

Town of Branchville
Council Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2015

The regular Council meeting for the Town of Branchville was held at 6 p.m. Monday, March 9, 2015, at the Town Hall. A notice was posted at the Town Hall with the time, date and place of the meeting at least 24 hours before the meeting.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem Tom Jennings. The Council, along with all those present, stood for the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by prayer.

The roll call indicated that Mayor Glenn Miller, Mayor Pro Tem Tom Jennings, Councilman Michael Blankenship, Councilman Sam Whisenhunt, Councilman Gregory Oliver and Councilwoman Amy Ott were present. Councilman Christopher Ott was absent.

Mayor Pro Tem Jennings welcomed the guests.

Minutes: Councilwoman Bryant made a motion to approve the Feb. 9, 2015 meeting minutes. It was noted that Councilman Oliver had misspoken when he said at the Feb. 9 meeting that the garbage collection contract with Republic Services rolled over for 3 years; it is actually 1 year. Motion carried.

Executive session: Councilman Blankenship made a motion to go into executive session for a personnel matter. Councilman Oliver seconded the motion. Motion carried. Council met in executive session for approximately one hour. Councilman Blankenship made a motion to return to public session. Councilwoman Bryant seconded the motion. Motion carried. Mayor Pro Tem Jennings said that the Council had discussed a personnel matter that did not require a vote.

Financial reports: Mayor Miller asked about a \$59,000 deposit that was labeled as property tax income. He said he would appreciate being informed whenever the Town receives a large amount of money like that. He asked several other questions about revenues and expenditures. Other Council members provided answers as best as they could in the absence of Town Clerk/Treasurer Jenny Elliott. Mayor Miller and others said the financial reports need to be clearer, simpler and easier to understand.

Councilman Whisenhunt made a motion to approve the financial reports. Councilman Blankenship seconded the motion. Motion carried, with Mayor Miller voting no.

Personnel policy: Mayor Pro Tem Jennings made a motion to accept the amended personnel policy as presented. Councilwoman Bryant seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Timber: Councilman Blankenship said the Council previously asked Caw Caw Timber Co. to submit a contract stating they will repair whatever they tear up as they harvest timber near the convenience site and Valley Proteins. He said Mr. Eddie Lee agreed verbally but thought the Council meeting was Tuesday and had not submitted anything in writing. Councilman Blankenship said it is not a big deal at this point because it is too wet to harvest timber there. He said the Council can consider the written contract at its next meeting if Mr. Lee brings the written contract to Town Hall before then.

Garbage collection contract: Councilman Oliver said the vendor, Republic Services, raises its fee by 3 percent each year the contract rolls over. He also said Republic has agreed to remove the monthly fee they had been charging for collection of yard waste, a service that few if any people have been using.

Ellis Avenue sewer line: Mayor Miller gave Council members copies of a map of his property and others near Dorange Road and Ellis Avenue showing where a sewer line crosses three private properties. He said the Town assumes the property owners own the line, but he disagrees with that position. He contends it's actually the Town's responsibility to maintain the line. The Mayor said he wants this stated in the minutes because at some point in the future there is going to be a problem with this line.

Dump truck: Mayor Pro Tem Jennings asked if anyone had any ideas for determining its value. Council members compared the truck's NADA book value with advertisements for similar models, such as a 2007 Ford F-250 with 87,000 miles being offered for \$48,900 and a 2006 model for \$38,900.

Mayor Pro Tem Jennings made a motion to advertise that bids for the dump truck will be opened at the next Council meeting, April 13, 2015, at 6 p.m. at Town Hall. The minimum bid is \$50,000. Councilman Oliver seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Trailer: Mayor Pro Tem Jennings made a motion to advertise that bids for the tandem axle trailer will be opened at the next Council meeting, April 13, 2015, at 6 p.m. at Town Hall. The minimum bid is \$7,500. Councilman Oliver seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Street light bulbs: Previously the Council had approved switching 20 street lights to LEDs at a cost of \$150 each. So far one has been installed, near the China Town restaurant. Councilman Whisenhunt asked if Council members were still in favor of switching 19 more lights. Mayor Pro Tem Jennings made a motion to proceed with the new lighting. Councilman Oliver seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Branchville Youth Sports: Councilman Blankenship said he wanted to give an overview of what is going on at Horton Field. This spring there are seven baseball teams and two softball teams involving a total of 100 players, age 4 to 12. There are also five soccer teams with 30 players in all. About 30 people are volunteering as coaches. Practices and/or games will be taking place at Horton Field every weekday for the next two months and a lot of Saturdays too. Last autumn there were 80 football players and cheerleaders. Some of the teams travel to games around the county and in neighboring counties. Councilman Blankenship said BYS helps prepare children for high school athletic competitions. He also thanked the police officers for helping maintain an orderly atmosphere at the ball games.

