

Town of Mineral Springs
Town Hall
3506 S. Potter Road
Town Council
Regular Meeting
September 10, 2015 ~ 7:30 PM

Minutes

The Town Council of the Town of Mineral Springs, North Carolina, met in Regular Session at the Mineral Springs Town Hall, Mineral Springs, North Carolina, at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, September 10, 2015.

Present: Mayor Frederick Becker III, Mayor Pro Tem Janet Critz, Councilwoman Valerie Coffey, Councilman Jerry Countryman, Councilwoman Lundeen Cureton, Councilwoman Melody LaMonica, Councilwoman Peggy Neill, Attorney Bobby Griffin and Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector Janet Ridings.

Absent: Town Clerk/Zoning Administrator Vicky Brooks.

Visitors: Amy Bernard, Maureen Fumo and Evan Wunder.

With a quorum present Mayor Frederick Becker called the Regular Town Council Meeting of September 10, 2015 to order at 7:32 p.m.

1. **Opening**

- Mayor Becker announced that Town Clerk Vicky Brooks was absent tonight due to a family crisis.
- Mayor Pro Tem Critz delivered the invocation.
- Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **Public Comments**

- Matthew Ferrante – 2609 LaBelle Drive.
- Mark Brody – Representative for NC District 55.
- Charles Bowden – 6409 Pleasant Grove Road.

3. **Consent Agenda**

- **Councilwoman Coffey** made a **motion** to approve the consent agenda as presented containing the following:

- A. August 13, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes
- B. July 2015 Tax Collector's Report
- C. July 2015 Finance Report

and **Councilwoman Cureton** seconded. The motion passed unanimously as follows:

Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill

Nays: None

4. **Downtown Park Update**

- Mayor Becker explained that he would start the downtown park update, because Ms. Brooks (as the council may have known from the opening) has had a severe family medical emergency and can't be here; other staff members will be filling in for Ms. Brooks tonight. Mayor Becker noted that he had just finished talking to Mr. Dan Blackman and explained that we are only a few weeks behind in the construction documents, but he believed Mr. Blackman would be dropping off the final construction documents at the Union County Inspections Department for plan review this week and also getting the bid advertisement run at the same time. Initially, they were wondering whether they were going to have to try to call a special meeting at the end of September just to keep the process going or to approve the bids, but because we are pushed out to the point where the bids won't be coming in until like October 6th is what Mr. Blackman was thinking for the bid opening, at which point that would put us pretty much in line for the October town council meeting to approve the low bid if we get a responsible low bid.
- Mayor Becker explained that he had discussed with Ms. Brooks the scheduled ceremonial groundbreaking at the Mineral Springs Festival at 2:00 p.m. on September 19th. Since that is a town function, the council should consider calling that a special meeting, which would be held adjacent to the town hall for the purpose of conducting a ceremonial groundbreaking; this way we are covered in case it could be construed as being an official town act.
- **Councilwoman Coffey** made a **motion** to call for a special meeting on Saturday, September 19, 2015 at 2:00 p.m. for the purpose of a ceremonial groundbreaking for the Mineral Springs Downtown Park adjacent to the town hall and **Councilman Countryman** seconded. The motion passed unanimously as follows:

Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill
Nays: None

5. **Western Union Elementary School Funding Request**

- Mayor Becker introduced Ms. Amy Bernard who explained that she was a parent that is doing a lot with fundraising at Western Union Elementary School. Ms. Bernard mentioned that the Vice President of the PTO, Ms. Adrian Jaquith, was here in the audience tonight. Ms. Bernard further explained that she was a parent of a first grader and a third grader at Western Union Elementary and she was here today to talk to the council about their school. The school is known to be warm and welcoming to everyone, the teachers and staff care about everybody that comes in the door and you can feel the kindness when you walk in the door. Ms. Bernard has heard that from a lot of people. Kindness goes a long way, but we need more, we need to make these kids academically ready for the real world. There are things that the kids deserve and they don't have. Ms. Bernard is here because she cares about this school and wants so many good things for the students and the teachers. Ms. Bernard wants every student to have the best resources available: library books; computers and technology; enough copy paper and classroom supplies; and teachers to have rugs for their classrooms if they need it. The reality

is that all of these things cost money, more money than the budget currently has, so they are here today asking the town to help.

- Western Union has served this community for 60 years; it has been a high school, a junior high school and an elementary school. It has burned down and been rebuilt. For a time it was the only high school for blacks in this area. Western Union is the only school in this town; multiple generations of Mineral Springs' residents have gone through it. Mineral Springs and Western Union are a history, but Ms. Bernard is asking the town to help with their future. Ms. Bernard noted that she had asked Ms. Maureen Fumo to come with them tonight, but she was stuck at curriculum night, so she might come anytime.
- Councilwoman LaMonica asked a question in regard to Ms. Bernard's partners' sponsorship program – she noticed it seemed to be predominantly geared toward corporate sponsors, but are they tax deductible. Ms. Bernard responded “we are, we would love your support, this is a town where we are, we serve the children of Mineral Springs and so I think it would mean a lot” Ms. Bernard explained that the things they are looking for are: RAS kid in Excel map and reading programs online cost about \$40 per kid; and copy paper, which they run out of for the teachers every year, which is about \$4 a packet; there are a lot of things they need that don't cost a lot, but they need it for a lot of kids.
- Mayor Becker asked if they could have some private corporate sponsorship too. Ms. Bernard responded “we do”, she wants everyone to love this school as much as she does, so she will talk to anybody about it because they are very proud of their history and they are proud of their history with Mineral Springs. Councilwoman Critz suggested that they talk to local business owners and just the community; there are a lot of people who are not connected to the elementary school and do not know the needs, but care about children and the community, so it would be a great way for them to get people to understand the needs. Mayor Becker mentioned that Western Union will be selling bottled water as a fundraiser again this year at the festival. The Harris Teeter VIC card link-up was also mentioned and Ms. Bernard stated that she will get that for everyone (Parkwood is also included on it); the town could also give it to anyone who comes through the Mineral Springs Town Hall.
- Councilwoman Neill mentioned that Ms. Bernard had said they need books and computer paper and asked if this was because of the 30% increase in the student population. Ms. Bernard responded that she didn't know if it is because of that, but it certainly exacerbates it. Mayor Becker commented that funding at the county and state level isn't always keeping up with the needs and it's hard. Ms. Bernard commented that the PTO's have to step in and do a lot of purchasing for academic and other things. There was just an article in the Observer talking about different schools that have well over \$100,000 in their PTO budgets. The Western Union PTO budget was about \$24,000, so that means they can't buy for those kids what they would like to buy for them. They would like to buy the electronics, they would like to be able to pay for field trips for kids that can't afford it, and they would like to do a lot of things.
- Councilwoman LaMonica asked Mayor Becker as the finance officer if the town had any budget funds to consider one of these levels. Mayor Becker responded we do, because remember this is going to the PTO (not to the school) which is a 501(c)3 and therefore fits in with our nonprofits and we have increased the budget in that

category and some of them have dropped off, so we have money for any of these levels without a budget amendment. If the council has a reasonable suggestion, he can tell them whether he thought it was..... Councilwoman LaMonica asked if the council could consider the “Eagle Level” sponsorship, which would be a \$1,000 and then mentioned that she would be more than happy to go to her employer for a match. Councilwoman LaMonica explained that her company had a match program, but she didn’t know if it’s dollar for dollar, but it is a global corporation and because of the tax status that the PTO has it qualifies for consideration for submission. Mayor Becker confirmed that the funds were available [in the town budget] for that level if the council feels that’s prudent.

- Councilwoman Coffey asked Ms. Bernard if they had a corporate sponsor for the computer needs of the school; the electronics – Dell, Apple? Ms. Bernard responded no, is that something they can do. Councilwoman Coffey responded absolutely. Ms. Bernard stated that she would give Councilwoman Coffey her phone number and she could call her. Ms. Maureen Fumo (Kindergarten teacher at Western Union and resident of Mineral Springs) explained that Ms. Bernard had asked her to speak with the council. Most of their technology needs are met through the public schools, there is a school budget and each school has to determine its own needs and seek its own donations, so it is left to PTO’s, teachers or parents at the school who might have connections through their work. Right now our interest is to provide I-pad carts for individual classrooms; we start with the upper grades and then progress down to the younger grades. A classroom cart is approximately \$1,000.
- Ms. Bernard added that Mineral Springs is a small community; they know it is not a particularly rich community, but it is a growing community and a diverse community. At the heart of every community is its school and our school has educated members of your families, her children, and they continue to have more families move into the community, so the better their school is the more things they can provide the children, the better educated they will be when you compare them to other schools in Union County.
- Councilwoman Coffey commented that she believed whole heartedly that the town should be able to exceed an “Eagle Sponsor” and she believed that the council could have a conversation and exceed that, but she was not saying what dollar value tonight; that is a conversation the council needs to have and do everything that they can. Mayor Becker commented that the council could come up with something tonight and then continue a discussion. Councilwoman Critz asked Mayor Becker for some feedback on if they doubled the “Eagle Sponsorship” of \$2,000 and we get the ball rolling, then they are at the festival with their donation tent with the nonprofits and then we see how things are going throughout the year; they can report back to us with needs. Mayor Becker would be better with the math, but Councilwoman Critz was guessing that as far as the number of kids from Mineral Springs themselves that actually go to Western Union per household we are just talking a couple of dollars per household at the \$2,000 level. Mayor Becker responded that was a good way of looking at it. For taxpayers here, we are hitting you up with a tax bill of \$25 to \$50 a year; taxpayers are paying the county with schools getting a big chunk. Mineral Springs has approximately a 1,040 households, so a \$2,000 sponsorship would be less than \$2 per household per

year. Looking at it in that perspective, it's probably not a huge burden on the taxpayer.

- **Councilwoman Coffey** made a **motion** to sponsor the school at the \$2,000 level inviting them to participate with our nonprofits at the festival and certainly return back to us with future needs. Councilwoman Critz stated that her husband works with Duke Energy, so she will contact them and see if they will match. Ms. Bernard responded that they can use any help with sponsorships. Councilman Countryman stated that Ms. Bernard might talk to Mr. Brody in the audience and talk to the people in Raleigh about the budget. Councilman Countryman's daughter is a teacher in Charlotte and education is a prime concern; we need teacher's aides in the schools and you need to do what you need to do to get it passed and approved. **Councilwoman Neill** seconded the aforementioned motion by **Councilwoman Coffey**. The motion passed unanimously as follows:

Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill

Nays: None

- Mayor Becker noted that he will try to get a check to them very quickly; they are countersigned by our clerk and she may literally not be available tomorrow, but we are good for it. When it comes to municipalities supporting the schools that are in the town limits....for example, Mayor Becker attends all Parkwood football games, so when he goes to Piedmont High School, which is in physically in the Unionville city limits, it says on the score board in huge letters "Town of Unionville", so he has a feeling that the Town of Unionville kicked in some money for that score board. Mayor Becker doesn't see the shame in supporting the school that's in our town. Sometimes people are afraid that it's lavish, but he thinks he has seen it at other schools too where in a city limit you see various evidence of sponsorships even at athletic fields. Mayor Becker stated that he would love to do one to sponsor Western Union for books in the classroom, because that is so fundamental.

6. **Eagle Scout Project – Evan Wunder**

- Mr. Evan Wunder introduced himself and explained that he was part of Troop #46 in Wesley Chapel, NC. Mr. Wunder will be presenting his Eagle Scout Project proposal for the Mineral Springs Greenway where he would like to place Brown-headed Nuthatch houses along the greenway. Showing a slide presentation, Mr. Wunder explained that the bird is local to the Southeast US; they live in pine forests and pine parts of the forest. While showing a picture of the house, Mr. Wunder further explained that the size of the house is like a blue bird house except the hole is smaller. This species of bird is declining due to habitat loss. Mr. Wunder would like to place barred owl houses along the greenway. The barred owl is located in the Southeast US spreading to the Western Coast; you can find them along streams. Mr. Wunder showed a picture of the barred owl house and noted that it is pretty large. Mr. Wunder would like to place educational trail signs along the greenway to bring an educational aspect to the greenway. The signs would include information about the birds and the habitat along the greenway. Mr. Wunder referred to the slide presentation and explained that the circles on the screen represented the pine areas where the Brown-headed Nuthatch boxes would go and then he would like to place one barred owl house at the beginning of the

trail and one at the end; this is due to the range of the barred owl being one mile square. There will be 15 Brown-headed Nuthatch boxes; they nest in family groups. Mr. Wunder wanted to place three educational trail signs.

- Mayor Becker thanked Mr. Wunder and asked the council if they had any questions for him. Mayor Becker reminded the council how these projects work; there is still a lot of paperwork. Mr. Wunder will get a signature from Mayor Becker (if the council approves him to move forward) and he will go back to his scout district council for approval. Ultimately we would get more final construction plans and maybe any funding that is necessary would be discussed later in the process. Councilwoman Coffey asked if this would be compliant with what we currently have going on on the greenway. Mayor Becker responded that he had told Mr. Wunder what he needs to do is contact Union County Inspections to make sure that a building permit is not required for bird houses, because there seem to be some people in town who think we need to have a building permit for everything. Just to be on the record here that we are asking the provider to contact the county. Mayor Becker stated that his feeling on this is that he didn't think Mr. Wunder should have a problem. If the trail was not there the birds are still being served in a natural area along the creek, but we would ask that Mr. Wunder does get this signed off on by county officials. Councilwoman Coffey asked if we should check with Stewart first, the only problem she has is making sure that we are compliant at this point and there is no interference, because she would hate for Mr. Wunder to start and then have to stop his project unnecessarily. Councilwoman Critz commented that she presumed Mr. Wunder was working with the clerk as far as signs and their compliance, etc. Mayor Becker responded no he has not been yet; it had just been with him so far. Councilwoman Critz mentioned that she backed up to the greenway pretty much in the middle and she has a barred owl nest (a natural nest) behind her house and she didn't know if that played into Mr. Wunder's distancing. Mr. Wunder responded that they use the house to nest during the spring and they use them to winter in. Councilwoman Critz commented that he always seems to be here and they love them. Councilwoman Neill commented that it was a great project. Mayor Becker stated that he was thrilled to see it being something specific to the wildlife that we are really hoping to encourage on conservation property. Councilwoman Coffey commented that they really want to, but she was definitely going to encourage that the council put this off until next month, so that they can get that answer from Stewart and make sure there is not interference and to make sure that Mr. Wunder checks with the county. Mayor Becker suggested that the council should be able to approve it subject to Mr. Wunder getting approval from the county and the engineer. Councilwoman Coffey questioned what if Stewart says that it will be an interference to what is going on. Mayor Becker responded that he would have to drop it.
- After continued discussion it was determined that this would be placed on the agenda for next month, Mayor Becker will talk with Dan Blackman from Stewart and will forward the building inspections contact information to Mr. Wunder and Ms. Brooks will be able to confirm anything about the signs.

7. Consideration of Accepting the Resignation of Councilwoman Melody LaMonica

- Mayor Becker commented that this is a bittersweet moment and explained that we had a letter last month from Councilwoman LaMonica, which he brought to the

council's attention. The council will have to formally accept Councilwoman LaMonica's resignation. Councilwoman LaMonica commented that she kind of assumed that she should live in the community if she were going to serve on the council! Mayor Becker responded that it is kind of legally required. Councilwoman LaMonica is just about finishing up approximately eight years of service; she has two, then four, then two. Councilwoman LaMonica added that she was on the planning board before that. It is just 10 years this month (actually) that they moved to Mineral Springs, which was a very surprising decision. Michael and Councilwoman LaMonica hadn't planned on making a shift like this in their lives. They keep a small beach house out east, so they will get out there for a weekend every now and then; coming home from church her husband drives by a house and says "what do you think" and she was like "what are you talking about", so anyway the house here is on the market if anyone needs a four bedroom, three and a half bath. The LaMonicas will close in 10 days or so. Mayor Becker asked "down east on the purchase"? Councilwoman LaMonica responded its dead east about three hours, so "you all come out". Councilwoman Coffey stated that she would be tremendously missed, but she is excited for Councilwoman LaMonica. Councilwoman Coffey loves the thought process of just being able to pick up and relocate and just enjoy life and a new culture. Councilwoman LaMonica stated that it is a very small town (smaller than this one) and they are excited, it is on the Intracoastal. They got a great deal; it was one of those things that the good Lord just dropped in their lap. They weren't looking obviously, just drove by, called, looked at it a few hours later and she said "okay, let's give it a shot". "We will see if things fall into place, it was the good Lord's plan, you know. It is truly with mixed emotions, cause I really expected to be buried in the backyard here", Councilwoman LaMonica said. Councilwoman Cureton commented that she was very proud of Councilwoman LaMonica and she gave her congratulations. Councilwoman Neill commented that they were going to miss Councilwoman LaMonica. Mayor Becker stated that they didn't put together a plaque and a farewell dinner or anything. Councilwoman Coffey responded that she said October 1st. Mayor Becker asked if Councilwoman LaMonica was still in office until October 1st. Councilwoman LaMonica responded yes, she knew she was going to be at the festival. Mayor Becker commented that she would be able to participate in the special meeting; have a shovel in hand. Councilwoman Critz explained that Councilwoman LaMonica had asked her privately if she thought she should not run again for council, because she travels so much with her job. Councilwoman Critz had responded to Councilwoman LaMonica that she brings and has brought to this council a dynamic that is unique, because the rest of them don't travel a lot and haven't had as much corporate experience (except for Councilman Countryman); it has just been a really unique perspective. Councilwoman LaMonica has asked questions that have made Councilwoman Critz think deeper. Councilwoman Critz will miss Councilwoman LaMonica and is grateful for what she has added to the group. Councilwoman LaMonica thanked them all very much for the opportunity to serve and especially to our residents over the last 10 years. It's been extremely rewarding for Councilwoman LaMonica to be able to contribute and give back in some form no matter how small. Councilwoman LaMonica commented that the council will be missed for both Michael and herself; as many of them may be aware Michael also serves in a couple of capacities for the town, "so thank you very, very much".

- Mayor Becker asked Attorney Griffin since the council has to accept her resignation, does the council vote on that, because it is not a conflict of interest. Attorney Griffin responded she either votes no or yes, if she doesn't vote it is a yes. Councilman Countryman commented in consideration of accepting the resignation, he doesn't accept it, "we sure do appreciate you being here". Mayor Becker commented that they would like Councilwoman LaMonica to attend the festival. Councilwoman Critz stated that she could consider it a major going away party; it is with great sadness.
- **Councilwoman Critz made a motion to accept Councilwoman LaMonica's resignation as of October 1, 2015 and Councilwoman Coffey seconded. The motion passed unanimously as follows:**

Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill

Nays: None

8. Discussion of Seeking a Replacement Council Member

- Mayor Becker explained that at the last minute he put this Coates' Canons guideline together, it's a page and a half thing that summarizes the statutes and what the practice is in replacing a council member. Last month, there was a very short thing in the agenda packet, which was just pure dry statute. This one has seven questions for the council. First is must they fill it? The answer is yes we must, it "shall" be filled and there is not a timeframe given in the statute; it could take a month or six months by statute. The council decides what they want to do and how much diligence and what process they want to use. Does the law require the council to follow a certain procedure – an advertisement procedure, a type of vote, a vetting procedure? The law has nothing, no requirements whatsoever; it's a council decision, not a state decision, not an electoral decision. Mayor Becker thought the logic behind that may be that the basis of the statute is that the voters of the community fill those terms every two years and in between those times, the council is a body that acts as a body politic, so the absence of a member is more of a council decision, because the voters have put in that person and the council may seek to find somebody like that person; that is one of the possibilities. There is no procedure the council has to follow. If we take applications, if we mail out a solicitation, if people just sent unsolicited letters of interest – those are public records; it is not a personnel issue like a job application. Anybody who contacts the clerk or a member of the council with interest and they submit curriculum vitae, those are public records, because they are seeking public office. Can they council meet in closed session to discuss those candidates? Absolutely not; there is no confidentiality, it is a public process. Must the council vote yes or no for each candidate? The council can do it however they want. If there is one candidate, the council can vote by affirmation. If there are 10 candidates, they council can weed them out over a period of time or by motion. Attorney Griffin added that somebody can make a motion and if it is seconded they debate it. Mayor Becker commented that they ask about the mayor breaking a tie. Attorney Griffin responded that the mayor can only break a tie in his situation, if there is a tie and a vote and a motion; not by ballot (only by motion to appoint somebody). Mayor Becker stated that the seventh question is the appointment for the remainder of the term or only until the next election. In the case of Councilwoman LaMonica it's both, the law is specific

about that and if it were a four-year term and you were resigning the first week of your term your appointed successor's term would last until the next election even if your term wasn't up. In this case it will be filled until the next election (2017) or resignation of that council member if that may occur. Mayor Becker commented that should answer all the questions and asked what does the council without Ms. Brooks here it is a little bit of a challenge if we are looking at any kind of..... Councilwoman Critz responded that she thought under the present circumstances with the clerk and the fact that they just got the extenuation of this information they need to table this until next month.

9. **2nd Annual Festival Update**

- Mayor Becker commented that Ms. Ridings had said that she had the blessings of the festival director to do some updating and then he can also try to do some updating.
- Ms. Ridings explained that they had worked on the newsletters all day and they are ready to go out tomorrow; Ms. Brooks was here briefly and got them all printed and ready to go. For advertising, there will be some commercials on WIXE coming out. We did talk with 107.9 (next year we sincerely need to increase the advertising budget), he came in and was very nice, but with the time constraints and Ms. Brooks immediate problems there was just no way to work it out this year. The signs are all up, the banners are all up and the newsletters will go out. Ms. Ridings pointed out that there were posters in the council's agenda packet and if they could find a place to put them up they could be her guest. Ms. Ridings explained that we have all kinds of door prizes this year; there will be a map for the residents in the newsletter listing all of the sponsors that have contributed to the festival. There is not a brick application in this newsletter, but Ms. Ridings has them. Ms. Ridings noted that if Ms. Brooks is not here, they are going to continue on and fill the gaps that we need to fill in to put it on. Councilwoman Coffey asked Ms. Ridings if she had a sign-up sheet for the council tent. Ms. Ridings responded that she didn't, but she could make one up if they wanted her to. Mayor Becker suggested passing a piece of paper around. Councilwoman Critz responded that they should do that before they leave tonight, so they are prepared. Ms. Ridings continued her update: the children's games are all set-up to be done with Ms. Krafft helping out Sabrina from the church. Ms. Krafft had a lot of really great ideas; she is going to dress up the front yard with hay bales and things like that that they are going to do. Basically we are on track and Ms. Ridings has touched base with a lot of different things today just to do some confirmation of things. Ms. Ridings explained that she would send out emails tomorrow morning for the spaces that the vendors are going to have with space numbers; that will be in the newsletter, but she is going to email them with space numbers.
- Mayor Becker shared that we have some returning features that were very popular last year: Ellie with Honeysucklellama Farms will have at least two llamas; there will be another dog rescue, this time it will be Heavensown; there will be the dunk tank (new this year); and the bounce house is slightly larger than last year. There are several people who have committed to the amateur musical acts: a local group of brothers who do traditional instruments from harmonica to fiddle to musical saw to autoharp and a little bit of singing; the Rebel Clef from Parkwood High School, which is a girls' a capella group of 15 that will be doing a 15 minute set; and we

also have the Parkwood Band and the Junior ROTC will have an expanded role in conjunction with the flag man (historical flags). Mayor Becker noted that Mr. Howie, Colonel Kelly and the flag man have worked out some additional flags to be carried with the band and placed on the stands, so just a little more pomp and ceremony. Mayor Becker stated that we hope everybody who is a resident of Mineral Springs will stop by and enjoy it. Councilwoman Cureton reminded Mayor Becker about the Parkwood football team. Mayor Becker explained that they were trying to get a couple of the Parkwood players to come (Mr. Mohammad isn't going to be here this year), but we will have some of that in the back for the older kids (older elementary and middle school kids) and some of our famous Parkwood running backs like Bryant Ferguson-Springs and Jaylyn Rutledge may be there just to toss the ball to some of the younger kids. Mayor Becker is hoping it will be a great event for the community.

- Ms. Ridings announced that there will be a volunteer meeting on Monday, September 14th at 7:00 p.m. at town hall.
- Mayor Becker mentioned that we will be doing door prizes every hour; it may end up being every half hour. Ms. Ridings managed to pull in coupons from multiple food vendors in Waxhaw, Wesley Chapel and Mineral Springs – Farley's Pizza, Chick-fil-a, Harris Teeter, Fox's Pizza. Ms. Ridings added that she had four tickets to the NASCAR Hall of Fame that she is very proud of. Mayor Becker mentioned that there are some flags and outdoor accessories from Mineral Springs Fertilizer; beautiful stuff this year. Ms. Ridings commented that her husband is donating a hand-turned ink pen. Mayor Becker mentioned Summerfield's (who is also a sponsor) has some oil changes and service coupons and Dusty Wallace from the barber shop is again offering haircuts; there is a lot this year.
- Councilwoman Critz mentioned that there are several other festivals happening that day and her first reaction was "oh no", but then a group of ladies at the beauty parlor informed her that people love going from festival to festival to festival when they are close in proximity, so maybe it's not a bad thing and maybe a lot of people will come. Councilwoman Coffey invited everyone to the Steele Hill A.M.E. Zion Church who is also having their festival on the 19th. Councilwoman Coffey assured everyone that she was committed to the Mineral Springs festival. Mayor Becker commented that this is a good drop-in type festival; this year we don't have a signature event like a band performing that you want to be here for. The activities will be fairly equivalent.

10. Literacy Council 2015 Spelling Bee

- Mayor Becker stated that he believed Ms. Brooks sent the email and explained that he had mixed feelings about the Spelling Bee, because this year it is on November 12th, which coincides with the town council meeting. If Mayor Becker were to volunteer to be a member of the Mineral Stings he would not be here, but we do have a mayor pro tem who has said that she could chair the meeting if it came to that (that's what mayor pro tems are for), so that does not stop the town from doing it. Mayor Becker believed that Amy Brooks (our Mineral Springs resident and Parkwood alumna) is going to be available again, but our Parkwood English teacher Julie Johnson is not available, because she has moved to Maine. Mayor Becker explained that there is another teacher who had expressed interest, but he hasn't

gotten a commitment from him yet, because he wasn't sure if the town was going to do it.

- Mayor Becker explained that we have the \$300 team sponsorship, which is the donation to the Literacy Council (a nonprofit), but new this year they are trying to squeeze a few more bucks out, so non-team members are going to have a \$5 admission fee. If we get this new teacher to do a cheering section, which we didn't have last year, we might have to subsidize their admission, because it would kind of be unfair to ask him to get his students to come cheer and then they had to pay. Mayor Becker reminded the council that the town has always budgeted \$300 for this and noted that he believed there was room in the budget if it ended up being \$350. Councilwoman Coffey commented worst case scenario, just in case Ms. Brooks can't make it, would it be feasible that the town donate to the Literacy Council in the name of Mineral Springs and not necessarily have a team. Mayor Becker responded that they were doing the Spelling Bee all along and we didn't know, so the town was giving them \$250 anyway until they found out about the Spelling Bee, so we could do that. We could commit the money and Mayor Becker would try to put the team together. Councilwoman Coffey responded that works, she thought they should get the money either way, because it is the Literacy Council and they need the money. Councilwoman Critz commented (as mayor pro tem) she did not mind chairing the meeting, typically the November and December agendas are very light, so she didn't think that it would be of any disadvantage to the meeting or community to have our mayor absent for one meeting. It has meant a lot to the activity itself that Mineral Springs has had a presence there. Mayor Becker commented that he likes Mineral Springs having a presence and he likes Parkwood High having a presence in this. The only disadvantage is that they moved it to November (as of last year) and that made it almost impossible to get a Parkwood student who is available, because it is an adult spelling bee and you must be 18 years old and there aren't many high school students who are eighteen in November. Mayor Becker concurred with Councilwoman Coffey in that we may or may not get Ms. Brooks, but he can start picking up the phone to try to get members of the community to come back; Mr. Critz did it one year. Mayor Becker stated that he would love to keep the team alive, so if the council's suggestion is to commit the funding and he will do his best to keep them they can make a motion. If we had to have additional coverage for a cheering section if it came from Parkwood. Councilwoman Neill encouraged everyone in the community to go; it's a lot of fun. Mayor Becker added that it's a huge thing in Union County that's just one of those hidden events that you just don't realize how fun it is until you've been there.
- **Councilwoman Coffey** made a motion to commit \$350 for the fee for the Spelling Bee, so that we have a team or not and the extra \$50 would be to allow the Parkwood students to get in without paying, fully any adults coming, let's say herself or something like that, let's pay the fee to get in just pay for the kids. Mayor Becker commented that the teacher that was interested from last year is very popular (Ms. Brooks and her daughter know him) and his name is Mr. Riggins and he might be able to get a following the way Julie Johnson was able to do the first year, because he seems to be a popular teacher. **Councilwoman LaMonica** seconded the aforementioned motion by Councilwoman Coffey. The motion passed unanimously as follows:

Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill
Nays: None

11. **Staff Reports**

- There were no staff reports.

12. **Other Business**

- Attorney Griffin explained that he didn't usually comment editorially or otherwise on legislative action, but with the mayor's and council's permission he would like to make a few observations quickly. Mayor Becker responded "we're in trouble now". Attorney Griffin replied back "no you are not", he commended the council for its attitude and approach to nonprofits, because they spend a lot of time consistently deploying tax dollars to nonprofits in this town and towns have had a wide latitude historically. Attorney Griffin pointed out that we have a Representative here now who would hopefully agree that within the past two sessions the legislature has sort of weighed in on some of the concerns it's had about what local towns are doing with their resources and are you duplicating what other layers of government are doing. The legislature, the county commissioners and the school board are charged by law with supporting the schools to the extent they have all that's necessary to provide quality education. Attorney Griffin sees not only from Mineral Springs, but other towns where the school entities are coming before this layer of government; they can't get it from the legislature as he has alluded the schools are suffering now from perhaps a lack of assistance and that's a consideration; adequate salary and adequate supplies, but the legislature, the county commissioners and the school boards are charged by law with giving to the schools all that they need to support what they are supposed to do in providing a quality education. Attorney Griffin knows when a local school group comes before a small town council it is very difficult to resist, because we want to be supportive of our schools. Attorney Griffin reminded the council that the former head of the league always admonished (at municipal conferences) to be aware that the local towns should not be involved in funding of the school. Now the town has given away taxpayers dollars here tonight at the rate of \$2 per household and they do it for a lot of other nonprofits. Attorney Griffin is not criticizing the council's wisdom, but in their wisdom they are spending tax dollars for various nonprofits that they feel like are beneficial and that they can't get the money elsewhere, but Attorney Griffin cautioned the council to be careful, because there's sort of a taxpayer revolt going on in the country now about layers of government; "we've got too much government". Therefore, Attorney Griffin cautioned the council to be careful about giving away taxpayer dollars that were raised to run a town and historically towns provide the recreational services, water services, sewer services and Mineral Springs was created primarily for zoning purposes, and not to get involved in giving taxpayer dollars away for other purposes. Attorney Griffin stated that he did not know why he felt compelled to say that, but he felt that way when he served on the school board for 12 years; schools ought not go out anywhere else trying to raise money, if we couldn't provide it as a school board we were not fulfilling our duty. Attorney Griffin loves to see these interested people, school boards or local towns go before the local school board, the county commissioners and the legislature

saying “by golly these needs that we have given money for are important and you are the ones that are charged with that responsibility for supporting our schools, why don’t you do it”. Hold them accountable. It’s not for the towns to be held accountable. Attorney Griffin noted that it was very difficult to resist a plea from a local PTA or local school to put up a sign or to add to the marching band uniforms or whatever. Attorney Griffin thanked the mayor and council for listening. Councilwoman Coffey stated that she appreciated that and commented that if they are not getting it then it’s a good thing that the town can step in and bridge the gap for now. Councilwoman Coffey wanted everyone to understand and know it’s everywhere, it’s spilled over into the mayoral race in Charlotte, NC, the candidates for mayor are talking about school funding; they have been beat up in the media for doing so. Councilwoman Coffey is compelled to say that if we can just bridge it for a moment, because it is not there. Councilwoman Coffey explained that she is in the public schools, so she cautions herself very carefully. Attorney Griffin commented that the bridge ought to go back to the source. Councilwoman Coffey concurred and commented that maybe it would be prudent on our part for Mayor Becker, Attorney Griffin and maybe Ms. Brooks to work together to formulate a letter that could come from this council that would just say what Attorney Griffin just said – that we have had these needs brought to us, that we have assisted to help bridge these gaps, but that we really believe that it is legally the responsibility..... We can let Representative Brody know right now, but we can contact the school board or we can send these to the county commissioners and we can be another voice. Attorney Griffin responded “think it through before you do it, but yeah”. Mayor Becker commented that he has been wearing out our school board liaison on this very matter and is in frequent communication with Vice Chairman Boyd. Mayor Becker stated that he wasn’t pointing fingers at her or at her board or at her superintendent or at our county commission, but he posted a comment publicly saying that “tonight there will be a member of the Western Union PTO coming to our town council with a funding request for materials that they really need to run their school, it really shouldn’t be this way” and then continued publicly with “I believe my council is probably going to support the school, but it’s not something we should be doing”. Councilwoman Critz suggested that the council vote could be an additional; she didn’t know if it’s the squeaky wheel thing, but we could formulate a letter that we could all vote on, agree to, propose. Councilwoman Coffey stated that Attorney Griffin is advising that we think that through. Councilwoman Critz responded that she didn’t mean right now, what she meant was that they work together, think it through and then it would be brought before the council. Mayor Becker stated that he did like the fact that there has been this possible fortuitous overlap where we might have opened our local PTO to some matching corporate donations and he hoped that it works, because that could be a really good outcome of the fact that they came before us. Certainly privately funding the PTO’s is the best way to go. Attorney Griffin commented if you can get your employer to do it or individuals that’s always the best way if the government is not doing it.

13. **Adjournment**

- ***Councilwoman LaMonica made a motion to adjourn and Councilman Countryman seconded. The motion passed unanimously as follows:***

Ayes: Coffey, Countryman, Critz, Cureton, LaMonica and Neill

Nays: None

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.
- The next regular meeting will be on Thursday, October 8, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. at the Mineral Springs Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted by:

Vicky A. Brooks, CMC, NCCMC, Town Clerk

Frederick Becker III, Mayor