



Minutes of the Regular Town of Fremont Meeting October 15, 2024

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen/Alderwomen for the Town of Fremont, NC was held at 6:00 p.m. on October 15, 2024. Present were:

Eddie Yelverton, Mayor
Leroy Ruffin, Mayor Pro tem
Oscar Mooring, Alderman
Tim Howell, Alderman
Wayne Jackson, Alderman
Joyce M. Artis, Alderwoman

Absent: Annie Lewis, Alderwoman

Also in attendance were Town Administrator Jonathan Allen, Interim Town Clerk Joyce M. Artis, Town Engineer Mike McAllister, and Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms.

Quorum Present: Yes

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

Invocation: Mayor Pro Tem Leroy Ruffin gave the Invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance: Alderman Oscar Mooring led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda: *Mayor Yelverton asked for a motion to approve or amend the agenda. Alderman Jackson asked to move Action #5 (Town of Eureka Sewer Billing) to closed session for the Board to consider the contract between Eureka and Fremont. Mayor Pro tem Ruffin asked to add the Town's audit on the agenda for discussion. Alderman Mooring made a motion to accept the amended agenda. Alderwoman Joyce Artis seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.*

Approval of Minutes: *Mayor Yelverton asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2024 Regular Board meeting.*

Mayor Pro tem Ruffin made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2024 Regular Board meeting. Alderman Jackson seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Yelverton asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2024 Closed Session Meeting. Alderman Wayne Jackson made a motion to approve the closed session minutes for September 17, 2024. Alderwoman Joyce Artis seconded. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

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

- Beatrice Jones, who resides at 108 W. Wayne Street, Fremont, stated she had recently visited the Town’s website and discovered that there was an advertisement for the Town Clerk. She went on to say that the advertisement had caught her by surprise, because the previous Town Clerk was present at the September’s Board meeting. She asked where the job had been posted, and if the pool of applicants consisted of a cross-sector of people that represented our Town. She went on to say that the Town had not consistently hired people that lived in the Town, and asked if those in charge of interviewing/hiring people believed that the Town did not have people who were qualified to fill needed vacancies. Ms. Jones also stated that she believed that our staff should mirror the population in which we serve. She informed the Board that the Christian Fellowship Alliance would be a great source of advertisement. She stated this group of local ministers would be able to share with their congregation about any and all vacancies, and they would be able to obtain what the Town needs. She went on to ask whether or not the Town Clerk application deadline date of October 25, 2024 was enough time for the Board to find the person that is qualified for the position, and should the search for the Town Clerk’s position be extended.

Mayor Yelverton asked if the personnel committee had any comments.

Alderwoman Artis stated that Mr. Allen has received applications for the Town Clerk’s position, and the position was advertised on Indeed.com. Mr. Allen stated that it also had been advertised on the Town’s website, and the advertisement had generated approximately 180 applications, of which some of the applicants lived locally. Mr. Allen also stated that he had narrowed the applications down to approximately 11 applications. Alderwoman Artis stated that the personnel committee will be involved in the interviewing process, after which the best qualified candidates will be brought to the Board for final approval.

Alderwoman Artis stated that on October 25, 2024, the position would have been posted 30 days. Mrs. Jones stated that she was satisfied with the responses that were given.

Mayor Pro tem Ruffin stated that the Town of Fremont is an Equal Opportunity Employer, and that the applications would be looked at very closely. He also stated that he would do his part in making sure that the Town would mirror the population that we serve during the selection process.

Mayor Yelverton closed public comment.

Speaker – Wayne County Combined Health Services Briefing - Keith Spivey

- Mr. Spivey, who serves on the Wayne County Combined Health Services Board, stated that as a board member, he is required to brief the surrounding areas, in which he lives,

concerning the information that is discussed during their meetings. Mr. Spivey informed the Board of the following:

1.) Job vacancies – Mr. Spivey stated that the Department of Social Services & Health and Human Services has approximately 20 vacancies; most of them are in the Income Maintenance and Child Support Departments. He went on to say that Health and Human Services has now obtained a dentist, which would allow them to be able to offer their mobile health clinic and their free dental clinic to different municipalities. Mr. Spivey informed the Town Board that he would present a schedule to the Town after the needs/demands of the mobile units have been identified. He went on to say that he would make the Town of Fremont a high priority.

2.) Baby Boomers – Mr. Spivey reported that 1.8 million baby boomers, which are those people who were born between 1946-1964, currently live in North Carolina. He went on to say that the baby boomers are rapidly becoming the largest population in the state, and is projected to increase to 3 million people within the next ten years. He also stated that the need for medical agencies, activities, walking and biking trails, housing, etc., would be needed for that population.

3.) State Employees Health Care System – Mr. Spivey stated that Blue Cross Blue Shield had lost the contract with the State of North Carolina, and beginning January 1, 2025, Aetna would be the health care provider for all active North Carolina State employees. He went on to say that the State is estimating an annual savings of \$120,000,000 by entering in a contract with Aetna.

Action:

(1) Resolution for AIA Storm Water Planning Grant – Town Administrator Jonathan Allen

Mr. Allen informed the Board that this resolution was needed to be approved in order for the Town to move forward with the \$400,000 ARP Grant. He went on to say that the grant included: Project Management, GIS Storm Water System Inventory Mapping, Storm Water Condition Assessment, Development of Storm Water Management Plan, a 5+ Years Capital Management Plan, and a Grant Administrator Fee. He also stated that the funds for this grant must be disbursed by December 2026.

Alderman Jackson asked if the things that had to be done that were not included or identified in the grant would come back before the Board before they were completed. Mr. McAllister replied, yes.

Alderman Mooring asked if this study was required in order to have the actual construction or repairs completed. Mr. McAllister stated that any construction would be separate from this grant. He went on to say that the study is meant to address all issues, and if any are found, the Town could apply for grant assistance through DEQ.

Mayor Yelverton called for a motion to approve the Resolution for the AIA Storm Water Planning Grant. Alderman Jackson made a motion to approve the Resolution for the AIA Storm Water Planning Grant in the amount of \$400,000. Alderman Mooring seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

(2) Proposed Guidelines for Nominations to the Civic Monument Form – Town Administrator Jonathan Allen

Mr. Allen stated that at the request of the Board, he researched possible guidelines for how one could be nominated to a Civic Monument, in which he presented to the Board. He went on to say that these guidelines were only a suggestion, and could be revised at the Board's request. He pointed out the need for a committee of 3-5 members which could be appointed by the Board. He informed the Board that the committee could be comprised of Town Board members and citizens as well. Mr. Allen also pointed out the suggested dates that a nomination should be submitted, and when the nominations should be purged.

Alderwoman Artis asked who would pay for the plaque for each person that is nominated and would there be a fee. Mr. Allen stated that a civic organization, municipality, or county could cover the cost, but it would be determined by the Board.

Mayor Yelverton stated that his understanding from the group that Mr. Julian Aycock represented was going to pay for the cost of the plaque. Alderman Jackson suggested that all of the plaques on the Wall of Honor should be the same.

(See #3 for Action on this item)

(3) Nominations for the Civic Monument on the Wall of Honor Form – Town Administrator Jonathan Allen

Mr. Allen presented the Nominations for the Civic Monument Wall of Honor Form. He stated that this form was only a suggestion, and like the Guideline for Nominations to the Civic Monument form, it could be revised by the Board/Committee.

Mayor Yelverton asked the Board if they would like to table the item. Mayor Pro tem Ruffin stated that this was the second month since Mr. Julian Aycock made his request, and felt that we should move on it.

Alderwoman Artis asked if the people who lived on the outskirts of town could be nominated to be on the Wall of Honor. Mayor Pro tem Ruffin stated that he felt that it should include those that lived in and outside of Town and those in the surrounding areas. Mayor Yelverton referred the Board to number 1(c) of the Guidelines for Nominations to the Civic Monument Form, which reads: "The honoree must have been born or have lived in Fremont."

Alderman Wayne Jackson made a motion to approve the Rough Draft Proposed Guidelines for Nominations to the Civic Monument and the Nominations to the Civic Monument Forms, and that the size of committee would be determined at a later date,

and the persons nominated would live no further than one mile outside of the Town of Fremont's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

Mayor Pro Tem Ruffin seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

(4) Budget Amendment BA-03 -2025 - Town Administrator Jonathan Allen

Mr. Allen stated that the increase in call-back mileage was due to the recent hurricanes/storms. He stated that Public Works Staff was called in to take care of storm debris and other pertinent matters related to the storms, and this amendment was needed to cover call-back mileage.

Alderman Howell asked if the Public Works Truck loan listed on the budget amendment was the sewer collections truck. Mayor Pro Tem Ruffin stated that the amendment referenced a 2019 pick-up truck.

Mayor Yelverton asked for a motion to approve Budget Amendment BA-03-2025

Alderman Artis made a motion to approve Budget Amendment BA-03-2025. The motion was seconded by Alderman Oscar Mooring. Mayor Yelverton called for discussion. There was none. The motion passed unanimously.

(5) Town of Eureka Sewer Billing - Town Administrator Jonathan Allen – Moved to closed session.

(6) Deputy Finance Officer – Alderwoman Joyce Artis

Alderwoman Joyce Artis referred the Board to the September 24, 2024 Finance Committee minutes that was included in each Board member's packet. She stated that in the Finance Committee meeting, Finance Officer Shannon Daly stated that the Town needed to appoint someone as a Deputy Finance Officer, which would have the authority to sign checks in her absence. Alderwoman Artis stated that the finance committee recommended Town Administrator Jonathan Allen, and asked that it would be added to the October's Town Board meeting agenda for the Board's consideration/approval.

Mr. Allen also informed the Board that during the meeting that he, and Mrs. Daly had with a representative from the LGC, it was recommended by the representative that the Town appoint a Deputy Finance Officer, and that a member of the Board or the Town Administrator could serve in the position.

Alderman Jackson asked who would sign in the place of Mr. Allen if he has to sign a check that is over \$2000.00. The Board agreed, in that case, two Board members would sign checks over \$2000.00.

Mayor Yelverton stated that he would entertain a motion to approve the Finance Committee's recommendation.

Alderswoman Artis made a motion to appoint Town Administrator Jonathan Allen as the Deputy Finance Officer, who would only sign checks in the absence of Finance Officer Shannon Daly; and if a check is over \$2,000, two Board members would sign in the place of the Town Administrator's signature. The motion was seconded by Alderman Wayne Jackson. Mayor Yelverton called for discussion. There was none. The motion was passed unanimously. (Motion was rescinded and restated. See the minutes of the November 19, 2024 Board Meeting.)

Reports:

(1) Finance Report – Town Administrator Jonathan Allen

Mr. Allen referred the Board to the cash trending report. He stated that the Cash Trending report reflected a decrease of approximately \$9,000 from August to September. He went on to say that the decrease was due to the USDA payment for the fire trucks.

Mayor Yelverton noted that in August 2024, the Town had \$24,405 in Powell Bill and in September 2024, there was \$52,031 in Powell Bill. He stated that, although he was happy to see the increase, he wanted to know why there was such a large increase. Mr. Allen stated that it was due to Mrs. Daly transferring the Powell Bill funds from our Southern Bank account to our Capital Management Trust account, and also because we received more Power Bill money from the State.

(2) Billing and Collections: Alderswoman Joyce Artis – Interim Town Clerk.

Alderswoman Artis reported the following:

1. **Billing & Collections:** In the month of August we billed \$384,304.25 and collected \$286,775.77 in the month of September. The difference between what was billed vs. what was collected is \$97,527.48. Items that are contributing to the difference are as follows:
 - \$1951.38 – Vouchers
 - \$170.29 – Budget Billing
 - \$126,062.95 – Cut offs
 - \$114.37 – Sewer Credit (water leak)
 - \$25.00 – Reconnect Fee Credit (paid bill, but didn't want reconnected)
 - +\$12,552.49 – Delinquent accounts paid by the CDBG Grant
2. **Vouchers:** There was \$1,951.38 owed to the Town for vouchers. The vouchers should be submitted for payment by ACH on the next payment date, which is October 15, 2024.
3. **Budget Billing:** There was \$1,140.29 billed and \$970.00 collected.
4. **Cut-offs:** There was a total of 9 cut offs; 5 residents and 4 businesses. We billed \$128,107.76 and collected \$2,044.78, which left an uncollected amount of

\$126,062.95. As of October 9, 2024, all but two accounts were restored. One is in the process of sending payment and the other is in negotiations with the Town.

5. **Debt Setoff:** There was \$0.00 put into Debt Setoff from delinquent accounts for the month of June and there was \$12,552.49 collected in the month of September. \$12,343.30 was received as payments from the CBDG grant and \$209.19 from the State.
6. **Arrangements (Old Debt):** There was a total of \$571.36 that was owed to the Town from arrangements and \$70.00 was collected, leaving a total of \$501.36 owed. We have added a new arrangement in the amount of \$181.90.
7. **Work Orders:** For the month of July, there were 1 connect, 1 disconnect, and 3 transfers.

Mayor Pro Tem Ruffin asked for the amount of the Town of Eureka's sewer bill. Mr. Allen stated that Eureka's sewer bill was \$39,839.17 for 4,936,760 gallons. Alderman Jackson wanted to know why the amount billed (\$126,062.95) was so much more than what we collected (\$2,044.78). Alderwoman Artis stated that she believed that it was due to not receiving Eureka's sewer payments, but she would check with Billing & Collections Clerk Vanessa Brooks concerning his question.

Mr. Jackson also asked why the Town only collected \$70.00 of the \$571.36 that was billed in arrangements. Alderwoman Artis stated that she believed that it was due to the citizen that was on budget billing and has a high balance. She also stated that she would check with Mrs. Brooks concerning this as well.

Mr. Allen stated that he had spoken with the citizen, and plans to follow up with him as well.

(3) Police Report – Assistant Chief Greg Bottoms

Calls for Service & Self-Initiated Proactivity

Assistant Chief Bottoms stated that due to the time of the year, the calls for service had increased. He went on to say that on September 22, 2024, there was a break-in at the Fremont Food Mart. He also stated that due to the business owner's surveillance camera, and the help of the Wilson County Sheriff's Office, the suspect was able to be apprehended and charged. Assistant Chief Bottoms also reported that the Fremont Police Department conducted a few missing person follow-ups. He went on to say that these activities increase each officer's time per call, and they also decrease business checks and escorts. He also stated that these activities decrease the overall calls for service and self-initiated calls as well.

Code Enforcement

Assistant Chief Bottoms stated that due to the excessive amount of rain, the police department took in consideration that the grass would be a lot taller and that citizens would not have the chance to mow their lawn in a timely manner. He stated that there were 9 letters mailed and one 1 property sent for abatement.

Assistant Chief Bottoms asked if there were any questions.

Mayor Yelverton asked if there was any information on who broke in the storage units located on Hwy 222. Assistant Chief Bottoms stated that the incident was an ongoing investigation.

(4) Town Update Report – Town Administrator Jonathan Allen

New Phone System

Mr. Allen informed the Board that the new phone system, provided by One-Call, would be updated very soon. He went on to say that the new phone system would include: voice messaging, direct dial call system, call-forwarding, etc. He also stated that the cost to install the system had come in under-budget, and would cost the Town less than what we are currently paying each month. He went on to say that he would be moving on with the new phone system by the end of the week.

Mayor Pro Tem Ruffin stated that he would like for the new phone system to save the staff time to perform the day-to-day duties, but he didn't want the person who is calling to be routing to 3-4 different people before they received an answer to the question.

Town Clerk Applications

Mr. Allen also informed the Board that he had received approximately 180 applications for the Town Clerk's position, and he has vetted 10-11 applicants. Those vetted applicants had either previously served as an administrative assistant and/or clerk or has governmental experience.

Code Enforcement Officer & Grant Writer

Alderman Jackson asked for an update on the hiring of the grant writer and code enforcement officer. Mr. Allen stated that he had asked for feedback from the Board and as of yet, he hasn't received anything. He went on to say that he would immediately begin with the advertisement process for both positions.

Discussion:

(1) Grant Updates – Michael McAllister, M-ASCE Principal Project Manager

AIA Study Grant - \$400,000 Storm Water Grant

Mr. McAllister stated that the \$400,000 Storm Water Grant included: mapping of all of the storm drainage structures, location of ditches, identifying the size of the lines, a capital improvement plan, etc. He went on to say that the \$150,000 water AIA Study

included: GIS, location of all fire hydrants, valves, meters, location of pressure issues, etc. He also stated that the \$150,000 Sewer AIA included: location of the manholes, all pump station, identifying the sizes of the sewer lines, smoke testing, and closed circuit television inspection (CCTV).

4.5 Million Sanitary Sewer Rehab Funding

Mr. McAllister stated that this grant would be used to replace most of the pump stations, install generators at all pump stations, locate and repair cipp lining, replace services to eliminate I&I, etc. He went on to say the pump stations would include a Skater, which is a device that could be installed on a tablet, and could be used to obtain information about the pump stations/generators without being on site.

Alderman Howell asked if the Board would get the results of the smoke testing. Mr. McAllister replied, yes.

Mr. McAllister also stated that construction of the pump station and sewer lines portion of the grant is about ready for bid. He stated the advertisement of the construction will go out this month (October) and the bidding process will start in November, after which it would take approximately 45-60 days to award the contract to a contractor. He informed the Board that, at this point, he was waiting for the last letter from the State.

He also informed the Board that due to the amount of the work that was funded by ARPA, it is hard to find a contractor to bid on projects, and he expects the bid to be high.

\$900,000 CDBG

Mr. McAllister stated that this grant included the Town of Fremont and the Norwayne Alumni. He informed the Board that the bidding process was opened, and the first bid came in on Oct. 3, 2024. He went on to say that the bid is high, and he has to work with the Town, Norwayne Alumni, and Vortex Construction to try to get within budget. Mr. McAllister also stated that he inquired about additional money that may be available. He stated that he was told that there will be additional money, but doesn't know when that would happen, and the Town would have to apply for it.

Mayor Yelverton asked if the electronic signs could be separated from the other items in the grant, so that we could get a bid on them. Mr. McAllister stated that the signs are already part of the opened bid, and at this point, they could not be separated from the other items.

(2) Sell of the Old Library

Mr. Allen stated that he was advised by the Town's Attorney, Brian Pridgen, to have the old library appraised. He also informed the Board that there was an independent 501c3 entity that had expressed interest in purchasing the old library. Mr. Allen asked for further direction from the Board.

Mayor Pro tem Ruffin asked if there was an additional lot beside the library, and if the Board wished to sell the old library separate from the lot beside it.

There was some discussion about if there was indeed a separate lot. It was determined that the deed would be researched to make sure.

Alderman Oscar Mooring made a motion to allow Mr. Allen to obtain an appraisal of the old library. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Ruffin. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

(3) Customer Water Leaks – Alderwoman Joyce Artis

Alderwoman Joyce Artis stated that it was brought to her attention that a citizen had a major water leak. She stated that, in addition to having to hire a plumber, the citizen may have to pay a large water bill. She asked the Board if we could start charging each citizen that has a major water leak the amount that it cost the Town. She stated that it would send the message to the public that we are not benefitting from their misfortune. She went on to say, “In doing so, we would receive what it cost the Town, and it would help the citizen as well.”

Mayor Pro Tem Ruffin stated that, years ago, the Town would adjust the bills of the citizens that had a major water leaks.

Alderman Jackson made a motion to charge the citizen, who has a major water leak, their monthly water and sewer rate, and to forgive the overage, and to charge the citizen the rate in which the Town was charged to purchase the water. The motion was seconded by Alderwoman Joyce Artis. There was no further discussion. The motion was passed unanimously.

(4) Length of Meetings – Alderman Tim Howell

Alderman Howell stated that he didn’t feel that the Board should meet more than two hours per meeting. He went on to say that he loses focus, and may make hasty decisions. He stated that we should be more considerate of our staff that has been at work approx. twelve hours. Alderman Howell suggested that to save time, the department heads should not read their reports. He went on to say that Board members should come prepared with their questions, since the reports are included in the Board Packets.

Mayor Yelverton stated that he would like to complete the whole agenda in one night. He went on to say that if the meeting runs long, then we could consider recessing the meeting.

(5) End of Year Audit – Mayor Pro Tem Ruffin

Mayor Pro Tem Ruffin stated that the deadline for the audit is 10/31/2024. He asked Mr. Allen for an update on the Town’s audit. Mr. Allen stated that the accountant is mostly done with his portion of the audit. He went on to say that after he is finished, everything would be sent to Dana Layne, CPA. He also informed the Board that Dana’s schedule

was hectic, and he didn't think that the audit would be completed by 10/31/2024. However, it would be completed by 12/01/2024.

Information:

- 1.) Trunk-or-Treat – October 31, 2024 from 5:30pm-7pm at Fremont Methodist Church, 106 N. Sycamore Street
- 2.) Board Retreat & Strategic Planning Meeting – October 29, 2024 from 10am-4pm at Lane Tree Golf Course
- 3.) September Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting
- 4.) Saint James Church of Christ, Disciple of Christ Community Clothing Giveaway October 19, 2024 from 9am-2pm
- 5.) King & Queens Presents Can Food Drive & Clothing Giveaway – November 10, 2024 @ 4pm-7pm in the old Joyners' Parking Lot
- 6.) Rakin' In the Fun Fall Festival – Oct. 26, 2024 from 10am-4pm at the Aycock Birthplace.

Closed Session:

Mayor Yelcerton asked for a motion to go into Closed Session. Alderwoman Artis made the motion. Alderman Mooring seconded it. Motion passed unanimously.

Open Session:

Alderman Jackson made a motion to instruct Town Administrator Jonathan Allen to contact Town Attorney, Brian Pridgen, about writing a letter to the City of Goldsboro, which would explain that we are not liable for the Town of Eureka, and that the Town of Fremont would only pay our portion of the sewer bill to the City of Goldsboro, which would be sent with said letter; and Fremont would not pay Eureka's portion of the sewer bill to Goldsboro.

Mayor Pro Tem Ruffin seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion to Close Regular Meeting:

Mayor Yelverton asked for a motion to adjourn. Alderman Howell made the motion. Alderman Mooring seconded it. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The Meeting ended at 8:40 p.m.

Eddie Yelverton, Mayor

Joyce M Artis, Interim Town Clerk