

January 13, 2022, MB#31

**TOWN OF VALDESE
TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2022**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Thursday, January 13, 2022, at 10:00 a.m., in the Community Room at Town Hall, 102 Massel Avenue SW, Valdese, North Carolina. The following were present: Mayor Leonard "Charlie" Watts, Councilwoman Frances Hildebran, Councilwoman Rexanna Lowman, Councilman Keith Ogle and Councilman Paul Mears. Also present were: Town Manager Seth Eckard, Town Clerk Jessica Lail and Finance Director Bo Weichel.

Absent: Councilman J. Andrew Thompson

A quorum was present.

Mayor Watts called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

DWAYNE WILSON: Dwayne Wilson with Dwayne Wilson Insurance & Financial Services gave Council a background of his experience as a community servant and insurance broker. Mr. Wilson has been in the insurance business for 37 years. Mr. Wilson explained that he decided last year to merge his agencies with a larger firm named The Hilb Group. This group has approximately 200 agencies and around 4,000 employees. Mr. Wilson did this to have more resources and platforms. Mr. Wilson's office consists of eleven full-time employees, five part-time employees, and four outside brokers. Mr. Wilson went over all the different wellness programs, employer-sponsored solutions, voluntary benefits solutions, and plans that he offers. Mr. Wilson shared that over the ten years he has been the broker for the Town of Valdese, he has created Wellness Fairs, Flu Shot Clinics, and a variety of Lunch and Learn Seminars for the employees. Town Manager Seth Eckard asked Mr. Wilson if he can provide the insurance rates sooner. Mr. Wilson explained that he has to work with the insurance providers to get rates as low as possible; it has to play out. Mr. Wilson went over the last ten years' medical plans and rates he has provided the Town. Mr. Wilson feels that his company is the most well-rounded agency for the Town to pick to represent our needs. Councilwoman Hildebran expressed her appreciation to Mr. Wilson for all he has done for the Town of Valdese.

GLENN WINTERS: Glenn Winters with Glenn Winters Insurance shared with Council that he started in the insurance business about 40 years ago. Mr. Winters started working for Blue Cross Blue Shield and then started his own agency. Mr. Winters has been through many trainings and knows the business very well. Mr. Winters feels that service is the most important aspect of a broker. Mr. Winters gave an overview of his clients in the surrounding area. Mr. Winters shared after looking over the Town's current plan that he would strongly encourage a dual option. Town Manager Seth Eckard said we have had that option in the past, but only a few employees took advantage of it. Mr. Winters also shared that you can do a dual option on the dental plan. Employees could buy up to a \$2,000 maximum if they needed more than the current \$1,000 plan. Mr. Winters explained how the negotiations work for renewals and some of his past experiences. Mr. Winters shared that he has very good relationships with Blue Cross Blue Shield but will always bid out to other carriers for the best rate. Mr. Winters stated that he genuinely cares and does his very best to take care of his clients, and he would do the same for the Town of Valdese. Mr. Winters shared that he and his office will take care of whatever services we need. Finally, there was a brief discussion on when Mr. Winters could provide the staff rates for the budgeting process.

JASON BRADSHAW: Jason Bradshaw with USI Insurance Services shared that USI is a national insurance brokerage and consulting firm with approximately 200 local offices across the United States. Mr. Bradshaw shared that USI Charlotte has been serving the local community since 1979 and listed several Cities and Towns he currently services in North and South Carolina. Mr. Bradshaw shared that he has been with USI for six years, and before that, he worked for Blue Cross Blue Shield for over ten years. Mr. Bradshaw is the Account Executive that would manage the Town. Mr. Bradshaw introduced Jennifer Davis, who is also an Account Manager and would help support Valdese and Shannon Buckner, the Employee Benefits Leader. Mr. Buckner shared that USI Charlotte has a team behind the main team to provide resources such as a Senior Underwriting Consultant, Communication Specialists, Compliance Consultant, Pharmaceutical expert, and a Population Health Manager. Mr. Bradshaw shared that he would create an annual strategy overview for us to know what is coming up each month. Mr. Bradshaw would provide us with a monthly dashboard report that would give us data and constant communication throughout the year. Mr. Bradshaw explained to Council how he negotiates the rates and when we would get our renewal rates.

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Mr. Buckner shared that USI has an advantage because of their relationships with Blue Cross Blue Shield and the amount of business they bring to them. Mr. Buckner explained the importance of having an effective wellness program and employees engaging in preventive care. Mr. Bradshaw shared the different resources for the employees and HR team that include use of a USI mobile app, custom communication tools, on-demand and video content, new hire booklets, and the benefit resource center who provide claim appeals and any other questions or issues the employees have. Mr. Buckner shared that the Town would receive two hours a month in employment legal advice.

DISCUSSION: HR Director Jessica Lail shared with Council that the Admin leadership team was interested in learning more from USI after attending an insurance meeting. Ms. Lail explained that it was suggested to hear from three different brokers, including Valdese's current broker. Council discussed the ten-year relationship the Town has had with current broker Dwayne Wilson and what a great job he has done. In addition, there was discussion on improvements that needed to be made with receiving the renewal rates earlier and past issues with the last open enrollment. Ms. Lail expressed her interest in USI because of the many resources they had for her as a HR Director and for the employees but has worked well with Dwayne Wilson and team. Council suggested staff check with other Municipalities and Burke County to reference Jason Bradshaw with USI. Council will make a decision whether to stay with Dwayne Wilson or change brokers over the next several days. No action or vote was taken.

ADJOURNMENT: At 12:34 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Councilwoman Lowman made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Mears. The vote was unanimous.

The next meeting is a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, February 7, 2022, 6:00 p.m., Valdese Town Hall.



Town Clerk



Mayor

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