



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

**January 17, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:00 p.m. on January 17, 2023. 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, and Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms.

**Quorum Present: Yes**

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

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

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

**Approval of Agenda:** Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Alderman Spivey made the motion to approve the agenda. Alderman Ruffin seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes of November 15, 2022, Closed Session Meeting, December 20, 2022, Regular Board Meeting, December 20, 2022, Closed Session Meeting, and January 10, 2023, Workshop. Mayor Pro tem Artis made a motion to approve all minutes. Alderwoman Lewis seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment:** Mayor Flowers 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.

Larry Jones, the President of Norwayne Alumni and Friends, representing 106 E. Norwayne Alumni Way and 114 S. Goldsboro Street, addressed the Board. He said that he is trying to be transparent in anything that he does affecting Fremont. He stated that he attended the County Commissioners meeting today and was on the agenda to speak with them about several issues. They were:

- The status of the CDBG-CV grant and asked for their assistance with it, being that it has been two years since we were awarded the grant and have not received any funds as of yet. The County Commissioner agreed to work on our behalf to get it resolved but asked if Mr. Howell was aware of this, because it was his responsibility. He understood at that moment that there was a protocol that was appropriate and that it needed to be followed.
- Earmarked funds that other surrounding Towns have received, and the Town of Fremont has not received any.
- The campaign of Investing in Fremont.
- The company named, Broken Pieces United, which is a company that tries to find employment for individuals and for companies to find employees, as well as try to create new jobs.
- To consider Northern Wayne County for an Industrial Park, because one benefit is that the Town of Fremont does not flood.
- Pointed out that there is an EMS at both Industrial Parks in Wayne County.
- The cost of a new library versus remodeling the elementary school to use for a library.
- There is a committee for the Caper's Foundation in Onslow County that consist of two city council members, two county commissioners, and board of education members who are doing some fantastic things in that area that he would like to replicate in our area.

Mayor Flowers and Mr. Howell thanked Mr. Larry Jones for all that he is doing for the Town.

Donna Barrett, who lives at 264 Pikes Road in Pikeville and owns Capital Café on Main Street in Fremont, stated that she contacted Mr. Howell a couple of days ago about her electric bill and she had not heard anything back and wanted that on record. She said that she feels that her bill is not correct and would like someone to look at it and let her know what is going on with it before the due date of January 20<sup>th</sup>.

Mayor Flowers asked Mr. Howell to check on it and Mr. Howell stated that we are aware of the issue and are working on it.

Mrs. Barrett stated that Main Street needed cleaning, as well as her mother and father's grave having settled and may need some dirt hauled in.

Mayor Flowers closed public comment.

**Action:**

**(1) Adopt Resolution of Intent to Amend the Town Charter – Mr. Howell**

Mayor Flowers stated that this resolution is stating that we want to follow the laws of North Carolina and United States of the Federal Government as it applies to these areas. He said that there is a correction in the first paragraph that should be 2010 instead of 2011. He asked for a motion to approve this resolution. There was some discussion, and it was determined that the Board did not feel comfortable voting on this and would like to table it until another time.

**(2) Temporary Services – Mr. Howell**

Mr. Howell stated that we use to have temporary utilities service for property owners to be able to have utilities connected for one month to do repairs on their property. He said there was a \$50 non-refundable fee for this service. He asked the Board if they would like to re-instate this service. There was some discussion. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the temporary service with a \$50 fee. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderwoman Jones seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Reports:**

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

- The bank statements are balanced through December.
- All bills are up to date.
- The funds are looking good this month.
- All our cash accounts are up and looking good.
- A list of all the checks that were written in December and the budget to actual are in the agenda packet.

Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that she noticed that our average running balance after all bills have been paid is \$1,250,000.

Alderman Ruffin asked if we got our Powell Bill funds in and Mrs. Nichols said that we got \$20,000 in December, which will reflect in next month's report.

**(2) Billing & Collections Report – Mrs. Daly**

Mayor Flowers asked the Board if they had any questions or comments for Mrs. Daly concerning her report.

Alderwoman Futrelle stated that 0 cut-offs look good, and Mrs. Daly said the reason for this is because the Board extended the cut-off date to January 4<sup>th</sup> instead of December 25<sup>th</sup>.

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

- The grapple truck is in the shop and hopefully we will have it back by the end of the week.

- The mosquito truck has been repaired and is taking the place of our water truck, which had the blown-up engine.
- The electric truck is in the shop to replace the rear seal.
- The bac-ho has not been serviced properly over the years and needs hydraulic repairs which will cost approximately \$4,500 that is not budgeted for.
- We have not passed on any of the cost to the school for services that we have provided or for costs we have incurred, or for services that will be needed by the school. He said he has asked Mr. Howell if he wanted to send the school a bill or does he want him to continue to put power and the water meter on the school. He is waiting for instruction as to what to do, because the school will be ready for power on Friday.
- The berm tree cutting at the spray field should start next week.
- The contractor for the guard rails on Goldsboro Street needs 30 more feet of rail before he can start that project.
- Eureka #2 lift station is leaking and is bypassed out of our system. He said they have to pump the lift station down, once a day, to prevent a spill of sewage. This causes more wear and tear on Eureka #1. He said the cost to repair it is \$15,895 and it would take one day to fix.
- Eureka #2 and Eureka metering flow meters have stopped working. He said he is working on getting quotes to fix these meters.
- Asphalt repairs should start this month.
- The utility billing system called MVRs, is now outdated and unsupported. He stated that we need to upgrade our system to FCS and we can do that by updating our software and continuing to use our equipment for a cost of \$6,000. He said evidentially we will need to upgrade our equipment at a cost of \$40,000, but we can do that once we get a grant.
- The signs are up at the cemeteries.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve \$4,500 to repair the bac-ho. Alderman Spivey asked if there is money and Mr. Harvey said that there is \$100,000 that we did not use for the school that could be used for this, but a budget amendment would need to be done. Mrs. Nichols agreed. Alderman Spivey made the motion. Alderwoman Futrelle seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve \$6,000 for the FCS billing software. There was some discussion about if the MVRs system stops working, we will have to manually read all the meters and input the readings, and this would cost more than the \$6,000 to upgrade the software. Alderwoman Jones made the motion. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve \$15,895 to repair Eureka #2 lift station. There was some discussion about having the funds and it was determined that there were adequate funds for this. Alderwoman Jones made the motion. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

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

- He is looking forward to working with the Board and the community this year.
- There were no major incidents over the New Year's holiday. He said there were some fireworks as usual, but there were no high call volumes, and everyone celebrated the New Year safely.
- He thanked his officers for all the hours they had worked.
- They are still looking for a full-time officer but are struggling to try to find someone. He stated that there is a shortage of officers, and he is trying to compete with bigger departments that can offer more pay.
- He along with his officers are having to work more hours to compensate for the full-time position not being filled.
- They are still maintaining a low crime rate, with no major crimes.
- They would like to look at making a 4-way stop at the intersection of Vance and Carolina Street, due to speeding.

There was some discussion about two applicants, one male and one female, that are interested in working part-time for Fremont Police Department; and there was discussion about the process of going through Training and Standards.

Alderman Spivey stated that the issue with officer shortage is not just here, but it is nationwide. Chief Moats agreed.

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

Mayor Pro tem Artis asked Mayor Flowers if she could defer her report to Closed Session. Mayor Flowers asked her for what purpose, and she said for personnel reasons.

### **Discussion:**

#### **(1) Board Retreat (Sample Agenda) – Mayor Pro tem Artis**

Mayor Pro tem Artis said that there is a sample agenda for the Board Retreat and asked the Board if they would like to make any changes to it.

Alderwoman Jones stated that she would like to add grant opportunities.

Mayor Flowers asked to add water, sewer, and electricity to the agenda because that is our greatest needs that we discuss during our Board Meetings.

Mayor Pro tem Artis said that the retreat is scheduled for February 1<sup>st</sup> from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Lane Tree Conference Center.

Mrs. Daly asked for some clarification as to what changes needed to be made to the agenda and what materials she needed to get to bring to the retreat for the Board.

Mayor Flowers stated that he would like to know the status of the spray field, lagoons, and electric rates and electric lines. It was determined that Mr. Harvey would get that information and present it to the Board at the retreat.

The Board stated that they would get the information to Mrs. Daly that they would like to discuss at the retreat.

**(2) State of the Town Address – Mayor Pro tem Artis**

Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that they had the State of the Town Address last June and she is recommending that they get started earlier to plan the event this year. She said that they had a great turnout last year and would like to have an even better turnout this year.

Mayor Flowers said that the purpose of the State of the Town Address last year was well intended and well accepted.

**(3) Cameras for Electrical Substations – Alderman Ruffin**

Alderman Ruffin asked Chief Moats if he had any information about the cameras. Chief Moats said that he has reached out to our IT guy for information, and he is waiting too here back from him. He said he will let Alderman Ruffin know just as soon as he gets all the information.

Mayor Flowers said there was another shooting this past weekend involving an electrical substation.

**(4) Board and Department Heads to Visit Businesses – Alderman Ruffin**

Alderman Ruffin stated that they have been talking about getting together to visit all the businesses in Town. He stated that they can discuss this at the Board Retreat.

**(5) Merit Increase Policy – Alderwoman Jones**

Alderwoman Jones stated that our current personnel policy does not have provisions for addressing merit increases for staff for outstanding work and this is something they want to look at going forward. She said this can be discussed at the Board Retreat.

**(6) Grant Writer – Alderwoman Jones**

Alderwoman Jones said that they have talked about two grant writers. She said that Mr. Howell has met with the grant writer that works for the Wayne County Commissioners and got his cost and he has spoken with someone else about writing grants. She said that we receive information about grants, but we do not have a grant writer that has the knowledge of how to apply for them and she feels that we need to look at getting someone.

Mr. Howell stated that they have a breakfast meeting on January 23<sup>rd</sup> in Kinston, with Eastern Carolina Council, who has a grant writer that they can talk to.

There was some discussion about how we can find a grant writer.

**(7) Dilapidated Houses – Mrs. Daly**

Mrs. Daly stated that she had spoken with the Town attorney, and he had given her instructions on the process of dealing with dilapidated houses, which is what she had

provided for the Board in the agenda packet. She said that the attorney cost before foreclosure on a property is \$2,000 to \$2,500 and after foreclosure is an average of \$3,000 more. She said the total cost for one property, if we have to foreclose, is approximately \$5,500 in attorney fees, plus any property taxes owed or any cost to tearing down the house. She said that we have a list of 13 properties, so far, that need addressing and asked the Board to let her know if they have any properties in their district that needed to be added. She said that the goal is to get a completed list of all properties and bring it to the Board to discuss how they should handle them.

**(8) Payment Arrangement for Cemetery Plots – Mrs. Daly**

Mrs. Daly said that she has provided some information to the Board on offering a payment arrangement for cemetery plots and asked if they had any questions and when they would like to start offering this. There was some discussion, and it was determined that a contract will be written and presented to the Board at the retreat for review.

**(9) Opening and Closing Graves – Mrs. Daly**

Mrs. Daly said that she has provided information concerning a grave digger; and what the benefits would be to the Town if we dug our own graves. She stated that this could be discussed at the Board Retreat.

Mayor Flowers said that he noticed that the grave digger does work for Pikeville and asked if we had called them to get information on how they do things. Mrs. Daly said that she had not but would be glad to call Pikeville to see how things are working out for them.

Alderman Ruffin said that he noticed that the grave digger does work for several people and wanted Mrs. Daly to call and find out how punctual he is and if he could handle digging our graves. Mrs. Daly said she would call and find out.

**Information:**

**(1) Drive-up Vaccination at St. James Church of Christ on Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.**

Mayor Flowers asked Alderwoman Jones if she would like to speak about the drive-in vaccination.

Alderwoman Jones stated that Goshen Outreach Services has been excellent in working with our community by providing vaccinations. She said they have offered the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccines and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> boosters, and now on January 28<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. until 12 or 1 p.m., they are going to offer the latest booster. She said they are also going to be offering wellness screenings, which include tobacco, depression and cardiac assessment screenings. She said these services will be offered at St. James Church of Christ.

**Closed Session: G.S. §143-318.11(6)**

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to go into Closed Session for a personnel issue. Mayor Pro tem Artis made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Open Session:** Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to adjourn. Alderwoman Jones made the motion. Alderman Spivey seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting ended at 8:17 p.m.

**Encouraging Quote:** “The four P’s to success are pressure, persistence, perseverance, and prayer.” – Steve Harvey

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**W. Darron Flowers, Mayor**

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**Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk**