

TOWN OF WHITE SPRINGS

“On the Banks of the Suwannee River”

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MINUTES

WHITE SPRINGS TOWN COUNCIL

Regular Council Meeting

Town Hall Council Chambers

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

6:30 p.m.

1. **Call to Order, Invocation, and Pledge Allegiance to Flag -** Mayor Rivers called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. TC Ruise led the invocation and the council led the pledge of allegiance.

**2.** **Roll Call - Mayor Rivers called the roll. Members present:** Mayor, Vice-Mayor, Councilor Mary Berry, and Councilor Nicole Williams. Absent: Councilor LaRita McCallum.

**3. Additions, Deletions, and/or Amendments to the Agenda** - Mayor Rivers asked if anyone had any changes to the agenda. Councilor N. Williams asked to add SOP, Administrative Code, Personnel HB and Res. 23-05. Mayor Rivers acknowledged that this would be added as Item 8.E on the agenda. Mayor Rivers asked if there were any more changes to the agenda. TM George stated that she would like to change Item 8.A to 8.D (8.D will be 8.A). Mayor Rivers asked again if there were any changes to the agenda? There were none. She then asked for a motion to accept the changes made to the agenda. VM J. Williams made the motion. Councilor M.Berry seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

1. **Citizens from the floor:** (Request form needed - 5min. limit)
2. Beth Daniels: Is it appropriate to take comments/complaints from people who are not citizens and their comments are not necessarily pertaining to town business? The Mayor stated that any complaint brought before the council must be addressed. She asked that Atty. Foreman explain further. Atty. Foreman stated that “under ordinary circumstances, no; you’d expect that to be addressed elsewhere”. But, the way the town charter reads, you have to hear and address the complaint. Your point is understood. Mayor Rivers then stated that it was the same process that was done when Helen Miller was in office and her seat was forfeited.
3. **Presentations: None**

**6. Approval of Minutes: The Mayor asked for a motion to accept the minutes as printed.** VM J. Williams made the motion. Councilor M.Berry seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

February 14, 2023 – Town Hall Meeting

1. **Old Business -**
2. **Ordinance 2023-01 - Second Reading/Wesson Street - Atty. Foreman -** Mayor Rivers asked Atty. Foreman to read the title. Atty. Foreman read the title. Mayor Rivers opened a public hearing. Citizen Beth Daniels stated “she thought it was a great idea.” Mayor asked for any other comments. There were none and she closed the public hearing and asked for a motion to accept the second reading of Ordinance 2023-01. VIce-Mayor made the motion and councilor Mary Berry seconded. Motion passed 4-0. (ordinance attached)
3. **Ordinance 2023-02 - Second Reading/Tobacco Free - Atty. Foreman -** Mayor Rivers asked Atty. Foreman to read the title. Atty. Foreman read the title. Mayor Rivers opened a public hearing. There were none and she closed the public hearing and asked for a motion to accept the second reading of Ordinance 2023-02. Vice-Mayor made the motion and Councilor Mary Berry seconded. Motion passed 4-0. (ordinance attached)
4. **Ordinance 2023-03 - Second Reading/Water/Sewer - Atty. Foreman -** Mayor Rivers asked Atty. Foreman to read the title. Atty. Foreman read the title. Mayor Rivers opened a public hearing. Citizen Bruce Witton asked when is the effective date? Mayor Rives stated that the rates will go into effect after tonight’s reading and the adopting of the ordinance and will be billed at the next billing cycle. Mayor asked for any other comments. There were none and she closed the public hearing and asked for a motion to accept the second reading of Ordinance 2023-03. Vice- Mayor made the motion and Councilor Mary Berry seconded. Motion passed 4-0. (ordinance attached)
5. **Derek Snead - Complaint -** Mayor Rivers called for Atty Foreman to address this item. Atty. Foreman stated that this is somewhat a follow-up to a citizen comment earlier. I, during the February 14, 2023 council meeting stated that complaints should go directly to the Commission of Ethics Office in Tallahassee; my comment was inaccurate. He also stated that after further research of the town charter section 2.03 he drafted a letter to the town. (see attached memo) He also stated that he referenced subsection 2.03 8.8. When I stated before that this is peculiar but it is written in your charter; that by a simple majority vote the council can remove the affected council member. (see attached memo) you will have 1st hearing and a vote to be remove, 2nd hearing the affected member has an opportunity to oppose the vote. After this process the affected member can take it to the circuit court. I will advise that in this process to make sure that if you have any doubt on the efficiency of your evidence, I’ll advise you “do not proceed”. I will now turn things over to Madam Mayor. Mayor Rivers asked TM George is the complaint mentioned here the one from February 14th? There are two complaints, the first one is about malfeasance and qualifications the second one is similar. Can we combine both complaints together, as the discussion with be about the same? Councilor N. Williams stated if they are different complaints let them be done at different times. I want each complaint to be done separately. I have that right. Mayor Rivers asked again, the first complaint deals with what? The council member’s record. TC Ruise mention that the minutes were in their binders. TM George read parts of the minute aloud. First complaint would be moral turpitude. Council N. Williams asked what exactly was the false statement? I have never discussed anything in public with anyone other that in the confinement of my personal car with my cousin Eddie Allen. Which is how this got started. When I stated that nothing should be discussed in public, this was not the time. If I’m not mistaken, this was in January’s meeting. If we’re talking about moral turpitude then its more than me on this council that should be talked about. In 1988-89 a lot of us would be in violation. Mr. Sneads’ charges against me were dismissed. This council continued to allow him to attend the meetings giving a false address each time. Moral turpitude has been in question with more that myself. Mayor Rivers stated that he stated he was being chased. Councilor Williams stated that she was on the phone with 911 when she was trying to get his tag number. There was no chase, I had an issue with him videoing my granddaughter 6-7 times. What moral turpitude have I done? If we want to talk about moral turpitude, some of you have been fired for money issues, some have resigned with excessive force issues. Tell me what issues I have and not allow someone who is not part of the community to tell you I did. (inaudible comments) Mayor asked Atty. Foreman about proof and he stated that, “I’d advise you that if you have any doubt on the evidence you have receive, I’d advised you to: “do not proceed”. You have to have the evidence. Mayor Rivers stated that she was in agreement with Joel (atty.), because she isn’t aware of the “chase incident”, I will ask for a motion to dismiss the complaint. Vice- Mayor J. Williams made the motion to dismiss the complaint for lack of evidence. Councilor Mary Berry seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0. Atty. Foreman stated; “To be clear the motion was to dismiss right”? Yes, stated the council. I did not hear Council member Nicole Williams answer that particular question.
6. **Derek Snead - Complaint -** TM George said that this complaint talks about the 911 call made by Council member N. Williams. TM George stated that she would play the 911 call with several false statement throughout. There are two officers in attendance at each council meeting. (see attached written 911 call). (Many comments made after the 911 call are inaudible Mayor/N. Williams) Council member N. Willaims stated that she believes it’s a personal vendetta against her. There has been comments mad eon FB. Mayor Rivers made a statement about me saying that I could be bought and that I have a slave mentality. Councilor Williams stated that TM George stated that she did not trust white people in a Oct 22 meeting. (voices were inaudible again) Mayor Rivers asked how did the council want to proceed with this complaint? Can I get a motion? Vice-Mayor J. Williams motioned to dismiss the complain and Councilor M. Berry seconded. Motion passed 4-0.
7. **Opt Out Insurance - Town Manager -** Tm George stated that every employee has the opportunity to Opt Out of the town’s insurance. The employee must have the evidence that they are covered by another insurance and the town would pay a portion. In reading a letter in your binder dated September 3, 2015, there is no evidence that this was approved by the previous council therefore, we need the approval to take place here to begin the process. The accountant has a formula to go by. He has to make the calculations. TC Ruise stated that the money is in the budget and was concerned that it shouldn't be an issue. The council did say that the projections will be retroactive by date of hire. A citizen made a comment about she knew of a formula. TM George stated that everyone was different. Mayor Rivers asked that the accountant make the decision as quick as possible. TC Ruise stated again that the money is there. Vice-Mayor J. Williams asked if this was the first time it has been brought to this council, yes. I just want to be a good steward of the town’s money. You guys are worth every dime and we will discuss at the next meeting when Michael gets back to us.
8. **ARPA Funding - Town Manager -** I would like to get permission from the council to move the ARPA funding into a separate account because you can only spend the money on certain things. Sewer is one of the qualifying items you can spend on ARPA. Mayor Rivers asked for a motion to allow TM George to move the ARPA Funds to a separate account. Vice-Mayor J. Williams made the motion and Councilor M. Berry seconded. Motion passed 4-0.
9. **CDBG Award - Town Manager -** The town has been awarded a $600K grant for Housing/Rehab. We are awaiting further direction from our grant administrators Jordan and Associates.
10. **SOP, Administrative Code, Employee HB, and Res. 23-05 -** Councilor Nicole Williams stated that if she was not mistaken this is the second time we’ve had a resolution like this one. Is Res. 23-05 for just employees or for everyone. I would like a clearer understanding on this. One was passed when Joe Griffin came to a meeting and called Vanessa a “lying black dog”. Atty. Foreman stated that she may be referencing Rules of Decorum. This type of resolutions cover any harassment in the workplace. This will cover everyone, staff and council. Councilor N. Williams stated that if these are covered, three council members allowed Derek Snead to remain in a meeting. Atty. Foreman stated that at the end of the day a vote from the council will stand. You asked for a point of order and it happened. Councilor N. Williams stated that the SOP reads that all employees must sign that they have received the handbook. I was told no one has signed. It has to be signed in order to receive a paycheck. I came in and asked for a copy of these and was given to different copies. I called previous employees and they were still different. Some one changed them, I want to know who changed them and why? I am calling for an investigation. Atty. Foreman stated that it is at the council’s pleasure to call for an investigation. TM George stated that she and TC Ruise was looking at the same charter dated 2012 and it was numbered differently. Mine was an electronic copy in the files. Councilor N. Williams asked Atty. Foreman what was the Charter, Administrative Code, and SOPs? Atty Foreman stated that the charter was the “people’s law, the Administrative Code/SOPs are the council’s regulations in governing your employees.

**9.** **Departmental/Administrative Comments**

1. **Public - None**
2. **Departments:**
3. Town Manager - Azalea festival may be rained out with 80% chance of rain. Mayor Rivers stated that she would make the call on Friday, March 17th. The Taste of White Springs is still on.
4. Fire Department - None
5. Utilities - Working with Windstream installing new Fiber Optic cables it will take them another month or two to complete the project.

1. **Council -** Councilor Mary Berry says that she is disgusted with the bickering and is in hopes of it being toned down. Mayor Rivers stated that she thinks it all started when she was not nominated for Vice-Mayor. Councilor N. Williams that she was ill during the time and thought that she should have been told.

A citizen asked what was going on with the community center? Mayor Rivers stated that it was in need of remodeling and that TM George and the council will work on the rehab. Mayor Rivers adjourned the meeting .

**Adjourn: 7:55pm**

IF A PERSON DECIDES TO APPEAL ANY DECISION MADE BY THE TOWN COUNCIL, WITH RESPECT TO ANY MATTER CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING, THAT PERSON WILL NEED A RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS, AND FOR PURPOSE THAT PERSON MAY NEED TO ENSURE THAT A VERBATIM RECORD INCLUDES THE TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE UPON WHICH THE APPEAL IS TO BE BASED. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) PERSONS NEEDING SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS TO PARTICPATE IN THE COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS SHOULD CONTACT THE TOWN CLERK’S OFFICE NOT LATER THAN THREE DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING.

Town Manager, Town Clerk, or Designee

**Vanessa George, Town Manager/ Audre’ J. Ruise, Town Clerk**

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