



Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting

January 18, 2022

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:00 p.m. on January 18, 2022. Present were:

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor
Joyce M. Artis, Mayor Pro tem
Beatrice Jones, Alderwoman
Keith L. Spivey, Alderman
Terry Futrelle, Alderwoman
Leroy Ruffin, Alderman
Annie Lewis, Alderwoman

Also in attendance were Town Administrator Tony Howell, Town Clerk Shannon Daly, Finance Officer Cathy Nichols, Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms, Town Accountant Jimmy Overton and Town Engineer Mike McAllister.

Quorum Present: Yes

Call to Order

Mayor Flowers called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Alderman Spivey 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. Alderwoman Jones asked to amend the agenda to include parking for Goshen Medical Center under discussion. Alderman Ruffin asked to amend the agenda to include Fremont bank accounts under discussion. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda. Mayor Pro-tem Artis 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 Regular Board Meeting minutes of November 16, 2021, the Closed Session Meeting minutes of November 16, 2021, and the Regular Board Meeting minutes of December 21, 2021. Alderwoman Lewis made the

motion. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously. Alderwoman Jones stated that there were two corrections to the Closed Session Meeting minutes of December 21, 2021. She said that on the 3rd page and the 3rd paragraph from the bottom, the word not needs to be included and on the 1st page, mine needs to be changed to mind. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the amended minutes of the Closed Session Meeting minutes of December 21, 2022. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for public comment.

Mr. Larry Jones from Norwayne Alumni and Friends located at 106 E. Norwayne Alumni Way gave a packet to each Board member and staff. He highlighted the items that were in the packet pertaining to investing in Fremont. He spoke about comparison investments in Southern Wayne County vs. Northern Wayne County and spoke about several things that could improve the Town of Fremont.

Lucille Jones, who resides at 803 Chestnut Street, stated that the trash cans need to be emptied at Martin Luther King Park. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that this is the 3rd or 4th time that Mrs. Jones has brought this to our attention. Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to meet with Mrs. Jones to address this issue and Mr. Howell said he would.

Mayor Flowers closed the meeting for public comment.

Speaker

Mayor Flowers introduced auditor Phyllis Pearson. Mrs. Pearson gave the 2020/2021 year-end audit report. Alderwoman Jones asked Mrs. Pearson if the Board and management could meet with her next year to discuss the audit and to get her suggestions for improvements. She said that the reason she is asking for this is because there is a bill, S-423, in the Senate that if it passes, it will hold the elected officials personally accountable for the finances of the Town. She said in that case the Board would need to have thorough knowledge of the financial statements. Mrs. Pearson agreed and explained that she could do that if needed. Mr. Overton said the best time to do that would be before you start to do the budget for the year. The Board had many questions about the audit and the financial condition of the Town and Mrs. Pearson and Mr. Overton answered all questions. (See Action Section)

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. McAllister to speak. Mr. McAllister stated that the City of Goldsboro has a huge amount of debt and they are at 90% sewer capacity. He said that he thinks it is unfortunate that the City of Goldsboro is charging high sewer rates on small towns, who are already struggling. He said to counteract these sewer expenses, he has the troubled units list from DWQ, and they are starting the process for funding for April and fortunately, due to all the federal money, they will be flushed with cash this year. He said that we are doing an asset inventory assessment on the water and sewer systems and due to our condition it puts us in a better position to get grants.

Mr. McAllister said another positive is increasing revenue. He said he is working with a developer to build an 81 lot sub-division on Hwy 222. He said the developer has requested annexation and the Town will be getting Powell bill revenue, along with, water,

sewer, and electric revenue and ad valorem tax revenue. He said that with \$175,000, 3-bedroom dwellings, it looks like the Town would increase the revenue by approximately \$340,000 annually. He said that there would be an increase of about \$41,000 in water, \$67,000 in sewer, \$115,000 in electric, 95,000 in property tax, \$3,000 to \$4,000 in Powell bill, and increase in garbage revenue. He said that this is a rough estimate. He said that he needed the Board to vote to set a public hearing for the next Board meeting for annexation of the subdivision. He said that the property will need to be re-zoned from an RA to an R-10 and will go before the Planning Board in February. He said after that, it will be brought to the them to approve before the annexation. (See Action Section)

Mr. McAllister stated that he and Mr. Howell had met with the school system and the architect last year and he has seen where they have gotten some funds approved from the NC lottery to cover the cost of over runs. He said the school system has contracted with him to put a pump station at the interchange at I-795 and Hwy 222. He said they are going to do it for the sole purpose of opening up that intersection for development. He said once we run water and sewer, development will come and hopefully we will get a Sheetz, Bojangles, or something to generate revenue.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. McAllister if a pump station would be required for the subdivision at Hwy 222 and if so who would be responsible for it. Mr. McAllister said that the developer would be responsible for all costs associated with putting in the subdivision, which includes a pump station, water and sewer lines, electric lines, force main, storm drains, and roadways. He said it will be under a one-year warranty and after that, it will become the Towns. He said that the pump station at the interchange of I-795 and Hwy 222 will also become the Towns property.

Alderwoman Jones asked Mr. McAllister to explain the re-zoning for the subdivision on Hwy 222. Mr. McAllister stated that right now it is zoned RA – Residential Agriculture and it requires a minimum of 15,000 square foot. He said they want to re-zone it to an R-10, which that requires a minimum of 10,000 square foot.

Mr. McAllister stated that they received a letter from the CDBG and it appears they have released the funds. He said he is continuing to work on this project and hopefully soon we will be able to get the funds to cover the delinquent accounts that we incurred during COVID. He said that due to the increase in materials and labor, the budget we had may not cover all that we wanted to do. Mayor Flowers stated that we had two years to complete this project and wanted to know if this was still correct. Mr. McAllister stated that it was but we got an extension on this project.

Reports

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to go over the November Billed and December Collected Financial Report. Mrs. Daly stated that she has added a few items to the report and they included vouchers, arrangements, budget billing, debt setoffs, and cutoffs. She said that she hopes these items help explain the difference between what was billed versus what we collected. She went over the report and stated that the total expenses for the month of December was \$276,566.47 and the total revenue was \$347,065.45, which is a profit of \$70,498.98. There was some discussion about the process of vouchers and the garbage expenses. Mrs. Daly pointed out that she had added the cash collections monthly summary report that shows all the monies that were collected for the month of December and asked the Board if this is a report that they would like to continue to have

and the Board said yes they would.

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Nichols if she didn't object he would ask the Board for any questions and prevent her from having to go over the financial reports. She said that was fine. Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that there was no balance for the General Fund under Capital Management Funds/Savings from June through December and wanted to understand why. Mrs. Nichols stated that there has to be an adjustment made but it will be very little in that account. She said that the report is showing that we have \$96,000 in the Powell bill, but we have spent some of the money which has not been transferred out. She said hopefully by the next Board meeting, Mr. Overton will make the adjustments so that we can see what we actually have that we can spend.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to give the Public Works report. Mr. Howell stated that Mr. Pulley had wanted to attend the meeting but was unable to. He said that the repairs are being made to the generators and the pumps have been installed on Goldsboro Street. He said that these items were approved at a previous meeting to be fixed, using ARP funds. He said he and Mr. Pulley did quotes for the hot patches for the list of street repairs the Board had discussed. He said they contacted three companies and have gotten quotes from two of them. He said the lowest quote was from Asphalt Services, which was \$17,200 and will be good for 30 days. The other quote was from Barnhill at \$20,493. The difference is \$3,293. He stated that the Board had approved having these streets fixed and Mr. Howell said he recommended that we use Asphalt Services, because the quote was lower. He said we had \$24,200 left in Powell bill funds. There was some discussion about the list of repairs on the streets and how often we get Powell bill funds and when. Mayor Flowers asked the Board if there is any objections to using Asphalt Services to complete the street repairs and there was none.

