

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF
THE TOWN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TOWN OF WILLIAMSTON, NC

January 18-19, 2019

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Williamston met in special session on Friday, January 18, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at the Red Heron Restaurant and then convened in the Assembly Room at Town Hall at 6:30 pm.

PRESENT Mayor: Joyce Whichard-Brown
Commissioners: Mayor Pro Tem Al Chesson, Ronell Rodgers, Jerry Knox, William Coffield and Alton Moore
Town Administrator: John O'Daniel
Town Clerk: Christina Craft
Finance Officer: Linda Harrison
Human Resources: Martha-Brown Lilley

CALL TO ORDER AND INVOCATION

The Mayor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Commissioner Knox offered the invocation.

Vision Review

The Town Administrator presented the current vision statements to the Board. He presented goals and strategies to complete the goals for each of the vision statements.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Town Administrator and the Finance Officer presented a comprehensive picture of the Town's Finances. A Financial Dashboard was presented showing FY 2017-2018 revenues and expenditures in the General Fund and the Enterprise Fund. Historically the revenues and expenditures are adjusted to the auditor's final financial report. The auditor's financial report has not been received and is not expected until the middle of February. The Town Administrator reported that the department directors did very well, staying within budget. Powell Bill is listed separately for tracking purposes only as those funds are General Funds. The Town has been frugal with Powell Bill funds as the funds are limited and can be used for other large expenses instead of borrowing funds if saved. The Powell Bill expenditures are reported to the State annually. A Financial Dashboard for the first 6 months of current FY 2018-2019 demonstrates that revenue and expenditures for both the General Fund and the Enterprise Fund have been reasonably projected.

The Finance Officer gave the following financial overview of the General Fund Revenue:

\$ 3,367,133 Available Fund Balance
\$ 6,238,329 Current Year Revenues
\$ 383,136 Powell Bill Reserves
\$ 9,988,598 Total Available General Fund Revenues

Expenditures:

\$ 6,265,329 Current Operating Expenditures (less debt service and OPEB Transfer)
\$ 109,977 Total Current Debt Service

The Finance Officer gave the following financial overview of the Enterprise Fund:

Revenue:

\$ 7,560,519 Available Retained Earnings
\$ 4,272,562 Operating Revenue for Water and Sewer Services
\$ 26,232 Principal and Interest payments from General Fund
\$ 4,298,794 Total Available Enterprise Fund Revenue

Expenditures:

\$ 2,287,165 Water Sales
\$ 1,841,852 Sewer Sales
\$ 166,679 Water District I & II Payments
\$ 4,295,696 Total Expenditures

A net of \$3,098 is projected to be available to add to Available Retained Earnings.

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FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

The Town Administrator reported that two police cars are in the budget for purchase and will most likely be purchased with a loan. The Police Department has two cars in the budget for this year and three in the upcoming budget. There were two new financial commitments to the General Fund which include the three police patrol cars, EMS remount and a new Fire Truck pumper. Commissioner Moore questioned if a lease option is feasible. Commissioner Chesson reported that the option had been reviewed in previous years but the amount of mileage on the vehicles made leasing cost-prohibitive. The patrol car rotation system minimizes the maintenance costs and older cars are sold on the GovDeals website. Commissioner Knox reported that the cars are purchased under a state contract at a very reasonable cost. The department managers, Finance and Administration reviews expenses monthly to ensure expenses are within budget. There is a contingency line item that can be used in emergency or disaster situations. This line item is not normally utilized. A boom truck was purchased approximately 5 years ago which has reduced employee injuries.

The Enterprise Fund financial commitments show that the Waste Water Treatment Plant loan will be paid in the next two years. The Annexation Sewer loan is a 20 year loan. The Water Districts I and II was purchased from Martin County and assumed the related loan. The Storm Water Fund is a dedicated fund related to the USDA loan for the Skewarkee Canal

The Local Government Commission (LGC) strongly suggests that the General Fund balance should be 55.5%. The total General Fund balance to include the Powell Bill funds is which equates 8.12 months of emergency use funds. In 2009, the general fund balance was under 10% and is now 58.69%. The LGC refers to this percentage whenever the Town attempts to borrow money. The Department Heads strive to keep expenses as low as possible which is evident with the increase in General Funds. The Town Administrator reported that the Powell Bill money and the \$25 increase on vehicle license implemented two years ago are designated funds to cover street repairs. The \$25 increase on vehicle tax cannot be used on equipment or salaries. The Sales Tax is distributed by assessed values and are in line with last year totals.

The Town Administrator reported on the status of the Accounts Receivable for utility billing. The Board authorized the movement from a 60 day billing to a 30 day billing which was fully implemented in January 2015. The amount of accounts receivable has decreased with the more aggressive approach. There was an increase in late fees in February which was due to many leaks in the cold weather. Many of those were adjusted. There are approximately 100 customers that have water turned off monthly due to nonpayment. While the town does charge a late fee, there is no charge to have the water turned on. In the months of November and December, late accounts are not cut off until after the holiday as a courtesy to our customers. There was a due date error on the December bill so no cut offs for late accounts were done in December. There is a fee charged by Point and Pay to use a credit card but citizens can use the auto-draft for free. The department utilizes debt-set off to attempt to collect Accounts Receivables.

The health insurance cost has decreased due to the switch to MedCost through the NC League of Municipalities last year. The premium paid by the town and employees were lower than previous years. Per contract, any increase in the premiums will not be over 8% renewal increase this year. The higher deductibles has maintained the costs in reimbursements. As of 2019, MedCost requires a wellness screen per employee. If the employee has not been to their family doctor for screening, the insurance company will host an onsite wellness screening. The employees must also have age-appropriate cancer screenings per the American Cancer Society guidelines. If there is anything noted in screening such as high blood pressure or diabetes, a health protocol will be set. If the employee does not follow the protocol or does not have a annual wellness screen, there will be a 10% penalty that must be paid by the employee.

Per direction of the Board, no new employees hired after July 1, 2013 can be added to OPEB. The obligation will decrease dramatically in the next 10 years due to the limitation of new additions. The OPEB funds are in a trust and cannot be used for any other purpose. The Human Resources Administrator reported that if the funds are available, the board may consider instituting a plan for the employees that do not benefit from the OPEB plan. Only the police department has a matching requirement for the 401K plan.

Employee Benefit Discussion

The Town Administrator reported that Pay Plan study that was approved by the Board last year recommended additional benefits. Additional benefits would make Town positions more attractive and assist in retaining employees. Currently, there is a 2% COLA considered in the budget with a 1/2% merit increase. He presented another option which will decrease the COLA to 1% with the Town doing a 1% match on the employee's 401K plan. The option also includes a

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change in longevity pay to be based on salary and years of service. The change in longevity will encourage employees to seek additional certifications. Commissioner Coffield reported that it is a good idea if the funds can be found to support it. The Town Administrator reported that this option will be explored and brought back to the Board.

Employee Holiday Schedule

The Town Administrator presented the town holiday schedule for review. The Mayor had requested that the Town adopts the State Holiday schedule. A poll was taken from other NC towns and the majority adopted the State Holiday Plan. Commissioner Moore questioned if the Town would consider a floating holiday for the employee birthday. By the birthday as a floating holiday, it could be scheduled and no additional costs to the town. Commissioner Chesson recommended reviewing only the State plan at this time. Commissioner Coffield reported that his experience was that only one day was given for Christmas and the current two days in the policy is enough. The Mayor reported that Veteran's Day should also be recognized. *It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Knox and unanimously passed approve 3 days at Christmas when Christmas falls on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.*

Elected Official Term Limit Discussion

The Town Administrator reported that the current Town Board of Commissioner's term limit is 4 years and all of the Board positions are elected simultaneously. He proposed that the Board consider staggering terms. Commissioner Knox reported that the terms used to be staggered but was changed to encourage people to vote. Commissioner Chesson reported that staggering terms would be very confusing as there are two districts to split and one at large commissioner. Only certain ones can vote, depending on the district where they reside. No action taken.

CLOSED SESSION

At 8:48 p.m., it was moved by Commissioner Rodgers, seconded by Commissioner Chesson and unanimously passed to go out of Open Session and into closed session to address a Personnel Issue per N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (6).

At 9:05 p.m., it was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Knox and unanimously passed to go out of Closed Session and into Open Session.

RECESSED

There being no further business, the Mayor recessed the meeting at 9:05 p.m. and will reconvene the meeting January 19, 2019 at 8 a.m.

Saturday, January 19, 2019**Present**

Mayor: Joyce Whichard-Brown
 Commissioners: Al R. Chesson, William Coffield, Ronell Rodgers, Alton Moore and
 Jerry Knox
 Town Administrator: John O'Daniel
 Town Clerk/Executive Assistant: Christina Craft
 Finance Officer: Linda B. Harrison
 Human Resources Administrator: Martha-Brown Lilley
 Recreation Director: Allen Overby
 Town Planner and Zoning Administrator: Cameron Braddy
 Police Chief: Travis Cowan
 Fire Chief: Michael Peaks
 Public Works Director: Kerry Spivey
 Town Attorney: Dan Manning
 Planning and Downtown Marketing Coordinator: Zach Dickerson

Absent

None

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WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed everyone. Commissioner Knox offered the invocation.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES/LONG RANGE NEEDS**Parks and Recreation**

The Parks and Recreation Director reported the Gaylord Perry Park Master Plan renovations is included on the CIP for Fiscal year 2019/2020 at a reduced rate with the assumption that grants will be received to pay for the remainder. PARTF grant application is due by May 1, 2019. The planning phase totals \$41,000 of which \$16,000 has already been paid. The plan has been scaled down to an affordable amount. The actual renovation is in the Capital Improvement Plan for 2020/2021 Budget Year. He is hopeful that other grants can be obtained to assist with the matching fund requirement. Once the PARTF Grant is submitted, the grant will not be awarded until the Fall. He requested direction from the Board as to how to proceed. Once the grant is approved, the Town will be required to move forward with the project. Commissioner Chesson reported that the parking lot is in need of repair and the park is due a renovation. It was the consensus of the Board to move forward with the grant application. The Board instructed Parks and Recreation Director to bring the application to the Board for approval at the February meeting.

Fire/Rescue/EMS

The Fire Chief submitted an annual report of operations for the year. In 2013, the department has a rating inspection. The rating was a 4 which is very good. To maintain and improve the ISO rating, the department must conduct annual hydrant inspections and pre-incident surveys, maintain/update operational guidelines and policies annually and issue "after the fire" surveys to citizens who suffer a loss from a structure fire. The addition of Fire Prevention Officer has resulted in a 95% increase in hydrant inspections and other the compliance requirements. Maintaining volunteers is a challenge. The Ladies Auxilliary offered a \$15 per call incentive plan to entice volunteers. This did help for the first six months. This trend will most likely lead to more paid employees. The Fire Chief shared designs for the fire department renovation.

Police Department

The Police Chief shared designs for the police department relocation project. Due to the government shutdown, the USDA will not be able to review the loan application. The Town Administrator reported the Town will need to extend the Option to Buy on the Stalls Building until the government shutdown has been lifted. Commissioner Chesson recommended the drainage issue on the new location to be constructed as irrigation as the Town is an Audubon Society. He also stated the new building will need to be well lit at night with ground lighting. This is something to consider for the Fire, Police and Town hall buildings. The Town Attorney assured the Board the extension on the Stalls property does not need further approval from the Board as their direction is sufficient. The Police Chief reported the recruitment position has proven beneficial in maintaining proper staffing.

Planning and Zoning

The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator submitted an annual report for review. The newly established businesses in the downtown area have created an estimated 144 jobs. He reported the Williamston Downtown, Inc. Currently, there is a design committee but will create two more committees. There has been \$50,000 in Vibrancy Grant improvements. There is \$1,000 in the Beautification program and would like to increase this line item in the next budget year. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) continues to be a challenge. The grant is currently in the HUD office. The Town has lost the contractors that had previously accepted the challenge of the renovations to the three downtown businesses due to the HUD extensions. The process has been much slower than anyone thought it would be. This delay has not been caused by any of the building owners. The Comprehensive Plan Update is underway. N-Focus won the bid to perform the update. They plan to be onsite at Town Hall on January 23, 2019 and would like to interview each of the Board members. Main Street Market would like to add more events during the year. He is currently working on a Downtown Williamston Urban Redevelopment Plan which will outline a "Urban Redevelopment Zone." Urban renewal also enables a municipality through its redevelopment authority to acquire land and dispose of land in accordance with the urban renewal and redevelopment plan's goals, desired uses for property and standards for redevelopment and design.

Public Works

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The Public Works Director reported that employee retention/turnover/succession is an issue. Pay Plan efforts in the past year have been a great help. Continued attention to the issue of succession and licensing is strongly advised. The department needs to continue to provide budget for annual street paving projects using town staff and avoiding additional engineering costs whenever possible. Sanitation scheduling has changed in 2019 with the department concentrating work efforts in one quarter of the town daily which allows for a greater focus on each quarter and proper monitoring of the service provided. As the chipper has decreased the amount of waste and related landfill costs, the chips still need to be managed. It is his proposal to migrate to a portable burner that will provide for longer term sustainability in our limb collection process. Once the burner is purchased, the chipper can be sold on GovDeals.com to re-coup some of the cost of the burner. He requested consideration to possibly charging a fee to cut off water as a convenience to customers as the Water Use Ordinance, Section II, part 9 states that "the customer shall furnish and maintain a private cut-off and appropriate backflow prevention device on his side of the meter, and the Town will provide a cut-off valve on the Town's side of such meter." He reported a CDBG application is being considered for the "New Town" water/sewer potential project. The "New Town" area seems likely to meet CDBG criteria and offers an opportunity to address concerns with possibly the oldest water lines in town. Sewer lines are also some of our oldest and will learn soon whether it is reasonable to apply for CDBG project funding to include water and sewer improvements. He is considering the possibility of abandoning the 75,000 gallon elevated water storage tank at Public Works. This will increase water turnover in the remaining elevated tanks and could possibly increase water quality. The 300,000 gallon elevated water storage tank at Public Works was cleaned this week. Significant amount of sand was removed from the tank along with sediment typically expected during a cleanout. The Cross-Connection/Backflow policy is almost complete and will be brought to the Board for consideration soon. Over the past few months, he and the Waste Water Treatment Plant staff have been meeting with representatives of Blue Frog Technologies. This system costs \$168,056 but has a very quick payback and costs reduction that may be enjoyed for years to come. This system appears to have an energy savings potential of about 92.5%.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) DISCUSSIONS

The Town Administrator presented the CIP for the Board review. He reported that the CIP will be continued to be under review as the budget is completed. A listing of each department needs were shared with the Board. Commissioner Coffield questioned the River Landing Phase II for \$730,000. The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator reported the amount was accessed by the previous director. Phase I has been completed. Phase II will require grant funding. Roanoke River Partners would be a great asset in finding funding opportunities to finalize this project.

Vision Review

The Town Administrator presented the current vision statements to the Board. He presented goals and strategies to complete the goals for each of the vision statements.

Downtown Economic Development Discussion

The Town Administrator reported the building that was purchased will need a new roof and other minor repairs. The Town needs to decide the future of the building. The first option is the Town completes the renovations with grants or general funds and partners with the Martin County EDC/MCC to facilitate as an incubator. The Town would eventually sell the property to an investor and put the revenue obtained into a new project. Another option is to sell the property to an investor or new business and they take advantage of Historic Tax Credit Grant and renovate the building into a mixed use property. A third option is to revamp Williamston Downtown (WDI) and transfer the building ownership to WDI. WDI can apply for grants to renovate the building and develop a Town Economic Development Fund. Commissioner Chesson reported that it would cost approximately \$300,000 to have the building completely renovated. If the Town decides to move in this direction, there must be public input and multi-year funding from the town. Commissioner Rodgers expressed concern over the risk factor. Commissioner Chesson reported that once the CDBG grants for the three buildings downtown are completed and the Fire/Rescue and Police projects are finished, it will be evident that the Town wants to be a catalyst in growing the downtown area. The Planning and Downtown Marketing Coordinator recommends a roof and minor repairs on the building and then turn it over to a business that would complete renovation. One or two new businesses and increased foot traffic will bring the downtown in the right direction. Many are discouraged due to the Mitchell Photography building. The Town Administrator reported that the Town needs to be in the facilitator mode and not property

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management. Commissioner Chesson suggested that the Town should dedicate a portion annually to economic development so that when issues occur, the Town can take a stern approach and also use the funding to seed growth. To clean out the purchased building and replace the roof, the cost will be approximately \$50,000. Commissioner Chesson recommends allocating \$100,000 annually to economic development to show that the Town is supporting growth. It was the consensus of the Board to move forward with allocating \$100,000 annually to economic development.

Code Enforcement Budget

The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator presented a graded listing of buildings that need to be demolished. The total demolition cost of the worst of the structures is approximately \$54,288, which consists of 14 properties. The current total Code Enforcement budget, which also includes other violations and mowing overgrown lawns, is \$16,000. Commissioner Chesson questioned if multiple buildings were demolished simultaneously, would it decrease the demolition costs. Fire Chief Peaks reported the fire department may be able to do controlled burns for training purposes and will visit the addresses to see if it is plausible. The Town Attorney reported that Cameron is in the process of serving the complaint on the owner and hold a hearing to require the owner to demolish the building which will take up to 90 days. If the owner does not comply, then it will come back to the Town for consideration of demolishing the buildings. There were three but one of the property owners has responded and is willing to demolish his building. Commissioner Chesson recommends additional allocations to increase the budget to \$30,000 annually for the next 3 years, to include an extra \$10,000 in the current year to allow for more demolishing to be done and improve the Town appearance. This will increase the amount to improve the Town appearance for a combined 3-year total of \$100,000. It was the Board consensus to increase the Code Enforcement budget by \$10,000 in the current year and to \$30,000 annually for the next three years.

Code Enforcement Parking Regulations

The Town Administrator presented the current off-street parking ordinance. The Mayor requested the ordinance to be reviewed and consideration given to disallowing parking in front of the residences on unimproved surfaces. The Town Administrator also presented the Greenville NC and the Town of River Bend ordinances which address this issue. The towns enforce this policy through their Parking and Code Enforcement department. Commissioner Rodgers reported that, while it is unsightly, it is the property of private citizens. The Town Administrator reported that overgrown grass is different than parking on the grass as it is a safety issue. Commissioner Chesson reported that letters could be sent but would have to enforce it. The Town Planner and Zoning Administrator recommends the Appearance Commission to send letters to let the owners and tenants aware of the citizen complaints. The Board directed the Town Planner and Zoning Administrator to send letters and revisit this situation in July.

Water Adjustment Policy Review

The Town Administrator distributed the current water adjustment policy and a survey of other municipalities water adjustment policies. The Town Administrator recommends no change in the current policy. The Town policy is that customers are only allowed one bill adjustment each year. The sewer is adjusted with every water adjustment. Many towns do not give water but do give sewer adjustments if the leak does not go back into the system such as toilet leaks. No other utilities give a break due to high usage. It was the Board's direction to adhere to the policy as written.

Matters of Interest to Board Members

The Town Administrator added this section to allow the Board members to bring any items to the staff and Board's attention. The Mayor reported it is a good idea to have a different pastor to do the opening prayer for the Board meetings. This would bring more citizens to the meetings. The Town Attorney reported that all churches in Williamston must be invited and prayer in public meetings is generally acceptable.

CLOSED SESSION

At 1:48 p.m., it was moved by Commissioner Coffield, seconded by Commissioner Chesson and unanimously passed to go out of Open Session and into closed session to address a Attorney-Client Issue per N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (3).

At 2:40 p.m., it was moved by Commissioner Coffield, seconded by Commissioner Moore and unanimously passed to go out of Closed Session and into Open Session.

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Acceptance of Williamston Fire and Police Sites Survey Bid

It was moved by Commissioner Chesson, seconded by Commissioner Knox and unanimously passed to approve and accept the Gaskins Land Surveying bid.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm.

Submitted By:

Approved By:


Town Clerk


Mayor