



Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting

October 19, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:30 p.m. on October 19, 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, and Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms.

Those not in attendance were Alderwoman Terry Futrelle and Chief Paul Moats.

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. Alderman Ruffin asked to amend the agenda to add updates to subdivision on Hwy 222 and sale of properties under information. Alderwoman Jones asked to add the recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Latin-American Month, and there was another one she couldn't remember. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda and to allow Alderwoman Jones to add the other one if she was to remember it under discussion. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made the motion to approve the amended agenda. Alderman Ruffin 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 September 17, 2021 Special Called Meeting, September 17, 2021 Closed Session Meeting, September 21, 2021 Regular Board Meeting, and October 5, 2021 Personnel Policy Workshop. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for public comment.

Ralph Wilkins who lives at 203 N. Dock Street said he has two statements. He said he would like to report that the water main has gone bad that runs in the middle of the road in front of his house. He said that there is water standing in the middle of the road about 18' long and it has been this way for over a month and it is running toward his easement. Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell if he needed any other information about this situation and he said no. Mr. Tim Howell said that he is aware of the problem and he does have the clearance to dig and will be taking care of it very soon. Mr. Tim Howell stated that he is also aware of the water leak at 412 S. Goldsboro Street, but he does not have the clearance to dig yet. Mayor Flowers asked what he meant by clearance and Mr. Tim Howell said 811 locate, who has to locate the lines before they can dig.

Mr. Wilkins said that the other issue he has is with the late fee. He wanted to know why he has to pay a late fee if we have a voucher by the 20th stating that we will receive the money. There was some discussion and Mr. Tony Howell said he will research it and report back to the Board next meeting.

Mr. Larry Jones stated that he is representing Norwayne Alumni and Friends from 106 E. Norwayne Alumni Way and Christian Fellowship Alliance. He gave everyone some information on a project he has been working on pertaining to a Quick Response Vehicle (QRV) for Fremont. He went over the report, which included the costs for a QRV, and the information he got from Mr. Cuddeback, the Wayne County EMS Director. He stated that the county offers training to organizations and to the public, which was in the letter provided in the packets. He said that Norwayne Alumni and Friends have been conducting training for CPR and will continue to provide the training. He said once he has more information about the QRV, he will bring it back to the Board to keep them informed of the progress. Alderman Ruffin asked if they would have to apply every year for a grant and Mr. Jones said there are a couple of grants, but he feels that the county should apply for the grants. He said that he feels that the county is trying to discourage us by pointing out the costs for a QVR, but he knows there are funds that the county has for projects and he feels that this project is a viable one. Alderwoman Jones stated that she has received the CPR training through Norwayne Alumni and Friends. Mayor Flowers thanked Mr. Jones for all he is doing for the Town.

Mayor Flowers closed the meeting for public comment.

Speaker

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to introduce the speaker. Mr. Tony Howell stated that Mr. PJ Rheam with Electricities is going to share a slideshow presentation on solar panels. Mr. Rheam stated that he has been with Electricities for over 9 years and he

manages technology and renewable programs. He said he has worked with Fremont on a number of projects over the last 9 years and he is here to talk about some policies and procedures that Fremont can adopt to allow the customers to safely install solar and other resources on the system. He gave the presentation. There was some discussion and Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Rheam what would be the next step. Mr. Rheam said that he would send all of the information, by email, to each Board member, which contains the interconnection standards, the agreements, the retail rates for a rider, and the power purchase agreement. He suggested that they review all the documents and then adopt a resolution that includes all of the information. He said after that you work on deploying the program by putting resources on our website and making sure the customers know that if they are interested in solar or other generation resources that this is the proper procedure to go through. He said once we get our first customer, they would walk us through the process, making sure the customer is connecting safely to the system. He said this is a free service they offer to the Town of Fremont. There was some discussion about adopting an ordinance instead of a resolution and Mr. Rheam suggested that we adopt the resolution first and then possibly an ordinance if needed. Mayor Flowers thanked Mr. Rheam for coming in and giving his presentation.

Reports

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Nichols to give the Financial Report. Mrs. Nichols went over the August Billed and September Collected Financial Report, the Cash Balances Report, and the Budget to Actual Report. She said the checking account is in good shape. She said we have \$996,000 in the checking account right now and that is after paying payroll and \$30,000 being transferred to savings. She said that USDA likes for us to have a year's worth of loan payments in savings and that's why we transferred the \$30,000. Alderman Spivey stated that the budget has \$1,700 for the health clinic, but it is his understanding that there is a stipulation that they have to give us an accountability of what they are actually spending the funds on. He asked if we require the same accountability from other organizations that we donate funds to. Mrs. Daly said she is not aware of us requiring that information from anyone else, such as the Boys and Girls club. Mrs. Nichols stated that we do not have anything like that from the Boys and Girls club. There was some discussion about the health clinic and it was determined that the health clinic has not sent in a letter this year, nor last year, to request the \$1,700.

Mrs. Nichols left the meeting after giving her report.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tim Howell to give the Public Works Report. Mr. Tim Howell stated that the Fall Cleanup went very well. He said they did catch someone hauling stuff from out of town, in town, for Fall Cleanup. He said grass season is about over and they will be focusing on leaf season and ditches. Alderman Ruffin asked about the leak at 412 S. Goldsboro Street. Mr. Tim Howell said that he does not have clearance to dig yet, but hopefully he will soon and then be able to fix both leaks by the end of this week. Mayor Pro-tem Artis wanted to confirm that he did have clearance to dig on Dock Street and Mr. Tim Howell said yes he does.

Mr. Tim Howell left the meeting after giving his report.

Mayor Flowers asked Assistant Chief Bottoms to give the Police Report. Assistant Chief Bottoms said that the Town of Fremont will follow Wayne County and observe Halloween on October 31st from 6:00 p.m., to 8:00 p.m. He said the Methodist Church

will have their Trunk-or-Treat on Saturday, October 30th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. He said they will have officers out at both events to ensure the safety of all the Trick-o-Treaters. He said there was a break in at the Speedway and there is a suspect being investigated for this break-in, who is linked to other break-ins in Goldsboro, Pikeville, and outside Wayne County in Rocky Mount and Nash County. It appears that a van was stolen from Wilson County and used for multiple break-ins on several different nights in several counties. There was some discussion about the Halloween events being on two different days and people speeding on Main Street.

Discussion

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the Burning Permit. Mr. Tony Howell stated that he has met with Fire Chief Brooks and they examined the current Burning Ordinance. He said that Fire Chief Brooks recommended that we address fire pits and/or burning containers and an ordinance was drafted to include these items. Mr. Howell read the drafted ordinance and asked the Board if they had any concerns. Alderman Spivey wanted to know what the penalty was if someone did not adhere to the ordinance. Mayor Flowers stated that there is a revision in the ordinance that has a catch all penalty and throughout the ordinances it refers to that ordinance when it pertains to a penalty. Mr. Tony Howell stated that Ordinance 95.30 is a violation code that refers to Ordinance 10.99, which is a general penalty. He read both ordinances to the Board. There was some discussion and it was determined that the Burning Ordinance will be brought back to the Board for approval next meeting.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about Peele Park and MLK Park. Mayor Pro-tem Artis said that she would like to combine this with item #3, which is staff meeting items. She said it is good to see that the staff is having meetings and forwarding the status of the items to the Board, because this shows the Board what is being completed and what is not. She said it is good to see some items that have been completed since the last meeting and she wanted to commend Public Works for spraying the weeds around town. She said at the last meeting Mrs. Lucille Jones stated that the trash cans needed to be emptied at MLK Park and she has brought this before the Board in the past. She said according to the staff notes, the cans have not been emptied and she asked Mr. Tony Howell what the problem was and if it was with Waste Industries. Mr. Tony Howell said that he is unaware of a problem with Waste Industries, but if the cans still need to be emptied then there is a problem and he will try to contact Waste Industries and find out. Alderwoman Lewis stated that Mrs. Lucille Jones pulls out the cans to the street for Waste Industries to pick up, she cleans the bathrooms, and she keeps things going at that park. Mrs. Vanessa Brooks stated that the cans are on the back door pickup and Waste Industries should be picking them up, but if they are not, then she needs to know so that she can correct it. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that at the last staff meeting it was stated that they had not been emptied and Mrs. Brooks said that she does not attend those meetings. It was discussed that the bathrooms were in bad shape during the Norwayne Alumni Parade and that next year we may want to have someone monitoring them. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that there are a group of ladies in Fremont that meet every morning at the park in Pikeville to walk, because the grounds at Peele Park are so uneven. She stated that she went to Peele Park and found that both driveways are uneven and she would like to see them fixed. She said that there is a decrease interest in the use of Peele Park, because of the poor condition of the equipment, and the bleachers are broken. Mayor Flowers stated that we would need to get a price before we do anything. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that the bleachers are a safety issue and she wanted to know

how often do we maintain the park and it seems that it can be years at times. Mr. Tony Howell said that he has instructed Mr. Tim Howell to do it on a weekly basis, prior to the weekend, and to make sure the trash is picked up, etc. Mayor Flowers stated that he thought that the parents of the ball players were maintaining certain parts of the park, but being that they are not playing ball, they are not maintaining it. There was some discussion about the grants that we got years ago that was used to improve both parks. Mayor Flowers stated that the staff should look into this and report back to the Board. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that we may need to rope off certain areas so that no one will get hurt.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that on every staff meeting report, she noticed that the catch basin on E. Wayne Street, which Alderman Ruffin noticed initially, was listed. She said on August 23rd it was identified as a problem, on September 14th it was reported that it needs to be relocated and the line be tv'd, on September 22nd it says the same thing, and on October 12th it was reported that the Public Works Director said he cannot find the basin. She said that Mr. Tony Howell, Alderman Ruffin, and Mr. Brian Taylor had been out there with Mr. Tim Howell when the basin was identified. Mr. Tony Howell said as far as he knows Mr. Tim Howell has not tv'd that line, but it needs to be done to see where it goes. He said that he has included this basin when asking companies for quotes for other jobs. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked what needed to be done and Mr. Tony Howell said that they need to find out where the line goes, but they think it goes across the street to another catch basin, but the line has not been tv'd. He confirmed that the catch basin was identified by Alderman Ruffin, Mr. Brian Taylor, Mr. Tim Howell, and himself, but he assumes that it is at a point where it cannot be seen and he will have to find out what the situation is so that they can find it again. Alderman Ruffin said that he thinks that the catch basin needs to be identified and cleaned out right away, because of the flooding on that same street. He said that the catch basin was pointed out to Mr. Tim Howell when they were all at the location. Mr. Tony Howell said that he will make sure that the line gets identified.

Mrs. Lucille Jones stated that there are people at MLK Park at night and wanted to know what can be done and Alderman Ruffin said that Mr. Tony Howell can get some signs put up that explains the times that the park is open.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about item #4, which is employee's exposure to the Corona Virus and how they are paid while missing work, due to waiting on test results. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that Mayor Flowers, Alderwoman Jones, Alderman Spivey and herself were present at a Wayne County Commissioner's meeting where they discussed how an employee is to be paid while waiting on test results for COVID. She stated that her understanding was that an employee, if tested positive, can be paid without using sick time, but if they tested negative, then they would need to use their sick time. She wanted to know how we are doing it. Mr. Tony Howell said that this has only happened on one occasion where an employee did not have enough of sick leave. He said that the current policy is to use sick leave or vacation leave. He said that you can over extend the sick leave, which will put them having a negative balance and can take a while to catch up. He spoke some about how you could have used the CARES Act and the American Rescue Plan to pay employees. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked if we are requiring a doctor's note and Mr. Tony Howell said yes we do and the employee has to be cleared to come back to work.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Spivey to speak about item #5, which is orderly discussion during Board meetings. Alderman Spivey stated that everybody has a voice and concerns about the different topics that are discussed on the agenda. He said at the last few meetings it has been frustrating to hear what everyone is saying, because of different conversations going on at the same time. He is asking that whoever is speaking to have the floor and allow that person to finish before someone else interjects. He stated that Mayor Flowers should take care of the floor by acknowledging who wants to speak and Mayor Flowers said that is what he tries to do. He said tonight has been successful in doing that except for one incident and agreed with Alderman Spivey that if two people are talking, you cannot hear either one of them. Alderman Spivey said that this is just a reminder to be courtesy to one another and if someone has the floor, then let them have the floor. Mayor Flowers stated that there are comments from the audience during the meeting and he believes in allowing that, because he believes in transparency. He asked the Board to think about it to see if they want to continue to allow it or do they want the public to only speak during Public Comment time.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the webinar. Mr. Tony Howell stated that Electricities would like to formulate and help implement an Economic Development Plan for Fremont. He stated that there is a steering committee, who includes Alderman Spivey, Alderwoman Jones, and the Mayor. He said that the webinar would be for the purpose of getting feedback from the Board about the Economic Development Plan. He said it would be to formulate a Town Hall meeting to include the public, such as, churches and business owners. He asked if the Board would be available for Tuesday, November 9th at 3:00 for a webinar, which would be held in the Board room and he will have a link to the webinar sent to each Board member's email if they chose to use it. All Board members were in agreeance with the date and time.

