

Minutes

Town Of Ronda Work Session

March 6, 2026, 6:00 PM

The Ronda Board of Commissioners met on Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present: Mayor Gerald Masterson, Commissioner Helen Porter, Commissioner Matthew Foster, Commissioner Bobby Munsey, Town Clerk Rachel DeGroat, Maintenance worker Jordan Church, and ORC Jeff Jones. Commissioner Chris Nelson was in attendance via FaceTime and Commissioner Kevin Reece was not present due to illness.

There were no members of the public present.

Mayor Gerald Masterson called the Work Session to order at 6PM.

Commissioner Matthew Foster lead both the invocation and pledge.

**Items for Discussion:**

1. Mayor Report
2. Lawn Maintenance RFQ for City-Limit Streets
3. Maintenance Building
4. Basement Door Contracted Work Follow-Up
5. Entire Scope of Work for \$3.5 Grant (Current estimated cost to complete proposed work)
6. HCCOG Grant Opportunities
7. Policy – Usage of Town Equipment
8. Administrative/Clerk Report
9. Maintenance Report
10. ORC Report

**1. Mayor Report:** Mayor Masterson reports about the recent meeting he and Jordan had out at Factory Street with YVSA and the camera that YVSA ran through the blocked culvert. Mayor believes the issue is not as bad as originally thought. However, cameras should that within roughly 100 feet of culvert, about 70 feet of that this plugged full of mud. Based on those findings, it is the belief of both the mayor and YVSA that there is most likely a break in the culvert "somewhere." Mayor does not believe there is a sinkhole but that the culvert needs to be replaced. It is about a 16' culvert but put an 8-10" culvert above the red tiles, shoved it into the 16", and drove over with a tractor

trailer, crushed it, plugged the culvert and it started filling on its way back up through. Most of the culvert is less than 8" under the pavement and needs to be deeper. Jordan talked to the factory manager today. Mayor feels that the factory should have some involvement and responsibility in addressing this issue along with the town. Mayor reports that the factory is willing to meet with the town to discuss further.

Commissioner Munsey shares that according to recent conversations he has had, Eddie Settle will begin trying to get the town a grant to pave all the roads and replace the culverts. The mayor then shares "I have seen more things happen that not everybody else on the board gets to. There have been several things, and I get in the beginning that one person is enough but at a point I feel that everybody else needs to know. We need to be up front and tell everybody stuff. I hope that as we move forward, even this week there was a bid opening here. I don't think that the 6 of us should've been here by any means. I think we should've been represented, whether it was me or somebody. And I think in the future, I would like to see somebody on this board, who is tied into that. We don't need 6 cooks in the kitchen, but it is much easier for us to know stuff if somebody has been there. That has been as much the boards' fault. I have seen many of things get voted in here, and they go 'Rachel would you handle that now that we have voted it in.' and probably it is here case, but that board member should have, and you talked about oversight." Commissioner Munsey, "I have tried to do some of that. I have kind of been left, because of everybody's schedule." Jeff Jones suggests about specific board members maybe be appointing over specific "departments," having one designated go-to member. Commissioner Foster agrees that oversight is needed, "so that all the commissioners and the mayor have the information needed to make the right decisions."

**2. Lawn Maintenance RFQ for City-Limit Streets:** Commissioner Foster shares his review of the cost comparison between the town buying the equipment and maintaining the licensing to perform the maintenance duties versus contracting those services to an outside source. Commissioner Foster points out that the chemical license alone is \$1,100.00 and that is not a one-time cost. There are yearly renewal costs on that portion alone. Commissioner Foster understands that while there are months in the year where lawn maintenance is not performed, paying throughout the year creates 12 smaller payments versus making larger payment amounts. Commissioner Foster also believes that an estimated tractor cost of \$64,000.00 that Commissioner Reece obtained is a heavy cost for the town to take on. Commissioner Nelson interrupts stating, "Kevin was working on a thing where we would be given the money from Wilkes County for that tractor. At least that part of it would not be coming out of Ronda's pocket, directly anyway. I am not arguing with anything you are saying there. Regardless of what we do with the right-away contract, the town is still going to need a tractor. So, you might be killing two birds with one stone. Or just one with one stone. Either way, we still need that tractor." Commissioner Munsey, "but then we are going to

