

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

November 9, 2020

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in regular session on Monday, November 9, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. at the NC Telecenter located at 415 East Blvd #130, Williamston, NC.

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
Police Chief: Travis Cowan
Recreation Director: Allen Overby
Town Planner and Zoning Administrator: Cameron Braddy
Town Attorney: Daniel Manning
Fire Chief: Michael Peaks
Public Works Director: Kerry Spivey

ABSENT None

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. She requested everyone stand for a moment of silence for our country. Commissioner Moore led the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Chesson offered the invocation.

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. The Mayor requested, under Old Business (1)(b), change the name from Gaylord Perry Center to Gaylord Perry Park. The Recreation Director reported the building is referred to as "center." Commissioner Rodgers requested New Business #5 "Town Administrator Evaluation Form Samples" to be moved into Closed Session under Personnel. The Town Attorney reported the line item is a discussion of just regarding a form and must be discussed in Open Session. The Mayor questioned if Commissioner Rodgers still wanted the addition of the Closed Session to which he reported he does for personnel matters. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to approve the regular agenda as amended.*

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. The Town Administrator requested the October 5, 2020 meeting minutes to be passed with a noted correction that Select Custom Apparatus was the company who received the bid award for the EMS Remount project. *It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to approve the consent agenda as amended.*

Items approved in the Consent Agenda are as follows:

- (1) Approval of the Minutes of the October 5, 19, 22 and 27, 2020 meetings
- (2) Capital Project Ordinance 2020-14 Police and Fire Radio Project
- (3) Approval of Budget Amendment - General Fund – NC Pandemic Recovery Office Coronavirus Relief Funds

General Fund

CARES CRF County/NC \$145,223

The purpose of this amendment is to budget revenue funds received from North Carolina Pandemic Recovery Office, Coronavirus Relief Funds (NCPRO CRF). These funds have a restricted use which will be to help cover EMS salaries and benefits during the pandemic event.

- (4) Approval of Budget Amendment - General Fund – Police and Fire Radio Capital Project Fund (VIPER)

General Fund

Police and Fire Radio Capital Project \$145,223

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The purpose of this amendment is to budget funds to be transferred from the General Fund to the Police and Fire Radio Capital Project Fund. These funds will be used to purchase "VIPER" radios that will be required for all Police and Fire Departments starting in 2025.

(5) Approval of Budget Amendment - General Fund – Finance Director Trainee Position

General Fund

Salaries	\$5,250
FICA	\$ 410
Retirement	\$ 585

The purpose of this amendment is to budget funds to cover salary, FICA, and Retirement for the Finance Director Trainee position that was approved at the September 14, 2020 Board meeting. The salary change was effective with the September 19, 2020 pay period begin date, October 2, 2020 pay period end date and paid October 8, 2020.

(6) Tax Relief Order

Year	Name	Remarks	Total
2020	Claude Wilkins	County Over Billed Value	\$ 188.06
2020	Earl Uzzell Jr	Boat not inside City Limits	\$ 16.40
2020	Trent Mohrbutter	Boat not inside City Limits	\$ 153.38

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

OLD BUSINESS

COVID DISCUSSION

Wes Gray, Martin-Tyrrell-Washington County Health Department Director, presented an overview of the most current COVID-19 stats for the county and state. He reported 75% of the COVID fatalities in Martin County are ages 75 and older. There have been a total of 22 deaths and 714 cases, with 53 active cases, in Martin County. The bulk of the current cases are due to ongoing outbreaks in Roanoke River Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Vintage Inn Retirement Community and Williamston House. There will be two testing sites, Lion's Club in Williamston and East End Elementary School in Robersonville, with are no-cost community COVID-19 drive-thru testing. The testing sites will be available November 10 to November 30 (10am to 3p Tuesday through Saturday). Commissioner Rodgers questioned the Bertie numbers related to Martin County cases and why the difference. Mr. Grey reported this is largely due to outbreaks in congregate living facilities.

The Parks and Recreation Director requested the Board allow Gaylord Perry Park to open on Saturdays from 8am to 12pm. When the park partially opened after completely closed due to the COVID pandemic, limited hours were set as 7am to 8pm on Monday thru Thursday and 7am to 5pm on Friday. He has received requests from citizens to open the weight room and gym on Saturdays. He reported opening on Saturday will return the park to regular operating hours. Commissioner Rodgers questioned if citizens are wearing masks when they utilize the facility. The Parks Director reported some do and, with the limitation on the number allowed, are socially distanced. Commissioner Moore questioned if participants have to sign a waiver to protect the town from any liabilities. The Town Attorney reported a disclaimer notice is to be posted on the building to protect the town from any liability. The Town Clerk reported she will distribute to all departments. *Commissioner Chesson made a motion to open the park on Saturdays from 8 am to 12 pm, seconded by Commissioner Knox. Commissioners Rodgers, Knox, Chesson and Moore voted in favor of opening the Gaylord Perry Park gym on Saturdays from 8 am to 12 pm. Commissioner Coffield voted against. Motion passed.*

CELL PHONE POLICY DISCUSSION

The Town Administrator reported the cell phone policy discussion was tabled at the October meeting. The Mayor questioned the need for the policy. The Town Administrator reported the town does not currently have a cell phone policy. He reported having several requests from staff for additional options to the current Town-provided cell phones. Cell phones and service is provided to certain employees based on the department's communication needs. In some cases, these employees are restricted by this policy and have requested the option to get their own phone plan for personal and business use and have the Town reimburse them for a portion of the bill. He reported this would be a personal choice under this policy and would ultimately save the town money as the Town would no

longer have to purchase the phone for staff who opt to move to a personal plan. He reported his business phone bill is \$75.79 per month. If he was to switch to a personal plan, the Town's reimbursement would be \$50. Commissioner Moore questioned if there are funds currently budgeted for this and would savings be realized immediately. The Town Administrator reported there are funds currently budgeted to pay for the service. There will be immediate savings but a very small amount as only two employees have requested this at this time. The Town Administrator reported a policy would standardize how the plans are handled and this option may save the Town money for those who choose the reimbursement option as the Town will not have to purchase the phone and would only pay a portion of the bill. One change made since the draft was presented in October was the provision that if USCellular makes changes to the Town contract and reduces the monthly fees, no reimbursements will be greater than the amount the Town would have paid under contract. Commissioner Chesson questioned if there were liability issues if staff used their personal phone. The Town Attorney reported the use of personal phones would be more of a problem for the employee's privacy if using the phone for personal and business purposes. If there is not a cell phone policy related to town business, a policy needs to be in place. He reported he did not see a liability issue for the Town as it is a public record, regardless of whether it is on a personal or business phone. Commissioner Chesson reported if the policy only benefits one or two employees, he is not in agreement with the policy. If overtime more staff want this, then he would consider. The Mayor reported having a personal phone and a business phone as she prefers the separation of personal and business. The Park and Recreation Director reported having one phone that is used for personal and business and would like to personally purchase a better phone to use for both which would be possible if the Town would pay a portion of the bill. The Town Attorney reported the Town's liability will not change but who would own the phone. The Town Administrator reported that some staff already have this benefit and would like it standardized. Commissioner Moore reported the savings amount is not listed. If more employees wanted, there would have already been a request. He recommends moving forward with a cell phone usage policy without the usage of a personal phone included. The Mayor requested the issue to be tabled until the Budget Retreat held in January. *Commissioner Chesson made a motion to table the discussion until the Budget Retreat in January, seconded by Commissioner Coffield and unanimously passed.*

Approval of Resolution 2020-204 EMS Remount Financing

The Town Administrator reported the Board approved the purchase of the EMS remount at the October 2020 regular meeting. A total of \$88,500 was approved along with the 1.53% financing through Truist aka BB&T. The bank requires the adoption of the financing resolution to award the financing to the lender. *Commissioner Moore motioned to approve Resolution 2020-204 EMS Remount Financing, seconded by Commissioner Chesson and unanimously passed. The resolution is hereby attached with the minutes of this meeting and incorporated in the Town's Resolution Book for future reference.*

Approval of Resolution 2020-205 Street Sweeper Financing

The Town Administrator reported the Board approved the purchase of the street sweeper at the October 2020 regular meeting. A total of \$228,400 was approved along with the 1.53% financing through Truist aka BB&T. The bank requires the adoption of the financing resolution to award the financing to the lender. *Commissioner Moore motioned to approve Resolution 2020-205 Street Sweeper Financing, seconded by Commissioner Chesson and unanimously passed. The resolution is hereby attached with the minutes of this meeting and incorporated in the Town's Resolution Book for future reference.*

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Fiscal 2020/2021 Budget Calendar

The Town Administrator presented the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 budget calendar. The calendar sets benchmarks for developing the budget. The calendar has been changed to adopt the final budget prior to the current Finance Director's retirement date in May. *Commissioner Moore made a motion to accept the Fiscal 2020/2021 Budget Calendar as presented, seconded by Commissioner Chesson and unanimously passed.*

Bowen Sign Building Discussion

The Town Administrator reported an invitation was sent to the Bowen Sign building owner but no response was received. He reported the property has been cleaned to some extent and requested direction from the Board as to whether to move forward with the demolition. Commissioner Chesson reported the parcel does look better but is not up to code. As there is a motion in effect, a formal plan needs to be in place with a timeline outlining the .

Commissioner Chesson requested another letter to be sent to the owner, allowing 60-90 days to obtain and present a plan. The Town Attorney reported the Town can hold off on action temporarily. Commissioner Chesson requested the written plan to be forwarded to the Town Administrator. The owner is welcome to attend and present, but the Town Administrator can present the written plan on his behalf.

Employee Benefits Discussion

The Town Administrator reported receipt of the most recent NC League of Municipalities' Salary and Fringe Benefit survey. He reported the Town of Williamston is trending below the state average for vacation and sick accrual rates and will include a further discussion at the January Budget retreat. He noted the Town employees will receive two days for Christmas this year and questioned if the Board would consider an additional day. The Mayor reported the additional day as extreme as Christmas day is on a Friday. It was the consensus to have only the two days off for Christmas.

Discussion of 108 W Main Street to Committee of 100 and Grant

The Town Administrator reported at the July meeting, the Board gave a consensus to move forward with discussions with the Committee of 100 related to the transfer of the property located on 108 W. Main Street and a proposed grant of \$30,000 to assist with the roof replacement. The Town Attorney reported the Committee of 100 attorney requested the Town not to adopt a resolution until he has completed his background work to include title work and obtain a title policy. The Town Attorney reported the Resolution will be presented at the December meeting.

Discussion of Town Administrator Evaluation Form Samples

The Town Administrator reported, after his last evaluation, it was requested the evaluation form be revamped as many of the listed items were difficult to measure. He requested Board members to review the samples and to pick and choose from each sample as the Town Clerk can combine into one form for review at the December meeting. The Mayor reported the current format was fine but needed to be revised as she has questions she would like added. Commissioner Chesson reported the current form is cumbersome and the ICMA form flow was easier to follow. Commissioner Moore reported the Board doesn't follow the one in place based on what is seen on the form. The Town Clerk reported the Board forwarded the evaluations to her and the tally with comments were given to the Board prior to his evaluation. Commissioner Moore reported he is not getting the transparency of what the Board is supposed to do. Commissioner Chesson reported he liked the ICMA form as it flows better or the current form. Commissioner Chesson reported the evaluation form was given to the Board prior and remembered receiving the tally of the rankings. He reported the evaluation form can be completed and given to the Clerk a week prior to the evaluation. The Mayor requested all Board members to review and submit any questions to the Clerk to design the form the Wednesday prior to the December meeting. Commissioner Chesson requested the Board to stick with the ICMA style to make it easier. The Mayor reported the ICMA style is best. It was agreed to send all questions to the Town Clerk by November 25, 2020.

Discussion of Mobile Food Vendor Changes

The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported the Town's Mobile Food Truck Vendor Ordinance currently allows five mobile food vendor permits to be issued annually for \$200. At the last board meeting, a public comment speaker referenced this ordinance and asked the Town to expand the number to allow for more food trucks to be able to attend special events. Planning Staff has submitted a draft ordinance update and seeks input from the Board. The draft ordinance keeps the limit of five mobile food vendor permits per year while allowing special event "one day" permits for \$50 with a limit of three "one-time" permits per calendar year. Commissioner Chesson reported the changes seem fair as compared with other municipalities. Commissioner Knox reported local restaurant owners will not like it as he has received complaints. The ones that complain hire local staff and pay taxes. The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported the current vendors are obtaining permits, such as Bill's Hotdog is one of the current ones by Corey's. Commissioner Coffield reported food trucks are very common and have to make a living. Commissioner Moore questioned if the Town is receiving a lot of requests. The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported having to turn down requests in the summer but not recently. Commissioner Moore reported long term restaurants are trying to make it and then there are fly-by-night type of vendors coming in. He is concerned if this is the right direction. Competition like this doesn't matter in the larger towns, but it matters in the Town of Williamston. The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported he plans to present the ordinance with any recommended changes by the Board. He reported the Code Enforcement Officer is responsible to ensure the food vendors are properly permitted. All five permits are currently filled. The Ordinance needs to be updated

to remove provisional licenses. It was the consensus of the Board to include the "one-time" vendor permits in the Ordinance.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Planning

The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported:

- Perry Street issue has been addressed and Magneson Hotel has been mowed and debris removed.
- The new Code Enforcement Officer will start next week.
- Staff is currently developing a Williamston Downtown Inc Website.
- The Patriot House is to be completed by the end of 2020.
- There are multiple new businesses in the downtown area, to include a florist shop and the motorcycle parts store.
- Staff held a trash cleanup on October 17th.
- Staff partnered with the Chamber to do a Halloween Scavenger Hunt.
- The Mitchell building demolition contract should be signed within the week.
- Walgreens has announced the closing of the East Boulevard location. Employees are being relocated to other sites.
- The downtown greenspace is to be completed by the end of 2020.
- The Community Garden is in place.

Public Works

The Public Works Director provided the following report:

- He has had scheduling struggles due to sickness.
- The Board-approved street project will begin soon.
- He is working on a state permit which is required prior to the purchase of the air-curtain burner.

Parks & Recreation

The Parks & Recreation director reported the following:

- The Community Garden will have a ribbon cutting on November 16th.
- The program supervisor has decided to return to teaching and another staff member is retiring.
- The department hosted a "trunk or treat."
- The Perry Park renovation is awaiting news from the LCW grant. He anticipates to hear whether the Town is awarded the grant by February.

Police

The Police Chief reported:

- Firearms training has been completed.
- Two staff members completed the Radar Certification course. Two radars were acquired from Governor's Highway Safety Program, free of charge.
- Staff were able to participate in Crisis Intervention Training which is a class he would like all staff to attend.
- One staff member attend a train the trainer course in "Survive the Verbal Conflict and will be able to bring the knowledge back to staff.
- Civil Unrest Preparedness training has begun, following the National Model.
- The department is participating in "No Shave November."

Fire/Rescue

The Fire Chief provided the following report:

- Staff is mentally and physically drained due to COVID-19.
- The pink fire hydrants were very well received by the public and the department plans to do this annually.
- The department will be rerated by NC Department of Insurance in the summer of 2021 and is hopeful for a lower rating which will bring a savings to our citizens.
- October is Fire Prevention Month and will post daily educational fire prevention messages on facebook.

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- There will be a live burn on November 29th on N. Houghton Street.
- Purdue Farms is to donate a 53-foot 18-wheeler for Hazmat.
- The department has cancelled the annual Christmas banquet due to COVID-19.

Administrator

The Town Administrator provided the following report:

- There are key staff to retire in 3 to 6 months and made the Board aware of staffing overlap for training.
- The Police/Fire Projects have had a few issues which required the spending of contingency funds.
- The longevity luncheon will be done by take-out only on November 10th.

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Moore to go out of regular session into closed session to address Personnel per N.C.G.S. 143-318-11(a)(3). The motion passed with all in favor except Commissioner Coffield who was opposed.

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson to go out of closed session and into regular session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moore and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:


Town Clerk


Mayor