Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont
Meeting
March 15, 2016

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen and Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 7:30 p.m. on March 15, 2016. Present were:

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor
W. T. Smith, Mayor Pro-tem
Leon Mooring, Alderman
Joyce C. Reid, Alderwoman
Al Lewis, Alderman
Joyce M. Artis, Alderwoman

Also in attendance were Interim Town Administrator, Barbara Aycock; Town Clerk, Marti Jones; Finance Officer, Shemeshia Fennell; Public Works Director, Tim Howell and Billing and Collections Clerk, Shannon Daly.

Those not in attendance were Alderwoman Annie Lewis, and Chief Paul Moats.

Quorum Present: YES

Call to Order

Mayor Flowers called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Rev. Ira Reynolds gave the invocation. Alderwoman Joyce C. Reid led all in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

Minutes and Agenda

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the revised agenda, which deleted Mr. James Upchurch as a speaker and added the Resolution that he was going to present to the board. Alderman Lewis made a motion to approve the revised agenda and Alderman Smith seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes of February 16, 2016 board meeting. Alderwoman Reid made a motion to approve the minutes of February 16, 2016 and Alderman Lewis seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Announcements

Mayor Flowers mentioned the announcements.

Public Comment

Public Hearing was pronounced open per Mayor Flowers.

Mary Elliott spoke on behalf of her brother, Primus Jones who resides at 507 Sycamore Street. Her concern was that the utility bill was too high. Mrs. Jones asked to see the bill and explained the water and electrical usage to her. Mr. Howell stated that the bill was from January 15th to February 15th and that during that time there were 27 days that were 30 degrees or below. Mrs. Elliott could not understand how the bill could be that high, even during the cold temperatures, and felt that something might be wrong. Mrs. Jones explained the readings are done by a radio read and suggested for Mrs. Elliott to write down the readings every day. Mr. Howell commented that the meters were all fairly new and there should not be a problem with them. He also suggested that an energy audit could be done on the home to see if there was a problem. Mrs. Jones explained that she could come to the office and make an arrangement that would give her more time to pay the bill. Mayor Flowers suggested that she meet with Mrs. Aycock and Mrs. Jones in order to find a resolution to this problem. Mrs. Elliott agreed to meet with Mrs. Aycock and Mrs. Jones.

Maryann Bradshaw lives at 500 S. Hillandale Drive and had a concern with her utility bill being too high. She explained that she lived by herself and has made many changes to cut down on her utility bill and wanted someone to explain why her bill was still high. Mayor Flowers explained that the heat pump would run the same regardless of how many people lived in the home, because it depends on the space that is being heated. He also stated that it was a good question concerning the water and sewage being higher. Mrs. Bradshaw asked if the power was so high due to the fact that we buy power from Goldsboro. Mayor Flowers explained that 32 cities, which include Fremont, are part of ElectriCities, which is where we buy our power. He explained that because of some actions that were taken last year, we were able to reduce the electrical rates by 6%. Mrs. Jones suggested that she come in and make an arrangement in order to give her more time to pay her bill, or she could try to get help from social services and/or churches. Mrs. Aycock suggested for her to come in as soon as she gets her bill, if she thinks there is a problem, so that we can try to get it resolved. Mrs. Bradshaw said she would.

Public Comment Closed per Mayor Flowers

Open Regular Board Meeting

Mayor Flowers called Commissioner Ray Mayo, of District 1, to speak. Mr. Mayo said that they are hoping to break ground, on the AG/Convention Center, sometime in June. This building will be located beside Wayne Community College and will be a tribute to agriculture, which is the #1 industry in Wayne County.

Mr. Mayo announced that he was on the Department of Social Services Board and that they have seen a tremendous increase of people coming in for assistance on their electric bill, due to the cold weather. He stated that if anyone needed assistance on their electric bill, it is available.

Mr. Mayo, who specializes in economic development, stated that the county is building an Advanced Manufacturing Center that will train people for jobs in our county. They are looking at creating new businesses in our county and Mr. Mayo is looking to have some of them in the Northern part of the county.

Mr. Mayo stated that it is a never ending battle to keep things up-to-date in order to have emergency services for the citizens of Wayne County.

Mr. Mayo explained that the county has to fund public education, but the commissioners had no say in how the money would be spent. He stated that over the past couple of years the Board of Education and the County Commissioners have worked together to get some things accomplished.

Mr. Mayo said that he was on the board of Goldsboro Wayne Transportation Authority, and that the Northern part of the county needs to take advantage of the transportation system.

Mr. Mayo said that Fremont has done a fantastic job and has made a tremendous amount of progress with correcting the sewer issues, but there is still a long way to go. He said that he is proud to be a part of working with Fremont, Pikeville, and Eureka, trying to make sure all the facilities are up-to-date and working sufficiently.

Mr. Mayo said that his number one priority is subdivision street repair. He said that district 1 has the most severe subdivision roads.

Mr. Mayo stated the he will serve another four years, because there was no one running against him. He said he is proud to serve our district and over the next four years he would like to continue working on the sewer issues and economic development, and possibly get natural gas and a central library. He ended with thanking the citizens and encouraging them to contact him with any concerns and he will stand up for them and help in any way he can.

Mayor Flowers commented on the great relationship they have with the County Commissioners and was thankful for Mr. Mayo and Mr. Wood, the county manager for their leadership. Mrs. Aycock stated that she appreciated the support from the county commissioners and county manager and thanked Mr. Mayo for attending the meeting and speaking to the board and the citizens of Fremont. Alderman Mooring re-iterated what Mrs. Aycock said and appreciated Mr. Mayo for all his support; and Alderwoman Artis thanked Mr. Mayo for attending the meeting and speaking personally to everyone.

Mayor Flowers introduced Mr. Fred Fontana, the Director of Goldsboro Wayne

Transportation Authority (GWTA). Mr. Fontana stated that GWTA is unique in that it services both the city and the county, with two separate budgets. It has an urban fixed route system in Goldsboro, which has 5 fixed route buses and is funded primarily by the city of Goldsboro and the Federal Transit Administration. It has a rural route that services the town of Fremont, which is funded by Wayne county, Human Service agencies, such as Department of Social Services and Senior Services, and North Carolina Department of Transportation. For urban routes the fare is $1.00 or .50 for disabled or senior citizens. There are 23 vans that service the rural areas from 5 am to 7 pm, Monday through Saturday. Medicaid recipients and senior citizens ride for free and for all others the fare is $5.00 each way to ride anywhere in Wayne county. On Mondays and Thursdays they go to Wilson, Greenville, and Kinston, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays they go to Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill for medical appointments. There is no charge for Medicaid recipients and senior citizens, but for all others the charge is $35.00 each way. Mr. Fontana stated that many changes have been made to upgrade and modernize GWTA. The changes include changing the name, making new routes, schedules, logos, website (ridegwta.com) and creating a face book page and installing tablets on every van in order to quickly find directions and help assist the dispatcher schedule routes in a timely manner.

Someone asked if there was a bus stop in Fremont and Mr. Fontana said there was not. He explained that Medicaid recipients need to call Social Services, Senior Citizens need to call Goldsboro Senior Center, and all others call GWTA for scheduling. Also, he stated that you needed to call at least 2 days prior to needing a ride. Mr. Fontana distributed brochures to the citizens attending the meeting and encouraged them to hand them out to people who could use this service.

Mayor Flowers called Rev. Reynolds to speak. Rev. Reynolds stated that they did not get the grant from the Golden Leaf Foundation for the house on Sycamore Street, but they did get several small grants ranging from $200 to $1,000. He said that they will either begin working on the house or will tear it down on April 16th. If they decide to tear it down, Habitat for Humanity will rebuild on the property.

Mrs. Aycock stated to Rev. Reynolds that she may have another house for him soon. She said that there was a house across from the cemetery that will probably be auctioned, due to the property taxes not being paid and she feels that the Town of Fremont will end up getting this house.

Mayor Flowers asked Rev. Reynolds if he normally fed the volunteers or was it something new and he said that he normally did feed them, but recently he has given others the opportunity to do it. Southern Bank fed lunch to the volunteers and gave a grant of $1,000. Rev. Reynolds suggested that the Town feed the volunteers and Mrs. Aycock agreed to it and thanked him for letting her know. Mrs. Jones asked if Habitat had their own volunteers or if they needed help. Rev. Reynolds replied that they wanted all the help they could get. Mayor Flowers told Rev. Reynolds that he was a positive image in Fremont and encouraged him to continue doing what he was doing. Rev. Reynolds said he thanked God for the Town of Fremont. Mrs. Aycock replied to not get

discouraged.

Mayor Flowers announced that the next speaker was Mr. Michael McAllister and that he was going to include the information about local government. Mr. McAllister stated that we did receive permission from the LGC for the $70,000.00 loan from the county. He said that Commissioner Mayo played a big role in it and Mr. George Wood wrote a nice letter to the LGC supporting it. Mr. McAllister stated that in order to pay back the loan, the rates were going to have to be increased. He said either we do it or the LGC will come in and raise rates, lay off people, and they are going to make the numbers match. Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Aycock if she had any comments about the LGC. Mrs. Aycock asked how many of the citizens knew what the LGC stood for. She explained that it was the Local Government Commission, which is the Department of Treasurer, who monitor towns who are in financial trouble and Fremont has been on the watch list for 8 years. She explained that they give the Board and staff the opportunity to get the town financially stable again, but if the town does not, they come in and bring their own staff and raise the rates to what they want them to be. Mrs. Aycock stated that Beth Wood, the state auditor, wanted to know what we were doing to get our problem fixed, and Mrs. Aycock replied that in the two years she had been here, she has not borrowed any money. Mrs. Wood said that we have to raise the rates in order to get the loan or not get the loan. Mrs. Aycock explained to the board and the citizens that we either raise the sewer rates and pay back the county $12,000 for 6 years or not raise the rates and let the lift station collapse and sewer will back up into Fremont, Eureka, and 3 schools.

There was a discussion about one of the citizens reading in the paper that the town owed Goldsboro $50,000 for sewer. The citizen wanted to know if the loan included that $50,000. Mrs. Aycock explained the process of sewer free boarding and the problems that would cause and she stated that the $50,000 was what the town has to pay Goldsboro to pump the sewer to them to prevent free boarding. Mayor Flowers explained that the town would save the $50,000 if we did not have to send the sewer to Goldsboro.

A citizen asked Rev. Reynolds if a person volunteers to help work on a house and that person qualifies, could they get the house. Rev. Reynolds answered yes and if you qualify for the house, there would be a certain amount of hours you would have to volunteer.

A citizen asked if the lift station gets fixed if we would raise the power bills and Mayor Flowers and Mrs. Aycock answered no. Mrs. Aycock said that this had nothing to do with power bill. She explained that the average collected for sewer in a month is $56,000, but last month's sewer bill to Goldsboro was $75,000. She said this has been going on for 8 years and this is why we are on the watch list.

A citizen asked if we could get more money from the property taxes that are being paid and Mayor Flowers said that we were getting about 50% and that is all that we can get. She asked if there were any other funds that the county could help us and Mrs. Aycock said no. She said that we get around $285,000 from property taxes that goes into the general fund and the police department, which is paid out of the general fund, cost around

$260,000. Mrs. Aycock said that we have cut the budget 5% last year, and there is no more cuts we can make.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Mooring if he had any comments about the LGC and he said that Mrs. Wood had questioned why we did not get money from the CDBG. He then asked if someone else could explain it. Mrs. Aycock stated that it is a Community Development Block Grant that we have applied for 4 times and have been denied 4 times. She stated that when you meet with the LGC they ask what are you doing to help yourself and Mrs. Aycock responded that she had applied for the CDBG 4 times and had been denied. They asked why the lift stations were in such bad condition and she responded because we are paying out $75,000 in sewer and taking in only $56,000 and there is no money to fix them. Mrs. Aycock also stated that public works has been videoing the sewer lines trying to find leaks so that they can be fixed which will cut down the sewer expenses. Alderman Mooring pointed out that they had all the documentation of problems that were sent in for the CDBG and Mrs. Wood wanted to know why we did not get the grant and Alderman Mooring asked Mrs. Aycock and Mr. McAllister and they said they were having a meeting on Friday and hopefully find out the answer. Mr. McAllister explained that a lot of time and effort that goes into applying for the grants. He also said that they applied for other grants, worked with the school board to put sewer meters at the schools, and found an error with the Goldsboro meter, in order to try to raise revenue. He assured the board and citizens that everything is being done to try to raise revenue. Mayor Flowers said that over the past 3 years that there has been tremendous improvements and imagine where we would be if we had not made those changes. He said that we can see the light of day. He explained that although the sewer is like a cancer, the electrical rates were lowered last year for the first time in 20 years. He explained that each thing should stand on its own. The electrical fund should pay for the electrical expenses, the sewer fund should pay for the sewer expenses, etc. He also said that the town has not borrowed any money or done anything over the last 2 years, unless it has been absolutely necessary.

Action Items

A. **CSX Information:** Mayor Flowers stated that the town was concerned about not having jurisdiction on 100 block Goldsboro Street. The property by the railroad tracks belong to CSX and the police department does not have jurisdiction on that property. We contacting CXS to get permission to police that area and they requested the town to pay $450.00 per year and for the town to put up a chain-linked fence 15 feet from the railroad. Our attorney contacted them a second time to negotiate and they still wanted a fence, but did not specify what type. Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell what the measurement was from the asphalt to 15 feet from the railroad and he said 22 feet. Mayor Flowers said that he had asked a few ladies what their opinion was about a fence and they said it would be more unsightly to have a fence there than the traffic problems. Mayor Flowers asked if the board wanted to take any action and Mrs. Aycock asked if the board wanted to continue proceeding with installing a fence or not. Alderman Lewis suggested that they should not continue with the fence. Alderwoman Artis asked if it would leave room for parking and if we would have jurisdiction on that track of land.

Mrs. Aycock said yes about 4 foot and Mayor Flowers said we would have jurisdiction on the fence side. Alderwoman asked if it was what we were asking for and Mayor Flowers answered that we wanted jurisdiction like we had everywhere else in town. Mayor Pro-tem Smith asked if we could ask the railroad to put up no overnight parking signs and Mrs. Aycock stated there were signs up on the other side of the road and that there is no problems with people parking there overnight. Alderwoman Artis asked if we would have to acquire insurance and how much would it cost. Mrs. Aycock said yes and it would be expensive, but she did not know exactly how much. She also stated that we would have to buy the fence, pay to have it installed and pay to keep it maintained, plus pay them $450.00. After some discussion, Mayor Flowers said that unless there is a motion to approve something, it would die for lack of a motion. There was no motion,

B. Budget Amendment #16: Mrs. Aycock explained that there are different funds, such as the general fund, electric fund and water fund, which has a budget of a certain amount of funds. Sometimes if the budget is not enough, you will have to borrow from one account, but you have to stay in the positive. If you go into the negative, the auditor will write you up. If something happens and you need more funds, then a budget resolution will have to be done and brought before the board. Mrs. Fennell re-iterated what Mrs. Aycock said and stated that the bottom line stays the same, even though you move funds from one account to another. Alderman Mooring made a motion to accept the Budget Amendment #16 for the budget year of 2016. Mayor Flowers stated there was a motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

C. Alderwoman Artis:

1. Alderwoman Artis stated on Wednesday, March 9th, that Mrs. Joann Anderson, at 102 S. Dock Street, was concerned about having to put her trash can on the opposite side of the street and wanted to know why the truck passes by her house turns around and comes back down the street to pick up her trash. Mr. Howell said that there was no reason for it. Mrs. Aycock asked who instructed her to do that and she said the town. Mrs. Aycock said no one here instructed her to do that. Mayor Flowers stated that all trash gets picked up on the same side of the street and it had to do with the routes. Alderwoman Artis said that Mrs. Baylock was older and said that it would be nice if she would be able to leave her trash on her side of the street and Mr. Howell said that she had backdoor pickup accommodations. Mayor Flowers said he was going to refer the situation to Mrs. Aycock and staff.

2. Alderwoman Artis stated that Sheila Knotts who lives at 200 N. Vance Street had planted daffodil bulbs around the stop sign and that they were removed during the water project. She also stated that Mrs. Knotts spoke with someone from public works and she was informed that her bulbs were in the yard, and they would return them to her, but she has not seen them. She feels that if she is expected to maintain the area around the stop sign, she should be able to plant whatever she would like to. Alderwoman Artis stated that she told Mrs. Knotts that the area was city property and that is probably why they were dug up. Alderwoman Artis asked if a homeowner could plant what they wanted around a traffic sign. Mayor Flowers said yes but asked will it stay. Mayor Pro-tem

Smith said that at one time there was a problem with people planting shrubs around the fire hydrants, because they would grow and cover them to where you could not find them. Mrs. Jones pointed out that they could block the streets to where you cannot see. Mayor Flowers referred this issue to Mrs. Aycock.

3. Alderwoman Artis suggested that the board compose an informal chamber of commerce or welcoming committee, to attract and welcome new businesses and set a time to formerly welcome the business owner at the new thrift store. Mayor Flowers said that in the past they have attempted to have new businesses come to the board meetings, but they would not attend. Mrs. Fennell stated that she visits new businesses to get information about them so that she can implement it into the newsletter. She has attempted 3 times to meet with the owners, but each time they were not there and the volunteers did not feel comfortable giving her any information except the owner's phone numbers. She did try to call them and left her contact information, but they have not returned her calls. Alderwoman Artis stated that she spoke with the owners and they said that Mayor Flowers had come by to see them. She also stated that they would welcome a welcoming party, ribbon cutting, or taking a picture for the newspaper. Mayor Flowers said that he visited them on behalf of the board and thought that was welcoming them to our town. He also stated that the ribbon cutting at Pastor Dew's coffee shop was initiated by him and he had an open house and everyone went, but we could keep that in mind for the future. Alderman Mooring stated that a ribbon cutting is the responsibility of the business owner, but we could go if they invited us.

4. Alderwoman Artis stated that some people would have liked to know about the opportunity to purchase a bench, but they were unaware of it and asked if they could purchase one now. She also asked if we could recognize those people who purchased benches. Mayor Flowers said that the members of STEP spent a lot of time trying to find people that would give toward the benches. He stated that having his mom and dad's name on Main Street was enough recognition for him, but he was only speaking for himself. Alderwoman Artis suggested putting their names in the newsletter and thanking them. This suggestion was discussed and agreed upon to be put in the newsletter. Alderman Mooring pointed out that the step grant paid for part of the benches and individuals bought the plaque and part of the bench. Mayor Flowers said that we have 6 benches that are very comfortable. Mrs. Jones stated that the flower pots along with the benches have made a big difference in the beautification of our town. Lucille Jones stated that she keeps the park clean and she enjoys doing it. Mayor Flowers thanked her and Mrs. Aycock was very appreciative of her taking care of the park.

D. Rate Discussions: Mrs. Aycock said that she had explained the importance of raising the rates, but it was up to the board to make the decision and she would have to report the decision to the LGC. Mayor suggested that they increase the rates to take care of the lift station now and Mrs. Aycock gave the different choices of rate increases. She said there are 634 customers and at a $1.50 increase it would be $11,412 extra a year, which would cover the cost of the $70,000 loan. At a $2.00 increase it would be $15,000 extra and at a $2.50 increase it would be $19,000 extra a year, which would pay back the loan plus it would build up the sewer fund. Mayor Flowers suggested to increase the sewer rate by