need to hire another full-time employee which is going to be \$50k-60k a year". Mayor Masterson, "Chris obviously Commissioner Reece has talked to you about this and not the rest of us." Commissioner Nelson, "I think he did actually bring it up during a meeting but there has not been a great deal of discussion on it because there has not been any kind of final decisions." Mayor Masterson asks, "what would the other use be for a tractor?" Commissioner Nelson, "there are lots of occasions where you need a tractor instead of the excavator. And there has been times when I have used my tractor for the town's benefit because the town did not have one. There used to be occasions that the ramp will fill up with mud out there. You would have to go clear the mud out. There have been occasions where a small tractor was needed to do some sort of work at somebody's house, with the terrain or a culvert, or whatever and we had the excavator. You can use the excavator in most cases but there are times where you need a little more finesse." Mayor Masterson, "I guess I would argue that as a former operator. I think with our excavator what is missing is a clean-out bucket part. We have got too small of a bucket on it for the kind of project you are talking about." Commissioner Munsey, "it is just hard for me to argue hiring another full-time employee." Commissioner Foster, "even a part-time employee is going to cost more than the contract." Commissioner Nelson, "there have been discussions about that other tractor that wouldn't necessarily come out of our pocket. That is all I am saying. I wasn't arguing about the contract." Commissioner Foster, "looking at the part-time employee cost, for that 6-8 month out of the year, you are looking at about \$13,117.00 in estimated cost on that. It is kind of a catch-22. We are approaching that time of year where we need to make that decision." Commissioner Nelson then expresses his concerns regarding Jordan working alone, "I really don't think it is a good idea for him to be doing some of these things by himself." Commissioner Foster, "yeah, some of these jobs are not one-man jobs." Commissioner Nelson, "my only concern on that is truly Jordans safety....and at the same time you have to be concerned about the towns liability itself on that." The mayor asks if Jordan would like to reply and Commissioner Munsey asks, "personally do you feel like you need somebody else"? Jordan answers, "it is a waste of time probably seven months out of the year. There have been times where I could use help, but I also have not had any issues. Since I have been here by myself, I have never really missed a deadline." Commissioner Foster, "to me when we contract this out, they take care of it, they take the liability. That was my thought on it as well, you are not out there trying to take on a two-man job by yourself." Jordan, "and when we first talked about this it was so that I can have more time to focus on the water system." Commissioner Foster, "I am not pushing for this contract, but I heard a lot of people making complaints about the way the roads were. Couldn't see around corners, couldn't see around stop signs, and these sorts of things. It has been dealt with to a degree. We don't want it to get back to that." Jordan, "do we have any idea on the turn-around time, talking about the county providing money to get a tractor? It is time to do it now." Commissioner Foster, "yeah, cause we need to make a

decision. That is what I feel about contracting it. It takes the liability and they have to deal with it." Commissioner Munsey, "and that takes the safety off of Jordan and it also saves money. So, it is kind of killing two birds with one stone." Jordan, "the conversation that I had with the board at the time, when we cut the other employees was, we save \$100k a year we can contract all the mowing, all the right-aways, and still be saving \$70k a year. Now I am not saying a tractor is a bad idea. If we can get a tractor and it is paid for, why not"? Mayor Masterson, "and I want to thank you Chris for bringing that up because it goes back to my mayor's report. Here is another thing that obviously some of us didn't know about. I know Matthew and myself haven't heard about that. Thank you for bringing that up cause it does make sense that if the county wants to buy us a tractor, I won't look a gift horse in the mouth. I think we need to act on this at the meeting. We have beat this one enough." Award to the lawn maintenance contract will be placed as a Board Action for the upcoming Board Meeting on Tuesday.

**3. Maintenance Building:** Mayor Masterson shares with the board that he has been unsuccessful in speaking directly with anyone from Butler manufacturer. After multiple attempts both by way of phone and email, he has yet to get a response from any of the Butler locations he has contacted. Regarding the current estimates the town has for repairs needed on the maintenance building, Mayor Masterson points out the many needs of repair within the maintenance building that are not addressed in any of the current bids the town has, "each door is rusted off, you can shake the whole wall back and forth. That back corner is totally rusted away. All of the rat-rails are rusted. That is not in this."

**4. Basement Door Contracted Work Follow-Up:** Commissioner Foster reports that the contractor, Dowell Construction, who performed the basement door install has yet to provide the town with his insurance information. Commissioner Foster states that the current condition of the basement door at Town Hall is an "eye sore," is "not functional," needs "to be fixed," and "the current quote that we have is less than \$2,000.00 more than the 40% remaining that would go to Mr. Dowell under Commissioner Reece's recommendation. I feel that we need to go fix the door and we can decide how to proceed with Mr. Dowell pending insurance information. Rachel has contacted him on two separate occasions, and he has not provided any info up to this point. I feel like as a town we need to get the door fixed, where we can lock it and close it. Anybody that wants to can walk down there and open that door. I think that needs to be handled and taken care of." Commissioner Munsey asks, "did he not provide insurance"? Rachel responds, "no, he did not. In his defense, we did not ask him to. Was he asked if he had it, yes. All of the contractors I have engaged with, outside of asking the question, I have not required or requested proof. Moving forward, I will be doing that because of this." Commissioner Foster, "if the town wants to go in a different direction with a different contractor, I am fine with how they want to move

forward. Personally, I trust this man's work. It is not my decision. He did give a really honest quote, as far as the cost. He told what kind of door it would be, there will actually be framing behind the door." Oak Ridge Custom Creations is the contractor that submitted a proposal to fix the exterior basement door at Town Hall. Board Action for vote will be placed on the agenda for Tuesdays Board Meeting regarding the pending award of bid proposal from Oak Ridge Custom Creations.

**5. Entire Scope of Work for \$3.5 Grant:** Town Clerk refers board to the packet of information before them to reference. According to the hired engineering firm, Wooten, there are three current projects within the \$3.5 million dollar grant. Those three projects are 1) all new water meter replacements, 2) waterline extension, and 3) a new, additional well. The new water meter project has been awarded. The new well has been awarded, has already begun and is underway. The waterline extension is from Money Road to Elkin Highway 268. The recent pre-bid meeting held at Town Hall this past Wednesday was in reference to the waterline extension project. The official bid will be posted in the paper and the deadline for bid submissions on that project is March 24, 2026, at 2PM here at Town Hall. ORC Jeff Jones explains that a minimum of 3 bids needs to be submitted that day, if 3 bids are not received then the project is required to re-bid. In the event the town needs to re-bid, that would be re-advertise on 3/26/26, and the submission deadline for re-bid would be 4/7/2026 at 2PM at Town Hall. Awarding for the waterline extension project is confirmed to take place at the April Board Meeting, 4/14/2026. There is also contingency of roughly \$280,000.00 within the \$3.5 million grant for possible overrun and an additional grant of \$1.8 million that process could allow to pull from for overrun coverages within the \$3.5 million grant.

**6. HCCOG Grant Opportunities:** Commissioner Munsey shares that High Country Council has various grant opportunities for the town to consider applying for. Commissioner Munsey reports that Ms. Michelle Ball is willing to schedule a time to sit down with the town, "listen to what we have to say. Let us know what they can and can't do. This is a new grant that was implemented back in December. These funds are just sitting there. She said that a lot of times, when you put your number in the hat, a lot of people won't get it for this reason and that and then you will get it. You don't know till you ask. She has gotten the town some grants in the past. It is hundreds of millions of dollars." The town agrees to propose meeting with Ms. Ball with the HCCOG on 3/19/2026 to further discuss in person these grant opportunities. Mayor Masterson, Commissioner Munsey, ORC Jeff Jones, and the engineers from Wooten will be in attendance.

**7. Policy – Usage of Town Equipment:** Commissioner Munsey shares that there has been the allowance of residents within city-limits to borrow town equipment to include the dump truck. Commissioner Nelson states there is a policy, and anyone can come rent it, get the key during business hours, and bring it back in the same condition

received. Town Clerk Rachel states that she has been unsuccessful in finding such a policy. Commissioner Munsey is concerned that without a policy or process including documentation there is a liability that the town is then carrying. Majority impression is that the equipment is specific to ONLY the dump truck and no other equipment or town tools. Majority of the board is familiar with only current members of the board being granted permission to utilize the dump truck and that has happened on occasion but not often. Board agrees that the allowance should only be for the use of the dump truck and clerk states that she will continue to look for this possible policy, if it cannot be found then one will be drafted for future board approval.

**8. Administrative/Clerk Report:** Town Clerk Rachel DeGroat reports that there are currently 33 water accounts that will be notified of possible disconnection if they do not resolve their past due balance by 3/20/2026. Total unpaid balances of those accounts are \$7,454.83. Clerk also reports that she noticed peeling paint on 2 of the walls in the recently renovated front office. Commissioner Foster looked at the areas and does not believe it is an active water or moisture issue but rather an effect due to the recent remedy. Commissioner Foster is thinking the best course of action is to remove the paint from the wood on the 2 walls, give the wood a chance to fully dry out from the years of moisture collection before re-painting. Commissioner Munsey advises the mayor that there is a one-year warranty on that room from the contractor that completed the repair work in the last year, and the town is still covered under that warranty. Clerk reports that she has received multiple calls from multiple residents regarding the intersection of Oak and Factory. Complaint is specific to an obstruction of sight pulling out from Oak onto Factory due to the collection of items on that corner property. Residents have complained that this is a safety issue and at least 4 of those calls have specifically stated that they have almost been hit by oncoming traffic because you need to pull out into the road to be able to see around the growing garbage, impeding their line of sight at the stop sign. Clerk also reports that one resident has advised that when he does get hit, he will be suing the town for their lack of action. Commissioner Munsey, "that is his right to do because we don't enforce anything." Commissioner Foster, "well we don't have the ability to. I went by, cause I was in the office when he called, and he was threatening to sue, but the thing is when I left here and went back by, according to Mr. Boaz, the right-away ends at the pavement but if you look at the GIS map, that is not the case. There has to be a right-away. When I went up through there, his vehicles are back from the road. It is private property, and you can't control what people do on private property regardless of how you feel." Rachel reports that she has advised the residents who call that the board has approved involving the county sheriff's department when personal property crosses over that threshold and onto the public streets, but as of yet the items at this specific location are not impeding the public road. Commissioner Foster, "our best current course of action may be to go and have a friendly discussion and say we are almost having wrecks; we

have citizens that are really upset because they can't see, could you back these vehicles up. Or could you push back your pile of priceless junk, so we can see. That may be the best course of action to begin with or start off with because private property is just that." Commissioner Nelson, "the other thing you guys need to keep in mind, he is constantly moving stuff in and out and around that property.....he might be fixing to drag it around to the back, or sell it to somebody else, or whatever. He is constantly changing up his priceless junk from one day to the next. This is a problem; it has always been a problem since he moved there. I don't know how to solve it. I agree with Mr. Foster, private property is just that, private property. I do think that he would be hard pressed to get out of a real EPA investigation over the fluids and that sort of thing leaking down over the ground. But I think we would be hard pressed to get the EPA to come in there as well. They generally tend to go out to the bigger fish they actually get money off of." Commissioner Munsey, "unless we put something on the books and enforce it, we have running around in circles on this for the last 5 or 6 years". Commissioner Nelson "it has been a little longer than that, that he has been there. You already said the loud part even louder; you can't enforce it. We don't have a police department; you are not going to be able to enforce it. The county and the state already has junkyard regulations, but again it is his property or at least for the time being it is. We can pass all the ordinances in the world, but it wouldn't make a lick of difference when we have no way to enforce it per the town, other than taking the guy to court." Commissioner Munsey, "maybe we can put this on the agenda for Tuesday. I think Boaz spoke to some degree on it, maybe he can refresh our memories." Mayor Masterson, "as Matthew said, every one of our streets is 30 feet wide by GIS. I know that in building I had to be 15 feet from edge of the 15 feet that comes from the middle of the road, so basically 30 feet". Commissioner Nelson, "if you want to talk about an obstructed view, those old trailers that they don't use anymore, that never move, block that blind curve just above the Factory. And I cannot tell you the amount of near head-on collisions out there at that turn because they are coming around that turn on the wrong side of the road. And you have no place to go, and there ain't nothing but trailers. I would really love to know about the right-of-way." Rachel states that she would refer to the attorney and previous minutes, but belief was that the town was holding off any legal action with the junkyard on Factory because a commissioner made a claim that the property was under surveillance and the legal action with the sheriff's office was going to happen in the not-so-distant future. Moving along, Rachel asks the board to review the amendment made to the Town Policy regarding the work vehicle. Clerk asks the board to review in preparation for Board Action at the Tuesday Board Meeting. Clerk reports that town is approaching the deadline for FEMA projects to be complete, maintenance building project is not complete, and the road repairs are not complete. Clerk urges the board to decide regarding the maintenance building, which is the plan to replace it with a brand-new building or repair the current structure. Deadline for the completion of all FEMA projects is March 28, 2026. The town will not meet that

deadline for the park and road repairs, or for the maintenance building. Clerk reports that she will need to request an extension with the state, but she needs to know which direction the board is moving regarding the maintenance building so that she can document the reason properly in the extension request. Rachel states, "go over the explanation that she (state rep) has and the breakdown of what the possible options are. But by the end of the month, I have to put this request in, probably before the end of the month. And then when it comes to the roads project, it was about four months ago that I believe Michael was supposed to, the whole thing with Wooten where they were supposed to do the engineering study on all the roads, it had to be done within six months. Chris you were very adamant about it being done within six months. I have no idea what we are doing with the roads. So, people were under the impression that the roads were under the \$3.5 million grant, that is not true at all". Referring to the FEMA project for the roads only, Rachel reports "part of it is on Factory Street, if there is work that needs to be done on Factory Street, we are just going to put \$9,000.00 down for it to get tore up. Or if there is actually committed work about to happen, we can hold off and put that \$9,000.00 towards that". Mayor Masterson asks, "could that \$9,000.00 be used towards the culvert?" Jordan answers, "it has to be towards patching the asphalt, there are coordinates of exactly where on each street. It is like patch work on the edge of the road. Four or five spots on Old Traphill, two or three spots on Factory where the road is the worst." Rachel again states, "I need to know where we are going." Commissioner Fosters states regarding the maintenance building, "there are structural issues that need to be addressed, that is the reason." Regarding the roads, Commissioner Munsey, "that is going to be the same thing." Clerk continues reporting on two quotes placed in the packet addressing the structural issues recently found in the flooring at the main entrance of Town Hall. Clerk offers to place this on the agenda for Tuesday Board Meeting to vote and award. Board agrees. Clerk references the audit next in the packet. Rachel continues that she is not familiar with how the audit works and cannot answer any questions. Clerk recommends that the board reviews the information over the weekend and holds any questions for Tuesday when Mr. Boaz will be present at the Board Meeting to discuss further. Commissioner Munsey states, "the auditor is supposed to be appointed by the board, that is a statute. It is supposed to be presented back from that person selected company to the board. So, for the last five years the board has allowed Michael (Boaz) to handle all of that. So, if you go back and look at the statutes, we may want to consider bringing that back to the board and allowing the board to pick the auditor. And then that way we don't have a middleman, and we can directly have the auditor speak to the board on their findings. So, we may want to put that on the agenda to vote on." Clerk replies that she will make note of that for the upcoming Board Meeting. Clerk continues that the Notice of Violation was included in the upcoming water bills for each resident. Mayor Masterson asks for clarification on that. Jeff Jones replies, "finally got the results today. I am going to shoot an email out, and I was told once we get that email out we will be set back to

reduce monitoring. The tests results are, if you look at the THHMs, our maximum contaminate level is 0.08, that's the allowable limit. We were at a 0.010, so significantly less. And what they call the HHA-5s, the allowable limit for the state is a 0.060. Our result was a 0.13. and that's where I have been arguing with them for the last 12 months , I was arguing that we need to go back and be put on reduced monitoring. Which hence the snow at the end of January, I didn't do testing at the end of January. It is a quarterly test; well, they wanted it in January. What prompted this was Elkins bad test. All of our tests have been fine, cause we keep our lines maintained. We should know something from them by the end of the week, that we are going to be put back to reduced monitoring, is my understanding." Clerk concludes her report.

**9. Maintenance Report:** Jordan Church with maintenance reports that the wire fence at Ronda Memorial Park, a FEMA project is completed and the fence is up. Installation of a No Thru Traffic sign on Maple Street and a Dead-End sign on Buckhorn Lane is complete. The flag and rope at the cemetery flagpole, Elkin Sign came free of charge and helped the town with the replacement of that flag. Repair of the door on the outdoor library box. Installation of the lockable bulletin board located at the front door of Town Hall. Salt spreader has been picked up. Performed power washing of the signs and benches at Ronda Memorial Park. Jordan then shares with the board pictures he took of the current condition of the picnic shelter, picnic tables, and playground equipment at Ronda Memorial Park. Uncertain of paint and repair versus replace but the condition of the equipment is deteriorating and pure rust in many areas. Jordan requests consideration from the board on how the town would like to proceed for these needed improvements.

**10. ORC Report:** ORC Jeff Jones reports that there are two quotes found in their packets for price comparison on boring equipment as requested by Commissioner Reece. Jeff reports that all the parts have arrived for the fire hydrant repair on Austin Little Mountain Road. Tentative date to perform that repair is March 18<sup>th</sup>, after the hydrant flushing's are complete. Jeff then reports that Jordan completed a water leak repair out at Little Elkin Baptist Church. Jeff reports on the Pleasant Hill Activity Center, states that Wooten had submitted a request for lead line replacement funding and that request has been awarded. Jeff believes the funding was roughly \$300,000.00 but is waiting on the official letter with the confirmed amount. Jeff then concludes his report.

Commissioner Nelson then speaks and states, "I brought up to Rachel about the Memorial Day celebration. I already asked her to start making some plans. I would ask everybody on the board if you have anything you want to help with, or any ideas please come on with them. I did want to do kind of a special thing for Rheajean's husband who was a veteran. I haven't said this to Rachel yet, I don't think, but I was hoping to have a special little place in the ceremony for him. I hope everybody will be available to be there or at least keep us in their prayers on Memorial Day."

Mayor Masterson states that he will brainstorm as well.

Mayor Masterson asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner foster makes the motion, Commissioner Munsey seconds, and all stood in agreement.

*Rachel DeGroat*

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Rachel DeGroat, Town Clerk