Alderwoman Jones asked about the advertisement for the Public Works Director's position. Mr. Howell said that the advertisement in the League of Municipalities ended on January 7th. He stated that the cost is \$100 for a month. He said that we did have two applicants, one that was an employee with us and one that is not. He said he contacted the applicant to see if he was still interested and what salary he was looking for and the applicant said he was interested and he would like \$60,000 a year with no benefits. Mr. Howell stated that he does not have any government experience, but has management in maintenance and he is a licensed electrician. He asked if the Board would like to interview the applicants. Mayor Flowers stated that if we are not going to advertise then we should think about interviewing the two applicants. Alderman Ruffin stated that due to our financial situation, he does not think we need to hire anyone right now because we cannot afford it. Alderman Spivey understood the financial situation, but he asked if the staff and Mr. Howell could handle the extra work by not hiring a Public Works Director. Alderwoman Jones stated that we are looking at only 4 months left in this fiscal year to have to pay the salary, not an entire year. Alderman Ruffin stated that he heard the auditor and accountant state that we do not have any money and we need to look at saving money until we get out of the financial situation we are in. Alderwoman Lewis stated that the staff right now has been doing a good job. Mr. Howell stated that the employee that has been stepping up to fill-in while we do not have a Public Works Director, may not be able or willing to continue to do both jobs without compensation. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked if we could table the decision on compensating the employee until next meeting. (See Action Section)

Mayor Flowers asked Assistant Chief Bottoms to give the police report. Assistant Chief

Bottoms said that nothing major happened during the holiday season. He said that the grant for the AEDs have been approved and he is proceeding with the steps it takes to get the equipment in as soon as possible. He said training will be provided once they get the AEDs. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked what the situation was about the other night at the corner of Dock and Norwayne Alumni Way. Assistant Chief Bottoms said that there was a lady that is going through a grieving period because she had a child pass away and she was out driving and misjudged the curb and went into the ditch. Alderman Ruffin asked if there could be something put there to warn drivers that there is a ditch there. Mr. Howell stated that he would check on that.

Discussion

Mayor Flowers stated that there is a paragraph on the agenda that addresses public comment, but we do not adhere to it. He asked the Board how they would like to address public comments. Mayor Pro-tem Artis said she does realize that it is in the agenda, but she does not think people read it and she thinks that it should be announced at every meeting to make the public aware of the proper procedure. Mayor Flowers stated that he doesn't see that the public comment time is a problem. He said the problem is if the Board wants the public participating throughout the meeting. Mayor Pro-tem Artis said that whoever is presiding over the meeting could address that issue. Mayor Flowers asked the Board to think about it and give him direction on how they want it handled. There was some discussion from Alderman Ruffin, Alderman Spivey, and Mayor Pro-tem Artis about the process being written in the agenda about public comments. They all agreed that we should follow this process. Mayor Flowers stated that he understands the wishes of the Board.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about arrangements. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked the Board to refer to the minutes of November 16, 2021 where Alderwoman Jones stated that Mayor Pro-tem Artis mentioned at the last Board meeting to allow the committee to handle any situation that the staff could not handle or that was questionable. Mayor Pro-tem Artis said that there is a schedule of office hours for the Board at Town Hall and wanted to know if there is an issue with a customer if the Board member that is working could try to assist. Mayor Flowers stated that he would not want a system where citizens could by pass the staff. Mayor Pro-tem Artis said that there was an issue recently with a citizen and he did not get the answers he needed from the Town staff and he was going around Town talking negatively about the Town. She said she was asking if this type of situation happens, if the Board member that is working could try to help. Mayor Flowers stated that he would not be for this, but it is up to the Board. There was some discussion and it was determined that the motion will stand from November 16th which states that if there is a problem that the staff cannot handle, they are to call the Special Committee for assistance.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Spivey to speak about the policy for financial assistance and calling customers. Alderman Spivey said he would like to table it until next meeting.