$2.50. Mrs. Aycock clarified that the increase would be on the base rate only. Alderman Mooring asked if the garbage base rate is increasing $5.00 and Mayor Pro-tem wanted to know what the reason was for the increase. Mrs. Aycock explained that the town is being charged $10.00 a ton more for garbage; therefore, we have to increase the rates for customers. Alderwoman Artis commented on the sewer increase for Eureka and Mrs. Aycock clarified that the increase was .50 per 1,000 gallons. Alderwoman Artis understood that the rates had to be increased to pay back the loan, but she suggested giving customers 5 arrangements, instead of 2 per year, to help those customers who are having a difficult time. Mrs. Aycock said that special arrangements are made for those who come in and discuss their situation, but for those who wait until cutoff day and think they can just walk in and get an arrangement, those are the ones that are taking advantage of our system and we have to put stipulations on it. Mrs. Jones commented that due to the high bills this month, we have allowed people to have a 3rd arrangement if they had already had 2 for the year. Mrs. Fennell added that if a customer gets a voucher from social services or another organization, it would not count as an arrangement. Mrs. Aycock re-iterated that we will work with those who really need it, but we cannot allow people to take advantage of the arrangement system. After much discussion, Alderman Mooring made a motion to increase the sewer base rate to $2.50 and Alderman Lewis seconded the motion. All were in favor and motion passed unanimously. Mrs. Aycock and Mr. Howell gave examples of how Eureka is costing Fremont money and explained that the .50 rate increase was a necessity. Alderman Mooring made a motion to approve the .50 per 1,000 gallons increase and Alderman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Aycock went over the handout that showed the charges for garbage from other towns, which most of them were higher than ours. Mrs. Fennell discussed the sewer financial report and explained the expenses to the town for garbage. Mayor Flowers stated that until we get our finances in order, any expenses that we incur, we will have to pass it onto our customer's, because we cannot absorb it. After much discussion, Alderwoman Artis made a motion to raise the garbage rate to $3.00 and Alderman Mooring seconded it. All board members agreed, except Mayor Pro-tem Smith and it was 4 to 1 that the rate will be increased $3.00.

E. Resolution: Alderman Mooring made a motion to approve the Resolution for Adoption Comprehensive Transportation Plan and Alderman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Reports

Financial Summary: Mrs. Fennell gave the financial reports.
Electrical Report: The number of bills decreased due to Andy Evans closing his tobacco houses for the season. We collected more in electric and taxes than what we billed.
Sewer Report: We billed $57,000 and collected $59,000, but we had to pay Goldsboro $75,000. We have about $213,000 left in the account of what we budgeted for. We have 4 more months in the fiscal year and we need to get the bill under $53,000.
Water Report: We collected more than we billed.

Late Penalties: We collected more than we billed.
Cash Trending: We are still up on the General Fund. It also shows you the cash balances of February 29th.
STEP Grant: We have submitted for funds and are awaiting payment.
Financial Summary: It shows what we have budgeted for, our revenues and expenditures, how much has been spent to date up to February 29th, and how much is remaining for the budget.
J.R. Peele Park Grant: The town has spent $18,000 on the park and has submitted for a match of $18,000 to continue working on the park. Lou Ann Brian, the grant coordinator, told Mrs. Fennell that the government has made a lot of changes and therefore our grant, along with many others, is at a halt. Mrs. Aycock added that they are backed up until December.

Public Works

Mr. Howell stated that out of the 34 sewer letters that went out, 20 has contacted the town, 5 has been videoed, 5 is work in progress, 5 is the town's problem because it is in the street, and 3 have been fixed. Mayor Flowers asked if there is a schedule to have the ones in the street fixed and Mr. Howell said that he had to get with Mr. McAllister. Alderwoman Artis asked if anyone has contacted and let the customer's know that the leaks are the town's responsibility and Tim said everyone has been contacted.
Mr. Howell said that the new street sign is complete and will be installed soon.

Mayor Pro-tem Smith stated that one of his customer's said that the flag at the railroad tracks needed to be changed. Alderman Mooring mentioned that the flag on our building is wrapped around the pole.

Alderwoman Reid made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Alderman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.