

Citizen Issue Forum Meeting - October 25, 2022

Mayor Charles Kemp hosted a Quarterly Issue Forum meeting on Tuesday, October 25, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. at the Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center. Mayor Charles Kemp, Commissioners Clarence McNeill, Jr. and J.J. McCree were present. Commissioners Terry Evans, Heather Seibles, Melvin Ellison and Jan Tedder-Rogers were absent. Town staff present were Town Manager Jerome Chestnut, Town Clerk Jenny Larson, Recreation Director Mickey Williamson, and Public Works Director Ronnie Seals. Several citizens were also in attendance.

Mayor Kemp called the meeting to order and gave the invocation.

Mayor Kemp stated the topic of the issue forum is code enforcement. He informed those present that a Public Hearing on the topic will be held during the regular town board meeting on Tuesday, November 15.

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut presented the following reasons why Code Enforcement is important and why the town needs to start addressing it now:

Why Code Enforcement is Important

- 1) Community Image — It's the first thing new citizens, investors, visitors see
- 2) Public Safety (1) — Unsafe homes/buildings are dangerous to those that occupy them legally and to those who don't (homeless)
- 3) Public Health — Rodents, Mosquitos, Snakes, dogs, cats
- 4) Housing Opportunities — the better upkeep of the homes/buildings, the more opportunities for citizens to have a place to live, work, play
- 5) Investment protection — you purchase/build a home here — you don't want your property values to decrease because of your neighbor next to you or down the street
- 6) Public Safety (2) — Property values determine amount of taxes collected. Your taxes pay for your fire/police/rescue services. If tax values are low, the amount of taxes collected is lower. The town/county can only provide services for what they are expected to collect

Why now?

Commissioners and Staff want to see positive change in the community so we can grow to become a more safe, clean, and vibrant community.

We are in a positive trajectory, so let's keep it going. We have significant infrastructure projects planned with water, sewer, and drainage improvements.

We are competitive when businesses are looking at places to start or expand. We have businesses that are doing well and slated to bring in more jobs.

Exciting times here in town. Newer facilities are being built with the Children's clinic and more facilities will be renovated in 2023, such as the relocation of the library downtown.

Mr. Chestnut also went over the code enforcement process, which he hopes to start implementing in the Spring of 2023:

Code Enforcement Process

- 1) Complaint Identified/Received by Town Staff
- 2) Town Staff will visit, but not enter the property, unless permission is granted by tenant or owner
- 3) If complaint is valid, a letter will be sent to the Owner outlining deficiencies of the property with a hearing date within 10-30 days
- 4) After the hearing, if deteriorated, an order will be given to repair, alter, or improve property within 90 days
 - a) if repairs can be made at a reasonable cost in relation to the value of the building
 - b) the order may also direct and require the owner to vacate and close the property until repairs have been made
- 5) After the hearing, if dilapidated, an order will be given to repair, alter, or improve property within 90 days
 - a) if repairs can be made at a reasonable cost in relation to the value of the building
 - b) the order may also direct and require the owner to vacate and close the property until repairs have been made
 - c) the order may also direct vacate and remove, or demolish the building within 90 days
- 6) Failure to comply
 - a) civil penalties at \$50/day or \$3,000 maximum
 - b) the Board of Commissioners can direct the Code Enforcement Officer to repair, alter, improve, vacate, close, demolish
 - c) lien on property
- 7) A property owner can appeal a decision from the hearing
 - a) Housing Appeals Board within 10 days of the decision
 - b) Superior Court within 30 days

After a few comments by the citizens present, the meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

Jennifer H. Larson
Town Clerk