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to speak about the property bids. Mrs. Daly said she wanted to give an update on the three property bids that the Board had accepted. She said she has advertised for upset bids and the ten days have passed. She said the three bids on 204 W. Ward Street, 920 S. Goldsboro Street, and 924 S. Goldsboro Street are now officially accepted. She said she has contacted two of the bidders and they will pay the complete price of the properties by the end of this week. She said that will be a total of

\$12,160. She said that the property at 204 W. Ward Street is owned by the County and the Town and it has to be approved by the County Commissioners. She said she has sent the information to the County clerk and it will be put on the agenda for Friday. Mrs. Daly said she has spoken with our Town attorney and he is ready to start the paperwork to complete the sale of the two properties.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to speak about the parking at Goshen. Alderwoman Jones said that the parking for Goshen is terrible. She said she saw someone in the Post Office who said he had an appointment with the dentist and there was no parking spaces available due to cars lined up for Goshen. There was much discussion about the problems with parking for COVID testing for Goshen Medical. It was determined that Mr. Howell will contact Goshen Medical to establish parking with directional signs.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to speak about the Town's bank accounts. Alderman Ruffin stated we are having trouble trying to pin down our finances and we don't know where some of this money is going. He said he is recommending that we change the bank accounts and he has never known the Town to have changed the bank accounts in the past. He said since we are having so many issues with the finances, he feels we need new accounts. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that it may not be a bad idea to change our bank accounts.

Action

Mayor Flowers asked for the Board to accept the year-end audit. Alderman Spivey made a motion to accept the year-end audit. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for the Board to make a motion to set the property annexation petition for 862 NC Hwy 222 for a public hearing at the February 15th meeting. Alderwoman Futrelle made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion. Alderman Spivey made a motion to advertise for the Public Works Director's position in the League of Municipalities for another month at the cost of \$100. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. Four favored: Mayor Pro-tem Artis, Alderwoman Futrelle, Alderman Spivey, and Alderwoman Jones. Two opposed: Alderman Ruffin and Alderwoman Lewis. Motion passed by majority.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to speak about the property bids. Mr. Howell said that we have received three bids and is asking the Board to decide if they would like to accept or deny the bids. He said we have a bid of \$1,200 for 202 E. Wayne Street, \$2,000 for 205 Dickinson Street, and \$1,500 for 405 S. Sycamore Street. He said his recommendation is to not accept the bids because they are too low. Alderwoman Futrelle said she thought they would accept the bid as long as it exceeds the tax value. There was some discussion about the bids. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion. Alderwoman Futrelle made a motion to accept the bids that are tax value or greater. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about the pay cycle for the Board stipend. Mayor Pro-tem Artis referred to the November meeting and stated that there was some discussion about the Board receiving their stipend every two weeks and that would put them on the same pay cycle as the Town staff. Mayor Pro-tem Artis made a motion

that the Board will start receiving their stipend on the same payroll cycle as the Town staff. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. Five favored: Mayor Pro-tem Artis, Alderman Ruffin, Alderwoman Futrelle, Alderwoman Jones, and Alderwoman Lewis. One opposed: Alderman Spivey. Motion passed by majority.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro-tem Artis to speak about the job descriptions. Mayor Pro-tem Artis stated that the Human Resource Committee has met several times and has come up with job descriptions for the Town Administrator, Town Clerk, Finance Officer, Billing & Collections Clerk I, and Billing & Collections Clerk II. Alderman Spivey made a motion to approve all five job descriptions. Mayor Pro-tem Artis seconded it. Mayor Pro-tem Artis asked if these job descriptions would take effect immediately and it was determined that they would. Alderman Spivey asked about the job description for the Public Works Director. Mayor Pro-tem Artis said that we have not completed that one yet.

Information

Mayor Flowers stated that there will be a mandated training with the LGC on Thursday. It was determined that it will be at 2:00 on Thursday at 121 W. Nash Street in Wilson. Mr. Howell said there will be other people attending and there will be ongoing training.

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly if the meeting with the auditor had been cleared and she said the meeting for tomorrow has been cancelled, because the auditor cannot be here. She said the auditor can be here on Monday, January 24th at 5:30 and he would like the Board to go over the draft audit and he will be prepared to answer any questions that the Board may have.

Mr. Howell said we are meeting with Electricities on February 17th for the Economic Development Plan.

Close Regular Board Meeting

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to adjourn. Alderwoman Jones made the 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