



Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting

May 17, 2022

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:00 p.m. on May 17, 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, and Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms.

Quorum Present: Yes

Call to Order

Mayor Pro tem Artis 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 Pro tem Artis asked if there were any additions that needed to be made to the agenda. Mr. Howell has asked to add credit card fees as item #7 under action. Alderwoman Jones asked to add state of the town address as item #3 under discussion. Alderman Ruffin asked to add street lights on Hwy 222 as item #8 under action. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked to add Clark Howell as item #4 under discussion. Mr. Howell asked to have a Closed Session pertaining personnel. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked for a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Alderwoman Jones made a motion to approve the agenda with the additions. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Pro tem Artis asked if the Board would like to approve them individually or collectively. The Board chose to approve them collectively. Alderman Spivey made a motion to approve the minutes of April 19, 2022 Regular Board Meeting, April 27, 2022 Special Called Meeting, May 2, 2022 Budget Workshop, and May 6, 2022 Budget Workshop. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Mayor Pro tem Artis opened the meeting for public comment.

There were no comments.

Mayor Pro tem Artis closed the meeting for public comment.

Speaker

Mayor Pro tem Artis 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 could not be here tonight, because C. B. Aycock made the playoffs. He said he would like to be on the agenda for next month.

Reports

Financial Report

Mayor Pro tem Artis asked Mrs. Nichols to give the Financial Reports. Mrs. Nichols said that she has given everybody the cash trending report ending in April. Mrs. Nichols read the report. Alderman Spivey asked if they were interest bearing accounts and Mrs. Nichols said that they were, but the interest is very little. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked Mrs. Nichols if she had the Budget to Actual Report and she said she thought that Mr. Overton had sent the Board the report. Mrs. Nichols said she would send them one. Mrs. Daly went over the March Billed and April Collected and Expenses Financial Report. She asked the Board if they had any questions. Alderwoman Jones asked if we were cutting off businesses and Mrs. Daly said no we do not actually cut them off, but we do charge them the \$50 fee and give them approximately a week to pay, but we would cut them off if they did not pay the bill. Alderwoman Jones had some questions about the billed month being different than the collected and expenses month. After some discussion, it was explained that this part of the report had to do with cash flow only, meaning, did the Town bring in enough of money to pay the expenses for that month. Alderman Ruffin wanted to know if the Town's utilities usage was in the report and Mrs. Daly said that it was in the expenses, but not in the billed or collections, because we don't bill ourselves. Alderman Ruffin asked if he could get a report on how much the Town is using in utilities and Mrs. Daly said yes she would get that for him.

Mayor Flowers joined the meeting.

Public Works Report

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Harvey to give the Public Works report. Mr. Harvey gave his report. The following was the report:

1. Capital Outlay: Purchased Big Dog 60” lawn mower \$8,749.00. Researching Jumping Tump to purchase: Approximate cost \$4K.
2. Repairs: 20 April- Utility pole on Main Street heading towards Eureka was knocked down during vehicle accident. New pole installed and service changed from old to new. Service impact < one hour. Insurance claim \$900.00. Grapple truck cylinder repair- \$3749.00. Water main leak on Vance St near old pool repaired. Ball field concession stand repaired, and bench rebuilt. Bathrooms still need repaired. Line truck repair (fuel leak, temp overheat and bucket attachment electronics) in work. 6 May wind storm generated two instances of power interruption. First instance- two cutoffs changed and line repaired, second instance- powerline severed from pole and service separated from home, pole and service repaired. Outage > 6hrs, approximate time occurrence 10pm to 4am. Water leak repair Memorial Church road and Main St. complete. Water leak repaired Vance and Harold Outage < 3 hrs.
3. Projects: Ditch cleanout continues (see attached map). Sewer taps installed on new construction off Harold St., water main taps on new property completed. Graveyard located on new subdivision property. Old pool discussion.

There was some discussion about who is responsible for the cemetery that’s located behind Peacock Street. Mr. Howell said that he would ask our Town Attorney who the responsible party is. There was much discussion about the pool and the dangers that it poses to the children.

4. Response to Board inquiries:
Alderman Ruffin requested warranty information and average service life of purchased lawn mower.
2 year comprehensive warranty, 40,000 hrs average service life.
Alderman Ruffin requested approximate costs to install street lights on poles from Memorial Church Road to Hwy 795. Approximate cost to town including labor is \$4,349.00

Alderman Ruffin stated that we can wait until they break ground on the school in June before making a decision on installing the street lights.

Mayor Pro Tem Artis requested information regarding PW employees using facilities for personal reasons. *This has occurred in the past and the employees request to continue this “perk”.

Mr. Harvey recommended that the Public Works employees not be allowed to use tools or equipment for personal use, due to liability issues. He stated that there is one exception and that is a staff member using the computer on the weekend to obtain his GED. There was some discussion and it was determined that the Public Works employees would not be allowed to use tools or equipment for personal use, with the exception of using them for personal enrichment, which would help the individual as well as the Town. This will become part of the personnel policy.

5. Requests to board: Request ordinance for access to town equipment by town employees. Request clarification/direction on grapple truck pick up. Request abatement fee schedule be standardized. Request Safety shoes be provided by the town for town employees (or a portion thereof). Utility (power) pole tap discussion.

Mr. Harvey asked the Board for clarification on Public Works employees being able to use Town tools and equipment. He stated that he has put a stop to it and wanted the Board to support his decision. There was some discussion and it was determined that there will be a policy added to the personnel policy stating that Town employees are not allowed to use Town tools and equipment for personal use, with the exception of using them for personal enrichment.

Mr. Harvey asked the Board to set a standard abatement fee for grass cutting. There was some discussion and it was determined that it will be tabled until the next meeting.

Mr. Harvey stated that there is nothing in the Personnel Policy that states that the Town has to pay for safety shoes, nor does OSHA require the Town to purchase safety shoes for the employees, but they do require us to make the determination if safety shoes are required. He said if it is specific gear, or specialized safety equipment, the Town must provide it; however, safety shoes are not in that category. He requested from the Board that the Town either purchase safety shoes or cover a portion of the cost for safety shoes. He said he would like it to be written in the personnel policy if the Board chooses to do this. There was some discussion and it was determined that it would be tabled until the next meeting.

Mayor Pro tem Artis asked Mr. Howell what the status was concerning the Dollar General truck hitting the electrical line on Ballance Road. Mr. Howell stated that our attorney sent a letter to the company, but we have not heard anything back from them. He said that we can follow up with that. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked how much were we asking for from the company and Mr. Howell said \$600. Mayor Pro tem Artis said that it would cost that much to pay the attorney and Mr. Howell said he did not think that he charged us anything for the letter. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked if we had given any money to the lady that was affected by the line being pulled down and Mr. Howell said no and his thinking was that when we got the money from Dollar General then he was going to ask the Board to make a decision about giving her some money.

Alderman Ruffin stated to Mr. Harvey that the grapple truck has been down most of the year and he wanted to know if anyone was keeping a tally of the cost of the repairs. Mr. Harvey said that all the repairs are being paid through the Town and Mrs. Nichols said that she would get the figures for Mr. Ruffin.

Mayor Pro tem Artis addressed Mr. Harvey and said that she really appreciated his report and that they have never had a written report like that before. Alderwoman Futrelle agreed and commented that it was very detailed.

Police Report

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

Chief Bottoms stated that they have not had any major incidents in the last month. He said based on increasing the part-time hourly rate, Officer Miller has come back. He said that he will be working two weekends a month. He said that he has not received any other applications for part-time help, but he is hoping that after the budget time is over, he will get some interest.

Mayor Flowers asked about the accident that happened on Hwy 222 and wanted to know what the role of the Police Department and Public Works. Assistant Chief Bottoms stated that the Police Department responds to all motor vehicle accidents that's within the Town. He stated they take the report and the report is distributed to the all parties involved. He said if there is Town property involved, then Mr. Howell and Mr. Harvey will get the report for insurance purposes. He said if there is no criminal activity, then it becomes an insurance matter, but if it is criminal, then they will go through the proper process to handle the situation. Mr. Harvey said that once law enforcement and emergency services have left the scene and everyone is safe, then Public Works will repair whatever needs to be repaired and file a claim. Mayor Flowers asked if the Town picked up any financial responsibilities and Mr. Harvey said no.

Discussion

Part-time Finance Officer

Mayor Flowers asked Alderman Ruffin to speak about the part-time Finance Officer. Alderman Ruffin stated that he would like to table that item.

Boys and Girls Club

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro tem Artis to speak about the Boys and Girls Club. Mayor Pro tem Artis referenced the notes that were in the agenda packet concerning a conversation that she had with Ms. Wooten, the Director of Fremont's Boys and Girls Club. There was some discussion and it was determined that they can get more information on how the funds, that the Town are contributing, are spent.

State of the Town Address

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to speak about the State of the Town Address. Alderwoman Jones stated that they had decided to have it on June 28th at 6:30 p.m. at the Methodist Church in Fremont. She asked Mayor Flowers what he would need from the Board to help him with the State of the Town Address. She recommended to put out flyers and yard signs as advertisement for the event. Mayor Flowers said he would like to sit down and brainstorm with the Board about what to present to the Town. He said he thinks that there are a lot of positive things and he would like to center it around those things. Alderwoman Jones said that she thinks they need to start advertising soon to get the word out. Mayor Flowers said that he doesn't want this event to be his event, rather he would like it to be their event. There was some discussion and it was determined that they would have a meeting to further discuss the details.

Clark Howell Job

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro tem Artis to speak about Clark Howell. Mayor Pro tem Artis referenced an estimate that was handed out to the Board concerning the repairs to the ditch behind Mr. Clark Howell's house. She went over the estimate and it was more reasonable than any other estimate that we have received. There was some discussion and a motion was made. (See Action Section)

Action

Clark Howell Job

Mayor Pro tem Artis made a motion to accept the estimate from Eastern Earthscapes & Construction, LLC to complete Mr. Clark Howell's job at 511 N. Hillandale Drive not to exceed \$4,100. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. No discussion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

GFL

Mayor Flowers asked Mayor Pro tem Artis to speak about GFL. Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that she wanted to know if there has been any improvements and if Mr. Howell has gotten any other quotes. Mr. Howell said that he has two other quotes, but one of the businesses are owned by GFL and the other quote is higher than GFL. He said that there has been fewer complaints about trash pick-up lately. There was some discussion and it was determined that we will continue to work with and use GFL for our garbage pick-up.

Fall and Spring Cleanup

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell and Mr. Harvey to speak about Fall and Spring Cleanup. Mr. Howell stated that in the past we have talked about Fall and Spring cleanup and asked if we wanted to continue this service. He asked Mr. Harvey to speak more about it. Mr. Harvey stated that now that he has clarification on what we are to pick up during Fall and Spring Cleanup, and that we are following the ordinance in that we do not pick up things such as construction materials, he feels that they can handle it, but personally he would prefer to do it once a year. There was some discussion about trash and debris pickup, but no changes were made.

Area Light Fees

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell and Mr. Harvey to speak about area light fees. Mr. Howell stated that we could increase the revenues on area lights by doubling the fee. Mr. Harvey stated that it is costing more to install an area light than what we are charging and he is recommending that we double the fee from \$100 to \$200. There was some discussion and it was determined that this is deferred to a later meeting when the Board will look at all Town fees to determine which ones may need to be increased.

Bulk Good Fees

Mayor Flowers stated that if there are no objections, the bulk fees will be deferred to a later meeting. There were no objections.

Non-Profit Rate Codes

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to speak about the non-profit rate codes. Mr. Howell stated that the Historical Society and the Rotary Club are paying a substantial lower rate for utilities than other non-profit organizations. He stated that he emailed our attorney, Brian Pridgen, and asked if we were handling these rates correctly and he said no. He said that Mr. Pridgen said that if we had an actual reason for rate discrimination that would be OK, but not reasons based on a club or association. He said Mr. Pridgen said that we could do it on a class basis, but not one or two clubs. He said that Mr. Pridgen stated that we can have a separate non-profit rate. There was much discussion. Alderman Spivey made a motion that all non-profit organizations pay the inside residential rates, but the rate code name will stay inside residential rate. Mayor Pro tem Artis seconded it. Five approved: Alderwoman Jones, Alderman Spivey, Alderwoman Futrelle, Mayor Pro tem Artis, and Alderman Ruffin. One Opposed: Alderwoman Lewis.

Property Bid on 205 Dickinson

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to speak about the property bid on 205 Dickinson Street. Mr. Howell said that the bid was for \$2,500 and the property tax value is \$1,930. He stated that we needed a motion to accept the bid. Alderman Spivey made a motion to accept the bid for \$2,500 for the property at 205 Dickinson Street. Alderwoman Futrelle seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Credit Card Fees

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to discuss the credit card fees. Mr. Howell stated that we have lost over \$38,000 due to the fees that the bank charges us in order to allow our citizens to use their credit card to make their payment. He is recommending that we pass this cost on to the citizens that choose to use their credit card for payment. Alderwoman Futrelle made a motion that we will charge a convenience fee for all credit card payments effective July 1, 2022 and this fee will be based on the fee that the bank charges the Town. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Information

Asian-American and Mental Health Month

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones to speak about the Asian-American and Mental Health Awareness Month. Alderwoman Jones referred to the proclamation in the agenda packet pertaining to Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month for 2022 and the National Mental Health Awareness Month for 2022. She stated that both of these were signed by the President. She spoke briefly about each one and encouraged the Board to read both of them if they have not already done so. There was some discussion.

Town Hall Closing

Mayor Flowers stated that the Town Hall will be closed on Monday, May 30th in observance of Memorial Day.

Closed Session

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to go into Closed Session. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Open Session

Close Regular Board Meeting

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

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk