fire department.

Alderman Randall Mays asked Fire Chief Brinkley how often he has had to pull a shift because someone has been out for various reasons. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that recently it has not been too bad, but if someone were to review the comp. time levels, you would be able to see who has been working. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that he has two employees right now sitting at four hundred hours.

Alderman Dallas Tester asked how we were with mutual aid. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that Icard, Mountain View, and Cooksville all serve and receive mutual aid from Long View. Long View Fire Department is also the county's primary engine for Tanker Task Force One.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked if we have received an increase from county on funding. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that he put in for a \$0.03 (three cent) increase through the county which is enough money to support one FTE. (Full time employee) This is about a \$10,000 increase from the county area if this is approved but that is not certain yet, however the county's fire and rescue manager feel confident that this will go through.

Mayor Marla Thompson asked if there are any grants available for the Fire Department. Fire Chief Brinkley stated there is a Safer Grant, however, it is extremely competitive and a roll of the dice.

Fire Chief Brinkley stated that 2024 deadline is scary to him since Long View Fire Department has skated by. Town Administrator Draughn stated that he disagrees with the statement that we've skated by and he does not like that terminology. Since 2016, the town has committed \$220,000 to the fire department and are looking at adding another \$50,000+ this year. Town Administrator Draughn stated that we are going to have to get creative in the way that we get people like we never have before. Town Administrator Draughn stated that he is pushing the County and the mention of using a county truck has come up, as well, however, the County will have to get involved there. Town Administrator Draughn stated that if he were able, he would have sixteen people for the fire department tomorrow, however, he doesn't feel that we can afford it without a major tax increase, but we can do up to 11 people with out incurring the tax increase, which is a good commitment from where we were. Town Administrator Draughn stated that ISO might not be able to be kept the level that we have previously had, but we will have to see how it goes in the future. Town Administrator Draughn stated that these are just his thoughts, and this is a decision made by the Board, not by him, but he does feel there are solutions other than raising taxes to hire sixteen people. Alderman Dallas Tester stated that this would be a tough climate right now to raise taxes in, anyways. Town Administrator Draughn stated that even a few years increasing taxes is not a solution and he is not trying to stone wall anything that Fire Chief Brinkley is saying, but the scare tactics are not necessary, because the town and the fire department will get through it. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that when he said, "skating by," he was referring to call response wise.

Alderman Dallas Tester asked what we get for allowing our tanker to be used in the county. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that we are the primary engine for Tanker Task force and that Newton is the secondary tanker. This is a new collaborative effort. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated that our willingness to help other department helps us receive help as well, so it is a great system for support. Town Administrator Draughn stated that Fire Chief Brinkley has done an excellent job raising our reputation in the fire community with the efforts he has put forth. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked how much funding I projected if we were to receive the \$0.03 (three cent) increase from the county that has been request. Fire Chief Brinkley stated that the total is about \$500 shy of the pay for one

FTE (Full time employee.) The county is working to approve this but are unsure when the funds would be seen. Fire Chief Brinkley has offered his assistance in any way that he can help.

Mayor Marla Thompson asked if there were any other questions. There were none. Town Administrator Draughn thanked Fire Chief Brinkley and excused him from the Council Chambers.

Town Administrator Draughn stated he wanted to share, as a final thought, that the fire department tends to preach doom. Town Administrator Draughn stated that he was going to push adding a position this year and a position next year using recruiting methods they have not used in years past, but this is a tricky situation without a clear solution. Mayor Marla Thompson asked if Fire Chief Brinkley stated that someone did not meet their training. Town Administrator Draughn confirmed that one of the 'on call' fire fighters did not meet their thirty-two required training hours, so that person cannot officially be counted on the roster. Alderman Gary Lingerfelt stated with regards to the extra time being worked, that sometimes that extra work is voluntary because they want the extra money in their pocket. Town Administrator Draughn added that with the 24 hour shifts they work, they can work at Long View, as well as two other places, but they never come back and help run calls after their shift here ends. Town Administrator Draughn expressed his frustration with this, using public works as an example. If Public Works did not come back in, what would happen with sewer and water issues. Finance Director James Cozart stated that the Fire Department's schedule is as follows: They work either 9 or 11 days a month. Alderman Dallas Tester asked if there was anything that we could put in writing stating that the fire fighters must work exclusively for Long View. Town Administrator Draughn stated that is not a possibility and that this is just a problem that irritates him, but he cannot fix it.

PUBLIC WORKS- PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR CHRIS ECKARD

Town Manager Draughn stated that Public Works Director Chris Eckard did not have main capital requests. The items in the Public Works budget are primarily going to consist of gas, tires, and the garage budget. Public Works Director Chris Eckard had the Sweet Bay Lane project, Limb Dump, and then he and Town Administrator Draughn would both give an assessment of the Radio Meter item.

Public Works Director Eckard stated the board has a copy of the Sweet Bay Lane maps showing where the 7600 feet of 12-inch water line and 2400 feet of 8-inch sewer lines would be installed. Public Works Director Eckard stated that he initially questioned the engineers from McGill about the size of the water lines and why they were going with such a large diameter line. The main concern for the engineers is volume and the uncertainty of what (business wise) may be put on the properties that will now have water and sewer access. The volume of water consumed must be able to flow fire protection and consumption despite the type of business, be it a warehouse or some type of industrial structure. Public Works Director Eckard stated that when he compared the smaller diameter water lines, the savings was much less than he anticipated it being, so the 12-inch water lines made sense. Alderman Gary Lingerfelt stated he had not thought of all the taps that may have to be done and the 12-inch lines would make Public Work's job easier, as well. Town Administrator Draughn stated that he and Public Works Director Eckard pressed McGill about the 12-inch water lines and McGill insisted that they did not feel comfortable doing any water lines less than 12-inches. Town Administrator Draughn stated that of the \$1.4 million available (ARPA FUNDS) for this project, \$500,000 is the money that NC Senator Dean Proctor secured for us specifically for the Sweet Bay Lane Project, so only a little over half of the ARPA funds would be designated to the Sweet Bay Lane Project, leaving around \$700,000 more for other projects. Alderman Gary Lingerfelt stated that he did not want to see us spend all the grant money on just one project. Town Administrator Draughn stated that we will be looking over the next few weeks to see if we are able to put in an ARC Grant, to get more money. Alderman Lingerfelt stated that we do have a lot of other items that also need to be addressed. Public Works Director Eckard agreed with Alderman Lingerfelt however, he did explain that this area is our only spot for growth, all the properties across I-40 are within town limits so we would need to provide them with services. Town Administrator Draughn stated that this is a project that has been in the making for the last 25 years. Public Works Director Eckard stated that the project has postponed, and it is time to take care of it now.

Mayor Marla Thompson asked how long the project would take from start to finish. Public Works Director Eckard stated roughly a year from start to finish. Town Administrator Draughn stated that once we get bids on the project, they would come to the board for approval. Public Works Director Eckard stated that this job is very straight forward and should not take a long time once it begins. The sewer portion on Old Shelby Road will be the slowest part of this project. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked if most of this project would be in the roadway or the side of the road. Public Works Director Eckard stated that all the projects should be out of the road except for the punches where the sewer is but most of the project should be out of the roadway and no asphalt should have to be dug up during this project. Public Works Director Eckard stated the only issue he foresees is the fact that no taps will be pre-made for this project, as there is no way of knowing what size taps will need to be used and there is no way of being able to plan for that. Public Works Director Eckard asked if there were any other questions. There were none.

Public Works Director Eckard stated he is reaching out to surrounding municipalities regarding their brush pickup and limb process. The last two payments that Public Works has made to grinding were \$22,500 and \$18,895 to get the brush we have picked up ground and then we are paying JW Grading and Demolition \$17,000 to \$18,000 to get rid of the grindings. Public Works Director Eckard stated that the limb dump has become a costly venture and is not as helpful as it once was. From a time standpoint, it is helpful, however, from a money standpoint it is not paying for itself. Public Works Director Eckard is talking to Blackburn Landfill regarding tipping fees, as well as, talking to City of Hickory and a few other municipalities to see what their process is for brush pick up. Public Works Director Eckard stated that it may be time to start going by yard size to base how much brush we pick up or measure the claw and do one scoop per household per week to cut down on the amount of brush. Our brush dump is just a brush dump and is not a mulch yard. We are having to pay to get rid of the mulch after it is ground down, which is becoming increasingly difficult to do. City of Hickory took the mulch once and said they would not take it again. The gentleman on 19th street that does willingly take the mulch is not in good health any longer so he may not be an option for much longer. Public Works Director Eckard stated that if we must pay for the brush to be ground, then pay for JW Grading and Demolition to haul the grindings to Blackburn Landfill, then we might as well take the brush straight to Blackburn ourselves and save the money. People are not wanting mulch like the use to. Alderman Lingerfelt stated that he would take it, but he cannot take as much mulch as we produce. Town Administrator Draughn stated that when we started the brush pick-up program, we were paying \$9,000 once a year and have now doubled that due to the amount of brush we are consuming. Public Works Director Eckard stated that we provide a great service to our residents and we do have some landlords and businesses who take advantage of it, by bring brush in from other properties for us to haul off or they will pay a company to come in and trim up and then put all of the brush out by the road for the town to pick up. This is something that is also occurring with the junk items we pick up as well. Public Works Director Eckard stated that picking up the brush with solely the limb dump, has become more of an expense than a benefit and the junk pickup is doing the same. Alderman Lingerfelt asked if it would be beneficial if we followed what City of Hickory does, opening on Saturday and having trucks run through. The cost use to be \$10 a scoop, which has gone up now. Public Works Director Eckard stated we would have to re-permit the limb dump as a compost facility which would require too much time and effort. Public Works Director Eckard stated that the only two options he sees that we have are 1- Take the brush back to Blackburn or 2- Start limiting what we can pick up if we are going to keep the limb dump, which still incurs the cost of getting rid of the mulch. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked where we stood right now with the limb dump status. Public Works Director Eckard stated that if we can keep the brush consumption low, we may be able to get by without having to have it ground through the end of the year and nothing needs to be hauled off right now. Town Administrator Draughn stated that we can bring this project to the next council meeting or to the budget workshop once we have more data. Public Works Director Eckard stated that two weeks ago, 19 mattresses were picked up on the junk route, the week prior 13 mattresses were picked up, as well as the week prior to that for a total of 45 mattresses in a 3-week span.

Town Administrator Draughn stated that he had brought this idea to the table years ago, but in other towns he has worked in, they have had a junk pickup twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. If you put stuff out the rest of the year, it would not be picked up and you had to haul it off to the dump yourself. This would be a lot different than what the town is used to and it would be a battle and long-term effort but it may be worth it in the end. Public Works Director Eckard stated it would be a joint effort between

Public Works, the Police Department, and Code Enforcement to see it through but it is something worth looking at going forward. Right now, the focus is on the limb dump. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked if we charged for white goods pickup. Public Works Director Eckard stated we do not. We do not run a route for White Goods Pickup, but we will pick it up if the “scavengers” do not get to it first. This service is available upon request and if the items are still there by the time, we get it, we will pick it up. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked what it would take to put limitations on the amount of brush and junk that is put out for pick up. Public Works Director Eckard stated he would like to measure and get the exact measurements of the claw and say that we will pick up one scoop of brush per week per household. There would be growing pains with it, but we would have to work through them. We can begin sending out notices and Public Works would begin sending out green tags and people would learn as they go. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated that he feels we should start putting a limit on the amount of things that we pick up and start siting people who exceed the set amount. Town Administrator Draughn stated that we will bring recommendations to the board so the ordinance can be amended and asked if July 1st was a suitable period for the board. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated he would like to see it begin prior to that because of how pitiful the yards look after a nice weekend. People are going to have to accept limitations that the town sets just like they have been able to accept the limitations that were set during COVID.

Public Works Director Eckard stated that it cost approximately \$98 per ton of junk that is hauled off to Blackburn. This is one truckload and we typically make numerous trips a week. We can send out notifications regarding the limitations that we set, as well as notify the residents of the availability of the box truck for rent for anything exceeding what we are able to pick up.

Town Administrator Draughn stated that Town Clerk Heather Minor would check to see if we can adopt this amendment during the April meeting or if we must have a hearing first. Town Clerk Heather Minor stated that you always must have a hearing first, so we should vote today to hold the public hearing at the April 11th meeting, along with the public hearing we are already holding. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays made a motion that we call for a public hearing for an amendment to change the ordinance(s) with regards to waste/brush pick up and fees. Alderman Dallas Tester seconded the motion. The vote to hold a public hearing at the April 11th meeting was unanimous.

AYES: Mayor Pro Tempore / Alderman Randall Mays
Alderman Gary Lingerfelt
Alderman Dallas Tester

NOES: None

Town Administrator Draughn stated that the last item for Public Works is replacing all our radio read meters. We would move to Read from the Office meters. This would be an expensive project that we are not sure that we can afford yet, but we are looking at it. This would cost approximately \$1,000,000. Mayor Marla Thompson asked if there were any grants that we could get for this. Town Administrator Draughn stated that there are not any grants available, but it could be worth it if we could afford it. If we do think it is something that we can afford, we will have a presentation at the workshop to give more information about it. We are still in the process of analyzing costs. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked how many towers we would need and what the radios of these towers would be. Public Works Director Eckard stated that the company is getting this information together to see what all we would need for our

size and topography. As soon as Public Works Director Eckard has all this information, he will get this back to the board. He hopes to have this information at the May budget workshop if it is feasible. Town Administrator Draughn stated that we have a company analyzing everything for us. Public Works Director Eckard stated that the mainframe system would be the costliest part of the project. This set up would provide Jamie and Denise instant readings and you are able to check peoples meter in real-time, anytime. This system would allow whoever is reading the meters to be able to pull up the information regarding usage on their phone or tablet immediately. Years' worth of meter reading information can be stored in this new system. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked if the meters were able to be shut off from the office. Public Works Director Eckard stated if you pay an additional \$600,00-\$700,000. Mayor Marla Thompson asked if this new program would free up some of Josh's time and allow him to be able to do other things as needed. Public Works Director Eckard stated that it would free up Josh for other projects. At this time, Public Works Director Eckard excused himself from the Budget Retreat.

POLICE DEPARTMENT- POLICE CHIEF TJ BATES

Town Administrator Draughn stated the two main things that Police Chief Bates has requested this year is an increase in pay for his department and updating the outdated vehicles that are remaining in the fleet. Town Administrator Draughn stated that since Police Chief Bates began his career with the Town of Long View, he has made his need for an administrative assistant known, however, Police Chief Bates feels so strongly about the rise of starting pay and compression pay for his department that he is more than willing to forego an administrative assistant. After Town Administrator Draughn's opening comments regarding the Police Department, he turned the floor over to Police Chief TJ Bates.

Police Chief TJ Bates stated that this was his third budget retreat with the Town of Long View as the Chief of Police and gave his opening comments addressing the character, work ethic, challenges, strengths and bravery of the men and women who service as Town of Long View Police Officers. Following his address to the Board, Police Chief Bates thanked the board and town administration for always supporting the police department.

Police Chief Bates stated that the first budget item he wanted to address are the ten full-time vehicles with high mileage around 90,000-125,000 miles. Police Chief Bates stated this is an increase from seven vehicles with high mileage last budget year. A two-car rotation must be kept as the minimum to maximize fleet performance, reduce maintenance and repair costs. The patrol division averages 12,923 miles on their vehicles on a yearly basis. Police Chief Bates stated that he is requesting two 2022 Ford Police Interceptor Utility AWD/ 3.3L V6 Direct-Injection, which is what was purchased last budget year and the department has been extremely happy with their performance. The price for these SUV's this year is \$32,805.00 each on STATE BID, estimating upfit for policing is \$15,028.90, which is subject to change due to inflation, making the total estimated requested cost \$95,667.80. This total includes everything that both vehicles would need to be fully outfitted police vehicles, such as, cage, lights, sirens, etc. Police Chief Bates advised the board to take a moment and look at the new explorers, which one is on duty today, if they have not already done so, so that they can see what they are purchasing. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked if we have explored the option of adding more Police Trucks to the fleet. Police Chief Bates stated that he has. Ford just came out with a new Ford F-150 Police Interceptor, which Police Chief Bates wanted to give Ford one year before he looked further into them. The detective division would benefit from having a truck once their vehicles go out, due to the amount of evidence that they can encounter and need to haul. Police Chief Bates stated that the only downside to the truck that he and Officer Ford currently have is the turn radius is not great, which is why he wants to give the new Ford F-150 a year and then review the specifications.

Police Chief Bates stated that the proposed salary adjustment is in no way, shape, or form Long View Police Department trying to compete with Hickory Police Department (HPD), because we are not the size of HPD and do not have the same type of funding. Police Chief Bates stated the pay adjustment that he is proposing is comparable to Conover, Claremont, Granite Falls, and Lenoir. The proposed adjustment of starting pay is from \$35,000 to \$40,000 for a brand-new police officer, though this is still a little under some other municipalities, it does put us near other departments of our size. Police Chief Bates would also like to implement a pay structure of Police Officer I, Police Officer II, and Master Police Officer. Police Chief Bates stated that Senate Bill 300 passing has caused a great need for administrative staff, however, it is more important to Chief Bates to retain the staff that he already has. Police Chief Bates stated that we have already lost one officer, Dylan Smith, to Lincoln County Sheriff's Office due to a \$4,000 pay raise

and the ability to earn more money. Police Chief Bates stated that the total cost for the pay adjustment would be \$41,554.00. The pay adjustment schedule is requested instead of an additional police department employee position and will address salary inequity and compression from previous administrations and meets the competitive demands of pay with similar sized jurisdictions. Chief Bates stated employee retention is most important because once an officer has left, they are not being replaced. The new position that was granted last year has yet to be filled. In the next one- and one-half years, Long View Police Department will lose two officers through retirement with a combined 45 years of experience. All jurisdictions in Catawba County have increased police officer pay to a rate that we will have a tough time with officer retention and officer recruitment if the economy keeps the same path. Police Chief Bates stated that we now have three jobs available between the Major and two patrol officer jobs, we have two officers on staff that are bilingual that make \$35,000 a year. Alderman Dallas Tester stated he was surprised that those officers have not been stolen from us yet. Police Chief Bates stated that other agencies are after our people because our people receive good training and are good officers. The pay increase, Chief Bates states, should be a tremendous help with retention and recruitment, they are appreciative of everything they have received and do not expect to have the same pay as larger agencies. Town Administrator Draughn stated that this has been a topic of discussion in the manager meetings. Due to COVID and the scrutiny law enforcement has been under has made us reactionary instead of being able to be proactive, we are having to react to the market. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated he can see Chief Bates' point and it points out that we have to keep up with industry standards, as well, in all departments, but in regards to the police department, as well as the fire department, there is such a distinct difference in leadership, for the better, that the folks that we are getting and that have lived through other chiefs recognize the shift in leadership. Alderman Dallas Tester asked if Chief Bates knows of any departments around here that offer any incentives for bilingual employees. Chief Bates stated that Catawba County Sheriffs Office offers a bilingual and education incentive. Alderman Dallas Tester asked if Chief Bates thought that was something that would work here. Chief Bates stated that his proposed increase and the pay structure will get the us some positive attention but that is something we can look at in the future. Chief Bates stated he cannot thank the board enough for being so supportive and he hopes that the department makes the board proud. Alderman Randall Mays asked if Chief Bates had a break down for classifying POI, POII, and MPO. Chief Bates stated that a POI is a rookie until you receive your general certificate after you have made it through 12 months probationary period with the state training and standards. POII is potentially up to 3 years of service, as well as certain certifications (such as Radar, Intox., etc.) that Chief Bates feels are necessary to become a Master Patrol Officer (MPO). Additional education may compensate for the certifications. Chief Bates stated that a pay structure helps with chain of command and liability as a ranking system.

Chief Bates asked if there were any additional questions. There were none. At this time, the board took a 15-minute break.

ADMINISTRATION/FINANCE- TOWN MANAGER DAVID DRAUGHN, FINANCE DIRECTOR JAMES COZART AND DEPUTY FINANCE DIRECTOR DENISE COLLINS

Finance Director James Cozart stated that the first item he wanted to discuss is the vacation accrual rate. Police Chief Bates and Town Clerk Heather Minor checked with surround municipalities to see what other agencies did regarding vacation accrual for existing employees, as well as new employees transferring time from another agency. The proposed change of vacation leave accrual rate would be as follows:

Years of Service	Days Accrued Per Year (based on workday)
0 – 1.99	10
2 – 4.99	12
5 – 9.99	15
10 – 14.99	18
15 – 19.99	21
20 plus	24

Vacation leave may be accumulated without any applicable maximum until the last pay period of the calendar year. Any employee with a balance exceeding 30 days (240 hours) shall have the excess accumulation transferred to sick leave so that only a balance of 30 days (240 hours) is carried forward to January 1.

The above would take the place of the current policy which is listed below:

Each full-time employee of the Town shall earn vacation leave each payroll period at the rate shown in the schedule below:

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Amount of leave earned</u>
0-9.99 years	10 days
10-19.99 years	15 days
20+ years	20 days

Vacation leave is granted so that employees may have approved time off from work, and it is anticipated that employees will use time off within a year of when it is earned. Effective the last payroll in the fiscal year, any employee with more than that number of days of accumulated leave shall have the excess accumulation removed so that only 10, 15 or 20 days (accrual rates depending on service) are carried forward to July 1 of the next calendar year. Without approval of the Board employees will not have additional vacation leave added to that leave balance until leave has been taken.

Finance Director Cozart stated that when we are trying to hire someone with experience their time transfers in for the retirement system, however, they have to accrual vacation time as a new employee which seems to be a hinderance. Alderman Gary Lingerfelt stated that he felt like that would have to help people to know that they are not going to have to start all over on vacation time if we adopt this change to the accrual policy. Town Administrator Draughn asked if the board is ok with us making the change, when would they like for us to implement it. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated that it should go into effect July 1st and we can bring a draft to the board anytime between now and the June

meeting. Alderman Gary Lingerfelt asked if we were still putting a cap on the maximum that can roll over. Finance Director Cozart stated that 240 hours of vacation time would be the maximum amount that you can transfer over to the next year and the balance would be converted into sick time.

Deputy Finance Director Denise Collins present the request for a part-time office assistant. Deputy Finance Director Collins stated that a part-time office assistant is requested to assist the front customer service area. Currently there is a strain on the administrative employees to help cover the front office. This position would work most days 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. These times would allow other administrative employees to have lunch, vacation and sick days. The person would need to have a flexible schedule for longer or shorter days as needed. The online payment system has relieved the front office/drive thru of the number of customers coming by to pay. However, it has caused the finance department to divert more time and attention to bank reconciliations. This position would help allow finance and the Clerk to focus more on the day-to-day operations of their duties and less time assisting the front office. This will especially be more important when the lobby reopens to the public April 1st. A part-time office assistant would work up to 19 hours per week but no more than 1,000 hours per year. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked what qualifications the person would need for this position. Finance Director Cozart stated that the person would need customer service experience, preferably someone with money handling experience would also be a plus. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays asked what we would do if someone was sick or out for several consecutive days. Town Administrator Draughn stated that some of this would be a learning curve. Finance Director Cozart agreed and stated that there are times when Angie is not busy up front and other times where she is completely covered up. We would have to adjust this person's schedule according to how many hours they have worked that week. This would be one reason the ideal candidate would have to be flexible. Deputy Finance Director Collins stated that their pay would depend on experience but, being that they would not be receiving benefits we would start this person around \$16.00/hr to \$17/hr. This would be a position that a retiree would need to take to have the flexibility we are looking for. Town Administrator Draughn asked that we prefer not to offer benefits to this employee, such as insurance, but if we found the perfect candidate, what would be the board thoughts on that. Alderman Gary Lingerfelt stated that if we get a retiree for that position, they should not need insurance. Alderman Dallas Tester stated he felt like it may be hard to find someone who is as flexible as we need them to be. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated that with as many retirees as we have in this town, it should not be that difficult to find someone and it would only be around \$16,00- to \$17,000 more a year for the administration side of the town. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall said that looking towards the future, this could potentially be a full-time position that could be split between the Town, Police Department, and Fire Department if needed. Finance Director Cozart stated that the idea of this candidate helping Public Works with administrative things have been discussed and there are a lot of different directions this position could go in.

Finance Director Cozart stated that they have pulled together some numbers for a cost-of-living adjustment. For consideration purposes, they put together numbers for a 3% increase, as well as a 4% increase. The total cost of a 3% cost of living adjustment \$73,514. A 4% cost of living adjustment would be \$98,635. These numbers are including the pay increase from the police department, as well. Town Administrator Draughn stated that he feels that due to inflation it is important that we do something for the employees of the town. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated that since the last couple of years have been rough, a 4% increase is what he would like to see done. Alderman Dallas Tester stated

that he feels that that is generous and a good idea. Town Administrator Draughn stated that there is nothing that has been recommended today that he feels we cannot afford to do. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated that he realizes there is a \$25,000 difference in 3% and 4% increase, however, he feels that with the sacrifice the employees have made in the last two years, they more than deserve this increase.

Finance Director Cozart stated that the next part of the discussion is about revenue information. We have not received guidance from the NC League of Municipalities (NCLM) yet on what they estimate the State Shared Revenue will be. Finance Director Cozart stated he can provide rough numbers and will have a better idea once we receive the information from the NCLM. Powell Bill revenues from previous years have been on a downward trend until 2021-2022 and we have received \$159,512.28 as of March 2022. Our sales tax revenue, based on state estimates, our budget estimate for the year was \$1.4 million. Year to date, with three distributions yet to come, we have received a little over \$1.3 million which is 95% of what the estimate was. Town Administrator Draughn stated that our budget to actual shows that we have had growth. Finance Director Cozart stated that we are proposing that our Returned Check Fees increase from \$25 to \$35, which we can charge \$35 as the maximum per the NC GS 25-3-506. We have received a letter from the City of Hickory stating a 3% increase will be applied for water and sewer increase, which we will pass along to our citizens. Town Administrator Draughn stated that in a couple of years, the cost of recycling is getting ready to drastically increase. The Catawba County Managers have talked about this at length. The roll out recycling carts were a great idea, however, people use them for trash, so they have become an issue. When the time comes, if all the towns agree, we may go back to a drop off recycling center instead of curbside pick-up. Finance Director Cozart stated that as of today we have not received the tipping fee from Republic Service.

Finance Director Cozart stated the debt schedule was included in their agenda packets. In the coming year, in the general fund, we will be paying off the loan for the radio equipment (general fund) and a public works meter reading truck (Utility fund).

Town Administrator Draughn asked if there were any questions. Mayor Marla Thompson asked on the Powell Bill, how many more dirt roads do we have that have to pave. Town Administrator Draughn stated he believes we have two remaining to pave. We are going to attempt to have it completed this year, as well as find a contractor who would also do a sidewalk.

Finance Director Cozart stated that he did have a budget transfer to vote on. We need to move \$69,718.00 from the Utility Fund to General fund for the Fire Department Extraction equipment. Alderman Dallas Tester made a motion to transfer the funds to the appropriate fund and Alderman Gary Lingerfelt seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

AYES: Mayor Pro Tempore / Alderman Randall Mays
Alderman Gary Lingerfelt
Alderman Dallas Tester

NOES: None

At this time, we recessed for lunch.

FINAL COMMENTS

Mayor Marla Thompson asked if there were any final comments. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays states that in the future we need to make sure that we have reserve money setback for short falls. Sometimes in years past we have encountered expensive unexpected expenses that we have not been prepared for. Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated he would like our pay scales to remain higher so that we can get and retain employees.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated that if we can get the southern expansion up and going at Sweet Bay Lane/Old Shelby Road this year, grants may become available to help businesses come into the area through economic development. A lot of grants that are available require matching funds, so we need to make sure that we have reserve money set back for those, as well.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated that we have had a photo directory of the employees and he would like to have that made available again and updated after the elections. Lastly, he said he would like for us to include in our new resident packets information regarding the person's alderman and how they can reach out to them. Finance Director Cozart stated we would be able to get the new residents voting information and a list of who their alderman was.

Mayor Marla Thompson asked if we still had the VEDIC in our budget. (Valdese Economic Development) Finance Director Cozart stated that we do.

Town Administrator Draughn stated that it is because of the Board's help that we can make the adjustments that we have. Our reserve is in great standing and this is something that we use to not be able to say.

Mayor Pro Tempore/Alderman Randall Mays stated that our department heads, specifically the fire department and police department, have done a wonderful job upgrading the atmosphere of the departments and has been a huge help with employee retention.

Town Administrator Draughn stated that not one penny of the town's money would be spent on expanding the southern borders for the Sweet Bay Lane project, which is incredible and will help tremendously and will not be a long-term debt the town will be faced with. Hopefully, this will open a viable market for new businesses in our district.

Alderman Dallas Tester stated he appreciates everyone on the board for the last four years and how united everyone has been for the best interest of the town.

No other comments were made. Mayor Marla Thompson asked if there was a motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Gary Lingerfelt and seconded by Alderman Dallas Tester. The motion carried unanimously and adjourned at 2:15pm.

- AYES:** Mayor Pro Tempore / Alderman Randall Mays
Alderman Gary Lingerfelt
Alderman Dallas Tester
- NOES:** None