

DATE: 7/16/19 FILE NO: DATE344
TO: Cherokee County Council
SUBJECT: Minutes of Regular Meeting, Monday, 7/15/19

There was a Regular Meeting of County Council Monday, 7/15/19, 5 PM in Council Chambers. Chairman Spencer presided with David Smith leading in prayer. Council members present were: Tim Spencer, Mike Fowlkes, Tracy McDaniel, Quay Little, Lyman Dawkins & David Smith. Absent: Charles Mathis. Administrator Steve Bratton, Attorneys Jim Thompson & Joe Mathis and Clerk Doris Pearson were present. The news media was informed by agenda and it was posted in accordance with the SCFOIA. One news media was present along with 30 visitors.

Councilman Tracy McDaniel made the motion to adopt the agenda of the Regular Meeting of 7/15/19 as received and posted in accordance with the SCFOIA. David Smith seconded and council voted in favor.

Petitioners: Charles Wyatt, Cody Sossamon & Mike Daniel made a presentation regarding proposed Community Center. Charles Wyatt asked council permission to have a referendum asking for a 9-mill tax increase to build a Community Center/Sports Complex that will include 4 artificial turf ball fields; indoor swimming pool, 35x75 2600 sq. feet, 5 foot deep; basketball courts/gym; and a multi-space convention center, seats up to 500 people, can be divided into small rooms, this is about a 25,000 sq. foot facility. Everything we are talking about is \$16.5 million which includes the ballfields, swim center & community center; \$5 million of that is the artificial turf ball fields. Bond payments will be about \$900,000/year to build it; operation of the facility is about another \$600,000/yr. = \$1,500,000/year. This will take a millage increase of 8.39 mills. We are asking for a 9 mill increase to cover this giving us some surplus. Breaking down monthly on a \$110,000 home would cost about \$3/mo.; \$20,000 vehicle would be about .90 cents/mo. A mill brings in about \$179,000; current millage for the Recreation Dist. is 3.9. **WHY DO WE NEED IT?** To bring in local, state & national level tournaments; tourism; quality of life; economic development; and local accommodations sales tax would increase. **We are requesting County Council to study the current organization of the Recreation Dist. and see what changes need to be made if any that would be deemed appropriate so we could move forward with this project. We are requesting County Council to schedule a referendum approving the millage sufficient to fund this project and/or operating cost based on numbers we received from other facilities very similar of about 9 mills.** Mike Daniel has approached several local businesses & industries saying they support this.

Mark Huff spoke in favor of this project. I moved here about 22 years ago and when we moved here there was no community swimming pool; not enough basketball courts/gym facilities; softball fields, etc. I believe in this project and I'm behind it. We really would appreciate your help & support.

Chairman Spencer replied I believe this project is a great idea for Cherokee County. I'm worried about where the funding will come from. If the state, federal and local entities would fund, I'm sure we can make this happen. Who will partner with us to make this happen?

Councilman Mike Fowlkes replied I appreciate what all of you have done. I feel this is a positive way to go.

Councilman Quay Little replied I greatly appreciate your effort and I think any idea we come forth trying to make quality of life better, I'm 100% behind you. My question will involve the City, they are the only true entity that benefits from the hospitality tax. If we put this facility in place, that will increase the hospitality tax. Have you spoken with the City in regards to this and what they will do? Are they committing any type of money from this account to this project based on what this project will do for that account? Most of your construction numbers are estimates and I feel you need a firm number. You will need a sound number before we do a referendum. If you had a commitment from the City toward this project, it could offset the cost. I feel the City will be the big benefactor from this project because of the hospitality tax.

Cody Sossamon replied we will be making this presentation to the City in August at their meeting. We will ask them to commit a certain percentage of money that will be generated from this project. I hope this would be a project for the County, City & Town of Blacksburg to work together to benefit the citizens of Cherokee County. The money to fund this project will come from the 9 mills that we are requesting that the Cherokee County residents hopefully will vote for. Mike Daniel has been working on this project for 3½ years; and we have been working on it since Oct. We are doing this because we feel this is a good project for Cherokee County and we are asking county council to allow us to have a referendum so the citizens can decide; please give the citizens of Cherokee County the opportunity to either vote for or against this project. As far as the final construction cost, we want get that until we put it out to bid.

Councilman Tracy McDaniel replied what Quay's concern is if you go out for a referendum for 9 mills and if it takes 10 or 12 mills to complete this project, then what do we do at that point? Do you have any cushion for overruns?

Councilman Quay Little replied when the referendum goes out, I want to make sure everybody has a clear understanding of what they are voting on in regards to the money, the project and whether they believe it is good for this county or not. That is why we need the facts. We want this to succeed as much as you do. Ask around and get different opinions on the construction cost. Cody Sossamon replied that Sossamon Construction has built several facilities very similar to this one and they used actual numbers with inflation and they feel confident their numbers are very close based on what you are looking at now. As far as operation expenses, we asked Clemson to help us and they did. We are asking you to put this to a referendum.

Mike Daniel stated I would get an expert to help me and your expert is your Bond Attorney. They have done thousands of these. I contacted them and the one thing they said to us is they want to see what the governing body is going to do? How much they are willing to go forward with a referendum? We are asking you to put it before the people and let them decide what they want?

Councilman David Smith replied this is the first time I've heard this presentation. Looking at this overlay, this is where our current DPW is now, what are we going to do there? Mike Daniel replied this is up to council. We have been told that if we are going to maximize the most dollar at this facility, it needs to be close to the Interstate. Cody Sossamon replied where we have the drawing at now, is not exactly where it has to go. There is a lot of property back toward the Recycling Center that can be utilized. This was just to give you an idea or concept of what it will look like if you guys decided to move the Public Works Dept. David Smith replied this project is a no brainer. We need to support things like this in order to grow. If we are not willing to take a risk, we will not grow. I'm behind this 100%. We should want this county to grow; we should want our children to have a place to play. I'm not sure why we have a total price of \$11.4 million and then we said an additional baseball field; this needs to be included in the total project. Why wasn't it? Charles Wyatt replied it was broken down into two ways: 1) the swimming pool, meeting space and see that cost; and then 2) \$5 million for the ballfields. The add on includes two gymnasiums and you can see the cost if we added a couple more gyms because there is space there to do it. The \$16.5 million does include the 5 turf baseball fields. Mike Daniel replied on 6/23/20, we will have the Mayor of Rock Hill come speak to us. They are in the process of building an additional \$40 million sports arena. They know the economic development value there; and they know teams will come if you build it. We again are asking you to endorse our idea; endorse our project and it's up to you to give us permission to have a referendum. I have visited several projects just like the one we are proposing and they have been very successful and I know that this project will also be very successful. Turf field is the game changer.

Anna Moss replied we have been working on this for at least 3 years but we wanted to bring something concrete to you; we want to utilize every possible dollar available from every resource; we want to hear every concern you have. We can't do this on our own; we need your help. We really need this project to help boost our economy & quality of life.

Councilman Lyman Dawkins replied for the last 7 or 8 years I have traveled around officiating basketball and I know how important it is for us to invest in something like this. We need to educate the citizens on how much it will cost them on an individual basis and how much we will gain from this further on down the road. Our Outlet Mall want be here much longer to draw people to our area, so we need something to keep our young people out of trouble. If we don't invest in this, people want change, Gaffney want change. I support this whole-heartily.

Councilman Mike Fowlkes replied our DPW does sit here where your proposed parking lot would be; but we may can adjust that plan; or even stall on the turf fields for a few years. There is room in there for the overages. Mike Daniel replied we did not include any revenue from any outside sources but, there will be revenue brought in once this facility is built from such things as renting the event center, having tournaments, etc.

Chairman Tim Spencer stated I feel if you can get the state, federal & city to commit to funds, we might could get this down to 6 or 7 mills and you might get it passed on a referendum. It passed last time that citizens wanted it; but they did not want to have to pay for it. We need to wait and see if everybody will come to the table and commit. Mike Daniel replied we talked to private industry and they are saying, they want to wait and see what local government is going to commit. Tim asked have you thought about naming this complex after a business, industry, etc. that might invest in this project? Mike replied we have thought about it but we haven't approached that avenue because the industries are asking us what are the local governments willing to do? Are they willing to put this on the referendum?

Councilman Quay Little asked when will you present this to the City? Mike Daniel replied at their first meeting in August. Quay replied if they can commit some of that hospitality tax that they would be receiving from this project, then the millage might go down. The entire county would benefit from this but financially the City is the one that benefits greatly. I pray we can all work together and come to an understanding that the money generated from this project needs to stay in this community for this specific project.

Chairman Tim Spencer stated I feel there is no one on this council that does not support this project but we cannot vote tonight because Councilman Charles Mathis is absent. When he returns, we will vote on this. I don't see any problem with putting it on the referendum. I just feel we need more accurate numbers and if you can get it down to 7 or 8 mills, I think it would be good. This failed once before and if it fails again, it will be many years before it will come back. I don't want to see it fail.

Chairman Tim Spencer called for a 5-minute break at 6:11 PM. Chairman Spencer called the meeting back to order after the break at 6:20 PM.

Councilman David Smith made the motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of 7/1/19 as received in their agenda package. Mike Fowlkes seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Mike Fowlkes made the motion to approve the claims for Cherokee County in the amount of \$371,333.06. Tracy McDaniel seconded and council voted in favor.

Councilman Quay Little made the motion to adopt the 1st Reading of Ordinance No. 2019-21 Amending Chapter 4 Animal & Foul. Administrator Steve Bratton stated this amendment has been drawn up for our Code of Ordinance, Chapter 4. We have addressed several things some of which were just housekeeping, etc. Bulk of change was to Section 4-11 on Page 6 -8 for tethering of dogs. Section 4-12, we took this opportunity to address fines & fees handed out for non-compliance of this ordinance. Fine will be \$100 & \$200. Sheriff Muller has reviewed this and states it is enforceable. We feel we are taking a step in a positive direction as far as the treatment of animals in our county. If the Control Officer or Deputy goes out and sees a violation, they generally issue a warrant on the 1st offense; and on the 2nd offense they would then issue a ticket. If it falls under animal cruelty, it would fall under the state statute. This would start immediately after the 3rd & Final Reading. We will give folks time to get into compliance. Sheriff Mueller has handouts they will pass out for us. Quay replied we need some of those handouts to

give to citizens that see this going on and they can hand it out to let people to let them know this is going to happen. **Tracy McDaniel seconded and council voted in favor.**

Administrator Steve Bratton reported that before our next meeting I will be calling for a Public Works Committee meeting to address an issue regarding dumpsters. Also, we are getting ready for the Peach Festival which will begin this weekend and they will be using a large section of our parking lot. I encourage you to attend. Friday we will close the left-hand side of our parking lot around noon.

As there was no other business to come before council at this time, Chairman Spencer adjourned the meeting at 6:25 PM.

APPROVED: **8/12/19**

BY ITS CHAIR: **Tim Spencer**

Respectfully submitted,

Doris F. Pearson, Master Clerk to Council