

Regular Meeting – March 15, 2022

The Fairmont Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting on Tuesday, March 15, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in the Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center with Mayor Charles Kemp presiding. Commissioners present were J.J. McCree, Heather Seibles, Terry Evans, Melvin Ellison, Clarence McNeill, Jr., and Jan Tedder-Rogers. Staff present included Town Manager Hank Raper, Town Attorney Jessica Scott (by phone), Town Clerk Jenny Larson, Deputy Town Clerk Donna Jacobs, Public Works Director Ronnie Seals, and Police Chief Jon Edwards. Others in attendance included Rev. Sammy Shropshire, Nate Thompson, Monte McCallum, Jessica Horne, and several citizens.

Call to Order and Invocation

Mayor Charles Kemp called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Rev. Sammy Shropshire, of Star of Bethlehem Baptist Church, gave the invocation, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Ellison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Public Comment Period/Citizens Appearance

Nate Thompson – Community Concerns

Mr. Nate Thompson is concerned about the community and wants to see the town properly cleaned up.

Consent Agenda

Upon motion by Commissioner Evans and seconded by Commissioner Seibles, it was unanimously voted to adopt the following consent agenda item:

- a. Approval of Minutes – Strategic Plan Meeting, February 8, 2022, Regular Meeting, February 15, 2022, Closed Session and General Account, February 15, 2022, and Budget Workshop, February 22, 2022

New Business

Engineer Approval – Water AIA Project

Town Manager Hank Raper asked the board to approve LKC Engineering for the Water Asset Inventory Assessment project. This will allow the town to negotiate a rate for their service on this project. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve LKC Engineering for the Water Asset Inventory Assessment project. Commissioner Ellison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Resolution 22-03 Equal Housing Opportunity, Fair Housing Complaint Procedure, Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Plan, and Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice for CDBG-I

Town Manager Hank Raper asked the board to adopt Resolution 22-03 Equal Housing Opportunity, Fair Housing Complaint Procedure, Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Plan, and Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice for the CDBG-I Brown Street project. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers made a motion to adopt Resolution 22-03 Equal Housing Opportunity, Fair Housing Complaint Procedure, Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Plan, and Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice for CDBG-I. Commissioner McNeill seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. A signed copy of this resolution is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Resolution 22-04 Voluntary Annexation request from Grandma's Snack Shack/Veronica Elvir

Town Manager Hank Raper informed the board that Veronica Elvir, owner of the property where Grandma's Snack Shack is located, has signed a petition to voluntary annex her property into town. The restaurant's proprietors would like to be able to sell beer but can only do that if the property is inside the city limits. Commissioner Evans made a motion to adopt Resolution 22-04 – Directing the Clerk to investigate a petition received under G.S. 160A-31. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. A signed copy of this resolution is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Ordinance 22-206 – Close Main Street for May Day Fun Festival on May 28

Town Manager Hank Raper asked the board to adopt an ordinance closing Main Street for the May Day Fun Festival on Saturday, May 28, 2022. Commissioner Seibles made a motion to adopt Ordinance 22-206 – Close Main Street for May Day Fun Festival on May 28, 2022. Commissioner Ellison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. A signed copy of this ordinance is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes. Mayor Kemp thanked former Commissioner Monte McCallum for volunteering to chair the May Day Fun Festival.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business this month.

Department Head Input

Police Chief Jon Edwards announced that solar powered radar speed signs have been installed on Iona, North Main and South Walnut streets.

Mayor Input

Mayor Kemp made the following statement for the record:

I want to use my time tonight to highlight the budget workshop we held on Feb. 22nd and focus on one aspect of it. Several months back we contracted with professionals to prepare and make available to us a pay study. It was presented and packets were given to each of us in person by one of those performing the work on it. The 1st occasion for our board to address its contents publicly was at the budget workshop on Feb. 22nd and at that meeting all board members present expressed to the town manager the need and their individual desire to have the town employees' salaries adjusted upward as the pay study called for as he prepared the budget. There was no push back in the desire by board members to see our town employees placed in a better salary position in the new fiscal year starting July 1st. I am absolutely convinced that the words of the board members heard on Feb. 22nd will be matched in late June with their positive vote to adopt a budget that rewards our employees with higher pay. These are honorable publicly elected officials which I am proud to work with and know they, as I do, appreciate the work our employees do for our town and her citizens. There is no doubt in my mind, that even with a little tweaking and more work to be done on it, our budget which begins on July 1st will reflect higher pay for each of our great town employees. I would not want any town employee to think that this board is not taking the pay study seriously nor wants to offer higher wages to each of them. That has already been made clear and will continue to be throughout the budget process. I make this statement tonight early in our budget process to reassure the employees who may be wondering whether the pay study or the recommendations that are included in it will be forgotten or ignored. The value our employees have to our town's operations are without question and given time for the budget to be completed employees will see the evidence of their importance.

This statement of support for our employees is another effort on my part to offer transparency to our board members, the citizens of our community, and to our valued employees. Without many of their email addresses I have no way of connecting with them as I do others in our community but starting on Wednesday, March 30th at 12:00 noon, I will be inviting all our elected officials and town employees to enjoy quarterly lunches at the fire hall, which will be my treat and at those occasions I will offer comments of praise and support to the employees in written form and ask for their email addresses if they have one to better communicate with them. I look forward to these opportunities starting later this month. These lunches will also be held in late June, Sept, and at Christmas time. I also plan to issue a proclamation on the Friday before Labor Day proclaiming that day as Fairmont Town Employees Appreciation Day. Fairmont is blessed with loyal, trustworthy, and dependable employees and I am proud to be able to express my appreciation to them in these ways. I am certain that our board members feel the same way. I would like to ask Chief Edwards, Public Works Director Ronnie Seals, and our town manager to make sure all the employees they supervise are invited and present during the lunch on the 30th so that we all can have this time together and so that I may verbally and by written tribute honor them in an appropriate fashion.

Commissioner Input

The commissioners thanked the citizens for coming to the meeting.

Commissioner Evans would like to revisit increasing commissioner pay during the next budget workshop.

Commissioner Seibles asked Mr. Raper to investigate the feasibility of adding Juneteenth as a paid holiday for employees.

Manager Input

Town Manager Hank Raper encouraged citizens to participate in the upcoming Strategic Plan meeting on March 22 and the Comprehensive Plan meeting on March 29. Citizen input is needed to make these plans successful.

Announcements

Tuesday, March 22 – Strategic Plan Meeting, 6:00 p.m., Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center.

Tuesday, March 29 – Comprehensive Plan to discuss Fairmont’s future, 6:00 p.m., Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center.

Saturday, April 9 - Easter Egg Hunt, Community Park. 10:00 a.m.

Tuesday, April 19 - Regular Town Board meeting, 6:00 p.m., Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Evans made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:33 p.m. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Jennifer H. Larson, NCCMC
Town Clerk