



Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting

July 20, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:30 p.m. on July 20, 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 Cathy Nichols, Public Works Director Tim Howell, Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms, and Town Engineer Michael McAllister.

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 to amend the agenda to add a budget amendment as item #5 under action. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked to add Moye Street pole relocation and Mayor Flowers stated that it will be item #13 under discussion. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Special Called Meeting of June 8, 2021. Alderwoman Jones made the motion. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Closed Session Meeting of June 8, 2021. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made the motion. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of June 15, 2021. Alderwoman Jones made the motion. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Closed Session Meeting of June 15, 2021. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Special Called Meeting of June 28, 2021. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the Closed Session Meeting of June 28, 2021. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for public comment.

Priscilla Cummings of 205 E. North Street stated that there needs to be something done about our town, because the streets are terrible. She said the police needs to patrol more, because there are a lot of things that can be seen. She stated that she is considering running for the District 3 seat. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked what street is she talking about and she said Vance Street.

Mayor Flowers closed the meeting for public comment.

Speakers

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to present our two speakers.

Mr. Tony Howell presented Mr. Craig Honeycutt, Wayne County Manager, and stated that he will be discussing the EMS response times. He thanked Mr. Honeycutt for being here and said that we appreciate and value the Wayne County EMS. Mr. Honeycutt said it is great to be here and he appreciates the opportunity to attend. Mr. Honeycutt stated the goal for Wayne County EMS. He said the goal from the Board of Commissioners was to enhance patient care by providing the highest level of pre-hospital care and improve response time. He said this has been accomplished through the addition of paramedic units across the County with an average response time of 8 minutes for 90% of all first out calls. There was discussion about the issues that have happened in Fremont recently concerning EMS response times. Mr. Honeycutt discussed some options, such as the Town having its own Quick Response Vehicle, QRV, and station with an annual cost of \$250,000 to \$300,000; using Fremont Fire and Rescue as the first responders; and getting more AEDs and training for cardiac arrest. He also stated that they are part of a Duke Grant that will allow them to purchase more AEDs and provide more training. Mr. Larry Jones, President of Norwayne Alumni and Friends, addressed some issues concerning the

problems by not having EMS in Fremont and gave reasons why we need it. Mr. Honeycutt responded to Mr. Larry Jones and suggested that we become a first responder and work with Fremont Fire and Rescue. He stated that as a County Manager, he has to look at what is best for the entire County and not just individual municipalities. Mayor Flowers stated that we do have a Public Works staff member that is on the Fremont Fire and Rescue and has responded to recent incidents, but he can only work within certain limits. He said that the Fremont Fire Department has two AEDs, the Methodist Church has one AED, and the Police Department has applied for a grant to purchase two AEDs. Mr. Larry Jones said that Norwayne Alumni and Friends are trying to get one AED. Mr. Larry Jones asked Mr. Honeycutt if he would be willing to go back and look at the data and other possible options and Mr. Honeycutt said he will be glad to look at any suggestions or possibilities for Fremont. Mr. Honeycutt encouraged everyone to get the COVID vaccination. Mayor Flowers stated that Alderwoman Jones' church in Fremont had two vaccination drives and they were successful. Mayor Flowers thanked Mr. Honeycutt for his time and stated that he is welcomed to our meetings anytime. Mr. Honeycutt thanked Alderman Spivey for his service on the DSS Board and said he is doing an incredible job and thanked the Board for allowing him to speak at the meeting.

Mr. Tony Howell presented Mr. Michael McAllister, our Municipal Engineer, and stated that he is working with a Community Block Grant, CDBG-CV, and he has some information he would like to share. Mr. McAllister stated that there is a lot of paperwork for this grant and would like to go over some of it. He said the first thing is the Capital Project Ordinance and it is a breakdown of expenditures appropriated for the project. Alderman Spivey asked who is the CDBG Grant Administration and Mr. McAllister said that he is. He referenced Section 6 and asked if we would get the funds upfront and Mr. McAllister said yes we would receive the funds and we would have three banking days to pay the payees. Mr. McAllister introduced the rest of the paperwork which was the Town of Fremont's Plan to Further Fair Housing, Local Jobs Initiative Section 3 Plan, Equal Employment and Procurement Plan, and a Language Access Plan. There was some discussion about the paperwork and Mr. McAllister said that these types of grants are a heavy burden of paperwork. Mr. McAllister stated that he is seeing a lot of activity and feels that Fremont is going to be growing. Mr. Larry Jones said that out of 100 counties, only 34 received this grant and the nearest one to us in Beulaville. He said that Mr. McAllister did an outstanding job in getting us this grant. The Board and staff applauded Mr. McAllister. (See Action Section)

Discussion

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to address items 1, 2, and 3.

Mr. Tony Howell stated that the remaining amount from the FEMA project is 25%, which is \$33,258.11. He said this is from Hurricane Florence and the total awarded was \$134,112.43. He said we have received \$100,854.32. He said the work has been done, but we still have some paperwork to do in order to file for this remaining amount and to close it out. He introduced Mrs. Cathy Nichols, our new Finance Officer, who has been helping with this project. Alderwoman Jones wanted to confirm that this was the same project that Alderman Ruffin met with Mr. Brian Taylor on Wayne Street. There was some discussion that the location was incorrect, after looking at FEMA paperwork. Mayor Protem Artis asked how much money we will be getting from FEMA and Mr. Tony Howell said that we will be getting \$33,258.11, plus possibly a little over \$13,000 for administrative costs. There was some discussion about having to find documentation on

the time spent on administrative work, because this project was started when Mrs. Fennell was the Finance Officer. Mr. Tony Howell said that he, along with Mrs. Daly and Mrs. Nichols, are going to have a workshop tomorrow to gather all the data needed to apply for the administrative funds.

Mr. Tony Howell said that four Pine trees, stumps, and debris have been removed from Wayne Street and this job is completed. He said the total cost was \$4,300. Alderman Ruffin asked Mr. Tim Howell if he has cleaned the catch basin at the Pine trees on Wayne Street and he said no we have not done that yet.

Mr. Tony Howell stated that he has formed a committee for discussion about solar panels. He said the committee consists of Mayor Flowers, Alderman Spivey, Mr. Tim Howell, Mrs. Shannon Daly, and himself. He said the committee members with the exception of Mrs. Daly, met with PJ Rheam and Cathy Moyer from Electricities to formulate an interconnection agreement, which will be the basis and starting point for installation of solar panels. He said they will be compiling data from the Town such as rate structures and they will present to the Board what they have found.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked Mr. Tony Howell if the catch basin that is buried on Wayne Street causing some of the flooding they have been talking about. Mr. Tony Howell said he wasn't sure, but it needed to be examined. Alderman Ruffin said that the catch basin is at the corner of Aycock and Wayne Street and it should not affect the flooding back down Wayne Street.

Mr. Tony Howell said that when Mrs. Aycock was here, she started working with Electricities on an Economic Development Plan. He said that they are wanting to begin working on this plan and the first step is to have a steering committee. He said this plan will be developed to seek and bring new businesses to Fremont. He said that Alderwoman Jones and Alderman Spivey are on the committee and he is in the process of contacting everyone on the list to see if they can still serve on this committee. He said that the committee doesn't consist of just Fremont citizens, because Mark Pope, from Wayne County Development and Alliance is on the committee. He said once the committee gets established, he will bring it back to Board. Alderman Ruffin said that Goldsboro has someone that works with bringing new businesses to Goldsboro and that person may be a good contact.

Mayor Flowers said that we have two people interested in the District 3 vacancy and wanted to know from the Board what direction they wanted to take. There was some discussion and it was decided that interviews would be set up for July 27th at 6:30 and if anyone is interested in the vacancy, they would have until the 27th to apply.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Lewis to speak about the Fremont Cemetery. Alderwoman Lewis said that on several occasions, she has visited the cemetery and it was terrible. She said the last time she went, it was in bad shape and asked Mr. Tony Howell to go back to the cemetery so she could show him the issues. She said the lawn mowers are going over the graves and the headstones have been hit and are not sitting correctly. She said some of the headstones are cracked and some of the names cannot be read. She said that someone had ran over her mother's grave and the headstone was sunk in the ground, but it has been fixed. She said they are not weed eating and something needs to be done about how the cemetery is being handled. She said that other people have complained to her about the same issues. Mr. Tony Howell stated that he will be

