

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

October 5, 2020

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

PRESENT Mayor Joyce Whichard-Brown
Commissioners: 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 Mayor Pro Tem Ronell Rodgers

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 President Trump, White House staff and Commissioner Rodgers who have tested positive for the corona virus. Commissioner Moore led the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Chesson offered the invocation.

WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed Tina Brown, Mayor of Robersonville.

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 Moore, 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. *It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to approve the consent agenda as presented.*

Items approved in the Consent Agenda are as follows:

- (1) Approval of the Minutes of the September 14, 2020 meeting
- (2) Tax Relief Order

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Liddick, 502 S. Haughton Street, reported concern related to the \$200 annual permit fee required for food trucks in Williamston. He reported the permitting fee is impeding business at the Hook Hand microbrewery in Williamston as the Hook Hand relies on food trucks to provide food at the microbrewery.

OLD BUSINESS

COVID DISCUSSION

Chief Peaks expressed appreciation of the partners of Martin Tyrrell Washington County Health Department for all of their work for this community. He reported a drastic increase of COVID-19 in the last week as there are two nursing facilities with an outbreak. There are a total of 65 active cases in Martin County.

NC DEPARTMENT OF LABOR SAFETY AWARDS

Chief Peaks reported receiving safety awards from the NC Department of Labor. The safety awards are normally distributed at the Greenville Safety Awards Banquet which was cancelled due to COVID. This award shows the Town has a safety-first work environment. He presented the following Town of Williamston departments with the Gold-Level Safety awards:

- 2nd Year: Sanitation Collection
- 3rd Year: Public Works Administration
- 4th Year: Water/Sewer Department
- 8th Year: Administration, Garage Mechanics, Waste Water Treatment, and Zoning Departments
- 9th Year: Street & Road Maintenance, & Cemetery Departments

NEW BUSINESS

Consideration of Citizen Request Regarding Bowen Signs Building

The Town Administrator reported Jeremy Maxic has purchased the Bowen Signs building which is a building the Town is pursuing code enforcement. Mr. Maxic has done some work to the building and the property is noticeably improved but not to code as of yet. He reported the owner was unable to attend tonight and requested permission to delay the code enforcement proceedings until the next regular meeting to allow the new owner to present his case. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to delay the demolition procedures until the November meeting to allow Mr. Maxic to present his case to the Board.*

Cell Phone Policy Discussion

The Town Administrator reported the Town does not currently have a cell phone policy and requested Board direction in development of a policy. Employees have expressed the desire to use their own cellular plan instead of joining the Town's cellphone plan. He recommends allowing staff the option to use their own plan and presented a sample policy for discussion. The Mayor questioned if the Town Administrator is proposing the employees are to purchase their own phones and the Town reimburses. The Town Administrator reported the employee could make that choice in the proposal. The Mayor questioned who, other than herself, Department Heads and supervisors, have phones. The Town Administrator reported each department is different. Only the director has one in the Zoning and Finance Departments. The Fire Chief reported the fire department has 5 phones which are distributed to the Fire Marshall, administration, two officers on duty and himself. The Police Chief reported not all of the police department staff have phones and some are only used by officers when on duty.

Commissioner Moore questioned if the Town phones are also used for personal and business. The Town Administrator reported this is the current practice as carrying two phones is cumbersome. As the Town plan does not have unlimited data, this has restricted some staff in their personal needs. Commissioner Chesson questioned if the change would save the Town money. The Town Administrator reported only three are interested at this point so the savings will be minimal. The Finance Director reported some phones do not have data and the cost is minimal so the reimbursement would only be \$30. The Town Administrator reported the reimbursement would not be more than the plan cost, even if staff were able to find a \$20 plan. Others with data would be limited to the \$50 reimbursement. The Mayor questioned if the Town would pay the entire bill or based on a percentage. The Finance director reported it depends on the phone plan as plans without data costs a lot less than a phone plan with data. The Town Administrator reported he wanted to be certain it was fair to the Town and employee. He reported if the Town paid \$50 on his plan instead of a separate plan provided by the Town, he would have to pay the bill and be reimbursed. Commissioner Chesson questioned the public record issue with using a cell phone. The Town Attorney reported the best analogy is email. If staff is to send a private email on the Town's computer, the private email related to personal business is not a public record. The email is only considered public record when Town business is discussed in the email. The email could be a public record whether it is sent via computer, Town cellphone or personal cell phone. Ownership does not add any extra weight as to whether it is personal device or town device. Commissioner Chesson expressed concern the employees are exposing themselves to the possibility of being scrutinized if using a personal phone for Town business. Commissioner Moore questioned if the reimbursement would be listed on a W-2 form. The Town Administrator reported two other towns pay a stipend which is included on a W-2 form. If the employee brings in a monthly bill and is reimbursed, the amount will not be included on a W-2 form. The Town Administrator questioned if the Board has any direction regarding the policy or concerns that could be researched prior to the next meeting. The Recreation director reported he was one that had approached

