TOWN OF RED RIVER
TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 25, 2019
EXHIBIT HALL AT CONFERENCE CENTER

1. CALL TO ORDER

A special meeting of the Red River Town Council held February 25, 2019, in the Exhibit Hall at the Red River Conference Center. Mayor Calhoun called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

2. ROLL CALL

Mayor Linda Calhoun Present
Councillor George Woerndle Present
Councillor Dan Foley Present
Councillor Sloan Covington Present
Councillor Steve Cherry Present

3. PUBLIC INPUT - ROV ORDINANCE

Mayor Calhoun opened the meeting by stating that we have had the OHV Ordinance in effect since 2016 and we have been through two summers, so we wanted to give everyone a chance to talk about it. There may be some concerns that we weren’t aware of since we were the first in the state to pass an ordinance to allow this. What we want to do is have an opportunity before summer gets here to get public input so that we have time to amend the ordinance if we need to. The Mayor then opened the floor to the public asking them to stand and speak for a couple of minutes.

Fritz Davis asked the first question to Marshal David Smith. Since David helped develop the Ordinance, what is an overview of what has happened vs what we hoped would happen? David spoke about the Legislature passing a state law three years ago that allowed municipalities and counties to open up roads that they control and maintain to ROV’s. The emphasis behind the state passing that law was to increase tourism for towns that could use it by allowing ROV’s to go from their point of origin to the trailheads and back. It was never meant to be in place of a motor vehicle in town. David thinks it has boosted our tourism in the fall and summer. He feels we are at about a 90% compliance. Unfortunately, the ones who don’t comply are the ones you hear about. David feels like it is working great. When the law was first passed, it specifically identified what vehicles were allowed to use the roads. They have to be a non-straddle vehicle. Dirt bikes, ATVs, and snowmobiles are excluded by state law. David spent 8 months working with the state for permission and an agreement to use highways 38 and 578. David then addressed the issue of curfew in the ordinance to cut down on complaints from homeowners in town. If we want to increase the curfew, it can be changed by this group. The use of Main Street is a different story. We just got permission late fall to add six to seven crosswalks on Main Street and are thinking of decreasing the speed limit on Main Street to 25MPH from 35MPH. We would have to start from scratch with DOT to get an agreement to allow usage of ROVS on Main Street. Until then, we cannot do it.
Abigail Banos asked the question to Marshal Smith why have we not talked about adding more street light on Main Street? Many of the street lights are not functioning. Mayor Calhoun answered that we have discussed it with Kit Carson Electric. The project to replace streetlights and sidewalks will happen in 2022.

Richard Swigart asked David what was the most violated rule that the marshal’s issued tickets for? David answered children not seat-belted, children not wearing helmets, and the Main street violation. Richard then asked with the group of officers the Town has is that enough staff to police the ROV rules along with everything else that has to be policed as well? David answered that during the peak of summer and fall ROVs is what they are dealing with all day. He reiterated that the compliance is getting greater. Richard asked if the Town decided to hire another person to police the ROVs in the summer would the fines cover the cost? David said those fines cannot be used for an officer. Richard also brought up the issue that as more ROVs come to town, where are they going to be able to park their trailers.

George Woerdnle brought up that even if we rescinded the ROV Ordinance it would not solve the issue of trailer parking. Most lodges do not have enough parking.

Jeff Spotts commented that if the ROVs stayed on the trailers in the parking lots rather than unload and park next to the trailers they wouldn’t take up as much space. If we open up Main Street there will just be more ROVs and trailers with nowhere to park.

Vicki Swigart mentioned that one area she feels got overlooked is where are we going to put all these people because the burden falls to the lodges who cannot accommodate 50 foot trailers. If we are going to continue to open it up for ROVs, then we need to work together to find a place for these people to park. The more new people coming in the front door with their ROVs, the more old time families are going out the back door and not returning after coming to Red River for all of these years. If we open up Main Street, then our Main Street turns into an ugly trailer parking lot. Vicki asks that the Town Council please help lodges try to come up with a solution for the trailer parking issue.

Chris Green spoke about coming together as a group the Red River Offroad Coalition and they went through the ordinance as it stands, and there are three things in it they would like to see changed.

1) Open up Main Street for ROV traffic - this would alleviate the noise and traffic complaints from the people who live on High Street and River Street
2) Change the curfew to 8:00 PM
3) Drive the ROV in lieu of vehicles - group feels that the businesses on Main Street are excluded because they cannot stop there on their ROVs. If they can drive their ROVs to the stores and restaurants it would open up parking because then there would not be so many trailers parked taking up all the parking spaces.

Chris says that no one utilizes the municipal parking lot because they cannot see it from their lodging. It is never more than one-third full. He feels that opening Main Street to ROVs would increase business for the businesses on Main Street. Chris also brought up the parking area by the softball field that is accessible and not utilized.

Russell Church spoke about living in a neighborhood of nightly rental homes. The house across from him sleeps 20 people and has a two-car garage, and parking for four. There will be five vehicles there and five trailers every week. The parking problem exists all over town.

Carolyn Banos spoke about doing UTV rentals through her business, but she does not agree with opening up Main Street to ROV traffic. She does agree that maybe allowing them to use the ROVs in
lieu of a vehicle might be good idea to try, as long as they are not parking on Main Street. Abigail Banos spoke of the policy they have for their UTV rentals that is they get a ticket from a Marshal on one of their rental machines then they will forfeit their $500 deposit. Fritz Davis asked that in the two years, how many ROV accidents have occurred on our streets? Marshal David Smith answered that there have been two incidents where and ROV struck someone or another vehicle. Jack Griffin spoke to the problem being parking. A lot of the available parking is on Main Street. As a business owner on Main Street he would like to see a little bit of lenience allowed for driving one half block to another half block without getting a citation. Angela Spotts spoke as a Main Street business manager who is already dealing with parking issues. She feels like their business would be hurt if ROVs are allowed on Main Street. She feels bothered that often you cannot even get across the street at a crosswalk without ROVs on Main Street. Councilor Dan Foley asked that the way the ordinance is written and as it stands, would it hinder what we already have to try to allow ROVs on Main Street? Marshal David Smith, answered that the new proposal would have to be mirrored to the original one and just amended to include that we want to use Main Street from Caribel to the "Y". It has to be done as a new proposal to NMDOT. While the process is going on it would not change what is already in place. Liz Tate spoke that with every change there is growing pains, but she feels that a lot of the guests at her RV Park would benefit from this. They come to town in an RV so they don’t have access to the Main Street businesses with their ROVs. She mentioned that we cannot get stuck in the past as a community. We have to keep the younger generations interested in coming here. Jodee Thayer brought up that maybe the space that is designated to be a future dog park would be better utilized as trailer parking. Paulette Kiker spoke that she came to the meeting thinking maybe we were going to talk about decreasing the ROV usage. She is not in favor of allowing them on Main Street because aesthetically people come to the mountains to have beauty and they do not want to see a lot of loud vehicles on Main Street. Her business backs up to High Street and the ROVs are very loud and it’s something that she does not care for. She doesn’t feel like the entire future of visitors to Red River will be ROV users, it will be a little bit of everybody. She feels that opening it up to more ROVs, they will tear up more of the trails. We need to be very cautious as to what we do. We should not increase the curfew to 8:00. She wanted to say that not everyone is for allowing them on Main Street. Fritz Davis asked Tourism Director Jenna Grubbs if there has been an increase in the amount of OHV permits sold out of the visitor center? What kind of growth are we looking at? Jenna Grubbs responded that we are absolutely looking at growth in the amount of permits they are processing at the visitor center. We are also seeing people coming in that have permits from other states and New Mexico honors those permits. When they receive calls regarding permits they recommend people purchase them online ahead of their visit. Linton Judycki stated that we can control the growth of the visitor population by our marketing placement. We don’t have the trail support for total gearheads like Moab, Utah. We can control our own destiny in that way through our marketing efforts. Jenna Grubbs thinks that we will see growth again this summer from the ROV crowd but then we will even out after that. That is her opinion.
Councilor George Woerndle asked Marshal David Smith if it is legal to have a town permit for ROV use? David responded that is not allowed because they are already paying for a state permit. Liz Tate suggested a way for guests to have the rules in their hand. If we had a QR code people could scan with their phones and hand that out on business cards rather than full size sheets of paper using color ink it might be easier for guests to always have the rules on hand. Jenna Grubbs mentioned that a goal of the Red River Offroad Coalition is going to create a trifold that has the rules, trail maps, etc.. as well as trail riding guidelines so we can talk to people about how to preserve our trail systems. Marshal David Smith made an announcement at the end of the meeting regarding the burglary issue this summer, he wanted to let the community know that an arrest has been made.

Mayor Calhoun let everyone know that if any changes are made to the ROV ordinance, that it will not happen overnight. There will be public meetings and the community will be involved in the process.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Calhoun then adjourned the special meeting at 6:26 PM.

Kim Leach, Deputy Clerk

Linda Calhoun, Mayor