



Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting

July 21, 2020

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:30 p.m. on July 21, 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, Accounting Clerk Cindy Rhodes, Billing and Collections Clerk Vanessa Brooks, Public Works Director Tim Howell, Chief Paul Moats, Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms 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 Spivey gave the invocation.

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

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Alderwoman Lewis made a motion to approve the agenda. Alderman Spivey seconded it. Alderwoman Jones asked about the status of the property at 202 E. Wayne Street. Mayor Flowers said that due to the court house being closed, the attorney could not do the research needed to get a clear deed to the property. He stated he wasn't sure of the status as of now. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comments

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for Public Comments.

Durwood Daniels lives at 102 E. South Street. He thanked the Mayor and the board members for what they had done, concerning his complaint against Mr. Wooten. He stated that the issue he had with the property on Sycamore Street was 95% completed, but now there are issues with property on S. Goldsboro Street. He referenced a zoning map that he handed out, which shows the zoning for the block of S.Sycamore, E. South, S. Goldsboro, and E. Norwayne Alumni Way, stating that it is zoned R-10. He said we should abide by the rules and regulations (Ordinances), pertaining to zoning of these properties, and asked the board to enforce them.

Mayor Flowers closed Public Comments.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of June 16, 2020. Alderman Spivey made a motion to approve the Regular Board Meeting of June 16, 2020. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. Alderman Ruffin asked if the correction was made for the 2.5 kw for demand. Mrs. Daly stated that the minutes were correct, but the budget wasn't and that she had reminded Mrs. Aycock to make the change on the budget. Mrs. Daly stated that she changed the rates and it was changed to 2.5 kw. 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 June 16, 2020. Alderman Spivey made a motion to approve the Closed Session Minutes. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. Mayor Flowers asked if there were any discussion and if so it could not be done in open session. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that she had a question and asked if there needed to be a closed session and Mayor Flowers said yes, that is his understanding. Mayor Flowers asked if it was a question that could be asked in a general way and Mayor Pro-tem Artis said no. Mayor Flowers stated that we will have the closed session at the end of the meeting.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Special Called Meeting of June 30, 2020. Alderwoman Jones made a motion to approve the minutes for the Special Called Meeting of June 30, 2020. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Information

Mayor Flowers stated that there is a new business, Prestigious Cleaning Agency, on Goldsboro Street, which provides cleaning for residential and commercial buildings. He stated that there was a ribbon cutting on Thursday, July 16th. Mayor Flowers, Mayor Pro-tem Artis, Alderman Ruffin, and Alderwoman Lewis attended.

Mayor Flowers pointed out the letter from the City of Goldsboro concerning the rate increases. He stated that we are paying the same rates as a customer inside the city limits of Goldsboro. He stated that there are industrial rates for customers using over 150,000,000 gallons per year. He suggested that we write a letter requesting the industrial rates, even though we only use approximately 90,000,000 gallons per year. Alderman Spivey asked if we could include in the letter the concerns that the LGC has with us, which are due to the issues we are having with the Town of Eureka. Mayor Flowers said that he would ask Mrs. Aycock to write the letter on behalf of the board.

Discussion

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to discuss the conflict of interest policy. Alderwoman Jones stated that according to the letter submitted by the auditor, Phyllis Pearson, on March 13, 2020, it was recommended that the Town adopt a formal Conflict of Interest Policy. Alderwoman Jones had a question about the dates that were on the conflict of interest policy that was written by Mrs. Rhodes. After some discussion, there was an understanding that the Conflict of Interest Policy was incorporated into the Standard Operating Procedures Manual on May 1, 2020.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to discuss the Yard Debris ordinance. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that there are people putting yard debris on property that does not belong to them. She said sometimes it may be on top of existing limbs or it may be put on empty lots. She wanted to know what could be done about this issue. Mayor Flowers stated that there is another issue and pointed out that in the ordinance it states that the Town will limit the amount of yard rubbish collected from an individual residence to no more than one-quarter load of a single-axle flatbed truck per collection. He said that the penalty is only \$25 and this may be something that needs to be changed because \$25 would not cover the cost to remove the debris. There was much discussion concerning the costs to the Town for picking up yard debris, including the repairs to the grapple truck, tipping fees, etc., how to inform customers of the ordinance on yard debris, piles of yard debris around town, and other issues concerning yard debris. Mayor Flowers suggested that they look at the ordinance and penalty and decide what changes need to be made and bring it back next meeting for action. The board agreed. Mr. Howell asked how the board wanted him to handle the yard debris until a decision is made. Alderman Spivey said to only pick-up one-quarter load of debris, which is what the ordinance states.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to discuss Zoning Ordinance R-10. He stated that he invited Mr. Pippin, who is the chair of the Planning Board, to attend to help answer questions. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that she felt that there have been some miscommunication between the board, the staff, the police and Mr. Wooten and had asked if Mr. Wooten could be present at this meeting. Mrs. Daly stated that he, along with his wife, were here, but they have already left. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that the zoning ordinance explains what he can and cannot do on his property, as far as, parking trucks and storing equipment. She commented that she understood that the police had sent Mr. Wooten a letter pertaining to cleaning up his property. Chief Moats said that it's been a while since they sent him the letter to clean up the property on Sycamore Street. He stated that now there are issues with the other properties on Goldsboro Street. He said that he has looked at the conditional uses for R-10 zoning, off-street parking and abandoned and junk vehicle ordinances, and he needs the board to interpret and make decisions on these ordinances. He said that he can only enforce the ordinances that the board approves. He said that whatever the board decides, it will have to affect the whole town, not just Mr. Wooten, and that could be an issue. After some discussion, Mayor Flowers suggested that they refer this to the planning board and let them come up with a recommendation for the board to consider. Mayor Pro-tem Artis agreed.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to discuss hiring and promotion freeze. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that in her research, she found that some municipalities have implemented a hiring and promotion freeze due to the negative impact that the pandemic had on its' General fund. She stated that our General fund was not healthy even before the pandemic and recommended that the Town of Fremont consider a hiring and

promotion freeze. There was some discussion and it was determined that the hiring and promotion freeze would not affect essential workers, and that Mrs. Aycock would determine who is essential and who is not.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to discuss the speed limit on Sycamore Street. Alderman Ruffin said that he has had a lot of complaints of speeding on Sycamore Street between South Street and Ballance Road. He stated that the only place to put a 4-way stop sign would be at the intersection of Norwayne Alumni Way and Sycamore. He said that he would get with Chief Moats to discuss this further.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to discuss Black Lives Matter. Alderman Ruffin stated that we have been very fortunate that we have not had any trouble, even though we are a small community. He said he would like to have something in place just in case we need it. Alderman Spivey asked Chief Moats if he had the power to deputize if needed and Chief Moats said no and the only person that had that authority is the Sheriff. Chief Moats said if there is a problem they would contact Wayne County Sheriff's Department for assistance, and noted that they would have the personnel, the proper equipment and gear to handle a situation. He stated that the police department has a good relationship with the citizens of Fremont and he doesn't foresee anything happening, but his department has discussed the potential issues that could arise, due to what is going on in the country.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to discuss Habitat. Alderman Ruffin said he knew that we cut grass on some lots in Fremont and wanted to know if we owned those lots. Mayor Flowers said that we do own some lots, but they are too small to build on. Alderman Ruffin stated that if we do have lots that Habitat can use, it would not only put someone in a home, but it would create revenue for the town.

Mayor Flowers asked Chief Moats to discuss the Firearms ordinance. Chief Moats stated that he would like to include air guns, which are paint ball guns, in the firearm ordinance. He said there have been some issues with people shooting each other with them in the past. He said by including air guns in the firearms ordinance, it allows the officers to regulate the guns and gives them the authority to charge the person with a citation.

Action

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to discuss the delinquent accounts. Mrs. Daly stated that she needed direction from the Board on how to handle the delinquent accounts. She stated that there are about 5 people that she has not been able to get in touch with. She said she has called numerous times and left 3 door hangers requesting the customers to contact her concerning their utility bills. She also asked the Board how they wanted to handle the contracts. She said the Executive Order 124/142 states that you have to give the customers a reasonable amount of time to pay the arrearages, which was at least 6 months. After much discussion, the Board decided that Mrs. Daly would send a certified letter to the 5 customers that she has been unable to get in touch with, stating that if they have not contacted her by July 29th, their utilities will be cut off at 8 am on July 30th. They also agreed that anyone owing \$1,000 or less should have a contract up to 6 months and anyone owing more than \$1,000 can have a contract up to 11 months, which would be by June 30, 2021. Alderman Ruffin asked Mrs. Daly to email the board a copy of the certified letter.

Reports

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to give the financial reports. Mrs. Daly gave the financial reports. She stated that when someone makes a partial payment, the electric part of the bill gets paid first; therefore, the electric report shows more collections than the other reports. Alderwoman Jones stated that someone let her know that they did not receive a bill and she wanted to know what happened. Mrs. Daly stated that when she sends the bills over to PMSI for printing and mailing, she gets confirmation from them stating the total number of bills that were printed and she verifies that total with what her total is. She said it has to be a problem with the post office. Alderman Mozingo mentioned that the landfill charges are \$31.50 per ton and our ordinance states that we charge a \$25 penalty if customer is not in compliance with the ordinance. There was some discussion about the charges to the town, pertaining to yard debris, exceeding the cost of what we are billing customers.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell if he had anything to report and Mr. Howell said he did not.

Mayor Flowers asked Chief Moats to give the police report. Chief Moats stated that they have added a person to the part-time staff, Shatana Jones. He gave a brief overview of Officer Jones explaining her qualifications and experience. He stated that they have about 15 part-time officers. He said that there is no cost to the Town during the application process when hiring part-time officers. He said all the expenses are incurred by the officer during the application process. Alderwoman Jones asked Chief Moats to explain the stats on 1 officer per 1,000 people. Chief Moats stated that this is in reference to call volume. He stated that for Fremont, having 1 officer working is manageable, due to the crime rate which has been reduced over the years. He stated that the crime rate is low also, because of the trust that has been built between the citizens and the officers.

Alderman Spivey asked Mr. Howell how many vehicles he had in his fleet. Mr. Howell said he had 13 vehicles.

Mayor Flowers asked if there was anything else and Mrs. Daly asked if the board could let her know the Thursday before the meeting if they had anything to put on the agenda.

Chief Moats and Assistant Chief Bottoms presented Alderman Ruffin with a police department retirement identification card.

Break

Mayor Flowers stated that we are going to have a break before going into Closed Session.

Closed Session

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to go into Closed Session to discuss Closed Session minutes from June 16, 2020. Alderman Spivey made a motion to go into Closed Session. Alderman Mozingo seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Action

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the Closed Session Minutes for the meeting of June 16, 2020. Alderwoman Jones made a motion to approve the Closed Session Minutes for the meeting of June 16, 2020. Alderman Spivey seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Close Regular Board Meeting

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to adjourn. Alderman Mozingo seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk