Mayor and Council Workshop
6 p.m. April 11, 2023
Holly Springs Law Enforcement Center and livestream

MINUTES

The Holly Springs Town Council held a workshop meeting on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at the Law Enforcement Center and via livestream. Mayor Mayefskie presided, calling the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. A quorum was established as the Mayor and four Council members were present as the meeting opened.

Council Members Present in the room: Mayor Sean Mayefskie, and Council members Aaron Wolff, Shaun McGrath, Tim Forrest, and Danielle Hewetson.

Council Members absent: Mayor Pro Tem Dan Berry.

Staff Members Present in the room: Randy Harrington, Town Manager; Linda McKinney, Town Clerk (recording the minutes); Daniel Weeks, Assistant Town Manager; Scott Chase, Assistant Town Manager; Corey Petersohn, Budget, Innovation and Sustainability; Mathew Mutter, IT; John Schifano, Town Attorney; Jay Osborne, Assistant Town Attorney; Cassie Hack, Director of Communications and Marketing; Elizabeth Goodson, Development Services; Beth Trautz, Development Services; LeeAnn Plummer, Director of Parks and Recreation; Jaime Joyner, Director of Human Resources; Catherine Clark, Administration; MaryBeth Spoehr, Administration; Tina Stroupe, Finance Director; Paige Scott, Director of Public Works.

1. Overview: Randy Harrington, Town Manager, gave an overview of the meeting agenda.

2. FY24 Budget Updates

a. Human Resource/Personnel Policy

Jaime Joyner, Director of Human Resources, said the Personnel Policy had not been revised in several years and the purpose of this item was to discuss possible revisions and get Council feedback. These revisions address the Strategic Priority of Organizational Excellence, Initiatives 1.2, provide competitive pay and benefits to retain and recruit top talent; 1.3, expand employee diversity and inclusion; and 1.4 to enhance recruitment tools, incentives, and/or benefits to attract a skilled workforce in difficult to fill positions. She said that while the cost of health insurance has increased 4%, there is no increase in dental insurance, and vision will see a 31% decrease. She said there would be additional voluntary benefits offered.

Ms. Joyner said the merit pay would be a similar approach as previous years, with January 1 as a general employee common merit date. The On-Call pay provision, for workers who need to be available to come in, but may or may not be required to come in, is currently $75 per week. She said she recommends changing that to $20 per day and allowing shorter periods of on-call. Call Back Pay, when an on-call employee is called in is currently time and a half the hourly rate after hours worked reaches 40 hours. The recommendation would be to pay hours worked a time and a half regardless of hours worked in the work week, so that a holiday during the week, for example, would not prohibit the called back employee from being paid.

Ms. Joyner said that other proposed policy revisions are to give the Town Manager authority to adjust pay up to 10% within an employee's salary classification. Currently the range is 1-3%. This would allow administrative flexibility to address issues such as internal pay equity situations or critical staff retention situations. Holly Springs Police Department Field Training Officers are currently not compensated above their regular pay. Staff recommendation is to pay an officer an additional $2 per hour while the senior officer is actively training another officer on shift. Another proposed revision would change vacation accrual calculations to be based on an employee's years of service in the Local Government Employees Retirement System, not solely years of service to the Town.

Ms. Joyner showed the number of annual holidays and other leave offered by our neighbors (and competitors for employees) and showed that Holly Springs offered fewer holidays and vacation accrual rates than our competitive peers. She said that 70% of the surveyed employers offered non-traditional leave days taken at the employees' discretion and 43% of those offer more than one day. Fifty percent of employers offer Juneteenth as a paid Holiday. One municipality offers exempt employees 80 hours per year of "use it or lose it" leave and another offers "Wellness Wednesday," monthly, allowing employees to leave work early. From this data, staff suggests offering a floating holiday, and a health and wellness day to employees. She said that the Town's current vacancy rate is 8.85%; the retention rate is 89% and voluntary turnover rate is 13.2%.

Council member Hewetson asked about the vacation accrual standard across other towns was to make new hires wait for days to accrue before they could take any time off. Ms. Joyner said that is the standard way. It could be front-loaded, but where that sometimes becomes a problem, is if an employee leaves we would have to pay out those hours.

Council member McGrath asked if the turnover rate was comparable to other municipalities right now. Randy Harrington said that in local government, if you are over 10% turnover, that is considered high. Council member McGrath asked if the call back pay was calculated only after a complete shift. Ms. Joyner said that payroll calculates by the week, not the day, so the trigger was a 40-hour work week.

Council member Wolff asked, regarding the call back pay, if someone is called back and it only takes 15 minutes to do the job, do they get paid for an hour? Ms. Joyner said the policy is, if someone is called back they get 2 hours for the first 15 minutes to 2 hours; after 2 hours it is by the actual hour worked.

There was discussion about the manager's authority to offer an in-grade pay increase to retain an existing employee. Council discussed what percentage would be enough to retain employees and what action the Town manager would take if he needed to go higher than his given authority. Ms. Joyner was asked about the percentage in other municipalities. Council consensus was to raise that authority to 15%.

Council discussed the Field Training Officer amount and the vacation accrual change, and how our vacancy rate compares to our peers. Council discussed whether two additional holidays was enough to make us competitive with our peer communities. There was discussion about how the floating days off would work. Consensus was to have two floating holidays and a wellness day added to the current holiday schedule.

b. Parks and Recreation Bond

LeeAnn Plumer, Director of Parks and Recreation, said this was a review of potential projects for the anticipated Fall 2023 Parks Bond Referendum. She requested Council feedback on the recommended projects. She said this is a big investment, but it aligns with the Strategic Plan's initiative of Developing Comprehensive Parks and Recreation amenity offerings to include a variety of parks, greenways, and recreation facilities.

Ms. Plummer talked about the park property on Cass Holt Road. She said that site survey work has begun and there have been a couple of meetings with neighbors and stakeholders. She said she wanted to use this chance to let the public know about a virtual public meeting "All Wheels" for input on a skate park on April 27th at 6:00 pm. She said that she and Assistant Town Manager Daniel Weeks toured Rec Centers in Dallas recently and she shared those learnings with Council.

Ms. Plummer gave a preliminary breakdown of the investment for the Cass Holt Road park. She outlined other community needs as identified in the Parks, Recreation and Greenways Survey and the Community Survey as well as National Recreation and Parks Association metrics. She showed locations for these investments and said they could include outdoor basketball courts, greenway connections, improved seating at the Cultural Center, baseball improvements at Womble Park, and a program pavilion and restroom at Sugg Farm Park. She gave a summary of preliminary projects and their estimated costs.

Council member Hewetson asked if locations had been considered for a covered court. Ms. Plummer said there is some property at Ting that might work, but staff needs to do more research to determine the best place. Council member McGrath said additional greenway connectivity is at the top of his list for where to put any extra money. Mr. Harrington said that the focus is obviously on the park, but some of these other projects could be easy/quick wins.

c. Other

Corey Petersohn, Administration, said that this item was to get Mayor and Council feedback on the housing related strategic initiative. He reminded the public of the areas of consensus from the retreat: Determine development incentives; fast track approval process; eligible fee reductions or modifications. He shared two potential options to revise the originally proposed Initiative 5.2. Option 1: Establish workforce housing eligibility criteria for a development project to be considered for fee or improvement credits. And Option 2: Establish criteria for Area Median Income (AMI) and percentage of workforce housing units within a development in order for a development project to be considered for fee or improvement credits.

Council discussed the pros and cons of the two options. Consensus was to go with Option 2, with the understanding that staff would not limit themselves to AMI but would consider creative solutions. Council member Forrest said he wanted to point out that this Council supports workforce housing.

Randy Harrington, Town Manager, said he had two additional items to put before Council regarding the budget. The first one is around the need to upgrade the 911 center, technology and staffing wise. This will be one of the largest recommendations in the budget. He said we currently have 4 consoles. We are looking to upgrade those to the latest technology and to add an additional station, and request two additional staff. The technology cost is about $817,000 but about half of that can be paid for by State 911 funds. There could be some grant money also to off-set that but we would need to set it up.

The second piece is around the Operations Campus. We have talked about a Phase 1 that encompasses 2 buildings. One is administration building and the second is an operations building. What has become apparent is that, out of the gate, we need to get these buildings right from the start. Based on two factors – cost inflation and site development – the price is higher than anticipated. There will be economies of scale if we do all the sitework at once and build the first building with the first floor finished and the second floor a shell. The operations building could have some areas shelled out also. But the buildings should be built at full size. There are some tough choices to make to do this. But he said he had identified about $400,000 of reductions in base budgets that won't have a significant impact on services. Shifting a portion of that to the capital side (about ½ cent of tax revenue) will enable us to solve the challenge of getting these buildings right out of the gate. The trade off is we lose it out of the operating side going forward and at a future time will need to bring that back.

There was discussion about how the revaluation next year would impact this decision. Mr. Harrington said that the 2024 revaluation would affect the 2025 fiscal year, and Council would have to decide on the tax amount then, and that would include the P&R bond referendum.

3. Potential Policy & Ordinance Updates

a) Grants Policy

Corey Petersohn thanked Council for creating the position of Grant Writer, and introduced Catherine Clark. Ms. Clark said this item was to discuss a proposed Grants Policy and receive Council feedback. The proposed policy would establish a uniform method for submitting grant applications, maximize external funding while protecting the Town's plans and commitments, and recognize that grants have Town-wide administrative requirements and obligations. She said that staff compared policies from Cary, Raleigh, Charlotte, and a variety of non-profit organizations. She said that some places include procedures in the policy, but that since procedures change frequently, staff focused on creating a policy-based document.

Ms. Clark said the funding focus areas for Holly Springs were public safety, infrastructure projects, parks and recreation, economic/downtown development and technology and innovation. The proposed policy would address who approves which grants. Staff recommends that project approval be at the Department level for projects that are in the Strategic Plan or department mission, with Council approval for exceptions to this guideline. Grant program approval would be by the Department director prior to development of any proposal or application, and department staff would coordinate with other affected departments. Application approval would be through the Finance Department and the Office of Budget, Innovation, & Strategy prior to submission to the funder. She said that the recommendation for grants with a "local match" requirement is that departments should identify funding in the base operating budget or appropriated Community Investment Plan (CIP) funds. For matching funds not yet appropriated, staff recommends director approval for matches up to $10,000. From above $10,000 to $100,000, staff recommends that Town Manager approval be required and for matching funds above $100,000 Council approval be required. She said that if there were no changes, this policy could come to Council at a future Consent Agenda. Mayor Mayefskie passed along that Congressman Nickel had called her out as an excellent grant writer.

Ms. Clark gave updates on FY23 grants awarded through the third quarter and those which are pending.

b) Historic Marker Policy

Elizabeth Goodson, Development Services, said this item was to provide an overview of the Historical Marker program and present a draft policy for Council feedback. She said that the purpose of the Historical Marker program was to increase public awareness, celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the Town, encourage historic preservation and enhance the enjoyment of our local history. She said the existing program was established in 2011 by resolution and managed by the Town Clerk's office (previously Public Affairs and Communications.) Three new markers have been added since then and the budget has usually designated funds for one marker per year.

Ms. Goodson outlined challenges with the 2011 program including, it was not publicized, there was no clear process for a marker to be requested, no clear selection process, and no standard design specifications. The proposed policy would propose a standardized yearly application deadline, with an outlined application process. It proposes a Committee to review applications and make recommendations based on specified criteria and standardized design specifications. She outlined possible options for the makeup of the committee and said that staff recommended Option 1, which included members of staff and one or more Council members, or Option 4 which included those people and one or more appointed residents.

Consensus was to go with Option 1.

Ms. Goodson outlined three options for who would make the final decision on a marker and whether and to whom that decision could be appealed by an applicant who was rejected. Option 1, Council would make the decision with no appeal; Option 2 the decision would be made by the Town Manager and appeals would be heard by Town Council; Option 3 the decision would be made by the Planning Board and appeals heard by Town Council. She said that staff recommends the Council make the decision and that no appeal be offered. Council member Forrest asked if we were required to have an appeal process. Ms. Goodson said it was not required. Council discussed the various options. Consensus was to go with Option 3, having the Planning Board approve or disapprove new markers, with appeals heard by Town Council.

Mayor Mayefskie asked how often the committee would meet. Ms. Goodson said they would meet after the applications come in January. Mr. Harrington added that it would be one or two meetings per year. Mayor Mayefskie asked about the rule saying individuals could not be considered until 25 years after their death, and asked why it was changed from 10 to 25. Ms. Goodson said that was best practice, followed by other places. Council consensus was to return the rule to 10 years after death to recognize an individual.

Ms. Goodson said that next steps would be to finalize the draft policy and bring it back to Council for consideration, with the next open application period to have a January 2024 deadline.

c) Weapons Ordinance Review

John Schifano, Town Attorney, said the purpose of this item was to discuss the recent US Supreme Court case of *N.Y. Rifle Ass'n vs. Bruen* and its effect on the Town code. He said that Section 12-353 of the Town code prohibits openly carrying a deadly weapon or firearm on any town-owned or controlled buildings and any appurtenant premises, and town parks and recreation areas. This prohibition does not apply to greenways, open spaces, sidewalks, walking paths or any other areas not specifically identified. He said the Bruen decision overturned New York state's "may issue" rule for gun permitting, but it reaffirmed that governments may still restrict gun possession and/or display in sensitive areas.

Mr. Schifano said his recommendation would be to clean up some language in the two sections by removing the word "possess" in Section 12-353(a), and removing "possess" and changing the word "defined" to "prohibited" in Sec. 12-354(a) (the penalty section) so that it would read "Penalty. The open carrying, or display of any firearm or other deadly weapon as prohibited in section 12-353 shall constitute a misdemeanor or subject to a fine as provided by G.S. 14-4 as may be imposed in the discretion of the court, or both." He said this doesn't change the meaning of the statute, it just cleans up the language and it could come before them on a Consent agenda.

4. Main Street Vista Development Agreement

Randy Harrington, Town Manager, introduced the subject by saying they had come to a staff-level agreement with the developer and asked if Council wanted to hear more. Elizabeth Goodson, Development Services, said they have been working with the developer to take the Omni Pump Station off line. This is something on the CIP list, but for future years. It would be 8-10 years before the Town could get to it, but the developer would be willing to do that for some reimbursements. It would require some sewer to be relocated to the 12 Oaks pump station. The Main St. lines are nearing capacity and it is appropriate to upsize lines from this project almost to Ting. We have been looking at guidelines to take out these lines and have new lines put in. This will allow future development in this area. The terms we are working on would have SDF reimbursed up to $1.5 million (out of $3 million). There are other elements of the agreement relating to Parks & Recreation fees and transportation and pedestrian improvements, that will be in the draft when the agenda item comes before you. Council member Forrest asked if that would be reimbursed in cash. Ms. Goodson said they will pay the regular development fees at the normal time, and get them back after. There would be a cap in the agreement, but if the costs go up she would anticipate the developer coming back to Council and asking for more. Council member Forrest asked if the line went all the away to 12 Oaks. Ms. Goodson said it empties to 12 Oaks but does not go all the way. Council member McGrath asked which side of the road the pipes would be on. Ms. Goodson said on the east side of the road, mostly. Council member McGrath said he was wondering if there was an opportunity for sidewalk work.

5. Open Discussion

Daniel Weeks, Assistant Town Manager, said next Weds. at 8 am would be the soft launch of the Office of Customer Care. We will not publicize it until later in April when Suburban Living comes out. There will be a presence at Springs Fest, Int'l Food Festival, and other events. On Weds. April 19th various phone numbers will be rerouted to the OCC. Residents might not even notice it. Within town limits, the number is 311. Outside can reach with a number. People can send a message through the app and other ways. Communications and Marketing are working on getting the word out and town staff is being asked to keep OCC in mind and send information their way.

6. Closed Session: none.

7. Adjournment: There being no further business for the evening, motion to adjourn was made by Council member McGrath second by Council member Forrest and passed with a unanimous vote. The April 11, 2023 meeting of the Holly Springs Town Council was adjourned at 8:07 pm.

Respectfully Submitted on Tuesday, May 16, 2023.

Linda C. McKinney

Linda McKinney Town Clerk