

Subject: The Mayor's Christmas Wish List

December 22

I know Santa is making his list and checking it twice; and I'm making a list also, a list of things the town will do next year. Let me identify a few items on the mayor's wish list.

First, the board and staff will begin the annual budget development process at the beginning of the next year. The process will end with the adoption of the town budget for Fiscal year 2023/24. Like always the town will address some very big and expensive items.

Second, one huge item on a wish list will be the replacement of the water pre-clarifier tank at the water plant. The tank was built along with the plant back in the 1960s. The tank is on its last leg of service, and a replacement tank will cost somewhere around 2.5 to 3 million dollars.

This past spring, town staff submitted a grant to the state for funds to build a new tank, along with a grant to replace waterlines and a water tank on Dog Mountain. The 3 million dollar grant for the Dog Mountain project was approved; however, the pre-clarifier tank project was not approved. Our staff and consulting engineers have resubmitted the grant for a second round of review.

We are hopeful the town will be awarded full or partial funding. An alternative would be for the state to grant an interest free loan. We have received those kinds of loans in the past. Such a government loan is tantamount to receiving free money.

Third, in the budget review process the staff and board will also be funding several more road paving projects based on need and priority. On another positive note, the repaving activity should begin to decrease as the town has been aggressively repaving roads in the past few years. While the town was behind on paving, we have gotten back on a standard road paving schedule.

Fourth, at the beginning of the new year a review of sidewalk projects will be initiated. The proposed sidewalk on NC 106 from the shopping center to Cobb Road will continue to be developed. It is a top item on my wish list for the town. There are a number of potential funding sources that could make this project a reality in a rather fast period. I am excited about creative ways to potentially fund the sidewalk instead of relying on NCDOT prioritization funding that could take years.

Fifth, but not last, on many people's wish list is installation of downtown electric vehicle charging stations. I believe those charging stations will become a reality in some form, but I'm just not sure of the specifics at this time. One idea I have is for the town government to transition to electric town vehicles where feasible. I believe our light duty vehicle fleet could

go electric in the near term. For instance, EV pickup trucks could be used for routine duties about town. After the workday those vehicles could easily be charged in stations at the town yard. In the long run the electric vehicles could become very cost effective from both a maintenance and fueling perspective.

Next year will be a full and busy, but for now let me just say to you Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah.