

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

October 22, 2020

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in special session on Thursday, October 22, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room located in Town Hall, 102 East Main Street, Williamston, NC.

PRESENT Mayor Joyce Whichard-Brown and Commissioner
Commissioners: Alton Moore, Ronell Rodgers, Al Chesson, Jerry Knox, and William Coffield
Town Administrator: John O'Daniel
Town Clerk: Christina Craft
Public Works Director: Kerry Spivey
Town Attorney: Dan Manning

ABSENT None

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Commissioner Coffield led the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Knox 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 the Regular Agenda. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Coffield, and unanimously passed to approve the regular agenda as presented.*

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Riverside High School Utility Request

The Town Administrator reported he received a call from the Public Works Director and Dr. Tom Daly, Martin County School Interim Superintendent, regarding the air conditioning unit failure at the Riverside High School. Dr. Daly reported the motor on the main chilling unit failed last Friday. The maintenance department bypassed the failed unit by plugging the unit into the Town water source. The water runs through the unit and onto the ground. To maintain the temperature, 15-17 gallons per minute must be run through the system to maintain the system. This is an issue as school has just reopened. He reported the cost for water will be very high during the next few weeks while waiting for the parts to be delivered. He requested the town to waive the sewer fee for the water used in the air conditioning unit as the sewer will not be affected with the water running on the ground. He reported, if the Town cannot waive the sewer fee for the excess water, he would have to close the school until the system is fixed. Commissioner Chesson questioned what hours the excess water will need to be run. He reported the water is run one hour prior to school opening to cool the building and then off in the evening. The Town Administrator questioned how long before the system is fixed. Daly reported the delivery may take up to 3 weeks and up to 3 days to install the part once received. The Mayor questioned if he is requesting a waiver of just sewer until the unit is fixed. Dr. Daly reported he is requesting a waiver for sewer only for the extra usage for the next two to three weeks. The Mayor questioned if the school had requested any assistance from the County. Daly reported the water is received from the Town and has not requested any assistance from the County. Commissioner Chesson reported the extra water usage would total approximately a quarter of a million gallons, at a cost of \$2 to \$2,200 in actual water costs. The water would not go into the sewer system so the sewer expense to the Town would not be affected. The Town would still maintain a profit from the water usage, even if the Town waived the sewer. The Public Works director reported he thought it prudent to meter the excess water for the sake of accounting. He reported the policy for the customers is inline with the water adjustments. He reported the request is not unreasonable as the request is to waive a service {sewer} that will not be used. Commissioner Moore questioned the Public Works director if the policy regarding leaks really addresses this issue and doesn't feel this is inconsistent with how citizen and other businesses are handled. He questioned if Lilley International or Shamrock had the same request, will the Town address the issue in the same way? He reported there is a policy in place. Commissioner Chesson reported this is different as we have a policy that addresses leaks. He questioned if sewer was waived when the citizens have had a leak. The Town Administrator reported the citizen adjustment will waive water and sewer cost by charging the customer an average of normal months. He reported there is not a policy that addresses this particular issue.

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Commissioner Moore reported if this comes up again, we should not have this conversation as the Town has to be fair to the citizens. What would happen if a citizen requested the same? The Town Administrator reported this situation is very different which is why it was brought to the Board for consideration. The Town has sold bulk water to fill a truck. The Public Works Director reported the sale of bulk water happens often. When the NCDOT and other contractors have a project, a meter will be placed on a hydrant to allow them to fill up their tanker trucks and a temporary account is set up to charge for the water used. In case of the school, the location of the hydrant is an issue. They could run a hose over 500 feet to the area. With the water already piped to the location, a meter could be placed at the location which seems to be a better option. There are similarities with citizens account but this issue is discussed upfront. Commissioner Knox reported this decision impacts a lot of students. Commissioner Moore reported if such a situation impacts anybody else moving forward, we will consider that as well. Commissioner Knox reported if there are 100 students in the household, we should consider it. Commissioner Moore reported even if there is only one student in the household, it should be considered. Commissioner Rodger questioned if the school is County property. The Town Attorney reported the school system is owned by the Martin County Board of Education which is a separate entity from the Martin County Government. Commissioner Coffield questioned if there are other resources that could be accessed. Dr. Daly reported there are funds in the budget and could pay the water and sewer. The excess charges plus the cost of the repairs will have to be taken from another budgeted items. He expressed appreciation of the Board to meet in emergency session as the decision to close the school will need to be made immediately whether to close the school as the students, teachers and parents must prepare for the closure. Commissioner Chesson reported this situation is not specifically addressed in the policy but knows when a citizen has a leak, they are given consideration the first time. For the common good of the Town of Williamston, the Board of Education and hundreds of students and the fact the Town is not losing money, he feels it is the right thing to do. Commissioner Rodgers questioned Commissioner Chesson's water usage estimate. Commissioner Chesson reported the estimate of \$2,500 to \$2,700 usage can be affected by the change in temperature. The sewer fee would be approximate \$3,000 for a quarter of a million gallons of water used. *It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Chesson to waive the sewer fee for the metered water used for the air conditioner. Commissioners Rodger, Coffield, Knox and Chesson voted in favor of granting the temporary sewer fee waiver for Riverside High School and Commissioner Moore voted in opposition of the request.*

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:



Town Clerk



Mayor