



## **Minutes of Regular Town of Fremont Meeting May 16, 2023**

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:00 p.m. on May 16, 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 Robert Jones, Town Clerk Shannon Daly, Finance Officer Cathy Nichols, Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms, and Town Engineer Mike McAllister.

### **Quorum Present: Yes**

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

Mayor Flowers stated that Leroy Johnson, a previous Mayor of Fremont, passed away this past weekend. He asked Pastor Shannon Marie Berry to give the information concerning the funeral. Pastor Shannon Marie Berry stated that the funeral will be at 2:00 on Friday at Fremont Methodist Church.

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

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

**Approval of Agenda:** Mayor Flowers asked if there are any amendments to the agenda. Alderman Spivey asked to add Mr. McAllister, who will speak on the pump station at Fremont School and rental of the ATV shop under discussion. Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the amended agenda. Alderwoman Lewis made the motion. Alderman Ruffin seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:** Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes of April 3, 2023 Special Called Meeting, April 3, 2023 Closed Session Meeting, April 6, 2023 Special Called Meeting, April 24, 2023 Special Called Meeting, April 24, 2023 Closed Session Meeting, May 1, 2023 Special Called Meeting, and May 1, 2023 Closed Session Meeting. Mayor Pro tem

Artis made the motion. Alderwoman Lewis 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 public comment.

**Discussion: Fremont Pump Station – Mike McAllister**

Mr. McAllister stated that the school system is going to retain ownership of the pump station at Fremont Elementary School. He is recommending that we make a change of ownership on the permit; therefore, the Town will not be responsible for the pump station and any issues that may arise. There was much discussion, and it was determined that the only investment we have in the project is the transformers on the poles, which the school should pay for. Mayor Pro tem Artis made a motion to approve the recommendation from Mr. McAllister to give up ownership of the manhole and the gravity sewer, as well as change the ownership on the permit. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Action:**

**(1) Resolution 2023-2 Notice of Assessments and Claim of Lien for the Costs of Nuisance Abatements – Alderman Spivey**

Alderman Spivey stated that the Town has been working for a while on abatements and one of the questions that has been posed is what actions the Town can take pertaining to these nuisances. He stated that Brian Pridgen, our attorney, said that the Board would need to approve the resolution to put a claim of lien on a property. There was some discussion. Mayor Pro tem Artis made a motion to accept Resolution 2023-2, Notice of Assessments and Claim of Lien for the Costs of Nuisance Abatements. Alderwoman Futrelle seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**(2) Quote for A/C Units – Alderman Spivey**

Alderman Spivey stated that we have a quote from E.T. Ferrell & Son, Inc. for two a/c units, one for the police department and the other one for the Board room. There was some discussion about the units and the other quotes we have received. Alderwoman Jones made a motion to approve the quote from E.T. Ferrell & Son, Inc. if the quote is equal to or less than the quote presented, which is \$25,245. Mayor Pro tem Artis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Reports:**

**(1) Finance Report – Mrs. Nichols**

Mrs. Nichols gave the financial report. She stated that the finances for the month of April are not the greatest news. She said the total loss for the month of April is \$12,821.97. She said we had some large expenses for the month of April to include an asphalt bill of \$37,850 to improve the streets. She said our revenues for property and franchise tax were down about \$30,000. She said we paid \$92,000 to Goldsboro for

the correction where they billed us incorrectly and we paid \$5,500 for poles for the electric department.

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

Mrs. Daly gave the March Billing and the April Collections Report. The following was her report:

1. **Billing & Collections:** *The difference between what was billed versus what was collected is \$60,261. The amount owed to the Town at the end of March was \$1,413. The reason we have collected so much more than what we billed is because the Town of Eureka paid their bill in the month of April that was due in March.*
2. **Vouchers:** *There was \$3,038 owed to the Town for vouchers. The amount collected was \$2,208. The difference is \$831, which we will collect this month.*
3. **Budget Billing:** *There was \$752 billed and \$895.00 collected. This is a month that bills were lower than what we collected. We collected \$143 more than what was billed. There will be months where the amount collected (set monthly amount) will be more than what was billed and months where the amount collected is less. The goal is that the account will be balanced by the end of the year.*
4. **Cut-offs:** *There were a total of 15 cut-offs, which 13 were residence and 2 were businesses. As of today, all have been cut on except 2 resident, one has moved and the other said they were going to pay bill to get cut back on.*
5. **Debt Setoff:** *There was \$926 put into Debt Setoff from delinquent accounts for the month of January, and there was \$538 collected in the month of April. Accounts have to be 90 days delinquent before they can be put into Debt Setoff.*
6. **Arrangements:** *There was a total of \$5,447 that was owed to the Town from arrangements and \$829 was collected, leaving a total of \$4,618 owed. This amount is the total owed from 6 accounts, which were 5 residents and 1 business.*
7. **Work Orders:** *There were 4 new connects, 0 disconnects, and 10 transfers for the month of April*

## **(3) Public Works Report – Alderman Spivey**

Alderman Spivey stated that the grapple truck was down for three days and the cost to fix it was around \$1,000. He said the line truck had a gash in the tire and had to be replaced, which was a cost of \$400. Alderman Ruffin asked if we were using a government contract to buy tires and Alderman Spivey was not aware of that. Alderman Spivey stated that Mr. Stanley is on vacation for two weeks and Mr. Champion is in class and will be back on Friday. He said the golf cart has been fixed and the cost was less than \$300. He said the Hillandale pump station is working well and there have been no major issues over the past month. Alderman Ruffin stated that we need to start keeping a running total of what we are spending on the grapple truck, because we have spent a lot of money over the past few years. There was some discussion about having a depreciation schedule for our vehicles and equipment.

## **(4) Police Report – Assistant Chief Bottoms**

Assistant Chief Bottoms stated that there have been no major incidents over the past month to report. He said the school is on the verge of being out and they are seeing juveniles out more. He said they are getting calls about juveniles, addressing them

and coordinating with the parents as well, but there are no major issues. He said on April 21<sup>st</sup>, he has started doing abatements for grass cutting. He said he has done 4 batches, the first one he mailed 15 letters, which 6 were abated; the second one he mailed 13 letters, which 3 were abated; the third one he mailed 10 letters, which 2 were abated; the last one he mailed 39 letters, but the abatements will not be until Monday.

Mr. Jones stated that he has received one complaint where the front yard was cut, but not the back yard. He said he will let public works staff know to cut the back yard.

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

Mayor Pro tem Artis said that she is continuing to enter the names of those that are in our cemeteries and have been able to identify available plots. She said Monique is looking to see if those plots are available to sell. She said that Elmwood Cemetery is a bigger problem than Fremont Cemetery.

**Discussion:**

**(1) Length of Meetings/Work Life Balance – Alderman Spivey**

Alderman Spivey said that at least twice the length of our meetings have been discussed. He said the longest one started at 6:00 and lasted until 10:45. He said that after two hours, many of them were zombied out. He said he is asking the Board to be mindful of the time for the sake of the Board and the staff, so that we don't get burned out. Mayor Pro tem Artis stated that she has recommended in the past to set a time limit of 2 hours. Alderman Spivey suggested that we set a time limit of two hours and after 2 hours, recess if need be. Alderwoman Jones said that we need to be cognizant of what is on the agenda and to try not to cram everything in on one agenda; and to only put on the agenda what is necessary.

**(2) Attorney Attendance at Meeting – Alderman Spivey**

Alderman Spivey stated that Brian Pridgen is unable to attend our monthly meetings because he has already committed to another meeting during that time. He said Mr. Pridgen could attend meetings at a different time. He said that Mr. Pridgen's rate for attending meetings is \$165 per hour, but he does not charge for travel time, just mileage from and to the Wilson office. He said that Mr. Pridgen stated that he has seen the length of our meetings and we would not be able to afford him.

**(3) Grant Writer – Alderman Ruffin**

Alderman Ruffin asked Mr. Jones to shop around to find a grant writer. He said he originally talked with Mr. Howell, our previous town administrator, about this and to make sure the money to pay the grant writer needs to come out of the grant and not from the Town. He said one project that he has talked about for a while is an electric charging station and Alderman Spivey included main street revitalization. There was some discussion, and it was determined that Mr. Jones will look into finding a grant writer to accommodate the Board's wishes.

**(4) Dilapidated House/Buildings – Mrs. Daly**

Mrs. Daly stated that Monique has been working on a list of dilapidated houses and buildings, which is in the Board packet. She said she wanted the Board to see how many we have, and she has been talking with Assistant Chief Bottoms about the abatement issues, as far as debris that needs to be cleaned up on the property. She said at this time we have no fees to charge to clean up the property, and she will be getting with Mr. Jones and Assistant Chief Bottoms to come up with a charge and then it will be presented to the Board.

Mr. Jones said that when he worked for another town, they had a program that offered to tear down old houses, which helped the owner, and it cleaned up the town. He said they used it for the Fire Department and Police Department to do training before they tore it down. He said they also had a program that when someone wanted water connected, they had to pay a \$10 fee, which then the code enforcement officer would inspect the property to make sure it was in line with the town ordinances. He said if it didn't, the water would not get turned on until the property owner addressed the issues that the code enforcement officer found.

There was some discussion about several properties in town that needs some attention.

**(5) Inactive Meters – Mrs. Daly**

Mrs. Daly stated that there is a list of inactive meters in the Board packet. She said Vanessa has worked with Dylan to get the information on all the inactive meters. She said there are 41 inactive meters, and 2 of them have had water usages that we were unaware of. She said 1 of them does not have a house on it and the last reading was in 2011 so she does not think we can go back that far to charge. She explained that we will read them again in a month and if there is usage at that time then she can charge them. She said the other reading was only 300 gallons used since 2011. She said they will read them for the next two months to see if there are any changes and she will keep the Board informed of the outcome.

**(6) Rental of the ATV shop – Alderman Spivey**

Alderman Spivey said that Reginald Hall wants to rent the building to be used as an auto service / sales / U-Haul rental shop. He said that he told Mr. Hall that the rent is \$500 per month and Mr. Hall said he will pay 6 months' rent in advance. He said that we have a copy of his auto dealer permit, dealer licenses, business licenses, VIN number and he has talked to the DMV in Raleigh that has given him the green light. Plus, Mr. Hall has written a statement about what he was going to be utilizing the building for. There was some discussion, and it was determined that Mr. Jones will draw up a contract to say when the rent is due, what the penalty is if the payment is late, and the hours he will be open which will be 8 to 5. Alderman Spivey made a motion to charge \$500 a month for rent. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Information:**

**(1) Asian Pacific American Heritage Month – Alderwoman Jones**

Alderwoman Jones stated that this is Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. She read some of the proclamation that was signed by the president. She said that this is also National Mental Health Month.

**(2) Special Called Meetings – Alderman Spivey**

Alderman Spivey said that there is a handout in the Board packet about Special Called Meetings. He stated that there has been a question about adding things to the agenda once it has been completed and advertised to the public. He read rule #2 that states that only those items of business specified in the notice may be discussed or transacted at a special meeting, unless (1) all members are present and (2) the board determines in good faith at the meeting that it is essential to discuss or act on the item immediately. He said that a good example of this is when the Board needed to approve the new map that included the annexed property, because the Board of Elections needed it before the elections could take place this November.

**Closed Session: Personnel - General Statute § 143-318.11(6)**

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

**Open Session:**

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion. Mayor Pro tem Artis made a motion that Mrs. Harris would enter into a contract with the Town of Fremont stating that the amount owed will be divided into 6 monthly installments. Alderwoman Lewis seconded it. Four favored: Mayor Pro tem Artis, Alderwoman Lewis, Alderwoman Futrelle, and Alderman Ruffin. One opposed: Alderman Spivey. One Abstained: Alderwoman Jones. Motion passed by majority. Alderman Spivey stated that he opposed the decision based on the advice from the town attorney.

Alderwoman Lewis made a motion to accept Mr. Robert Jones as the Town of Fremont's Town Administrator and to accept the contract that was presented. Alderwoman Futrelle seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

**Motion to Close Regular Meeting:**

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

The meeting ended at 9:05 p.m.

**Encouraging Quote:** “We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails.”– Bertha Calloway

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W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

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Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk