



## **Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting**

**November 15, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:00 p.m. on November 15, 2022. Present were:

Joyce M. Artis, Mayor Pro tem  
Beatrice Jones, Alderwoman  
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 Fire Chief Jeff Brooks.

Those that were absent were Mayor W. Darron Flowers and Alderman Keith L. Spivey.

**Quorum Present: Yes**

**Call to Order:** Mayor Pro tem Artis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Invocation:** Alderman Ruffin gave the invocation.

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

**Approval of Agenda:** Mayor Pro tem Artis asked for a motion to approve or amend the agenda. Mr. Howell recommended adding Christmas Schedule Revision as item #4 and Board Meeting in December as item #5 under action. Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that she would like to remove item #6 under discussion, which is the New Elementary School Power Source. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked for an approval for the amended agenda. Alderwoman Jones made the motion to approve the amended agenda. Alderwoman Lewis seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mayor Pro tem Artis asked if the Board would like to approve the minutes of October 18, 2022 Regular Board Meeting and October 18, 2022 Closed Session Meeting, separately or consecutively. Alderman Ruffin made a motion to approve both sets of

minutes together. Alderwoman Futrelle seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment:** Mayor Pro tem Artis opened the meeting for public comment and stated that if anyone would like to address the Board, they would need to come to the podium and state their name and address, and they would have 3 minutes to speak.

Larry Jones, the President of Norwayne Alumni and Friends, representing 106 E. Norwayne Alumni Way and 114 S. Goldsboro Street, made several points which were:

- He stated that he is following up from a previous meeting when he spoke about investing in Fremont.
- He recommended that the Board request from the County Board an industrial park for Northern Wayne County.
- He said that Fremont has done the work, the budget is in the black, and you have managed the resources to improve the Town, which no one can deny.
- He said a major part of help is funding from grants. He said Norwayne Alumni and Friends is working on the CDBG-CV grant, which is still pending, and they are going to be moving forward with some action to try to make sure that they do not lose that grant.
- He said that there is a need for an industrial park in Northern Wayne County. He said that we currently have one in the central part of the county, which is in Goldsboro that is under construction and there is one in Southern Wayne County that is already in place.
- He said that the proposed place for an industrial park in Northern Wayne County is where the current elementary school is, which is located on Hwy 222. He said this is an ideal and realistic location because it is close to I-795.
- He said that some things that need to be done to move forward are: the Town of Fremont needs to be in agreement, letters need to be sent to the County Commissioners, we need our County representative to support this effort, and we need Wayne County Chamber of Commerce's support as well.
- He said the benefits of an industrial park are revenue increases for the Town and County, additional job opportunities, population increase, Town improvements, and many more.
- He introduced Desiree Newsome and stated that they have started a company called Broken Pieces United, which is located at 114 S. Goldsboro Street. He said the purpose of this company is to try to bring jobs to this area.
- He said that their needs are a building for this company and for training. He said the Town can help if they have a building they could use.
- He said they are supporting local businesses and bought 75 turkeys from the local grocery store for the food bank and they are renting the space from a local business in Fremont.
- He said that they want to expand, but they will need additional space and they want to stay in Fremont.
- He said the local grocery store has some young people working in the store as part of a program from JCI. He said this program allows you to get workers without paying them, because the pay comes from a grant. He suggested that the Town look into this program for workers that the Town may can use, without having to pay them.

- He said that they are working with a group in Onslow County and they have identified 200 jobs, so he believes that the goals that he has presented are definitely doable in Fremont.
- He said that there is a program for those in prison called re-entry program that they will be working with to help them find jobs for the skills they have.
- He stated that we lost our library and EMS. He referenced several areas that have an EMS located close to a school, but Fremont does not and that's not consistent. He stated that Mt. Olive refurbished a building for their library and Fremont has the elementary school that can be used for our library. He said that we need to talk about these things as a group.
- He said that it was brought to his attention that if Fremont had an AT&T Call Center, we would have jobs here. He said that Fremont did not get flooded out. He said that Fremont does have value within the County and Fremont has more to offer than what people realize.

Mayor Pro tem Artis closed public comment.

**Speaker:**

- (1) Johnny Pippin – Northern Wayne Library** – Mayor Pro tem Artis introduced Mr. Johnny Pippin. Mr. Pippin stated that he is representing the newly organized group, Friends of the Northern Wayne Library. He said they have been meeting for approximately a year after our library closed. He said that the only library that is in the Northern Wayne area is in Pikeville, and it is not big enough to accommodate the needs of the people. He stated that we need a modern library in our area and referenced the library in Goldsboro and the new library in Mt. Olive. He said that a library is much more than just books. He said a modern-day library is totally different which can be used daily. He presented a slideshow that shows all the different things that a library can have and how it can benefit the citizens. There were some questions about the size and the location of the library and Mr. Pippin stated that this has not been determined, because there are some politics involved. He said he would appreciate if the Board could support them, and if possible, talk with our County Commissioner Barbara Aycock, or any other County Commissioner.

**Action:**

- (1) Minor Subdivision Plat located at N. Vance and Harrell Street – Mr. Howell**

- **Planning and Adjustment Board Meeting Minutes (Approval of Plat)**
- **Zoning Compliance Permit Application**
- **Minor Subdivision Final Plat**

Mr. Howell stated that Mr. Jonathan Lee from Lee Building & Electrical wants to subdivide 4 lots to make 3 lots, to meet our ordinances, with each lot to be built with a single-family dwelling. He said all lot dimensions and set-backs are in accordance with our ordinances. He said that the Board of Planning and Adjustment has reviewed the preliminary plat and they, along with him, is recommending an approval for the plat.

There was some discussion and Mayor Pro tem Artis asked for a motion to approve the minor subdivision plat located at N. Vance and Harrell Street. Alderman Ruffin made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**(2) Fire Department Officers – Fire Chief Brooks**

• **List of Officers will be emailed and hardcopy will be available at meeting**

Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that there is a correction to the list of Fire Department Officers. She stated at the bottom, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant's name is Robbie Taylor instead of Robbie Parker. She asked Fire Chief Brooks to present the names to the Board. Fire Chief Brooks said that last Thursday night at their annual election, they selected the following officers:

Chief - Jeff Brooks  
1st Assistant Chief - Steven Marlowe  
2nd Assistant Chief - Steve Evans  
1st Captain - Scott Yelverton  
2nd Captain - Josh Pulley  
1st Lieutenant - Carl Lawrence  
2nd Lieutenant - Robbie Taylor  
Secretary/Treasurer - Gene Howell

Fire Chief Brooks stated that he added some history about each officer, explaining how long they have been on the department and the guidelines set forth to qualify as an officer of the Fire Department. He asked the Board for their approval of each officer.

Alderwoman Jones asked if there was an age limit for an officer to serve and Fire Chief Brooks said there is no age limit as long as they can perform the duties. Alderwoman Jones pointed out that all officers are men and asked what efforts have been used to try to get women or people of color to join the Fire Department. Fire Chief Brooks said that they have three females that are currently on the Fire Department, but they do not want to be officers, they want to support the Fire Department. He said there is a job for everybody; somebody needs to direct traffic, somebody needs to pass out equipment, etc. He said typically an officer is someone that will go inside a burning building and have specific knowledge. He said a few years ago, there was a female that was their secretary/treasurer and she stepped down after two years. He said that they hardly ever have people of color apply for the Fire Department, but currently they have two people of color that have joined the Fire Department. Alderwoman Jones asked if they had any type of recruitment methods and Fire Chief Brooks said that they use word of mouth, FaceBook, and they set up a booth at the County Fair. He said 239 people from the entire county filled out information cards stating that they were interested, and the Fire Chief from each area will receive the cards from people living in their area.

Mayor Pro tem Artis asked about the female that served as secretary/treasurer and Fire Chief Brooks said that she served about 5 years ago and Gene Howell helped train her, but after two years, she decided not to continue to serve. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked for a motion to accept the officers that were presented. Alderman Ruffin made the motion to

accept the list of officers that were presented to them by Fire Chief Brooks for Fremont Fire Department. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked Fire Chief Brooks if he foresees the offices rotating and he said that no one has shown any interest in stepping down anytime in the near future. Mayor Pro tem thanked him for all that he and the Fire Department does for the Town. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**(3) Customer Account – Mrs. Daly**

Mayor Pro tem Artis asked Mrs. Daly to speak about the customer account. Mrs. Daly stated that this is an account that she brought before the Board at the last meeting and she was instructed to get more information about the account. She said she researched and found the information and put it in a report with a spreadsheet, outlining the details of her findings. She asked the Board how they would like her to handle the account. There was some discussion about the information that was presented. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked what the pleasure of the Board was. Alderwoman Futrelle made a motion to approve working with the customer to collect the money in whatever amount she can pay until it is paid off. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. Alderman Ruffin clarified that the amount to be paid is \$1,951.96. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**(4) Christmas Schedule Revision -** Mayor Pro tem Artis asked Mr. Howell to speak about the Christmas schedule revision. Mr. Howell recommended to give the staff an additional ½ of a day off, with pay, for Christmas. He said this would be on Thursday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>. He said they will be off on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> and Monday the 26<sup>th</sup>. There was some discussion about it not affecting the operations of the Town to have an additional ½ of a day off. There was some discussion about not cutting off utilities for non-payment on the 25<sup>th</sup>, due to Christmas. Mayor Pro tem Artis suggested that we add having an additional ½ of a day off for Christmas to the personnel policy. Alderman Ruffin made the motion to approve giving the staff a ½ of a day off, with pay, on Thursday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**(5) Board Meeting in December -** Mayor Pro tem Artis asked Mr. Howell to speak about the Board meeting in December. Mr. Howell stated that we have had a total of 26 meetings this year, which consists of Board Meetings, Budget Meetings, and Workshops. He said this does not include Committee Meetings, Staff Meetings and voluntary Library Meetings. He stated that there have been 6 Board of Planning and Adjustment Meetings. He said along with the meetings, there will be extra work for the Christmas Events that will take place in December, which staff and Board will work, participate and attend. He suggested and recommended that we take the month off in December for Board Meetings and reconvene in January. There was some discussion and it was determined that the Board would make a decision after the Closed Session Meeting.

**Reports:**

**(1) Finance Report – Mrs. Nichols –** Mrs. Nichols gave the financial report.

- She stated that the income statement took a hard hit this month of \$70,000 for an intersection cost that we knew was coming and it was budgeted for.
- She said that we did have some fire tax money come in on November 1<sup>st</sup> of \$26,000 and it will show up in next month's report.
- She said that all bills are paid up to date and all bank statements are balanced up to date.
- She said the auditor is coming on December 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> to complete our year-end audit.
- She gave information about the Candy Cane Kids and invited the Board to participate.
- She said if there are any questions about the Cash Trending Report, the Budget to Actual Report, or the Checklist for October, to let her know and she will be glad to answer them.

Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that the balance in our checking account is around 1.2 million dollars and she asked Mrs. Nichols if she considered that to be higher than average. Mrs. Nichols stated that last year, we were nowhere near that amount. She said we were somewhere around \$900,000.

Alderman Ruffin stated that looking at the Fire Department it appears they had a lot of expenses for the month. Mrs. Nichols said that it wasn't that the expenses were high, it was they did not get in their fire tax money in October, but it will show up in November.

Fire Chief Brooks stated that the audit is tied to their funding. He said that once the audit is completed, it has to be turned over to the County Finance Director in a timely manner or their funding that is coming in from the State, will be put on hold. He said he realizes that we have switched auditors this year and he has turned it over to the County, but if there is money withheld, it will be due to the fact that the audit has not been turned in. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked if they would take in consideration that we had to get a new auditor and we have an extension, and he said that they would.

**(2) Billing & Collections Report – Mrs. Daly** – Mrs. Daly asked if there were any questions about the report. Alderman Ruffin stated that there were 12 residence and 7 businesses that were cut off and that all were cut back on except 4. He asked how much money was not collected from the residence and how much was not collected from the businesses. Mrs. Daly said that she did not have that information on the report, but she could add it to the report and he said he would like to see that.

Mrs. Daly gave an update on a business account that owed a lot of money to the Town. She stated that, yesterday, they paid \$2,860.10, and they will come in Monday to pay \$470.49. She said that will leave them \$5,505.66 that is delinquent. She said they requested a payment arrangement and they will see what they can pay and let her know on Monday. She said that we do not want to see the business close and she is giving them until Monday to come up with an arrangement to pay the delinquent amount.

Mrs. Daly asked the Board if we could move the cutoffs from December 25<sup>th</sup> to January 2<sup>nd</sup>. There was some discussion and it was determined to move it to January 4<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Daly said there are special situations, such as when someone passes away and wants the utilities connected for a short amount of time. She asked the Board to allow us to make provisions for special situations to allow utilities to be turned on without having to do all the paperwork and provide a \$450 deposit. There was some discussion and it was determined that Mrs. Daly would have the discretion to provide special provisions for special situation to connect utilities.

**(3) Public Works Report – Mr. Harvey** – Mr. Harvey gave the public works report:

- He stated that they had 4 water leak repairs and 2 electrical grid repairs that both Town employees and contractors fixed.
- He said that the electric pickup truck was repaired and we are in the process of having the water pickup truck repaired; however, it is in need of a new engine, which will cost approximately \$10,000. He said it will need other repairs, such as, the steering column, bearings and radiator replaced. He said it has 167,000 miles and it is one of the two oldest trucks that we have.
- He said Fremont Meadows is on hold or has been cancelled.
- He said the 400 amp temporary service for the new school will go in on Friday.
- He said the spray field has been cut, removed and seeded; and the soil sample was completed today and once we get the results back, they will be filed with the State. He said next month we will have to have the trees removed from the berms to come into compliance with State requirements.
- He said the quote for the guard rails on Goldsboro Street is approximately \$4,900 and maybe we could use Powell Bill money since it is a street repair.

Mayor Pro tem Artis asked about the quote and stated that there are two different amounts; one is for \$4,370 and the other is for \$4,844. Mr. Harvey explained the quote and stated that one is for the guard rail on Goldsboro Street near 710 S. Goldsboro, and the other one is on the intersection of Barnes and Goldsboro Street. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked if the Board would like to move on both projects. Alderman Ruffin made a motion to complete both projects. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

- He said he got a quote for tree trimming around the power lines and it will be approximately \$2,000 a week. He said there is a desperate need to have the trees trimmed.

Alderman Ruffin asked for Mr. Harvey to get another quote for trimming the trees and Mr. Harvey said that he would and asked for any suggestions. Alderman Ruffin said Danny Wooten or Directional Falls.

- He said that the storm water ditch from Main Street to Vance Street that goes to the graveyard needs repairing. He said the property owner is starting to lose pieces of the property due to erosion.

- He said that he has pictures of different areas for street repairs. He said that he needed direction from the Board as to how they want to use the Powell Bill Funds for the repairs. He stated that they could do patchwork repair, or do they want a plan to start replacing the roads instead.

There was some discussion about the conditions of the streets and which street needs attention first. It was determined that Mr. Harvey will get a list of needed street repairs to present to the Board before a decision can be made.

Alderwoman Jones stated that she noticed that there were no flags on the veterans' graves at Elmwood Cemetery and wanted to know why. Mr. Howell stated that the Boy Scouts group did not have enough boys to do that this year. It was determined that we will look at this earlier next year to make sure there are flags on the graves.

Alderman Ruffin asked if there was a quote to fix Goshen drainage and Mr. Harvey said he will get one. Mr. Harvey said it will be very expensive and he is hoping to get a grant to cover the expense for this project.

**(4) Police Report – Chief Moats – Chief Moats gave the police report:**

- He said there are no major incidents this month.
- He said there will be information on their FaceBook page regarding safety during the holidays.
- He said they will be providing safety control for all of the holiday events for the Town.
- He said the biggest thing they are dealing with right now is calls pertaining to animals. He said they have had numerous calls over the past couple of weeks with dogs running loose. He said that animal control is short-staffed and they cannot respond to calls unless there is some type of an emergency with dangerous and aggressive dogs. He said the problem is the Town does not have the ability to house the animals nor care for the animals until the owners or animal control can pick them up; therefore, it's been challenging handling these types of calls. He said he was able to get animal control to pick up a dog that has gotten loose numerous times, even though the owner had been given written citations, so that problem has been resolved.
- He said they had an incident on South Goldsboro Street, where there were 12 Pit-bulls in the woods, down in a valley on the backside of Chestnut Street. He said they were unaware of these dogs, because of the shape of the property, they could not be seen. He said some of them were in bad condition, because they had been fought or have attacked each other. He said animal control did respond to that and they removed 5 dogs. He said the property owner was advised that the Town Ordinance only allows for them to have 2 dogs, so they removed the rest of the dogs to different locations around their property, which remedied the problem at that location.
- He suggested that we look at our Animal Control Ordinance to see if changes needed to be made to how many dogs you can have. He said the ordinance allows



them to write citations, but it takes some time for it to be heard in court; therefore, this may also need to be revised.

#### **(5) Cemetery Report – Mayor Pro tem Artis**

##### **Discussion:**

- (1) Street Repairs – Alderman Ruffin** – Alderman Ruffin said that Mr. Harvey discussed this during his report.
- (2) Ditches – Alderman Ruffin** – Alderman Ruffin said that Mr. Harvey discussed this during his report.
- (3) Board and Department Heads to Visit Businesses – Alderman Ruffin** – Alderman Ruffin stated that he has mentioned this in the past, but does not recall that a date to visit local businesses had been agreed upon. He said they need to let the businesses know that they appreciate them coming to Fremont and staying in Fremont. He suggested that they discuss this and pick a date in January.
- (4) Back-up Plan for Immediate Needs – Alderman Ruffin** – Alderman Ruffin said that we need a back-up plan for jobs. He said we are having a lot of turnovers with personnel leaving for “greener grass and better places.” He suggested that we reach out to find people, part-time, to train for various positions, such as in finance, public works, town administrator, and all positions, just in case someone wants to leave. He said we do not need to have our hands tied and have to scramble when someone leaves.

Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that Mrs. Daly has brought this to their attention concerning cross-training and having a Deputy Town Clerk, just in case something does happen again. She agreed with Alderman Ruffin and thought his suggestion was a good idea.

Mr. Howell said that Mrs. Daly and Mrs. Nichols have cross-trained to back each other up; and towns with less than 5,000 people can serve in dual roles. He said Mrs. Daly can take on the role as Deputy Finance Officer, and Mrs. Nichols can take on the role as Deputy Town Clerk. He said that Mr. Harvey is cross-training the staff in public works, as well.

Alderman Ruffin said although Mrs. Daly and Mrs. Nichols can cross-train with one another, if one of them leaves, the other cannot do both jobs; therefore, there needs to be someone else pulled in to be trained with both ladies.

Mr. Howell said that he would suggest that Mrs. Daly and Mrs. Nichols serve in dual roles until someone can be hired.

Mr. Harvey said he is interviewing someone for the water position, tomorrow. He said he has two people interested; one with water and sewer certifications and the other one has water distribution schooling, but has not worked under someone long enough to obtain his certification. He said it would take him 6 months to train and then he could get certified.

- (5) **3-Year Plan for the Town – Alderman Ruffin** – Alderman Ruffin asked Mr. Howell to put together a 3-year plan, which states where we go from here. Mr. Howell said that he has been working on an Economic Development Plan, but he has not seen a Capital Improvement Plan and he is trying to find more information on that. He asked if we had a Capital Improvement Plan that was instituted as some point? If so, he is not aware of it, but he does feel that we do need one if we don't have one.

Alderwoman Jones stated that this is something that the Board can assist Mr. Howell with during a Board retreat. Alderman Ruffin said that we need to have a plan to replace vehicles and equipment. He said Fremont is doing better, but we need to keep putting things in place to continue making it better.

- (6) **New Elementary School Power Source – Mayor Pro tem Artis** – Removed from agenda.

- (7) **Fire Department Time Sheets – Mayor Pro tem Artis** – Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that she has noticed that there are 2 employees that are paid and their time sheets are filled out in ink, which appears that it is filled out at one time. She asked Fire Chief Brooks is there any other way it can be accounted for other than just writing it down?

Fire Chief Brooks said that they do not have a time clock at the fire station, but it could be a possibility that they get one.

Mayor Pro tem Artis asked who keeps up with the time and Fire Chief Brooks said that Gene Howell keeps up with his own time and he keeps up with his own time.

Mayor Pro tem Artis asked if it would be a problem for them to clock in at Town Hall or at the Public Works building. Fire Chief Brooks said that he does not do all of his work at the fire station. He said he works on grants, filling paperwork with the state, etc. at home and not at the fire station. He said sometimes they have to attend meetings in Goldsboro and they are traveling, and not at the fire station. He said the majority of the work Gene does is at the fire station and they work anywhere from 12 to 20 hours a pay period.

### **Information:**

- (1) **Flyer – Eastern Carolina Council – Food Reimbursement Assistance Program** – Alderwoman Jones stated that Mr. Howell, Mayor Pro tem Artis, Alderman Spivey and herself attended the Wayne County Commissioner Quarterly Luncheon. She said that

there was someone there from the Eastern Carolina Council that spoke about different incentives and things that are available to groups. She said one of them that interested her for our Town is a program that provides assistance to address the nutritional needs for people aged 60 years and older, by providing a food reimbursement. She said it is not based on anything other than age. She said you can go to the website to apply and the funds are available. She said the limit is \$500 per household.

**(2) Town of Fremont's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Tree Lighting will be held on Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 p.m.**

Chief Moats stated that Assistant Chief Bottoms sent out an email to the Department Heads advising what the protocol will be for that event involving blockages from the police department and fire department. He said in light of recent violent attacks on different events across the country, they just have set a protocol for the safety of the citizens and staff. He said they will have special parking for the Board members in the alley, and there is a map outlining the parking areas. He said they will coordinate with Fire Chief Brooks to make sure everything is set up and runs smoothly and safely.

Mayor Pro tem Artis thanked Chief Moats and Assistant Chief Bottoms for making sure that the traffic will be controlled and that they will have parking for the Board this year.

**(3) Town of Fremont's Christmas Parade will be held on Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1:00 p.m.** – Mayor Pro tem Artis said that the Board will be riding on the trailer again this year.

Mayor Pro tem Artis thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and Pastor Shannon Marie Berry for livestreaming the meeting.

**Closed Session:** Mayor Pro tem Artis asked for a motion to go into Closed Session. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Open Session:** Mayor Pro tem Artis asked for a motion to adjourn. Alderwoman Lewis made the motion. Alderwoman Jones seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at 9:34 p.m.

**Encouraging Quote:** “Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Joyce M. Artis, Mayor Pro tem

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk