



## **Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting May 18, 2021**

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:30 p.m. on May 18, 2021. Present were:

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

Also in attendance were Town Administrator Tony Howell, Finance Officer Cindy Rhodes, Public Works Director Tim Howell, and Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms.

Those not in attendance were Alderman Ricky Mazingo, Town Clerk Shannon Daly, and Chief Moats. Due to the absence of Mrs. Daly, Ms. Rhodes will be taking minutes.

### **Quorum Present: Yes**

### **Call to Order**

Mayor Flower 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 Flower asked if there were any amendments to the agenda. Mayor Flower asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Alderwoman Lewis made the motion. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Public Comment**

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for Public Comment.

Mr. Larry Jones came forward and spoke regarding an incident where a member of the food bank passed away, while working, on April 20, 2021 and concerns about the rescue response time. Mr. Jones stated that he called and spoke with Mr. David Cuddeback

regarding this incident. Mr. Cuddeback explained that the unit assigned to Fremont was out on another call when their call came in. It took a response unit 20 minutes to arrive at the scene from Belfast. Mr. Jones stated he, as well as others, did not know we no longer have a unit in Fremont. He questioned how this decision was made when we still have the need and what kind of a backup plan do we have in place should this happen again. Mr. Jones stated Norwayne Alumni has been working hand in hand the Christian Fellowship Alliance and these are concerns are not from just one group but are a reflection from the whole community.

Mr. Travis Moore came forward and added to what Mr. Jones said regarding the incident at the food bank and the response time. He stated this is an important issue and 20 minutes is unacceptable. Whether the outcome would have been different we will never know. Mr. Moore added something needs to be said to county about this. Mr. Moore also spoke in regards to a situation with a resident. Mr. Tony Howell addressed his concerns and reassured him that everything was being taken care of.

Mayor Flowers closed the meeting for Public Comment.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes collectively or individually. Alderman Ruffin suggested to do them individually

April 20, 2021 – Regular Board Meeting: Alderwoman Artis motioned to approve these minutes. Alderwoman Lewis made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

April 20, 2021 – Closed Session Meeting: Alderwoman Jones wanted to make corrections on page 3, last paragraph. We need to change \$1,000 to \$100,000. Alderman Spivey motioned to approve the minutes as corrected. Alderman Ruffin made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

April 27, 2021 – Special Called Meeting: Alderwoman Jones motioned to approve these minutes. Alderwoman Artis made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

April 27, 2021 – Closed Session Meeting: Alderman Spivey motioned to approve these minutes. Alderwoman Jones made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

May 4, 2021 – Special Called Meeting: Alderwoman Artis motioned to approve these minutes. Alderman Spivey made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

May 4, 2021 – Closed Session Meeting: Alderman Ruffin motioned to approve these minutes. Alderman Spivey made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Speaker**

Mayor Flowers stated that Mr. Randy Lassiter, was going to present the Board with some information pertaining to the Fremont Volunteer EMS. Mr. Lassister, Chief of the Fremont Volunteer Rescue Squad, came before the Board and shared a slide show presentation about the volunteers and how they work. He went on to share their mission and history and that they are all volunteers. He explained currently they are not recognized by the county to run calls but they are recognized by the county for the Junior

Program. The Juniors Program is an education program for teens who are between the ages of 13-18. He also shared that they recognized by the State of NC to perform water rescue. Mr. Lassiter did say that he is working on trying to get reinstated for their emergency response capability. He stated they are here help the community as well as the state. He added that he is an AHA Instructor and offered to teach CPR and how to use an AED. He also discussed they are no longer being funded by the county. They are 501(c)(3) non-profit and they do fund raising but they do need some financial assistance. They maintain all of their equipment, insurance coverages and worker's comp, as well as their association dues. Alderman Ruffin asked how the town could help because we would love to see them get up and running again. Mr. Lassiter stated utilities and insurance would be a big help. Mayor Flowers asked board if they would like for Mr. Howell to write a letter to Town Manager and Director of EMS in regards to the response time. The Mayor recommended asking the Director of EMS to come to the next meeting to explain if this is a one-time issue or if this is something we can expect. Alderwoman Artis stated she agreed to writing the letter and having the Director of EMS to come to the meeting.

### **Information**

Mayor Flower asked if Alderman Mozingo formally resign. Mr. Tony Howell stated right now all we have is an email stating that he will be resigning as of May 30, 2021. He added that he would reach out to him again to get something in writing. Mayor Flowers stated that in the agenda packet was the process for what has been done in past to fill a board position. He also asked to have this moved to the discussion area, and possibly action, to be discussed if this procedure is what to follow.

