



**TOWN OF GRANITE QUARRY**  
**BOARD OF ALDERMEN**  
**PLANNING RETREAT MEETING MINUTES**  
**Friday, March 19, 2021 8:30 a.m.**

**Present:** Mayor Bill Feather, Mayor Pro Tem John Linker, Alderman Jim Costantino, Alderman Kim Cress, Alderman Doug Shelton

**Staff:** Town Manager Larry Smith, Town Clerk Aubrey Smith, Town Planner Steve Blount, Fire Chief/Maintenance Supervisor Jason Hord, Police Chief Mark Cook

**Call to Order:** Mayor Feather called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m.

**1. Approval of the Agenda**

It was requested an item be added to the agenda – GovDeals Auction Award Question. Mayor Feather suggested it be added as item 1A.

**ACTION:** Mayor Pro Tem Linker made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of item 1A - GovDeals. Alderman Cress seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

**1A. GovDeals Auction Award Question**

Manager Smith emailed the Board a summary and provided the summary as a handout at the meeting. A department head bid on and won a vehicle from his department that had been placed up for public auction using GovDeals. Town Attorney Chip Short agreed with the legal interpretation by the School of Government that the practice was not legal, even when using GovDeals. A policy will be written to prevent department heads from bidding on surplus items from their departments in the future.

**ACTION:** Mayor Pro Tem Linker made a motion to allow the GovDeals auction award knowing that the Manager will be adding a new policy in the future. The motion passed 3-1 with Mayor Pro Tem Linker, Alderman Cress, Alderman Costantino in favor and Alderman Shelton opposed.

**2. Review and Agreement on Ground Rules for the day**

Manager Smith reviewed proposed ground rules for the day including a definition of consensus on a handout that he provided. Alderman Shelton added that if the word decision was used, a vote should be required.

**ACTION:** Mayor Pro Tem Linker made a motion to approve the ground rules for the meeting. Alderman Costantino seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

**3. Review and Agreement on Objectives for the day**

Manager Smith presented objectives for the day on a handout he provided to the Board.

**ACTION:** Alderman Cress made a motion to accept the objectives. Alderman Shelton seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

**4. Year End Review/ Carryover Items/ Pending Projects Larry Smith**

Manager Smith reviewed his presentation on Year End Review, Carryover Items, and Pending Projects. Pending projects include the pay and classification study that will be discussed more at next week's Budget Workshop. He highlighted many successes from the last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Successes included Granite Industrial Park sewer extension, IDF Grant, town hall façade improvements, space needs assessment updates, ISO Class 1 ranking, building connections in the community, and many more.

Manager Smith reviewed individual items in the goals list with the Board. The Board discussed revisiting the list later in the meeting after the presentations.

**5. Updates / Review of Recent Training on Successful Strategies**

Manager Smith presented on a recent training on successful strategies. He shared the "smaller is better" movement that is being seen in the wake of the pandemic and the focus on strategic direction. Professional development courses over the last year have been focused on mental health and burn out. A clear, concise organizational purpose is key.

**6. Budget (and American Rescue Plan): 30,000 ft Overview**

The Board had informal discussion on the American Rescue Plan funds. There is not much information known at this time on the exact amount or restrictions for the funds. Alderman Shelton suggested having large project ideas with long-term benefits in place that would otherwise be difficult to fund.

Manager Smith shared that tax assessment numbers are in limbo at this time. Based on numbers being seen right now and best estimates of one cent on the tax rate, the number should be a little over \$27,000. State-shared distributions are up around \$85,000. Ad valorem taxes projections show anywhere from even to down \$11,000. Manager Smith shared the largest upcoming estimated expenditures which include:

- Pay and classification study
  - April 1 - June 30 ~\$15,000 base
  - Option II sans benefits \$59,952, with benefits roughly \$80,000
  - FT Planner \$5,500 - \$6,500, starting salary for FT planner: hiring \$47,500, max \$73,000
  - Town Manager salary TBD because the position is negotiated
- Town Hall roof renovation ~\$100,000 - \$150,000
- Parks – could be looking for matching grants in the spring
- Waste Management contract –tonnage increase when recycling ended, again when COVID hit

Manager Smith handed out a sheet with the all the municipal tax rates in the county. He shared that industrial and commercial development were the answer whenever possible.

***The Board recessed for a break from 10:25 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.***

## 7. Discussions

### A. Growth and Development

Manager Smith shared a selection of slides from Ed McMahon's 2015 presentation on Strategic Growth and Secrets of Successful Communities. He reiterated that now is the time to be thinking about development guidelines and the "smaller is better" mentality. He shared that a successful development strategy was to pick and choose development proposals. This is often achieved by educating the public, exploring incentives, and creating partnerships.

Planner Blount shared his presentation on Planning for Growth. He reviewed the six strategic properties as identified in 2019 by the Comprehensive Plan. He showed a potential 100-acre mixed use development that could be a project based around the existing town-owned property on Mayor Ponds Street. He shared slides outlining the process for making the project a reality. Planner Blount pointed out four parcels of land at the corner of Church Street and Salisbury Avenue that are currently for sale. He identified them as the "face of Downtown Granite Quarry" and outlined how to make that happen.

There was Board discussion that included questions on whether staff had reached out to owners of strategic properties and the status of relationships with strategic partners. Manager Smith asked the Board whether they would like him to invite a representative from the EDC to the Budget Workshop on March 25, 2021. There was Board consensus to issue the invitation.

The Board discussed priority levels for strategic properties. Mayor Feather identified the industrial park as his number one priority, the "gateway" property as his second, and the potential 100-acre property for development that Planner Blount referenced as his third. Alderman Shelton stated in terms of significance, the property discussed as the "gateway to the town" was his number one priority, the industrial park was his second, and the potential development discussed was his third.

Manager Smith clarified the point Planner Blount made about the street lighting on Mayor Ponds Street; that if that area becomes a planned unit development, the sidewalks and street lighting will likely all be torn down and redone. Staff recommendation remains to use wooden poles and overhead lines like the rest of the street to match the Town's existing policy and practice/precedent until now and work on appropriately developing standards moving forward.

*The Board recessed for lunch from 12:12 p.m. to 12:38 p.m.*

### B. Website and Community Outreach

Clerk Smith reviewed her presentation on the current Town website and Facebook page and the issues with regulations and retention. She also discussed opportunities for community outreach by identifying neighborhood captains and utilizing a quarterly newsletter.

There was Board discussion on the communication needs in the community. Mayor Feather stated that a printed version of a newsletter had been done in the past. In his opinion a newsletter was costly and time consuming. He would personally say no to it. He also stated that the Facebook page run by the local business owner was not intended to be part of the Town. He would prefer that it continue to be run by the business owner and not be affiliated with the Town. Clerk Smith let him know the Town Hall address, Town logo, and description describing the entity as a "public and

government service” would have to be removed for the page to no longer be affiliated with the Town.

Mayor Feather recommended that it could be helpful for the website to be upgraded to take park reservations, provide police reports, and take payments. Alderman Cress agreed that having reliable information easily accessible with the ability to take payments through the website would be beneficial. Alderman Costantino was interested in having the ability for the public to be able to print police reports from home. Alderman Shelton stated he believed the Town should focus on the website instead of the Facebook page. He felt it should be user friendly and dynamic. Alderman Cress questioned whether the Town needed a Facebook page. Chief Cook spoke about the benefits of social media for quick notifications. Alderman Shelton asked if the Town was interested in push notifications/ couldn't options for that specifically be explored. Mayor Feather asked about the Reverse 911 system.

Mayor Feather proposed that ideas for making the website more interactive while automating tasks be explored as well as the availability and cost of ways to disseminate information to the public. Alderman Costantino agreed that they should investigate. Alderman Shelton agreed that they needed to explore communication means and bring recommendations back. Alderman Cress liked the idea of weather alerts being sent out for Granite Quarry. Mayor Pro Tem Linker suggested the Board members look at the websites for other towns.

The Board will explore websites of other comparably sized communities and will recommend direction to staff.

### **C. Pay and Classification Study**

Manager Smith reviewed his presentation on the pay and classification study. He presented the Board with recommendations and his request for direction or feedback. He asked if the Board would like to have a closed session before the Budget Workshop for the separate Town Manager position's pay classification discussion.

Board discussion on the pay and classification study included the pay grade for a full-time planner and at what point a full-time fire chief would become necessary. Alderman Shelton asked if there was a feel for what the cost of benefits would be. Manager Smith said it would be roughly \$20,000 which would bring Option II to ~\$80,000. There would be a January 1% - 2% cost of living adjustment recommended as well to stay current.

There was discussion regarding the procedure for setting the classification for the Town Manager position.

*The Board recessed for a break from 1:50 p.m. to 1:57 p.m.*

### **D. Identity (What Levels of Service)**

The Board discussed identity and levels of service.

Highlights of the discussion included:

- Planning / Code enforcement / Community Appearance:
  - Different complaints

- Hiring out?
- Stricter ordinance
- Enforcing ordinances
- Proactive solutions
- Admin issues:
  - Social media, third-party?
- Fire:
  - Current practices should keep the FD at ISO 1
- Maintenance:
  - Streets – ongoing issues
  - No complaints on level of service
- Police:
  - Level of service, no complaints
  - Space needs
  - Chief would like to open back up frozen position
- Parks:
  - Parks Master Plan should address many needs
  - General maintenance and upkeep
  - More security cameras
  - Tennis Courts
  - Legion Building – agreement, future use, condition
  - Property lines at Civic Park
  - Grass seeding
  - Bike and Pedestrian Plan – scope

## 8. Review of Board Objectives

The Board discussed their objectives and priorities.

- 1) Strategic property – contact buyer regarding Downtown Master Plan, possible partnership on infrastructure (stormwater, FD access, downtown parking, etc.) cost/benefit analysis
- 2) Town Hall upgrades (PD space needs)

Alderman Cress identified the pay study, departmental needs, and code enforcement as his additional priorities.

## 9. Board Discussion: Set Direction

There was general Board discussion regarding the Board putting thought into the level of debt they were comfortable carrying, the tax rate, and the level of services being provided for the tax rate.

## Adjourn

**ACTION:** Alderman Costantino made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Linker seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

The meeting ended at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Aubrey Smith*

Town Clerk