

Regular Meeting – May 17, 2022

The Fairmont Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting on Tuesday, May 17, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in the Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center with Mayor Charles Kemp presiding. Commissioners present were J.J. McCree, Terry Evans, Heather Seibles, Melvin Ellison, Clarence McNeill, Jr., and Jan Tedder-Rogers. Staff present included Interim Town Manager Jenny Larson, Town Attorney Jessica Scott, Deputy Town Clerk Donna Jacobs, Public Works Director Ronnie Seals, and Police Chief Jon Edwards. Others in attendance included Minister Cycachee Scott, Jimmy Broach, Jr., Steven Harrell, Lorenzo Currie, Nathaniel Thompson, Bobby Walters and several citizens.

Call to Order and Invocation

Mayor Charles Kemp called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Minister Cycachee Scott, of Deeper Truth Deliverance Center, gave the invocation, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Hearing – Voluntary Annexation of Grandma’s Snack Shack

Commissioner Evans made a motion to go into public hearing at 6:04 p.m. Commissioner McNeill seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The purpose of the Public Hearing is to discuss the voluntary annexation of Grandma’s Snack Shack, located at 306 Eldorado Road. There was no public comment on the annexation.

Commissioner McNeill made a motion to come out of public hearing at 6:05 p.m. Commissioner Evans seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approval of Agenda

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

Public Comment Period/Citizens Appearance

Legusta Floyd

Mr. Legusta Floyd had questions about the utility rate increase. He passed out copies of his questions to the board and citizens present. A copy of these questions is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Nathaniel Thompson

Mr. Nathaniel Thompson complained about a pile of trees and debris located at 714 McKoy Street that hasn’t been moved in a year. He presented a petition from the area neighbors requesting the debris be removed. A copy of this petition summary is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Bobby Walters

Mr. Bobby Walters thanked the Public Works department for taking the street sweeper through the Happy Hill area. He suggested the need for a playground for the children in the Happy Hill neighborhood.

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 – Special Meeting, April 12, 2022, Regular Meeting, April 19, 2022, Issue Forum, April 26, 2022, and Budget Workshop, May 4, 2022
- b. Ordinance 22-208 – Budget Amendment #3 in the amount of \$7,678 for additional ABC Revenue.

Unfinished Business

Ordinance 22-209 - Voluntary Annexation of Grandma's Snack Shack/Veronica Elvir

Commissioner Evans made a motion to adopt Ordinance 22-209 - Voluntary Annexation of Grandma's Snack Shack, located at 306 Eldorado Road and owned by Veronica Elvir. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers 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.

New Business

Jimmy Broach, Jr. – Atlantic Building Components

Mr. Jimmy Broach, Jr. of Atlantic Building Components discussed his business and the availability of 105 jobs for local residents. The salaries start at \$15 to \$17 an hour plus overtime, medical/dental insurance and 401k. The company plans to invest \$2 to \$3 million in renovating the buildings. They plan to stay in Fairmont a long time by signing a 20-year lease on the property. Atlantic Building Components makes roof trusses for houses and have contracts with many major builders in the Raleigh and Myrtle Beach area. Fairmont will be the fourth location for the company.

Steven Harrell – Housing Choice Vouchers

Mr. Steven Harrell, Chief Operations Officer, with the Lumberton Housing Authority, discussed housing choice vouchers and the recruitment of landlords to participate in this program. Robeson County has access to 596 vouchers and 5 veteran vouchers. He stated that the applicant must have income to be eligible for the vouchers.

Lorenzo Currie – proposal for bar and grill in old Levinson building

Mr. Lorenzo Currie presented his proposal for a bar and grill in the old Levinson Building in downtown Fairmont. He stated that there would be no pool tables in the restaurant but that he wanted to provide a place for citizens to come and have fun.

Mayor Kemp excused Commissioner Evans at 7:20 p.m. so he could return to work.

Ordinance 22-210 – Closing Main Street for Summer Business Expo on Saturday, June 25, 2022

Commissioner McCree made a motion to adopt Ordinance 22-210 – Closing Main Street for Summer Business Expo on Saturday, June 25, 2022. Commissioner Seibles 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.

Planning Board appointments

Commissioner McCree made a motion to reappoint Winona Gause, Dwayne McCormick and Gary Deese (out of town member) to the Fairmont Planning board for a three-year term expiring May 2025. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Department Head Input

Public Works Director Ronnie Seals

Public Works Director Ronnie Seals responded the debris pile on McKoy Street. He spoke to the homeowner 9-10 months ago. The trees are too long for the town to pick up and need to be cut first, which the town cannot do. The debris has to be removed by a contractor and taken to a certified landfill at the expense of the property owner.

Commissioner Input

The commissioners thanked the citizens for coming to the meeting.

Mayor Input

Mayor Kemp gave a detailed explanation of the reasons why the 25% increase in utilities was needed.

“The remainder of my comments focus on the utility rate increase recently approved by our town board for the budget which will go into effect July 1st. There has been much conversation about this topic but not all of it accurate. Outside this office I currently hold I

am also a retired history teacher, and, in that world, accurate facts were central to any discussion. I want to take a few moments to share some information about our utility rate history accurately. Starting April 1, 2004, the town board voted 5-1 to increase water rates \$7.91 and sewer \$8.57 for a \$16.48 increase or 38%. Rate total went from \$44.20 to \$60.68. On June 29, 2010, sewer was increased \$2.00, and sanitation was increased \$0.50, a total of 2.50. On June 28, 2012, sanitation was increased \$2.00. On Jan. 15, 2013, water was increased \$1.94, sewer \$2.32 for a total of \$4.26 or a 9% increase. On Jan. 1, 2020, water was increased \$2.00 and sewer \$2.00 for a \$4.00 total or 6%. And now on July 1, 2022, water will increase \$3.00, sewer \$7.00, and sanitation \$7.06 for a \$17.06 increase or 25%. Some have claimed that the upcoming rate increase is the highest in our town history but to be accurate the 2004 increase was. It was 38% and the current one is 25%. All of the rate increases total 53% over the past 18 years. It is incorrect to say that the town board has ignored the need to raise rates and now are in a position to have to. These figures I've just shared prove otherwise. The total utility rate in April 2004 was \$44.20, today it is \$67.94 that's a 54% increase over 18 years. The problem is not that the town has not increased rates. These facts prove otherwise. The problem is that inflation, cost of equipment and repairs, passing along increased sanitation rate increases from Waste Management, and replacement of existing infrastructure is exceeding revenue, and the state insists we charge more. That's the issue. We are faced with an increase or face restrictions and punishment from the state agencies who supervise all grants and remaining in the bullseye of their financial targeting. We don't want or need that so basically our hands are tied.”

Manager Input

Interim Town Manager Jenny Larson informed the board that official Fiscal Year 2022-2023 budget will be delivered to them on May 31. Copies will be available for the public to view in the Water Department and online June 1. The Budget Public Hearing will be Tuesday, June 21 and citizens are encouraged to come and comment. The budget will be officially adopted on Tuesday, June 28.

Executive/Closed Session – Attorney-Client Privilege GS 143-318.11(a)(3)

Commissioner Seibles made a motion to go into closed session at 7:46 p.m. for the purpose of preserving the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the Board of Commissioners for the Town of Fairmont per N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(1)(3). Commissioner Ellison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mayor Kemp, Commissioners McCree, Tedder-Rogers, Ellison, McNeill and Seibles along Town Attorney Jessica Scott, Interim Town Manager Jenny Larson, and Deputy Town Clerk Donna Jacobs were in attendance during closed session.

Commissioner Tedder-Rogers made a motion to come out of closed session at 7:50 p.m. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Mayor Kemp announced no action was taken.

Announcements

Saturday, May 21 – Student Community Trash/Litter Pick-up.

Tuesday, May 24 – Special meeting with Atlantic Building Components to address residential neighbors about the business plans, 6:00 p.m., Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center.

Saturday, May 28 – May Day Fun Festival, 10:00 a.m., Downtown Fairmont.

Monday, May 30 - Memorial Day Program, 12:00 noon, in the Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center.

Monday, May 30 – Town offices and schools closed in observance of Memorial Day.

Tuesday, May 31 – Special Board meeting to discuss Town Manager applications, 6:00 p.m., Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center.

Thursday, June 2 – Groundbreaking ceremony for the new Robeson Health Care Corporation medical clinic on South Walnut Street, 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, June 11 – Senior Bingo, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center.

Tuesday, June 21 – Budget Public Hearing and Regular Town Board meeting, 6:00 p.m., Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center.

Saturday, June 25 – Summer Business Expo, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Downtown Fairmont.

Tuesday, June 28 – Special Board meeting to adopt Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget, 6:00 p.m., Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center.

Sunday, July 3 – Fairmont’s Fantastic Fourth Fireworks featuring the Pizazz Band. Music begins at 5:00 p.m. with fireworks at 9:30 p.m. in the Fairmont Community Park

Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Seibles made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m. Commissioner McNeill seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Donna Jacobs
Deputy Town Clerk