

## City of Blue Ridge

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480 West First Street • Blue Ridge, Georgia • (706) 632-2091

City of Blue Ridge  
Council Meeting Minutes  
City Hall  
480 West First Street  
March 13, 2018 at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Donna Whitener  
Council Members Robbie Cornelius,  
Nathan Fitts, Kenneth Gaddis, and  
Rhonda Haight  
City Clerk Kelsey Ledford  
City Attorney James Balli  
Finance Director Alicia Stewart  
Zoning, Land Development and  
Project Manager Jeff Stewart

Absent: Council Member Harold Herndon

1) Call Meeting to Order:

Council Member Rhonda Haight made a motion to call the meeting to order. The motion was seconded by Council Member Nathan Fitts. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

2) Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance:

Lydia Long offered a word of prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

3) Council Meeting Rules of Procedures (to be presented at each meeting by the City Clerk):

Mayor Donna Whitener announced that the Council Meeting Rules of Procedures were available at the Council desk.

4) Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting (if minutes are completed and available):

a) Council Member Rhonda Haight made a motion to approve the February 13, 2018 Council Meeting Minutes (Included Executive Session Minutes). The motion was seconded by Council Member Robbie Cornelius. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

**Action Agenda Items (Items requiring the approval of the Council):**

5) Georgia Cities Week Resolution (First Reading and Adoption):

Mayor Donna Whitener read the Georgia Cities Week Resolution aloud. Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to adopt the resolution. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rhonda Haight. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

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6) FY2018 Budget Amendment No. 1:

Finance Director Alicia Stewart gave a brief summary of the budget amendment. Council Member Rhonda Haight made a motion to approve FY2018 Budget Amendment No. 1 (attached). The motion was seconded by Council Member Robbie Cornelius. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

7) Open Records Policy and Resolution:

City Attorney James Balli gave a brief overview of the Open Records Policy and explained the importance of transparency for the City. Members of the Council agreed that transparency was very important. Mayor Donna Whitener read the Open Records Policy Resolution. Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to approve the policy and resolution. The motion was seconded by Council Member Kenneth Gaddis. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

8) Mass Notifications MOU and Resolution:

City Attorney James Balli gave a brief overview and explained that this would be a MOU with surrounding jurisdictions to participate in a mass notification system in the event of emergencies. After some discussion, Mayor Donna Whitener read the Mass Notification MOU and Resolution. Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to approve the MOU and Resolution. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rhonda Haight. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

9) FY2016 CDBG Request for Conflict of Interest Exception:

Mayor Donna Whitener read the FY2016 CDBG Conflict of Interest notice (attached). Council Member Kenneth Gaddis made a motion upon disclosure and discussion of said conflicts to request a general exception to the conflict of interest rule for this project. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rhonda Haight. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

### **Purchasing Approvals:**

10) The Steedley Firm, Inc. Invoice No. 637:

The Mayor and Council were presented with Invoice No. 637 from The Steedley Firm, Inc. in the amount of \$13,847.50 for services related to the CDBG project. After discussion about the grant administration percentage, Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to approve the invoice. The motion was seconded by Council Member Robbie Cornelius. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

11) Kitchen Remodel Budget:

The Mayor and Council discussed the remodel of the kitchen. Mayor Whitener asked for a budget of up to \$10,000.00 to remodel the City Hall kitchen. Council Member Rhonda Thomas made a motion to approve the budget of up to \$10,000.00 to remodel the kitchen. The motion was seconded by Council Member Robbie Cornelius. The Council voted 3-1 with Council Member Kenneth Gaddis opposed.

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### 12) Roof Repair/Firetruck Storage:

Mayor Donna Whitener recapped the topic of the roof repair from last month's Council Meeting and asked the Council what should be done about the repair and the removal of the drive thru. Council Member Nathan Fitts expressed that his opinion was to remove the drive thru area and that City Hall as a whole needs some exterior maintenance. Mayor Donna Whitener said that this would be discussed later. Council Member Rhonda Haight expressed that her opinion was that if the Council decided to remove the drive thru section of City Hall, for parking, then the City did not need to repair that section on the roof because it would be a waste of money. Mayor Donna Whitener stated that the City has received the insurance money for the drive thru/firetruck storage roof repair. Council Member Nathan Fitts asked about the use of the drive thru and Mayor Donna Whitener stated that it is use occasionally, but that the City should utilize a drop box instead of using the drive thru. Council Member Nathan Fitts said his vote was to remove the drive thru, Council Member Rhonda Haight agreed. Mayor Donna Whitener discussed that the drive thru area is in rough condition and the functionality of the drive thru. Council Member Kenneth Gaddis asked if the City had a structural engineer evaluate the drive thru section. Mayor Donna Whitener stated that a structural engineer has not evaluated the area but that roofing professionals have. Mayor Donna Whitener stated that she hoped that the insurance money received could be used on the main City Hall roof. Council Member Nathan Fitts questioned the firetruck storage. Mayor Donna Whitener stated that once the new County fire station is built, that she hoped the City firetruck could be stored at their facility. The Council was in agreement with her. Mayor Donna Whitener informed the Council that she was working with the insurance claim adjuster about using the insurance money on the main City Hall roof. Council Member Robbie Cornelius asked if the City would be repairing or replacing the City Hall roof. Mayor Donna Whitener stated that she thought the City could just repair the roof. She asked if the Council wanted shingles or metal. Council Member Nathan Fitts stated he thought it depended on what the Council wanted to do with City Hall as a whole. Council Member Kenneth Gaddis made a motion to table the topic. The motion was seconded by Council Member Nathan Fitts. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

### 13) Donation to the Humane Society:

Council Member Rhonda Thomas gave a brief summary of the Humane Society's program of spaying and neutering felines. Council Member Rhonda Thomas made a motion to pay \$1,500.00 to the Humane Society for this program. The motion was seconded by Council Member Nathan Fitts. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

### **Discussion Agenda Items (Items for discussion only):**

#### 14) Abandonment of a Portion of Hill Street:

Mayor Donna Whitener informed the Council that Suzie Soave has requested that a portion of Hill Street, between East First Street and East Main Street, be abandoned by the City. Council Member Nathan Fitts asked if the City abandoned the street, where did the City owned acreage

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go. Council Member Rhonda Haight responded that the adjacent property owners would get the property of the abandoned road. The Council was in agreement to allow City representatives to begin the process of abandoning the portion of Hill Street as discussed. The adjoining properties are known as parcels BR01 013A owned by Richard A & Charlotte Stanley, BR01 014B owned by Richard A and Charlotte Stanley, BR01 013 owned by Blue Ridge Innovations LLC, and BR01 026 owned by Cookin Chicks LLC.

15) Abandonment of an Unnamed City Street:

Mayor Donna Whitener informed the Council that Danny Mellman has requested that the unnamed City Street located adjacent to their property known as parcel BR01 092 be abandoned. Mayor Donna Whitener mentioned that she would like to look at this property before proceeding and encouraged the Council to do so as well. The Council agreed.

16) Farmer's Market-Jim Sisson:

Mayor Donna Whitener informed the Council that Jim Sisson was present and that he has shown interest in purchasing or leasing the Farmer's Market. She introduced Mr. Sisson and asked him to speak to the Council about his proposal. Mr. Sisson gave a brief update on Blu Bear's condition and informed everyone that he was in the kiln. He then proposed that the City proceed with selling the Farmer's Market since it is a non-performing asset in his opinion. He mentioned that if the City sold the property it would then bring the City some tax revenue. Mayor Donna Whitener mentioned that she and Mr. Sisson had discussed the option of leasing the property from the City if the Council did not want to sell the property. Council Member Nathan Fitts then asked Mr. Sisson to continue his discussion of Blu Bear. There was conversation of the height of the bear and the City thanked Mr. Sisson for working on the bear.

17) Town Hall Meeting, March 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.:

Mayor Donna Whitener announced that the City would be holding a Town Hall meeting on March 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. She went over the agenda and she along with the Council encouraged the public to attend and give input on each topic.

18) Noise Ordinance:

Mayor Donna Whitener asked that City Attorney James Balli begin this topic discussion. Mr. Balli reassured the public that the Drive-In was not going anywhere and mentioned the attraction that it is to Blue Ridge. He then proceeded to say that laws are laws and that the City needs to look at all the options out there to address the citizens' concerns. He continued to state that the City is looking into the matter, but that no decision was being made at this Council Meeting. Mayor Donna Whitener mentioned that the owner of the Drive-In would be installing a noise barrier.

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19) Meeting Policy:

Council Member Kenneth Gaddis expressed his desire to allow the public to speak in Council Meetings again. He suggested that the topic of discussion receive a motion, second and before a vote is made that the Council allow the public to speak. Council Member Rhonda Haight agreed that the public should speak but that time limits are needed to control the length of the meetings. Council Member Nathan Fitts stated that he liked the section that discussion be limited to one spokesperson per topic. City Attorney James Balli confirmed that the Council can amend the current policy. Council Member Nathan Fitts expressed that he would like to see public comment prior to the end of the meeting. Mayor Donna Whitener mentioned that the meetings could allow public comment as the first item on the agenda.

**Public Comments:**

20) Cesar Martinez—The Blue Ridge Business Association:

Cesar Martinez gave an update on the business association. He stated that the two main problems in Blue Ridge are parking and restrooms. He suggested that the BRBA would be happy to offer any assistance on boards, committees and focus groups. Council Member Nathan Fitts assured that restrooms are a top priority for this administration. There was also discussion about crosswalks on Mountain Street and lighting at those intersections. Mr. Martinez was invited to the City's meeting with DCA on March 28<sup>th</sup>. They finished by briefly discussing the possibility of creating a DDA.

21) Martin McHan—Bear in the Park:

Martin McHan was present to address his concerns with Blu Bear. The Mayor and Council assured him that they were working on the bear and that they would be filling the cracks, painting the bear and building a shed to store the bear in the park once it is removed from the kiln.

22) Natalie Kissel—Flooding on Ada Street:

Natalie Kissel asked if her husband, Benjamin Kissel, could speak on her behalf. Mr. Kissel gave a brief overview of the problem facing their property. Mr. Kissel explained that the City had three options, 1) fix the drainage, 2) the Kissel's will fix the problem and the City can reroute their storm drainage or 3) the City can do nothing, which will be the most expensive option. The Kissel's, Mayor, Council and City Attorney discussed this topic but no formal approvals were made at this time.

23) Executive Session (if needed)—Personnel , Land Sale/Acquisition:

Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to close the meeting for an Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel and land sale/acquisition. The motion was seconded by Council Member Robbie Cornelius. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried. After closed discussion, Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to open the meeting from Executive

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Session. The motion was seconded by Council Member Kenneth Gaddis. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to allow the hire of seasonal employees at the pool with pay as follows: \$9.00 per hour for concession stand employees, \$10.00 per hour for head lifeguard employees, and \$8.00 per hour for all other lifeguard employees. The motion was seconded by Council Member Robbie Cornelius. The Council voted 3-0 with Council Member Kenneth Gaddis not voting due to him speaking with the Finance Director during the time that this vote was taken.

Council Member Kenneth Gaddis stated that the Council reviewed the Police Department salaries and that the Council felt they deserved a raise for their dedication to the City and its citizens. Council Member Nathan Fitts explained that an analysis was conducted for all of North Georgia and the pay for Blue Ridge officers was far less than anywhere else. He explained the difficulty that Blue Ridge experienced without a competitive pay compared to other places in North Georgia. Council Member Kenneth Gaddis made a motion to raise Officer Scearce’s pay from \$26.32 to \$28.95, Officer Presswood from \$21.72 to \$23.89, Officer Stuart from \$20.14 to \$22.76, Officer Huffman from \$18.78 to \$21.23, Officer Patterson from \$17.48 to \$20.27, Officer Green from \$15.71 to \$18.22, Officer Ware from \$15.45 to \$17.92, and to raise the starting pay from \$14.00 to \$15.00. The motion was seconded by Council Member Nathan Fitts. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried. City Attorney James Balli clarified that the raises were given based upon rank. Council Member Nathan Fitts mentioned that the raises were within the Police Department budget.

