



Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting

September 21, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:30 p.m. on September 21, 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
Terry Futrelle, Alderwoman

Also in attendance were Town Administrator Tony Howell, Town Clerk Shannon Daly, Finance Officer Cathy Nichols, Public Works Director Tim Howell, Chief Paul Moats, 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 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. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that she would like to amend the agenda to include extending Mr. Tony Howell's probationary period as item 4 under action and to include Moye Street pole relocation as item 4 under discussion. Alderman Ruffin stated he would like to add wearing mask as item 5 under discussion. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made the motion to amend the agenda. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve all the minutes collectively, which were July 20, 2021 Regular Board Meeting, August 17, 2021 Regular Board Meeting, August 31, 2021 Special Called Meeting, August 31, 2021 Closed Session Meeting, September

10, 2021 Special Called Meeting, and September 10, 2021 Closed Session Meeting. Alderwoman Lewis made the motion. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for public comment.

Lucille Jones, who lives at 803 Chestnut Street, stated that MLK Park is in need of some metal trash cans. She stated that she keeps the park clean, but the trash cans are damaged and need replacing and the cans need to be emptied.

Mayor Flowers closed the meeting for public comment.

Presentation

Mayor Flowers asked Chief Moats, Assistant Chief Bottoms and his family to come forward for a presentation. Chief Moats stated that Assistant Chief Bottoms has applied for his Advanced Law Enforcement Certificate, which is the highest certificate that you can obtain in Law Enforcement through the Criminal Justice Training and Standards Commission. He stated that it is very difficult to get, because it requires years of service, credits and education. He stated that it takes time to obtain this certificate and after all documents are submitted, it is reviewed by the Board of Commission for Training and Standards and the Governor. He said it is a high award to present to a Law Enforcement Officer, because it shows their ability and detail to work and their loyalty to Law Enforcement. He said Assistant Chief Bottoms has done an outstanding job and he presented the certificate. Assistant Chief Bottoms introduced his wife and daughter and approached the Board and staff with his certificate and received their appreciation for his dedication and accomplishment.

Speaker

Mayor Flowers introduced Mr. Larry Jones and asked him to speak about EMS. Mr. Jones passed out a packet of information about EMS to the Board and staff, and went over each item in the packet. He stated that Seven Springs had received over \$400,000 for a Golden LEAF grant and he is suggesting that we go to the County and ask them to do the same thing for Fremont. He said we are not asking for a full unit, but a rapid response unit. He said he feels that we need this to head off any major problems in the future. There was some discussion about purchasing AEDs and making sure they are the same kind; therefore, being compatible with what the County uses, in order to save time during a crisis. Mr. Jones stated that the things that we can do now is to concentrate on how to utilize the people in the Town to be prepared in case there is an emergency, such as the Police Department, Fire Department and Public Works Department. He said also we can approach different organizations in the Town to see if they can have people who are trained in CPR and possibly have AEDs. He said Norwayne Alumni will be purchasing an AED and Christian Fellowship Alliance are trying to purchase an AED. There was some discussion about what a rapid response unit is, how it could benefit the Town and the need of one, due to the fact of the growth within the Town. Mr. Jones stated that Fremont pays higher taxes, but is not getting the same level of service, because the service was reduced in 2019 when the unit was moved to Nahunta. He said he understands the Town has a lot of things to deal with and Norwayne Alumni and

Christian Fellowship Alliance will take the fight to go forward with the County. He said he understands the Town can't do but so much and is asking that they state their position, which is not be in opposition of having a rapid response unit in Fremont. He said that they will have to have voices to go to the County Commissioners and say this is a problem and deal with the politics. He said that we saw this when Mr. Honeycutt was here. He said that they do not want to hear what the Town is saying; therefore, it becomes an issue that the citizens have to speak their claim and say this is a problem and the County needs to do something about it. He said there is money available, it's just how the County decides to appropriate the money and they should provide Fremont with support. Mayor Flowers thank Mr. Jones for his leadership, his drive and everything he does, and hopes that we will see some results eventually.

Mayor Flowers stated that the next presenter is Mr. Mike McAllister. Mr. McAllister stated that the LGC had requested funds for the Town of Eureka to help pay their expenses and one of them being the Town of Fremont. He wanted to make sure that we have been getting paid from Eureka and if we have any problems to let him know and he may can help. He also stated that there is a developer who is wanting to put in a 100 lot subdivision off of Hwy 222 and they are wanting to annex. He said he has met with the developer and has looked at another subdivision they have put in Clayton and it looks very nice. He said he will be working with this developer, as well as the Town, to put in the subdivision. He said that we have the sewer capacity to handle this subdivision and would not need to have approval from the City of Goldsboro. He said they are looking to build 3 bedroom homes, probably 10,000 to 15,000 square feet lots, some with garages and some without. He said we would be looking at ad valorem tax revenue, powell bill funds, and water and sewer revenue, which part of that would go straight to our General Fund. He said they have not closed on the property yet, but they have to by October 1st. Mayor Flowers asked if there would be any costs to the Town and Mr. McAllister said that the developer will put in all the infrastructure and the Town would take it over after one year to maintain it, but there would be no upfront expense to the Town. Alderman Ruffin asked if we would need to increase manpower to handle it and Mr. McAllister said that would be something we would need to look at during the annexation. There was some discussion about how much the Town and surrounding area is growing.

Information

Mayor Flowers pointed out the items for information and asked the Board if they had any comments. There were no comments.

Discussion

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the Town properties. Mr. Tony Howell stated that the Town owns property and that there are nine properties that could be sold. There was some discussion and the Board decided to allow Mr. Tony Howell to advertise for bids for these nine properties and then bring the bids back to the Board.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the proposed outline for agendas. Mr. Tony Howell stated that he is proposing to switch the information section with the reports. He said this will allow staff to give their report and leave, thus saving the Town money on overtime hours. He also suggested taking the Closed Session off the agenda and add it if needed at each meeting. There was some discussion and it was determined that the information and report section can be changed, but the Closed Session needed to

stay on the agenda.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Lewis to speak about the burning permit. Alderwoman Lewis stated she would like to be able to burn, with a permit, in a burning barrel. There was some discussion that the Town's ordinance does not allow for any burning within the Town. It was determined that Mr. Tony Howell will contact Fire Chief Brooks to get information concerning a burning permit and if it could be allowed if the Board approved it.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about Moye Street pole relocation. Mayor Pro-tem Artis wanted to know the status of relocating the pole and if we are in jeopardy of losing \$3,150 that the contractor would have to pay the Town if they did not start building within 120 days. Mr. Tony Howell stated that we are in breach of the contract and would not be able to collect \$3,150. There was some discussion about the contractor selling the property and about Century Link taking another two weeks to complete relocating the pole.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to speak about the mask. Alderman Ruffin stated that he thinks that we need to put a sign on the door that everyone has to wear a mask if they enter the building. There was some discussion and it was determined that a sign would be posted that says a mask is required if they enter the building and also we would provide masks if needed.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the Fiscal Accountability Agreement between the Town of Fremont and the LGC. Mr. Tony Howell stated that the LGC sent us a letter with their requirements for the Town of Fremont, being that we are on their watch list, which there are 27 Towns that are. He said they are asking us to sign off, agreeing to abide by their regulations, which are stated in the letter. He said that we are on the watch list primarily because of our water and sewer fund cash flow that was negative. He said we are not where we need to be, but we are progressing. He said our goal is to get off the unit assistance list, but until we do we have to follow through with what they have asked us to do and they want to make sure all the Town Officials are in agreeance with this agreement and are asking for each Board member's signature. The letter has to be sent back to them by September 30th. Alderman Spivey stated that he has a problem with the letter.

Recess

Mayor Flowers called for a 10 minute recess.

Call to Order

Mayor Flowers called the meeting to order.

Action

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Spivey to speak about the problem he has with the Fiscal Accountability Agreement between the Town of Fremont and the LGC. Alderman Spivey stated that Item #2 under background states that in the General Fund, the percentage of fund balance available for appropriation relative to expenditures is still below comparable units. He said he would like to know what comparable units and hopes that the LGC will

explain this when they conduct their visit so that they understand exactly what they are looking at in relative to where the Town of Fremont currently sits now. He said Item #1 under items required it states that an in-person or virtual visit with LGC staff will be scheduled in the near future. He said there are other issues he has but the main issue is that the LGC is expecting us to be definitive in our efforts, by signing this letter by September 30th, to rectify the financial status of the Town of Fremont, but why aren't their efforts not being reciprocated. Mr. McAllister stated that the LGC typically wants to see an 8% reserve for small towns but would like for you to have more than that. He said they would like for you to have at least enough in reserve to pay 3 to 6 months of expenses in case of a disaster. He said he agrees with the issue that the LGC does not require the same for themselves as they do the Towns. He said being on that watch list is a benefit to us, because it allows us to have priority funding and we have received two grants due to our status. He said there are about 100 Towns on the watch list. It was discussed that we were around 20% in our General Fund, but we are low in our water and sewer fund. Mr. McAllister stated that it is in our best interest to sign the letter. Mayor Flowers said to pass the letter around to the Board for signatures and if you don't want to sign it, then don't, and we will send the letter in with whatever signatures we got. Mayor Pro-tem Artis wanted to clarify that the reason we are put on this list is because of the fiscal year of 2020 audit, not on an additional audit.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to speak about the committees. Alderwoman Jones said that prior to the pandemic, she proposed that we have three committees: human resources, finance and accounting/administration, and infrastructure, which will include public works, police, and everything else. She stated that at that time there were some people against it and some people for it. She said that each Board member can be on whichever committee they would like to be on and bring the findings or recommendations back to the full Board. She stated she is now bringing it back up to get the feeling of the Board. Mayor Pro-tem Artis said that would be a great idea. There was some discussion about how many people could be on a committee. Alderman Spivey stated that he has some questions about committees and has contacted the School of Government to give him some clarity on the issue. Alderwoman Jones made a motion to have three committees: human resources, finance and accounting/administration, and infrastructure. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously. Mayor Flowers stated that the committees will be established at the next Board meeting.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the time change for Board meetings. Mr. Tony Howell asked if the Board would like to consider changing the meeting time from 6:30 to 6:00. There was some discussion and it was determined that this would be tabled until a later date, but will be on the next Board meeting agenda.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about the probationary period for Mr. Tony Howell. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that tomorrow will be 6 months since Mr. Tony Howell has been hired and the Board has not had a chance to formally do an evaluation. She said she would like to get the Board's suggestion on extending the probationary period in order to give the Board time to do the evaluation. There was some discussion. Alderman Ruffin made a motion to extend the probationary period for two months, and within that time, a formal evaluation will be completed and a decision will be made. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion to repair the 200 block of N. Vance Street in the amount of \$14,500. 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 July Billed and August Collected Financial Report, the Cash Balances Report, and the Budget to Actual Report. She said the cash is looking good in the bank account right now and is better now than what it has been since she has been here, and right before she came. Alderwoman Jones asked about the status of the 2020/2021 audit. Mr. Tony Howell said that we have until October 31st to have it in, and we are waiting on Mr. Overton to finish a few things before the auditor can complete our audit. It was discussed that the Board would like to see the audit before it is sent in and the Board does not want to have to file an extension, being that we are on the watch list.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tim Howell to give the Public Works Department Report. Mr. Tim Howell said that he has gotten asphalt quotes for three sections of Town, W. South Street, W. Norwayne Alumni Way, and N. Vance Street. Mr. Tim Howell showed some pictures of the conditions of the roads. There was some discussion about the Powell bill funds we have and it was determined that the Board agreed at the last meeting to spend \$39,900, which is what we had budgeted for the year. It was determined that we will contract out the job to fix N. Vance Street, in the amount of \$14,500. (See Action Item)

Mayor Flowers stated that the County Library System has closed our library, due to mold. He said they have kept it closed due to the roof is in ill repair and they are now moving the books and equipment out of the library. There was some discussion about the damages to the roof and the entire roof needs replacing. Alderwoman Futrelle asked if there was damage due to hail, why wasn't it turned in on our insurance. Mr. Tony Howell said it was, but the money was spent somewhere else and he did not know where the funds actually went. Mayor Flowers stated that he hopes that once we get the roof repaired, the County will bring us back our library. Mr. Tony Howell stated that we may be able to get an USDA Economic low interest loan to repair the roof or there is a grant that he is looking into that may help.

Mayor Flowers asked Chief Moats to give the Police Report. Chief Moats said that the Norwayne Alumni Event went smooth this year. He said there was one minor incident that was not related to the event, and other than that, there were no other incidents to report.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked to put Peele Park and MLK Park on the agenda for discussion on next meeting's agenda. She asked if we have heard back from KBS on E. Wayne Street. Mr. Tony Howell said they have looked at the job to give an estimate, but we have not received the estimate yet. Mr. Tony Howell said that the project on Pippin Street is in progress and it will be the first expenditure that we will be spending out of the American Rescue Plan funds in the amount of \$9,940.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked Mr. Tim Howell what the hours were for Public Works Department. Mr. Tim Howell said during the summer they come in earlier because of the heat, but now they will be coming in at 7:00 and getting off at 4:00, if they take an hour lunch. He said normal hours are from 7:30 – 4:30.

Close Regular Board Meeting

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

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk