

TOWN OF WHITE SPRINGS

“On the Banks of the Suwannee River”

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MINUTES

WHITE SPRINGS TOWN COUNCIL

Regular Council Meeting

Town Hall Council Chambers

Tuesday, July 13, 2021

6:30 p.m.

**1.** **Call to Order, Invocation, and Pledge Allegiance to Flag** – Mayor Rivers called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. City Clerk, Audre’ Ruise gave the Invocation as all lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2.** **Roll Call** – Mayor Rivers called the roll. All council members were present. (Nicole Williams, Jacqueline Williams, LaRita McCallum, and Mary Berry, also present: Town Manager George, Town Clerk Ruise, Utility Dir. Ray Vaughn, and Admn. Asst. Cynethia Williams)

**3. Additions, Deletions, and/or Amendments to the Agenda** – Mayor Rivers added item 8.E. Budget Workshop. Council Jacqueline Williams motioned as Council LaRita McCallum seconded. Motion passed 5-0

**4. Citizens from the floor:** (Request form needed - 5min. limit per speaker) –

Amber Schuler – Announced her 2nd Pop-Up event on August 7, 2021 from 10:00am to 2:00pm. She will send the flyer to Town Hall for posting. (Flyer attached for addition to minutes)

Joe Griffin – Citizen Complaint (see attached)

**5. Presentations**

1. **Hutcherson Family Representative** – Kenny Hutcherson Memorial Dr. Kenneth Hutcherson Family representative, Willie Hutcherson (son) – The family wanted to know the status of renaming Suwannee St. for his father Kenneth Hutcherson. Mayor Rivers mentioned that Cynethia Williams, Administrative Assistant went through the books of ordinances and resolutions to find the prior information on what was adopted concerning the street designation for Mr. Hutcherson. Two ordinances were found with the same numbers and per the Town Clerk, Audre’ Ruise Tallahassee has no record of either ordinance. The representative from the state said that the system would have alerted that there were two ordinances with the same number each time, therefore she found that there is no record of either ordinance at the state level. Town Manager, Vanessa George addressed the difference of “memorializing and renaming” the street. Memorializing the street would mean there would be a sign above the current street sign designating the street as Kenneth Hutcherson Memorial Drive. No addresses would change. Re-naming the street would mean the current street would be changed to Kenneth Hutcherson Memorial Drive and all addresses to the designation would have to be changed. Council Jacqueline Williams remembers that the family did ask for the street to be re-named and the council was in agreement. Attorney Foreman was in agreement to the definitions and said there would be an ordinance drafted to the town and hold 2 separate readings (First and Second) then the ordinance would be adopted after the council votes to adopt the said ordinance. Council Jacqueline Williams motioned, and Council Nicole Williams seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

1. **Sam Shiver** – Adult Arcade/Amusement Center/Social Club – Mr. Shiver had previously discussed in a meeting with the Mayor and Town Manager the opportunity to have an adult arcade and casino in White Springs. Although Mayor Rivers told him that there was a previous ordinance passed for the town, he still wanted to get the feel of the council. Mayor Rivers went on to say that a vote sheet was attached to all the water bills this month to get their feel once again on having a casino in town. The Town Manager and Mayor Rivers wanted to make sure he had armed security and that our officers would not be called at the casino should a citizen needed the officer at their residence during the same time frame. Mr. Shiver was appreciative and asked the council would they consider another discussion with him and the community on the possibility of a casino in the town. He assured that he would have adequate security at all times and said that the criminal element of a casino is no more that the possibility of a robbery at a grocery store. Council Jacqueline Williams mentioned that maybe the council should have the discussion in the form of a workshop with Mr. Shiver and to get the community’s feedback. Council Jacqueline Williams made the motion and Nicole Williams seconded. Motioned passed 5-0.

**6. Consent Docket:** None

**Approval of Minutes:**

June 8, 2021 – Town Hall Meeting – Council Jacqueline Williams made the motion to accept the minutes and Council LaRita McCallum seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

**7. Old Business**

1. **Interlocal Agreement –** HC Sheriff Office – Attorney Foreman – Karin Griffin asked to make a statement before Attorney Foreman discussed the IA with HCSO. Mrs. Griffin wanted to ask that Attorney Foreman to please read the entire agreement so all would know what was in it since they had no copy of it. Mayor Rivers asked Attorney Foreman to read the IA in its entirety. Attorney Foreman completed the agreement with no discussion from the floor. Mayor Rivers mentioned that there was no change to the agreement other that the timeframe was added on #2. Council Jacqueline Williams made the motion to accept the agreement and Council Nicole Williams seconded. Motion passed 5-0. (see attached)

1. **Interlocal Agreement –** Animal Control Update – Attorney Foreman – Attorney Foreman wrote Town Manager an extensive document stating the current agreement with Hamilton County. (see attached)

**8. New Business**

1. **Community Unity Day –** Council – The Special Events committee will host an event on July 31, 2021 in Bailey Ogburn Field from 2:00pm to 6:00pm. A flyer was posted on the back of water bills and posted throughout White Springs, Jasper, and Lake City.

1. **TDC Board Appointment –** Council – Mayor Rivers and Town Manager George attended a meeting in Jasper last week. There was not a designated representative on the TDC Board from White Springs. Mayor Rivers asked the council if anyone was interested? Council Jacqueline Williams made the motion for Mayor Rivers to be the town’s representative to the TDC Board. LaRita McCallum seconded. Motion passed 5-0.
2. **Complaint –** Town Clerk **–** Attorney Foreman – Attorney Foreman stated that he had received along with the council a complaint filed by an employee at Town Hall on a citizen. He said the complaint was taken very seriously by himself and the Town Manager. The employee wanted it to be stated in the council meeting. Attorney Foreman stated that the council as a governmental agency must create and adopt a policy by adding TAW (Trespass after Warning) on a citizen’s conduct and behavior in town hall settings. This policy must be in place and tailored through current governmental policy. He stated that the right of citizens access to government is very serious. The council must consider this creation of policy and the alternatives.

Town Clerk, Audre’ Ruise stated that she was the complainant and Joe Griffin has bullied her with derogatory, abusive, racist, and sexual remarks and she will no longer be tolerant of his conduct and behavior. She also stated that something has to be done to protect her.

Mayor Rivers stated that she has witnessed Mr. Griffin’s remarks while in the office and he has said some derogatory things to her as well.

Council Nicole Williams has witnessed Joe Griffin’s racist remarks for years in various meeting and emails to former TM, Tommie Jones. Mr. Jones contacted Hamilton County DA and the NAACP. No one should feel threatened or harassed in the workplace. I am definitely in favor of creating a policy to this issue.

Council LaRita McCallum says she can remember being in the audience during town meetings when citizens comments were very negative and now that she is on the council the negativity continues.

The council was in favor establishing a policy and will schedule at a later date.

1. **Complaint –** Town Manager – Vanessa George sedge way into the complaint process by stating that she would not be called a “lying dog” by Joe Griffin ever again. (Joe Griffin fell out of his chair while Karin Griffin yelled across the room disrupting the meeting) Mayor Rivers called a recess for 5 minutes. (**Note: Joe Griffin was asked 6 times throughout the meeting to stop disrupting the meeting. His wife Karin made 4 outbursts disrupting the meeting, she directly called Town Clerk Ruise a liar.)** Finally, Mayor Rivers asked HCSO to escort the Griffins’ out of the meeting.

After, the meeting was called back to order TM George apologized if she offended anyone for her passionate declaration during the meeting. TM George continued to discuss Joe Griffin’s negative emails and phone calls with frivolous FS 119 requests, by him stating that “this should keep yall busy for a while”. TM George also stated that it is so serious that she would ask male staffers to be in the office whenever Mr. Griffin was coming in to assure some protection was provided for staff safety.

**9.** **Departmental/Administrative Comments**

1. **Public – None**
2. **Departments**

**Fire Department** – Thomas Brazil stated that the Fire Truck was sent out for repair.

**Town Manager** – Vanessa George stated that we were waiting on the 2019 Audit. We were asked to supply a letter from the former attorney, and she denied the request. Attorney Foreman has agreed to write the letter on the town’s behalf. She also stated that she will be working on the new fiscal budget next week, and one of the items she’ll be working on is “an increase in water/utilities”. She will be talking with our accountant (Michael Whitehead) at JNS Tax as well.

**Utility Director –** Ray Vaughn stated that the crew had to re-dig for the sewer line on the road in front of the Dollar General, it was completed.

1. **Council –** Mayor Rivers stated that dates needed to be set for the Budget Workshop, etc. All agreed on the following schedule:

\***Budget Workshop**, August 3, 2021 at 7:00pm in Town Hall

\*1st Reading for Ordinance 2021-04 for Kenneth Hutcherson, August 10, 2021 6:30pm

\***Adoption of Preliminary Budget**, August 17, 2021 at 6:30pm

\***Adoption of Tentative Budget and Millage**, September 14, 2021 at 6:30pm

\*2nd Reading and Adoption for Ordinance 2021-04 for Kenneth Hutcherson, September 14, 2021 at 6:30

\***Adoption of Final Budget and Final Millage**, September 28, 2021 at 6:30pm

Citizen Charles Spencer was left off the “Citizen Speak” section and was asked to come to the podium. Mr. Spencer asked if a neighbor had the right to take over a city road. Attorney Foreman answered: No. Mr. Spencer and his neighbor has been in a feud over the road access, and he is now put his home up for sale. He also asked the town if they would put up a sign for his road. Utilities Director, Ray Vaughn has the sign in his office and showed it to Mr. Spencer and told him he would put it up when the other part for the sign arrives.

**Adjourned**

IF A PERSON DECIDES TO APPEAL ANY DECISION MADE BY THE TOWN COUNCIL, WITH RESPECT TO ANY MATTER CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING, THAT PERSON WILL NEED A RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS, AND FOR PURPOSE THAT PERSON MAY NEED TO ENSURE THAT A VERBATIM RECORD INCLUDES THE TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE UPON WHICH THE APPEAL IS TO BE BASED. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) PERSONS NEEDING SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS TO PARTICPATE IN THE COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS SHOULD CONTACT THE TOWN CLERK’S OFFICE NOT LATER THAN THREE DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING.

Town Manager, Town Clerk, or Designee

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