Election questions: The Orangeburg County Office of Voter Registration and Elections has asked two questions. Does the Town want the county to continue conducting municipal elections? And do we want to keep our "plurality" form in which the candidates who get the most votes win, or have runoffs?

Councilman Whisenhunt made a motion to inform the county that we want the county to continue conducting municipal elections and to keep the plurality form that the Town has been using. Councilman Oliver seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Conference: Clerk of Court Lee Hendren asked for authorization to attend the Municipal Court Administration Association's Spring Meeting on April 10 in Columbia. The only costs to the Town would be mileage and the \$100 registration fee (including meals). Councilman Blankenship made a motion to send Mr. Hendren to the meeting. Councilman Whisenhunt seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Municipal Judge: Clerk of Court Hendren said J. Frank Quattlebaum's term as municipal judge is nearly up and the Council needs to decide whether to renew his contract or invite others to express their interest and submit their credentials.

Mayor Pro Tem Jennings said the Town advertises for quotes on just about everything else. He directed Mr. Hendren to contact the Municipal Association of South Carolina for insights into the qualifications for a municipal judge and how the Town can go about identifying candidates for the position. Council members said they want this item put on the agenda of the April 14 Council meeting.

Training: Councilman Whisenhunt said there will be a training session on March 31 on flushing the distribution system and disinfecting broken lines. The cost is \$15 per participant. Councilman Whisenhunt asked for authorization for himself, Nelson Goldsmith and Brian Delk to attend this session. Councilman Blankenship so moved. Mayor Miller seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Councilman Whisenhunt said there will be an equipment operators' expo in Columbia on April 23. The cost is \$40 per participant. Councilman Blankenship made a motion to send Mr. Goldsmith, Mr. Delk

and Councilman Whisenhunt to the Expo. Councilman Oliver seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Councilman Whisenhunt asked if they could take the Town truck to save mileage costs. Councilman Blankenship so moved. Mayor Pro Tem Jennings seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Public comments: Marianna Street said she is glad the playground next to Horton Field is open and the children are using it.

Phyllis Overstreet asked if Mayor Miller had repaid the Town for the dinner at Ryan's as the Council requested at its previous meeting. Mayor Miller replied that he had not done so yet, but that he will.

A member of the audience asked when the spray park will open. Councilman Whisenhunt said it will be ready to open on Memorial Day.

Street lights, part 2: Councilman Oliver said SCE&G has recommended relocating three street lights and adding three street lights to existing poles. The only cost would be the monthly electricity bill. One of the places that would be better lighted would be in front of the Dollar General store.

Councilman Oliver so moved. Councilwoman Bryant seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Tools: Councilman Oliver made a motion that someone be authorized to go to the Homier tool sale in Orangeburg later in the week and spend up to \$200 on basic tools so the Town employees can do repair work without having to use their own personal tools. Councilman Whisenhunt made a substitute motion to purchase the tools at Lowe's so they can be returned if found to be defective. He offered to make the purchases. Mayor Pro Tem Jennings offered an amendment to raise the amount to \$500 as long as it includes a lockable tool box. Councilman Blankenship seconded the motion. Motion carried.

F-150 truck: Councilman Oliver said a line going from the front of the engine to the back is leaking water but the part is no longer available. He said the options are to replace the entire engine; find the part at a salvage yard; or ask NAPA in St. George if they can fabricate a line especially for the Town. Council asked Councilman Oliver to look into the options and report back with cost estimates.

Raylrode Daze: Councilman Oliver proposed having a meeting to discuss the festival's finances. He said the Town spends about \$2,500 a year on garbage bins, food for law officers, and cleanup for the privately sponsored event. Councilman Oliver asked if it is fair for the town to spend tax dollars on such expenses. He proposed that the Town receive 10 percent or more of the proceeds from vendor permits.

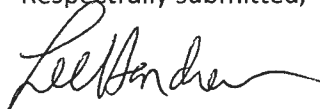
Mayor Pro Tem Jennings said the festival does not raise enough money to reimburse the Town. He said the festival is a good use of tax dollars because it brings more people to Branchville than any other event, because it "keeps life in the Town" and because most townspeople attend and enjoy the festival.

Fire department: Councilman Blankenship said a County official asked him to publicly debunk some rumors about the fire department. First, it serves outlying areas in addition to the Town itself. Second, the department is a function of the County, not the Town. Third, no new fire station is envisioned.

Penny tax: Councilman Blankenship said he met with County Administrator Harold Young to discuss penny tax revenues. Councilman Blankenship distributed copies of a hand-out itemizing how the revenue from the second penny sales tax was spent in Branchville. He presented a document that needs the Mayor's signature so the Town can begin receiving revenue from the third round of the penny tax.

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Lee Hendren, Clerk of Court, in the absence of Clerk/Treasurer Jenny Elliott