

**TOWN OF HILDEBRAN
Council's Chamber
Albert Parkhurst
Municipal Complex**

**OCTOBER 5, 2021
7:15 PM**

**REMOTE SPECIAL
MEETING MINUTES**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hildebrand called the remote special meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:15 p.m. The meeting was held by simultaneous communication and was streamed live via the Town's YouTube channel.

COUNCIL PRESENT

The following members of the Board were present: Mayor Hildebrand and Council Members Derek Cline, Cole Herrell, Ben Honeycutt, Mike Smith and Terry Weaver.

STAFF PRESENT

The following staff members were present: Town Attorney Redmond Dill, Town Clerk Alice Sanders, and Finance Officer Fredrick Rankins. Town Manager Logan Shook was in attendance via telephone.

CITIZENS PRESENT

See attached sheet.

ADOPT AGENDA

Council Member Honeycutt made a motion to adopt the agenda. All voted in favor.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS:
DISCUSS THE TOWER
POST DEMOLITION AND
TAKE ANY ACTION
DEEMED APPROPRIATE**

Mayor Hildebrand stated that the purpose of the meeting was for Council to discuss the tower post demolition. He stated that he would begin the meeting by letting Council members provide any statements.

Council Member Honeycutt read a statement saying that he had been contacted by citizens regarding the recent vote and demolition of the tower. He felt that Council should have pursued a second opinion and felt that the rush of the demo of the tower was a slap in the face to the citizens that had fought for years to save the tower. He stated that some citizens were concerned about the fate of the remaining school building. He stated that he would like the timeline of the demo and the signing of the demo contract addressed.

Town Manager Shook read a statement regarding the tower and the PARTF grant application process. Mr. Shook reviewed the discussions concerning the future park located at the old school site and the PARTF grant application and the role that the tower played in the process. He stated that the PARTF Regional Resources Consultant had a formal concern about the safety of the

tower and Council then began a renovation to the tower in early 2021, prior to the final PARTF application award process which takes place in late September/October, to address her concerns. He then reviewed the deficiencies after the renovation which led Council to hire a structural engineer. He reminded Council of the outcome of the structural engineer's findings, that the tower was deemed unsafe and that cost estimates to make the tower structurally sound ranged from \$250,000 to \$400,000 while also requiring a steel cage around the tower for support. Mr. Shook stated that staff, in response to the structural engineer's findings, assumed demolition could be an option given the costs to make the tower structurally safe. Staff prepared a state demolition application to run from September 28th to November 15th, 2021 in case Council chose demolition. He stated that due to the fast approaching PARTF grant deadline, staff wanted to ensure that the Town's grant status was not affected by the unsafe tower so the Town informed Piedmont Grading, a demolition company that was available to demolish the tower quickly, that the Town may need them on site ASAP. He stated that Piedmont Grading agreed to be on site on September 28th assuming Council voted to demo the tower on September 27th. He stated that if Council did not vote to demolish the tower on September 27th, Piedmont Grading agreed to either demolish the tower at another time or not demolish the tower at all, depending on Council's wishes in subsequent meetings.

Mr. Shook continued his summarization of the timeline by stating that at the September 27th meeting, Council had discussions on the tower and decided by a vote of 4 to 1 to demolish the tower and build back a functional monument. Council also voted to reimburse HHDA all \$25,500 raised by the organization to help fund the original tower renovation that was, sadly, unsuccessful. The complete statement read by Mr. Shook is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes (Attachment A).

Mr. Shook stated that Piedmont Grading, the demolition company, provided the Town a letter from their perspective and it was provided to Council.

Council Member Honeycutt asked Mr. Shook if Piedmont Grading removed the copper from the new roof from the job site. Mr. Shook stated that he did not know what happened to the copper downspouts but he had asked

Piedmont Grading prior to the demo about the value of the copper and was told the amount of the copper was valued around \$50.00. Mr. Shook stated that he would look for it.

Mayor Hildebrand asked Attorney Dill about a comment that a citizen said that Attorney Dill predicted that the tower would be demolished, the bricks would be saved and HHDA would get their money back. Attorney Dill stated that he said that in his opinion the tower was unsafe and would have to come down unless it is made safe, but he did not say that the tower would be demolished because that was a decision that only Council can make and that he has no power and could not make any promise of that happening.

There was discussion about the agreement in 2017 between the Town and HHDA regarding the tower and the lawsuit. Attorney Dill stated that the demolition of the old school building was overseen by the Town's insurance company and he had no knowledge as to why the connecting wall from the tower to the breezeway was removed. Mr. Shook requested that someone read the letter from Piedmont Grading explaining their perspective of just how unsafe the tower was as evidenced during the demo process. Council Member Herrell read the letter dated October 5, 2021 from Wayne Kerr, Piedmont Grading & Wrecking Co., Inc. An excerpt from the letter is below:

“My operator has many hours of experience with specialty demolition and we formed a game plan. As he was executing the plan, he began to take the rear smaller portion down. It fell very quickly; I was surprised how fast but not alarmed. He then chipped away at the two corners further from the remaining school building with his intent to go to the other side and push the top portion over and then repeat this process until it was on the ground. When he approached the school building side, he put some pressure on the structure, what happened next shocked me. The structure had catastrophic failure. I have never seen a structure collapse as quickly as this one. It kicked out towards my operator and I am so thankful he was not harmed. Nothing in my experience had prepared me for this kind of structural failure. Looking back, I am so thankful no one has been hurt by this structure. In my opinion this was a ticking time bomb. I know brick and mortar of that age loses its strength; my only thought is that maybe the heat from the building fire accelerated the

loss of integrity from the mortar because upon its collapse the dust was more than I have ever experience [sic] in the past.

In closing, I understand this was a difficult decision and I too wish things lasted forever but nothing ever does. I want you to know that in my humble opinion your action to demolish this great bell tower more than likely saved property damage and even possibly human life. The collapse was inevitable, again in my professional opinion.”

A copy of the entire letter is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes (Attachment B).

Deputy Tower stated that two weeks ago, and prior to the demolition, the Sheriff’s Department received a call on a Saturday afternoon that children had climbed the fence and were playing in the tower. The children were from the group renting the community center.

Council Member Smith stated that although he voted to demolish the tower because of costs, he felt like he was in the dark about the timing of the demolition. Mr. Shook stated that Council was originally supposed to meet on September 14th and make a decision on how to move forward after hearing the structural engineer’s report, but that meeting was cancelled and at the September 27th meeting he informed Council after the vote that he had spoken to demo companies and they had told him costs to demo were expected to run up to \$20,000 and that a budget amendment for \$20,000 was subsequently approved.

Mr. Shook also reviewed the Town’s PARTF application for the future park and the urgency to have the safety of the tower addressed prior to the PARTF grant award process so that the Town would not miss the opportunity to be awarded roughly \$300,000 in grant money if the tower’s safety issues, as noted by the PARTF Regional Resources Consultant, were not addressed.

Mr. Shook stated that this year, because the state has over \$6.7 billion in ARPA funds, the state is going to award PARTF additional funding. Typically, PARTF receives \$5 million a year for grants. This year, the state is looking to allocate \$60-\$160 million to PARTF for grants. Mr. Shook stated that it was imperative that the safety of the

tower was addressed so that the Town's PARTF application would be in good standing when these additional funds become available.

He also reminded Council that the demolition permit had a timeline of September 28th – November 15th, a six-week timeframe, in case Council chose to make a final decision about the tower at a later date. It was also clarified that even though a permit was pulled, it did not mean the Town had to demo if Council chose otherwise.

Council Member Herrell discussed various topics including the attempts of Council to hold meetings to address the tower and to hold public comments, open transparency, political action committees and false accusations. He stated that he wanted to move forward and build a monument that will last for the next 100 years for future generations.

Mayor Hildebrand stated that the best way to move forward is to begin building a replica of the tower. Mr. Shook stated that he was informed by Mackie Johnson, Icard Architectural, that the Town was not allowed to use his drawings of the tower to build a replica. He stated that staff is looking for any Town documents but he hoped Mr. Johnson would be willing to let the Town use the drawings.

Council discussed various options for the replica to include:

- A bigger ground floor
- Display the tiles that HHDA sold
- Honor veterans
- A multifunctional purpose
- Include restrooms and concession stand on back side
- Incorporate any salvageable bricks from the original tower

Mr. Shook stated that he would contact Mr. Bathgate for assistance in securing a contractor to work with the existing bricks since they are older and softer and a contractor that specializes in that area would be needed.

Council Member Cline discussed coming together, starting new and moving forward and stated that the Mayor and Council represent the community and should show leadership as the Town grows beginning with the new park and tower replica. He emphasized that staff has worked

hard to ensure most of the park will be paid for with grant money.

Mr. Shook informed Council some of the ARPA funds may be able to be used on both the existing and new park.

Council continued discussions about moving past division in the Town and its desire for progress and growth.

ADJOURN

All business being concluded, Council Member Honeycutt made a motion to adjourn at 8:26 p.m. The motion was approved by the following **roll call vote**: Ayes: Council Members Cline, Herrell, Honeycutt, Smith and Weaver. Nays: None. Absent: None.

I attest these are the approved minutes of the Board.

Alice Sanders, Town Clerk

Wendell Hildebrand, Mayor