

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

August 7th, 2023

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in regular called meeting on Monday, August 7th, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Assembly Room at 102 East Main Street, Williamston, NC.

PRESENT Commissioners: Mayor Joyce Whichard-Brown, Mayor Pro-Tem Alton Moore, Dean McCall, and Darnell Scales
Town Administrator: Eric Pearson
Town Clerk: Jackie Escobar
Police Chief: Travis Cowan
Police Captain: Beth Coltrain
Public Works Director: Stacy Stalls
Parks and Recreation Director: Allen Overby
Fire Chief: Michael Peaks
Finance Officer: Mandy Bullock
Internal Auditor: Linda Harrison
Planning and Zoning Administrator: Cameron Braddy
Town Attorney: Watsi Sutton
Tax Collector: Tiffany White

ABSENT Commissioner Jerry Knox

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the meeting to order. First, Commissioner Scales led the pledge of allegiance, and Commissioner McCall offered the invocation. The Mayor extended a special welcome to Martin County Commissioner Dempsey Bonds, Martin County Commissioner Ronnie Smith, and Martin County Manager James Bennett.

AGENDA APPROVED

The Mayor asked if there were any adjustments to the agenda or if the Board wished to remove or add to the agenda. The Town Administrator requested the removal of Item 8 under Consent Agenda, and Item 2 - Update on Agreement with Professional Grant Writer under Old Business. He also requested the addition of Consider Approval of Grant Writer Agreement to Old Business, Tax Orders to New Business, and the addition of a Closed Session for Business Prospect N.C. 143-318.11(4) and Employee Matter N.C. 143-318.11(6). *It was moved by Commissioner Moore, seconded by Commissioner Scales, and unanimously amended the regular agenda.*

APPOINTMENT AND OATH OF OFFICE OF RUTH COFFIELD TO DISTRICT 1 SEAT

It was moved by Commissioner Scales, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously approved for Ruth Coffield to fill vacant District 1 seat. The Mayor swore in Ruth Coffield to fill vacant District 1 Town Commissioner seat.

CONSENT AGENDA

It was moved by Commissioner Moore, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and unanimously approved the consent agenda as amended.

Items approved in the Consent Agenda are as follows:

- (1) Approval of the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of July 10, 2023
- (2) Budget Amendment – RRT

Undesignated Fund Balance	\$23,359.00
Department Supplies	\$ 2,000.00
Uniforms	\$ 2,000.00
Garbage Collection	\$ 1,000.00
<u>Small Equipment</u>	<u>\$18,359.00</u>
	\$23,359.00

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|-----|---|------------------------|
| (3) | Budget Amendment – Water Meter Project | |
| | Retained Earnings | \$20,000.00 |
| | Transfer to Capital Project Fund | \$10,000.00 |
| | Transfer to Capital Project Fund | \$ 8,000.00 |
| | | \$20,000.00 |
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- | | | |
|-----|--|--------------------|
| (4) | Budget Amendment – Water Meter Project | |
| | Water Fund Contribution | \$10,000.00 |
| | <u>Sewer Fund Contribution</u> | <u>\$10,000.00</u> |
| | AMI Fortiline-Equipment & Project Management | \$20,000.00 |
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- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| (5) | Budget Amendment – Chemical Supplies | |
| | <u>Retained Earnings – Sewer</u> | <u>\$16,000.00</u> |
| | Chemical Supplies | \$16,000.00 |
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- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| (6) | Budget Amendment – Code Enforcement | |
| | <u>Undesignated Fund Balance</u> | <u>\$17,000.00</u> |
| | Code Enforcement | \$17,000.00 |
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- | | | |
|----------------|---|--|
| (7) | Amended Audit Contract | |
| (8) | Non profit Request for Funding Application | |
| (9) | Williamston Housing Authority Appointment | |

PUBLIC HEARING – REZONING REQUEST – 816 & 818 W. MAIN TO R-4 ZONE

The Mayor opened the floor at 5:43 p.m. The planning and Zoning Administrator reported that the church at this location intends to sell the property at 816 and 818 W. Main Street. The location is proposed to be rezoned from R-4 Zone to O&I (Office and Institutional) to sell the property. The Planning and Zoning Administrator included that he posted a notice on the property, advertised the public hearing in the local newspaper, and sent letters to the adjacent neighbors. With no further comments, the Mayor closed the floor at 5:45 p.m.

RESOLUTION 2023-09 - RECOGNIZING MAYOR JOYCE WHICHARD-BROWN

Commissioner Dean McCall presented Resolution 2023-09 - Recognizing Mayor Joyce Whichard-Brown. The election of Mayor Whichard-Brown made history by her being the first African-American and first woman to hold the position of Mayor for the Town of Williamston. The resolution included that Mayor Whichard-Brown's picture would be placed in the upstairs conference room alongside other notable Williamston Mayors to memorialize her historic election as the first African-American and first woman elected as Williamston's Mayor and for her dedication to the Town of Williamston.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bernadette Rodgers, 1434 US Highway 64, introduced herself as the owner of Smiling Faces daycare. She noted that her business met the community's desperate need for childcare. Her facility cares for approximately 120 children and employs 25 people. Her business was the first minority-run childcare facility to obtain a 5-star rating in the area. It contributes 1.4 million to the county. However, her business is within ¼ of a mile of the Town sewer but is not connected to Town sewer. She noted that the need was critical to provide the best for the children. Bernadette Rodgers emphasized that the Town of Williamston and Martin County promised sewer services for 23 years but have not fulfilled the promise. The Mayor thanked Bernadette Rodgers and noted that the issue would be taken under advisement.

Eula Hedgeback expressed support on behalf of Bernadette Rodgers.

INTRODUCE MIKA DAVIS – NEWLY APPOINTED WILLIAMSTON BRANCH LIBRARIAN

Karey Blanchard, regional director of BHM Library, introduced Mika Davis as the newly appointed Martin Memorial Library Director. Mika Davis has replaced Ann Phelps after her retirement. Mika Davis expressed excitement to serve Martin County and the Town of Williamston. The Mayor and Board of Commissioners welcomed Mika Davis.

OLD BUSINESS

Resolution 2023-08 Sale of Used Sewer Jet Machine

The Public Works Director reported that purchasing a new sewer jet machine prompted the sale of the used sewer jet machine. The Town received two bids, one from the Williamston Housing Authority and one from the Town of Hamilton. The Town of Hamilton was a high bidder. *It was moved by Commissioner McCall, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously approved Resolution 2023-08 Sale of Used Sewer Jet Machine. Resolution 2023-08 is hereby attached with the meeting minutes and incorporated in the Town's Resolution Book for future reference.*

Consider Approval of Agreement with Professional Grant Writer

The Town Administrator reported an update regarding the grant writer agreement discussion that began a year ago. In a review of the cost to have a grant writer employed by the Town, after considering wages, taxes, insurance, and benefits, the cost for the Town to employ a grant writer seemed costly. The option to enter an agreement with an independent professional and proven successful grant writer was ideal. This agreement will be with McAdams Company at a total cost to the Town of \$15,000. It is very exciting as McAdams has a good reputation for getting grant approvals at the state and federal levels and has worked with multiple entities in our area.

On its own, the Town has done quite well in obtaining grants, with the total amount received over the past couple of years totaling well over **\$2.5 million**. If there are questions about any of the grants, the Town of Williamston asks the public to call or email the Town Clerk with questions, and she will direct the caller or email the question to the appropriate staff. Because the Town of Williamston has received that level of grant, the Town is subject to the "Single Audit" requirement by the Local Government Commission (LGC). All Town of Williamston grants are audited by the auditor for compliance. As mentioned by the auditor in his presentation to the Board, the Town received an Unqualified Audit opinion.

The Town Administrator met with Emily Miller of McAdams on Tuesday, August 1, to discuss the grant needs of the Town. The Mayor, Commissioners, and town staff have been in constant contact with entities such as Golden Leaf, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Division of Water Infrastructure, Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and USDA, as well as meeting with our State and Federal elected officials. The discussion with Ms. Miller wrapped around many grant opportunities these groups have personally sent to the Town of Williamston. Ms. Miller will be at the September 11, 2023, Regular Board meeting to formally introduce herself to the Board and discuss the services she will provide to the Town.

Having a professional grant writer working via agreement with the Town has been a goal of the Board and staff for the last year. So, after several months of conversations and negotiations, getting this agreement in place and subsequently meeting with the grant writer is the culmination of much effort but also the signal of just the beginning of what is expected to be a productive relationship. *It was moved by Commissioner Moore and seconded by Commissioner Scales and unanimously approved entering into an agreement with a professional grant writer, Emily Miller of McAdams.*

NEW BUSINESS

Alternate Board Member Appointment to MCRWASA Board

The Town Administrator reported that there is an unfilled alternate MCRWASA Board of Directors position following Commissioner William Coffield's passing. Per the direction of the Town Board, Mrs. Ruth Coffield was asked if she would agree to fill that position. Commissioner Ruth Coffield agreed to fill the position for the remainder of her husband's unexpired term. *It was moved by Commissioner Scales, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and unanimously appointed Commissioner Ruth Coffield as an alternate board member to the MCRWASA Board.*

Budget Amendment – Landfill Fees

The Town Administrator reported that while most budget amendments are administrative and placed on the consent agenda, the landfill tipping fees budget amendment was listed under new business to highlight the effort to decrease the landfill tipping fees. Martin County recently notified the Town of the increase in landfill tipping fees from \$40 per ton to \$55 per ton. The 37.5% increase in fees occurred after the adoption of the Town's Fiscal Year 2023-24 Budget, therefore requiring the budget amendment. This fee increase further emphasizes the need to define the Town's pickup service. *It was moved by Commissioner Coffield, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and unanimously approved Budget Amendment – Landfill Fees.*

Undesignated Fund Balance	<u>\$39,000.00</u>
Cleaning Services	<u>\$ 4,000.00</u>
Martin County Landfill	<u>\$35,000.00</u>
	\$39,000.00

Budget Calendar for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget Year

The Town Administrator presented the proposed calendar for developing the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (FY25) budget. Many of the dates are for staff, but a few directly involve the Board of Commissioners. However, the Board has input throughout the year on budget items, either via the Board-appointed liaison to each department or other means, such as via the Town Administrator. The specific dates on the calendar that directly involve the Town Board of Commissioners are:

- January 4, 2024 – Board Conducts Public Hearing to get Community Input
- January 25 – 26, 2024 Board Retreat
- April 19, 2024 – Budget Workshop
- May 6, 2024 – Second Budget workshop if needed
- June 3, 2024 – Budget Public Hearing and adopt FY25 Budget
- June 3, 2024 – Second Budget Workshop if needed
- June 21, 2024 – Alternate date to adopt the budget.

The Town Administrator recommended the budget retreat on the 25th and 26th of January 2024. With the potential for an all-new Board, he recommended a half day on January 25, where the Department Heads can provide a detailed overview of their departments and answer specific questions about them. Then, a full day on January 26 to develop Board goals, objectives, and benchmarks for FY25. *It was moved by Commissioner McCall, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously approved the Budget Calendar for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget Year.*

Ordinance 2023-07 - Amending the Zoning Map of the Town of Williamston 816 & 818 W. Main

The Planning and Zoning Administrator reported that Greene Memorial Disciple Church (dba. Green Memorial Church of Christ) had submitted a request to rezone parcels 0500847 and 0500850 from R4 (Residential) to O&I (Office and Institutional). The Planning and Zoning Administrator included that he posted a notice on the property, advertised the public hearing in the local newspaper, and sent letters to the adjacent neighbors. Staff recommends submitting a recommendation of approval as it is a reasonable request and, although not in line with projected future land use, will provide a coherent area of West Main Street, allowing residences, offices, and other opportunities for development without disrupting adjacent neighborhoods. Commissioner McCall questioned if there was any public feedback. The Planning and Zoning Administrator noted that he received a call asking for clarification. *It was moved by Commissioner Moore, seconded by Commissioner McCall, and unanimously approved Ordinance 2023-07 Amending the Official Zoning Map of the Town of Williamston 816 & 818 W. Main.*

Ordinance 2023-08 Road Closure for EJ Hayes Homecoming Parade

The EJ Hayes Alumni Center requested the temporary road closure during the day(s) and times set forth below on the following described portion of a State Highway System route:

Date: Saturday, September 16, 2023

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Route Description: Washington Street at the Carolina Avenue intersection to the intersection of Main Street and Watts Street

This street closure is for EJ Hayes Alumni Center to host their annual homecoming that brings thousands back home for a weekend of fellowship and reunion. *It was moved by Commissioner McCall, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously approved Ordinance 2023-08 Road Closure for EJ Hayes Homecoming Parade.*

Ordinance 2023-09 Road Closure for the 27th Annual Carolina Country Stampede

The Williamston Downtown Stampede Committee requested the temporary road closure during the day(s) and times set forth below on the following described portion of a State Highway System route:

Date: Friday, September 29, 2023 to Sunday, October 1, 2023

Time: 12 p.m. on Friday, September 29, until 2 a.m. on Sunday, October 1.

Route Description: The Intersection of Watts Street on Main to the intersection of Haughton and Main. Washington Street would be blocked from Railroad Street to Main.

It was moved by Commissioner McCall, seconded by Commissioner Scales, and unanimously approved Ordinance 2023-09 Road Closure for the 27th Annual Carolina Country Stampede.

Sale of 115 Griffin Avenue

The Planning and Zoning Administrator reported that Yolanda Williams submitted a bid to purchase 115 Griffin Avenue for \$1,000. Mrs. Williams noted she planned to build a small single-family house within the next 3 to 5 years. However, the Planning and Zoning Administrator will speak to Mrs. Williams regarding the area's current zoning before any building. Commissioner Moore expressed concern over any potential zoning issues. The sale of 115 Griffin Avenue was postponed.

N.C. Ad Valorem Tax Settlement

The Tax Collector reported that the Original Tax Levy was **\$3,001,864.95**, and the Total Levy, Additions, Adjustments, and Lot Cleanings were **\$3,310,179.90**. Deductions totaled **\$3,065,595.75**. Uncollected Tax as of June 30, 2023, was **\$244,584.15**. Tax collections and deductions for the 2022 levy were 92.572%. The Tax collector requested that the report be approved and accepted as a settlement of the 2022 Advalorem Tax Levy. She noted the continued effort to collect those unpaid real and personal property taxes that amount to **\$244,584.15** on June 30, 2023. *It was moved by Commissioner Scales, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously approved the N.C. Ad Valorem Tax Settlement report.*

Time of Delivery of Tax Records to Collector Tax Order

As provided in G.S. 105-321, upon order of the governing body, the tax receipts shall be delivered to the tax collector on or before the first day of September. Before delivering the tax receipts to the Tax Collector in any year, the municipal governing body shall adopt and enter in its minutes an order directing the Tax Collector to collect taxes charged in the tax records and receipts.

A copy of this order shall be delivered to the Tax Collector when the tax receipts are delivered. However, the failure to do so shall not affect the Tax Collector's rights and duties to employ the means of collecting taxes provided by the Subchapter. The collection order shall have the force and effect of a judgment and execution against the taxpayers' real and personal property. *It was moved by Commissioner McCall, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously approved the Time of Delivery of Tax Records to Collector Tax Order.*

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Public Works

The Public Works Utilities Director reported the following:

- The department completed its annual chlorine burnout and would be switching back to monochlorine. During the event, the Water Treatment Plant switches the disinfectant used in the system from the standard chloramine to free chlorine. The periodic and temporary conversion from chloramines to free chlorine, which is a normal procedure for water systems, ensures water safety in distribution lines and the highest quality of drinking water.
- The Phase 2 Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meter installation began.
- The Street Utility Department finally had a full crew.
- The Street Project Request for Quotes was due on August 22 for bid opening on August 23.
- The department renewed its NPDES permit.

Fire/Rescue

The Fire Chief provided the following report:

- The Hazmat Regional Response Team (RRT) had a local mission in Lenoir County.
- The department received a grant through the State for free fire alarms for the community.
- The Town of Williamston completed its annual Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training.
- Department staff attended Mass Casualty Training.
- Due to the closure of Martin General Hospital, Fire/EMS is transporting patients to ECU Bertie, Washington, and Greenville. The location is dictated by protocol. The Fire Chief has attended all relevant meetings and has been in constant contact with the area's Medical Director. He emphasized that the department is doing all possible. He recognized the department volunteer's efforts.

Police

The Police Chief provided the following report:

- Police officers attended training on violent offenders. They also attended the local Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) graduation.
- The department purchased two vehicles for the current fiscal year.
- Due to bad weather, the Fun in the Sun event was postponed to Friday, August 11.
- The Martin General Hospital closure also impacted the Police Department, and they were trying to overcome the new challenges.

Finance

The Finance Director reported:

- The Town of Williamston recently underwent a security check by the National Guard, and we are awaiting the results.
- The Southern Software conversion was still delayed. Southern Software sent in-person support to assist with the conversion. Due to the delay, there would be no late fees or disconnects.
- The Town's IT company, Soundside, began to change the Town Hall's computer server.
- The Town Administrator noted the list of items provided to the auditor.

Parks and Recreation

The Parks and Recreation Director reported:

- The department would offer camps for the following sports: Soccer, Football, and a Tennis Clinic.
- The 14th Annual Back to School Event will be on **August 12** at Gaylord Perry Park. The Headhunterz Motorcycle Club and Parks and Recreation host this event. This event gives free school supplies and activities for all ages.
- Volleyball registration would be on August 19, with the program lasting through November.
- The Gaylord Perry Park renovation was underway. The playground was complete, and work began on the sidewalk.
- The Town of Williamston Employee Spotlight was Jess Miller, the Parks and Recreation Athletic Program Supervisor.

Planning

The Planning and Zoning Administrator reported:

- Regarding 108 W. Main Street, the Planning and Zoning Administrator has contacted the Committee of 100. The barricades were for safety while contractors fixed the façade damage. The Committee of 100 was working on the interior flooring.
- The Planning and Zoning Administrator and the Downtown Marketing Coordinator attended the N.C. Main Street Director's meeting in Elkin, North Carolina.
- The department was assisting Forget Me Not Florist. The Town Administrator reached out to various resources in hopes of further assistance. He will continue to update the Board on progress.
- The Downtown Summer Music Series had a great turnout.
- The Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) Neighborhood Grant was in the process of demolishing the last home on Roberson Street. This grant award was for **\$575k**.
- The River landing project was in the design and permitting stage.
- The street lights in the annexed area were still in progress.
- The Downtown Fast Chargers were expected in October.
- The Planning and Zoning Administrator reported that he was working with the arborist. All the roots were removed. Planting should begin this month.
- Code Enforcement issued 100 violations.

Closed Session – Business Prospect N.C. 143-318.11(4) and Employee Matter N.C. 143-318.11(6)

Commissioner Moore moved with a second by Commissioner Scales, to go out of regular session into closed session for Business Prospect N.C. 143-318.11(4) and Employee Matter N.C. 143-318.11(6) at 7:14 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

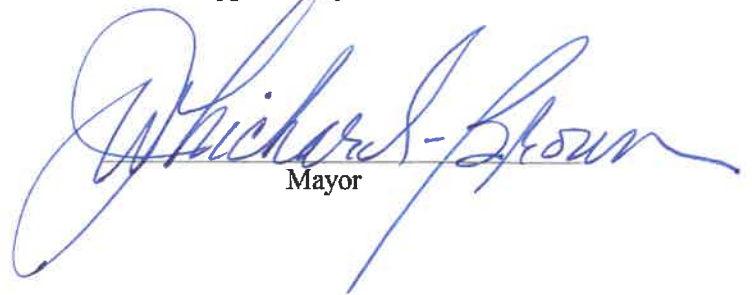
It was moved by Commissioner Scales, seconded by Commissioner Moore, to go out of closed session into a regular session at 8:38 pm. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 8:39 pm.

Submitted By:


Town Clerk

Approved By:


Mayor