Action

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to speak about committees. Alderwoman Jones stated that they have been talking about committees for a while, but she wasn't sure if everyone knew what the roles and responsibilities were for the committees. She referred to the print outs for the Sample Board Committees Job Descriptions and said that all of them do not apply to what they are wanting to do, but some of them do and asked if the Board would review them and decide which ones they would like to be a part of. Mayor Flowers called for a five minute recess for the Board to review the material. After the recess, Alderwoman Jones asked Alderman Spivey which committee he would like to be a part of and he said he would like to have some more time before he makes a decision. Alderwoman Jones asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis which committee she would like to be a part of and she said the Personnel Committee and Finance Committee. Alderman Ruffin said he was interested in the Personnel Committee, but wanted to look over finance some more. Alderwoman Jones stated that he had said previously that he would like be part of the Infrastructure Committee, which deals with the Police Department and Public Works and he said yes he would like to be on that committee. Alderwoman Lewis said she wanted to be on the Infrastructure Committee. Alderwoman Jones said she would like to be on Finance and Administration and Human Resources Committees. Alderwoman Jones said that she thought Alderwoman Futrelle would be good with Human Resources. Mrs. Daly asked Mayor Flowers if they could go over the list of the committees. Alderwoman Jones said that Mayor Pro-tem Artis and she were on the Finance and Administration Committee and Alderman Ruffin was thinking about it. She said Mayor Pro-tem Artis, Alderwoman Futrelle, and she were on the Human Resources Committee.

She said Alderman Ruffin and Alderwoman Lewis is on the Infrastructure Committee, and she said Alderman Spivey would let her know when he decides.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the time change for Board Meetings. Mr. Tony Howell said that we had mentioned at the last meeting about changing the time to 6:00 p.m. He said if we do this then we can get out of the meeting a little bit earlier, plus it would save the Town overtime that the staff would have accumulated. There was some discussion and it was determined that we would follow the proper procedure to change the ordinance from 6:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. for Board meetings.

Alderwoman Jones stated that the Director of Public Works gave his report and then left, but there were a lot of things that came up after he had left. She said that she thinks that he would need to stay for the meeting in case he is needed, more so than Mrs. Nichols. Mayor Flowers said that before anyone leaves the meeting, they need to ask to be excused and the Board would decide if they were needed or not.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about the evaluation date for the Town Administrator. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked the Board if October 26th or November 2nd at 3:00 would be a good time to meet for the evaluation of Mr. Tony Howell. There was some discussion and it was determined that the meeting will be on Wednesday, November 3rd at 3:00 p.m. to discuss which evaluation form will be used. Mayor Flowers suggested that Mrs. Daly not have to attend this meeting, because he felt like she would not be needed being that all they would be doing is looking over evaluation forms. Alderman Ruffin stated that someone needs to take the minutes. Alderwoman Jones volunteered to take the minutes.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to speak about the arrangements. Alderwoman Jones stated that she understood that prior to November 28, 2018 that a resident could request and get if needed two arrangements per year on their utility bill. She said she understood that it had caused some problems for the staff, because the same people were doing it over and over again, so it stopped. She said since that time she has had an individual come to her and was requesting to have one extra day to pay her bill and she was told no, so she had to borrow money to pay her bill. She suggested that the Town allow at least one arrangement a year, but two would not be out of the question. She said that from time to time people have a problem with their finances and the date that they receive their checks. She said that she had met with Mr. Tony Howell and staff and she didn't think that it was something that we had to advertise, but was told that if it gets out to one then it will get out to 100. She asked the Board what their opinion was on this issue. Alderman Ruffin stated that if it gets out to 100 then that's OK, because our utilities are not the cheapest in the world and that we have a lot of senior citizens that are probably having some problems. He said that he doesn't see a problem with getting two extensions and the staff just has to keep up with them and only give two a year and after that you are on your own. Alderman Spivey stated that he sits on a Supervisory Committee Board that's with a financial institution and the issue of a customer not being able to make their mortgage payment, car payment, or credit card payment, comes up at least once a year. He said that in most instances if the person waits until the day of or the day before the payment is due, the business will not talk to them, because they have checks and balances that they have to do. He said he feels for the citizens that are struggling and he understands that but there are two things that stands out; one is that the utility bills that the Town of Fremont has, needs to be paid in a timely manner and

number two, the town staff has a lot on their plate and if that is one less thing they have to worry about, he feels that things should stay as they are. He said that if there is a situation that comes up, he feels that there should be some flexibility where the Town Administrator or whoever can make a judgment call, but he does not feel that we should go back to having one or two arrangements per year. There was some discussion and Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones what was her suggestion and she said to have two arrangements. Mayor Pro-tem Artis suggested that to eliminate the headache for the staff and the citizens stating that they are being treated not nice, that maybe they can come before a committee of Board members to listen to their problems and they bring it to the Board for a decision. There was some discussion about in the past people were waiting to the last minute to ask for help, and they were using the two arrangements in January and February and when they had a true emergency during the year and were told they could not have another one, they would become upset, making for a hostile environment. Mrs. Daly explained in detail the way the process worked in the past and stated that if the Board wanted to give arrangements, the staff needs to have an understanding on how it needs to be done. Mrs. Daly stated that if we do this, then we have to let it be known to everybody that these arrangements are available, because we cannot pick and choose who we offer this to. Mayor Flowers asked how we will be able to prevent citizens from taking advantage of the system, if we automatically give two arrangements per year. He said all we will be doing is giving them the opportunity to abuse the system. There was a lot of discussion and Alderman Ruffin asked Alderwoman Jones if she could write up exactly what she is suggesting about arrangements and bring it back to the Board at the next meeting and she said yes she could do that. Mayor Flowers asked if the Board was in agreeance to defer action on this issue until next meeting and all agreed.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Spivey to speak about the meals for Board members. Alderman Spivey stated on October 6th, he sent an email to the Board and Mr. Tony Howell referencing the Board receiving gift cards for Christmas. He said that the email contained information from the NC Constitution and an excerpt from the Local Government Finance, which he read to the Board. He stated it is his opinion that the Board should not have voted to receive Christmas gift cards based on the information he read from the two documents. He also does not think the Board should get meals at the meetings. There was some discussion about other Boards receiving meals either before or after meetings, and Alderwoman Jones stated that the meetings are not for self-serving purposes. She said what the Board does is for the citizens of the Town of Fremont and she thinks that what he read in the two documents was vague and she feels that it would require a further opinion. She said she doesn't feel that anybody is coming to the meetings to get a slice of pizza or a sub. Alderman Spivey said he would research it further and get back with the Board.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Tony Howell to speak about the Cemetery Ordinance. Mr. Tony Howell said that we have a revised ordinance which was done in 2019. He said that at that time the ordinance pertaining to burial containers and inadequate containers was not included in the revised ordinance and we feel it was an oversight. He said that because it is a General Regulation, we only need to add it back in and is asking the Board to vote on adding these back to the current ordinance. There was some discussion about vaults, burials, cremations, and the condition of Fremont Cemetery. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve adding the two ordinances pertaining to outer burial containers and inadequate containers to our current Cemetery Ordinance. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Information

Mayor Flowers stated that items #1 and #2 are self-explanatory.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to speak about the subdivision on Hwy 222 and the sale of the properties. Alderman Ruffin asked Mr. Tony Howell what the status was on these two items. Mr. Tony Howell stated that he spoke with Mike McAllister and he said that the developer was supposed to have closed on the property last week, but he has not heard if that was finalized. He said he will contact Mr. McAllister to find out the status. He said that the sale of the properties is something that we are working on. He said we are trying to find out the best way to advertise it. He said we are looking at putting it on our website, on our board in Town Hall, and putting signs on the property.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to speak about the observances for the month. Alderwoman Jones said that we have Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Latin-America Month, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked Mr. Tony Howell what the status was on the wall in Town Hall. Mr. Tony Howell said that Mr. Tim Howell has contacted someone to look at it, but he is not sure what the outcome was. He said that the roof has leaked in the past, but was fixed, and he isn't sure if the damage to the wall is from the previous leak or is it leaking again causing the damage. He said he will find out.

Alderwoman Lewis stated that Mr. Leon Mooring used to put flags on all the Veterans graves on Veterans Day and wanted to see if we could do it this year. Mayor Flowers said that the Boy Scouts might be interested in it, if we can get the flags. There was some discussion and it was determined that we will look into getting this done this year.

Close Regular Board Meeting

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

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk