Town of Branchville

Budget Meeting

Mayor Franklin Dickson Presiding

Monday December 13, 2021

6:30 PM

The Budget Meeting / Public Hearing for the Town of Branchville was held on Monday, December 13, 2021 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 all council was present.

**Welcome of Guest:** Mayor Dickson welcomed those present. Mayor Dickson explained that the purpose for this meeting was to inform the public of a rate increase for water and sewer. He also explained as to how we got to this point for such an increase. In 2016 I became Mayor. I was informed by DHEC that the town was fined $9,900.00 for false documents in our water system. We have several loans with USDA for water. One of the loans the county of Orangeburg assisted the town with, however, those funds ran out last year. Orangeburg County did assist us last year through October. I was also told that the Town owed Orangeburg County $153,000.00. These funds were issued was prior to this council. We knew the USDA loans would have to be paid, but were unaware of the money owed to the County of Orangeburg. The funds were mishandled by prior management before us. Out of 323 towns in South Carolina, our current rates are 23rd from the bottom. We brought in Rural Water Development to assist and advise the council. They worked with us and made their recommendations, and the only thing to do was to raise the rates and from that point forward implement a 3% increase each year on the base rate. We held several meetings trying our best to keep the rates as low as possible. The debt owed to USDA for loans is 3.2 million. Councilmembers assured the guests we did our very best to keep rates as low as possible, explaining that we had no surplus, therefore we had to increase the rates. Mayor Dickson asked the public for the comments. Several guests spoke: David Gaskins, Robert May, Cynthia Chandler and Pricilla Banks. The council heard their complaints and concerns.

**Adjournment**: Motion was made by Council Dukes to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Jumper seconded the motion, motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:00PM.

Town Clerk

Faye Connelly