addressing the issues that Alderwoman Lewis has shown him. He asked Mr. Tim Howell whose responsibility it is for the headstones and he said that it is the families' responsibility. Alderwoman Lewis asked if someone runs over the headstone and breaks it, why is it the families' responsible. Mr. Tim Howell said that the stone should be flush with the ground. Mayor Flowers said that he thought the funeral home was responsible for the graves not sinking in. Alderman Ruffin asked if there is anything in writing stating who his responsible. Mayor Pro-tem Artis said she was at a funeral a few days ago and took pictures and showed Mr. Tony Howell how Round-up was used around the graves. She said it looked bad, because it was sprayed too wide. Mr. Tim Howell said that he has addressed this issue with his staff. Alderwoman Lewis said that they were not edging around the stones and Mr. Tim Howell said that it has been corrected.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to speak about the State of Fremont Address to the Town. Alderman Ruffin asked if it could be moved to the end of the discussion section and Mayor Flowers said yes it can.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to speak about Goshen Medical parking lot. Alderman Ruffin stated that he had asked Mr. Tim Howell to check on the parking lot at Goshen Medical Center about two months ago and he said it was stopped up. Mr. Tim Howell said it was from tree roots and it runs from that catch basin to Wayne Street. Alderman Ruffin asked if he had looked into fixing it and Mr. Tim Howell said that he could if he had the funds. He said that the trees and roots will need to be removed and the pipes would have to be replaced. There was discussion about the trees being on residential property and if we have an easement. Alderman Ruffin said that we have only one doctor's office and we should try to take care of the parking lot and said that we need to look into this. Mr. Tony Howell asked if the lines have been T.V.'d and Mr. Tim Howell said yes. Mr. Tony Howell asked lately and Mr. Tim Howell said no, but they have put in root killers and it has done nothing. It was determined that this issue would need to be researched further.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to discuss the Personnel Policy Workshop. Alderwoman Jones said that our Personnel Policy has not been updated in quite some time and it needs to be reviewed. She stated she would like to come up with a date that we can work on this. Mayor Flowers gave a list of all the things that we are currently working on and suggested that we wait until the fall to have a workshop. There was some discussion and it was determined that we will have a workshop on October 5th from 12:30 to 2:30.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Spivey to speak about the Forensic Audit. Alderman Spivey apologized about not emailing the Board about the audit because he has not received all the information about it. He said according to the LGC, there is no policy stating that a full blown audit has to be conducted, but it is a good idea to prove your cash at the day of transfer. He said he has reached out to several accounting firms and they are not willing to do anything until they are finished with their end of the fiscal year auditing. He said that a forensic audit is very detailed in nature; can be \$400 to \$800 per hour; takes a team of people to look at everything; cannot set a time limit due to the fact that it depends on what they start finding; and requires a minimum of \$5,000 retainer fee. Mayor Flowers asked where the money was going to come from. Alderman Spivey said it will have to come from the budget. Mayor Flowers asked what in the budget you would want to reduce and said he had missed a few meetings and needed to understand what the purpose was for a second audit. Alderman Spivey stated that he brought up getting a

forensic audit because we were hiring a new Finance Officer, and when he was in the military they would have someone independently review the financial books before handing the books over to someone new. Mr. Tony Howell stated that our auditor will be in from August 11th – 13th to do our year-end audit. There was some discussion and it was determined that we would not use our current auditor for the forensic audit and we would find the money to do it.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Spivey to speak about the Town Administrator orientation and expectations. Alderman Spivey asked if the Board has given Mr. Tony Howell an orientation or the expectations they have of him. He said that he thought that it would be wise if the Board would go over issues and challenges they have had in the past and let him know what they expect of him as a Town Administrator. Alderwoman Lewis stated that she had shown Mr. Tony Howell some things in the Town that she had concerns with and Alderman Ruffin stated that he has gone over some things going on in the Town. There was some discussion and it was determined that the Board would address Mr. Tony Howell with their expectations on July 27th at 5:00 before the District 3 interview meeting.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the sewer rates for the Town of Eureka. Mr. Tony Howell stated the City of Goldsboro has gone up on their wastewater sampling fees by 24%, which is \$656.86. He said that one way to counter that cost is to look at the Town of Eureka's rate. He said currently their sewer rate is \$12.20 per 1,000 gallons and our inside city rate is \$12.88 per 1,000 gallons. He suggested that we increase the Town of Eureka's rate to \$12.88 per 1,000 gallons. He said at 2 million gallons of sewer, at the extra .68 per 1,000 gallons, it would increase our revenue by \$1,360 which would be more than enough to offset the sampling fees increase that Goldsboro is imposing on us. There was some discussion about the rates and sampling fees that Goldsboro is charging and what exactly the test samples are. (See Action Item)

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the part-time street maintenance position. Mr. Tony Howell stated that we have an employee that is retiring and is going part-time, which he will be working only 3 days a week. He is recommending that we hire someone for 2 days a week to cut grass through the end of October. He said this would be a seasonal position and the pay would be \$12.00 per hour. (See Action Item)

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about the Moye Street pole relocation. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that as of yesterday, the pole has not been relocated and they were told by Mr. Tim Howell that it had been moved. Mr. Tim Howell said that he has done his part and Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked what his part was. Mr. Tim Howell said that it is a joint pole and two entities own that pole and he had the electrical removed off of it and that's his part. He said now they have reached out to the telephone company (Century Link) today, once again, and they sent somebody out to access the situation and they told us that all three poles, Moye, Main and Dock, will be switched over and transferred this week. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked if we have lost the chance of getting ½ of the cost back for relocating the pole, because the contract states that the contractor has a certain amount of time to start building or he would have to pay back \$3,150 to the Town. Mr. Tim Howell said that the contract states that the pole has to be moved, but it should have said the facilities. Mr. Tony Howell read part of the contract and there was some discussion about the contract, what has been done, and who is responsible for what's left to be done. After being questioned, Mr. Tim Howell said I've done my part like I said. Mayor Flowers proceeded to ask Mr. Tim Howell a question and

Mr. Tim Howell gathered his things and said I don't think I can satisfy nobody tonight so I'm going home and then he walked out of the meeting. There was much discussion about this situation and it was determined that Mr. Tony Howell would consult our attorney to see if we still had a chance to hold the contractor to the 120 days after the pole is removed. Mayor Pro-tem Artis addressed Mr. Tony Howell and said that as for Mr. Tim Howell walking out, he should not have that luxury, and then to be able to walk back in tomorrow, without being spoken to at least. Mr. Tony Howell said that he can make that happen.

Mayor Flowers suggested that we defer the State of Fremont Address to next meeting. Alderman Ruffin agreed.

Action

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the Capital Project Ordinance for the CDBG-CV Grant. Alderwoman Jones made the motion. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. No discussion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the Fair Housing Plan, Local Jobs Initiative Section 3 Plan, Equal Employment and Procurement Plan, and the Language Access Plan. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. No discussion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve increasing the Town of Eureka's sewer rate by .68 per 1,000 gallons, making their new rate \$12.88 per 1,000 gallons. There was some discussion about the outside city rate and basic rates. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion. Alderwoman Jones made a motion to hire someone for seasonal part-time to cut grass. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the Electricities Betterment Funds. Mr. Tony Howell said that Mr. Tim Howell was going to speak to the Board about this, but he will be glad to go over it. He pointed out three areas that Mr. Tim Howell suggested that we can spend the \$5,000 on. There was some discussion about what the cost will be to do what was suggested and other ideas that the money can be used for. It was determined that this should be tabled until more information is obtained.

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Cathy Nichols to come to the front to take the Oath of Office. Alderwoman Jones administered the Oath of Office to Mrs. Cathy Nichols. Mayor Flowers welcomed Mrs. Nichols. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that they are so glad she is here and that she enjoyed meeting with her and feels that she will be a great asset to the Town of Fremont. Mr. Tony Howell echoed what Mayor Pro-tem Artis said and thanked Mrs. Nichols for working with him the last few days and said it's a great thing to have somebody that he looks forward to working with and that feels that they are confident in their role and that is something he applauds. Alderman Ruffin said welcome aboard and we look forward to you taking care of things. Alderwoman Jones echoed what Alderman Ruffin said. Alderwoman Lewis said welcome aboard. Mrs. Nichols thanked each one.

