

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

February 1, 2021

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in regular session on Monday, February 1, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the NC Telecenter located at 415 East Blvd #130, Williamston, NC.

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

ABSENT None

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to include Tina Brown, Robersonville Mayor. Commissioner Rodgers led the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Knox offered the invocation, after a moment of silence for the pandemic and our country.

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 to the Regular Agenda. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to approve the regular agenda as presented.*

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 Rodgers, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to approve the consent agenda as presented.*

Items approved in the Consent Agenda are as follows:

- (1) Minutes of the January 4, 2021 regular meeting, January 22, 2021 Special Called meeting and January 22, 2021 Budget Retreat meeting.

- (2) Tax Relief Order #5

Year	Name	Remarks	Total
2020	Rebecca Boyd	Boat Sold	\$ 22.34
2020	Elliot Turner	Double Billed	\$ 7.90

- (3) Approval of Budget Amendment - Street Sweeper

General Fund

Powell Bill Fund Balance \$228,400

The purpose of this amendment is to transfer budgeted funds from Powell Bill Interest/Fund Balance to Powell Bill Loan Revenue. We borrowed \$228,400 for the Street Sweeper and will pay the loan back with Powell Bill Funds each year.

- (4) Approval of Budget Amendment - EMS Remount

General Fund

Capital (Rescue) \$89,000

The purpose of this amendment is to appropriate funds for the EMS Remount that needed to be replaced in current year. This was approved with Resolution 2020-204 approved at the November 9, 2020 meeting.

- (5) Approval of Budget Amendment - Town Hall HVAC

General Fund

Capital (Administration) \$5,500

The purpose of this amendment is to appropriate funds for the A/C Unit that was replaced at Town Hall this year. Corey's Heating & Air installed the unit and because it was over \$5,000, it will be capital.

- (6) Approval of Budget Amendment - Repair Lines on Ralph Taylor Road
Water/Sewer Fund

Capital (Water) \$38,425

The purpose of this amendment is to transfer funds from Capital to Repair Lines in the Water Department. It was a repair to existing water lines on the Ralph Taylor Road. I moved the budgeted funds from Capital to Repair Lines since it was such a large expenditure.

- (7) Approval of Budget Amendment - Martin County Landfill Costs
General Fund

Martin County Landfill Fees (Sanitation) \$55,000

The purpose of this amendment is to appropriate additional funds for the Martin County Landfill Costs for the current year. Due to storms and additional limb pick-up and issues with debris breakdown, we have been making more trips to the landfill. We are over budget by \$20,253. In November, I estimated \$5,000 for months December thru June.

- (8) Approval of Budget Amendment - Police Department Project
General Fund

Transfer to Capital Projects \$516,998

The purpose of this amendment is to budget additional funds to be transferred to the Police Department Project that have already been allocated for Project in Project Ordinance 202-5 dated March 2, 2020. This transfer of funds will definitely reduce Fund Balance for the year.

PUBLIC HEARING

Proposed Rezoning Request for 7002 West Main Street

The Mayor opened the public hearing to receive input from citizens on the proposed rezoning request for 7002 West Main Street. No public comments were received prior to or during the hearing. With no comments, the Mayor closed the Public Hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joe Thaxton, resident of 3300 US Hwy 17, Williamston, reported he began serving the citizens of Williamston in April of 2015 when Suez won the bid to operate the Martin County Regional Water and Sewer Authority. He thanked the MCRWASA, town and county for allowing Suez to provide water for the residents. He is hopeful Suez will be able to provide services in the future.

OLD BUSINESS

COVID-19 OPERATIONS UPDATE

Chief Peaks reported there have been 761,302 total positive cases in North Carolina with 9,342 deaths and 683,697 recoveries since the beginning of the COVID outbreak. There are 379 active cases in Martin County. 82.6% of the county's population has been tested. 75% of the COVID-related deaths have been 75 years old or older. 1,948 individuals in Martin County have received the first round of vaccinations while 178 have received the second dose. With the extremely limited number of vaccines received, it will take several weeks to two months to vaccinate the 65-year-old and older population. We have been guaranteed 100 doses per week in Martin County for the next three weeks. We were given an extra allocation of 300 vaccines that will be given out on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. This extra allocation is not guaranteed weekly but hopeful to receive more in the next few weeks. The biggest complaint received by the health department is communication as there are over 200 voicemails daily. He is hopeful in months to come that the EMS will be able to assist in vaccinations. Currently, all vaccinations are done inside the building and no drive-through vaccinations as the limited doses of vaccines received do not warrant mass vaccination clinics. Commissioner Rodgers questioned if others are coming into Martin County to receive vaccinations. Chief Peaks reported he will verify with the health department but he is aware of local citizens going outside Martin County to receive the vaccinations.

CONSIDERATION OF OFFER TO PURCHASE 108 WEST MAIN STREET

The Town Administrator reported 108 West Main Street is the property beside The Enterprise on Main Street. The Town acquired the property through foreclosure approximately two years ago for a total cost of \$6,500. After consulting with the Town Attorney as to the best way to facilitate economic development, it was advised to work with the Committee of 100. Dean McCall, Vice President of the Committee of 100, reported an offer on behalf of the Committee of 100 for \$8,000 for the purchase of the building. The Town Attorney reported the Board can propose to

accept the offer but the process requires notice of the offer must be publicized. If the bid is not raised, the offer can then be accepted. Resolution 2021-1 was presented to accept the offer of the Martin County Committee of 100 to purchase and rehabilitate the property on 108 West Main Street. *Commissioner Moore motioned to approve Resolution 2020-1 Proposing to Accept the Offer of the Martin County Committee of 100 to Purchase and Rehabilitate That Certain Property in the Town of Williamston Known as 108 West Main Street and after a period of 10 days and no upset bid, accept the offer of \$8,000 made by the Committee of 100 for purchase, seconded by Commissioner Knox and unanimously passed. The resolution is hereby attached with the minutes of this meeting and incorporated in the Town's Resolution Book for future reference.*

APPROVAL OF ALLOCATIONS OF FUNDS TO WILLIAMSTON DOWNTOWN INC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Town Administrator reported the Town submitted a grant request which was denied for a roof for 108 West Main Street. He reported the need to allocate \$45,000 for the roof repair to the Committee of 100. Commissioner Moore questioned if the total is a true figure as the amount previously was less. Commissioner Chesson reported the construction costs have increased and the roof has been leaking for at least tow years. The Committee of 100 will spend a sum much greater than this to get the building to a shell building status for future economic development. *Commissioner Chesson made a motion allocate \$45,000 in funds for economic development to Williamston Downtown Inc through the Façade Grant which will allow the Town to have oversite of the funding, seconded by Commissioner Knox, passed unanimously.*

Discussion of Changing Utility Bill Distribution

The Town Administrator reported Mayor has requested the Town to change from postcard style water bills to mailing bills in envelopes. He presented several quotes to outsource the bill distribution which will cost at minimum of an increase of \$6,400 in cost. The Mayor questioned why the Town would consider outsourcing when staff is available or additional staff could be hired to process the bill inhouse. The Mayor stated the citizens' water is being turned off as they didn't receive a bill. The Town Administrator reported the bills are due the same day each month. Commissioner Rodgers questioned Shenika Speller, Utility Clerk, if there are many complaints of people not receiving their bill. She reported the majority of those calls are from people who never pay their bills on time. She has noticed a difference when the local post office processes the bills inhouse locally, the bills are received. When the mail is sent to Rocky Mount postal center, the bills tend to not be delivered. This doesn't seem to be a problem with the type of mailing but more with the distribution center. The Town Clerk reported Washington County had the same issue in the month of December with the bill in an envelope. Their finance director reported there are times when their bills have been found, undelivered in the Rocky Mount distribution center. The Mayor reported receiving another person's bill in the mail. Ms. Speller reported that would still be an issue with the post office and not the actual bill itself. Commissioner Coffield reported the cards have no privacy. Tiffany White, Tax Collector, reported the information on the bill is public information. Ms. White reported it would take the three employees a day and half to stuff over 3,200 water bills as bills are distributed during the busiest time of the month. Commissioner Moore requested accurate states of people who do not receive their bills. The Town Administrator reported these stats could be tracked in the future. The Town Administrator reported current costs is \$1,077 per month and outsourcing cost would be approximately \$6,400 per month. The Mayor requested a vote on changing to envelopes and hiring one person to come in part-time to process the bill process. Commissioner Chesson reported as staff does not recommend the change, allow staff to log citizen complaints concerning not receiving bills through the end of July. Commissioner Knox questioned if it is the same people every month. Ms. Speller reported the majority are on the cut-off list monthly. Commissioner Knox reported as we owe it to the people we serve to make certain they have the bill, if we can save month, we need to do that. Commissioner Chesson motioned for this to be tabled until the first of July to re-access the situation. The Mayor questioned how that would help. Commissioner Chesson reported if there are only a handful of complaints, then a change may not be warranted. This time will allow staff to reassess the situation and provide an opinion in the next fiscal year. Commissioner Knox seconded the motion to table. Commissioner Moore questioned if the problem has been tracked to Rocky Mount. Ms. Speller reported contacting the Post Master and the Post Master tracked the bills. Ms. White reported there is only one person in the Post Office that will process the bills locally and he was not in the office in December. The Town Clerk reported Washington County had the same issue in the month of December and reported a high volume of calls in that month. Ms. White reported the Post Master needs to be contacted to see if the bills can be processed locally moving forward. Commissioner Moore reported enough information has not been received at this time to make an informed decision. The motion was unanimously passed.

Discussion of Bowen Sign Building

The Town Administrator reported the Board had requested staff to reach out to the owner of the Bowen Sign building as code enforcement process had begun on the property. Jeremy Maxik, President of Blackwater Cider, reported

purchasing the building in September 2020, paying all of the back taxes and bringing the building up to code. He understands the town has \$8,000 allotted to demolish the building. He requested these funds in the form of a grant to facilitate further improvements to the building. He reported being willing to take on other dilapidated buildings in the town. Commissioner Chesson applauded his efforts, ability and desire to rehabilitate the building. He questioned if there is a time-frame so the town could work together on this project. Mr. Maxik reported the building will be used to store bulky equipment and eventually expand. Commissioner Chesson questioned if the roof is solid. Mr. Maxik reported the front half is solid and the back half is not but is cleared out. Commissioner Chesson questioned if the plan is to complete the building. The \$8,000 would help with metal for the roofing. Mr. Maxik reported there was a grant on the building and he was not notified until after purchase that the building that the grant was no longer available for the building. Commissioner Chesson reported the grant process was frustrating for all involved and the loss of the grant on that property was out of the Town's control. Commissioner Moore wanted to clarify that Mr. Maxik wants the Town to grant him \$8,000 for help rehab a building which he purchased and was aware the building was under a demolition order. Mr. Maxik reported the back taxes have been paid the building has been upgraded. Commissioner Chesson reported before the Board acknowledges the request, staff would have to talk to staff and the attorney. The Town Administrator requested Board direction to stop the demolition order as the building has been improved. Commissioner Chesson made a motion to remove the Bowen Sign building from Code Enforcement, allow Mr. Maxik time to continue his work and further explore his request for grant funding, seconded by Commissioner Coffield and unanimously passed.

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Ordinance 2021-1: Establishing Rules and Regulations for Use of the Town's Skateboard Facilities

The Parks and Recreation Director reported, under the direction of the Town Attorney, an ordinance is required to establish rules and regulations governing the use of the skateboard park. The statute does not require the staff to supervise the park usage. The Town Attorney reported towns have been hesitant to establish skateboard parks due to the liability issue. The more supervision that is there, the more liability the Town has. The Mayor reported supervision is needed as children are not going to care about an ordinance. She questioned who will enforce the rules. The Recreation Director reported the users of the skateboard park assume all risks associated with the use of the park. Greenville has the same ordinance in place and do not regularly monitor the park. The skateboard park will be located in the Gaylord Perry Park. Commissioner Chesson reported the Recreation Director has done his due diligence and reported visiting the park in Elizabeth City with the Recreation Director. He agrees this is hazardous and it is the parent's responsibility to assure the children have the proper safety equipment. The Town cannot think through every situation and the Town has governmental immunity. The only way to make sure everyone is completely safe is to not have the park. *A motion was made by Commissioner Moore to approve the Ordinance 2021-1 Establishing Rules and Regulations for Use of the Town's Skateboard Facilities. Commissioner Chesson 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.*

Approval of Town of Williamston Cell Phone Policy

The Town Administrator reported the Board had given direction at the Budget Retreat in January to remove all reimbursement for cell phone usage from the proposed Cell Phone policy and resubmit for Board approval in February. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Knox and unanimously passed to accept the Cell Phone policy as presented.*

Approval Ordinance 2021-2 Setting the Speed Limit on Woodlawn Drive

The Town Administrator reported Commissioner Knox expressed a safety issue on a portion of W. Woodlawn Drive. The Board directed staff to develop an ordinance to set the speed limit to 20 miles per hour on the section of Woodlawn Drive between Liberty Street and School Drive. *A motion was made by Commissioner Rodgers to approve the Ordinance 2021-2 Setting the Speed Limit on Woodlawn Drive. Commissioner Coffield 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.*

Approval of Rezoning Request for 7002 West Main Street

The Planner and Zoning Administrator reported the rezoning request of 7002 West Main Street was received from owner, Rev. Lula Brown. She has someone interested in purchasing the property for community programs office and food pantry. Currently, the property is zoned R8 (Residential) and wants the area rezoned to O&I (Office and Institutional). A public hearing was held at the beginning of this meeting to allow residents to express any concerns about the proposed rezoning. Letters were sent to the adjacent property owners and the rezoning request received unanimous support of the Williamston Planning and Board of Adjustments. No calls or letters have been received in

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relation to the rezoning request. The rezoning of the property final decision falls to the Board of Commissioners. The Mayor reported the building used to be a furniture store and questioned how it became residential. The Planner and Zoning Administrator reported the change happened in 2011. Commissioner Coffield reported there is a church behind it. The Planner and Zoning Administrator reported that property is also zoned as residential as well. Commissioner Moore questioned if any future changes would have to be approved by the Town. The Planner and Zoning Administrator reported these changes would go before the Planning Board and their recommendations forwarded to the Board of Commissioners. *A motion was made by Commissioner Chesson to approve the Ordinance 2021-3 Amending the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Williamston. Commissioner Coffield 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.*

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Moore to go out of regular session into closed session to address Attorney/Client Issue per N.C.G.S. 143-318-11(a)(6) and to discuss a Personnel Issue per N.C.G.S. 143-318-11(a)(3). The motion passed unanimously.

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

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:



Town Clerk



Mayor