Town of Branchville

Regular Council Meeting

Mayor Franklin Dickson Presiding

Monday, July 13th, 2020

7:00 PM

The regular Council Meeting for the Town of Branchville was held on Monday, July 13th, 2020 at 7 PM at the Town Hall. A notice with the time, date and place of the meeting was posted on the exterior bulletin board of the Town Hall at least 24 hours before the meeting.

Mayor Dickson called the meeting to order. Council, along with all those present, stood for the

Pledge of Allegiance, followed by prayer. Roll called indicated that Mayor Dickson, Mayor Pro Tem Blankenship, Councilman Oliver, Councilman Banks and Councilman Jumper were present. Councilman Dukes came in shortly after roll call.

**Welcome of Guest:** Mayor Dickson welcomed those present.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mayor Pro Tem Blankenship made the motion to approve the June 9th, 2020 minutes. Councilman Oliver seconded the motion, motion carried.

**Approval of Financial Report:** Councilman Dukes made the motion to approve the General Fund

Financial report for June 2020. Councilman Banks seconded the motion, motion carried. Councilman Dukes made the motion to approve the June 2020 Municipal Court financial report. Mayor Pro-Tem Blankenship seconded the motion, motion carried. Councilman Oliver made the motion to approve the June 2020 Water and Sewer financial report. Mayor Pro Tem Blankenship seconded the motion, motion carried.

**Council Reports:**

1. **City Hall/License/Insurance:** Councilman Banks reports: No reports at this time, personnel matter to discuss in Executive Session.
2. **Water/Sewer/Streets:** Councilman Oliver reports: Evans St has five leaks, per Nick Pinckney in order to fix the problem the whole street needs to be dug up and water lines re-run. Pinckney can do the water work, but does not repair the road. Discussion on running lines on both sides of the road to avoid excessive tap fees, and using cold patch or crush and run as band-aids for now. Mayor suggested we try to hold it until the penny money comes through in September. Oliver says it should hold until then with the band-aids but will need to be addressed in the near future. Also during the recent repaving of Freedom road a leak formed down past the Dollar General, possibly caused by the heavy construction equipment. Mayor says he will talk with the construction company about it.
3. **Parks/Recreation:** Mayor Pro Tem Blankenship reports: Not much going on at the ball fields, a few teams using the facility for practice. Volunteer groups are keeping up with the grass, fall sports are in question, don’t know what’s going to happen yet there. Doing some projects with the remaining penny money that needs to be spent by the end of the year, AstroTurf and shade covers
4. **Projects/Events:** Raylrode Daze has officially been cancelled by the Raylrode Daze committee due to a concern for the inability to enforce social distancing and in an effort to protect the town from COVID-19.
5. **Buildings/Grounds:** Councilman Oliver reports: Have a bid from Jake’s Glass to install Plexiglas at the front counter at Town Hall for both security and COVID-19 protection. Councilman Oliver made a motion to accept the bid from Jake’s Glass to install the barrier. Councilman Dukes seconded the motion, motion carried.
6. **Police Department:** Councilman Dukes reports: Good month considering the pandemic, thanks to the police department for all they do. Court was held for the first time in two months in June, 135 cases were heard.

**Old Business:** No old Business

**New Business:** Face Masks: Mayor Dickson stated that he was in a meeting of local mayors with Orangeburg County July 3rd when Orangeburg approved the face mask ordinance. At that meeting, many mayors expressed the need to have that in their own towns, and he was told that all municipalities would have to adopt the ordinance on their own. The Branchville ordinance is a copy of the Orangeburg ordinance. Mayor called for discussion of the face mask ordinance for Branchville. Councilman Banks dissented, expressing concern. He noted the mask debate was truly a civil liberties debate, and that concentrated government power is an enemy of liberty, bringing us one step closer to socialism and communism. He believes that the people of Branchville are aware enough of the risks to wear the masks when in the appropriate situations without having to have an ordinance to force the issue. Council discussed the scope and duration of the ordinance and consulted with Chief Clark on the enforcement of the ordinance. It was noted that Branchville gets a good bit of traffic from out of state. One of Branchville’s police officers has been diagnosed with the virus, office staff and other officers are taking precautions. Mayor asked for a motion was to be made to approve the ordinance. Motion was made by Councilman Jumper, seconded by Councilman Dukes. The vote was taken with four Councilmen in favor and two opposed. Motion was passed.

**Public Comments Agenda:** Beverly Berry noted that the ordinance wording states that it would automatically expire in sixty one days, not the ninety days that was mistakenly quoted. She asked what the merchants should do if someone in the store was told to put on a mask and refused. Mayor Dickson told her they should call Town Hall to have an officer sent over. Matt Clamp noted that he was told by Dollar General employees that they could not turn anyone away, mask or no mask. It was discussed that there are certain situations, such as disability or religious reasons, that someone would not be required to wear a mask.

**Public Comments Other:**  None

**Items for Information:** Election is July 14, 2020 to fill the seat of Donny Connelly. Running for that seat is Glenn Miller and Tommy Connelly. Raylrode Daze has been cancelled for reasons stated previously. An audience member asked if the Christmas Parade would be cancelled as well, and Mayor Dickson stated not yet, we were waiting a little longer to see if it would still be possible.

**Executive Session:** Mayor Pro Tem Blankenship made a motion to go to Executive Session. Councilman Dukes seconded the motion, motion carried. Council left at 7:46 PM. Councilman Banks made the motion to return to the regular Council Meeting at 8:43 PM. Councilman Oliver seconded the motion, motioned carried.

Councilman Oliver said that under contractual matters they discussed a bid for some work to be done to the Community Center. The work to be done is replacing the windows and installing vinyl siding. Three bids were submitted, the bid recommended for approval was from Ken Stevens. Mayor asked for a vote to approve the bid, motion carried.

Under personnel matters, Councilman Banks made a motion to hire Faye Connelly back as Town Clerk since the sad passing of former Councilman Donny Connelly. All Council seconded, motion passed. Clerk Connelly thanked the Council for their generosity and for all consideration that was shown. All Council welcomed Clerk Connelly back.

Mayor Dickson mentioned that there was a wastewater report received from DHEC indicating a violation, but that Alvin Jeffcoat was on top of it. Mayor Pro-Tem Blankenship presented a letter that had been signed by several different municipalities to be addressed to the governor to ask for equal opportunities for all students with respect to broadband access. Mayor Pro-Tem Blankenship made the motion to sign the letter, Councilman Oliver seconded, motion carried.

Council met with Matt Clamp in Executive Session who hosted a Youth Coon Hunt over the past weekend and would like Council’s support to make the event bigger and better next year. Council was agreeable, but Mr. Clamp will return to Council with more information closer to the next hunt

**Adjournment**: Motion was made by Councilman Dukes to adjourn the meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Blankenship seconded the motion, motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:48 PM.

Clerk of Court

Emily Maynard