Mayor Flowers said the next item is the appointment of the Board of Planning and Adjustment members, He stated that last month we approved to re-structure the Planning Board, eliminating the Planning Board as we knew it, and combining the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment. There was some discussion about how the members were chosen, when their terms will begin, the letters that were sent to those who were not selected, and how many members are on the new Board. Alderman Spivey made a motion to approve the five members that were being recommended, with the stipulation that a second letter be sent to those members who were not selected, explaining that in order to be in compliance with our new ordinance the Board was being downsized. Mrs. Daly stated that she was certain that the letter that was sent did explain that both Boards were being combined and that was the reason we were being downsized and she would like a little more clarification as to what the letter needed to say. Alderwoman Jones said she would help her with the letter. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers said the next item is the late fee, decreasing the penalty from \$10 to \$5. Mr. Tony Howell asked Mrs. Daly to address the late fee. Mrs. Daly said that on October 18, 2020 there was a motion made to cut the penalty from 10% to 5% for anything over \$100, but we did not look at changing the flat rate from \$10 to \$5 for anything up to \$100. She said she thought it was an oversight and asked the Board if they would like to make that change. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers said that the next item is Budget Amendment, BA-2022-1, and asked Mr. Tony Howell to discuss it. Mr. Tony Howell said that the Budget Amendment is for the Logics payroll system software upgrade for \$6,000 and \$2,345 for the subscription cost and we only have \$2,500 budgeted for Logics. He said that the payroll system we have now is outdated and we have to get the new software. He said that Mrs. Nichols does have knowledge of the new payroll system software and has worked with it previously. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve Budget Amendment, BA-2022-1, to purchase the Logics payroll system software in the amount of \$8,345. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Reports

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Nichols to give the Financial Report. Mrs. Nichols went over the report and pointed out that on the May Billed / June Collected Report, she did not include the expenses, because all of them had not been recorded and completed. She said that she has not met with Mr. Overton yet to see where we are at with everything, but he will be in on Friday and she will get all the information she needs. She said the cash report is not correct, because the bank statement is not balanced; therefore, she did not go over that report.

Mayor Flowers asked Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms to give the Police Report. Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms asked the Board to keep Officer Ben Reid in their thoughts and prayers. He said that Officer Reid has been here since at least 1968, maybe even longer, and he is hoping that he will be able to return to work soon at some capacity. He said that as far as things going on in town, they are pretty much consistent with what they usually have during the summer. He said there were a few fireworks on July 4th, but they were within the regulations. He said there was a decrease of fireworks in Fremont, and he felt

that was due to the Town of Pikeville having a fireworks show, which he assisted with traffic control. He said there was some vandalism at the Ballpark on North Street and there are some juveniles that are suspects and they are working on filing juvenile petitions. He said he has spoken with members of the Fremont Athletic Association and they addressed some concerns about the lighting, which has been reported to Mr. Tim Howell and his staff. He stated that they have other concerns about the upkeep of the park and he has addressed these concerns with Mr. Tony Howell. He said over the past years the Fremont Athletic Association has had to replace certain things at the park, that the Town has not taken care of, and these concerns have been given to Mr. Tony Howell to be taken care of by Mr. Tim Howell. He said they are still going through applications for the detective position, which is a lengthy process. Alderwoman Jones asked if Officer Reid would be retiring and Assistant Chief Bottoms said that he did not want to. There was some discussion about what he would need to do to qualify at the end of the year to keep his certifications. Alderwoman Jones asked about the status of the grants. Assistant Chief Bottoms said that the 2018 GCC grant has closed and the final reimbursements have been submitted; the 2019 GCC grant equipment is still coming in and he will be submitting the reimbursements for that; and the 2020 GCC grant paperwork has to be corrected to reflect the new Town Administrator and new Finance Officer.

Close Regular Board Meeting

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

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk