



Minutes of the Regular Town of Fremont Meeting August 15, 2023

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

Pledge of Allegiance: Alderwoman Lewis

Approval of Agenda: After Action for rate, a statement Alderwoman Jones wants to read. *Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mayor Pro tem Artis made the motion to approve the amended agenda. Alderman Spivey seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.*

Approval of Minutes: *Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to approve the minutes of July 18, 2023 Regular Board Meeting, July 18, 2023 Closed Session Meeting, August 9, 2023 Special Called Meeting, and August 10, Emergency Called Meeting. Alderman Spivey made a motion to approve the minutes. Alderwoman Lewis seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.*

Mayor Flowers changed the agenda to open the floor for public comment. Mayor Pro tem Artis address Mayor Flowers and stated that the Board had approved the agenda as it was. Mayor

Flowers stated that Public Comment has always been at the beginning of the meetings and he was going to keep it that way.

Public Comment: Mayor Flowers opened the meeting for public comment.

- Clay Thompson, 951 Highway 222W, Car Wash & Mini Storage Owner, was concerned about his business water and sewer bill was higher this month.
- Tommy Jones, PO 441 Fremont, 505 W Main Street, Barber Shop Owner, concerned about his business water and sewer bill was higher this month.
- Mark Snyder, Alternative Shop, 117 N Wilson Shop, concerned about his business water and sewer bill was higher this month.
- Steve Evans, 183 Evans Farm Road, concerned about his rates being higher this month.
- Natalie Newsome, 101 E Main Street, Natalie's Hair and Tanning, concerned her business water rate is higher. She was concerned about some businesses were being charged a demand rate and trash rate and not every business is being charged these rates.
- Gail Lail, Fremont United Methodist Church, 106 N Sycamore Street. She stated that the church is divided in four demand rates and the church's water and sewer rate is higher.
- Cathy Stott, Cathy's Florist, concerned her business water rate is higher. She would like to see support from the Town Board for the businesses in town.
- Gene Fields, House of Furniture, 66304 Airport Road, Pikeville, concerned about the higher water rate for his business. He was concerned the Board had not voted on the issue. Mayor Flowers and Mayor Pro tem Artis explained it was changed in the adoption of the budget, but would be addressed this evening.

Mayor Flowers closed public comment.

Action:

(1) ARP Policies - Mr. Jones

Mr. Jones explained that the additional ARP policies needed to be adopted to be in compliance with Federal regulations. There is a typographical error in the information to be adjusted. *Mayor Flowers called for a motion to adopt the ARP Policies. Alderwoman Jones made a motion to adopt the policies with the correction. Alderman Ruffin seconded the motion. Discussion was called for. Motion passed unanimously.*

(2) Re-appointment for Wayne Jackson and Steve Hooks for the Planning and Adjustment Board - Mr. Jones

Mr. Jones requested the re-appointment for Wayne Jackson and Steve Hooks to the Planning and Adjustment Board. Alderwoman Jones inquired if there is advertisement for these positions on this board. The Chairman of the Planning and Adjustment Board makes a suggestion as to whom may serve. *Mayor Flowers called for a motion to re-appointment. Alderman Ruffin made a motion to re-appoint Mr. Jackson & Mr. Hooks. Seconded by Alderman Spivey. Motion passed unanimously.*

(3) Budget Amendment BA-02 - Mr. Jones

Mr. Jones presented the Budget Amendment BA-02. *Mayor Flowers called for a motion to approve the Budget Amendment. Mayor Pro tem Artis made a motion to approve. Alderwoman Jones seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

(4) Rates - Mr. Jones

Alderman Ruffin asked Alderwoman Jones to make a statement regarding the issue with the rates. Alderwoman Jones read the following statement:

“We are so glad to see so many of you here tonight and we wished it was under different circumstances. We understand why you are here and rightfully so. Many of the business owners reached out to several of the Board members about this issue, and some of the Board members reached out to some of the business owners as well as when we learned of this exorbitant increase.

Churches, non-profit organizations, and small mammas and pops entities were affected by this increase as well.

The Board wanted to reach out to you because we were just as surprised as you were. Please know that we were just as surprised as you were. Please know that we would never vote to increase a rate that would cause your bills to be doubled to tripled.

This Board has been sitting for almost 4 years, and has almost always absorbed every increase that has been assessed to us by the City of Goldsboro and Wayne Water District.

As a board member, I want to apologize for what you have endured. Rest assured that we will make it right. We are going to determine where the disconnect occurred and correct it. Also, in the future, you will be notified of any increases prior to their occurrences.

As you know many of us visited your business this past spring and we wanted to know what the Town could do to make things better for you. That has not changed. We will continue to see your inputs.

If my fellow board members would agree with me, I would like to have a suggestion box put out front where you can let us know of your concerns at all times. We don't take you for granted. We want to do what's right by our citizens.

Thank you.”

Mayor Flowers shared his experience in this matter. Mayor Pro tem Artis stated the committee met yesterday and desires to rescind the vote for the rate increase on the businesses and move all businesses back into the residential category. Mayor Flowers explained Wayne Water raised our rates by 5% and City of Goldsboro raised the sewer rate by 4%. He said the past couple of years, the rates have gone up on the Town and they have absorbed them, but we cannot continue to do that. Mr. Jones explained all bills will be adjusted, going back to the previous rates, until the rate structure can be better

understood. The demand rate and garbage will be looked into as well. Mr. Jones invited business owners to stop by to discuss any concerns. Regarding the trash charge issue, this will be researched and investigated. Automatic draft bills for businesses will not take place this month. *Mayor Flowers called for a motion to approve the rate adjustment back to residential. Mayor Pro tem made a motion to go back to the original rates which will allow our business owners to pay what they normally pay; Seconded by Alderwoman Jones. Motion passed unanimously.* The July bills will be adjusted and rebilled and not required to be paid till September; and those who have paid their bills will have a credit on their account. *Mayor Pro tem Artis made a motion to extend the moratorium on payment due till September 30th if needed. Seconded by Alderwoman Futrelle. Motion passed unanimously.*

Alderman Ruffin asked Mayor Flowers why he changed the agenda as agreed upon by the Board.

Reports:

(1) Finance Report - Mrs. Daly

Mrs. Daly provided the finance report as presented in the Board packet and update from our accountant. Mr. Marlar is working on our finances and getting together things for our year-end audit. She stated that the balance in our bank account at the end of July is \$1,340,048 and in the Capital Management account we have \$446,827, which is a total of \$1,765,045. She said our Capital Management account is doing very well, making \$1,600 in interest last month. Mayor Pro tem Artis asked for clarification on the sales tax list on the Cash Collections Monthly Summary. Alderman Spivey inquired about the Budget to Actuals regarding town meetings and meals. Alderwoman Jones asked a correction to the abatement list be handled individually as suggested by the former Register of Deeds, and include an index document. Mrs. Daly said that she would email the Board with the answers to their questions.

1. **Billing & Collections:** The difference between what was billed versus what was collected is (\$7,500). The amount owed to the Town at the end of March was \$1,782.
2. **Vouchers:** There was \$1,466 owed to the Town for vouchers.
3. **Budget Billing:** There was \$779 billed and \$895.00 collected. This is a month that bills were lower than what we collected. We collected \$116 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 12 cut-offs, which 8 were residents and 4 were businesses.
5. **Debt Setoff:** There was \$117 put into Debt Setoff from delinquent accounts for the month of April and there was \$0 collected in the month of July. Accounts have to be 90 days delinquent before they can be put into Debt Setoff.

6. **Arrangements:** There was a total of \$1,164 that was owed to the Town from arrangements and \$179 was collected, leaving a total of \$985 owed. This amount is the total owed from 5 residents.
7. **Work Orders:** This information will be provided at the meeting.

(2) Public Works Report - Mr. Jones

Mr. Jones provided the Public Works Report as presented in the Board packet that includes the work orders that the public works staff has completed. He stated that there has been an application for a new subdivision, Hidden Hills subdivision water update has started, and S. Vance will be working to get started on the new homes.

(3) Police Report - Chief Moats

Chief Moats stated there have been no major incidents in July. He stated both officers have been able to take vacation with their families, the new grant is being used to update software, they are staying on top of abatements, and there will be checkpoints with the Town of Pikeville throughout the evenings/night utilizing our mutual aid agreement. Mayor Flowers inquired about the traffic situation for the new school and asked if we should address the traffic issue before the school opens. Chief Moats had concern about the traffic on Hwy 222 and they will not know until they actually see the traffic pattern and the number of cars involved.

(4) Cemetery Report - Mayor Pro tem Artis

Mayor Pro tem Artis provided a Section B of the cemetery report with the concern for the empty spaces that were purchased over 60 years ago. She said there is very little space left in the cemeteries.

Discussion:

Electric Car Station –Alderman Ruffin

Alderman Ruffin told the Board Mr. Jones is working with a grant writer and Alderwoman Futrell for an Electric Car Station. Mr. Jones said at this time, they have not been able to find a grant available for local governments. A new grant should be available in 2024.

(2) Medicaid Expansion (DHHS) - Alderman Spivey

Alderman Spivey shared that DHHS will be expanding Medicaid through the State of North Carolina. There are concerns about the state passing the budget and counties need personnel to manage the expansion. There are an expected 600,000 people who will be eligible.

(3) Capital Improvement Plan - Alderwoman Jones

Aldерwoman Jones shared the need for a capital improvement plan as asked by the LGC. Mr. McAllister thought that it had been a while since there has been an update to the CIP. There is a need for a CIP committee.

(4) Company Christmas Party Date - Aldерwoman Jones

Aldерwoman Jones asked the Board when they would like to have a Company Christmas Party. The Board would like to go to Lane Tree. The Board would like Ms. Daly to call Lane Tree for availability around the second week of December.

Information:

- 1. International Overdose Awareness Day**
- 2. Town Hall will be closed on Monday, September 4th in observance of Labor Day.**

Mr. Jones referenced the email about the Division of Water Infrastructure and LGC, and stated that there is a need for a meeting 30-days before applying for the grant. The meeting will be Tuesday, August 29, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

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

Mayor Flowers asked for a motion to go into Closed Session. Alderman Ruffin made the motion. Aldерwoman Lewis seconded it. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion to Close Regular Meeting:

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

The meeting ended at 8:43 p.m.

**Encouraging Quote: “Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.”
– Albert Einstein**

W. Darron Flowers, Mayor

Shannon L. Daly, Town Clerk