

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

May 4, 2020

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in regular session on Monday, May 4, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the NC Telecenter located at 415 East Boulevard, Williamston, NC at Town Hall.

PRESENT Mayor Joyce Whichard-Brown
Commissioners: Mayor Pro Tem Ronell Rodgers, Al Chesson, Alton Moore, Jerry Knox and William Coffield
Town Administrator: John O'Daniel
Town Clerk: Christina Craft
Finance Officer: Linda Harrison
Town Attorney: Daniel Manning

ABSENT None

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

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

WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed everyone present.

AGENDA APPROVED

The Mayor asked if there were any adjustments to the Regular Agenda or if the Board wished any items to be removed or added to the Regular Agenda. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Knox, and unanimously passed to approve the regular agenda as presented.*

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. Commissioner Moore reported errors in the minutes. The Town Administrator requested all minutes to be removed from the consent agenda. The Town Administrator requested the addition of a Tax Relief Order for 118 Pearl Street as the property has been through foreclosure. *It was moved by Commissioner Moore, seconded by Commissioner Chesson, and unanimously passed to approve the consent agenda as amended.*

Items approved in the Consent Agenda are as follows:

(1) Tax Relief Order

Year	Name	Remarks	Total
2009	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 281.20
2010	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 281.20
2011	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 281.20
2012	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 281.20
2013	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 281.20
2014	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 281.20
2015	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 281.20
2016	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 281.20
2017	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 256.20
2018	Charlie Wilder Heirs	Town owed through foreclosure	\$ 256.20

(2) Approval of Budget Amendment - General Fund – Ladder Truck Repairs

General Fund

Repair Equipment

\$41,240.10

The purpose of this amendment is to budget funds to repair the Ladder Truck at the Fire Department. The Town has only one Ladder Truck which is 20 years old. There is corrosion issues on the bottom fly section of the serial. Because of these issues, the truck is unsafe and out of service as an aerial. This is not covered under warranty but will receive some discount from the

Atlantic Emergency Solutions for the repair. This was approved at the March 31st Town Board Meeting.

(3) Approval of Budget Amendment - General Fund – 2020/2021 OPEB Expenditures

<u>General Fund</u>	
Retirees Fringe Benefits	\$60,000.00

The purpose of this amendment is to budget funds for 2020/2021 OPEB Expenditures in the current year. This transfer will be made in June if funds are available.

(4) Approval of Budget Amendment - Water/Sewer Fund – 2020/2021 OPEB Expenditures

<u>Water/Sewer Fund</u>	
Water - Retirees Fringe Benefits	\$20,000.00
Sewer - Retirees Fringe Benefits	\$20,000.00

The purpose of this amendment is to budget funds for 2020/2021 OPEB Expenditures in the current year. This transfer will be made in June 2020 if funds are available.

(5) Approval of Budget Amendment - General Fund – Fire Department Project

<u>General Fund</u>	
Transfer to Capital Projects	\$22,957.00

The purpose of this amendment is to budget funds for the Fire Department Project. \$22,957 will complete the contribution of \$72,957 from the General Fund to the Fire Department Project per the Project Ordinance #2020-2 dated January 6, 2020.

(6) Approval of Budget Amendment - General Fund – Police Department Project

<u>General Fund</u>	
Transfer to Capital Projects	\$100,000.00

The purpose of this amendment is to budget funds for the Police Department Project. If funds are available in June 2020, a transfer for a portion of the General Fund contribution will be made in this fiscal year.

(7) Approval of Budget Amendment - General Fund – Gaylord Perry Park PARTF Grant Project

<u>General Fund</u>	
Transfer to Capital Projects	\$ 50,000.00

The purpose of this amendment is to budget funds for the Gaylord Perry Park PARTF Grant Project. If funds are available in June 2020, a transfer for a portion of the General Fund contribution will be made in this fiscal year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

As the meeting was held virtually for the public, the Mayor asked each of the online participants if they would like to speak. No public comments were received.

OLD BUSINESS

Ratification of Resolution 2020-102 Suspending Disconnection of Water Services Due to Nonpayment During State of Emergency

The Town Administrator reported the Governor's Executive Order which suspended disconnects and late fees for residential accounts did not address commercial utility accounts. Commissioner Chesson questioned if there have been requests or lack of payment from commercial businesses. The Finance Officer reported there are some small businesses that aren't able to work such as hair salons. Commissioner Chesson reported the small businesses to include the restaurants are suffering due to COVID-19 restrictions and the extension should be allowed. The Town

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Administrator reported the department has reached out to the utility software vendor to prepare for payment arrangements as approximately 200 accounts are currently behind. Interest charges have never been added to utility payment arrangements and individuals will have to request a payment arrangement. He did not have a breakdown of how many of those were commercial accounts. Commissioner Rodgers questioned if there any funds that can be obtained to assist with these payments. The Town Administrator reported there may be funds available from other third parties such as the Department of Social Services but none through the municipality. Commissioner Rodgers questioned if water usage has spiked. The Finance Officer reported an increase in residential usage. Commissioner Moore questioned if the Town was extending the payment plan beyond the suggested time of the Governor's order. The Town Administrator reported the plan is not go beyond the six months for payment plans. He also noted many residents that have been in the cycle of paying late fees have used the stimulus check to get ahead on the bill. He is hopeful the Governor's office will give further guidance as what a reasonable payment arrangement is. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to approve Resolution 2020-102 to suspend disconnection of water services due to nonpayment during the State of Emergency for commercial accounts. This resolution is hereby attached with the minutes of this meeting and incorporated in the Town's Resolution Book for future reference.*

Blessings Box Discussion

The Town Administrator reported the First Christian Church had submitted a request to place a "Blessings Box" in the Barnes Plaza. The church has decided to place the box adjacent to the park and has received approval from Commissioner Chesson to place the box beside the building occupied by The Enterprise. He requested the church to put contact information on the box if citizens have questions. The church is reaching out to other churches to help keep the box stocked and plan to keep the box adjacent to the park long term. The box will contain nonperishable food items such as canned goods.

Administrative Updates

The Town Administrator reported Mitchum Trucking had reached out to the Town earlier this year to donate the former Mitchum Trucking Property which is located near the Rail Trail. The Board directed staff to research the property for any environmental concerns. The Town Attorney reported the property is currently being monitored by the State. He advised the Board, if interested in the property, to hire an environmental specialist to research the property as remediation of the property has not been completed. Commissioner Chesson reported the property is not only contaminated but is located in a low area with unsuitable soil. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously approved to decline the donation of the Mitchum Trucking Property.*

COVID-19 UPDATE

The Town Administrator reported this is week five of 50% staffing. As the Governor is moving into Phase I to open the State, he recommends bringing staff back fulltime on May 11 with other restrictions in place. The Mayor questioned if the work is behind. The Town Administrator reported with many citizens home, the yard debris has increased. The majority of the work is getting done with great difficulty. Commissioner Coffield recommended waiting for guidance from the Governor as his brother-in-law has died due to the virus. Commissioner Chesson reported a concern of two employees in a vehicle together and working within a less distance of 6 feet of each other. The Town Administrator reported the benefit of 50% staffing will decrease the likelihood of the entire staff getting infected at once. Commissioner Chesson reported the staffing should be at the department head's discretion with recommended face masks and other safety measures such as handwashing stations to be put in place. The virus is not going away anytime soon and may resurge. Commissioner Moore reported there are two people in the truck for a reason and if there are enough vehicles for them to drive separately. The Town Administrator reported there are two employees in a vehicle as many jobs such as picking up large items such as mattresses. It is difficult to isolate the Public Works employees. The Mayor reported the 50% staffing should be extended at least two more weeks and can be revisited at that time. The Town Administrator reported he will keep the Mayor and Board updated. Commissioner Chesson reported masks should be available for all staff, especially those who have direct contact with the public.

Fire Department Renovation and Police Department Relocation Project Update

A preconstruction meeting for the fire department with start date of May 11. The construction company will have 300 days to complete construction. The Town Administrator reported Randy Stalls has removed the majority of items from the former Stalls Building. Dumpsters should be delivered by the end of this week. He plans to utilize part-time Parks and Recreation employees to remove the remaining items in the building. Commissioner Moore questioned if the contractor will be responsible for all waste once construction begins. The Town Administrator confirmed the contractor will be responsible for the construction waste. Commissioner Rodgers questioned how the payments are made and are there grace periods in place in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Town Administrator reported

there will be a \$200k annual payment. The contractor has 300 days to complete the construction regardless of the pandemic before the Town could pursue liquidated damages. The Town Attorney reported we are living in unprecedented times but are bound to the contract regardless.

Budget Presentation

The Town Administrator presented a proposed balanced budget. He and the Finance Officer had to cut over \$1 million in expenses with the input from the department heads. The budget includes a 10-cent property tax increase and a 25-cent increase in water fees per 1,000 gallons. There is also a 2% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). He reviewed the five-year capital improvement plan. There are over several million dollars' worth of projects in the Public Works that have been pushed back. The Police Department is receiving 3 vehicles per the rotation schedule. The air conditioner for the Gaylord Perry Park gym is also included. For Public Works, there is a dump truck and an air curtain burner budgeted. It is the Town's intention to finance the air curtain burner. The burner will save the Town money as it will reduce the landfill fees. A Mobile Lite Collector included is used in collection of data during water meter reading by driving the route rather than requiring employees to walk the route. The wastewater aerators and controls is the Blue Frog system the Public Works Director has discussed with the Board in the past and this will hopefully reduce power consumption by the wastewater plant once in place. The backflow device is a current requirement on the water supply line providing water to the wastewater facility. The Mayor questioned which fund addresses the need for street lights for Annexed Area A. The Town Administrator reported this was not budgeted at this time. Currently, Dominion reported they will require deeds of easement to place the poles. The Mayor reported property owners had submitted a petition to get the lights. The Town Administrator reported Dominion requires a legally-binding agreement to allow them to install and will follow up with them to see the status of the project.

The Town Administrator reviewed the breakdown of revenues and expenses per fund. He reported the Powell Bill funds must be used for street-related expenses. A street sweeper is scheduled to be purchased from Powell Bill funds which may require financing or the use of fund balance. This will be brought before the board prior to purchase. Commissioner Chesson questioned if the amount of budgeted revenue has been decreased as it is questionable if the same amount will be available in the upcoming year. The Town Administrator reported the revenues were based on historical figures. Commissioner Moore questioned what the license plate fee funds are used for. The Finance Officer stated \$5 of the \$30 fee can be used for General Fund expenses. \$25 of the \$30 fee must be used for street repair in the Powell Bill Funds. These funds are reported to Powell Bill annually. Currently the fund is used towards a loan for street improvements in the Annexation area. Commissioner Moore questioned the mosquito control line item and if Public Works sprays in the Town at any time other than when requested. The Finance Officer reported the expenses would be listed in the departmental expenses but believes spraying is done. The Gaylord Perry Air Conditioner is listed as being funded directly through Fund Balance. The Town Administrator is hopeful to find a grant to cover the cost of the air conditioner and if so, no fund balance will be used. There are \$55,000 in revenues the Cemetery Department. These revenues will reduce as the last graveyard is being developed. The Town Board will have to eventually decide whether to expand the department or just maintain the current graveyards. The air conditioning for the Gaylord Perry Park gym is listed as funded by fund balance but it is hopeful to receive a grant to cover this project. Total General Fund Revenues are \$6,311,142.

The Enterprise Fund Revenues are budgeted at \$4,419,616. The Martin County Regional Water and Sewer Authority (MCRWASA) has budgeted an increase in rates which is the primary reason for an increase in water rates as the Town is required to purchase 100 percent of water used from MCRWASA.

The summary of expenditures provided a breakdown of expenses per department by type. Personnel Services includes salaries, benefits, insurances, and taxes. Per Board direction, the recommended expenses have remained the same. Commissioner Coffield questioned if the Board's training line item was divided equally between all the Board members. The Town Administrator reported the line item remained the same as the prior year and not all Board members were budgeted to attend conferences as it was based on historical attendance. Commissioner Rodgers and Coffield were not budgeted to attend the NC Leagues' CityVision Conference. The Mayor reported she was in agreement with the idea to keep the expenses at the same as the current year but didn't realize Commissioners Coffield and Rodgers were not budgeted to attend the NC League Annual conference. She questioned if Commissioner Rodgers and Coffield planned to attend the League conference this year. Commissioner Rodgers and Coffield both reported they plan to attend the Black Summit and the League in the upcoming year.

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Commissioner Rodgers reported both conferences have been cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the funds could be used. The Finance Director reported unused funds in a line item is moved to Fund Balance and does not accumulate. Commissioner Chesson questioned how much funds were needed so they would be able to attend. The Town Administrator reported the need of another \$1532. Commissioners Chesson and Knox requested the removal of Town-paid local events under their personal line item as they will pay for their own ticket should they choose to attend. The Town Administrator reported the NC Rural Conference and the Winter Meeting for the Mayor could be removed as she has not attended the last two years. The Finance Director reported all staff reviews their travel each year and submits a request annually for such training events and suggested the Board could do the same so that these events are not missed. The Town Administrator removed the Mayor's Winter Meeting, the NC Rural Conference, the Mayor's Rotary dues, local events for Commissioners Chesson and Knox and miscellaneous local events to move those funds to Commissioners Rodgers and Coffield's Training expense line. The remaining funds from the transfer will be added to the Mayor's miscellaneous line.

There were two items of note in the Administrative Department's expenses. The copier contract was due for renewal and plan to change companies with a savings of almost \$4,000 annually. The group insurance deductible refund was reduced by \$20,000 based primarily on historical trends.

The small equipment in the Planning Department was for a computer. As the department has funds available that have not been spent in the current year, the computer has been purchased and removed from the budget. The Code Enforcement line item is mainly for vegetative issues and dilapidated houses. The Mitchell building was not budgeted at this point. As soon as the Board is able to have a public hearing, there is an ordinance that will put the regulations in place so the Town to move to address the building. Commissioner Chesson questioned if other municipalities are holding public hearings. The Town Administrator reported, while some municipalities are holding virtual public hearings, he is not comfortable with moving forward at this point as someone may question the validity of the ordinance in the future. The General Assembly has reported they may relax the open meeting laws and regulations and he will revisit if this happens.

The Police Department salaries was reduced as historically there is turnover in the department. Multiple small equipment items were cut to include two pistols, a taser, four cameras, and 21 rifle optics. It was noted Dodge has cancelled multiple orders and the vehicles may be a different model.

The Town has loans for fire truck, an EMS remount, and the Skinner Warehouse.

The Fire Department is budgeted to purchase turnout gear, airpack cylinders and fire hoses. The State funds the RRT Department in the amount of \$69,000. The contract is due for renewal and will be brought to the Board at the next regular meeting.

The Sanitation Department will have to add stone on the drive at the Waste Water Treatment plant. As a new backhoe was not included in the upcoming budget for purchase, funds were budgeted for the maintenance of the older machine. It is hopeful the air curtain burner purchase will reduce the cost in the department. The Mayor questioned why funds are budgeted for mosquito control if the department is not spraying for mosquitos. The Finance Director reported the department has hired a contractor to spray in the past. Commissioner Rodger reported there is an area where garbage is being dumped in a residential area. The Town Administrator requested he call his office tomorrow to discuss further.

The funds for Rail Trail erosion have been reduced and LED lights in the gym were cut as there is not an immediate need. The Town Administrator reported the Recreation Director is currently seeking other funds for the Gaylord Perry Park renovation.

The Garage department has budgeted the purchase of a charger, side grinder, and an evaporative cooler.

The Economical and Physical Department has a new allocation for the Martin County Chamber but the other allocations have remained the same as the current year. \$50,000 has been allocated for the Police Department relocation and \$150,000 for the Town's matching funds relating to the PARTF Grant. These items moved to this line item as these are the main reason for the tax increase budgeted. Commissioner Chesson questioned what one

penny of tax increase amounts to in revenues as the Board has made the decision to increase taxes by 10 cents. The Town Administrator reported approximately \$30,750 based on a collection rate of 92.48%.

Powell Bill funds can only be used for street related projects. The Public Works were able to test drive the street sweeper that they hope to purchase.

No funds are budgeted for the OPEB liability. If funds are available at the end of this fiscal year, these funds may be moved into the OPEB line item.

The Storm Water fund is used for the payment for the Skewarkee Canal project loan.

The Water Department has a mobile lite collector, backflow preventer, and Ralph Taylor Road water main line upgrades budgeted for the upcoming year. The Sewer department has a Wastewater aerators and controls budgeted for purchase in the upcoming year.

The Mayor questioned the amount the Town has to pay to the NC League of Municipalities in the amount of \$6,500. The Finance Director reported these are annual dues based on population size.

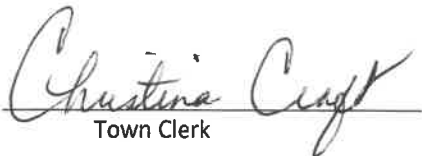
The Town Administrator reported a Public Hearing to allow for citizen input on the proposed budget will be scheduled for the next regular meeting, prior to the adoption of the budget.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:


Town Clerk


Mayor