the Town Administrator for reimbursement instead of carrying two phones. There are applications he likes on the personal phone that he is not comfortable adding to a Town-owned phone. Commissioner Moore reported some of the language in the policy seem extreme such as taking the staff to court concerning the phone at termination or retirement. The Town Administrator reported the Town would not be liable. If the Town purchased the phone, staff must turn the phone in on exit to be distributed to the newly hired employee. The Town Administrator reported the policy is just a sample and would like direction from the Board in the creation of the Town policy. He recommends the Town to reimburse at a set rate for those who choose this route monthly reimbursement upon receipt of their personal bill. The Mayor reported she needs additional time to review the policy and would like to table the discussion until the November meeting.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Public Works

The Public Works Director provided the following report:

- Covid-19 restrictions have slowed operations as temperatures must be taken at the beginning of each shift. There have been staff affected directly by the virus which has limited staff available.
- 25 tons of asphalt has been used in September
- Staff is currently working on the Street Paving project.
- The Street sweeper is due for replacement.

Planning

The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported:

- Planning and administration has been reviewing the food truck ordinance and will bring before the Board in November
- He expressed appreciation for the Public Works department who assisted with the awning at the Tar Heel apartments.
- The Housing Authority stated they would clean the 110 Perry Street property last week. They did not give a timeline.
- He is currently reviewing applications for the Code Enforcement position. Nine applications were received.

Parks & Recreation

The Parks & Recreation director reported the following:

- The opening of the Perry Park has gone smoothly. The limit of 6 in the weight room was decreased to 5. Only a few people have used the gym for walking.
- There will be a trunk or treat event at Godwin Coppage Park on October 30th. There will be a few vendors spaced apart. The participants are requested to stay in the vehicle as they will drive thru for the treats. Vendors will walk to the cars. Children are encouraged to wear costumes.
- There is a crack in the culvert at Godwin Coppage Park and culvert issue on the Rail Trail. Contractors have been scheduled to review both issues.

Police

The Police Chief reported:

- Staff was able to participate in training offered by the District Attorney office to refine procedures to prepare for court. Most of the training is internet based and worked very well.
- Staff continues to clean the old building in preparation to move to the new facility. As soon as the GovDeals auction site opens back up, he feels they are in a good position for the relocation.
- Construction of the new building is going well. In the next few weeks, there will be a remarkable difference.
- Firearms training begins tomorrow and will be a 3-week process for him. This is the last of the mandated training for the calendar year.

Fire/Rescue

The Fire Chief provided the following report:

- He reached out to the Health Department regarding cold and flu season during COVID-19. The Health Department reinforced the current practice by continuing the daily staff questionnaire and temperatures.

- RRT went to Tarboro to help upright some tanks and put into containment. RRT also responded locally to assist Piedmont Gas as a natural gas line cut at the Walmart location by a contractor.
- The RRT contract has been signed and executed. Of the seven RRT units in the state, we were the only unit with a contract for almost a week.
- Fire Prevention has applied for a grant for 9-volt batteries for smoke detectors.
- The County purchased Panasonic tuff book computers for Fire/EMS through a CARES Act grant. The computers will be mounted in the trucks.
- Please like and share information on the Williamston Fire/EMS Facebook page as staff will post fire prevention ideas daily.
- In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness month, staff will wear pink shirts. Staff has started a "Paint the Town Pink" project by painting fire hydrants pink on Main Street and encourages citizens to write the names of survivors or in memory of those who lost the battle. The hydrants will be painted red again in November. Next year, the hydrants will be painted pink prior to the Homecoming Parade.

Administrator

The Town Administrator requested the Board consider a special called meeting for the end of October as the Town should hear from the Demolition Grant application by October 15th. The Mayor questioned if he had dates in mind. The Town Administrator reported if the Board continues to meet on Mondays, the 19th may be too soon as the contract must be sent to the Town once the award notice is received. The Planning Board meets on October 26th. The Mayor questioned if the Commissioners will be available on the 19th at 5:30.

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Commissioner Coffield, seconded by Commissioner Chesson and passed to go out of regular session into closed session to address Attorney-client per N.C.G.S. 143-318-11(a)(6).

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.

EMS TRUCK REMOUNT

It was moved by Commissioner Knox, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to award the bid for the EMS Truck Remount to Select Custom Aparatus for \$88,500.

STREET SWEEPER PURCHASE

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Moore, and unanimously passed to award the bid for the purchase of a street sweeper to RegenX in the amount of \$228,400.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Submitted By:

Approved By:


Town Clerk


Mayor