

Council Meeting Minutes
For
February 5, 2007
Branchville Town Hall
7:00 P.M.

PRESENT

Mayor Tim Cooner
Councilman Glenn Miller
Councilwoman Amy Bryant
Mayor Pro Tem Charles Dukes
Councilwoman Benita Gibbs
Councilwoman Georgianna Harmon

OTHERS PRESENT

Rhonda Thompson Town Clerk

GUESTS

Beverly Berry	Betty Skolasky	Luther Folk	Luvenia Williams
Jeffrey Hart	Virginia Peele	Lisa Treadaway	John Goodwin

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

Mayor Cooner welcomed everyone out and commented it was a little nippy and asked if everyone was OK.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Cooner asked the pleasure of Council on the approval of minutes. Councilman Miller said there was one correction on page one that should read Victory Garden and not Victory Guard. That change was noted and Mayor Pro Tem Dukes motioned and Councilman Miller seconded.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – AGENDA ITEMS/NON AGENDA ITEMS

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS OF OTHER MATTERS

Ms. Beverly Berry said she thought there was a leash law in effect in the Town and the Mayor said we do, Ms. Berry said everywhere she looks there is dogs running all over Town. Captain Hart asked if she knew whose dogs they were and Ms. Berry said no. then Captain Hart said that was the problem with leash law, if you don't know who the dogs owners are it is hard to enforce the leash law. Captain Hart then said the County Animal Control would put traps out for you if you want them to and then the Highway Patrol will pick them up. Captain Hart then stated that if you know whom the dogs belong to, the Police Department can enforce the leash law and have done so in the past to a few citizens on Bridge Street. Councilman Miller stated if the dogs are a problem put the traps out and get rid of them. Ms. Berry said she was not afraid of the dogs; she

does not like cleaning up after them. Councilwoman Bryant said someone had approached her about the windows in the gym not being fixed for Club Volleyball. Mayor Cooner said that no one who utilizes that gym complains except for Club Volleyball, and thought we were going to get pricing. Mayor Cooner said and Mayor Pro Tem Dukes agreed that some individuals play basketball in the gym several evenings during the week. Mayor Cooner advised Councilwoman Bryant that we would see what we could do about the gym. Ms. Berry asked what was happening on the fixing of the elementary school and Mayor Cooner replied we are trying to get a plan put together for that.

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT

Mayor Cooner asked pleasure of approving the financial report and Mayor Pro Tem Dukes motioned and Councilwoman Harmon seconded. Mayor Cooner shared with the Council that on the Financial Statement on line item School Water and Sewer D & C \$47,000, the Town just pulled \$17,000 out of that account and replaced the pump at the sewage pond that should be right at \$8,000. Mayor Cooner also stated there is work that needs to be done on the chlorination and we need some more scales. Councilman Miller questioned the expenditures, and the Mayor elaborated to say the Town is going to allow this company to work on pump stations #6, #5 and the school. Mayor Cooner went on to say that these pumps were installed back in 1998 or 1999 and preventive maintenance has not been done on a regular basis since the installation. There is a pump that keeps losing its prime and down at the school one pump keeps tripping out. Gary Collins a man out of Columbia charges \$100.00/hour. Mayor Pro Tem Dukes said that is probably the going rate. Councilman Miller said he can beat that price. Mayor Cooner said that is why he is not signing a contract with Gary Collins. Mayor Cooner said that we purchased a pump with a higher horsepower because we could get that one in three days versus three weeks. This pump is the one that pumps into the river and being that we had so much rain last week we did not need to go three weeks with only one pump working that area. because in the winter time water does not evaporate as quickly in the pond as it does in the summer time. Mayor Pro Tem Dukes said the stronger pumps would probably be better for the Town anyway. Councilman Miller asked what we were doing with the pump losing prime. Mayor Cooner responded by saying that the Town continues to prime it and it might last an hour or maybe one week before losing prime again. Mayor Cooner said an estimate of what needs to be spent to correct these problems should be around \$12,000 - \$15,000, he also said the chlorination work should cost around \$4,000 and preventive maintenance should be done on chlorination and sulfur dioxide every six months.

COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

Police Department

-Mayor Cooner stated that the Police Department was doing a good job. Mayor Pro Tem Dukes said he doesn't hear anything around Town so they must be doing a good job.

Administrative Office

-Councilman Miller stated nothing new.

Public Works

-Mayor Cooner said these men are working and had to go to the sewage pond last Monday when it was so cold and it felt like 100 mile and hour winds. Mayor Cooner said that him and Hank was hovered up beside the building trying to cut the wind. Mayor Cooner said they had to go back down there Thursday to put a motor in and when Hank left he was wet down to his socks. Mayor Cooner said at times you might see these men sitting down but when you go home and have water you know they are doing their jobs. Mayor Cooner said and in the summer time they work hard as mules, so this is the time they have a chance to catch their breath and we do some maintenance on different things. Mayor Cooner said we had a sewer stop up between Highway Department and Ott Street and that took the most of two days to fix the problem. Mayor Cooner said that we have written the letter regarding the old fire truck but have not gotten a response.

Mayors Report

-Mayor Cooner said the two properties we looked at buying down by the old Ball Field are locked in now and the Town can purchase. Mayor Cooner said he has a list of items needed for different sports and we were given some money from Councilman Wimberly to do some work at the elementary school and the funds were not enough so Councilman Wimberly told Mayor Cooner to put a package together as to how he wanted to spend the funds. Mayor Cooner said he wanted to do something with the two Ball Fields, and at Horton Field want to bulldoze down the bathrooms and build some nice ones, and fix the parking lot. Mayor Cooner said the one property by Mr. Folks house is low and the only thing we will be able to do there is clear that property and bring in dirt and plant grass. Councilman Miller asked what kind of money for that property and Mayor Cooner stated \$8,500.00 for the one by Mr. Folk and the one at the Ball Field was \$10,000.00. Councilman Miller asked why wouldn't we fix up the old elementary school and if there was anything left, fix up the Ball Field. Mayor Cooner said y'all remember every year how we have to travel to Edisto to play ball, and this year some of the games are going to be played here in the Town. Mayor Cooner said this ball league has gotten so big and Mayor Pro Tem Dukes stated we now have six different age groups. Mayor Cooner said who remembers last year when they had that football game down there, he said there were so many people down there he thought they must be giving away \$100 dollar bills. Councilman Miller brought up once more the fixing of the old elementary school and he said it is really not as bad as what some people may think. Mayor Cooner said that he had spoken to the County Councilman about some kind of after school program similar to the one in Orangeburg that we are trying to get put into the old elementary school. Mayor Cooner then stated that he had received a phone call just last week saying some of The New Penny money was going to be ready and this was "up front" money so we could see more going on than just the Ball Fields. Councilman Miller said the hedges at the old elementary school needs trimming and there was an individual around Town that does that and could he get pricing for him to trim the hedges. Mayor Cooner said we are going to do something, we are going to have some really nice Ball Fields and everyone knows there is a drainage problem there which will have to be addressed and get lights and spend a pile of money on fences. Mayor Cooner then addressed Councilman Miller that when we start working over there we might want to put a high fence all the way around the entire building. Councilwoman Gibbs said that the children in that area liked

Basketball and maybe we could put in a few more courts. Mayor Cooner said all around the well back to the ditch should be cleaned up so that should give us room for the Ball Fields and for some Basketball Courts, Councilwoman Gibbs said she knew the Basketball Courts would be utilized. Mayor Cooner said we want to have a sports complex and having it in one location is not feasible because it is not enough room so therefore we would have to make two separate areas. Councilman Miller said the community needs to be involved and let them know this is "their community" and if someone comes and abuses the property the Police needs to be called. Councilman Miller also stated that the areas will need to be kept clean and the people that utilize it should be the ones. Mayor Cooner said that is like when we go out and turn off someone's water and they go out there and turn it back on, he said enough \$870.00 tickets should let people know that is not tolerable. Councilwoman Gibbs said all we have to do is ask the children to help, because in many instances in the past the Beautification committee has asked, and Councilwoman Gibbs has rounded all of them up and they were more than willing to help. Councilman Miller said some children were offended after Rail Rode Daze hearing that 4-H was given all the credit for cleaning up.

Beautification Committee

No new information to report.

OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Cooner said we advertised the coolers at the old elementary school for bid and they closed last Friday and we obtained one bid, Councilwoman Gibbs said she wondered when that happened. Councilwoman Gibbs went on the say that as long as we keep taking from the school and not replacing anything half of the kitchen appliances was gone already and if by chance we were to open the school back up then the Town will have to go and purchase all new items. Mayor Cooner said he doubts that the coolers are in working condition. Councilman Miller said then the minutes should reflect that discussion. Councilwoman Gibbs agreed that she did not see anything regarding the coolers in the last minutes. Mayor Cooner said it was discussed. Councilwoman Gibbs said why do we keep taking from the school and don't put anything back into it. Councilman Miller found the minutes that read, "There was some discussion regarding the coolers at the school" and said that was the end of it. Mayor Cooner asked what the Council wanted to do. Councilwoman Gibbs said that her mother and her walked to the school and looked at the coolers and it made Councilwoman Gibbs very angry that the coolers were not even locked because they could be an endangerment for children. Councilwoman Harmon said that would be a good reason to get rid of them. if they created some danger. Councilwoman Gibbs went on the say that if the coolers are removed from the school it would leave two huge holes in there that would have to be fixed. Councilman Miller agreed. Councilwoman Harmon asked if the coolers worked. Councilwoman Bryant said to have coolers fixed would cost almost as much as buying new ones. Councilwoman Gibbs wanted to know if there was a limit where the bids would start. Councilman Miller said he thought the Council had agreed on setting a minimum bid which would prohibit items being sold at to cheap of a price, which has happened too many times in the past. Councilman Miller brought up once more the information provided in the minutes regarding the coolers. Councilwoman Harmon

asked if they should motion to bid on coolers. Councilman Millers said that Councilwoman Gibbs said that if you take the coolers out you would have a hole in the building. Councilwoman Harmon said that if you leave them in you have a safety hazard. Councilwoman Gibbs said if you don't sell them then take the doors off of them. Councilwoman Gibbs said the Council needed to go see before deciding to bid and remove the coolers because there would be a hole in the building and Councilwoman Gibbs has to look out her window everyday and see the school in the condition jts in now and we only want to keep taking and taking and taking, we are steadily destroying the school. Councilwoman Bryant asked the Mayor if he had seen the coolers. Mayor Cooner said the coolers were old and outdated like everything else around at the school. Mayor Cooner said he had the school secured at one time and someone broke into it and stole the alarm system. Mayor Cooner also said we have chained the doors and the locks were taken, and the windows were knocked out. The Council then all spoke at the same time. Councilwoman Harmon asked what the Mayor thought about it and he suggested tabling it and thinking about it. Mayor Cooner asked if that would be suitable with the Council and they agreed.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Cooner asked at this time to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter and Councilman Miller motioned Councilwoman Gibbs seconded. Mr. Luther Folk then asked if he could say a few words and he said the Town can say what you are going to do but you have to do it. Mr. Folk said he had been on Council for 39 years and during those years they rebuilt the Depot and put the apartments in and brought the sewage into town. Mr. Folk then told the Mayor and Council the projects in progress now are Streetscape, Rural Water, Freight Depot and Town Hall. Mr. Folk said if the Town gets these completed in the next two years Mayor Cooner will be the best Mr. Folk has ever seen. Mr. Folk said he believed he could do it but the Council would have to stick by him. Mayor Cooner said when he came on board as Mayor the only thing the Council person's at that time worried about was what time they were going to get out for the ballgames. Mayor Cooner reminded Mr. Folk of the bad water system that was in place when he became Mayor and that the Museum had burnt down and was still sitting there burnt and the Town had no Police Department. Mayor Cooner reminded Mr. Folk of what he has accomplished and the Grant money he has gotten for the Town. Mayor Cooner then told Mr. Folk that in November for him to vote on him a new Mayor. Mr. Folk said that he had run into Mr. Silverthorne and Mr. Folk thanked him for the work he did around getting the school that burned, cleaned up. Mr. Folk said that Mr. Silverthorne told him that Mr. Folk was the only one that had thanked him for doing a good job. Mr. Folk suggested that the Town write Mr. Silverthorne a letter thanking him for the work he has done. Mr. Folk said the Mayor and Council and community has to work together to get anything done. Mayor Cooner said that we had to pay 100% on the Old School clean up project and the job is not yet done. Mayor Cooner said Mr. Silverthorne and Mr. Rhoad jumped all over him for not paying in full and Mayor Cooner said to pay. Councilman Miller said absolutely not; don't pay until the job is complete. Councilwoman Harmon said it should not be paid. Mayor Cooner said the property was supposed to be brought back up to grade and seeded and Mayor Cooner held back 10% for this to be completed, but when they insisted on him being paid Mayor Cooner paid in

