

Council Meeting Minutes
For
November 6, 2006
Branchville Town Hall
7:00 P.M.

PRESENT

Mayor Tim Cooner
Councilman Glenn Miller
Councilman Charles Dukes
Councilwoman Amy Bryant
Councilman Chris Ott

OTHERS PRESENT

Rhonda Thompson Town Clerk

GUESTS

Betty Skolasky	Debra Perugini	Luther Folk	Virginia Peele
Beverly Berry	Carolyn Campbell	Beatrice Miller	Allen Ott
Bill Silverthorne	Mark Ott	Ralph Edwards	

Mayor Cooner asked that all stand for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

Mayor Cooner welcomed everyone out tonight and mentioned that maybe because of the time change and weather not too many guests were present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Pro tem Charles Dukes made a motion to approve the minutes of October 2nd Town Council meeting with a second from Councilman Glenn Miller. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – AGENDA ITEMS/NON AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Cooner asked for public comments on items of agenda, hearing none.

Next to public comments of other matters.

-Ms. Beatrice Miller thanked the Mayor and Council members for the contribution for the Kidney Foundation and said it was a great success. Ms. Miller also thanked anyone else that made contributions.

-Mr. Luther Folk stated that the Museum was not being operated correctly because they were supposed to have committee meetings and two Councilpersons were supposed to attend and he requested that two Councilpersons be appointed for that committee.

-Mr. Mark Ott said that it was a problem with the noise coming from the peanut plant and he was assured that things would be changed around this year and less noise to his direction and that did not happen. Mr. Ott then stated if it were not corrected by next peanut season he would take legal action.

-Mr. Ralph Edwards agreed with Mr. Ott that something does need to be done about the noise because he can hear it at his house, as well.

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT

Mayor Cooner asked pleasure of approving the financial report and Councilman Glenn Miller said approved as released and Councilman Chris Ott seconded. Motion carried.

Committee and Staff Reports

Police Department

-Mayor Cooner stated that everything seems to be running along pretty smooth. Councilwoman Amy Bryant mentioned the spray painted star on the 45 speed limit signs, out by the school, and that symbol she thought to be gang related.

Administrative Office

-Councilman Miller stated the peanut processing plant was a concern to citizens, he said he went to several destinations about town to listen and he could hear the noise at some of the locations but at others had to get out of his car to hear. He wanted to let the towns people know this issue was not being pushed aside and he asked Mayor Cooner to explain what steps of action are being taken before next year. Mayor Cooner said he met with the chairman of the board and the fans are blowing back toward Branchville and the noise is greater at the back of the dryers where the fans are. In order to turn the dryers around in the opposite direction a cement pad would have to be poured that the landing gear of the semi's could drop on and would have to rewire the gas lines as well as the electrical lines. Mayor Cooner said that he was sure the problem would be resolved before next peanut season. Councilman Miller stated they also have considered putting some type of elbow vent on the dryers to offset the direction of the blowing of the fans.

-Mr. Allen Ott asked what happened from April, when Mr. Mark Ott came in to express his concern about peanut season, and the start of peanut season. Mayor Cooner said his concerns were relayed along and the peanut board was going to plant a buffer of trees and Mr. Allen Ott said in the 20 years time span for the trees to grow enough to buffer the sound what was going to happen. Mayor Cooner said peanut season should be over in a few more weeks. Mayor Cooner also said he doesn't think whomever designed the construction of the peanut plant did not think through the noise situation like they should.

-Councilman Miller then stated a concerned citizen approached him in front of the Dollar General and was really outrageous and asked what we were going to do about the elementary school and said we needed to sell it because the Town was not in the real estate business. Councilman Millers wanted the record to show that it was Sidney Walters who yelled at him about the school. Mayor Pro Tem Dukes said the Mr. Walters needed to be at the council meeting tonight.

-Councilman Miller then questioned the \$29,000 was to tear down or tear down and move away. Mayor Cooner answered to \$29,000 to haul the debris off and the \$14,000 was to have the asbestos removed. Mayor Cooner asked for approval of Council to accept the \$14,000 proposal to remove the asbestos and Councilman Glenn Miller motioned and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Charles Dukes. Motion carried.

-Ms. Virginia Peele said she knew she was late but wanted to know what we were going to do with the old elementary school. Mayor Cooner responded by stating we are going to put in ball fields, get gym and classrooms up to standards and maybe use the classrooms for an after school program.

Public Works

Mayor Cooner stated on the Regional Water Project 93 signed up for the sixty-six area and around 51 signed up on the Cattle Creek side. Total of 144 people signed up. Councilman Miller questioned if this project would bring any type of employment to local persons. Mayor Cooner said the contractors would bring in own staff. We anticipate starting on this project the first of the year.

Mayor Cooner then questioned Mr. Allen Ott as to whether Branchville was the only Fire Department that the ISO rating was not lowered on in the County of Orangeburg. Mr. Allen Ott was not sure if that was true information. Mayor Cooner then asked what we needed to do to get this rating. Mr. Allen Ott said paperwork needed to be obtained, but we did not need to request if we are not ready for it. Mayor Cooner said that he found out with the Regional Water Project would decrease homeowner insurance rates. One example was one policy would save approximately \$400 and some odd dollars. Mr. Allen Ott then stated that ISO requires maintenance is done on fire hydrants 2 times per year. Such items as flow tests, static test and flow rates needs to be tested.

Mayors Report

Mayor Cooner said he was in a meeting earlier today and something needs to be done and he has spoken with the County because we do have a good many elderly people living here in Branchville. When the Branchville rescue squad was formed it was a wonderful thing in the mid to late 70's and the volunteers are no longer here and the guidelines are tough to be qualified. It was then stated that the county would only back us up as long as we had volunteers. It was also discussed at one time that the Cattle Creek fire department might input a rescue unit but nothing ever became of it. Mayor Cooner said he was going to try to attend a County meeting to bring up this issue before going public with this matter. Mayor Cooner then complimented Mr. Allen Ott for the assistance the fire department gives during wrecks and other activities that require directing traffic.

Beautification Committee

Mr. Bill Silverthorne stated that they had planted rye grass at the Museum and at the Community Center so we would see pretty grass during the winter and that there was a light out on East Highway 78 and there is a sign that cactus keep pushing the sign down. He also thanked the Council for letting us move on the school clean up project. Mr. Silverthorne asked if we could complete by Christmas. Mayor Cooner said he might be able to find the additional money. Councilman Miller then asked if the Town could have the Old Yellow Fire Truck. Mr. Allen Ott said might need some work on the brakes and would need to write a letter to Mr. Oakley and let him speak with the higher ups and have Mr. Allen Ott a letter by Thursday night when they have the next board meeting. Mayor Cooner said we are going to try to pull it off one more time about raising property taxes.

We are reviewing property in town listed as agricultural and it is up to us whether or not we allow certain pieces of property to be listed as agricultural. We are reviewing that now and will bring the recommendation before the Council to have answer by January. Councilman Miller asked what determined what is agricultural, Mayor Cooner said you would think it would be farmland but a few trees planted could be considered agricultural.

OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Cooner stated at the close of this meeting we would have a public hearing on the 3rd and final reading on the water rate increase. Mayor Cooner said the only other old business was still working on the Water Project.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilwoman Amy Bryant asked about the Christmas Parade and if Councilwoman Georgianna Harmon had said something, Town Clerk Rhonda Thompson stated that Councilwoman Georgianna Harmon had phoned to let the Town know the Christmas Parade was scheduled for December 15th at 7:00 and that was a Friday night and would have the 16th and 17th as rain days. Mayor Cooner asked if the Council members wanted a float to ride and Mayor Pro Tem Charles Dukes said that was an expense the Town did not need. Councilman Glenn Miller asked how he got the bands to participate and if you contacted the school and Mayor Pro Tem Charles Dukes said he had the parade list on his computer. Mr. Bill Silverthorn asked how the budget looked and if we were working on it and Mayor Cooner responded by saying that it looked, like usual, kind of poor. Mayor Cooner then said while we are talking about Christmas that the Police Department has volunteered to handle the Christmas Party. Mayor Cooner then asked the Town Clerk Rhonda Thompson what day they had decided and it was December 21st, on a Thursday. Then Mayor Cooner said the menu would consist of Steaks, Potato's, Rolls, Macaroni, Salad Bar, Cole Slaw and Assorted Desserts.

PROGRESS ON CAPITAL PROJECTS

Mayor Cooner stated he needed to get an idea on what we are going to do with the Freight Depot. Mayor Pro Tem Charles Dukes' idea was to get together one night and brainstorm. Mayor Cooner said we need to brainstorm quickly but the Freight Depot project needs to be in Washington this month. Councilman Glenn Miller said two projects needs to be discussed the Freight Depot and the school project. Mayor Pro Tem Charles Dukes said speaking of the Old Elementary School there was a man in Orangeburg that has started several after school programs and were very successful. Mayor Cooner said he does not believe that an after school program would not last two months. Mayor Pro Tem Charles Dukes said this particular individual works magic with sports clubs. Mayor Cooner said to get the man on in here. Mayor Cooner stated, a work session needs to be held, not a Council meeting. Mayor Cooner said the number one priority for him is the Freight Depot, then, we need to discuss the Town Hall and tie two projects together and then work on getting more money. Mayor Cooner then suggested Thursday night at 7:00 and to come in with some ideas jotted down on paper.

Councilman Glenn Miller stated that he was told the reason why Branchville did not have a Health Center and Dialysis is because no one asked for it. Councilman Glenn Miller said he stated that four years ago and is now repeating himself. Mayor Cooner shared something he had brought up a year ago about moving the Community Center down to Horton Field and doing something different with the Community Center. Councilman Glenn Miller said that would never happen with the senior citizens of the Town. Mayor Cooner said it would be more convenient at Horton Field with small children's birthday parties to have a fenced in area and handicapped parking. Mayor Cooner said he has an option of buying a piece of property adjacent to Horton Field, and whatever becomes of the Hut building some kind of paved parking would have to be poured and that place could be made to look very attractive.

ITEMS OF INFORMATION

Mayor Cooner stated that Councilwoman Georgianna Harmon signed up to attend the SCRWA meeting in Myrtle Beach the 13th – 16th of November. Mayor Cooner said she did call in and was spending some time with her brother who was having some health issues. Councilwoman Amy Bryant brought up the issue of where the teens have been hanging out and that concerns her with the big trucks coming into town. Mayor Cooner asked what she wanted Police protection or signs. Councilwoman Amy Bryant did not want any of the teens to get hurt. They can park between the tracks just no semi-trucks can park there. We wrote a letter to the highway department on the Section Shed and are waiting to hear from them. Mayor Cooner said there were some trees behind the CBP plant that are huge enough to cut. Mayor Pro Tem Charles Dukes will ask Matthew Summers to give us a quote and then Councilman Glenn Miller said we need not to only ask local people when need to get several quotes. Mayor Cooner said we need to have the public hearing right after the meeting and he has no other information before Council. Mayor Cooner then asked if he could get a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Charles Dukes made the motion and Councilman Glenn Miller seconded.

Meeting Adjourned.

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Cooner called Council, today being November 6, 2006 Public Hearing for the water. We will now have the 3rd and final reading on the water rate structure for the 2007 year, for the Town of Branchville. What is the pleasure of Council, Councilman Glenn Miller made the motion and Councilwoman Amy Bryant seconded. Motion carried.

Mayor Cooner said he had nothing else to bring forth at this time and the meeting was dismissed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rhonda Thompson
Town Clerk