



Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting

January 19, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:30 p.m. on January 19, 2021. Present were:

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

Also in attendance were Town Clerk Shannon Daly, Finance Officer Cindy Rhodes, Public Works Director Tim Howell, Chief Paul Moats, Billing and Collections Clerk Vanessa Brooks, Accountant Jimmy Overton and Auditor Phyllis Pearson.

Those not in attendance was Alderman Ricky Mazingo.

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 for a motion to approve the agenda. Alderman Ruffin asked to amend the agenda to add 202 E Wayne Street to discussion. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to amend the agenda to add 202 E. Wayne Street. Alderman Ruffin made the motion to approve the amended agenda. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for Public Comment.

Melissa Kirven stated that she has property at 508 S. Sycamore Street. She said that she has been charged \$100 for bulk pick up and she feels that she should not be responsible for this charge. She said that her tenant should be charged, because the tenant put the items out by the road. There was some discussion. Mayor Flowers said that the staff would need to look into it and if she wasn't satisfied with the staff's decision, then she could bring it back to the Board in February.

Mayor Flowers closed the meeting for Public Comment.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of December 15, 2020 and the Closed Session Meeting of December 15, 2020.

Alderman Lewis made a motion to approve the Regular Board Meeting minutes of December 15, 2020 and the Closed Session Meeting minutes of December 15, 2020.

Alderman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Speaker

Mayor Flowers asked Phyllis Pearson to give the audit report for 2019 -2020. Mrs. Pearson gave the audit report for 2019 – 2020. There was some discussion and questions were asked of Mrs. Pearson. Mrs. Pearson answered all questions and stated that if the Board had any further questions to feel free to call her and she will be glad to answer them.

Mayor Flowers asked Kim Daniels from USDA to present the Loan/Grant for a tractor and cutter. Mrs. Daniels explained the Loan/Grant commitment. She stated that the complete project cost is \$66,455. She said that the loan amount is \$29,900 over a 7 year term with a 2 1/8 interest rate. She said that the yearly payment would be \$4,643 and would not be due until a year after closing. She gave some more information and read the resolution that needed to be approved by the Board. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to wait until we have our budget workshop before approving the Loan/Grant. Alderman Ruffin stated he would like to talk with Mr. Overton, our accountant, before he makes a decision. Mr. Overton stated that the Loan/Grant was a good deal and he recommended that the Board accept it. There was some discussion. (See Action Section)

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Overton to give the financial report. Mr. Overton gave the financial report for each account as of December 2020. There was some discussion. Mr. Overton stated that the Town was on track and not over budget. He said that the financials is looking better than it was this time last year.

Discussion

Mayor Flowers stated that we have had a vacancy for the Town Administrator since the middle of December. He asked Mrs. Daly how many applications we had for this position and she said 10. There was some discussion and it was determined that the advertisement with the NC League of Municipalities would run until February 4th; therefore, the Board would meet between that time and the next board meeting. Mayor Flowers instructed the Board to email Mrs. Daly some dates that they have available to meet, in order to screen and interview the applicants.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about the agenda format. Mayor Pro-tem Artis wanted to see what the Board thought about including old business to the agenda. There was some discussion and Mayor Flowers asked the Board to consider Mayor Pro-tem's suggestion and it can be included on the agenda for next month.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about the Interim Town Administrator & Interim Finance Officer. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that in the agenda packets there is NC G.S. 160A-156, 160A-157, and 160A-158. She stated that in previous meetings, Alderman Ruffin suggested that Alderwoman Jones assist in the Finance Department and Alderwoman Jones had concerns about the vacancy in the Administrator's Office. She said that there was some misunderstanding as to who could temporarily fill those positions and she recommended to the Board that they follow the General Statutes for future references. There was some discussion. (See Action Section)

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to speak about street paving. Alderman Ruffin said he had asked Mr. Howell to get a list of streets that needed paving. Mr. Howell stated that he emailed everyone a copy of this list and stated that the worst streets were 200 block of W. Norwayne Alumni Way and West South Street. Mr. Howell said that the list also included cuts, and the worst ones are 704 S. Sycamore and 503 S. Vance. He said E. Carolina Street had a lot of pot holes and 812 S. Goldsboro Street was bad too. He said that these streets were priority. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked if this is something the Town staff could fix and Mr. Howell said no and that it would have to be contracted out. There was some discussion.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to discuss 202 E. Wayne Street. Alderman Ruffin stated that in past meetings, it was discussed that the Town would look into providing property for Habitat for Humanity to build houses on and he wanted to know the status of where we were at. Mrs. Brooks said that she received an email from Matthew Whittle, the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity, who provided her the requirements for property that they could use. Alderman Spivey volunteered to contact Mr. Whittle to discuss this situation further. There was some discussion and it was determined that this item will be included on next month's agenda.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to discuss the NC CDBG-CV Grant. Alderwoman Jones stated that on September 1, 2020, Governor Cooper announced 175 million dollars to assist for rent and utility payments for North Carolinians. She gave the details of this grant and stated that the Town of Fremont was awarded \$900,000, which was the maximum amount an agency could receive. She stated that Mike McAllister, the Town Engineer, did an excellent job with the application and the Town has teamed up with a Fremont Community Organization, Norwayne Alumni and Friends, Inc. She stated that about \$30,000 would go to Sanctuary Systems, but the bulk of the money would go to Norwayne Alumni and Friends, Inc. to be administered by the Town. There was some discussion. Mr. Larry Jones, the President of Norwayne Alumni and Friends, Inc., was asked to speak. Mr. Jones stated that he was excited about this grant and thought that it was positive for the community. He stated that Mike McAllister did a fantastic job, because he had no idea that we would be awarded the \$900,000 and that there were only 20 Cities/Towns that received this grant. He discussed some details about the grant and said that there would be some modifications. He said that the \$900,000 would have to be spent within 24 months. He said that this grant came about due to the issues with people not being able to pay their utility bills, which some of this grant money will go to paying those bills. He stated that Mike McAllister will be the administrator and he will prepare

the bids for the projects. Mayor Pro-tem Artis wanted to thank Alderwoman Jones for searching out the grant and her help to ensure that we got approved for this grant.

Action

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the USDA Loan/Grant for the tractor and cutter. Alderwoman Jones made a motion to approve the USDA Loan/Grant for the tractor and cutter. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to follow NC G.S. 160A-156, 160A-157, and 160A-158. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. There was some discussion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to allow Alderwoman Jones to serve as the Interim Town Administrator until the vacancy is filled. Alderwoman Jones stated that due to the fact that the process of filling the Town Administrator position will begin in February and after hearing the financial reports from Mr. Overton, she felt that the motion was not needed. Mayor Pro-tem Artis rescinded the motion. Mayor Flowers stated that this motion has been rescinded.

Mayor Flowers stated that the next item is the signature cards for Southern Bank. He stated that in the agenda packet there is a current list of names that are authorized to sign checks. He suggested that we take off Mrs. Barbara Aycock and add the new Town Administrator once we know who that is. Alderman Spivey asked where the document was that shows the names that were approved by the Board to sign checks. He read the General Statute that explains that each check should have the Finance Officer or Deputy Finance Officer signature, plus one other person, which could be staff or Board member, whom the Board has designated. There was some discussion and Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that they should appoint a Deputy Finance Officer to sign checks when Ms. Rhodes is not available. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion. Alderman Spivey made a motion to approve the list of signatures that is currently listed, (Cynthia Rhodes, Dianne Spellman, Shannon Daly, Leroy Ruffin, and Annie Lewis), excluding Mrs. Barbara Aycock. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. Three approved: Alderman Spivey, Alderwoman Jones, and Alderwoman Lewis. Two opposed: Mayor Pro-tem Artis and Alderman Ruffin. Motion passed by majority. There was some discussion about the check amount needed before a Board member's signature is required and that there needs to be purchase orders with each invoice. Alderman Ruffin made a motion that any check over \$3,000 would have to have a Board member's signature. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to speak about late penalties and cut-offs for businesses. Mrs. Daly explained that there were 144 business accounts that were late for the month of December and there were 17 businesses that were on the cut-off list. She stated that on an average the penalties for each business would be \$76.20. Alderman Spivey made a motion to start charging businesses late penalties and cut-off fees. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. Alderman Ruffin suggested that we give the businesses 60 days notice before we begin the charges. There was some discussion. The motion was amended to include that the effective date would be March 20, 2021. Four approved: Alderwoman Jones, Alderman Spivey, Mayor Pro-tem Artis and Alderman Ruffin. One opposed: Alderwoman Lewis. Motion passed by majority.

Mayor Flowers suggested that they defer action on the workshop date until they get a Town Administrator.

Reports

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to give the financial reports. Mrs. Daly asked the Board if they had any questions with the reports that was in the agenda. There was some questions concerning the delinquent customers and Mrs. Daly explained the report and stated that all delinquent customers are currently paying on time.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to give the public works report. Mr. Howell asked what the wishes are from the Board about the Library. There was some discussion and it was determined that Mr. Howell will get some quotes to fix the roof and email them to the Board.

Mayor Flowers asked Chief Moats to give the police report. Chief Moats stated that there was a shooting incident on Friendship Drive and a train accident on Main Street. There was some discussion about contacting CSX about getting railroad crossing arms at the intersection on Main Street. Alderwoman Jones asked about a house on Norwayne Alumni that has graffiti on the house that says you dead. Assistant Chief Bottoms stated that the graffiti has been removed. Chief Moats said that they addressed a house on Pine Street that had a sign with inappropriate language and the sign was removed by the resident. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that she has had some complaints about people speeding on Main Street. Chief Moats said that he has stopped some people and they are looking at getting an electronic sign to put on Main Street that will give the digital reading of the speed, which will hopefully deter speeders.

Close Regular Board Meeting

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

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk