

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

8

February 1, 2016

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in regular session on Monday, February 1, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room at Town Hall.

**PRESENT** Mayor: Joyce Whichard-Brown  
Commissioners: Mayor Pro Tem Al Chesson, Ronell Rodgers, Jerry Knox, William Coffield,  
and Junious J. Horton  
Town Administrator: Eric Pearson  
Town Clerk: Christina Craft  
Finance Officer: Linda Harrison  
Public Works Director: Kerry Spivey  
Recreation Director: Allen Overby  
Director of Planning and Development: Brent Kanipe  
Police Chief: Travis Cowan  
Fire Chief: James B. Peele, III  
Town Attorney: Daniel A. Manning

**ABSENT** None

**CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION**

The Mayor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Commissioner Rodgers led the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Chesson offered the invocation.

**AGENDA APPROVED AS ADJUSTED**

The Mayor asked if there were any items to be removed or added to the Regular Agenda or the Consent Agenda.

Items approved in the Consent Agenda are as follows:

- 1) Approval of the Minutes of the January 4, 2016 Meeting
- 2) Budget Amendment – Fire Department Grant
- 3) Tax Relief Order

*It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Horton and unanimously passed to approve the agenda as presented.*

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bill Perry addressed the Board concerning Town Ordinance 51.20 which is the collection of rubbish in the Town of Williamston. He reported that the Town of Williamston provides for pickup services for rubbish which is identified as tree branches, leaves, and grass clippings for residences. The Town does not provide this service for businesses. Business owners pay the same property tax rate as residential owners. Business owners have to pay to remove their rubbish and a pay a fee to dump in the county's landfill. One class over another class of taxpayers is not fair. The second part of the complaint is that the Town picks up rubbish for church properties which are neither residential nor do they pay property taxes. Extra benefits for churches are not listed in the ordinance. He would like for the Town of Williamston to collect rubbish for all taxpayers in the city limits. The Mayor expressed appreciation for his time and reported that the comments would be taken under advisement.

**PRESENTATION**

Mark Finlayson, Executive Director with the Highway 17 Association, updated the Board on the Highway 17 Association efforts. In 2006, a group of municipalities and counties to include the Town of Williamston, formed a formal US 17 Association. It was envisioned as a 3-year effort but was so successful in their efforts advocating for

the highway improvements with the state legislature and the NCDOT that the US 17 Association is now in their 10<sup>th</sup> year. The mission continues to be to improve the US 17 corridor from South Carolina to Virginia and make it the best transportation facility we can make it, given the engineering constraints and funding. The goal is to have the entire Highway 17 as a four-lane divided highway with as much control of access as possible to build. The portion beginning around Chocowinity and ended near Old Ford meets that definition as does the Windsor bypass in Bertie County. The intent is to strive to get every segment of corridor fully funded under the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The R2511 Project is the 10-mile improvement between Washington and Williamston. That project is down the list on the STIP. The final portion that needs to be in place to get the project completed is the approximately \$60 million and are continuing to work on finding the funds. In the 10 years, \$360 million raised for US 17 projects that were previously unfunded on the STIP, 11 segments of improved US 17 are open to traffic, and two other major projects are under construction to include the Wilmington bypass in Brunswick and New Hanover Counties and the Jones County improvements that will link New Bern to Jacksonville on a four-lane road. One focus is improving Williamston to Hampton Roads to interstate standards with the idea that it would be part of that eventual interstate highway from Raleigh to Norfolk. If all segments of Highway 17 are brought to interstate standards, this will be an outstanding economic development prospect for eastern North Carolina. The highway from Raleigh to Norfolk has long been a priority of Senator Butterfield and diverse organizations such as the Raleigh Transportation Alliance. Beginning last year, the Highway 17 Board has been evolving to include Highway 64 group.

For the last several years, the service transportation act, called MAP 21 was being extended through continuing resolution but Congress needed to do a long term sustainable bill so that the state departments of transportation could have some certainty as they plan budgets. Of the \$4billion annual budget at the NCDOT, \$1 billion is federal money collected from the federal gas tax. Congress passed a bill, FAST Act (Fix our Aging Service Transportation Act), that will be very beneficial for the NCDOT. There is a long term Federal bill that is even better as it makes the Highway 64 Raleigh to Williamston and US 17 from Williamston to Hampton Roads a reality. NC has 25 years to build the road to those standards. NCDOT is working on a plan to put "future interstate" signs along the corridor. The number of the interstate is unknown at this point as the Federal Highway Commission makes that decision. Williamston should see future interstate signs possibly in the next three months. From an economic development standpoint, this will make the area more attractive to business prospects as it gives the business access to a great transportation facility for their goods and services. Currently the Association is advocating with the NCDOT and the General Assembly to find the funds to complete the project. The expanded Board of Directors met in Rocky Mount approximately a week ago and decided to rename the group to the Highway 17/64 Association. The Association is working to continue to build the improvement between Williamston and Washington as that makes that segment even more important as it links Beaufort County to the interstate. Mr. Finlayson expressed appreciation for the support given by the Town of Williamston in these endeavors as the Town has been supportive since the outset of this project.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

##### **ADDENDUM TO TRILLIUM HEALTHCARE CONTRACT REGARDING INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT**

Allen Overby reported that there have been changes to the design made by the Trillium Healthcare. Trillium Healthcare is granting Williamston an additional \$85,629 in grant funds to build an inclusive playground at the Godwin-Coppage Park. One sacrifice to receive the extra funding was the loss of one swing that was earmarked for the Gaylord Perry Park. The second phase of the grants will hopefully include the Gaylord Perry Park. Mr. Overby requested approval of the Trillium Healthcare Addendum. Commissioner Rodgers questioned the reason for not positioning the new playground at the Gaylord Perry Park. Mr. Overby reported that there were originally two grants submitted for the grant money. Trillium Healthcare denied the Gaylord Perry Park application which was submitted at the same time as the Godwin-Coppage Park application. Commissioner Rodgers reported concern of the air conditioning problems at the Gaylord Perry Park and wants it to be fixed by mid-summer if at all possible. Mr. Overby reported that the air conditioning issue is listed in the Capital Improvement Plan. Commissioner Chesson reported that these Trillium funds are from a grant that is strictly for an inclusive playground and many other communities have received these funds as well. His understanding is that the reason Trillium chose Godwin-Coppage Park is due to the high volume of use. That decision to install the playground at Godwin-Coppage Park over the Gaylord Perry Park was a decision made by Trillium Healthcare. The Gaylord Perry

Park upgrades was discussed last Friday night's Retreat as the Board will have to decide through the Capital Improvement Plan and upcoming Budget process if the town has the funds.

*It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Horton and unanimously passed to approve the Addendum to the Trillium Contract as presented.*

#### **GAMETIME CONTRACT TO INSTALL THE INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND**

Mr. Overby presented the Gametime Contract to install the inclusive playground. Trillium has a deadline of June 17, 2016 to have the project completed. Once the contract is approved, the equipment will be ordered immediately as they have expressed interest to begin installation as soon as possible.

*It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield and unanimously passed to approve the Gametime Contract to install the inclusive playground as presented.*

#### **WELCOME**

The Mayor welcomed County Commissioners Ronnie Smith and Dempsy Bond who were in attendance at the meeting.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **WASTE WATER ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Mark Garner, Vice President of Rivers and Associates, Inc., presented an amended contract to update the Waste Water Asset Management Plan. The original plan, funded through a grant, was prepared in 2013 as it was a requirement for loan assistance for the Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation project. The Plan includes an assessment of the Town's wastewater collection and treatment system and a list of projects for consideration in the Town's next Capital Improvements Plan. In early December, the Federal Government determined that, if you have a Waste Water Asset Management Plan and receive their funding, you must update that plan to include all the new assets that are being constructed by the funding money which should include the project on the south of town. The amendment will add an additional cost of \$7,000 to perform the updates to the Waste Water Asset Management Plan.

*It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Horton and unanimously passed to approve the Waste Water Asset Management Plan contract amendment as presented.*

##### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY**

Eric Pearson presented a Conflict of Interest Policy for board consideration and approval. The Town has had a policy in place but USDA application requirements specify that the policy must be in greater detail. The policy is in compliance with USDA loan requirements. One of the requirements is that the independent commissioner must be listed and if a commissioner votes, they must not be a town employee. The USDA requires that the Town have a procedure to handle a conflict of interest. Commissioner Chesson questioned the recusal of self without disclosure. Per Attorney Manning, State Statutes state that financial reason is the only reason that a commissioner can recuse themselves. The remainder of the board will decide if a conflict of interest exists after the disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts.

*It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Rodgers and unanimously passed to accept the Conflict of Interest policy as presented.*

##### **APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION R-2016-128 AUTHORIZING ADMINISTRATOR TO SIGN RD APPLICATION DOCUMENTS**

Eric Pearson presented the Resolution R-2016-128 as to allow the Town Administrator, Town Clerk and Town Finance Officer permission to approve RD application documents through RD Apply. RD Apply is an electronic USDA application which is related to the Skewarkee Canal project. This resolution was created from the recommended resolution provided by the USDA as they require Board approval to specifically state who has the right to upload documents into the RD Apply system. This permission is limited to this application and does not apply to any other documents or applications.

*It was moved by Commissioner Horton, seconded by Commissioner Coffield and unanimously passed to accept Resolution R 2016-128 Authorizing Administrator to Sign RD Application*

*Documents as presented. Resolution 2016-128 are hereby attached with the minutes of this meeting and incorporated in the Town's Resolution Book for future reference.*

**APPOINT REPRESENTATIVE TO MID-EAST COMMISSION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT (COG)**

The Mayor reported that she has requested that Commissioner Coffield to be appointed as the representative to the Mid-East Commission COG. He has previously agreed to be appointed to be the Town's representative.

*It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Horton and unanimously passed to approve the appointment of Commissioner Coffield to the Mid-East Commission COG as presented.*

**REAPPOINTMENT TO LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD**

The Mayor presented a request for reappointment of Jim Horton from the Martin Memorial Library Advisory Board to serve his second six year term. Commissioner Chesson reported that he is a good advocate for the advisory board.

*It was moved by Commissioner Coffield, seconded by Commissioner Rodgers and unanimously passed to reappoint Mr. Jim Horton to the Martin Memorial Library Advisory Board.*

**REQUEST TO APPLY FOR A DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT GRANT**

Brent Kanipe requested Board approval to apply for a downtown redevelopment grant. The Department of Commerce has recently transferred funds into the Rural Development Mainstreet Program. The money is set up for downtown redevelopment grants. The grant must be a minimum of \$300,000 to a maximum of \$500,000. This is similar to the Catalyst grant the Town received for the EJ Hayes Alumni renovations but this is specifically targeted to downtown vacant buildings. It will be a competitive grant as there is only \$2,000,000 in total grant funds. The obstacle to overcome will be getting a building owner or developer to take advantage of this opportunity. This will not be a matching grant. The purpose of the grant is to address issues that will get the building to the point it is ready to be leased or rented by a viable company by addressing such issues as code issues, roof repairs, ADA requirements, and electrical/plumbing needs. If the grant is approved, the money will be given to qualified owners as a forgiven loan. The first step will be to present a Letter of Intent to the Department of Commerce and preapplication form. During that time, program participants will need to be found. While technically the building owners do not have to match any funds, it is suggested they do agree to commit funds to hopefully have a successful grant. A public hearing will be held before the submittal of the application. If a willing property owner is not found, the Town will not continue with the application.

*It was moved by Commissioner Horton, seconded by Commissioner Chesson and unanimously passed to approve with applying for the downtown redevelopment grant.*

**DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS**

**Planning**

The Planning Director presented the annual planning report, reviewing the highlights on the business growth and its positive economic impact on the town.

**Fire/Rescue**

The Fire Chief distributed the Fire/Rescue department's bi-annual report and reviewed the objectives and goals of the performance/strategic initiative.

**Police**

The Police Chief presented and reviewed highlights in the bi-annual Police Department report. He reported that there was a coding error possibly due to a software update and will hopefully be resolved very soon.

**Public Works**

The Public Works director presented and reviewed annual activity and performance reports for the Public Works department.

**Parks & Recreation**

The Parks & Recreation director presented and reviewed highlights in the annual Parks and Recreation report.

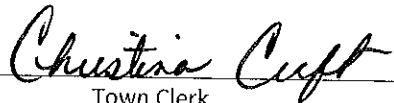
Copies of the department's annual reports are available in the Town Clerk's office for review.


**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:

  
Town Clerk

  
Mayor