

Town of Stantonsburg

Regular Board Meeting

March 11, 2024

Mayor Coley Rhodes called the monthly board meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The following council members were present: Donnie Bass, Ben Harper, Eartha Butler, Jackie Grice, and Steve Mooring. Also present was Town Manager Brian Hawley, Town Clerk Alexis Whitley, and Town Attorney Slade Rand.

Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer: Mayor Rhodes led the Pledge of Allegiance and opened the meeting with prayer.

Approval of Agenda: Councilman Mooring made a motion to approve the agenda amending the actual date. Passed unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes: Councilman Mooring had some things to address starting on page 3 referencing his concerns with the Public Works Department. He would like those concerns to be stated in the minutes. On page 5, a grammatical correction needed to be made to “tethered” to make it “tattered”. Councilman Butler suggested making a new paragraph on page 2 under new business where the Town Clerk presented her certificate of sufficiency for annexation. Councilwoman Grice made a motion to accept the minutes with amended changes. Passed unanimously.

Public Hearing

Mayor Rhodes opened the public hearing.

Town Manager Hawley discussed the public hearing for the annexation of Sand Pit Road and Peacock Bridge Road. The petition for annexation has been certified by the Town Clerk and is valid. It is recommended by the Town Manager for the council to adopt the ordinance which will also extend the boundaries of corporate limits slightly. Councilman Mooring has concerns about the town being covered and whether the current property owners have been notified. Per Steve Oliverio with Bartlett Engineering, they have been notified.

Mayor Rhodes asked if there were any questions or concerns. There were none.

Councilman Bass made a motion to adopt the ordinance which will also extend the boundaries of corporate limits slightly to approve annexation of Briar Farm Phase 2A and 2B in the area of Sand Pit Rd and Peacock Bridge Rd.

Mayor Rhodes closed the public hearing.

Public Comment:

Katherine Horton who resides on Tyson Drive, voiced her concerns regarding the GPS in the police vehicles and the GPS policy. She explained her concerns and why she thinks the GPS should be removed from police vehicles. She also made reference to her concerns regarding her safety.

Financial Reports: The town's CDs are up for renewal, and Finance Officer, Victoria Lucas, checked some of the yields and included them in the council's packets.

February: Monthly Receipts: \$883,453.28 Disbursements: \$375,927.60 Difference: \$507,525.68 Report referred to our auditors.

Invoices for Payment: Councilman Bass has questions regarding NERC and whether the cost is being split between all 3 towns - Stantonsburg, Black Creek, and Lucama. Town Manager Hawley stated that amount should be our 1/3 portion. He will confirm. There are a few charges the town had to check regarding agreements with Black Creek and Lucama due to not being billed correctly. Councilwoman Grice questioned if the Walmart Credit Card was paid off or cancelled. As of the month of February, the Walmart card balance was \$0.

Councilwoman Grice made a motion to approve invoices. Passed unanimously.

Old Business: Mayor Rhodes presented the Non-Power Agencies Board of Commissioners for Electricities. We needed a replacement for the primary position on the board. We did not have a volunteer from the council and Manager Hawley said he would be glad to take on the position if allowed. It was confirmed that Manager Hawley can serve on this board.

Councilwoman Butler made a motion that Manager Hawley be listed on the Non-Power Agencies Board of Commissioners for Electricities. Manager Hawley was sworn in by Mayor Rhodes for the primary position as a commissioner on the Non-Power Agencies Board of Commissioners.

Councilman Mooring reflected on a discussion about golf carts from the previous meeting and he noticed the revenue statement is showing revenue from golf cart fees. The council requested that Town Manager Hawley draft a new Golf Cart Ordinance to be presented at the next meeting. A few things to be addressed in this ordinance are safety inspections, payment received at Town Hall, reflective triangles, lights, dollar amounts, and rules regarding riding at night.

New Business: Event Committee Chair, Jane Lancaster, approached the council regarding dates for upcoming events. The proposed date for the Crepe Myrtle Festival is Saturday, October 12th from 10-4. They are planning to bring the Embers back this year as well as another band, The Classics, if possible. Our original stage is not available this year as they are booked for a different festival. The estimate for the stage is \$1,385.00 and the estimate for the sound is \$1,150.00. Building a stage is an option that has been discussed. The board reached a consensus on the date of the Crepe Myrtle Festival being October 12th from 10-4. The proposed date for the Christmas Parade is December 7th at 5:00pm. There was discussion about changing the route of the parade due to it being so long this last year. There will not be a rain date for the Crepe Myrtle Festival and other bands are welcome to play before or after The Embers.

Councilwoman Butler made a motion that we approve October 12th for the Crepe Myrtle Festival and December 7th for the Christmas Parade. Passed unanimously.

Town Manager Hawley presented his concern about a high electric bill that a customer received within one month of usage after electrical work was done at her home. The town has investigated this matter with the county, inspectors, and the town's electrical engineers. At this time, our investigation shows that the homeowner is responsible for that bill. The customer has been paying on the balance as we

have estimated her bill on a yearly basis. Permits were missing and her electrician said he was not licensed. Town Manager Hawley determined to waive all late fees for her because of how excessive her bill is.

The council reached a consensus to continue charging the customer the average based off her usage within the yearly estimate unless she goes over her average usage.

Town Manager Hawley presented the request of business cards for the council. The board reached a consensus that they would like to have business cards. The proofs will be sent before ordering.

Town Manager Hawley addressed the issue at Old Saratoga Bottling Company. The company manager sent an email out to Mayor Rhodes and Town Manager Hawley discussing the issue. They have a pole that is leaning toward the building. The weight is an urgent concern. The town is getting a few estimates on this complex project. Councilman Bass requested they brace this pole in the meantime which our electric department already did. Manager Hawley will take care of this as soon as possible.

Manager Hawley discussed the accident that happened on NC Hwy 222 that took down a town pole. Per Town Manager Hawley he did allow our electrical department to request help to get this repaired. The amount of help was not clarified. Going forward, we will be using mutual aid agreements first before contracting things out. This will be a written policy as well as verbal. The estimate for the work done will be turned over to insurance.

The Town Procurement Policy was addressed. Town Manager Hawley did not want to act on it until the council had enough time to review it. Finance Officer, Victoria Lucas, has worked very hard to prepare this policy. This policy will be revisited at the next board meeting in April.

The Budget Retreat will be held Saturday, March 23rd, 2024, at Wilson Community College organized by Town Clerk, Alexis Whitley. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. Menu options will be sent out via email to the council before Friday.

Town Manager Hawley addressed incorporating into the Fire District as discussed with Crawford Bolton. He has met with the fire chief and discussed the current contract. Talking with Crawford and other towns based on the new assessments, if the council was to consider this, it would be the perfect time to do so. This would free up a lot of the funds we spend on the fire department for coverage. Turning it over to Wilson County would be a much better alternative and the town can adjust their rates. Mayor Rhodes questioned the negative effects if the town were to incorporate into the fire district. Town Manager Hawley stated that after speaking with Crawford and other fire departments, there are no negative effects but, we need to have the information submitted by March 22nd. Town Manager Hawley recommends that the town do this. Councilwoman Butler made a motion to go forward with incorporating into the fire district. Vote 3 to 2. Councilman Harper, Councilman Mooring, and Councilwoman Butler being for. Councilman Bass and Councilwoman Grice opposed.

Department Reports:

The Water/Sewer Department: **Water:** Cox-Edwards made the repair to the leaking 2-inch gate valve on Woodbridge Rd. Edwin Gurkins passed his C-Well Exam and now is certified and will be able to work on the weekends by himself. 10 water meters were changed out in February. Normal maintenance and repairs made. All required reports and sampling performed with no violations. Edwin Gurkins completed

his 6-month probationary period in February. Town Manager Hawley recommended a merit 5% increase in pay for Edwin.

Councilwoman Grice made a motion to accept the pay increase. Passed unanimously.

Wastewater: Edwin Gurkins will be taking a Wastewater Treatment exam and Lonnie Smith will be taking a Collections exam on March 14th. We are having NC Rural Water come out to help perform smoke testing on parts of the collection system sometimes in April. The only cost to the Town will be the liquid used to make the smoke and should be under \$200. This will help us identify areas that we can hopefully fix in house. (leaking manholes, cleanouts, etc.) No major issues to report and basic maintenance and repairs made. All reports and required sampling were performed with no violations.

For Park/Rec: Preparing the park for the Easter Egg Hunt will begin.

Public Works: In front of the Town Hall has been pressure washed by Robert, and the awning of Town Hall has been painted. Town Manager Hawley thinks our public works department can handle pressure washing all downtown sidewalks instead of hiring a company to do so. Councilman Mooring voices his concerns about it also being "grass-cutting" season again and if they are able to complete the sidewalks in a timely manner due to that.

Electric Department: the town pole on NC Hwy 222 was discussed and we will be going through insurance to seek reimbursement.

Police Report: Police report for the month of February reviewed. There was an alarm at the school again and speaking with Chief Rosario, each time 911 is called the county is charged for it and not the town.

Manager's Report:

For the CDBG grant, title opinions are being worked on. Land surveys are next once title opinions are finished. Tirence from UCPCOG said it has been very hard to find land surveyors. Bartlett Engineering has surveyors and Herring Sutton and Associates does also.

For the Seal Building, Town Manager Hawley presented a Scope of Work from Green Heron in Durham. Their estimate was a bit high but after Mayor Rhodes and Town Manager Hawley met with them, and after reaching out to East Carolina, the new estimate came in right at \$46,900 and we have approximately \$47,500 left remaining for the grant. Councilman Harper made a motion to accept the scope of work for the transformation project from Green Heron planning. Vote 4 to 1. Councilman Bass opposed. Councilman Mooring, Councilman Harper, Councilwoman Butler, and Councilwoman Grice were for.

Town Manager Hawley presented minutes from January 10, 2022, from the annexation of Briar Farm Phase 1 that needed to be amended to say, "Councilman Harper made the motion to approve annexation and adopt the ordinance to extend the corporate limits." Councilman Mooring made a motion to amend the January 10, 2022, minutes from the public hearing for the annexation of Briar Farm Phase 1. Passed unanimously.

The ice machine is set up in the shop and running great.

Budget Retreat information will be sent out to the council this week.

Mayor Rhodes is attending the NC Main Street Conference, which is tomorrow, March 12th.

Well and Waterline Grant priorities; tomorrow Town Manager Hawley and Roger will be meeting with the Town Engineer, Mike McAllister to discuss updating our Capital Improvement Plan and identify what priorities will be recommended to the council to move forward. The recommendation right now is to initially meet with Vince Tomaino from Municipal Engineering on Mike's team and based on the way the grant is written to direct appropriations to NCDEQ and knowing the situation with some assets, it is best to use funds to rehab some of the town's wells. Town Manager Hawley will keep the council updated.

Gary Pittman is not any closer to finishing our books for 2022 and things cannot be picked up on until after tax season. Town Manager Hawley presented a letter of engagement from Ryan Marlar, CPA. He can get things turned over to the auditor in 30 days if he is able to pick up from where Gary has left off for 2022. The council discussed the letter of engagement and voiced their questions and concerns. Town Manager Hawley will get more information and send it out to the council.

The Cash Management Policy will be presented in the next meeting.

For mold remediation next door, Town Manager Hawley asked the council for permission to purchase Personal Protective Equipment for him to remediate records in the building next door. Records we no longer need to keep according to the records retention policy will be destroyed. Councilwoman Grice has concerns regarding the number of records that need to be remediated. Town Manager Hawley states that it should take 3 days to get things done.

Councilman Harper made a motion to give Town Manager Hawley permission to purchase Personal Protective Equipment. Vote 3 to 2. Councilman Harper, Councilman Bass, and Councilwoman Butler are for, with Councilman Mooring and Councilwoman Grice opposed.

Comments from Mayor and Council:

Councilman Mooring asked that the town continues to maintain asset records as we have turn over. Overtime has been cut in half almost and the town has been successful at handling this.

Councilman Bass questioned if the town has had any luck on a 3rd full time police officer. Town Manager Hawley plans to discuss this at the Budget Retreat.

Town Manager Hawley made the council aware that he reached out to Representative Fontenot and Senator Newton to seek further appropriations and part of that is for a 2-year grant of \$500k to help fund our Police Department.

Councilwoman Butler mentioned the sign on bonus for the police officers as brought up in the previous meeting. Town Manager Hawley stated that is one of the things we are talking about. Councilwoman Butler asked for an update on internal controls for oil and gas. Finance officer, Victoria Lucas, has made a spreadsheet to appropriate where expenditures are going to go for the fuel we must purchase. A few adjustments need to be made. Cash Management policy is part of the overall policy but also some internal controls.

Councilwoman Butler had concerns about KS Bank. The town has 3 accounts there. She was concerned that all of the accounts were at one bank, and she had questions about the interest decreasing and increasing out of the accounts constantly.

Councilwoman Butler questioned the drink machine at the town park and whether it is our machine or someone else's and if they rent the spot from us. Councilwoman Grice stated that it is the husband of the lady who owns Sisters of Beauty here in town. He keeps the machine stocked. Mayor Rhodes stated that he came before the board and the board passed a motion that he could put the machine out there and keep it stocked at no charge.

Councilwoman Butler had concerns about the charge for uniforms and that our workers are not wearing them. Town Manager Hawley stated that we are in a contract with them until next year and he recommended to not continue that contract but take a different route on that.

Councilwoman Butler presented a complaint she was approached with regarding our police department begin overzealous in the area of Sand Pit Rd. The posted speed limit is 35mph now, but it used to be 55mph. It has been posted as 35mph for a while now. The resident received a ticket going 20 miles over the posted speed limit. Town Manager Hawley will speak with Chief Rosario regarding this and to see about moving the speedometer sign to that area for a while.

The council and Town Manager Hawley received a letter from June Downing regarding the removal of her mother, Joanne Lucas, from the Planning Board. Town Clerk, Alexis Whitley, is getting the public records request fulfilled.

Councilwoman Grice mentioned the letter as well. She has concerns that the new members were selected in July 2023, but the application process was not passed, and they were not voted in until January of 2024. Letters were sent out to incoming members, outgoing members, and members that switched boards. Per Town Manager Hawley, there was not a standard process for board appointments at that time. He did check to make sure nothing was done wrong, and after listening to the minutes again, there was a motion left out of the July minutes when the actual list was presented.

Councilwoman Grice asked to clarify if the positions were posted before people were solicited.

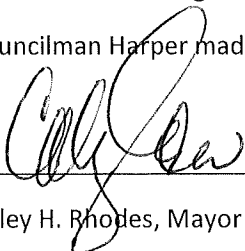
Councilwoman Grice addressed the public comment to seek more information regarding the concern voiced about the harassment and the GPS policy.

Councilman Mooring questioned the direct deposit as a check was received instead of direct deposit. Per Town Manager Hawley, everything had not been submitted for finalization.

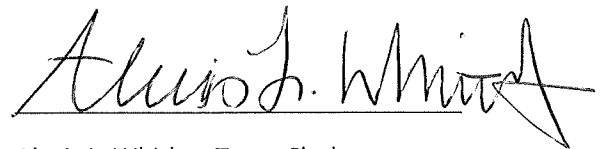
Councilman Mooring mentioned the CD renewals and he suggested that the town move some of the funds. This was further discussed. He requested a comparison on CDs. Town Manager Hawley will provide that at the next meeting.

Councilman Mooring recommended the town get a financial advisor.

Councilman Harper made motion to adjourn. Passed unanimously.



Coley H. Rhodes, Mayor



Alexis L. Whitley, Town Clerk