



**Town of
GRANITE QUARRY**
TOWN OF GRANITE QUARRY
TOWN COUNCIL
PLANNING RETREAT
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, February 26, 2025, 9:00 a.m.

Present: Mayor Brittany Barnhardt, Mayor Pro Tem Doug Shelton, Council Member John Linker, Council Member Rich Luhrs

Not Present: Council Member Laurie Mack

Staff: Town Manager/Fire Chief Jason Hord; Town Clerk Aubrey Smith; Finance Director Shelly Shockley; Police Chief Todd Taylor; Public Works Assistant Director Josh Whitley; Office Assistant/Event Coordinator Debbie Loflin-Benge

Call to Order: Mayor Barnhardt called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

1. Approval of Agenda

ACTION: Council Member Linker made a motion to approve the agenda. Council Member Luhrs seconded the motion. The motion passed 3-0.

2. Overview

Manager Hord presented on revenues.

A. Revenues

- Ad valorem taxes are currently at .44
- Assessed tax base this year is \$425,970,955.05
- \$12,704,391 in Real and Personal tax base over the last year
- \$1,514,357 in vehicle taxes over the last year
- Annexation increases \$28,584 unimproved
- Estimated worth of 0.01 on the tax rate is \$41,175

Finance Officer Shelly Shockley stated that in the current budget \$1.1 million had been appropriated in fund balance, mostly to cover capital projects. It looks as though there will be at least \$85,000 in excess revenues. The \$85,000 will offset funds that have been taken from the fund balance to pay for items including the additional police car and the contract with Electus. Because the Transformational Projects won't be completed this year, the funds appropriated for them will roll back into the fund balance to be appropriated again next year. While it is still early, revenues coming in are expected to exceed projections. \$20,000 in planning and zoning revenues have been received. The NCLM revenues projections report will be released mid-March. There was discussion regarding the two methods for tax calculations. Finance Officer Shockley will provide more information to the Council on the methods at future meetings along with end-of-year projections.

B. Governing Body

Manager Hord shared some items from the Council's wishlist and which items have been accomplished or have been built into in the budget including the completed "In God We Trust" branding, implementation of #GQSOLID Award, CAC Community Projects like National Night Out, purchase of a big Christmas tree, and grant work for the Civic Park project. Manager Hord asked if the Council had an idea of the amount to put in contingency for the upcoming year. There was discussion on doubling the current amount, but some council members thought it may be too early to decide.

C. Planning Board / Board of Adjustment

Manager Hord shared that recruitment and retention has continued to be an issue for the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment. He introduced the idea of a small stipend per meeting attended that would be paid out twice a year to each board member. The cost would be under \$6,000 per fiscal year. Board of Adjustment members would only be paid if they had business items on the agenda.

3. Department Presentations

A. Admin

1) Staffing

Manager Hord asked the Town Council about initial thoughts on adding an additional full-time person to be the Office Assistant and having the current Office Assistant role transition to Community Engagement Coordinator. There was discussion on the need for community engagement and the possible use of interns for marketing. Manager Hord will work up a job description for the proposed Office Assistant role that includes assisting the Fire and Police departments as well. Council members were also interested in seeing how many hours would need to be dedicated to the Community Engagement role to illustrate whether it was a full-time job.

2) Insurance

Staff was informed Monday that the town's current insurance provider will be dropping health insurance in June of 2025. The town's broker is currently researching options for the upcoming budget year. Staff will keep the Council updated as more information is received.

3) Planning / Code Enforcement

Manager Hord shared the cost breakdown for planning services as well as projections for an additional NFocus staff member on Mondays. The overall increase in the base cost would be \$41,976 for FY25/26. There was discussion regarding the breakdown. There will be more information shared at future meetings.

B. Police

Chief Taylor stated the Police Department has many needs and is roughly 10 years behind where it should be. The expanding service area and increased call volume necessitate more personnel. Chief Taylor shared a five-year personnel plan for two patrol officers to be added in the upcoming fiscal year and three staff (assistant chief, traffic officer, and administrative assistant) in the following fiscal year. Chief Taylor also shared a five-year vehicle plan calling for four new vehicles in FY25/26. The Council discussed the specifics of the five-year plan for equipment needs. The cost

for the proposed equipment updates in FY25/26 would be \$99,506.00 without taking possible grants into consideration. There was discussion on the key card access options for the building.

Manager Hord reviewed his recommendation for standardized increases to make police salaries more competitive. The increases would include 15% for the Police Chief, 10% for Sergeants/Investigator, and 7% for Police Officers for a total of \$48,714. The Council discussed the pros and cons of increasing the percentage and breaking it up over two years.

C. Fire

Manager Hord shared his recommendations for Fire Department salary increases including 10% for Fire Captains, 5% for Engineers, and 7% for full-time Firefighters. He also recommended adding part-time employees seven days a week instead of four. The increase in part-time coverage would cost an additional \$94,000.

D. Public Works

Public Works Assistant Director Josh Whitley shared the Public Works vehicle/equipment assessment and five-year plan including the purchase of an additional supervisor truck and one zero-turn mover in FY25/26. He stated that the department would like to add an additional full-time employee in the upcoming fiscal year. Manager Hord shared the Community Appearance Commission's request for 32 additional banners with a cost of \$6,000. Mayor Barnhardt requested an assessment of current banners as well as visuals for the proposed banners.

Council Member Luhrs left the meeting at 11:16 a.m.

1) Parks and Recreation

Manager Hord stated that due to the likelihood that the park improvements will be funded via grants and private donations, no further capital projects were being requested in this budget cycle. There was discussion on whether minor upgrades to the Legion Building should be accounted for. Some desired upgrades were discussed. There was Council consensus to remove the pictures that are currently displayed on the Legion Building walls.

4. Miscellaneous

A. Events

Office Assistant and Event Coordinator Debbie Loflin-Benge presented the breakdown of the town's existing budget for events and the requested budget of \$28,000 for the upcoming fiscal year. The budget includes an increase of \$3,000 to cover the rented stage.

B. Community Appearance Commission

The requested budget for the CAC for the upcoming fiscal year is \$1,000. There was discussion regarding potential community appearance projects including block work and tree planting.

C. Environmental

Manager Hord shared that projected environmental costs are set to increase by \$19,438. An increase in the Environmental Fee could help offset the cost.

D. Streets

Manager Hord shared that staff does not recommend any capital improvements to streets in the upcoming year. The current Powell Bill balance and expected revenues for the next year were discussed.

5. Transformational Projects Update

Manager Hord shared that the Industrial Park sign total cost is \$70,000 and there is still a need for \$41,000 to be secured. He is still working on securing those funds.

6. Council Comments

- Mayor Pro Tem Shelton stated it was a good presentation and that the Council loves a high-level overview but will look forward to seeing details at future meetings.
- Mayor Barnhardt stated she also believed it was a good overview with the most information the Council has ever received at this point in the process.

Adjourn

ACTION: Council Member Linker made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Shelton seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

The meeting ended at 12:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aubrey Smith

Town Clerk