

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

March 28, 2020

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in emergency session on Saturday, March 28, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room at Town Hall.

PRESENT Mayor: Joyce Whichard-Brown
Commissioners: Mayor Pro Tem Ronell Rodgers, Alton Moore, and William Coffield
Town Administrator: John O'Daniel
Town Clerk: Christina Craft

ABSENT Commissioners Al Chesson and Jerry Knox

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

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

WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all present to the meeting.

AGENDA APPROVED

it was moved by Commissioner Rodgers, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to approve the agenda as presented.

APPROVAL OF RECONNECTIONS OF ALL WATER ACCOUNTS CUT OFF DUE TO NONPAYMENT ON MARCH 24, 2020

The Mayor reported she called this meeting after listening to Governor Cooper yesterday, doctors on tv, Senator Butterfield today, who repeatedly said to wash your hands, wash your hands, wash your hands. She reported citizens can't wash your hands, body, water to drink without water. Now, the entire state is under a stay at home order as of 5pm on Monday and what are people to do but get this disease if they don't have water. She called this emergency meeting because she wants water turned back on. After listening to Congressman Butterfield, he said in his presentation that all utilities will be paid. She instructed the Town Administrator call him to find out what that means that it will be paid.

The Town Administrator reported there are approximately 15 accounts that are currently turned off due to nonpayment. Commercial accounts are treated differently as they receive a warning and additional days. Mayor questioned why businesses get special treatment that our citizens do not receive. The Town Administrator reported he was just informed of this today but will have to research to see if this is in writing or normal practice. Mayor reported to not have a problem with it but she is here to serve the citizens. This is the first time this has ever been the case. People are dying and this is nothing to play with. These people can't wash their hands. They aren't supposed to go out but you know they will go out anyway. They haven't washed their hands and who knows when it will start spreading in Williamston. Commissioner Moore reported he thought the Town was on the same page and the town was following guidelines from the Governor. John reported the Governor has not mandated but suggested water not to be turned off. He sent an email to the Board prior to water disconnects as staff is required to continue the practice per policy unless Board direction is given. The Mayor and Commissioner Chesson responded to the email stating that water would be cut off this time as the bills were due the 10th but revisited for future billing. The Mayor stated hindsight is 20/20 and could kick herself for acting sooner as you have to wash your hands. Whether someone is getting over or what, we still have to try to keep this virus from spreading. The Town Administrator reported he is not opposed but requires Board direction. Commissioner Moore questioned how soon we can get water turned back on for all citizens. John stated staff would have to be called in to do reconnects prior to Monday. The Mayor questioned why Public Works can't just come in and do the cut-ons and wait for paperwork on Monday. John reported he would have to call someone in the billing department to make certain no citizen is missed as the billing timeframe has moved into a new monthly cycle. The Mayor stated she understands exactly, at this junction, we can't think about money as this not only an emergency meeting but is also an emergency to call Shenika and other staff. This is serious business. She does not want to have wait until Monday and wants the water turned on tonight or tomorrow. She entertained a motion to have the water turned on tonight or tomorrow morning and go through whatever channels to get Shenika and staff here to make this happen. *Commissioner Moore made*

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a motion and wants to make sure this motion goes into the forward in the right direction, that is tonight as soon as this meeting is over to make sure the appropriate employees are called to make certain this water cut back on as soon as possible, seconded by Coffield and was unanimously passed. Commissioner Rodgers then commented that this meeting is not to discuss other matters but this is a sensitive matter. He reported the Board has to think of the Town and what is right as far as the citizens paying their bills. He questioned how is it right for the Town to want to get their citizens to pay their bills but also has to strike a balance with that and consider problems beyond the bills should people's water be cut off regarding hygiene and that could be terrible. This disease doesn't sit still. It moves in such a way now that I am afraid to trust anything or anyone. They need to be able to take care of their hygiene needs. The virus can live on fabric and they need to be able to wash their clothes. There are 6 cases in Bertie and 3 deaths from what I have heard from people in that area. Commissioner Coffield questioned if unable to contact Shenika, is there anyone else that can be called. John stated he would reach out to the Finance Officer and Public Works Director to arrange staff to begin working on this immediately.

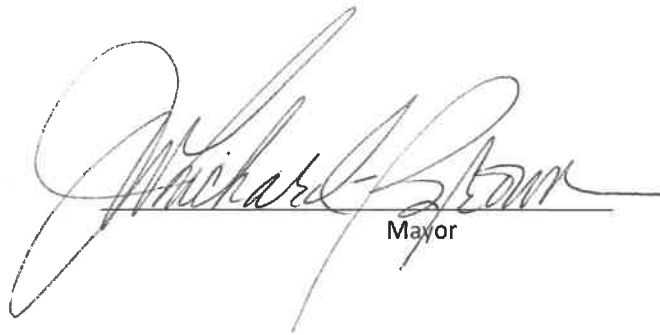
ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:


Town Clerk


Mayor