full. Mayor Cooner said Mr. Rhoad said recently it has been to wet to complete. Councilman Miller said if he had someone putting a roof on his house he would not get full pay unless the roof was completely on. Councilman Miller asked where the extra money is going to come from to pay someone else to finish the job and Mayor Cooner replied we would have to seek legal litigation against Mr. Rhoad. Councilman Miller said to let the record show, this night, that before the old school ground is complete the Town will spend big dollars, if it is spent on nothing but attorney fees. Mayor Cooner acknowledged Ms. Luvenia Williams and said that she was the Town's best employee. Ms. Williams said she would always be here for the Seniors. Ms. Williams thanked Mayor Cooner for all of his hard work and mentioned the Senior Meal Program still needs funds. Ms. Williams said she is feeding 50 to 60 a day and if more funding is not received they will have to rotate to 30 people a day. Ms. Williams said she couldn't look into those Seniors eyes and tell them that 30 can come tomorrow and 30 the next day. Ms. Williams said Mayor Cooner has been searching very hard to locate more funds and she asked the Council to help. Ms. Williams also reminded the Council that she has not seen any of them visit the Seniors during the meal program since it has started. Ms. Williams said if the Council would visit they could see the enjoyment they get from the program. Ms. Williams also said she has some that have not missed one time. Mayor Cooner said the program is doing very well and he has made phone calls to Representative Gilda Cobb Hunter, Senator Matthews, and Congressman Clyburn. Mayor Cooner said we need approximately \$13,000 to carry the Seniors until June 30th and at that time we will have new money coming down. Mayor Cooner also stated he has been talking with the Lieutenant Governor's office and the Mayor is planning on taking the Seniors up to the State House. Mayor Cooner said he holds a position on the Board for the Orangeburg County Council on Aging and they say that our site is the biggest one that they have currently. Mayor Cooner said last month alone our site turned in over \$800.00. Mayor Cooner said it's just hard to get the money through the state passed. Mayor Cooner said if he could ever get the money reoccurring then the Town would have something going in the right direction. Councilwoman Harmon said if last month we were averaging 41, what is the average now. Ms. Williams replied 48 to 55. Councilwoman Gibbs stated that if we fix up the old elementary school cafeteria and that would hold them all, and be enough parking.

Mayor Cooner asked for motion to go into executive session and Mayor Pro Tem Dukes motioned and Councilwoman Gibbs seconded. After executive session two issues were brought to the table and voted upon. The first being that the Town could do business with Palmetto Chlorination, it was motioned by Mayor Pro Tem Dukes and Councilwoman Harmon seconded. The second being the purchase of a package of 16 Hersey radio read meters for \$4,000.00, it was motioned by Mayor Pro Tem Dukes and seconded by Councilwoman Bryant.

PROGRESS ON CAPITAL PROJECTS

No new information to report.

ITEMS OF INFORMATION

No new information to report.

Mayor Cooner said if no further business could he have a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Dukes motioned and Councilwoman Harmon seconded.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rhonda Thompson".

Rhonda Thompson
Town Clerk