

MINUTES  
TOWN OF RONDA EMERGENCY MEETING  
December 22, 2025, 5:30 PM

The Ronda Town Board met on Monday, December 22, 2025, at 5:30 PM with the following members present: Mayor Rheajean Benge, Commissioner Helen Porter, Commissioner Chris Nelson, Commissioner Kevin Reece, Town Clerk Rachel DeGroat, and Town ORC Jeff Jones.

The following members of the public present: Doug & Mary Jane Combs, Jeff Layell, and Jerry Masterson.

Mayor Rheajean Benge called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM, stated that the Emergency Meeting was called to present to the board a cost estimate to fix the active leak on Austin Traphill Road.

Commissioner Reece states that the board was made aware of a water leak on Austin Traphill Road back in September. He continues that a past vote was made getting the leak fixed and "evidently that is not happening." Commissioner Reece confirms that "a month and a half ago" he witnessed the water actively leaking across Austin Traphill Road. Commissioner Reece states that since that time a state senator contacted him wanting to know why the town is allowing water to run on the ground and the whole community is having to pay for it. Commissioner Reece states that citizens have been writing on the envelopes of their water bills "talking about why we are allowing this to happen?" Commissioner Reece shares with the board that a couple of days ago he contacted Town of North Wilkesboro and they said they have lack of manpower right now but would assist us with parts if we needed it. Commissioner Reece continues that he then contacted the Town Manager of the Town Elkin. The Town of Elkin cannot fix it as the Town of Elkin, but they offered to "work with their Public Works Director, their ORC and then can provide the parts and he will reimburse us back at our actual cost. And if there is any equipment that he needs, we will assist if he is willing to do it, we are good with that. So, their guy went out and looked at it. He told me until I get in the ground I cannot give you an exact dollar amount, but to do the whole thing and that is doing the re-paving back, cause we have to dig up this gentlemen's driveway. Due to everything he said I think it is going to come in between \$10k-12k. And they are going to move the tap, there is a tap evidently underneath the driveway, they are going to move that tap over, so if there is another issue you don't have to dig through the asphalt, the concrete. And can get it done, depending on if the Town of Elkin has an emergency leak, that comes first. Get it done in 2 weeks, then I got a text he is wanting to start on it tomorrow if we can approve it. Then I asked the gentleman, can I ask the board to authorize up to \$15k, cause you said \$10k-12, and you don't know what is down there. And he said I know we can do it for less than that. So, we've called

this Emergency Meeting to try and resolve this problem. The gentleman whose property has been affected is in the audience, thank you for being here. I am sorry it has been going on for so long. And that is all the information I have and if I can get board approval, I would like to try and get this passed and get this resolved."

Commissioner Nelson shares that after speaking with the resident last week, he spoke with Jeff Jones. During that conversation Jeff Jones tells Commissioner Nelson that "the guy you were going to have do it burnt his eyes, and you were going to speak to another gentlemen." Commissioner Nelson asks Jeff Jones directly, "how has that gentlemen been able to look at it?" Jeff Jones replies, "no sir." Commissioner Nelson asks Jeff Jones an estimate on how much water we are losing with this leak Jeff Jones answers, "from the video I have just seen, probably 10 gallons a minute".

Commissioner Nelson then asks Jeff Jones if he has any references as to how much it would cost if one of the two contractors he was talking to was to complete the work. Jeff Jones answers that he would not put himself in that situation. Commissioner Nelson states that he didn't know if the conversation with them had gotten that far.

Commissioner Nelson then asks Jeff Jones for his "thoughts on this"? Jeff Jones answers his only concern is making sure this man has the proper insurance for the town. Commissioner Reece states that he did tell him that he can provide W9's and did have the proper insurance to do it, he did tell me that over the phone. Commissioner Reece continues that he has not yet seen that documentation, but that he was told that. Commissioner Reece states that he is sure "Rachel can contact him and have him email that before the work starts." Jeff Jones then asks, "he is going to delete the tap under his driveway, correct?" Commissioner Reece asks, "is that what moving the tap means?" Jeff Jones states, "well he is going to re-tap that line but here is the thing. That neighbors line runs parallel down, under his driveway from, I guess it is probably 40 feet or better probably up the road there. It runs down under his driveway."

Commissioner Nelson asks, "so we have two lines running under his driveway? His and the neighbors?" Jeff Jones clarifies, "his is tapped out in his front yard. The neighbors come down parallel with our water main and taps under the corner of his driveway and that is where its leaking." Commissioner Reece asks Jeff Jones, "so what needs to be done?" Jeff Jones answers, "well I am just making sure that they are going to re-tap the line straight, like it should be. I assume that is what he means by relocating the tap. But we need to make sure he deletes the tap that is under the driveway, so it won't leak ever again." Commissioner Nelson asks if there is a way to make sure "he is in contact with Jeff to make sure that is done correctly?" Commissioner Reece answers "should be." Jeff Jones states "well he never contacted me when he showed up the other day." Commissioner Reece explains, "cause I personally told him to meet Jordan out there because he works for us all the time, to talk to him, and I didn't know where you would be. And I think you were on the phone with him at that time, is that right?" Jeff Jones states "he called me right when they were about to leave because I guess in the conversation with Jordan, the tap being deleted was not discussed, during the first

part of that conversation. And Jordan got him back and told him exactly what it needed." Commissioner Reece states "if we pass this tonight, Rachel you can ensure that they talk and we are passing it, that we want whatever he said needs to be done down there." Rachel DeGroat confirms to the board that she is taking notes on what needs to be properly communicated and confirmed with the contractor. Commissioner Reece includes, "make sure that can be done within the amount of money we are approving." Rachel DeGroat acknowledges that she understands and will confirm with the contractor.

Jeff Jones then apologizes that it has taken so long also. He states "we've contacted four, we've heard back from one. Then he was under a doctor's condition that he couldn't be out, and he is their guy. It's unfortunate, is what it is."

Commissioner Nelson asks, "would you be available to be there when he is doing it?" Jeff Jones says, "yes, that is the thing....Jordan tried to call him Friday, or whatever day it was, Thursday maybe. And nobody ever got back with him. He called Jordan, Jordan was out in the cemetery, trying to locate a plot out there and was asking where I was and if I can meet him. At that point and time, I still had, about 30-45 minutes away of work, at another location that I work for. And I said I thought he was going to give us other than hey I'll be there in 10 minutes. That is via what Jordan told me. I don't know, I am just reverbing what I was told." Commissioner Nelson asks, "but if starts work tomorrow, you will be available to be there, talk with and make some....ok." Commissioner Reece states, "you really wouldn't need to be there until he got it exposed anyways." Jeff Jones agrees and then states, "plus I think he is certified. I am speculating at that cause I don't know the full situation of this company. I know that one of them should be already licensed to work on the distribution system."

Commissioner Reece asks, "the man has a Class I Commercial Plumbing License and a State Distribution License." Jeff Jones asks, "yes, the distribution, Class I? They don't have a Class I." Commissioner Reece responds, "well he said I got a Class I Commercial Plumbing License which allows repairs on commercial water lines." Jeff Jones says, "ok, well there is a fine difference between our system and commercial. My biggest thing is to make sure he has Utility Contractor License." Commissioner Reece states, "he says he has that through Elkin." Jeff Jones states, "I don't think that is the truth."

Commissioner Reece states, "I have that here in writing." Jeff Jones continues, "I don't know what his, that portion is cause my insurance that I carry I can go out and assist you guys with your repairs. When we are starting to get into the work work, I start running in the whole limits of my general insurance. I just want to make sure you guys are covered, that's all." Commissioner Nelson asks, "we need to make sure he has?"

Jeff Jones states, "proper general liability insurance." Commissioner Reece states "so as long as he can provide that, if we know he can do what we are talking about with this tap." Mayor Benge interjects and states "we are talking about he; we have never even mentioned the company name." Commissioner Reece says, "his name is Travis Butcher,

I don't know the name of his company." Commissioner Nelson asks, "does he have a company, or does he work for the Town of Elkin?" Commissioner Reece answers, "he does both." Commissioner Nelson asks, "what kind of assist is going to need from us equipment wise?" Commissioner Reece answers "he got everything, we don't gotta do it at all." Commissioner Nelson states, "ok." Commissioner Reece continues that if we approved this "the man is going to fix it, and he is going to re-do the driveway and everything. It is going to all be included in this price, materials, everything. But I don't know him either, but I know his family's name. But Brent Cornelius, he is the Town Manager of Elkin....that is how this got started. If this problem happens for the Town of Elkin, he would be the man fixing it. But we got to do something. It ain't fair to the citizens and all of us are paying for water to run down on the ground."

Commissioner Nelson states "as long as he is properly certified and has all the equipment he needs, I have no problem with it. I do want Jeff there, to either oversee or at least communicate what is going on. I want to know that he is properly documented before he sticks the first shovel in the ground." Rachel DeGroat states, "I am texting him now." Commissioner Nelson says if he is "not properly documented we cannot handle the liability. But if the man can do the job, we want him to do the job." Commissioner Reece then asks "can we go ahead and vote as long as he meets that criteria? We will leave it up to the Clerk and Michael Boaz to verify that. And we will leave it up to Jeff Jones to make sure he is moving the tap the way he thinks it needs to be done." Jeff Jones interjects, "I think we should be good. If it's Travis over there he should know what I mean. I don't know how they run things in Elkin and part of the reason we have this problem is because of Elkin." Commissioner Reece agrees and states "we inherited all of Elkins problem water." Jeff Jones states "and that is why the house across the street from him has a water service off our water main, to two houses and one of them is in Elkin that bills them for water, not us." Commissioner Reece states "I want to know more about that." Resident, Jeff Layell from the audience states "there was a doctor that lived there years ago, and he had pulled strings to have his house put in-city limits so that he would have public trash. He no longer lives there. The house has been sold to the, he's not lived there for years. And the people that were living there, they have sold it to the nursing home. "

Commissioner Reece makes "a motion we approve this, spend up to \$15,000.00 with Travis Butcher's company as long as Rachel the clerk and Boaz verify, he has the certifications and the insurance to get it done." Commissioner Nelson seconds that motion. Unanimous vote of 3/0 in favor. Mayor Benge "let the record show that we are going to go with this guy."

Commissioner Nelson makes the motion to adjourn at 5:48 PM. 3/0 vote in favor to adjourn.

*Rachel DeGroat*

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Rachel DeGroat, Town Clerk