



Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting

August 18, 2020

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:30 p.m. on August 18, 2020. Present were:

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor
Beatrice Jones, Alderwoman
Keith L. Spivey, Alderman
Ricky Mazingo, Alderman
Joyce M. Artis, Mayor Pro-tem
Leroy Ruffin, Alderman
Annie Lewis, Alderwoman

Also in attendance were Town Clerk Shannon Daly, Billing and Collections Clerk Vanessa Brooks, Public Works Director Tim Howell, Chief Paul Moats, Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms, Accountant Jimmy Overton, and Mr. John L. Pippin, Jr., Chairman of the Planning Board.

Quorum Present: Yes

Call to Order

Mayor Flowers called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Alderman Ruffin gave the invocation.

Alderwoman Lewis led all in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to state what he would like to add to the agenda. Alderman Ruffin said he would like to add the speed limit on S. Sycamore Street and Habitat for Humanity to discussion. Mayor Flowers said he wanted to remove Ewais under speaker from the agenda, by advice of the Town Attorney; and add Finance Report by Jimmy Overton under information, after Planning Board minutes. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made the motion to approve the amended agenda. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for Public Comments.

Durwood and Grace Daniels lives at 102 E. South Street. Mr. Daniels stated that it has been a privilege, an opportunity and his responsibility to speak to the Board 6 times over the last 7 months. He stated that he attended the Planning Board Meeting and understood that their recommendation was to give Mr. Wooten 30 days to remove all the commercial equipment from his properties that are zoned R-10. He thanked the Mayor for listening to him, in and out of session, and stated that he understands politics better now and that it takes time to resolve issues.

Scott Powell lives at 205 N. Wilson Street. He asked if there is anything that can be done about the electric bills being high. He asked if there are any alternatives such as using solar panels, or using another electric company that supplies the electricity. Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to address Mr. Powell's questions. Mr. Howell said that solar panels are an option, but we are locked in with Electricities, who provide our electricity. He stated that an option would be to have an energy audit, but due to COVID-19, Electricities are not doing them right now. Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to meet with Mr. Powell to discuss this further and Mr. Howell said that he would.

Mayor Flowers closed Public Comments.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of July 21, 2020. Alderwoman Lewis made a motion to approve the minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of July 21, 2020. Alderman Spivey seconded it. No discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Closed Session Meeting of July 21, 2020. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to approve the minutes for the Closed Session Meeting of July 21, 2020. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. No discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Information

Mayor Flowers stated that the Town Hall will be closed on Monday, September 7, 2020 in observance of Labor Day.

Mayor Flowers stated that Mr. Pippin, the chairman of the Planning Board is here, and asked the Board if they had any questions about the minutes from the Planning Board Meeting. There was some discussion and it was determined that the Police Department will address any nuisances on the properties that are owned by Mr. Wooten and a letter from the Town will be sent concerning the commercial equipment. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the recommendation from the Planning Board, which is to give Mr. Wooten 30 days to remove all commercial property. (See Action Section)

Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated according to the minutes from the Planning Board Meeting, Mr. Jackson, a Planning Board member, asked about the Town having a Code Enforcement Officer. Chief Moats said that the Police Department does have a Code

Enforcement Officer that handles grass, abandoned vehicles, and issues that deal with health and safety. He stated that the Police Department does not determine if a building is safe or other issues that would cause for an inspector. Mayor Flowers said that the Town Administrator handles those issues and uses the County Inspectors for those problems. Alderman Ruffin stated that the Town of Fremont is going to have to get a Code Enforcement Officer, because there are many houses that are dilapidated and unsafe. Mayor Flowers stated that there are a number of issues that they need to discuss and suggested that they have a workshop in order to have the time to look at these things.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Overton to speak about the finances. Mr. Overton stated that at the last meeting the Board asked if he could prepare a Monthly Financial Report that could show them where they stand. Mr. Overton handed out a Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and changes in Fund Balances that covered the General Fund, the Fire Department, the Electric Fund and the Water and Sewer Fund. Mr. Overton went over each report. There was some questions from the Board concerning the Electric, Cemetery and Water and Sewer Funds. Mr. Overton stated that Mrs. Aycock has been trying to get grant money to repair the sewer lines and he suggested that we see if Goldsboro would lower the rates. Mayor Flowers stated that he would get Mrs. Aycock to send a letter to Goldsboro to ask them to look at the fee schedule and ask if we could get a lower rate. He stated that Goldsboro increased the rates on July 1st and it will go into effect in October. There was some discussion and Mr. Overton said that the Town cannot afford an increase in rates.

Mayor Flowers stated that Fall Cleanup will be October 12th – October 16th.

Discussion

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to discuss placement of headstones at cemeteries. Alderwoman Jones read Ordinance 93.11 Foundations for Gravestones or Markers. It states, “Foundations for gravestones or markers shall be made and set under the direction of Town and shall be of sufficient width and depth and of such material as will insure adequate support for such gravestones or markers. The Town shall have the authority to determine if such foundations are adequate and shall reject any foundation or material which, in his opinion, is not sufficient for adequate support.” Alderwoman Jones said that there was a headstone placed at the wrong location at Fremont Cemetery. She said she talked with Mrs. Aycock and Mrs. Aycock said that a lot of times the funeral homes put out stones without contacting the Town. Alderwoman Jones said that we need to enforce what’s in the ordinance and make sure that the Town is contacted before headstones are placed. She said that the Town did correct the problem at Fremont Cemetery. There was some discussion and it was agreed upon that the Town needs to locate the correct grave in order for the gravestones and markers to be installed correctly. Alderwoman Jones read Ordinance 93.15 Entry between Sunset and Sunrise. It states, “No person shall enter the limits of the cemeteries between sunset and sunrise without written permission of the Town, except for sunrise services.” She asked if this was enforced and Chief Moats said yes it is.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to discuss Personnel Policy. Alderwoman Jones stated that the Personnel Policy has not been updated since 2008 and she is suggesting that they have a workshop to review and make changes if necessary.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to discuss Hiring and Promotion Freeze

(Essential & Non-Essential Workers). Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that at the last meeting she suggested that the Board implement a hiring and promotion freeze for a certain period of time. She said that Alderman Spivey had suggested that they should obtain an essential and non-essential list of employees. She said she emailed Mrs. Aycock to obtain that list and she was told that it was hard to decide who was and who was not an essential employee; however, Mrs. Aycock did agree that we should not hire anyone for a while. She stated that Mrs. Aycock suggested that they look at some other things that relate to our employees. Mayor Flowers suggested that they have a workshop to discuss this. He stated that it's his understanding that Alderman Spivey suggested a list of essential positions, not essential workers. There was some discussion. (See Action Section)

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to discuss the speed limit on S. Sycamore Street. Alderman Ruffin asked Chief Moats what the status was of getting a speed limit detector. Chief Moats said that they have not been able to find one and if they do, they will have to use grant funds that they have applied for but have not been awarded yet. He stated that they have tried to find one to borrow, but have been unsuccessful and right now police presence is all they can do. Alderman Ruffin asked Alderman Mozingo if S.T. Wooten has one and Alderman Mozingo said they have speed trailers that post the speed of each vehicle. There was some discussion about a 4-way stop sign at S. Sycamore Street and Norwayne Alumni Way. Alderman Ruffin asked to table it until next meeting for action.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to discuss Habitat for Humanity. Alderman Ruffin wanted to know the information in order to contact Habitat to see if they could possibly build on any of the lots that the Town owned. He asked Mrs. Daly to get the information from Mrs. Aycock and let him know. Mrs. Daly said she would get the information for him.

Action

Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to approve the recommendation from the Planning Board, which is to give Mr. Wooten 30 days to remove all commercial property. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. Alderman Ruffin asked who was going to enforce it and Mayor Flowers said the Police Department. There was some discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Alderman Ruffin said that he would like to make a motion that there be no hiring or promotions until further notice. Mayor Flowers said there is a motion on the floor to have a hiring and promotion freeze. Mayor Pro-tem seconded it. There was some discussion. Five favored, Alderwoman Jones, Alderman Spivey, Mayor Pro-tem Artis, Alderman Ruffin, and Alderwoman Lewis; One opposed, Alderman Mozingo. The motion passed by majority.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the Resolution to Apply for an Asset Inventory Assessment Grant for Water and Sewer. There was some discussion about what this resolution was and Mayor Flowers stated that it was needed to be able to make an application for a grant. Mr. Overton said that this grant was from the Department of Environmental Quality and it is to pay the engineering firm to determine where your water or sewer lines need to be repaired. He stated that once this grant is completed then you can apply for another loan or grant to fix the lines. Alderman Spivey asked if Mr. Howell could give the information, as to where the problems are with the lines, therefore;

not having to get the grant and use the engineering firm. Mr. Overton did not know if that would be possible. Alderwoman Jones asked if the grant was 100% and Mr. Overton said that this grant was 100%, but the grant to do the construction would probably not be 100%. After some discussion, Alderman Mozingo made a motion to approve the Resolution. Alderman Ruffin seconded. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers stated that the Yard Debris Ordinance and the penalty was in the agenda packet. He read Ordinance 50.19 Penalty. It states “Violators of the Town’s recycling requirements will be issued a maximum of two written warnings per calendar year. After these two written warnings, each additional violation of this ordinance in the same calendar year shall subject the offender to a civil penalty in the amount of \$25 to be recovered by the town.” Mayor Flowers stated that the floor was open for discussion. Alderwoman Jones asked Mr. Howell how many written warnings have been issued and he said none, but there have been door hangers given out. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked if this penalty applied to garbage and/or recycle cans being left out and Mayor Flowers said yes. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked Mr. Howell how many door hangers have been issued and he said about 10 within the last week. There was some discussion about door hangers, the cost to pick up yard debris, issues with where yard debris can be put for pickup, the size of limbs that are picked up, what to do if a pile of yard debris is larger than ¼ of a truck load, and how often the yard debris is being picked up. After much discussion, Alderman Mozingo made a motion to table the ordinance to next meeting. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Reports

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to give the financial reports. Mrs. Daly gave the financial reports. There was discussion about the electric report showing more collections than the other reports. This is due to how the Logics system is set to apply money to the electric account first. There was some discussion about the negative difference for sewer and how much of that was due to contracts that were made with customers that were unable to pay their bill. Mrs. Daly gave an update on the customers that were delinquent. She stated that only one person had not done a contract with the Town and had to be disconnected. She stated that 12 people had written contracts for 6 months or more and 11 people had verbal contracts that would pay balance by the end of August. She stated that 1 of the 12 that had a written contract, was evicted and asked to have the utilities disconnected. There was some discussion about some utility bills being high.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to give his report for public works. Mr. Howell showed pictures of public works rescuing a deer from the lagoon, blocking off the street at Branch and Sycamore for COVID-19 testing, removing a limb on a power line at Hwy 117 N. due to the hurricane, yard debris at S. Wilson Street that is in violation of our ordinance, and two power poles on Moye Street that the owner wants removed. It was discussed that we are going to contract out the removal of the two power poles on Moye Street and the owner will pay the cost.

Mayor Flowers asked Chief Moats to give the police report. Chief Moats recommended that the 4-way stop sign for Sycamore Street and Norwayne Alumni Way be added as an action item at the next board meeting for approval. He advised the board about the awards for the Governor’s Crime Commission Grant for the fiscal years of 2018, 2019, and 2020 and the amounts that were awarded to the Fremont Police Department. He

stated that the 2018 funds were just released and will be used for the second phase of police radios to be purchased as a result of a county radio upgrade.

Close Regular Board Meeting

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to adjourn. Alderwoman Lewis made a motion to adjourn. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk