



Work Session - Minutes Monday, June 9, 2025

COUNCIL PRESENT:

Mayor Mulhollem
Mayor Pro Tem Castleberry

Council Member Bruton

Council Member Jackson
Council Member Buzzeli

Council Member Wilson

STAFF PRESENT:

Bryan Chadwick, Town Administrator
Marcus Burrell, Town Attorney
Kim P. Batten, Assist. Town Admin./Finance Officer
Jason Kress, Town Planner
Chris Allen, Parks & Recreation Director
Jenny Martin, Human Resources Officer/Town Clerk

COUNCIL ABSENT:

None

MEDIA PRESENT:

None

1 WELCOME/CALL TO ORDER:

a) Invocation

Mayor Mulhollem called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m in the Jeffrey D. Barnes Council Chambers located at 14094 Buffalo Road, Archer Lodge and declared a quorum present. Council Member Jackson offered the invocation.

b) Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Mulhollem led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the US Flag.

2 ANSWERS TO CITIZENS' QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC HEARING:

a)

Mr. Bryan Chadwick, Town Administrator, explained the rationale for putting money into the fund balance for this year's budget.

Mayor Mulhollem echoed the explanation offered by Mr. Chadwick and explained that the Town had been lucky over the years to receive funding from grants for certain projects. Mr. Chadwick elaborated on why the fund balance should be replenished and said that the Town should be saving money for potentially new services it may have to provide in the next several years.

Mayor Mulhollem reminded those in attendance that Archer Lodge was incorporated to adapt to incoming development and manage growth. Mayor Mulhollem elaborated on zoning changes in the area.

Mayor Mulhollem noted that the Parks and Recreation Department has been and will continue to be a priority for the Council moving forward. He shared that in his opinion, he hopes to continue to see the department grow to reach its full potential. Mayor explained the process of how the department began and that they were grateful to receive grants to help fund the park and he shared that department offerings have grown exponentially since the department's founding. The mayor said that parks and recreation was consistently one of the top priorities of residents when the Town was incorporated.

Mr. Chadwick addressed questions concerning the training and meetings budget item. Mr. Chadwick expressed the need for staff attendance at these trainings as some are required by law and ensure staff is up to date on pertinent information relevant to their positions. He shared that these training courses are for the overall benefit of not just the staff themselves but for the Town as well.

Mr. Chadwick discussed expenses related to landscaping and what the Town handles versus what is contracted. Mr. Chadwick explained that Town staff maintains grass at the park. Mr. Chadwick noted that it is more expensive to hire another staff member than to contract for other landscaping needs.

Mr. Chadwick presented information about parks and recreation fees and that fees paid by non-residents of the Town versus residents of the Town are 50% higher. Mayor Mulhollem questioned Chris Allen, Parks and Recreation Director, about the feasibility of having registration solely open to residents for one to two weeks before being opened for nonresident registration. Mr. Allen shared that around 75% of participants in programs are nonresidents and that changing registration timeframes for residents would not be an issue. Council Member Bruton agreed with Mayor Mulhollem concerning the introduction of a one to two week waiting period for nonresidents. Bruton asked Mr. Allen if Flowers has an organized parks and recreation department and said that she doesn't feel that Archer lodge should be footing the bill for nonresidents to use parks and recreation facilities. Mr. Allen shared that programs in flowers are run through the YMCA.

Council Member Jackson and Mayor Pro-Tem Castleberry agreed that registration should be opened early for residents. Mr. Jackson shared that he feels that the Town needs non-residents to bring in revenue as well as increase participation. Mr. Allen shared that no child has ever been turned away from a program, even if registered late.

Mr. Chadwick discussed the recommendation that 401k benefits be decreased from 8% to 6% and confirmed that it had been placed into the budget ordinance draft.

Mayor Mulhollem explained the current tax structure and that the last tax increase was done to help fund the park. Mayor Mulhollem explained the tax structure for the fire department. Mr. Chadwick answered questions related to fees and explained that the fire department would be meeting tomorrow to make decisions related to the fire tax. Mr. Wilson asked if changes to the fire tax would have an impact on the ad valorem tax. Mr. Chadwick explained that changes to the fire tax would not have an impact on ad valorem tax.

Mr. Chadwick briefly addressed concerns from citizens about reducing benefits for employees. Mayor Mulhollem spoke about the potential impacts of reducing the benefits package.

3 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS CONTINUED:

a)

Mayor Mulhollem thanked staff for changing the budget process and suggested using the new process in coming years as he felt allowing for time between public comment and budget passage was beneficial.

Mayor Mulhollem spoke about the current tax rates and the revenue that comes from them. He expressed pride in the low levels of debt owed by the Town. Several members of Council shared remarks on the effects of Johnston County's recent property tax reevaluation and expressed concerns regarding the potential impacts especially for residents that will be left to pay more annually.

Mayor Mulhollem brought up that the Town should put money into fund balance due to potential changes in services provided by the county and other municipalities. Mr. Chadwick shared that Clayton animal control staff has been incredibly busy and that they may need to stop providing services for the Town sooner than the original timeline suggested. A brief discussion prompted by Council Member Bruton occurred concerning a potential change to the 2¢ tax and whether reserves could be replenished via this method.

Mayor Mulhollem raised concerns from residents about foul balls at the park and the safety concerns associated with them. He raised the point that this is not addressed in the current version of the budget ordinance.

Council member Jackson suggested that Council begin to discuss items of concern in the proposed budget. Mayor Mulhollem agreed and prompted Council to begin raising specific concerns. Council Member Buzzelli raised concerns again regarding tax levels. Discussion then occurred amongst Council regarding the impact of decreasing the tax rate.

Council Member Buzzelli suggested the possibility of the parks and recreation department taking over landscaping at Town hall. He also brought up concerns regarding the budget for training and website revitalization. Council then revisited a conversation centering around the impact of lowering or maintaining the tax rate. Discussion then followed concerning the amount budgeted for trainings for staff and Council.

Council Member Buzzelli revisited having the parks and recreation department handle landscaping for Town Hall. Conversation then took place between Council and staff concerning benefits and pay for parks and recreation department employees. Several Council Members concurred that the Town could look into potentially having parks and recreation staff handle landscaping for Town Hall.

Members of Council stressed the importance of putting funds into reserves in the case of an emergency. Ms. Kim Batten, Assistant Town Administrator/Finance Officer, elaborated on the importance of having reserves and gave examples from the past in which the Town had to use reserve funds.

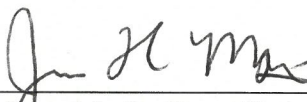
Council member Wilson shared that he supported the budget as is. Council Member Jackson shared that he was comfortable moving forward with finding potential areas in the budget to cut if that was what other Members of Council wished to do. Council Member Buzzelli shared his concerns about approving the budget ordinance as recommended. Council and staff then had conversations comparing the proposed budget ordinance to the budget from the previous fiscal year.

Council Member Wilson left the meeting prior to adjournment at 9:58 p.m. Mayor Pro-Tem Castleberry expressed that he was comfortable with the budget as proposed. Council Member Bruton voiced that she was not comfortable with the budget as proposed.

4 ADJOURNMENT:

- a) With no further business, Mayor Mulhollem adjourned the meeting at 10:21 p.m.**
- Moved by Council Member Jackson
Seconded by Council Member Buzzelli
Approved to adjourn the meeting at 10:21 p.m.
- CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
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Matthew B. Mulhollem, Mayor


Jenny Martin, Town Clerk

