

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CALLED JOINT MEETING
TOWN OF WILLIAMSTON BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MARTIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MCRWASA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
NC TELECENTER
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2015 3:00 P.M.

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in special called session on Tuesday, September 1, 2015 at 3:00 P. M. in the NC Telecenter, Williamston NC. This was a joint meeting with the Martin County Board of Commissioners and the MCRWASA Board.

PRESENT Mayor: Tommy Roberson
Commissioners: Jerry Knox, William Coffield
Town Clerk/Executive Assistant: Christina Craft
Dan Boone, Retired VP - Wooten Company
Martin County Commissioner Board: Ronnie Smith, Tommy Bowen, Elmo Butch
Lilley, Dempsy Bond Jr.
Martin County Regional Water and Sewer Authority Board: Chairman David Bone, Director
Tommy Bowen

ABSENT Mayor Pro Tem Al Chesson, Commissioners Herman B. Daniels and Junious J. Horton

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the Town Board meeting to order. County Commissioner Dempsy Bond lead the Pledge of Allegiance and County Commissioner Tommy Bowen gave the invocation.

LACK OF QUORUM

The Mayor announced that Town Board of Commissioners cannot vote at this meeting because it lacks a quorum. Any items, such as the approval of the agenda, could not be acted upon.

PRESENTATION OF MCRWASA WATER TREATMENT PLANT

David Bone, Martin County Manager, presented a power point presentation to explain why Martin County and the Town of Williamston needed a new water treatment plant and subsequently had to raise the water rates. Mr. Bone provided a historical review as to why both have contracted with MCRWASA to provide 100% of water usage. The State Division of Water Resources (DWR) cites water supply dangers in the region. The Central Coastal Plain Capacity Use Investigation Report describes the increased potential for salt water encroachment, evidence of aquifer dewatering, and reports of extreme loss of well yield. The importance of this project is that it should stop salt water intrusion into the aquifers, provide good, clean drinking water for years to come and provide valuable water capacity for economic development. He reported that the MCRWASA does not serve the entire county but is limited to the Town of Williamston and Martin County Water Districts #1 and #2. Through inter-local agreements, the Town of Williamston and Martin County have agreed to purchase 100% of their average daily demand of water from MCRWASA. This arrangement was necessary to pay for the debt service and operating expenses of the water treatment plant. The Town of Williamston and Martin County Water Districts #1 and #2 wells will be maintained as a supplemental and back-up water supply. While both separate entities are charged the same rate for water by MCRWASA, the Town of Williamston has less debt and more customers than Martin County which is why the County residents have a higher water bill than in-town customers. Water districts #1 and #2 have not been self-supporting. The County's General Fund has been subsidizing revenue, and this must be paid back. There are no capital reserves. The County cannot continue to subsidize the two districts as the use of general fund revenues on a long-term basis is not sustainable, not recommended by the State's Local Government Commission and could have consequences for the County and its citizens. The County needs legislative support and an increase in the number of customers. If revenues decrease too much due to a loss of customers, other County options to raise revenues include pursuing statutory authority to charge availability fees, changing the policy to require mandatory hook-up, and considering a property tax on the water district. The Town, County and MCRWASA can seek special appropriation from the federal and state government, seek additional partners and consolidation of utilities to hopefully provide some cost benefits / efficiencies.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Martin County Chairman of the Board of Commissioners had numerous citizens sign up to address the Boards. Wilson Farrell, 1399 Popular Point Road, questioned the meeting time of 3 pm as many citizens are not able to attend due to the timing. He would like to see a study of average use per household and possibly increase the base amount. He questioned if the cost would lower if the citizens paid directly to the water authority and eliminated the middle man. He wants a regular Town Hall type meeting where any complaints can be heard on a regular basis. Sandra Manning, 112 Perry Street, questioned why her water was on a steady increase each month and why a time limit to pay was imposed. Joyce Gray, 2082 Bonnie Best Road, stated that the contract stated water and sewer. The water and taxes are on a steady increase and her business is not doing well. Richard Clayton, 104 W. Grace Street, questioned how many affected people are on fixed incomes and why the new intake in the river is in such a bad location as two streams dump there. Sam Whitley, 24125 NC 125, questioned how many on the Boards have well water. Freddie Jackson, 4396 Everetts Road, questioned who voted for the water commission. Sherrie Bazemore, 403 E. Simmons Avenue, stated that the individuals were not considered when this decision was made as most people in the county make less than \$18,000 annually. Ms. Bazemore reported that her September water bill is \$270. Don Phippen, 1465 Johnson Drive, questioned why some have to pay twice as much as others. Jimmy Mobley, 1120 Corey Drive, wants the County Commissioners to invite the State Representatives to go to the citizen's meeting at Deadwood. Heber Coltrain, 1031 Scenic Drive, reported that the Martin County Water Authority had 4 options to meet state mandates back in 2009 and wanted to know why the most expensive option was chosen. He reported that the second option used a cleaner water source. Michael Glenn, 305 West Boulevard, encouraged the commissioners to press for relief and solution to the high water rate issue and to show the presentation again at a later date as many were unable to attend a meeting held during the day. Chairman Ronnie Smith was appreciative of all citizens that presented their thoughts and concerns and allowed for any others that wanted to speak the opportunity to be heard. Mayor Tommy Roberson reported that his water bill also increased about \$20 and is hopeful that the right team of professionals is in place to keep costs from increasing. He reported that the Board is very concerned. There were other options and there were negatives involved with every option presented. He apologized for the Board not having a quorum. He welcomes the opportunity to speak with individuals to discuss any of their concerns. He reported that there is interest in trying to get relief on the federal level. A letter has been drafted to send to State Representatives to be signed by the three boards. Tommy Bowen also reported that he was concerned about the rates. The decision to move forward with the option to pull water from the river was based on the information available and was implemented by majority vote.

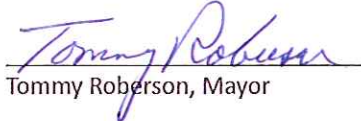
ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:


Christina Craft, Town Clerk


Tommy Roberson, Mayor