Council Member Nathan Fitts mentioned that a salary analysis was completed for the City Clerk, Kelsey Ledford and the results were much like the Police Department, with her salary being much lower than surrounding municipalities. Council Member Nathan Fitts made a motion to increase City Clerk, Kelsey Ledford’s pay to \$17.74 per hour. The motion was seconded by Council Member Kenneth Gaddis. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried. Council Member Rhonda Haight mentioned that Mrs. Ledford would be working five (5) days per week.

24) Adjournment:

Council Member Rhonda Haight made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Nathan Fitts. The Council voted 4-0. Motion carried.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Donna Whitener

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk Kelsey Ledford

\_\_\_\_\_  
Approved




# Blue Ridge, Georgia

## Live. Work. Play.

### BUDGET AMENDMENT #1 2018

<u>DEPARTMENT/ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION</u>		<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>AMENDMENT</u>	<u>ADJUSTED BUDGET</u>
<b>GENERAL FUND</b>				
100-31-0000-3100 TAXES	SALES TAX	690,000	35,000	725,000
100-51-7400-1100 ZONING	SALARIES & WAGES	-	(27,000)	(27,000)
100-51-7400-2100 ZONING	GROUP INSURANCE	-	(6,000)	(6,000)
100-51-7400-2200 ZONING	FICA	-	(2,000)	(2,000)
To allow for the hire of zoning/ project development administrator.			-	
100-31-0000-6200 TAXES	INSURANCE PREMIUM TAX	76,000	15,000	91,000
100-53-1500-2201 GEN ADM	MAINT BLDG & GROUNDS	(10,000)	(5,000)	(15,000)
100-52-3200-2201 POLICE	MAINT BLDG & GROUNDS	(500)	(5,000)	(5,500)
100-53-3200-2201 POLICE	MAINT BLDG & GROUNDS	(1,000)	(5,000)	(6,000)
To add expense for maintenace to City Hall & Police buildings.			-	
100-33-0000-6000 INTERGOV	LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANTS	-	21,480	21,480
100-53-3200-1600 POLICE	SMALL EQUIPMENT	(6,500)	(14,920)	(21,420)
100-53-1500-1600 GEN ADM	SMALL EQUIPMENT	(3,000)	(4,000)	(7,000)
100-53-4900-1600 SHOP	SMALL EQUIPMENT	(10,000)	(2,560)	(12,560)
To add grant funds for GMA safety grant and police computer equipment.			-	
<b>WATER FUND</b>				
505-51-4335-1100 SWR PLANT	SALARIES & WAGES	(83,027)	(6,500)	(89,527)
505-51-4410-9000 WTR ADM	CONTINGENCIES	(37,013)	16,000	(21,013)
505-51-4430-1100 WTR PLANT	SALARIES & WAGES	(165,074)	20,000	(145,074)
505-51-4440-2100 WTR DIST	GROUP INSURANCE	(95,608)	(6,000)	(101,608)
505-51-4450-1100 WTR LOSS	SALARIES & WAGES	-	(40,000)	(40,000)
505-51-4450-2100 WTR LOSS	GROUP INSURANCE	-	(10,500)	(10,500)
505-51-4450-2400 WTR LOSS	RETIREMENT	-	(2,000)	(2,000)
505-51-4450-2700 WTR LOSS	WORKERS COMP	-	(2,000)	(2,000)
505-51-4450-2200 WTR LOSS	FICA EXPENSE	-	(3,000)	(3,000)
505-51-4450-1100 WTR LOSS	CONTRACT SERVICE	(25,500)	18,000	(7,500)
505-51-4450-2100 WTR LOSS	CAPITAL OUTLAY	(31,000)	16,000	(15,000)
To allow for water loss employee, new hire of additional employee in water distribution and raises for sewer plant.			-	

ADOPTED AT REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

  
CITY CLERK

  
DATE

# City of Blue Ridge

480 West First Street

Blue Ridge, Georgia 30513

(706) 632-2091

February 13, 2018

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

### **Pursuant to 24 CFR Part 85, Section 85.36(b) (3) "Code of Conduct" and 24 CFR Part 570.489(h), "Conflict of Interest"**

Notice is hereby given pursuant to 24 CFR Part 85, Section 85.36(b) (3) and 24 CFR Part 570.489(h) of the city of Blue Ridge's intent to request an exception to the general conflict of interest prohibition which requires public disclosure for a conflict defined by 570.489(h) (1-3), including but not limited to, wherein a person participating in the grant process may have an interest in said grant for familial and/or business ties.

On October 17, 2016, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs awarded the city of Blue Ridge a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to upgrade water and fire protection infrastructure along portions of East Second Street, Hill Street, Orchard Boulevard, Orchard Place, State Street, Wilson Street, Ridge Street and Card Lane.

The exception will be requested for the following persons, who have familial and/or business ties in the target area. Potential conflicts are as follows:

- 1) Mayor Whitener is related by marriage to Janice Nicholson, who owns two parcels and three residential units along Orchard Boulevard. Specifically, Whitener is third cousin to Janice Nicholson's husband, Danny Nicholson, maternal nephew of Mayor Whitener's father. One unit is occupied by Jodie Nicholson, son of Janice and third cousin to Mayor Whitener.
- 2) Mayor Whitener is third cousin to Brian Nicholson, who owns and resides on one parcel along Orchard Boulevard. Whitener's father is uncle to Brian Nicholson's father.
- 3) A potential conflict also exists for Mayor Whitener and Brian Huffman, who is employed by Whitener's private business.
- 4) Post 1 Council Member Harold Herndon and his wife owns two undeveloped acres along State Street.
- 5) Post 2 Council Member Rhonda Thomas Haight is the great-niece of Glenda Herndon, who resides in the target area.
- 6) Post 4 Council Member Robbie Cornelius and her daughter, Carolyn D. Cornelius, reside at 89 Orchard Place. A 0.04-acre permanent utility easement is required from Carolyn D. Cornelius at this location. This easement was identified approximately two years prior to Cornelius's election to office and is essential for project completion. In accordance with the Uniform Relocation & Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970 (URA), Carolyn D. Cornelius has been notified of her rights as a property owner and agreed to sell for fair market value based on 2017 Fannin County Tax Assessor's records.
- 7) Post 5 Council Member Nathan Fitts is Mayor Whitener's maternal nephew. His mother, Linda Fitts Rogers, sister to Mayor Whitener, is also related by marriage to Janice Nicholson. Nathan Fitts is fourth cousins with Jodie and Brian Nicholson.



February 13, 2018

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

**Pursuant to 24 CFR Part 85, Section 85.36(b) (3) “Code of Conduct”  
and 24 CFR Part 570.489(h), “Conflict of Interest”**

In accordance with 24 CFR Part 570.489(h), each of the following factors was considered in the decision to seek the request for exception:

- i) Not applicable. The exception will not provide a significant cost benefit or an essential degree of expertise to the program or project which would otherwise not be available.
- ii) Not applicable. All construction activities were publicly bid in accordance with Georgia House Bill 1079, House Bill 513 and Senate Bill 146. Notices were posted at City Hall, on the City’s website, in the local legal organ, *The News Observer*, and on the Georgia Local Government Access Marketplace (glga.org) prior to the November 07, 2017 election. As such, opportunity for open and competitive bidding is not applicable to the requested exception.
- iii) The majority of persons affected are members of a group or class of low or moderate-income persons intended to be the beneficiaries of the assisted activity, and the exception will permit such person to receive generally the same interests or benefits as are being made available or provided to the group or class.
- iv) Not applicable. The affected persons have not withdrawn from his or her functions or responsibilities or the decision-making process with respect to the specific assisted activity in question.
- v) The interest or benefit to Carolyn D. Cornelius was present before Robbie Cornelius was elected.
- vi) Undue hardship will result either to the State, the city, or the persons affected when weighed against the public interest served by avoiding prohibited conflicts. Undue hardship will result to the persons affected when weighed against the public interest served by avoiding prohibited conflicts.
- vii) The potential conflicts, outlined herein above, do not provide any financial interest, directly or indirectly to Mayor Whitener or Councilmembers Cornelius, Herndon, Thomas, or Fitts. The target area was selected due to the presence of low or moderate-income persons and not due to potential conflicts. The exception will allow all persons in the target area to receive the same interests or benefits as are being made available or provided to the group or class.