

**MINUTES OF THE  
SUMMERFIELD TOWN COUNCIL  
SPECIAL CALL MEETING  
SUMMERFIELD TOWN HALL  
May 28, 2008  
6:30 PM**

**NOTE: The official minutes are a CD recording of the meeting. The following is a summary of the events of the meeting.**

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by Mark Brown.

**PRESENT:**

**Council:**

Mark Brown, Mayor  
Dena Barnes, Pro Tem  
Alicia Flowers\*  
Becky Strickland  
Bob Williams  
John Wray

**Staff:**

Michael Brandt, Town Manager  
Dana Luther, Finance Officer  
Valarie Halvorsen, Town Clerk

\*As Flowers was not present when the meeting was called to order, Barnes made a motion to formally excuse her until her arrival. The motion was seconded by Williams and carried unanimously. Flowers arrived at 6:36 pm and Strickland made a motion to formally include her in the meeting. The motion was seconded by Barnes and carried unanimously.

**Consent Agenda**

Barnes made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, which consists of the Meeting Agenda. The motion was seconded by Wray and carried unanimously.

**Presentation of 2008-2009 Fiscal Year Operating Budget**

Brandt read the newly adopted Vision Statement, a summary of the Budget Message, and described the following aspects of the budget: Budget Process; Economic Outlook; Revenue Projections; Budget Priorities; Future Budget Outlook; Expenditures of the Governing Body, Administration, Professional Services, Planning Services, Public Property/Buildings, and Committees.

Strickland asked about the role and duties of the Fire Department and EMS in relation to what they are asking the town to fund. She feels that tax dollars we are already paying should fund the things they are asking for. Brandt stated the items requested are not being purchased by other organizations and governments that the town is supplementing. Strickland asked about emergency preparedness supplies and Brown replied that in 1996 the shelter program was created locally as this service is not provided by any other agencies or governments. As to defibrillators, the Fire Department and EMS have them for their own use, but the current purchase is suggested to have them on hand during town meetings and events so there would be no need to delay treatment waiting for an ambulance. Strickland feels the purchase of any lifesaving equipment should be the responsibility of EMS. Wray disagreed and said most public agencies and buildings have purchased defibrillators for themselves and feels they would be good to have on hand in case of emergency during a public meeting or event.

There was discussion of creating a separate Founders' Day committee from the Community Relations committee and the need to generate income from Founders' Day to help offset the cost.

Brandt thanked Luther, the committees, and Council for their help and cooperation during the budget process. Addressing Council, he stated the budget was now in their hands and it was up to them to make suggestions, changes, or approve it and the Public Hearing would be held during the June 10, 2008 council meeting. There is a June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting date scheduled if it is needed for further council discussion.

Strickland stated the assumption is the budget would be passed as is and she would like to see a tax rate reduction of 1 cent because the economy is bad and such a reduction would help the citizens. She further stated one way to do this would be by having each committee make cuts and council foregoing their monthly stipend. She said council positions used to be voluntary, not paid positions, and foregoing the stipend alone will cut almost \$20,000 from the proposed budget. Flowers agreed with Strickland about foregoing the monthly stipend. Strickland also suggested reducing amounts budgeted for education and the retreat until such time as the economic outlook improves.

Flowers would like to hold an additional council workshop to further discuss the budget and to go through it line by line. Luther stated she and Brandt had gone through it line by line and made cuts everywhere they could. She stated they had projected the budget and fund balance based on differing tax rates with assumptions about projects and expenditures, which was distributed to council. Flowers stated she is only concerned with this year, not 2029. Luther said dipping into the fund balance affects investments, sales tax revenue, and other items and would result in a snowball effect, that it is not as simple as cutting one line, because that one line affects every other revenue line.

Strickland feels the fishing pier is an unnecessary expense at this time and suggests waiting until another year. Luther replied that this cost sharing opportunity something the town has been waiting for a chance on and it will not be available at our pleasure. Barnes feels that the \$6000 is not that great of an expense to allow the citizens an additional recreational outlet. Strickland replied that was just one possible cut of many that could potentially reduce the tax rate. She also suggested doing fund raisers or benefits to raise funds for these types of projects, rather than expending public money. Flowers stated she would volunteer for a fund raiser and feels the citizens would support it. Strickland also suggested that the town owned property at Summerfield and Rhondan roads be sold to the fire department as it is just sitting there, serving no purpose, and costing money to maintain.

Brown asked council what they thought about holding an additional workshop. Strickland replied it would be a waste of time if only she and Flowers were interested in changes to the budget by lowering the tax rate. Williams feels it would be a wasted effort as Brandt and Luther already went through the budget line by line. Flowers asked Brandt if he felt it would be a waste of time or if there were items that could be cut. Brandt replied the budget was based on council's priorities, but if council's directive is to find cuts he would do so, he just needs direction from council on what items they want to cut.

Strickland commended Brandt, Luther, and the Finance Committee on their wonderful job on the budget and her comments are in no way disparaging to them. Strickland suggested a workshop to look at cuts. Wray said he is willing to sit down and look at cuts and to forego his stipend to lower the tax rate if it is possible, but he does not want to cut out necessary budget items. He further stated it seems as if Brandt, Luther, and Finance have already gone through the budget and made all the appropriate cuts and what is proposed is what is necessary for the town.

There was discussion on line items that could possibly be cut back, including legal fees, council stipend, and the fishing pier. Barnes noted she was not opposed to cutting out the stipend and delaying the fishing pier. Strickland suggested reducing Governing Body Dues and Subscriptions, the \$500 to Piedmont Triad Partnership, the \$300 for retreat, reducing the Administrative budget, and asking each committee to make cuts. Brandt stated he would be meeting with the committee chairs the following week and could ask them to do so. Strickland feels they should be told that the cuts will start with council foregoing their stipends.

Brown feels that cutting items such as the fishing pier will make little overall difference in the budget, but will impact the quality of life of the citizens. Williams feels it would be a mistake to put too many things off until next year or another future year, as costs may be higher the longer we wait. Flowers feels that Parks & Rec should find something else to cut if it is not the fishing pier. Barnes feels each committee should make suggestions about what is or is not to be cut from the budget. Flowers feels that some budget cuts and belt tightening will not adversely affect the quality of life of the citizens.

Brandt asked council to consider that if taxes were lowered to 2.5 cents this year they would potentially have to raise taxes at a later date. In years to come, projects that are being constructed now will be completed and there will be maintenance and upkeep costs associated with that. Strickland stated if we stop building things there will be less maintenance costs and feels that government should be reigned in and cuts should be made. Flowers agrees and said maintenance costs have to be considered when building things like parks and ball fields.

Brandt stated the proposed 3.5 cent rate appears to be appropriate to maintain town funds and needs well into the future but if the rate is dropped to 2.5 this year it will shrink the time frame of when the rate will have to be increased. Barnes was not opposed to having Brandt run the figures with a 2.5 and 3 cent tax rate to see how far that would take us. Brandt said that was easy to do but the difficult part would be deciding what to cut. Flowers agrees and would like to see all the options on paper. Luther asked council for guidance on what to cut, giving examples of stipends, town newsletter, Finance education, Parks & Rec programs, Founders' Day cuts, and others. Flowers noted it only took Luther a few minutes to come up with many possible cuts. Luther replied that she and Brandt made numerous cuts like she described but they add up to little money in the grand scheme of things.

Wray feels each committee should look for cuts themselves rather than have council determine what will be cut. Wray further stated the budget presented by Brandt and Luther was exactly what was asked for by council, one with no tax increase and preferentially a tax decrease and thanked Brandt, Luther and the committees for their hard work. He does not want to cut anything that will be detrimental to the citizens. He feels that do to the poor economy people will stay in

town during the summer rather than travel and things such as the park and the fishing pier will be used extensively. Williams thinks it is a mistake and short term thinking to cut the budget at this time.

Strickland stated the tax rate could be lowered one penny by foregoing stipends and selling the Summerfield Rd property, neither of which would impact anything 5 years from now or 10 years from now, but would impact the current year. Williams is against selling the property and feels it would be a mistake. Wray feels that in keeping a long term perspective, lowering the rate 1 cent would be a mistake as it will deplete the fund balance a lot faster and will result in having to raise taxes in the future.

Brandt asked council if they wanted him to talk to each committee about cuts and to propose additional cuts and run the numbers with a 2.5 and 3 cent tax rate. Flowers replied affirmatively. Brown feels Brandt has already done what he was asked to do, which was to prepare a budget with no tax increase and a decrease if possible, with an eye on the future budgetary needs. Wray agrees that the proposed budget will keep the town financially sound for many years and any cuts would undermine that effort.

Luther asked if council agreed with the assumptions that were used to project future years, including a million dollar capital project every 5 years. Strickland stated she is opposed to growing government and therefore would be opposed to capital projects, that she ran on that platform, and that she does not want them to become a burden like they have in Greensboro and Guilford County.

Brandt again asked for direction and Strickland feels it will be a waste of time if other council members have already made up their minds about the proposed budget. Brown reminded council of large potential expenses including the Haw River and Jordan River rules and the Census. Barnes discussed the cuts that Guilford County did years back that ended up costing a lot of time and money to correct. She feels that the budget looks good and looks fair and feels the cuts will be very small for each taxpayer and will have a negative impact. She urged the others to consider what was really needed to run the town both now and in the future. Wray is willing to relinquish his stipend but is unwilling to agree to any budget cuts unless the committees approve the cuts. He is satisfied with the budget as presented. Flowers agrees that the committees should be involved. Strickland feels the committees will need direction, such as asking them to make a 2% or a 5% cut, but if council has made up their minds already then the whole exercise is a waste of time.

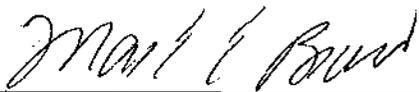
Speaking from the floor, Sherrie Joseph, Parks & Recreation committee member noted that their budget was created based on what was requested and things that were slated as priorities by council. Gail Dunham also spoke from the floor in favor of a tax cut, budget cuts overall, selling the Summerfield Rd property, and the need to practice due diligence. She stated that during a previous year budget discussion Barnes stated she had already made up her mind about the budget prior to hearing what the citizens had to say during the public hearing. Barnes replied that she resented that statement and personal attacks were inappropriate and out of place.

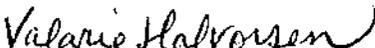
Following further discussion, Williams made a motion to adjourn at 9:20 pm. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Barnes stated there was a need to give Brandt direction prior to adjourning the meeting. Brandt stated there would be a June 3, 2008 meeting of committee chairs and he would report on that during the June 10, 2008 meeting. He offered to meet with anyone who wished to further discuss budget issues and will re run the numbers with the 3 cent and the 2.5 cent tax rates and send the information to council.

Brown thanked Brandt and Luther for their hard work.

With no further business before the Town Council, a motion to adjourn was made at 9:25pm by Flowers. The motion was seconded by Barnes and carried unanimously.

  
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Mark E. Brown, Mayor

  
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Valarie Halvorsen, Town Clerk