

MINUTE BOOK XXXI PAGES 19-25
PLANNING RETREAT MINUTES
February 28, 2022

The Planning Retreat of the Town of Troutman Town Council was held on Monday, February 28, 2022, 8:30 am the Troutman Town Hall, 400 North Eastway Drive, North Carolina with Mayor Teross W. Young, Jr. presiding.

Council Members Present: W. Paul Henkel, George W. Harris, Edward R. Nau, Felina L. Harris, Jerry R. Oxsher

Council Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Ronald Wyatt, Town Manager; Kimberly Davis, Town Clerk; Justin Mundy, Finance Director; Josh Watson, Police Chief; Adam Lippard, Public Works Manager; Chip Smith, Parks and Rec. Director; Lynne Hair, Planning Director; Emily Watson, Communications and Employee Services

Press Present: Debbie Page, Iredell Free News

Others Present: See Sign-in Sheet

MAYOR YOUNG CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Young presented a brief welcome and expressed appreciation to all in attendance.

Town Manager Ronald Wyatt asked that everyone to please turn their phones off or to silent. He stated that the purpose of the retreat is for staff to evaluate where we have been, where we are and where we are going so that we can better serve our citizens and perform to their expectations. Department heads will be presenting before Council their processes and systems, and their needs in order to properly plan for the town's future. He stated that citizens have noticed and are appreciative that the Town is being frugal in holding their retreat at Town Hall and not out of Town. He advised Council that the Department Heads presenting today will not be in attendance for the second half of the retreat due to taking time off to enjoy time with their families during their children's spring break.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, (*Adam Lippard, Public Works Director*)

Safety

Public Works Director Adam Lippard began his presentation with the department's top priority which is safety stating that 3.5 out of every 100,000 construction workers die every year. In 2019 there were 5,333 deaths in the United States; the highest fatality rate of any industry. Seventy (70) of those are due to trench cave-ins and ninety-two (92) were due to unsafe confined space entries. These type incidences are encountered weekly within the department and in order to avoid them, employees complete all required safety training along with all safety directives, and policies are reviewed and updated as necessary including personal protective equipment and standard operating procedures to make sure all procedures are in line with OSHA and best practices. Mr. Lippard discussed future departmental safety needs that include additional shoring and trench equipment with required training; implementation of a new wireless communications system that would serve as a back-up in the event of cell service failure; and increased in-house safety training. The department's goal is zero incidents, informing Council that there was one minor hand injury last year.

Wastewater

Mr. Lippard provided an overview of the Town's sewer system stating that the Town maintains 33 miles of gravity sewer line and 16 miles of force main sewer. The Town also maintains 17 pump stations that continue to grow with two more getting ready to come on line within the next year which will significantly add to the department's workload. He spoke to wastewater compliance noting that in August of 2020 the wastewater system underwent a complete evaluation by NCDWQ (NC Division of Water Quality). Within 9 categories and over 100 subcategories, zero (0) deficiencies were found and system operating procedures and record-keeping continue to exceed compliance standards. Next inspection will be April 5th this year. Mr. Lippard advised that the department continues to work with engineering on the wastewater infrastructure system and I&I (Inflow and Infiltration) remediation with the assistance of Rural Water. Future wastewater system needs is second phase of the sewer improvement project at Westmoreland Road. Town Manager Ron Wyatt explained that the Town received \$2.5 million state grant funded at 100% for the Westmoreland Road sewer project for the capability of sending wastewater to Mooresville to be processed. Councilmember Nau requested an update regarding the jetter truck. Mr. Lippard responded that the hold up in receiving the truck is by Ford due to supply and demand, but once the dealer can get a VIN number, the timeline will be 6 to 8 weeks. Town Manager Wyatt stated that he does not anticipate getting the truck in this year's budget.

Water

Mr. Lippard presented an overview of the Town's water system highlighting that 96% of the Town's 60 mile water system contains modern designs and materials including ductile iron (top of the line), C-900, C-909, 180 PSI PVC, and copper; only 4% is cast iron piping. He commented that leaks will happen no matter the piping with shifting of the ground during weather changes. The Town maintains an excellent compliance rating meeting and frequently exceeding all state standards. Mr. Lippard advised that there are roughly 53 miles of water lines consisting of ¾" to 16" lines. The annual 2021 Local Water Supply Plan is complete and the 2022 plan is currently in the process of being completed before April. He explained water maintenance and compliance monitoring for bacteria, chlorine testing, water tank inspections, hydrant flushing, maintain all associated systems records and electronic state reporting in efforts of maintaining safe drinking water. In addressing projects in process, Mr. Lippard stated that they are changing out bad and/or out of spec meters in effort to meet their goal at a rate of 10 per month. A review of all standard operating procedures was completed and those procedures were updated. Councilmember Oxsher asked if Public Works do residential water samples. Mr. Lippard replied that they handle in-house chlorine sampling but the state sampling is sent to R&A Labs. The Town does lead and copper sampling for residential every three (3) years. Mr. Lippard continued by highlighting future water system goals as follows: procurement of leak detection equipment; achieve 10% of less water loss reporting (the town is currently at 13%, state average is 15 to 20%); achieve a 1% or less monthly water meter recheck rate; achieve a .2% or less monthly water meter change out rate. Councilmember Nau asked if there is insurance that would cover a broken water line that may would be considered a catastrophic. Town Manager Wyatt replied that there is such, since being in this role he just has not priced it. He advised that he had priced it in a different professional role and it was outrageously expensive and if a claimed is not filed every 3 years it would not be worth the cost, but he can check into it. Town Manager Wyatt stated that in 2020 the Town applied for a grant with the Division of Water Quality to help identify improvements needed within the Town's water system and was denied. The Town is in the process of applying for the same grant once again and if successful it will improve the quality of the Town's water system. He advised that Energy United the company that supplies the Town's water has implemented an increase of 4½% this year. He explained that the Town once purchased water from Statesville before going with Energy United and reported that the town is close to having new agreements with Statesville.

Streets

Mr. Lippard stated that Public Works is responsible for maintaining all city streets (small street repairs), curbs and storm drains clean of debris, maintaining and installing crosswalks, spraying curbs and sidewalks, and sign repair and installation. He stated that the biggest issue in repairing streets is availability of asphalt. Mayor Young stated that at one time the Town had a report ranking street repairs needed and asked if the report is being kept up. Mr. Lippard replied yes it is. Town Manager Wyatt responded that ranking of the street infrastructure will be revisited as part of the grant the Town just received.

Facilities and Grounds

Public Works is responsible for maintenance of town facilities and grounds. Mowing will begin next month. Town Manager Wyatt expanded further regarding facilities and grounds providing a brief history regarding staffing within Public Works. Efforts are in the process of completing/re-doing work in the planning house and at the Wagner Street building project before commercial contractors are needed to pull permits to complete the projects making them ADA compliant.

Vehicle and Equipment

Mr. Lippard stated that Public Works is responsible in maintaining all town vehicles and equipment (admin, public works and police).

Employee Training

Employees have completed all required training and certifications for maintaining the Town's water and sewer system as well as additional training above what is required.

Current Challenges

Mr. Lippard stated that even though he did speak about the modern material is the Town's systems, there is 1) ageing infrastructure that will cause issues in the future; 2) sewer capacity issues and treatment provider; 3) replacement of aging backup power supply (generators); and 4) replacement of sewer pumps.

Staffing

Mr. Lippard advised that staffing is currently one less than in 2007. Efficiency has improved, but is no longer sustainable. The Department has a new employee (Jamie Cook) has been hired but may require additional qualified personnel in the near future. Town Manager Wyatt informed Council that Mark Jewett has been hired part-time to split his time between Public Works and Parks and Rec.

Future Challenges

Replacement of aging water and wastewater infrastructure; aging workforce/anticipated retirements; and compliance with future regulations that are continually changing.

Long Term Goal

The department's long term goal is to achieve and maintain a sustainable community.

(Copied in full, Power Point is filed on CD titled: "Town Council Supporting Documents" dated February 28, 2022 in CD Book #1 titled: "Town Council Supporting Documents")

(Break)

TROUTMAN POLICE DEPARTMENT, (*Josh Watson, Police Chief*)

Current Staffing

Police Chief Josh Watson stated that the Police Department is currently composed of the Chief of Police, 1 lieutenant who is the Patrol Division Commander; 4 Patrol Sergeants; 2 Patrol Officers; 1 School Resource Officer (SRO) Unit Commander; 4 SRO's; 1 Criminal Investigator; and 1 Evidence Technician/Records Specialist. The department also has 2 Patrol vacancies. He stated that the department's minimum staffing for on-duty officers is 2 officers (supervisor and patrol officer) on patrol 24 hours a day. In ensuring that minimum is being met, the Troutman Elementary SRO has been pulled to work patrol and well as the Patrol Division Commander. Due to the vacancies and one officer out for a non-work related injury, he (Chief of Police) and the investigator and are working patrol, mostly night shifts, along with mandatory overtime for patrol officers. Town Manager Wyatt commended Chief Watson and the investigator for not only working their normal shifts but also working night shifts and for leading by example. Mayor Young expressed appreciation to the Chief in making sure that the Town has coverage.

Staffing and Training

Chief Watson stated that training is essential and once officers complete Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) and are hired, they go through field training. Once that is complete, the officers will go through more advanced trainings such as Radar Certification, Intox Certification, and Community Oriented Policing (40 hour courses); Officer Safety and Readiness Training (48 hour course); De-Escalation Technique Training (24 hour course); Police Legal Institute (80 hour course); and Taser Training which is held in-house. Some courses are state mandated and some the can be completed on line during the officers shift, but for one officer to attend in person it affects one or two others who must fill in to cover the officer in training. Going forward Chief Watson commented that he may look at a different staffing model in order to ensure officer training. Councilmember Oxsher asked if there are a lot of catch-up training happening. Chief Watson stated that he has a plan in trying to get officers caught up, but being short staffed he has not been able to send anyone for specialized training. Some of our newer officers came to the Town from other agencies and already have most certifications.

Staffing and Employee Retention/Recruiting

Chief Watson stated that another way that staffing effects the department is employee retention and recruiting and in his 20 years in law enforcement right now is the worse recruiting environment he has ever seen. Staffing levels limit the ability for officers to use earned vacation and compensatory time which negatively affects their family time.

Staffing and a Growing Population

With Troutman currently having 3,700 residents with 1,538 new homes completed or in the process of being constructed and 1,800 more approved, Chief Watson stated that the department needs to prepare and plan for the growth with additional staffing. The number of calls will rise as well as the need for additional services including more area to patrol and additional community policing.

Staffing Solutions: Enhanced Recruitment

Chief Watson stated that in an attempt to fill vacancies and work on staffing issues, the department is focusing on recruitment efforts as follows: Placing 2 Sergeants as recruiters making them the contact persons for questions relating to the application process, salaries, benefits, etc. These officers have developed recruiting posters that have been placed at Basic Law Enforcement Training Academies around the area; using social media to target current officers; and the department has developed a structured incentive program to attract officers structured to offer fixed percentage increases above starting pay for prior years of law enforcement service, education, certifications, and for speaking Spanish. He stated that there were three vacancies and since starting the recruitment program one patrol officer has been

hired. Applications have been submitted for consideration of the other two vacancies with pre-screening beginning in March.

Staffing Solutions: Additional Personnel & Cost

Chief Watson recommended adding additional personnel of one officer per rotation (total of two officers). This would allow the department to place an officer working a mid-shifts (12 to 12 daily) benefiting the department by ensuring shift coverage due to absences and allow the department to develop a training plan for officers and prepare for growth. He advised that adding additional (2) officers would require an increase in the department's upcoming budget of approximately \$218,936 plus a recurring cost to the budget each year thereafter of \$118,252. In his presentation, Chief Watson broke down the cost per officer by average salary, benefits, uniforms and equipment, and patrol vehicle. Town Manager Wyatt spoke to past endeavors in efforts to purchase police vehicles and vehicle replacement.

Chief Watson briefly discussed retention issues regarding part-time officers stating that there have been several officers that the department no longer holds their certification due to lack of availability and/or interest in working. Town Manager Wyatt stated that there is now a clear understanding that the Town will not hold their certifications if it is not benefiting the Town.

Communications Funding

Resulting from a request from Iredell County Emergency Communications (ECOM), Chief Watson recommended providing funding assistance as a form of contracted services in the department's upcoming budget (amount to be determined during the budget process). He explained that this request is a result of discussions regarding the Town's growth and the increase in calls/radio traffic being monitored and technology upgrades. Town Manager Wyatt stated that the County is in the process through ECOM of spending \$8 million on the upgrade to the communications systems with the goal to get everyone in the County under the program.

Additional Plans for the Upcoming Year

- Streamlining the accounts/coding in the department's budget to end redundant line items and better manage the department's budget.
- Reduce the number of Flock cameras in September at contract renewal in efforts to save \$6,000-\$8,000.
- Summer Outreach Program involving off duty officer volunteering to interact with by coordinating sport activities for middle school and high school students.
- Develop community policing initiatives from feedback and input received at the upcoming community meeting on March 29th to help with quality of life issues. At present, the largest issues/complaints are student crossings and traffic. The department will be more aggressive with enforcement and issue citations. Town Manager Wyatt expressed support in the community outreach program commenting it is instrumental going forward.
- Provide accessibility to Computer Aided Dispatch in police vehicles. This system will provide officers with a larger amount of information when responding to calls and benefit them with officer safety and investigations. The proposed system Mobile Path will replace a contracted system that was not usable with ECOM and is the same in cost (no increase to the budget).

In conclusion, Chief Watson stated that in going forward the departments main focus is staffing and community issues. Town Manager Wyatt address Council stating it is embarrassing that the Town had a system that could not be used and it goes to show how improperly managed the department has been in not having effective tools to keep officers safe or have effective communications. He expressed appreciation to Chief Watson for identifying major issues with the department that others have failed to do. Councilmember Henkel asked the timeline for installation of the new system. Chief Watson replied within a month to month and a half. He has already cancelled the old system and is waiting on IT and the county's VPN for accessibility. Councilmember Oxsher expressed appreciation to Chief Watson stating

that every time he has heard him speak, he is not only identifying problems but presenting solutions to the problems.

In regards to recruitment of officers, and in the areas of salaries, benefits, etc., Councilmember Henkel asked Chief Watson if the Town is competitive or does the Town need to look into incentives. Chief Watson responded that starting base pay for a new officer with no experience or certifications is \$44,126 a year. Troutman is the 2nd highest paying department in the County.

Councilmember George Harris referenced conversation held at last year's retreat regarding cleaning up of the evidence room. Town Manager Wyatt and Chief Watson each addressed the question agreeing that much progress has been made.

(Copied in full, presentation highlights is filed on CD titled: "Town Council Supporting Documents" dated February 28, 2022 in CD Book #1 titled: "Town Council Supporting Documents")

COMMUNICATIONS AND EMPLOYEE SERVICES, *(Emily Watson)*

Town Manager Wyatt began the presentation commenting that employees wear different hats out of necessity. This position was established to streamline multiple jobs to get them under one umbrella to include areas of social media (Facebook), website posting, review of Town policies, insurance, onboarding, liability, etc.

Emily Watson, Communications and Employee Services opened by quoting "You don't rise to the level of your goals, you fall to the level of your broken systems". Therefore, if there is not a proper IT system, proper procedures and processes, and functioning training programs in place we are not going to be able to rise to the level of our plans. There was no one paying attention to the operations of employee services such as on-boarding, recruitment, retention, and training. COVID, along with growth, brought out issues and additional needs regarding IT and programing. This past year brought a shift with employees whether it was switching positions, new hires, retirement or people just moving on brought about additional needs. She stated that this position was created because of multiple broken systems. It has been a challenge finding those broken systems and finding solutions for them. As the Town grow and morphs there will be more goals and responsibilities.

In speaking to identified goals and responsibilities that fall under her purview, Ms. Watson addressed the following:

- Recruitment and Retention-Need to attract quality employees and retain those employees.
- Open Communications with the Public-Ms. Watson commented that the public is screaming for better communication and transparency and Staff is trying to be open and more positive.
 - Directors and department heads meet with Mike Fuhrman, Iredell Free News the 1st Tuesday of every month regarding articles featuring staff, what departments are working on, Town events, etc.
 - Staff is trying to be more transparent through the Town's monthly newsletter, the Town's new website (still in progress), and Town Face Book pages.
 - Town Council meetings are live streamed on You Tube.
 - Mass phone communications-The Town is currently on Hyper Reach through the county but is looking to go back to using Blackboard which is a more friendly system with the ability to add and remove citizens in-house.
 - Digital Marquee-In the process of replacing/updating the digital sign.
 - Utilization of banners.
 - Sunshine list
- Employee Training-Employees are currently going through required training with the NCLM in regards to sexual harassment, OSHA, etc. Forth coming will be training on Social Media and

emails in the work place. Updated computer software and programs is needed for training as simple as excel.

- Maintain Employment Compliance with OSHA, HIPPA, EEOC, etc.
- Establish/integrate a new on-boarding process including management and support with insurance, and serve as the liaison between employees and Medcost. Town Manager Wyatt informed Council that in March or April, Medcost will be coming to Town Hall to educate all employees on the services they currently have and services available. He also commended Ms. Watson on inventorying all insurance liability for Town properties. Manager Wyatt commented on the requirement of maintaining employee record keeping including all training which has also fell under Ms. Watson's purview.

Ms. Watson recommended the following for the upcoming budget:

- In-house IT Support-Discussion was held regarding IT and internet issues.
- Contracting with Blackboard for mass phone communications-Town Manager Wyatt advised that the Town has enough room in this year's budget to proceed with Blackboard.*

Councilmember Felina Harris left the meeting.

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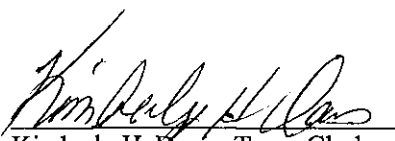
WRAP UP – COMMENTS

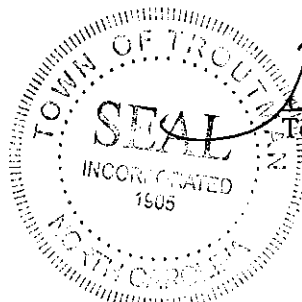
Town Manager Wyatt stated that the purpose of this style retreat was to specifically identify the systems that are not functioning properly and now that the systems are identified lets identify the process to fix them so we can move forward to better serve the citizens. He stated that every employee here cares 100% about their job and wants to do it 100%. They want to feel that they are valued at the end of the day and know they have been provided with the tools needed to effectively do their job. He continued by stating in identifying broken systems, and fixing them, will help in retaining employees.

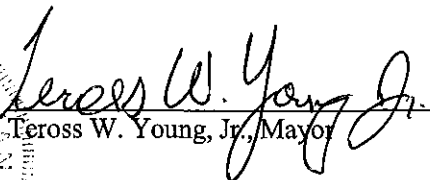
Councilmember Jerry Oxsher stated he totally agrees with Manager Wyatt and one day moving into a much larger, nicer facility will make things much easier, but a new building is not going to fix a broken system. He continued by commenting if the Town can get a grasp on this now, a new building will be the icing on the cake.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Councilmember Paul Henkel, seconded by Councilmember George Harris, and unanimously carried, Planning Retreat of February 28, 2022 was adjourned at 11:58 p.m.


Kimberly H. Davis, Town Clerk




Teross W. Young, Jr., Mayor