

# CHIMNEY ROCK VILLAGE

## Village Council Meeting Minutes Special Called – January 7, 2025 Chimney Rock Baptist Church

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Peter O’Leary, Mayor Pro Tem Buck Meliski, Council-members April Schick, Bruce Godzik, and later entry Patrick Warneke. **Officials Present:** Stephen G Duncan, Administration; J. Meliski, Village Engineer; Ben Putnam, Legal Counsel; Mike Hager, Village Governmental and Corporate Coordinator.

The Mayor, Peter O’Leary, called the meeting to order at 4pm at the temporary meeting location, Chimney Rock Baptist Church.

Bruce Godzik made a motion to approve the minutes from December 17, 2024, Council meeting and the agenda for this the January 7, 2025, Special Called Council meeting. His motion received a second from April Schick and the motion passed.

### **BUDGET ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES:** (Stephen Duncan)

- **Relief Funds** – It was reported that the funds for Helene residents and property owners were holding on slightly ahead of request. He felt that we may need to try and raise some additional funds to maintain enough to meet unexpected needs that may come to the attention of the Council or the Grant Program later. Also, the Council had granted the use of these funds to assist residential areas, and the Village has been able to help clear areas on Southside Drive, Terrace Drive, Rainbow Falls, The Cliffs, and into the Buena Vista community.
- **FEMA** – It was reported that over \$ 302,000 had been officially submitted for reimbursement but these funds had not been reimbursed yet from FEMA. Another \$ 300,000+ funds were ready to be submitted and once all the paperwork is finalized, this request will be made. Other upcoming expenses will include the payment for the roll-off dumpsters and the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the security contract that is through March 30, 2025.
- **Annual Audit for 2024** – The audit is in draft form and in February the Council will have their annual presentation of the audit, findings, and recommendations.

### **CHIMNEY ROCK VILLAGE – TASK FORCE Report** (Mayor O’Leary and Task Force Chair, Don Cason)

- It was reported that the task force was having its initial meeting and just beginning its work on ideas, planning and future meetings. The next meeting will be at 10 am, Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup>. This is primarily for the task force to discuss and begin their initial work and the public is invited to attend and will be provided at time to offer commentary but the bulk of the meeting will be for task force members to help put together their framework for work as they begin their planning into the future.

### **WATER & SEWER PROJECT AND ACTIVITIES:** (J. Meliski)

- **Southside Drive Water Service** – It was announced that water service has been restored to Southside Drive through an insulated temporary water line. Customers will have to get an inspection from the Rutherford County Inspection Department to have the water turned on to their residence. Water samples have been taken and the water evaluated clean for public use.
- **Bids for Water and Sewer Construction** – Rebuilding the commercial areas and surrounding to be considered. There were two bids, one for \$ 2.9 Million and the other for \$ 2.7 million from Ledford and Parker. Mr. Meliski recommended the low bidder, Ledford

/Parker. A motion was made by Buck Meliski, seconded by April Schick and Council approved the motion to contract with Ledford & Parker for just over \$ 2.7 million. They are ready and will begin construction immediately.

- **Water and Sewer billing for customers was proposed to begin 30 days after they are reconnected or connected** to the water and or sewer systems when available. There was a brief discussion, and a motion was made by April Schick, seconded by Buck Meliski to approve beginning invoices for water and or sewer customers after they are reconnected or connected. The Motion passed unanimously.
- **Other Reports:**
  - **County and Village Property Tax Bills:** Stephen Duncan reported that tax bills were due, even from those that lost most or all their assets during TS Helene. He had discussed it with the Rutherford County tax office and reviewed state statutes. There were no provisions for waivers, but it was noted that the properties would be reassessed as of actual value in January 2025 and this new value would be what 2025 County and Village tax assessments would be based on. There had been some questions about this and unfortunately, there were no provisions in the law to adjust for the value of the property before the storm. New assessments will be applied to the 2025 tax billings.
  - **Chimneyrockvillage.gov Initiated:** Stephen Duncan also noted that application had been made and approved by the US Department of Homeland Security to allow the Village to adjust the Village's website from a .com to a .gov website. This will provide additional credibility with the public with items on the government platform. This is being worked on now by Mrs. Duncan and should be up and running in a month or so. Once the new web site, chimneyrockvillage.gov is operational, it will first be linked and then the .com will be canceled.

#### **MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS:**

- **The Mayor reported on the success of the Christmas Celebration** held to share the Village and the progress with the public. He noted and thanked the over 1,200 volunteers, thanked the 700+ volunteers on the waiting list, the vendors, contractors, and all that had been helping the Village rebuild. He announced that Spokes of Hope were back in the Village and had restarted the work efforts.
- **NCDOT – The status of the highway through the downtown continues to be “CLOSED”** and open to local traffic only. The road per the NC DoT web site remains closed until January 31, 2025, but the indications are that the road will remain closed for a longer period. Additional work and planning for Security will continue at least through March 31, 2025. As the Village learns more, it will be shared with the public.
- **Other Updates and Reports:**
  - There were reports about the river and its condition, and the need to plan more for a future Riverwalk to replace what was lost. Other ideas about reconstruction of the Village Center Plaza and other ideas were mentioned. Also, at present, the trout buffer is washed away.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTARY:**

- **SOUTHSIDE DRIVE:** There were several of the public that wanted to express their thoughts about Southside Drive. They had primary concerns or suggestions:
  - They were concerned with the overall opening of the Village to traffic as the feel vulnerable to intrusion if the Check Point is removed.
  - They did want the Check Point to continue.

- There were others that voiced the same opinion from other communities where few residents had returned to reside in the Village as utilities are not readily available.
- **EROSION CONTROL ALONG THE ROCKY BROAD:** Questions regarding destroyed lots remained. Residents were most interested in how their river front destroyed lots could or would be restored. Continuous erosion was affecting their properties and could at some point affect their structures. They desired more information about how to protect their property from further losses. The Village is working on this with FEMA, the USArmyCorp, and the NC DEQ. More reports will be provided as the Village learns more.

**RUTHERFORD COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CONTRIBUTION:** Before a motion to adjourn was made, there was a special presentation from the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce to the Village for restoration and renovation of the Village. Cindy Cobb, executive director, presented a check to the Village for \$ 12,500. This was raised from their county-wide membership. The Mayor accepted and thanked her and the Chamber for their support.

Upon their being no further business for this meeting, a motion to adjourn was made by Buck Meliski, seconded by April Schick and the motion was passed. The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:15 pm.

**These are the minutes from January 7, 2025, Special Called Council Meeting are approved, this the 21<sup>st</sup> day of January 2025.**

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Peter O'Leary, Mayor

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Stephen G Duncan, Clerk to the Council