

**TOWN OF VALDESE
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - BUDGET WORKSHOP
APRIL 19, 2021**

The Town of Valdese Town Council met on Monday, April 19, 2021, at 6:00 p.m., in the Waldensian Room, Old Rock School, 400 Main Street West, Valdese, North Carolina. The following were present: Mayor John F. "Chip" Black, Jr., Councilwoman Susan Stevenson, Councilman J. Andrew Thompson, and Councilman Roy F. Sweezy. Also present were Town Clerk Jessica Lail, Town Manager Seth Eckard, Finance Director Bo Weichel, and Public Services Director Greg Padgett.

Absent: Councilwoman Frances Hildebran, Councilman Keith Ogle

A quorum was present.

Others present: Jeff Blalock, Greenway Transportation Finance Director, Brian Horton, WPCOG Transportation Planning Manager, Dwayne Wilson of Dwayne Wilson Insurance & Financial Services, RJ Mozeley, McGill Associates, P.A.

Mayor Black called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., and invited members of Council to enjoy dinner catered by Myra's.

GREENWAY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION Mr. Horton and Mr. Blalock provided Council with an overview of the Public Greenway Transportation. Mr. Horton shared that the ridership numbers for the Valdese route is lower than wanted, but COVID-19 has affected it. Greenway proposes that Valdese's contribution of \$10,000 remain the same for the next two fiscal years. Mr. Horton suggested in year three, the grant funding ends, and the local government will need to pay more to keep the service going or enact changes to the service. Mr. Horton shared instead of having four routes, it may change to two routes. Mr. Blalock mentioned that as fuel prices go up, ridership goes up. Councilwoman Stevenson suggested more marketing, and Mayor Black suggested placing it on our Town's website. The Council will see if the ridership numbers improve over the next two years and reevaluate the program.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE UPDATE Mr. Wilson discussed Blue Cross Blue Shield's first renewal quote, which showed an increase of 32.4% to our premiums if we keep the same plan. Mr. Wilson informed Council that this is very early in the process, and he is working on getting that number lowered and shopping out other providers as well. Mr. Wilson will update staff as soon as updated quotes are received.

VALDESE CEMETARY EXPANSION Mr. Padgett asked Council what direction they want to go with on the cemetery expansion, which would cost around \$11,000. Mr. Padgett shared that J&M Memorials approached the Town to purchase a mausoleum. Mr. Padgett feels it would be an expensive endeavor but it could be an option in the future. Council discussed the possibility of developing an ordinance/resolution that reserved the remaining unpurchased plots for family members of existing plot owners. Council recommended at this time not to expand and revisit for consideration in the future.

SIGNAGE AT VALDESE PUBLIC LIBRARY Mr. Eckard shared with Council that in his negotiations with donating money to the Burke County Library, one of the agreements in giving money would be that "Valdese" would be placed on the building. Mr. Weichel showed Council three options and shared the cost of each. After a brief discussion, Council recommended that we not pay Burke County to put "Valdese Branch" on the building.

FY 21-22 PROPOSED BUDGET AND HIGHLIGHTS Mr. Eckard and Mr. Weichel presented the proposed budget for FY 21-22. They reviewed the General and Utility Funds Revenues and Expenditures.

FY 21-22 PROPOSED RATE STRUCTURE & FEE SCHEDULES Mr. Weichel briefly reviewed the proposed rate structure, which was also presented at the budget retreat. Mr. Weichel shared that the cemetery plots would be increased. Mr. Mozeley shared that there would be a 5% increase to industrial and commercial utility customers and a 3% increase to residential utility customers. The proposed residential rate increase equates to a \$1.35 increase for minimum users each month.

ADJOURNMENT At 8:00 p.m., there being no further business to come before Council, Mayor Black adjourned the meeting.

The next meeting is a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, May 3, 2021, 6:00 p.m., Valdese Town Hall.

Town Clerk

Mayor

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