

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

May 3, 2021

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in regular session on Monday, May 3, 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 (arrived at 5:54), Alton Moore, Al Chesson, and William Coffield
Town Administrator: Christina Craft, Interim
Town Clerk: Jessica Godard
Finance Officer: Linda Harrison
Fire Chief Michael Peaks
Planner and Zoning Administrator: Cameron Braddy
Town Attorney: Watsi Sutton
Public Works Director: Kerry Spivey
Recreation Director: Allen Overby

ABSENT Police Chief: Travis Cowan

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the meeting to order. Commissioner Chesson led the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Coffield offered the invocation, after a moment of silence for the pandemic and our country.

WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed Representative Shelly Willingham.

AGENDA APPROVED

Interim Town Administrator Craft requested the addition of the PreStorm Debris Contract Renewal and authorization to submit RFP requests for the upcoming year. Commissioner Rodgers requested the removal of Old Business Item #3 Consideration of Resolution 2021-5 Setting Cemetery Rates. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to approve the regular agenda as amended.*

CONSENT AGENDA

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. The Interim Town Administrator requested the addition of Tax Relief Order for John David Ambrose for the transfer of a boat. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Knox, and unanimously passed to approve the consent agenda as amended.*

Items approved in the Consent Agenda are as follows:

- (1) Minutes of the April 5, 12, and 26, 2021 Meetings.
- (2) Tax Relief Order #9

Year	Name	Remarks	Total
2017	Jessica Harrell	DW Caught fire in 2016	\$438.06
2018	Jessica Harrell	DW Caught fire in 2016	\$438.06
2019	Jessica Harrell	DW Caught fire in 2016	\$438.06
2019	John David Ambrose	Transferred Boat/tag to father	\$ 4.45
2020	John David Ambrose	Transferred Boat/tag to father	\$ 4.45

- (3) Approval of Budget Amendment - Town Hall A/C Replacement
General Fund

Powell Bill Fund Balance \$5,500

The purpose of this amendment is appropriate funds for the A/C Unit to be replaced at Town Hall as the unit that controls the downstairs portion is no longer functioning. Corey's Heating & Air is to install the unit and because it is over \$5,000, it will be capital.

PUBLIC HEARING

Proposed Closure of Tank Street and Portion of Hunter Street

The Mayor opened the public hearing to receive input from citizens on the closure of Tank Street and a portion of Hunter Street. A comment from Dianne and Elmer Carr, resident of 103 Manning Street, was received prior to the hearing expressing their concern of the road closure as they are already cut-off on Slade Street. The Interim Town Administrator reported a Resolution of the Board intent to close Tank Street and a portion of Hunter Street has been advertised in the Enterprise for four weeks. A comment from Dianne and Elmer Carr, resident of 103 Manning Street, was received prior to the hearing expressing their concern of the road closure as they are already cut-off on Slade Street. The Interim Town Administrator reported to have spoken with Ms. Carr, assuring her it would not be the entirety of Hunter Street as the closure would end at the existing fence line and explained the security and safety concerns which is the reason for the consideration. Tank Street closure would begin at the intersection of South Martin Luther King JR Drive and ends in the curve with an additional 100 feet of Hunter Street. Commissioner Coffield questioned why the Town closed Slade Street as that would be two streets closed in the same neighborhood. Commissioner Chesson reported it was a tradeoff as the railroad demanded the Slade Street closure as the alternative would have been the construction of a \$2 million overpass to the McCaskey Road. The closure was mandated by the railroad. Commissioner Rodgers requested the closure to be postponed so he could see exactly where the closure would be. He reported the railroad also took a portion of his land when Slade Street was closed. Commissioner Moore questioned if there are alternatives so equipment and citizens can utilize Tank Street safely. The Interim Town Administrator reported speed bumps were considered at one time but this would not address the pedestrian safety issue. Commissioner Moore questioned if there was any consideration to only closing the street during working hours. The Public Works Director reported not giving a lot of thought to that as there is not an excessive amount of traffic and it wouldn't address the pedestrian issue. He also reported there have been many close calls due to vehicles traveling at high rates of speeds. The next issue is that the railroad borders two sides of the compound. There is limited space to operate and maneuver equipment. When larger equipment backs out of the garage, the cab is still in the building when the back is already in the street. There have been multiple breaking and entering in employee's cars. Security and safety are major concerns along with the liability it places on the Town. Commissioner Rodgers requested a walk-through with the concerned citizens. The Public Works Director reported to be receptive to a walk-thru. Commissioner Chesson reported there have been signs placed in the area, advertisements in the local paper for months, multiple ways of egress from their property and it is time to look at the big picture as it is the Board's duty to address the safety issue and close the road. The Public Works Director reported there used to be a water fountain in the garage. There were small children that would enter the garage to get a drink of water. Eventually you become ever mindful of the consequences of the blind spots and the safety concerns as seen on the job. The drink machine and water fountain were both removed into the building at a great inconvenience to the staff to eliminate the immediately concern. Commissioner Moore requested the road closure to be tabled until the citizens can meet with the Commissioners and Director Spivey at the Public Works compound to make sure the employees and citizens are satisfied. The Interim Town Administrator reported the Ordinance under Old Business is the item that would actually close the street. Once the Public Hearing is closed, a motion will need to be made to table Ordinance 2021-4. With no further discussion, the Mayor closed the Public Hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Mayor opened the floor for public comment. No public comments were received.

OLD BUSINESS

COVID-19 OPERATIONS UPDATE

Vickie Manning, representing the Martin-Tyrell-Washington County Health Department, presented an Coronavirus update. There have been 42 fatalities in Martin County since the beginning of the pandemic and 2 new cases since April. Thankfully the percent positive cases in the county are declining. There are no clusters in the Martin-Tyrell-Washington Counties at present. As of today, MTWHD has administered or managed 12,640 vaccines since December 23, 2020. Approximately 31.6% of Martin County population has received the first dose and 27.8% has received the second dose. While they have had a big popup clinic at Riverside High School, they are reaching out to partner to hold other popup clinics in the area. The testing center contract has been extended to the end of May. Commissioner Rodgers expressed concern because people seem to becoming more relaxed and questioned if there would be booster shots. Ms. Manning anticipates a booster shot but uncertain when it will happen.

CONSIDERATION OF ORDINANCE 2021-4 TO CLOSE TANK STREET AND PORTION OF HUNTER STREET

It was moved by Commissioner Moore, seconded by Commissioner Coffield to table the consideration of Ordinance 2021-4 to Close Tank Street and Portion of Hunter Street. Commissioners Knox Moore, Coffield and Rodgers voted in favor of tabling the Ordinance. Commissioner Chesson was against.

APPOINTMENT OF FINANCE DIRECTOR

The Interim Town Administrator reported the Board previously appointed her to be the Finance Director in Training. As Linda Harrison has retired, the Ordinance requires the Board to appoint a Finance Director. *It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to appoint Christina Craft as the Finance Director.*

NEW BUSINESS

TARHEEL APARTMENT BUILDING EXCEPTION

Jeneane Everett, Town Accounting Services Supervisor, reported the Tarheel Building is crumbling and have yet to find a responsible owner. Greg Modlin was paid \$3,900 to barricade the building. If unpaid by the owners, the amount is normally added to taxes due on the property. This impacts the tax collection rate and how much the town can borrow. With no owners found, the Town will eventually own through foreclosure. She requested the Board to make an exception the rule. General Statute 168.193 Abatement of Public Nuisances addresses when citizen property is mowed or building is demolished and the addition of the cost to the taxes due on the property. Town Attorney Watsi reporter the quicker you foreclose, the quicker you take ownership of a potential liability. Mr. Barddy reported is you can prove that the Town is in process of taking ownership, the demolition grant application process can begin but can not be awarded until the Town obtains ownership. Commissioner Chesson requested the Town Attorney to formulate the motion to ensure the motion is worded properly. *Commissioner Chesson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Coffield to table the exception request to the June meeting to allow the Town Attorney the opportunity to research.*

APPROVAL OF GFL ENVIRONMENTAL FEE ADJUSTMENT

Interim Town Administrator Craft reported GFL Environmental has requested a 4.6% adjustment on the service portion of the fee. The current rate of \$1.44 per cubic yard will increase to \$1.51 per cubic yard. She reported the adjustment is allowed per the franchise contractual agreement. She also reported the franchise agreement is due to renewal in November and has been forwarded to Attorney Sutton for review. *Commissioner Moore made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Chesson approve the 4.6% increase on the service portion of the GFL Environmental franchise agreement.*

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION 2021-6 COMMEMORATING the 100th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILLIAMSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Town Clerk read and presented the Resolution to Chief Peaks. The Williamston Fire Department as reorganized on May 3, 2021, after nearly 15 years of service by the volunteer fire company. The Mayor requested all Commissioners to join the Chief to take a picture for the newspaper.

APPROVAL OF GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE 2020 CDBG-NR PROGRAM

The Interim Town Administrator reported the Town has been awarded the CDBG-NR grant in the amount of \$750,000, of which \$575,000 is for the rehabilitation of homes; \$100,000 is for the gym air conditioning system; and \$75,000 is for grant administrator fees. This ordinance is a requirement of the CDBG grant system. *Commissioner Coffield made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Moore, to approve the 4.6% increase on the service portion of the GFL Environmental franchise agreement.*

It was moved by Commissioner Moore, seconded by Commissioner Coffield and unanimously passed for the approval of the Capital Project Ordinance 2020 CDBG-NR Program as presented. The Ordinance is hereby attached with the minutes of this meeting and incorporated in the Town's Ordinance Book for future reference.



**GRANT PROJECT ORDINANCE
2020 CDBG-NR PROGRAM
TOWN OF WILLIAMSTON**

Be it ordained by the Williamston Town Council that, pursuant to Section 13.2 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, the following grant project ordinance is hereby adopted:

Section 1. The project authorized is the Community Development project described in the work statement contained in the grant agreement #14-D-3145 between this unit and the Department of Commerce. This project is more familiarly known as the Williamston 2020 Community Development Block Grant Project Neighborhood Revitalization.

Section 2. The officers of this unit are hereby directed to proceed with the grant project within the terms of the grant documents, the rules and regulations of the Department of Commerce and the budget contained herein.

Section 3. The following revenues are anticipated to be available to complete this project:

Community Development Block Grant	\$750,000.00
TOTAL	\$750,000.00

Section 4. The following amounts are appropriated for the project:

C-1 Rehabilitation	\$575,000.00
C-1 Parks and Recreation	\$100,000.00
C-1 Administration	<u>\$75,000.00</u>
TOTAL	\$750,000.00

Section 5. The finance officer is hereby directed to maintain within the Grant Project Fund sufficient specific detailed accounting records to provide the accounting to the grantor agency required by the grant agreement and federal and state regulations.

Section 6. Funds may be advanced from the General Funds for the purpose of making payments as due. Reimbursement requests should be made to the grantor agency in an orderly and timely manner.

Section 7. The finance officer is directed to report annually on the financial status of each project element in Section 4 and on the total grant revenues received or claimed.

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Section 8. The budget officer is directed to include a detailed analysis of past and future costs and revenues on this grant project in every budget submission made to this board.

Section 9. Copies of this grant project ordinance shall be made available to the budget officer and the finance officer for direction in carrying out this project.

Adopted this _____ day of _____, 2021.

Joyce Whichard-Brown, Mayor

ATTEST:

Jessica Godard, Town Clerk

APPROVAL OF ADAMS & COMPANY CONTRACT

The Interim Town Administrator reported the Board awarded the CDBG-NR grant administrator bid to Adams Company at the special called April 26, 2021 meeting. She presented the grant administrator contract between the Adams Company and the Town of Williamston for the Board's consideration. Town Attorney Sutton recommended approval of the contract. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Knox, and unanimously passed for the approval of the CDBG-NR grant administrative and Housing Services between the Town of Williamston and the Adams Company.* Commissioner Moore questioned if there are any delays expected. Mr. Adams reported the only delay is the environmental review process which will take 3 to 4 months. Commissioner Chesson questioned if there are exact specifications for the air conditioning so the construction can begin as soon as the environmental process is complete. The Recreation Director reported he believes there must be electrical service updates prior to the installation. Mr. Adams reported the engineer will discover these items when the project is reviewed. Commissioner Rodgers questioned if the grant provides for homeowners to have somewhere to live during the process. The Interim Town Administrator reported, while this is included, the homeowners are encouraged to stay with family so all the money can be used on the project. Mr. Adam reported it typically takes 120-days to rebuild the home.

APPROVAL OF EXTENSION OF PRE-STORM DEBRIS

The Fire Chief presented the Phillips & Jordan pre-storm debris contract renewal. The current contract allows for a one-year renewal. A prestorm debris management contract ensures there will be a company that will assist after a hurricane if the damage is beyond what staff can manage. There is no cost until cleanup is required. The contract was originally signed with Phillips and Jordan Inc in June of 2018 and allows for one additional year term. Town Attorney Sutton reported she has reviewed the contract and the one-year extension is acceptable. Chief Peaks also requested Board approval to begin the RFP process for a pre-storm debris contract for the 2022 year. *It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Moore to approve the one-year extension of the Prestorm Debris Management Contract renewal with Phillips and Jordan, Inc as submitted and to begin the RFP process for the 2022 year.*

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Public Works

The Public Works Director provided the following report:

- Signs to spell out policies and cemetery procedures for the cemetery. By the time the cemetery is mowed, the grass is overgrown at the beginning of the cemetery.
- Over 300 hours have been spent mowing grass in the past month.
- There is a drainage issue in the newly annexed area in town on Clubview Drive. Once the road was paved, the property on the receiving end of the water flow is washing out and will damage the road if it continues. If the budget allows, he is hopeful to handle the issue quickly.
- The shop foreman is retiring on May 27th after 44 years of service to the Town.
- He expressed appreciation for the Board's direction at the April meeting to change the cemetery rates for weekends and holidays. He is concerned that of the last 79 funerals at Woodlawn, 39 were not residents of Williamston or Martin County. Eight were multiple purchases. Raising the rate to \$1,150 for a cemetery plot would bring the Town's rates to what nearby cemeteries charge. He recommends allowing a discount to the open/close fee with proof of residency. Commissioner Rodgers questioned if the 39 out of towners have family here and not certain the policy address in-town versus out of town rates. Commissioner Moore questioned if it was legal to charge out-of-towners more. It would be easier to adjust open/close fees. The Public Works Director recommends, in the interest of slowing the loss of plots to people who are not of the Town and having to provide perpetual care for the area, to increase the cemetery plot rate. Commissioner Chesson requested a staff recommendation to the Board at the next meeting.

Fire/Rescue

The Fire Chief provided the following report:

- He thanked the Board for the Resolution.
- Staff has continued Hazmat training and there were no state responses in April
- Summer public education programs continue to include car seat installation and hot weather.
- Staff participated in a County peer-review meeting.

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- Staff participated in a 2-day training trench rescue.
- There are mutual aid agreement in place with the City of Washington and working towards one with Wilson
- The grant has been received for the LUCAS CPR device and will apply for another device after the first of the fiscal year. The device has been ordered.
- The building project is very close to completion.

Parks & Recreation

The Town Administrator reported the following (in the absence of Parks and Recreation Director):

- Kickball league started last week
- Working towards getting summer programs set up, following COVID guidelines. There is no access to school buildings and are rearranging schedules.
- He is hopeful to receive a LWCF grant contract soon.
- RFP for engineering drawings for part of the renovation project has been advertised.
- Devus Wiggins is the new Recreation Specialist, replacing the late Mike Williams.
- Hunter Mebane is the new Program Athletic Supervisor.
- The department is currently fully staffed

Planning

The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported:

- Code Enforcement is working hard to keep grass mowed.
- Staff is working on the 2021-2022 demolitions.
- Zach Dickerson has held multiple cleanup efforts on the downtown planters, pulled bushes. The tree roots prevent planting new bushes. Zach and citizens have cleaned and restrained the benches in the downtown area.
- A new business, Dog Branch Antiques and Auctions, has opened at 145 West Main.
- Staff is working on the 2021 Carolina Country Stampede. The bands are booked and currently working to find sponsors and vendors.

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Moore to go out of special session into closed session to under Personnel per N.C.G.S. 143-318-11(a)(6). The motion passed unanimously.

It was moved by Commissioner Knox to go out of closed session and back into open special session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:

Town Clerk

Mayor