



Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting

April 19, 2022

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:00 p.m. on April 19, 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, Public Works Director Brian Harvey, 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 6:00 p.m.

Alderman Ruffin gave the invocation.

Alderwoman Lewis led all in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Mayor Flowers stated that Mr. Howell has asked to remove item #7 under action and it will be addressed at a later date. Alderman Ruffin stated he would like to add part-time Finance Officer under discussion as #7. Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that she would like to add staircase in the Town Hall under discussion as #8 and Clark Howell under discussion as #9. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Alderwoman Jones made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Flowers asked if there were any sessions out of the eight sessions of minutes that the Board would like to pull for discussion. Alderman Spivey stated that in the minutes of

January 24th, it was stated that a letter was written to the County Commissioners asking if they would consider keeping the library here. He asked if we had received a response from them. Mr. Howell said no sir. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve all eight sessions of minutes, which were January 24, 2022 Special Called Meeting, January 24, 2022 Closed Session Meeting, March 15, 2022 Regular Board Meeting, March 15, 2022 Closed Session Meeting, March 29, 2022 Special Called Meeting, March 29, 2022 Closed Session Meeting, April 5, 2022 Budget Workshop, and April 12, 2022 Budget Workshop. Mayor Pro tem Artis made a motion to approve all minutes. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

.Public Comment

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for public comment.

There were no comments.

Mayor Flowers closed the meeting for public comment.

Public Hearing

Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for public hearing concerning Zoning Ordinance changes to Chapter 152: Subdivision.

There were no comments.

Mayor Flowers closed the meeting for public hearing

Speaker

Mayor Flowers stated that Mr. Larry Jones was here to introduce Mr. Todd Morgan, the new principal of C. B. Aycock High School. Mr. Jones said that Mr. Morgan gives his apologies by not being here, but they got their schedules mixed up. He said this week is Spring Break and Mr. Morgan is out of town, but would like to be on the agenda for May. He said that C. B. Aycock is the first school to agree to a project, which would be to assist children with personal hygiene items, as well as, some non-perishables. He said that Norwayne Middle School and Fremont Stars has also agreed to participate in this program. He said the plans are to go to Northeast and Northwest so that the whole Northern Wayne County will be covered. He said Mr. Morgan will discuss this further when he can meet with the Board in May. He said also included in the grant was to improve communication and provide internet accessibility for the community in Fremont. He said there are companies selling ipads for \$11 or for \$20, which is part of the Affordable Connectivity Program that we have within the nation. Mayor Flowers asked was Norwayne Alumni sponsoring it and the school supporting it or is the school sponsoring it and Norwayne Alumni supporting it. Mr. Jones said that Norwayne Alumni is sponsoring it and providing supplies to the school. There was some discussion about the items that would be needed and how much would be needed. Alderwoman Jones stated that the program is part of President Biden's Build Back Better Program where the Administration believes that every household should have access to Broadband. She said that the ipads are wireless and can be used immediately out of the box and the service is good for one year. Mr. Jones said that Alderwoman Jones discovered the program and presented it to Norwayne Alumni.

Action

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. McAllister to speak about the preliminary subdivision plans for the subdivision located at 862 NC Hwy 222. Mr. McAllister stated that they have found that there is a cemetery possibly on the property. There was much discussion about the cemetery and the developer stated that he is meeting with the surveyor to determine the exact location of the cemetery, but assured the Board that the cemetery would not be disturbed. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the preliminary subdivision plans. Mayor Pro tem Artis made the motion. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. McAllister to speak about the 2022 Spring Application Resolutions required for all LGUs and the 2022 Spring VU Applications Resolutions. Mr. McAllister said there are three resolutions that need to be approved. He said one of them is for wastewater and he is going to apply for money to rehab every manhole that needs it and the rest of the pump stations that need it. He said the other one is for water and he is applying for AMR meters, which will prevent having to manually read meters. He said the third application resolution is applicable for a Global Unit Grant, which we meet the requirements for, due to our financial situation. He said this is new money that came out of ARPA. There was some discussion about the price increases and the problem with getting bids for the projects. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the resolutions. Alderwoman Jones made a motion to approve the 2022 Spring Application Resolutions required for all LGUs and the 2022 Spring VU Applications Resolutions. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. McAllister to speak about the Zoning Ordinance changes to Chapter 152: Subdivision. Mr. McAllister stated that the only changes he made were mainly correcting language that was outdated and one description for a cul-de-sac that was wrong. He said the other change he made was that he increased the Surety Performance Bond from 1.25 to 1.5 because 1.25 was not enough. Alderman Spivey asked if this needed to be approved by our Town attorney and Mrs. Daly said that she sent it to him and he has approved it. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked who was responsible for installing the sewer lines and Mr. McAllister said that developer is responsible for installing all the utilities and roadways. He said the Town will take over the utilities and roads once it is completed, but there would be a one year warranty on them. There was some discussion about the subdivision and the ETJ. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the changes to the Zoning Ordinance Chapter 152: Subdivision. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to speak about Budget Amendment BA-2022-5. Mr. Howell explained that the budget amendment would allow us to move the ARPA funds to salaries and the salary funds to do projects. He stated this is the easiest way to use the ARPA funds. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve Budget Amendment BA-2022-5. Alderwoman Lewis made the motion. Alderwoman Futrelle seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to speak about Budget Amendment BA-2022-6. Mr. Howell explained that the budget amendment was to allow us to buy a lawn mower. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the Budget Amendment BA-2022-6.

Mayor Pro tem Artis made the motion. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to speak about the property bids. Mrs. Daly stated that there is a bid for \$3,000 for 202 E. Wayne Street and the tax value is \$5,930; and there is a bid for \$1,500 for 405 S. Sycamore Street and the tax value is \$3,610. There was some discussion. Mayor Flowers asked if there is a motion to approve the bids. Alderman Spivey made a motion to accept the bids. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. Three approved: Alderman Spivey, Alderwoman Lewis and Alderwoman Futrells. Three opposed: Alderwoman Jones, Mayor Pro tem Artis, and Alderman Ruffin. Mayor Flowers broke the tie vote and accepted the bids. Motion passed.

Alderwoman Jones made a motion that the Police Department be permitted to advertise and hire a part time officer at the pay rate of \$23.50 per hour. Alderwoman Futrelle seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Alderman Ruffin made a motion to decrease the check amount that requires Board signature from \$3,000 to \$2,000. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Reports

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to go over the Financial Reports. Mrs. Daly asked the Board if they had any questions about the top section of the February Billed and March Collected and Expenses Financial Report. There was none. She stated that we have received \$87,412.19 more than what our expenses were for the month of March. She stated that on the middle section of the report, she added the amount of cut-offs for the month of March and that was 10. She said as of today, 8 have been turned back on and 2 are still cut off. She said that everything is looking good and we have \$1,893.79 coming in from vouchers. She asked if there are any questions. Mayor Flowers asked what happens to those people whose utilities are cut off and Mrs. Daly said they have to move and if they don't, the police will go instruct them that they cannot stay in the house without utilities. She said on the last section the total expenses was \$291,490.91 and the total revenue was \$360,506.23, which leaves us a profit of \$69,015.32. She said that is really good and it's good to see all of the numbers in the positive. Alderman Ruffin asked if the cut-offs were in the figures and Mrs. Daly said that the two that were still cut off are not in the figures.

Mrs. Daly stated that the Monthly Cash Collections Summary is a report that shows where she got all the numbers for the revenues from.

Mrs. Daly stated that the next report is something that Mr. Overton, the accountant, was talking with her about and she asked for a copy to put in the agenda packet for the Board to see. She said this report is the water/sewer fund report. She said after 9 months, we should have spent 75% of the budget, but we have only spent 53%, which is really good because this is the fund that we always lose in. She said as far as the revenue, we should have at least collected 67%, but we have collected 73%, which is more than what we had budgeted to collect. She said we have spent less than our budget and have collected more than we budgeted so it's like a "double whammy." She said we are doing very, very good. She said the net revenue minus the expenditures is \$279,189.68. She said we are very excited about these numbers and wanted the Board to see that we are in the positive

in the water/sewer fund.

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Nichols to give her financial report. Mrs. Nichols stated that there is an income statement that shows the income and profits for all the departments. She said she does not have a cash trending report this time, but she will email it to everybody. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked if the rental income was for the property on Main Street and Mr. Howell said yes it is. Alderwoman Jones asked about the cemetery revenues and if we have sold a lot more plots lately, because we budgeted for \$2,000 but we show that we have received \$6,050. Mrs. Daly said that we have sold more plots this year. Alderman Ruffin said that we are going to run out of cemetery plots. Mayor Flowers asked what kind of court fees do we get that is showing \$13. Mrs. Daly said that goes to the Police Department from Wayne County Court. Alderman Ruffin asked about the Powell Bill. Mayor Flowers said we budgeted for \$39,900, but we are up to \$46,352.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Harvey to give the Public Works report. Mr. Harvey said this is his first official Town meeting and thanked the Board for allowing him to be there and he appreciated the responsibility and trust that the Board has placed in him. He stated his first weekend was the Daffodil Festival and he wore more trash than he made and his kids and wife had a wonderful time and that's just a testament to their planning. He said the budget process has been fun so far and he has participated in one workshop, and he got a lawn mower out of it. He said he has been doing a lot of sweat equity with the staff, working with them, figuring out what they do and finding out what their strengths and weaknesses are, so not a lot of organization been done on his part. It's been a lot of operating a shovel, fixing sewer leaks, etc. He said they did fix three water leaks, 102 Mill Street, W. North Street, and Memorial Church Road. He said the one on W. North Street was horrible and water was coming out everywhere. He said there was a sewer leak on Ward Street that we first thought was the customer's responsibility, but it turned out being the Town's, so we fixed it. He said they have been preparing for the new builds and they have been setting temporary service poles in the construction areas. He said Durand is pro-active and he appreciates that about him. He said the last water leak that they know about it the one on Main Street and it only leaks when the water is turned on, but since we don't use it, we are not interested in making a bigger problem than we have to right now. He said that's about all they have accomplished, but they have identified quite a few things that need to be accomplished. He said they have bought sump pumps to change out some at the lift stations and he is getting a quote for the sewer meter that counts the wastewater going to Goldsboro, which has not worked since July of last year. He said we have been relying on Goldsboro to tell us how much wastewater we are sending to them. He said we that he felt that we had that money already in the budget that can be used. He asked the Board if they had any questions. Alderman Spivey asked if the grapple truck got fixed and Mr. Harvey said that it did get fixed, but it is currently back in the shop getting another leak fixed. Alderman Ruffin asked how much the sewer meter is going to cost and if we can do it and Mr. Harvey said that it would be less than \$12,000 and we cannot do it. There was some discussion about the water leak on Ward Street. Mr. Harvey stated that there has been some discussion about putting street lights on Hwy 222 from I-795 to Memorial Church Road. He said that he was told that the plan was to wait until the school is built and the lights from the school will illuminate the area that we are wanting to illuminate, but he wanted to know what the Board would like him to do. There was some discussion and it was stated that they are going to break ground in June. Alderman Ruffin stated that he would like to have street lights installed in between the lights that are already there to make sure that the school will be well lit. Mr. Harvey is to get pricing for the lights and it will be brought back to the Board for action at the next

Board meeting. Mr. Harvey stated that the ditches should be cleaned out in the winter, but they did not get cleaned out this past winter and he doesn't know when the last time they were cleaned. He said he is starting a ditch cleanup plan and they are going to start cleaning the ditches at the end of South Goldsboro Street and work their way up. He said the Town is responsible for keeping the storm water drain ditches clean, but not all ditches are storm water drain ditches. He said most are property drainage ditches which are the responsibility of the property owners. He said the plan is to clean ditches on Fridays and they have already cleaned the ditch behind the Holy Temple Church.

Mayor Flowers asked Chief Moats to give the Police Report. Chief Moats stated that the Daffodil Festival went well and there were approximately 14,000 attendees and there was only 1 incident, involving a lost child, which they were able to reunite him with his family. He said Mrs. Jessica Batts, the female officer, has completed her training and is now working on her own and transitioning well into her position. He stated that the Town has more coverage, but still needs a part-time officer. He stated that during the budget meeting, he proposed an increase in the hourly rate for part time officers to be competitive with other agencies who are offering a little bit more than what he has proposed. He said currently the hourly pay is \$14.85 and this pay is too low to get anyone interested in working with the Town of Fremont. He said he is proposing to increase the pay to \$23.50 per hour, which is midway from what other agencies are offering and where we are at presently. He said he would like to start advertising, but with the understanding that we can increase this hourly rate. He said normally the hiring process takes about 30 to 60 days, which is a quick turn-around for getting the requirements for the Training and Standards completed through the application process. He said they can quick track the application process, for instance, if Mr. Miller would like to come back, because he was a former employee, or if there is a certified officer already working and just wants to work some extra on the weekends. He said the application process would be much quicker in these situations, instead of someone coming right out of BLET. He said he does have some money left in his budget this year to hire someone. He said there is 10 weeks left in this budget year and if he hired someone right now, it would cost \$4,700 if the hourly rate was \$23.50. He said it would take at least 4 weeks to hire someone, so the cost would be less than the \$4,700. He is asking for the Board to approve the \$23.50 hourly rate so that he can begin to advertise. There was some discussion. Mayor Flowers stated that since this is under reports and not action, he said we would defer it to the next Board meeting to give everyone an opportunity to review it, unless the Board wants to do it tonight. Alderwoman Jones said that since advertising takes a while, she would be in favor of making a motion to move with that process now. Alderman Spivey said after the last meeting, he researched and found that Fremont is not the only small town having this problem with hiring officers, because they are in short supply. Mayor Flowers stated that his concern is that if you double that amount in salary, it's almost equal to a full time position of what we are paying some of our higher level employees. He said we are still debating on whether or not we are going to give a raise to all of our employees and we need to be fair to them. Alderwoman Jones said that she hears what the Mayor is saying, but she doesn't think he is comparing apples to apples, when you are comparing a policeman versus another type of employee. Mayor Flowers said with the training that is required for electricians and plumbers, they are high on the level of salaries if they are certified. Chief Moats stated that with part time employees, they are not getting all the benefits, so we have to make it somewhat appealing to them and \$14.85 per hour is not appealing. He said our officers are getting paid a little less than the average and he is trying to compensate that with the cost of living raise for the next fiscal year, which they have missed for the last three years. He said that will bring their salary up, plus they are

getting all the benefits. Mayor Flowers said he would like to have time to look and see how this increase will impact everybody, before making a decision. Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that basically we will be replacing two part time officers and not creating new positions, but would be increasing the pay by roughly \$8.00 an hour. (See Action Section)

Chief Moats stated that Marty Jones was charged with embezzlement or theft of some money that belonged to the Town of Fremont and that case has since been disposed of as of November 17, 2021. He said she plead guilty and there is restitution and fees totaling \$6,528.27. He said the restitution that she is required to pay to the Town is \$6,152.77 within 24 months, which will be between now and November 17, 2023. Mayor Flowers asked if this will be paid through the judicial system and Chief Moats said that she will go through the probation services and the restitution will be paid through the probation services and that money will be allocated back to the Town. Alderwoman Futrelle said she read that she had probation and asked if that was correct and Chief Moats said that was correct and the quicker she pays the restitution the quicker she comes off the intensive probation and will be on unsupervised probation.

Discussion

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to speak about the check amount that needs Board signature. Mr. Howell stated that at a previous Board meeting, there was some discussion about lowering the check amount that requires Board signature from \$3,000 to \$2,000. He said that the Board did not act and approve it and wanted to know if they wished to change it. There was some discussion. (See Action Section)

Mayor Flowers asked Mrs. Daly to speak about Ormond's. Mrs. Daly said that she got in touch with Eddie Ormond and he said that he is not going to put a store front for his gas business in that building, because it is too big, but he may build off to the side of it. She said he told her to tell the Board that he welcomes any suggestions that they may have for the use of the building. She said he told her that an internet café' wanted to lease the building, but he would not lease it to them for that type of business.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro tem Artis to speak about GFL. Mayor Pro tem Artis said that she has gotten several complaints about GFL. She said they leave trash behind and they don't completely empty the containers. She said one lady gets on her golf cart, with her broom and dust pan, every Monday and goes around houses nearby to clean up. She said there is a man that lives behind her that is very upset and wants to know what is going to be done about this situation. She said she has contacted Mr. Howell because every single Monday there is a problem and she wanted to bring this situation before the Board. Chief Moats said that we have the same issue in the alley behind the office. He said that there have been several Monday mornings when he has come in after GFL has emptied the trash bins and there is trash strewn through the alley and you can follow the truck wherever it goes, due to the trash left behind. Alderwoman Lewis said that sometimes there are different people working and some of them will take the bags out of the bins instead of emptying the entire trash bin, which leaves trash in the bin. Mr. Howell said that the route supervisor has agreed to come in and talk to us and wanted to know if the Board wants to speak with him or if the committee would like to meet with him. Mayor Pro tem Artis said that they are talking about going up on their rates. Mr. Howell said that they are going up 4.2%. Mayor Flowers told Mr. Howell to talk to the supervisor first and if he is not satisfied, then refer him to the Board.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro tem Artis to speak about the State of the Town Address. Mayor Pro tem Artis said that a few months ago Mr. Ruffin brought up this subject and she wanted to revisit it. She said that basically this will allow us to be more transparent. She said that she believes that having a State of the Town Address will bring out more people and we need to do it in light of other things that have come to our attention and we can dispel a lot of rumors that have been going around Town. She said she wanted to bring it to the Board to see how they felt about having a State of the Town Address and would like to do it as soon as possible, especially now that we are doing so well with our finances. She said she would like the citizens to know that we are really taking care of the Town's money. Mayor Flowers said he would be careful about talking about our finances, because the reason we are doing well is due to the fact that we have had one of the driest years that we have ever had. He said we can talk about how good this year is and next year if we have a lot of rain, we will have mud in our face. Mayor Pro tem Artis said that she begs to differ with Mayor Flowers, because there have been other things going on that made a negative impact on our finances and she does not feel that we will find ourselves in that same position. Mayor Flowers said that he was just talking about that one thing. Alderwoman Jones stated to the Mayor that it would be his address and she often hears him talk about the good things that are happening to Fremont, such as, the new houses that are being built and the new school that is being built. Mayor Flowers said he agrees with the concept, but the negative side is that we don't have any representation. He said we can do a State of the Town Address and it would be very positive, because there are a lot of good things going on, such as, having a schedule to clean the ditches. He said half of the Town would be excited to know that, but when can we have a State of the Town Address where it can be done effectively? He said what is the audience going to be? There was discussion about how to advertise to make the citizens aware of it. Mayor Flowers stated that he thought June to July would be a good time, because we are closing out one year and opening up another year. Alderman Ruffin said that the citizens have a better outlook towards Fremont, because certain things are happening. He said we are finally paving and fixing streets and fixing leaks. He said we went a couple of years and did not fix any of these things. He said all the citizens know what's going on in Fremont, if you are doing anything they know it, if you're not doing anything they know it. He said if we advertise, he believes we will get attendance. Alderwoman Lewis stated that there are some negative people in Fremont. Mayor Pro tem Artis said that she believes things are going to get better with our new Public Works Director, our new Town Administrator, our new Finance Officer and our Police Officers. She said everybody is doing a good job. She said it takes a team effort and we just want to get that word out there. Mayor Flowers suggested that we discuss this at the next Budget Workshop.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to speak about the golf carts for the Daffodil Festival. Alderman Ruffin stated that he would like to see us have golf carts so that we can pick people up and bring them from their cars to the Festival. Everybody liked and agreed with this suggestion. Mayor Flowers stated that this suggestion can be turned over to the Daffodil Committee.

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to speak about the part time Finance Officer. Alderman Ruffin stated that he would like to have a part time Finance Officer to help Mrs. Nichols. Mayor Flowers asked if we could defer this to the Budget Workshop and the Board agreed.

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro tem Artis to speak about the staircase in Town Hall. Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that she and Alderwoman Jones had a chance to see the staircase that was put in and said that they do not look safe. She said that they were informed that they were not inspected. She said if someone gets hurt by using those steps, the Town will be liable. She said that until we can get the steps inspected and/or removed, she would feel better if they were roped off and not used. Mayor Flowers said that the issue has been stressed about the safety of the staircase and asked what is the pleasure of the Board. Alderman Spivey said step up to the plate and get them like they are supposed to be. Mayor Flowers asked if there is any objections to Mr. Howell getting some estimates of replacing them making to make them safe? There were no objections.

Mayor Flower asked Mayor Pro tem Artis to speak about Clark Howell. Mayor Pro tem Artis wanted to know what the status of Clark Howell's pipe being installed. She said Mr. Clark Howell is upset and is concerned, because his barn is almost going down into the ditch. She said that the Board has made a motion in the past to get it repaired. Mr. Howell said that we have reached out to Brian Taylor and he is trying to find the pipe. He said we could try to get some more quotes to fix it if you do not want to wait for Brian Taylor. He said that Brian Taylor's quote was lesser and that's why we were using him. Mr. Howell said that he will bring this back to the Board once we find out when he can do the job.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to speak about the Budget Workshop. Mr. Howell stated that we have until May 16th to turn in our preliminary draft budget to the LGC. He said he has to turn in a report on the ARPA funds by next Friday and the School of Government wants us to make sure we meet that deadline. There was some discussion and it was determined that the next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 27th from 3:00 to 5:00.

Close Regular Board Meeting

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to adjourn. Alderman Spivey made the motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk