



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

June 8, 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 June 8, 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, Assistant Police Chief Greg Bottoms, and Town Accountant Jimmy Overton.

Quorum Present: Yes

Call to Order

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

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Flowers asked to amend the agenda to include the resolution for the application for Viable Utility Reserve Study Grants. There was some discussion about the water line that was damaged by the contractor doing work for Dollar General on Hwy 117. The discussion included what happened to the water line, who was responsible for the damage, and if 811 was called to mark the lines before the contractor started digging. Mr. Tony Howell stated that 811 did mark the lines, but this particular line was not on the grid. Alderman Ruffin stated that the line has been there for 35 years and it ran underneath the railroad tracks and connected to Goldsboro Street. Mr. Tony Howell stated that if we can get the grant, the money will be used to help uncover all the lines. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to approve the agenda to include the resolution for the application for Viable Utility Reserve Study Grants. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Alderman Ruffin stated that the invocation is on the agenda and suggested that we pray. He said that we have had two deaths in Fremont today; one being Mr. Stewart and the other one being Mrs. Applewhite. Mayor Flowers stated that there was a funeral today for

Mrs. Hooks. Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Spivey to give the invocation. Alderman Spivey gave the invocation.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Lewis to lead all in attendance in the pledge of allegiance. Alderwoman Lewis lead all in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

Budget

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Overton to discuss the budget. Mr. Overton went over all the rate increases that will be imposed on the Town from sewer, water and garbage. He stated that the decisions that the Board made last meeting was to only increase the sewer rate by 17.5%. He said that the Town received a letter from the LGC stating that the preliminary budget was in compliance with general statues, but there was a concern about a transfer made from the water/sewer fund to the general fund. He said that this transfer was due to the increase in sewer revenue and could possibly disqualify us from receiving grant money. He stated that this can be corrected by changing it to reimbursing the general fund for expenses, such as salaries, benefits, payroll taxes, etc. There was some discussion about the USDA Loan/Grant for the Tractor that was purchased and that the Board will need to pass a budget amendment for this. There was some discussion about projects that needed to be done and if they were in this year's budget or if they needed to be added to next year's budget. Other topics that were discussed included the status of the FEMA Projects; how much we will receive from the American Rescue Plan and how the money can be used. Also, it was discussed that salaries can be decreased due to eliminating a position; and an employee retiring and working part-time, which would be a total of 1 ½ positions. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked if more responsibilities could be given to our Public Works Director and asked if he had been helping read meters and filling in while we are short staffed. Mr. Tony Howell said that he was helping during this time and highly suggested that we hire a lineman soon. He said that he has an application from someone interested in this position. There was some discussion about the applicant and his qualifications. There was discussion about the police detective position, if it could be filled by using part-time officers, how many applications we have, and the process in hiring someone to fill that position. Mr. Overton went over each fund and explained which ones were in balance and which ones were not in balance. Mr. Tony Howell went over the recommended increase in fees. It was pointed out that the Fremont Cemetery needed some attention and the Board was not in agreeance to increase the cost for cemetery plots. Mayor Flowers recommended to defer the decision on these increases to a later date. After much discussion Alderman Spivey made a motion to increase the sewer rate by 17.5%, the water rate by 5%, and the property tax by .01 and to keep the electric and garbage rates the same with no increase. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Alderwoman Lewis pointed out that the citizens are not pulling their garbage and recycle cans back from the side of the road. There was some discussion about why this is not being addressed and that the citizens used to be penalized if they did not follow the ordinance pertaining to this. Mrs. Daly stated that there is a process to handling this, but she needs to know that there is a problem and if Public Works would tell her, she could start enforcing the penalty. Mayor Flowers suggested that the Police Department take the responsibility of letting Mrs. Daly know who is violating this ordinance and Alderman Spivey did not agree and said that this is for the Public Works Director.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to explain the resolution that needed to be approved. Mr. Tony Howell went over the resolution and the application process for the Viable Reserve Study Grants. He explained that this was mandatory in order for us to receive the grants. There was some discussion about what the reason was for these grants. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the Application for the Viable Reserve Study Grants. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. Alderman Ruffin had several questions and concerns about how the study would work and the process of it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a point that the Board had agreed to advertise for the Finance Officer position and wanted to know when will we begin advertising for it. There was some discussion about what the salary will be and how we would budget for it. Mr. Overton stated that a budget amendment can be done after a decision is made about the salary. Mayor Flowers stated that Mr. Overton said that we could get someone from his office at half of his cost that could help. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to move on replacing the current Finance Officer and advertise for that position. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously. Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell if he understood what the Board's decision was and he said not exactly. Mr. Tony Howell had several questions about the part-time position, when was he to move the current Finance Officer, and was the salary going to change. It was determined that the part-time position would be eliminated and the salary for the current Finance Officer would decrease. Mr. Howell has concerns about who would go into the Finance Officer's position until we could hire someone. It was discussed that Alderman Spivey could take that position temporarily.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the preliminary budget to include the changes that were made earlier. Alderwoman Lewis made the motion. Alderman Spivey seconded it. Mr. Tony Howell asked Mr. Overton to provide the preliminary budget with the changes, before the next meeting. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

There was some discussion about possibly approving the final budget, next week after the public hearing; therefore, being able to cancel the June 29th meeting. It was determined that the decision would be made next week at the June 15th meeting.

Closed Session

Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to go into Closed Session. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. Four approved: Mayor Pro-tem Artis, Alderwoman Jones, Alderwoman Lewis, and Alderman Ruffin. One opposed: Alderman Spivey.

Open Session

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion. Alderman Spivey made a motion that the last day for the Finance Officer to hold that position will be on June 30th. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. Mr. Tony Howell asked if Alderman Spivey would accept the same pay as the front desk position, which was \$10.50 an hour and Alderman Spivey said yes. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjourn

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made the motion.

Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk