

Tempers flared during and after the Greenville Town Council's regular meeting Monday night. The biggest spark came as the board debated whether or not to hire former councilman Randal Johnes as the town's manager and a consultant to the water utility.

If hired, Johnes would be retained for a minimum of two years.

In addition to the length of time on Johnes contract, whether or not his hiring would violate the town's nepotism policy, whether or not he should be bonded in his position or whether or not he should even be hired at all were all parts of the debate.

The effective hire date would be retroactive to January 1, 2012.

A few of Johnes job duties would include keeping the the town's electronic files current, issuing building permits, work with the Greenville building inspector to issue stop work orders, assisting builders, contractors, developers and residences in developing appropriate information, Assist the emergency services chair person, assist the town council president as requested and a number of other duties pertaining to the water department.

Daryl Kepley started the discussion when he questioned the length of the term Johnes would serve.

Patti Hayes said Johnes would be under contract for two years based on the on-going projects in the town.

"Greg (Redden), you and I talked about a year would be enough for various reasons that don't need to be discussed," Kepley said. "Then we could always increase his term at the end of the year."

Redden said that's the way it should have be written in the ordnance.

Kepley then asked Hayes why she is opposed to hiring Johnes for one year.

She said it was due to projects that Johnes has been working on that will not be complete for a number of years.

"I know with everything that is on-going, it's probably going to take more than two years," she said. "So I am wanting to keep everything smoothly transitioning for the next couple of years. These projects are going to be continuing for the rest of this year and next year and I don't see why we need to skip something in the middle of it all. Two years is enough time to get to a stepping point and see if we actually do need to continue a town manager."

Redden said the council can use Johnes expertise as the town looks to build a new water tower and the possibility of purchasing the sewer plant.

Kepley seemed stuck on hiring Johnes for one year, but Councilman Bob Wright voiced his opposition altogether.

"I don't think we need a town manager period!" he said. "If they will give me the work, I'll do part of it. We have five people on this board. I made \$500 last month and we had a 48 minute meeting. We got five people and why do we want somebody to do our job for us. It don't make sense."

Wright then threw a verbal jab at Council President Talbotte Richardson.

"I have a buddy that I'd like to get a job, too, Talbotte," he said. "Daryl beat (Johnes) in the election and he should have turned all his stuff over to him, and then point a different aspect of the town's business to each one of the members. If us five people can't run this little town, we've got a real problem."

Wright then brought up the fact that the town was already strapped as it is.

Richardson said the water company is handling the bulk of the money and the town would only

be required to come up with just \$600 a year.

Wright then offered the suggestion that the town try to function without a manager for a couple of months to see how things go.

“Let’s see if we can do it, actually do our jobs,” he said. “I’ve been a contractor for 40 years. You give me a job and I will get it done. For the last two years Mr. Johnes has been running the whole town and I don’t think it’s right.”

Richardson was less than confident in the suggestion.

“There aint no way,” he said. “Bob you don’t have the contacts that Randal has. There are people who come in here everyday needing something.”

The meeting shifted gears as the council’s attorney Rick Fox suggested the council contact the state board of accounts concerning a performance bond.

He said the statute would require at least a \$15,000 performance bond.

Fox also spoke to Johnes knowledge of the projects.

He said Floyd County spent \$50,000 for a consultant to oversee the project for new radios and suggested that the council strongly consider having someone with a working knowledge stay involved.

“... You have two huge projects you are looking at and I think it’s very important that the board puts someone in charge who has the expertise to manage those projects,” he said. “It’s very important when you have that much money at stake.”

Richardson allowed Larry Kessinger an opportunity to ask a question and he brought up the wording in the ordinance about reasons Johnes could be terminated.

Under the ordinance that was read, the only way Johnes could be removed from his position is by just cause.

“When you wrote in there, you’ve locked him in and you can’t get rid of him except for just cause,” Kessinger said. “Anytime I’ve had an consultant contract it would read that the consultant serve at the pleasure of the board. That dismissal clause needs to be removed.”

Redden said the ordinance that was read is an old ordinance. He said there is a newer one that has the wording Kessinger suggested.

The next subject that was brought up was bonding.

“There is a provision in the statute that calls for a blanket bond, so you can get everybody covered,” Fox said.

Clerk-treasurer Jack Travillian said he would check with the insurance company to see if Johnes’ new position would be covered under the blanket bond.”

The final thing brought up was nepotism. Kepley and Wright said that Johnes and Richardson share a grandchild and it doesn’t look like right to the people in the town.

“It just looks bad to me,” Kepley said. “You can twist it around anyway you want to, but it looks like we are creating a job for a guy who got voted out of office.”

Richardson called for a vote and made a motion of unanimous consent with the amendments that were discussed about the bond and the wording of dismissal..

Hayes seconded the motion. When the vote was called for Wright and Kepley voted no, which forced a roll call with Hayes, Richardson and Redden voting yes and Wright and Kepley voting no.

Richardson called a special meeting for next Monday at 7 p.m. for the second and third readings of the ordinance.

