



**Minutes of Special Called Meeting
&
Budget Workshop**

May 25, 2021

The Special Called Meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:30 p.m. on May 25, 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, Town Clerk Shannon Daly, Finance Officer Cindy Rhodes, Public Works Director Tim Howell, Police Chief Paul Moats, Assistant Police Chief Greg Bottoms, and Town Accountant Jimmy Overton.

Those not in attendance were Alderman Ricky Mozingo.

Quorum Present: Yes

Call to Order

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

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to give the invocation. Alderman Ruffin gave the invocation.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to lead all in attendance in the pledge of allegiance. Mayor Pro-tem Artis lead all in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Flowers asked to approve the agenda. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made the motion to approve the agenda. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Budget

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Overton to speak about the budget. Mr. Overton asked Mr. Tony Howell if he had heard anything from the LGC concerning the draft budget that was sent to them. Mr. Tony Howell said that we had received a letter today and he proceeded to read the letter. Mr. Overton said that basically the LGC was looking at our budget to see if we were in compliance with state statutes and we were.

Mr. Overton pointed out that the garbage rates are going up 3.6%, the water rates are going up 5%, and the sewer rates are going up 17.5%. He stated that the Board needed to decide if they were going to go up on these rates for the citizens. There was much discussion about the rates and how they would affect the Town, as well as, the citizens. It was determined that the Board wanted to have another meeting to look at some other things before approving any rate changes.

It was discussed that there are four positions that are vacant, one in the Police Department, and three in the Public Works Department. There was much discussion about the necessity of filling these positions right now. Both Chief Moats and Public Works Director Tim Howell gave reasons as to why they needed these positions filled.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked if we had heard anything about the American Rescue Plan funds. Mr. Overton said no we had not. He said we do not have clarification on exactly how the funds can be spent, except that it can be used for COVID related expenses. There was discussion about if it could be used for repairs to the library or be used to contribute to the Fremont Emergency Services. There was some discussion as to what services they would be able to provide to the Town of Fremont, because it is hard to find volunteers to cover the daytime hours during the week. It was determined that Mr. Tony Howell will be sending a letter to the Wayne County Board of Commissioners to request their support for Fremont EMS. The price of AEDs (Automatic External Defibrillator) was discussed. Chief Moats stated that the Police Department is in the approval process of receiving a GCC grant that would allow them to purchase two AEDs which could be utilized in Town Hall and police cars. Mayor Flowers stated that Alderwoman Jones has requested that they consider providing some funds for next year to Fremont EMS. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked if the ARP funds could be used for the Fremont Health Clinic and Mr. Overton said that it may be able to and we would know for sure once we receive instructions on how the funds can be used.

Mayor Flowers stated that we now have a balanced budget that included rate increases for water, sewer, and garbage. Mr. Overton said that was correct and the budget included a full staff, but there are four positions vacant that is a total of about \$200,000. There was discussion about not funding some of the positions, because some of the guys have been taking a lot of time off and it seems that public works is running fine. Alderman Ruffin asked if we did not fill some of the positions could we not have to increase some of the rates. Mr. Overton said that is correct. There was much discussion about how much we can cut back on the salaries and how much we could reduce the rates. It was determined that we would reduce half of one salary position expense, decrease the landfill fees expense by \$4,500 and increase the bulk fees revenue by \$600. This will allow us to reduce the water and garbage rates; therefore, not having to increase the rates this year even though the rates have been increased for the Town. At this time, the sewer rates will stay at the increased rate of 17.5%.

There was some discussion about rather or not to go into Closed Session. There was some concern about the expenses for finance and Mr. Overton stated that the books are caught up through April and he does not foresee having to do as much for the Town next year. The Board decided to have a Budget Workshop on June 8th at 6:30 before finalizing the Budget for 2021/2022. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to have a public hearing on June 15th at 6:30 and approve the budget on June 29th at 6:30. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously. Alderman Ruffin made a motion to discuss and/or approve the fees and rates increases at the June 8th Budget Workshop. Alderwoman Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjourn

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

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk