

Minutes

Town Of Ronda Work Session

November 14, 2025, 5:00 PM

The Ronda Board of Commissioners met on Friday, November 14, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. with the following members present: Mayor Rheajean Benge, Commissioner Helen Porter, Commissioner Kevin Reece, Commissioner Chris Nelson, Town Clerk Rachel DeGroat, Town Consultant Michael Boaz, Maintenance Staff Jordan Church, ORC Jeff Jones, and Town Attorney Mr. Jonathan Sink.

Member of the Public Present: Doug and Mary Jane Combs, Victor Varella, Michael Combs, Jerry Masterson,

Mayor Benge Called the Meeting to order at 5:00 PM. Mayor Benge requests the following amendments to the agenda:

1. Under Board Action 3a. to include Commissioner Seat Vote
2. Under Board Action 7. to add 8. Clerk Evaluation
3. Enter Closed Session prior to Adjournment

Commissioner Nelson makes the motion to amend, Commissioner Porter seconds. 3/0 vote to amend the agenda as described above.

Mayor Benge asks for a motion to approve agenda. Commissioner Nelson makes the motion to approve, Commissioner Reece seconds. 3/0 vote and agenda is approved.

**Board Actions:**

1. **Town Attorney** – Town attorney Mr. Sink states while “being as vague as possible,” after receiving multiple “phone calls from various board members regarding how, if at all if a board member who has acted improperly with respect to the law or policy, which would include Towns Code of Ethics, how could this board do something about that. What are our options?” It is clear the direction the board wishes to go is a board censure. The Town Code of Ethics document will guide in a very specific way that process. The next step in that process is to schedule a Special Meeting or a Regular Meeting. Special Call Meeting is the typical way to go but not the required option. Either meeting option would be the equivalent of a due process hearing. It would be in an Open Forum setting for the Commissioner in question. If that investigation shows facts that support the board’s probable cause to investigate in the first place that would then be an actual open meeting hearing. I am willing to provide a simple script for how that would go. That Commissioner could have his own legal counsel present if he

chooses. We are talking about a public censure. The next step, if that is the will of the board, you would need to either align that hearing with a regular meeting or call a Special Meeting which requires 48-hour notice. Commissioner Nelson asks, "when that initial hearing is taking place is it imperative that that person be here?" Mr. Sink replies that "due process equals notice and a right to be heard. So, it is important that he/she be given that right to be heard. I would be hard press to tell you to go ahead and have that hearing without that person present. That is just my legal advice. If you had a situation where the individual was not showing up every time, there are others that could be done. I would make every effort, as a best practice and in accordance with state law and procedure, and our own code of ethics to make it a time when he/she can be here."

Commissioner Reece asks "I have not been directly that much involved and I am reading stuff now that I have never seen before. One of the questions I've got is, if the public asks me about these messages that's been presented to me, I am allowed to share that with the public?" Mr. Sink answers, "you are and pursuant to State Law, specifically Chapter 132, those have now become a matter of public record." Commissioner Reece, "as far as due process, you tell the person, you give them notice, and it is their choice to participate or not. But you are giving them the choice to participate and you're letting them know what the allegations against them are. And as long as you give them adequate notice that is due process, right?" Mr. Sink answers, "it is.....courts even in this county would tell us to make every administrative effort. It is the notice, here is when it's going to be, here is when and where it's going to be. This is what it's going to be about. So, the individual has time to prepare for it." Commissioner Reece "how much notice do you think would be proper to hear?" Mr. Sink asks when is the next regular meeting on the books? Town Clerk answer this upcoming Tuesday. Mr. Sink suggests giving more time than that. Mr. Sink concludes that these are the starting steps of this process. Mayor Bengé asks if the board wants to pursue the Regular Meeting or Special Meeting option. Commissioner Nelson answers that he is fine with waiting till December 9<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

Commissioner Reece motions to address the public censure against Commissioner Munsey on December 9, 2025. Commissioner Nelson seconds that motion. Commissioner Nelson asks, "how about you Ms. Helen?" Commissioner Porter replies, "I don't know what we are talking about." Commissioner Nelson states, "you will know a little more about it in just a minute." As per Mayor Bengé, 2 votes in favor, 1 non-verbal resulting in a 3/0 vote. Commissioner Nelson then asks permission from Mayor Bengé to address the public; Mayor Bengé grants his request. Commissioner Nelson begins, "we had a contract with a gentleman to rebuild our planter out here around the flagpole. We had a special meeting for it, voted on and approved by the board. And the next day we had a Commissioner try to interfere with that contract. Actually, misrepresented himself, claiming to be a part of the "landscaping team," that we don't have, voted on, and approved of by the board, that we never did. And told him not to show up till next month, till the board met again. Told him he wouldn't be paid if

the "landscaping team" didn't approve of it. Later on, it went on and threatened him with a lawsuit, claiming the materials he was going to use was not what was specified. Later on, he went on and accused me, threatening to sue me for the materials being used. This Commissioner was neither at the Board Meeting/Special Meeting where we voted on accepting the contract or the materials. He basically knew nothing except he didn't want it. He could've really put the town in legal jeopardy, breach of contract, could've put himself in trouble, impeding a contract, and could have got himself sued for harassment. So, I rise today to speak of that Commissioner who has placed himself above the interest of the town. And placed the town in legal jeopardy, as well as himself. He attempted to circumvent the vote of the majority of the board and tried to reset the terms of the contract without any contact with any other board members. To make matters worse he then began harassing the contractor, whose estimate was voted on and approved by the board. Keep in mind the contractor, he was just doing what he was contractually obligated to do. But this Commissioner didn't come to the board, he was harassing the contractor. Why would anyone bother them when it is the board who asked for the estimates, eventually agreed on one, and voted to accept the contract. This Commissioner did not show up to the Special Meeting to vote on the contract therefore, the problem is his and his alone. The opportunity was there, he simply didn't show for whatever the reason, to either voice his opinion for or against said contract. Not only did he attempt to circumvent the contract, put himself in legal jeopardy, interfere with the contract, very possible that he could be sued for harassment by both the contractor and myself. This went on for days, days. The Commissioner misrepresented himself to the contractor in his duties, his position and authority. As he claimed to be on the landscaping team, which to my knowledge does not exist, both voted on and approved by the board, which we didn't. He then threatened him with non-payment if the landscaping did not approve, and then went on to threaten both the contractor and myself with a lawsuit if the project did not meet his expectations. Forgive me but his expectations were not the objective to be met. I for one do not appreciate the threat of a lawsuit, and I can confirm the contractor did not. This makes going forward, working together for the betterment of the town of Ronda, very difficult. I am willing to try but I cannot be the only one putting forth the effort. I wanted to inform everyone in the interest of transparency of the actions of this commissioner, Bobby Munsey. And publicly ask restraint and forethought from him in order to stay off such irresponsible actions in the future. Thank you."

Commissioner Reece comments on the copies provided of text messages. Commissioner Nelson reiterates that these are copies of text between Commissioner Munsey, the contractor and text exchanges between Commissioner Munsey and Commissioner Nelson. Commissioner Reece reads a text "I'm on the landscaping team approved by the board so it's not clear to me who you are dealing with at the end of the day you won't be paid till the board approves but..." Now I've only been on the board a short time now, we do not

have a landscaping team approved by this board, do we? Commissioner Nelson replies, "not that I am aware of." Commissioner Reece continues, "and then telling the contractor 'he is a she and she has no authority over the board, but you roll your dice if that is your game. Chris is not a mayor, but a Commissioner.' And to make it clear to the board we voted to have that project done in front of our building and that is the project we are talking about and wanted done before Veterans Day. And it got completed, right? Mayor Bengé answers yes. Commissioner Reece final question is "what harm did we do to the contractor? Did the contractor come here, and start work, and have to leave and come back?" Mayor Bengé answers no. Commissioner Nelson elaborates "he actually contacted me the Monday morning they were supposed to start working to tell me that they would not be coming because he had a Commissioner that did not agree with what he was trying to do. And actually if you would look at the second page, the text is "It's all good I'm ok with transparency, with the board involved we can delay the project till our next meeting I'll inform the clerk in the morning so don't show up till further notification next month." Commissioner Nelson states "he was acting solely on his own without any communication with anybody on the board. That right there, if he had waited till the next month we would have been in breach of contract." Commissioner Reece states "but did anything cost the contractor any money?" Commissioner Nelson states, "he did not want to show up until he was completely sure that he was not going to be sued or attacked for doing the job." Commissioner Reece explains "the reason I ask that was cause if this happened and it cost him money; I think we would have to pay him." Commissioner Nelson agrees but states, "that was not the case."

2. **Budget Officer Appointment** – Mayor Bengé states her understanding is that the board would like to appoint a new Budget Office. Commissioner Nelson makes a motion to appoint Michael Boaz and remove Commissioner Munsey from that. Commissioner Reece asks if that is who signs the checks. Michael Boaz answers "no." Commissioner Reece asks for a further explanation of what a Budget Officer is. Michael Boaz explains that a Budget Officer is required by the Local Government Fiscal Control Act and essentially the Budget Officer prepares the annual budget, which is what Mr. Boaz has been doing for the town for the past 6-7 years. Commissioner Reece states, "if that is what it does then I second that." 3/0 vote. Michael Boaz is the newly appointed Budget Officer.
3. **Commissioner Seat**
  - a. **Candidate Speech:**
    - i. Michael Combs – presents that the town should increase its growth with new business and new revenue. I retired after 27.5 years with the State of NC as a meat inspector. Have contacts with legislators in the Raleigh area to discuss the needs of the town. Safety concerns for the town discussed at prior meeting speed limits concerns. In support of emergency boat ramp access at the Yadkin River.

- ii. Gerald Masterson – believe that you should be a 10-year resident before running to take a seat and I have only been in Ronda for 5 years, withdrawing my name and giving my support to Mr. Michael Combs.
  - iii. Victor Varella – Ronda mayor in 2005, served for 13 years. Levelheaded individual. During time as Mayor, helped usher in 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the water system, Elkin water support during town severe drought, playground equipment at the park, and recycling program into town. Strong contacts within the county, Elkin and Raleigh.
- b. **Commissioner Seat Vote:** Commissioner Nelson makes a motion to appoint Michael Combs. Mayor Bengé asks, “is there a second?” Mayor Bengé then states, “if there is no second.” Commissioner Reece says “give me a second, I want to have a little discussion. I had a one-on-one talk with you, Ms. Helen, about this candidate and I know what you told me. Does that stay the same, about Michael, has that changed? You told me you were good with it, has that changed?” Commissioner Porter states “no.” Commissioner Reece then states “it sounds like to me it is decided.” Mayor Bengé states to Commissioner Porter, “we can address those issues we have with him later.” Commissioner Reece continues, “we got one motion out there now and I don’t want to be the second, I don’t want to offend nobody here. I told people I was not going to do a second. But, if the conversation that I had with Ms. Porter has been the same, it hasn’t changed then it is already decided. Which I don’t mean to put her on the spot but if she wants to second it then...” Commissioner Porter then states, “OK, I’ll second it.” 3/0 vote and Michael Combs is appointed to the open Commissioner seat. Commissioner Reece requests permission to address the public. Mayor Bengé grants his request. Commissioner Reece states, “Victor, I want you to know my vote was not personal. I want everyone in this room to know there’s time I go to Victor about certain things and he gives me advice, and he still tries to help the town of Ronda even though he is not on the board. And I want you to hear from me Victor that I appreciate everything you do for the town of Ronda. And I hope you continue to help us even though you did not get this board appointment. And I want you to hear that from me directly.” Commissioner Michael Combs is sworn in.
4. **ORC Report** – Jeff Jones reports of a new tap to be installed within “the next couple of weeks” on Hunts Road. Leak on Austin Traphill Road, repairs have begun. Department ran into a “mess,” this is the oldest part of our system. We dug about 3 feet towards the main intersection, found one leak but it still is leaking. Commissioner Nelson asks, “are we 37 feet under the road and then down the hill or?” Jeff Jones replies, “to the edge of road and then down heading down heading towards the main intersection 37 feet and still never found the leak.” Commissioner Nelson asks if this is main line? Jeff Jones states “no it is water service to Austin Traphill Road.” Jeff recommends that it’s one of the older

lines and we don't have the ability to tap the main, to contact Sid with Carolina Grading Utilities, to delete the old tap and re-tap the line. Jeff Jones states that cost will be above "our thresholds." Commissioner Nelson makes the motion to contact the outside contractor Sid and contract that work out to him. Commissioner Porter seconds that motion. Commissioner Nelson asks, "that will be done in roughly a days' time?" Jeff Jones answers "I don't know what his schedule is like, but hoping within the next week or so and it will take him possible a day to get this wrapped up." 4/0 vote to contact and contract Sid with Carolina Grading to complete leak repair on Austin Traphill Road. Jeff Jones reports that over the last 2 weeks the town has had intermittent communication between the East Wilkes Water Tower and the booster station. Right now, as of today it is working. However, I have provided a quote for Missions Communication that is Clearwater. This is to put a unit where we can interface back and forth electronically. Communication and requests with this unit can allow me, through the app on my phone turn on the booster station "from my home." The quote is for \$7,500.00, uncertain if we have the money in our budget right now to make this purchase, or a conversation to have with engineering to see if this purchase can be put on some funding we have currently, but we are having issues now. This is a live unit, but about a 1-minute time delay. This unit is expandable and can be placed on the current well, pressure sensors, it is a modular unit that we can expand, or contract as needed. Mayor Bengé asks, "how bad will it hurt us to wait until our Board Meeting?" Jones states "I just wanted to bring it up to you, see the pricing, so you could look through this. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns, you can call me directly. Whatever we need to do." Commissioner Nelson asks the opinion of the Budget Officer regarding the \$7,561.04 cost. Mr. Boaz states, "we approved....\$21,000.00 for the PRVs. That was an unbudgeted expense. We had some reserve.....we had budgeted about \$10,000.00 in maintenance and system repair, and you spent all of that and I don't think we have gotten the bill from Charles Underwood. And then you had \$11,000.00 in contingency. So, you have spent your contingency for the fiscal year. The water fund is a public utility and is a business. I understand the need to be able to communicate and know what is going on with your water system. So, I am not saying this is not a valid expenditure. But if you are asking me if you have the money budgeted, the answer is no. As the budget guy, I would say push it as long as you possibly can. But that is a decision we would have to work with Jeff on and Jordan." Commissioner Nelson asks, "so it won't kill us to push this off till the December Board Meeting?" Jones answers "unless something catastrophic happens between now and then, it might work perfectly fine. It might work perfectly fine for the next six months and we can put it in the next budget. I don't know." Mr. Boaz states that between now and December's board meeting, we can speak with engineers and see about asking for permission from the state to charge this expense to the \$3.5 million grant money as well. That is also an option but needs permission from the state first. Commissioner Reece questions the NC 7%

sales tax listed on the quote provided, "I thought that Ronda was tax exempt." Mr. Boaz clarifies that "no local government is tax exempt. You pay it and then you can get it back at the end of the year. You file a return." Commissioner Combs asks, "who actually files?" Mr. Boaz answers, "the staff files after the close of the budget. It is something we do, and the system keeps track of it." Commissioner Combs asks Jeff Jones regarding the quote "it does not include running the conduit or pulling the wire." Jones answers, "it is already there. They will just re-use the existing." Jeff Jones then provides an update on the well. "We have the final reports in. The gross alpha, the MCL, which is the maximum contamination limit is 15 for the state of North Carolina. Ours is at a 17. So that brings up 3 options. First one is we can possibly re-set up and flush the well to possibly try to lower, see if from us breaking the rocks. And I do not have costs for these. I am following up with him. His guess is we have a 50% chance to re-set up, re-flush, re-test. The second one is to put treatment in for that gross alpha. I pretty much told him, and I am going to be pretty transparent with you guys, I told him this is probably a no go. As far as I am concerned. And he is under the same impression. But he wanted to make sure to give us the option. If we have to do the gross alpha treatment, it means we are going to have to filter it with some kind of filter and it is going to be very costly. You are talking about a radiological thing and worrying about waste from that. If we spill the water on the ground...it is putting us into a very peculiar situation. I told him we would bring it up, but my personal opinion is this is a no-go. There is just so much, the EPA regulations, who knows. Another option is with the blending of the water, and with the blending of the water try to lower that average. But the thing is they went out and did 2 hydraulic model studies after the PRVs and tried to work it out. It is unfeasible to blend the water because the locations are too far apart. Third option is possibly drilling another well. He is going to follow back up with them to see how close we can get to the other well or that land that we have with the park up there. Something in the western part of town. This is where we are going to get up with the geologist and have this discussion and they are going to hopefully give us some options in the area so that we can find something that might have farmland that we can purchase and put a drill on. These are the three options we got with the well. I am just summarizing this. Rachel has a copy so just request a copy from her and she will print this out for you to read through this." Mr. Boaz "you need your engineers here to discuss this. The option that Jeff didn't discuss is to abandon that well and figure out plan b, with something else besides digging another well. This is a problem. If you go to the citizens and tell them, I just did a quick Google and if your citizens do a quick Google, they're not going to be all that happy. When they start reading about what this stuff is. It's radium and uranium, is a by-product of that. This is an issue." Commissioner Reece "I want to know all about this as soon as possible, but I need the engineers in here." Mr. Boaz, "yes. What is the treatment? How much is it going to cost to drill another well? We need engineers. I want John Grey." Commissioner Nelson "so you're saying it's a

50/50 chance if we flush it and re-test it?" Jones says "yes." Commissioner Nelson "we've already lost our butt with the well we just drilled that may or may not be able to be flushed out. When are we going to start talking about other solutions like putting in a water treatment plant down here at the river, kind of like Elkin did? If we get rid of wells, we get rid of a big headache." Jones says, "yes, cause we go straight purchase from Elkin." Commissioner Nelson says, "leave Elkin out of it and get our own water from the river." Jones replies, "we are talking \$40 million maybe." Mr. Boaz "the options are we really have to look at Elkin and figure out a way around that contract. The contract for what it was intended for is fine. But it is no longer that. It is no longer an emergency; it is no longer just to serve those few customers. It is essentially our sole water source that we really have to figure that out. Once I talk to the engineers I will have a plan." Commissioner Nelson "I would really like for the engineers to be here with the full board. And you bring your plan and you bring your stuff. Let's all get a clear understanding." Jeff Jones "me and Michael working together to offer a plan is going to be effective then me and him just sitting here talking about stuff." Mr. Boaz "Jeff and I just need to sit down and to be honest with you, Tuesday might be a little too fast. I am not trying to leave the board out of it. Let your staff develop some options for you, that we can then present to you. This one may actually need a Special Meeting sometime the end of next week. This is a big deal and is a lot to work out." Motion made by Commissioner Reece to hold Special Meeting on Friday, November 21, 2025, at 5PM. Commissioner Nelson seconded. 4/0 vote. Jeff Jones then provides a quote from Consolidate Pipe, a parts list of things that need to be replenished, requesting board's approval to proceed with the order. Commissioner Nelson states, "everything is good, ok." Jeff Jones reports lastly that over the past 2 months he has been contacted by two people that want to develop property around East Wilkes Middle School. One is on Macedonia Church Road, putting seventeen lots in there. This is the one furthest along in this process. I have reached out to John with the parcel maps to let us know how much this will cost. I am bringing this up to you because I have told the contractor, Chris Oliver, that when he is ready, he needs to attend a Board Meeting to introduce himself and begin this conversation. The other development is almost directly behind our water tower, off Austin Little Mountain Road, fully developed at 35 lots. Commissioner Nelson asks, "none of this that you are discussing is covered under our \$3.5 million, right? So, if any of this happens, we will probably have to go back and..." Mr. Boaz states, "any type of development, why would we pay for it." Commissioner Nelson, "exactly but we are going to be doing the work, correct?" Mr. Boaz states, "no, they do the work. They pay for it and then they give it to you. As a general rule, contractor wants to develop property, you build we'll take it." Commissioner Reece shares that right next to East Wilkes High School, the school has agreed to give that property to the YMCA. The state is going to fund putting a YMCA there, which will have a swimming pool. We will be selling them a lot of water within the next 5 years.



- 5. Maintenance Report** – Jordan Church reports  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the right-aways mowed, transmission serviced in the work truck, at Ronda Memorial Park removal of old mulch and replaced with rubber mulch at the playground. Removed all brush at the cemetery, various leak repairs. Installation of new garage doors at the maintenance shop has been completed. Commissioner Reece asks if we can include on the agenda for the Board Meeting to discuss a pay increase for Jordan in the Maintenance Department. Another thing Commissioner Reece asks to include on the agenda to amend or make a new contract with Jeff Jones. In the event we need to ask Jeff Jones to come help Jordan with something other than the water, can we negotiate a rate with him to help on other projects on an as needed basis. Mayor Bengé states that both requests will be added as topics of discussion to the upcoming Board Meeting agenda.
- 6. Town Hall Basement Door** – Commissioner Nelson makes the motion to a 60/40% payout on the Dowell contract “to be clear, I think that is high money, but we already agreed so I will make that motion. Commissioner Reece seconds. 3/0 vote.
- 7. Timeline of agenda release** – Rachel DeGroat speaks on behalf of Commissioner Munsey in his absence; Commissioner Munsey is requesting a 48-hour release of the agenda prior to both Work Session and/or Board Meetings. Commissioner Reece asks if there is any law that says it must be that way? Rachel answers with “no, I think it is just courtesy for preparation and awareness.” Mayor Bengé believes a vote is not needed. Commissioner Reece is fine with leaving it the way it is. Commissioner Nelson asks, “isn’t the purpose of the Work Session to get an idea of what you want to talk about at the meeting.” Mr. Boaz answers, “sure, but it can also be beneficial if there is a proposed new ordinance, policy, quote, or something for the board to have seen it before they sit down at the table. So, if it is ok with you guys, Rachel and I will make it our goal to get it out 48-hours in advance.” Commissioner Reece states “normally I would agree with this but if you are going to do something as a Commissioner, come to the board with clean hands. If you got an idea come to the board because you are coming to the board for legitimate reason to help the town, not cause you are pissed off. And I believe that is put on there cause somebody don’t have clean hands. That’s put on there by one Commissioner who is upset and I don’t like the reason behind it. What we are doing works. Every time we have ever had an ordinance or talked about closing a road, we have always held a special meeting and always informed the public. We don’t pass things without the public having chance to give input on it. I think we can leave it the way it is. They are going to try and get it to us in 48 hours, and I believe that they will. But if they don’t, I am not going to be jumping down their throat.” Commissioner Nelson states, “you guys do what you can.” Mayor Bengé announces a consensus of four to “leave it alone and try your best to get it out at 48 if you want to.”

- 8. Clerk Evaluation** – Mayor Bengé instructs the Commissioner to fill out the evaluation provided for Town Clerk Rachel DeGroat and bring to the upcoming Board Meeting to discuss then.

At 6:34 PM Commissioner Nelson makes the motion for a 10-minute recess prior to entering Closed Session. Commissioner Reece seconds the motion.

*Rachel DeGroat*

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Rachel DeGroat, Town Clerk