

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE TOWN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TOWN OF WILLIAMSTON, NC

September 14, 2020

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in special session on Monday, September 14, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room located at 102 East Main Street, Williamston, NC.

PRESENT Mayor Joyce Whichard-Brown and Commissioner
Commissioners: Mayor Pro Tem Ronell Rodgers, Al Chesson, Alton Moore, Jerry Knox, and William Coffield
Town Administrator: John O'Daniel
Town Clerk: Christina Craft
Finance Officer: Linda Harrison
Police Chief: Travis Cowan
Recreation Director: Allen Overby
Town Planner and Zoning Administrator: Cameron Braddy
Town Attorney: Daniel Manning
Fire Chief: Michael Peaks
Public Works Director: Kerry Spivey
Human Resources Administrator: Martha-Brown Lilley

ABSENT None

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. She requested everyone stand for a moment of silence regarding the COVID pandemic. Commissioner Coffield led the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Knox offered the invocation.

WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed Tina Brown, Mayor of Robersonville.

AGENDA APPROVED

The Mayor asked if there were any adjustments to the Regular Agenda or if the Board wished any items to be removed or added the Regular Agenda. The Town Administrator requested the addition of a purchase request received and consideration of softball fee refunds. The Mayor requested moving the Police Chief's presentation prior to public comment. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to approve the regular agenda as amended.*

The Mayor asked if there were any adjustments to the Consent Agenda or if the Board wished any items to be removed or added to the Consent Agenda. *It was moved by Commissioner Coffield, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to approve the consent agenda as presented.*

Items approved in the Consent Agenda are as follows:

- (1) Approval of the Minutes of the August 6, 2020 meeting was approved with the correction of Commissioner Rodgers was not in attendance and August 10, 2020 meeting minutes approved as presented.
- (2) Tax Relief Order

Year	Name	Remarks	Total
2017	LaDenes, Inc	Property Donated to Town	\$ 203.51
2018	LaDenes, Inc	Property Donated to Town	\$ 570.81
2019	LaDenes, Inc	Property Donated to Town	\$ 527.26
2020	LaDenes, Inc	Property Donated to Town	\$ 548.06
2020	Randy Stalls	Town Purchased	\$1,366.57
2020	Randy Stalls	Town Purchased	\$ 310.06
2020	David Taylor	Boat not inside town limits	\$ 271.70
2019	Thalassa Fishing LLC	Boat not inside town limits	\$3,367.30
2020	Thalassa Fishing LLC	Boat not inside town limits	\$3,641.79

cancel the parade. The Town Clerk reported people on floats and in vehicles will be in close contact for over an hour. Commissioner Chesson reported there will not be any bands either. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to cancel the 2020 Christmas Parade.*

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION 2020-203 AUTHORIZING CONVEYANCE OF 140 W MAIN STREET LOT

The Town Administrator reported the Town Attorney drafted the presented resolution per Board direction. The Board approved conveyance of 140 West Main Street at the August meeting to the Martin Chamber of Commerce. Commissioner Rodgers questioned if the people living in that area have been informed concerning this transfer. The Town Administrator reported the empty lot is in the Downtown Area and not in a residential area. The Martin County Chamber of Commerce's plan for the area will be facelift for the lot in question.

UPDATE ON STREET LIGHT PROJECT IN ANNEXATION AREA A

The Town Administrator reported a second survey was sent to the citizens in the annexation area by the Country Club. Dominion would not consider the project without a signed survey from the property owners. Once the survey is sent to Dominion, Dominion will proceed with obtaining easements from the agreeable property owners prior to the installation of the lines and poles. The Town Administrator requested Board direction as to whether to attempt a third survey to hopefully increase the number of responses. Commissioner Coffield reported to move forward with the ones that want street lights and do not prolong the project. Commissioner Chesson reported he agreed but is concerned with the logistics of the sporadic placements of the lights. The Town Administrator reported Dominion will connect to junction boxes and will not have to bore the light line beside the entire street. Commissioner Chesson reported once some lights are installed, others will want street lights in their area once they see the minimal impact to their property. The Town Administrator reported a budget amendment will to proceed will be brought to the Board if approved. He is uncertain how long before Dominion will begin as many are working from home at this time. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to allow the Annexation Area A Street Light Project to proceed with the property owners who have agreed with the request.*

APPROVAL OF COMMUNITY GARDEN

The Planning and Downtown Marketing Coordinator reported a new location for consideration of the Community Garden. The new location is behind the tennis courts and has ample parking. The Mayor questioned if the property is residential. Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported the property is zoned as office and institutional. Commissioner Chesson reported the garden would be good use of the property with the street lights and ample parking to include the primary school parking area. *It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to allow a community garden behind the tennis courts.*

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MEETING DATE CHANGE

The Town Administrator reported there is a conflict meeting at the NC Telecenter for the November meeting. Commissioner Chesson recommended November 9, 2020 for the Regular Meeting. The Town Clerk verified the meeting room at the NC Telecenter was available. *It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to change the Regular November meeting to November 9, 2020 at 5:30 pm to be held at the NC Telecenter.*

APPROVAL OF CAPITAL PROJECT ORDINANCE 2020-13

The Town Administrator reported the Town will receive a total of \$166,911 from Martin County as part of the Corona Relief Fund (CRF). The laptops purchased by the county on our behalf totaled \$21,687, leaving the remaining balance of \$145,223. The Town submitted a plan to the County and State on how the funds would be spent. The entire balance will be used to reimburse the town for the payroll expenses of employees that responded to COVID-19. He requested Board's consideration in moving \$145,223 from budgeted salaries to cover the cost of Police and Fire radio and IT expenditures. The Town will be required to switch all radios over to the new VIPER system within the next few years at a total cost of \$504,957. When current radios cease to work, new radios will be purchased as replacements as the older radios are no longer available. The Mayor questioned if this was in the plan to the County and State. The Town Administrator reported the actual submission report was included in the packet but recently more detailed information has been requested. *A motion was made by Commissioner Chesson to approve the Capital Project Ordinance 2020-13 Police and Fire Department Radio Project. Commissioner Knox seconded the motion and*

the motion was passed unanimously. The ordinance is hereby attached with the minutes of this meeting and incorporated in the Town's Ordinance Book for future reference.

DISCUSSION OF TREESIDE MOBILE HOME PARK (MHP)

The Town Administrator reported Lewis Whitley addressed the board with concerns over the water supply to his recently purchased mobile home park. While only 19 lots are occupied, he is charged an availability fee for all 38 lots. He presented several options reviewed. Mr. Whitley requested the water system in the park to be turned over to the Town. As the 37 acres are privately owned, it is not financially feasible for the Town to install waterlines and meters at each individual site as the property is not within town limits, it is cost-prohibitive and it is unknown if the lines were installed to Town code. The second option is to reduce the number of flat rate charges which is complicated by the treatment of apartment rentals, such as duplexes, do not have individual meters although they have been encouraged to do so. The apartments, even if not rented, are existing structures. If this option is also extended to apartment rentals, it would be impossible to manage and verify changes resulting in significant revenue loss to the Town. The third option is to continue business as usual but reduce the number of flat rate charges for the MHP to 20. It will be the responsibility of the owner to contact the Town prior to the installation of another mobile home in the park. Staff will conduct quarterly checks to verify that these regulations are followed. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to reduce the flat rate of availability charge for the Treeside Mobile Home park be reduced from 38 units to 25 units and is to be reassessed on a semi-annual basis but the Director of Public Works has the authority to raise as needed.*

APPROVAL OF RRT CONTRACT

The Fire Chief reported the RRT contract November 1, 2020 through June 30, 2024 with the availability of a one-year extension. Currently the RRT program is running under a one-year extension. He requested the Board to approve the contract presented and grant authority to Town Attorney, Town Administrator, Mayor and Fire Chief to sign the contract via DocuSign. There are a few changes regarding RRT guidelines. *It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to approve the RRT Contract as submitted and grant signing authority to Town Attorney, Town Administrator, Mayor and Fire Chief for the RRT contract.*

DISCUSSION OF PARKS AND RECREATION USER FEES

The Recreation Director requested the Board's consideration of changes in the Perry Center fees. The only changes were to the rate schedule is to change the group participant numbers for "home school-mentor, etc." to allow for groups 10 or less and 11+ clients. For the athletic fees, currently the charge is \$20 for residents and \$30 for nonresident for basketball, volleyball, football, and softball. The proposed change will be \$15 for residents and \$25 for non-residents for basketball and volleyball; \$25 per resident and \$35 for non-resident for football and softball. The requested change reflects the expenses with each sport. Participants that participate in all sport will notice a slight decrease in the cost. Concession Fees are currently 10% of sales and would change to \$1 per registered participant. Under travel team and tournament fees, use of the gym for practice will be \$20 for a 2-hour session and \$30 for a 3-hour session. Under General Fees, a temporary fence currently costs \$100 and would change to \$200 for the setup fee. General fees for Martin County Youth Soccer will change from the cost of paint to \$300 set up fee per season. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to approve increased rates as presented.*

APPROVAL OF LILLEY SUBDIVISION REQUEST

The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported the Elmo Lilley Jr. has submitted a final plat for subdivision of a 14.25-acre property located on US 17 north of the Walmart property – parcel 0501881. The plat shows the subdivision of the property into 8 separate parcels intended to be used for future residential properties. The preliminary plat and final plat were approved by the Williamston Planning Board. The property is currently zoned Commercial. The Town Planner suggested the two parcels along US 17 remain commercial and the remaining lots be rezoned to Residential at a later date. The properties to be rezoned to residential are bound by Walmart to the south and residential property to the northeast. The Mayor questioned when the Crescom bank was to build on the property. Commissioner Chesson reported the bank has changed plans concerning locating in Williamston. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to approve the final plat for the subdivision request for parcel 0501881 with the two parcels along US 17 remain commercial and the remaining lots be rezoned to Residential at a later date.*

DISCUSSION OF FINANCE UPDATES

The Town Administrator reported Commissioner Moore requested a Finance Report to be submitted at the monthly meetings. The Finance Director provided a Tax Collector report, cash balances report, and a revenue/expense statement for the Board to review. The Town Administrator requested the Board to review and decide what types of information would prove most beneficial. He also reported the data reported will be at least two months behind to allow for monthly closeout procedures. The Town Administrator requested Board direction as to the frequency and information provided. Commissioner Chesson reported the dashboard received in January should be sufficient. Commissioner Chesson reported he is satisfied with receiving the data with trends in January as no one is allowed to go over budget. Commissioner Chesson reported unless you dig deep, the numbers don't make sense and will be creating additional workload for staff. While he sees what cash balances are, but without context, the information doesn't make sense. Commissioner Moore reported the request was not to point fingers but needed as the Board is accountable for the information. If there are issues, he wants to know ahead of time. Commissioner Chesson reported the information could be provided to any Commissioner upon request. The Mayor reported quarterly may be too often but biannually would be sufficient. The Town Administrator reported the current times information is presented to the Board during the retreat in January and audit presentation which is presented towards yearend. The Mayor questioned if the Board was satisfied with receiving the information twice a year. Commissioner Chesson reported anyone in the public plus the Board can receive this information upon request. Commissioner Moore reported he was satisfied as long as he is able to receive the information upon request. The Town Administrator reported staff will gladly provide the information upon request and twice a year. The Finance Director reported franchise information is always 3 months behind and is estimated in June. Sales and Use Tax is always received two months behind. She can give numbers in June prior to the yearend audit as long as the Board is aware of the approximations. The Town Administrator reported the Town's goal is to complete the budget process by May as the Finance Director will retire in May.

DISCUSSION OF POLE PURCHASE REQUEST

The Town Administrator reported an individual expressed interest in purchasing a pole at the old service station, located on Town-owned property on River Road. The Town Attorney reported someone has offered \$50 for the pole and the pole is no value or use to the Town. In a situation such as this, the Board can grant the Town Administrator the authorization to dispose of nominal value items. *It was moved by Commissioner Rodgers, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to authorize the Town Administrator to dispose of the pole.*

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Public Works

The Public Works Director provided the following report:

- Landfill fees were very high for the month with 289 tons of debris collected. There was no choice but to take a large portion to the landfill.
- The chipper is out of service as the replacement part has to be fabricated.
- He reported he may need help to get the application completed as the permitting process is complex for the air curtain project.
- The street sweeper is close to replacement time as the sweeper unit is in poor shape. The truck mileage is not as important as the hours on the sweeper unit. A third unit will be onsite next week for staff review and will hopefully have quotes for the Board's review soon. The Mayor questioned if a sweeper could be purchased and mounted on the truck. The Director reported the town has never done that and an issue may be finding one that would fit. Some of the funds could be recouped by selling the aged equipment on GovDeals.com and savings of retrofitting would be limited as it is a specialty piece of equipment.
- Safety on Tank Street continues to be an issue due to the public traffic plus the large equipment in an area with many blind spots. There was discussions in the past concerning closing the street and making it a part of the Public Works compound. Closing the street will not create a hardship on the residential access. The proposal is to put an automatic gate on Martin Luther King Drive end of Tank Street and a manual gate at the other end. Commissioner Coffield questioned the house at the corner of Tank Street and Martin Luther King Drive. The Director reported there are multiple heirs and have satisfied the tax issue. The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported the home is a repeat offender for Code Enforced mowing.

Planning

The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported:

- He provided a handout to update the Board of Code Enforcement activities. He reported the potential for additional code enforcement funds. Currently there are \$24,000 in the budget with \$3,675. 1004 W. Main Street is included in the report which was referenced in the public comment period as \$1,100 was used to clean that property after the fire. That property is a constant issue with trash. Commissioner Moore questioned if there is a long-range plan for this property. The director reported staff has recommended the owner obtain additional trashcans for the tenants. Commissioner Moore reported the owner personally placed an interior door on the property line. It is hopeful the \$1,100 bill for the dumpster will correct their behavior. The Mayor questioned if any tenants are in the building. The Fire Chief reported power has not been restored to the building since the fire and should be vacant to the best of his knowledge. Two of the apartments were uninhabitable after the fire. The Director reported the owner is located in Cary, NC per the tax card and will not respond to any letters sent. Staff was able to talk to him briefly on one occasion when he was onsite after the fire. He requested the Board to review the list and let him know if there are any additions or questions. Commissioner Moore questioned if the cleanup at 110 Perry Street was a turnkey job as it appears to be gutted. The Director reported the property was cleared but currently seeking a contractor to finish. Commissioner Rodgers questioned if the Town will also spray the property. The Director reported the property is owned by the Williamston Housing Authority and the Town does not have the authority to spray. The Town Administrator requested direction from the Board as the department does not have the needed funds in the budget for basic operations as funds were exhausted on big projects. Commissioner Rodgers questioned if the funds for the black summit wasn't used last year. The Finance Director reported unused funds are rolled into fund balance and departments must stay within the budgeted allowance unless the Board approves a budget amendment. The Mayor questioned what fund balance is used for. The Finance Director reported fund balance is not used for budget but is like a savings fund. When there are savings from a budgeted item, the excess funds are moved into fund balance. An exception would be for the RRT Fund as those funds have restricted use. Commissioner Rodgers questioned the use of budget amendments. The Finance Director reported budget amendments are used to move funds from fund balance to current expenses or to move from one budgeted line to another which will not utilize any fund balance. The Town Administrator reported of the \$24,000 that is budgeted, the Board has directed \$47,400 of Code Enforcement concerns to be addressed in this year. He requested the department to not add any additional projects until costs for current projects are realized. The Mayor reported an understanding these costs were charged by adding to the property's taxes. The Town Administrator reported the costs are added as a lien on the property. The Finance Director reported the costs are not always reimbursed. The Director reported none of the year-to-date expenses of \$3,475 have been reimbursed. Commissioner Rodgers questioned the current projects that have been voted on will be completed. The Town Administrator reported the need to wait until the Town receives notification on the demolition grant for the Mitchell building in the next month as that will determine as to the amount of funds left that were budgeted. Commissioner Rodgers reported noticed some of the places that were voted on to be mowed have not been done. The Town Administrator reported the Board hasn't voted on mowing except the clearing of a lot but have received calls concerning properties. This update is to make certain the Board is aware the projects are placing the department over budget and will have to be addressed. Commissioner Chesson expressed appreciation for the update but was adamant these properties must be cleaned up even if it requires the use of fund balance. The Mayor agreed and the vegetation on Perry Street has been cut but the lot looks like a trash dump and needs to be cleaned. Commissioner Rodgers reported citizens who pay their bills contribute to the finances of Williamston and they suffer because of properties that don't belong to them and affect the value of their property. Commissioner Chesson instructed the Director to use every legal method at your disposal to get the items taken care of with no tolerance.
- The Code Enforcement position application deadline was extended to September 30th. The Mayor questioned if only one person applied. The Director reported the job was posted in additional places to obtain more interest in the position. Commissioner Moore questioned the hours required for the position. The Director reported the hours were Tuesday, Wednesday and a half day on Thursday for a total of 20 hours.
- The Patriot House renovation is to be completed in December.
- A motorcycle parts store is relocated downtown which will be an online sales store.

- Cakes by Becky bakery has opened in the old Red Heron building and appears to be well received.
- Roanoke Realty has relocated downtown.
- There is interest in opening a florist shop downtown.
- The Michell Building is to be demolished by the end of this year.
- Commissioner Coffield questioned who determines when the grass gets mowed through code enforcement as it is hard on a mower to mow when grass gets that high. The Director reported the nuisance ordinance in the Town Code of Ordinances states the grass must be at least 10" tall before staff can begin code enforcement process. the Town has to mow through code enforcement repeatedly one of the properties on Martin Luther King Drive and is technically 3 parcels.
- There has been an increase in investment interest in the downtown area.

Parks & Recreation

The Parks & Recreation director reported the following:

- The department currently has a new program supervisor and a new maintenance worker.
- Tree root repair has been fixed on the walking trail at the Godwin Coppage park.
- Erosion work has been completed between the softball field and mobile home park. Concrete has been installed under the bleachers. Martin County Travel and Tourism allocated \$500 to assist with the \$4,000 project.
- The program supervisor is currently working on coaching manuals.

Police

The Police Chief reported:

- The renovations of the new police department are moving along. Staff is working in advance organizing items to be relocated when the building is complete.
- The department has had sickness, isolations and a lot of decontamination. COVID has made working a challenge but services have not suffered and staff is working together to ensure guidelines from the CDC, health department and Governor's office are followed.
- Staff has been taking advantage of online classes except for firearms training.

Fire/Rescue

The Fire Chief provided the following report:

- The Captain has returned to work after a heart attack.
- He met with David Jenkins (Martin County Schools), and Larry Johnson (Fire Protection Coordinator) to instill a fire program for High School juniors and seniors to complete the entire fire course with the exception of live burns. A person must be at least 18 years old to participate in live burns.
- One of the EMS units is out of service and will need to be replaced very soon.
- Departmental supplies are stocked but the back orders are concerning.
- There are 38 active COVID cases in Martin County with a total of nine deaths.
- October is fire prevention month.

Administrator

The Town Administrator reported:

- Staff is working towards obtaining quotes for the EMS remount and a street sweeper for the next board meeting.
- He is hopeful the NCLM Safety Grant will help fund the fence needed for Public Works.
- He requested assistance with the Mitchell building demolition from Martin County. A motion was made but never seconded. No assistance is anticipated.
- The longevity luncheon will be held November 10, 2020.
- A tree fell on the fence at the Skinner warehouse.

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield and passed to go out of regular session into closed session to address Attorney-client per N.C.G.S. 143-318-11(a)(3) and Personnel matters per N.C.G.S. 143-318.11(a)(6).

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson to go out of closed session and into regular session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Coffield and passed.

STREET PAVING PROJECT

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to accept staff recommendation to repair Williamston Street (from South Watts Street to South Haughton Street) and North Martin Luther King Drive (Hyman Street to Gurganus Street) in the amount of \$82,970 per the Barnhill Contracting Company bid proposal.

FINANCE OFFICER IN TRAINING

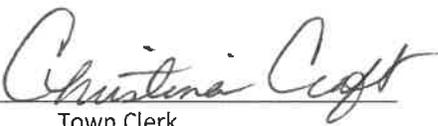
It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to hire Christina Craft as the Finance Officer in Training effective immediately per the pay schedule presented.

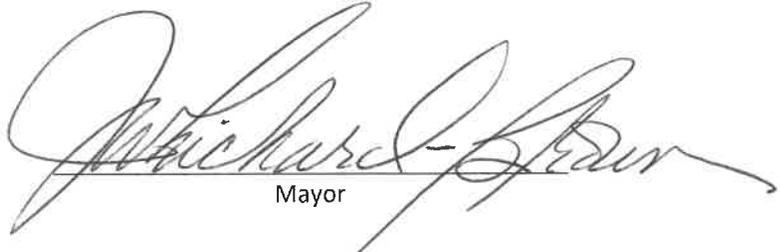
ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:


Town Clerk


Mayor