July 8, 2014

Special Meeting

To Discuss Golf Cart Ordinance

6:00 P.M.

The Town of Pink Hill held a special meeting on Tuesday, July 8, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. in the town hall board room. Present for the special meeting were Mayor Carol Sykes, Commissioners Mike Hill, Donald King and Debra Grady, Town Attorney George Jenkins, Police Chief Joey Thigpen, and Town Clerk Kimberly Mitchell.

Visitors present were Bill Turner and Dora Evans.

Mayor Sykes called the special meeting to order. Mayor Sykes welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mayor Sykes stated the purpose for this special meeting was to discuss whether we have a golf cart ordinance or not. Commissioner Grady made a motion to approve the special meeting agenda. Commissioner Hill seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Mayor Sykes said she wanted to ask each board members opinion on why we need an ordinance or why we do not need an ordinance and then we will look at the ordinances. Commissioner Hill stated he does not care whether we have one or not but wanted to get some input from Chief Thigpen first. Mayor Sykes stated she wanted to hear from the board members first. Commissioner Grady said she sees that something was brought up at the Rose Festival. She thinks whatever the state law says that is the way we go, as far as us forcing everybody to buy insurance on them. Commissioner Grady stated she just doesn’t see the need of it at this point, we just need to follow the state law. Mayor Sykes said she is sort of on the same opinion. She said her opinion is that the town has not had enough problems with golf carts to have an ordinance against them and would probably have more problems if they do have an ordinance. Chief Thigpen stated he felt like it would be a good thing to have an ordinance. He said in his opinion you can make a law to drive them on a town road but there should be some limitations like no night time driving and require them to have insurance. Chief Thigpen said it is up to the board and what they decide to do. Mayor Sykes asked Chief Thigpen if the golf carts are regulated by the state. Chief Thigpen stated yes. Kim asked what happens if somebody rides one when we don’t have an ordinance, what are we supposed to do about it? Chief Thigpen said you can charge them for operating a vehicle on a state roadway. He said if you look at all the bad things people can do on a golf cart, you would picking all day long. If you look at all the good things people can do like just going to the store and not cause a problem, you punish the good ones for trying to regulate what the bad ones would do. Chief Thigpen said he does not think we have enough people around here that are going to get out there and cut the fool on them. Commissioner Hill asked if we say no to golf carts to the public and we let them drive them around at the Rose Festival and the Christmas Parade, then that puts the town in a bind. He said then the public is going to want to know why they can’t drive golf carts around also. Commissioner Hill said we have to do one or the other. We have got to either say no to the golf carts or do the ordinance and then they can’t drive them at the Rose Festival or the Christmas Parade. Mayor Sykes asked could there be a special rule for certain events to allow them to be able to ride golf carts. George stated a municipality may regulate the operation of golf carts on any public road or highway where the speed limit is 35 MPH or less. He said regulating it can be that you will have a driver’s license, insurance, Pink Hill tag, or that you can operate them during the Rose Festival, Christmas Parade, or July 4th Independence Day event. He said that is regulating also. George said the legislature says that a town can pass an ordinance. Commissioner Hill said on a state highway they are supposed to keep to the extreme right. George said it also says that no person less than 16 years of age may operate a golf cart on a public street, road, or highway. He said the purpose of an ordinance is to say that we are going to allow golf carts if they do this, this, this, and this. Kim said the ordinance is to make it where it is allowed for people to ride them in the town. Commissioner Hill said right now if you were riding a golf cart down the street you could get a ticket. Commissioner King said he is a little against it because of safety. He said it is going to be a big expense if somebody gets a golf cart out there with turning signals, tail lights, headlights, and all that on them it is going to be really expense but of course that is up to the individual. Commissioner King said the big thing he has against them on the streets of Pink Hill is when someone is backing out of a parking lot onto a main street and here comes a golf cart, you are not going to be able to see them and he is not going to see you either. Commissioner Hill said most of the golf carts now that you buy come with headlights, taillights, and rear view mirrors. Commissioner Hill said he is just saying if we don’t have an ordinance and keep letting them have them at the Rose Festival and the Christmas Parade, you are going to run into problems. He said he thinks it is best to just go ahead and do an ordinance and be done with it, and then it is their responsibility to be safe. Commissioner Grady said she sees how it would not be our responsibility either way, so with the ordinance it wouldn’t make any difference as far as anybody’s responsibility. It is not ours if we don’t have an ordinance and it is not ours if we do have an ordinance. Commissioner King said personally he is against it but he looks at the old folks and he looks at a person that is handicapped as long as they are able to manipulate a vehicle, he is for it for them. He said the people that are operating around at the Rose Festival on golf carts if you make them all follow the same laws such as headlights, then he is for the ordinance. Other than that Commissioner King said he is not for the ordinance. Commissioner Grady asked if they do not do an ordinance then how do people proceed to ride golf carts in town and be legal. Chief Thigpen said nowhere except in their own yard. Mayor Sykes asked if we could deny a DWI person. George said if that person went to the doctor he would probably find no reason why he could not drive a golf cart. Commissioner Hill asked what if they put a provision in the ordinance that says anybody convicted cannot drive a golf cart. George stated that he recommends that the town not put that provision in the ordinance. Commissioner Hill said they need to decide what times the golf carts can be driven like one hour before dawn and one hour after the sun sets but they must be equipped with taillights and headlights. Mayor Sykes said they also have to determine what they are going to charge for a sticker and registration and when is it due and how long will it run for. This all has to be considered in an ordinance. Commissioner King asked if there is any reason why we can’t let the Town Clerk and Chief of Police come up with good sound ordinances. George said they can give the board recommendations. Commissioner Hill said he thinks the penalties need to be high enough so if someone gets one they will not want to get another one. Commissioner Hill made a motion to close the special meeting. Commissioner Grady seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

With there being no further business to be discussed the meeting was adjourned.