Mayor Flowers stated that Town Hall will be closed on Monday, May 31<sup>st</sup> in observance of Memorial Day.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to discuss Asian American – Pacific Islander Heritage Month. She stated this used to be only Asian American Month, and it has been expanded to be Asian American – Pacific Islander Heritage Month to include everyone. She added that a Proclamation from the Mayor was in the Board packet as well as a Proclamation from Governor Cooper's office. She went on to share a portion of the Governor Cooper's Proclamation.

### **Discussion**

Mayor Flowers stated that the Board needed to recommend someone within the town limits to serve a 3 year term on the Board of Adjustment. There was some discussion and it was determined that it will be deferred until the next meeting.

Mayor Flowers stated that the next item is FEMA projects and asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about this. Mr. Tony Howell spoke to Mr. Taylor and he has completed everything except the Wayne St. project. Mr. Taylor has bid on the Wayne St. and we have also reached out to JS Civil, Cox-Edwards and TA Loving for additional bids. He added that he has also asked for separate bids on the extra pipe on Hillandale as a price comparison. Once the Wayne St. project is completed that will complete all of our FEMA projects. The Mayor asked if the FEMA has done any site inspections. Mr. Tony Howell answered they have not. He also added that we are working to pull together all of the data needed to finalize paperwork for FEMA. Ms. Rhodes has been in contact with Mr.

Taylor's wife get that information.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the Pine trees on Wayne Street. Mr. Howell stated that we have the insurance documentation to have the job done. Directional Falling will be doing the job because they had the lowest bid at \$4300.00. We have four pine trees to take down as well as grinding the stumps. Mr. Howell stated the only thing we are waiting on is to have the contract signed to begin the work, and this will hopefully be completed by Friday.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to speak about property at 219 E. Main Street and the rental contract. Mr. Howell stated there was a question as to whether the Board wanted to sell or rent in which the Board has elected to not sell the building. Mr. Tony Howell added he has reached out the resident who came to the Board requesting to purchase the building to let her know that we would not be selling but has not heard back from her.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak regarding Solar Panels. Mr. Tony Howell stated he has made several phone calls regarding solar panels and which would be the better Interconnection Agreement and Rate Arrangement. He has spoken to Jason Thigpen, PJ Ream, Greenville utilities, the City of Wilson and the City of Apex. Each organization recommended having an Interconnection Agreement and a stated rate structure for the Solar. The City of Wilson feels they have a really good Interconnection Agreement. Most municipalities would strongly suggest not using net metering, but to use net billing. He stated there is a difference at how that is set up and he stated that the Board needs to be very careful how that is structured as far as rates go. He stated that in his view there is a lot more reviewed because it is confusing at how it is set up because it is so new. He recommends that in the future having another representative come in and help us narrow down what kind of Interconnection Agreement we want to have. Because there is so much information to go through, Mr. Tony Howell recommended a few of the Board members get together to review and then bring the findings back before the Board. He also added there are ordinances that would need to be revamped regarding solar. This is something Mr. Pridgen would need to weigh in on as well.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to discuss the application for utilities for businesses. Mr. Tony Howell stated that Mrs. Daly had devised an application for new business as opposed to the one we use for residents. Our current application does not address the business owner component as this new application does. This is being brought before the Board so they will how it looks for new businesses.

### **Action**

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion regarding the next Budget Workshop Date. Alderwoman Artis suggested Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. Alderman Spivey asked if we had heard back from the LGC regarding our preliminary budget. Mr. Tony Howell stated that no we had not heard back as of yet. A discussion regarding zoom meetings regarding budgets and financial issues with the LGC. Alderman Spivey did express concerns that the Board was not included in these meeting. It was decided that Mr. Tony Howell would forward all future zoom meetings to the Board so they can participate. Mayor Flowers asked if there no more discussion for someone to make a motion to have the meeting next Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. Alderman Spivey made the motioned. Alderwoman Artis made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to discuss Receipt of American Rescue Plan Funds. Mr. Tony explained that during the Pre-Contract phase we found that we needed to get approval to receive these funds. Ms. Rhodes explained that when these are received they are going to be treated like grant funds and the Board approves to receive those funds. Alderwoman Artis added for the sake of the minutes to include the amount of funds to be received. Mr. Tony Howell stated his understanding was the amount would be \$370,000.00; \$185,000.00 this year and then \$185,000.00 the next year. Mr. Tony Howell added that during Pre-Contract state we learned the criteria in which the State will be determining the total amount to be received. Ms. Rhodes stated the determination will be made the total of the budget that included January 27, 2020. She added we cannot receive more than 75% of that total budget. Hopefully, we will be receiving more definitive numbers as we get into the contract phase. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to be made to receive these funds. Alderwoman Artis made the motion. Alderwoman Jones made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flower asked for Mr. Tony Howell to discuss Rent for Peele Park on June 5<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Tony Howell shared with the Board he had a family call asking about the park for a graduation celebration for June 5<sup>th</sup>. He brought before the Board a draft Facility Rental Agreement completed by Mr. Pridgen with a fee schedule. He thought it would be a good to have for the future if the Board would like to rent out parks/facilities. There was a lengthy discussion of the fee schedule as well as the agreement. Mayor Flowers suggested acting on the fee schedule then act on the agreement. The first motion: Alderman Spivey motioned to approve the amended fee schedule with the total cost of \$237.00 for Peele Park. Alderwoman Jones made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously. There was more discussion regarding the agreement. Alderman Spivey made the motion adopt agreement and application as is, with the addition of prohibiting fireworks, provide liability insurance and security for 100 people or more. Alderwoman Artis made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

## **Reports**

Mayor Flower asked Ms. Rhodes to give the financial reports. Ms. Rhodes stated that the financial reports show what we billed in March, what we collected in April and the expenses for each department. She explained the sewer fund expenses were high because we actually paid two bills to Goldsboro. This was because we held the bill due in March due to negotiations with Goldsboro to bring that down. Alderwoman Artis questioned why the Electric Fund was in the negative. Ms. Rhodes stated that she would look into it and email everyone answers. Ms. Rhodes went on to discuss the Cash Trending Report. Alderwoman Artis questioned why the Fire Department was in the negative. Ms. Rhodes explained they have been waiting on their Fire Taxes from Wayne Co. Alderman Spivey questioned what account was this paid from when it went in the negative. Mr. Rhodes stated expenses still get paid from the Fire Department budget.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tim Howell to give the public works report. Mr. Tim Howell had planned on showing the Board some of the Library issues, but his computer went down. He stated that he did find out late today that the town will be receiving a letter from Wayne County in reference to the Library repairs. Alderman Spivey questioned the letter and what it meant. Mr. Tim Howell explained that the letter will be giving a time line to get the repairs done. He went on and explained in more detail the repairs needed. Mr. Tony Howell asked if he should continue getting quotes for repairs of the roof

(shingles vs. metal). It was decided yes to do that, but to also continue looking to see if we can use any of the ARP funds.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tim Howell to explain the Surplus items. Mr. Tim Howell explained that the town an abundance of PVC pipe that needs to be declared as surplus so we can dispose of it. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to declare the PVC pipe surplus. Alderman Spivey motioned to have the PVC pipe declared as surplus. Alderwoman Jones made the second. All were in favor and the motion was passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms to give the police report. Assistant Chief Bottoms reported there have not been any major incidents in the last month. With COVID curfew restrictions being lifted and school getting out, we do expect more calls for people being out later at night. He went on to discuss the status of the grants they are receiving from GCC.

### **Closed Session**

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to go into closed session for a personnel issue. Alderwoman Artis made the motion. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Motion from Closed Session made in Open Session**

The Mayor asked for a motion from the Board based on the Town Administrator's request to not terminate Mr. Hill, but to allow the Town Administrator and the Public Works Director to work with Mr. Hill to improve his behavior and report back to the Board. Alderman Spivey made the motion to allow Mr. Tony Howell to make the decision to terminate Mr. Hill and it was seconded by Alderwoman Jones. The motion failed; (3) descended – Mayor Pro-Tem Artis, Alderman Ruffin, and Alderwoman Lewis; (2) in favor – Alderman Spivey and Alderwoman Jones. After the motion failed and additional discussion, a following motion was made to terminate Mr. Hill's employment. Alderman Ruffin expressed that Mr. Hill's careless actions also had costed the town by turning in his meter readings and the Board are having to waive late fees when warranted. The motion was made by Alderman Ruffin, and was seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Artis. The motion passed: (3) in favor: Alderman Ruffin, Mayor Pro-Tem Artis, and Alderwoman Lewis; (2) descended: Alderman Spivey and Alderwoman Jones. Mr. Tony Howell stated he would speak with Mr. Hill in the following morning concerning his dismissal.

### **Close Regular Board Meeting**

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to adjourn. Alderwoman Lewis made a motion to adjourn. Alderwoman Jones made the second. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

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W. Darron Flower, Mayor

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Cindy Rhodes, Finance Officer