



**Town Council
Special Meeting Minutes
May 23, 2023 – 3:00 p.m.**

Mayor O’Cain called the Special Meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. on May 23, 2023, electronically through Zoom and in person.

The following members attended in person at Town Hall, 441 White Pine Drive, Laurel Park NC 28739:

- Mayor Carey O’Cain
- Commissioner Kristin Dunn
- Commissioner Deb Bridges
- Town Manager Alex Carmichael
- Town Clerk Tamara Amin
- Police Chief Bobbie Trotter
- Assistant Police Chief Michael Capps
- Public Works Supervisor Brandon Johnson
- Crew Leader Matthew Pearce
- Parks Technician Bryan Hensley
- Fire Chief Tim Garren

The following were absent:

- Mayor Pro Tem Hansen
- Assistant to the Town Manager Jordan Jones
- Interim Finance Officer Ed McGowan

The following attended by ZOOM platform:

- Commissioner George W. Banta (was not included in the quorum count)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Dunn moved to approve the agenda. Mayor O’Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

OLD BUSINESS

WEBSITE DISCUSSION

Town Manager Alex Carmichael said Council asked staff to solicit website development bids. Staff reached out to five web firms. The table below indicates the pricing. Summit Marketing comes in at the lowest, but their bid assumes Town staff will do much of the porting. Also, Summit uses Joomla instead of Word Press. Activate Business Services is the next lowest. They use Word Press. There are pros and cons to the two platforms.

Joomla seems to be more secure because the optional plugins for Word Press are open source. However, both offer ongoing security. Word Press seems to be easier to develop and manage. Also, the Activate quote doesn't assume staff would do the porting.

Both developers offer as needed support. Joomla might require more learning, time, and as needed support, while Word Press might be easier to manage in house.

Company	One-Time Cost	Annual Costs	Notes
Catalis	\$0	\$4,995	Purchased current developer. 6% Increase after four-year term
CivicPlus	\$15,000	\$6,000	
Granicus	\$7,900	\$10,000*	*Verbal quote
Activate Business Solutions	\$9,000 - \$11,000	\$2,179	
Summit Marketing	\$8,275	\$1,245	Town staff will port agendas, minutes, and other pdfs

Mayor O’Cain asked Staff to reach out to VC3 and get their opinion about the various platforms and which they would recommend.

Commissioner Bridges has worked extremely well with Activate. Commissioner Dunn has only worked with Summit and could share her experiences with Staff.

Mayor O’Cain asked Staff to put the website discussion on the June Agenda.

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Town Manager Alex Carmichael said after the previous budget workshop Council gave staff direction on budget priorities. Town Manager Carmichael recommended budget levies of 39.5 tax rate and includes those priorities.

Council discussed the Cost of living which is at 5.5% for the region and what would be a fair amount to keep Laurel Park competitive. Council discussed options of offering a COLA and Merit combination, one-time bonus for all, or a longevity bonus.

Mayor O’Cain asked Commissioner Bridges to talk with the Town Manager on allocating locations from the Budget to take money out and give employees more money. Mayor O’Cain asked Town Manager Carmichael to talk to Department Heads and see what they think is a fair amount.

Mayor O’Cain said last year the Town allocated \$1 million for roads that were not spent. This year the Town is allocating \$600K more. The reason the Town has not spent that money was because most of that money came from a Grant and the Council did not receive direction to move forward until December 2022. The Town also had to do stormwater drainage before repairing the roads.

In January 2023, Town Engineer Will Buie started putting out bids which were awarded a month ago. Stormwater repairs will start in June and end in August. The bid package for the pavement just went out and is due back the first week of June. Work will commence in August or September and be done by November. The Town can not spend the \$600k until after July 1. Town Engineer Will Buie will negotiate with the lowest bidder to make it okay for them to wait on the \$600K until July 1 to get the funds. By 2029 with this plan in place they Town should be ahead of the curve.

Mayor O’Cain asked if anyone had any questions or comments.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. John Crook said the Town is not just working on roads. He wanted to clarify that they were also working on shoulders, ditches and culverts.

Mayor O’Cain asked Town Manager Carmichael and Public Works Supervisor Brandon Johnson to ride with him through Kenmure to get an idea of the way the roads are being done.

Ms. Virginia Erwin asked why has there been a vacancy in Public Works for over a year.

Public Works Supervisor Brandon Johnson said he has only received 2 applications and can’t seem to find anyone interested.

Mr. Michael Erwin asked about the water fountain since Friends of Laurel Park agreed to split the cost.

Town Manager Carmichael said that was a different water fountain that is going in at Rhododendron Lake Nature Park.

Ms. Stephanie Eaves asked why the Town was promoting Jump Off Rock Music Concerts at the Hendersonville Visitors Center in the brochures as well as online.


The Town was unaware that this was happening and assured residents that they are not promoting events outside of Town Limits.

Mr. Mike Erwin said the Tourist Board donates money to the Friends of Laurel Park and that was one of their criteria in getting that donation.


ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Commissioner Bridges moved to adjourn at 3:55 p.m. Mayor O’Cain asked for discussion; there was none. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.


ATTEST:



Tamara Amin, CMC, NCCMC
Town Clerk/Deputy Tax Collector



J. Carey O’Cain, Mayor



Date