



Town of Beaufort, NC

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Town of Beaufort Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting 6:00 PM Monday, May 11, 2020 - Train Depot, 614 Broad Street, Beaufort, NC 28516 Held Electronically through Zoom due to COVID-19 Pandemic Minutes

Call to Order

Mayor Newton called the meeting to order. The meeting was held electronically due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Roll Call

Mayor Newton called roll and declared a quorum present.

PRESENT

Mayor Everette Newton
Commissioner Sharon Harker
Commissioner Charles McDonald
Commissioner Ann Carter
Commissioner Marianna Hollinshed
Commissioner John Hagle

Agenda Approval

Mayor Newton indicated Commissioner Hollinshed had asked for an addition to the agenda. Measures to help businesses was added as Item 2 under Items for Discussion and Consideration.

A motion was made to approve the agenda as amended.

Motion made by Commissioner Hagle.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Harker, Commissioner McDonald, Commissioner Carter, Commissioner Hollinshed, Commissioner Hagle

Calendar

Mayor Newton reviewed the upcoming events. The Olde Beaufort Farmers Market has reopened on Saturday mornings and the Big Rock Tournament will be held beginning June 8, 2020.

1. Schedule of Events for May 2020 and June 2020

Public Comment

No public comments were made.

Project Updates

1. Project Updates on Infrastructure, Parks, and 400 Pollock Street

Town Engineer, Greg Meshaw, gave a review of current projects.

Mr. Meshaw reported for the Street Rehabilitation and Construction project the contract with Thomas Simpson Construction had been executed and the pre-construction meeting had been held. The anticipated proceed date will be June 1, 2020. The first part of the project will take place on Howard Jr. Lane with some stormwater line repair and some sewer line repair before paving. He identified Professional Park Drive as the first street for grinding to begin before repaving.

For the Turner Street Pedestrian Improvement project, Mr. Meshaw reported the notice to proceed will be held until after Labor Day. He indicated the cost of the project will be \$152,694. In addition, Mr. Meshaw indicated there was a plan to add an additional crosswalk on Turner Street to Middle Lane.

The Tiller School Pedestrian Improvements project is moving forward due to the school principal being able to provide the crossing count and traffic count. He reported there is still work to be done on the project with the North Carolina Department of Transportation and funding.

For the Sidewalk Improvement Project, Mr. Meshaw reported the anticipated areas for the project are around the Randolph Johnson Park, Wellons Drive and Eastern Avenue. He indicated to the board members there were 13 segments needing survey and design work.

Mr. Meshaw indicated the Randolph Johnson Park splash pad has been completed and construction on the playground should start in about two weeks.

A new project is the Waste Water Treatment Plant Sludge Handling Facility repainting. He indicated the bid documents will be compiled and put out for bid this summer.

Mr. Meshaw also gave updates on the USDA Water and Sewer Funding loans and grants. He reported there is anticipation of receiving up to 75% grant funding for sewer and up to 10% grant funding for water improvement projects. The town has sufficient funds for a \$10 million debt payment. The plan is to deal with the worst streets to first fix the sewer problems before paving streets.

Option #1 is to have a \$10 million dollar loan and receive the maximum 75% grant funding for sewer and 10% grant funding for water. This scenario would provide more sewer repair work than water repair work. The total project cost with grants and loans is estimated at \$22 million dollars of funding.

Option #2 (touch it once) assume the \$10 million dollars worth of loan is used in addition to whatever amount of grant funds are received. A total of 24 streets will get water and sewer repair work. The total project funding assuming maximum grants are received would be near \$14 million.

Option #3 (expanded touch it once) assumes the maximum grant funding is received and a request is made for the maximum loan amount. The result here would be 104 streets with water needs and 117 streets with sewer needs. Also 37 streets would receive water and sewer repairs. The project would be \$31 million with an increase in the loan amount of approximately \$8 million. The additional amount of the yearly debt service payment would be approximately \$284,575

which would need to be funded by a 53% increase in the variable water rate to \$7.75 +/- per 1,000 gallons of usage.

Commissioner Carter asked about the crosswalk over to Middle Lane. She asked if the western side of Turner Street would be level enough to walk down to the crosswalk. Mr. Meshaw indicated there would most likely need to be a bulb out to allow for a step down with possible bike parking in the bulb out. He indicated the concept had not been finished at this time. Commissioner Carter indicated she would need to give the water/sewer projects some thought and would like more information.

Mayor Newton asked Town Manager Day when a decision would need to be made for the street repairs and water/sewer financing options. Mr. Day and Mr. Meshaw both confirmed it would need to be made real soon. Mr. Meshaw indicated the target date to submit the application is June.

Commissioner Harker indicated the presentation was great. She asked if the Professional Park paving project would help with the flooding. Mr. Meshaw indicated it would not help the flooding on Meeting Street. He indicated the Meeting Street flooding issue was on his list of projects to consider in the very near future. He indicated he hoped to come up a solution before the paving project is completed. In response from a question she asked, Mr. Meshaw indicated there was not an application fee for the submittal to USDA. Additionally, he indicated the decision time frame for the USDA application would be prior to Christmas.

Commissioner McDonald asked about a \$12.5 million loan and payable over a 40 year period. Mr. Meshaw confirmed. He asked how about the length of time for the total project. Mr. Meshaw indicated it would be approximately one year in design and another year of construction. He indicated he believed it would be one year away from this coming January 2021 before construction to begin.

Commissioner Hollinshed indicated the report on sewer and water was ambitious. She asked about the age of the sludge shed. Mr. Meshaw indicated it was built when the plant was expanded in 2008. Regarding the sewer/water project Commissioner Hollinshed asked what the cut off line would be if the maximum amount of funding was not received. Mr. Meshaw indicated work would be done as far as the funding lasts. Commissioner Hollinshed indicated she would like to see more information before agreeing to an increase for citizens to pay.

Commissioner Hagle indicated the presentation given by Mr. Meshaw was great. He indicated he was not surprised at the work needed on the sludge building. He indicated the presentation on the streets is a lot to consider and raising rates is a hard pill to swallow. He suggested there be a separate session to discuss the street projects.

Mayor Newton indicated a year ago the town believed the maximum amount for funding was \$6 million and agreed there was a good deal of information to digest.

In response to additional questions from Commissioner McDonald, Mr. Meshaw indicated Option #3 was the only one for which a rate increase would be needed for water.

Town Manager Day asked what the timing to work best for a decision on which option. He continued by stating the rate increase for Option #3 would be at least two years out or even further. Mr. Meshaw indicated a decision would need to be made by the end of the week.

Commissioner Harker asked if the USDA funding was the last opportunity for funding. Mr. Day indicated no, the funding is available every year.

In reference to a question from Commissioner McDonald, Mr. Meshaw reported he had not seen any of the studies done on the water system and the sewer system before his coming to work for the town. Town Manager Day indicated the sewer study done most recently was in 2010 and was used by Rivers and Associates for this project. The most recent water study was completed in 2018/2019. The street study was completed after Mr. Meshaw joined the town.

Commissioner Harker asked about the USDA funding and if one of the options had to be selected. Mr. Meshaw commented the application is based on the desired project. He indicated a request could be made for the largest project and then scale back possibly. He continued by

saying the town did not want to turn down grant money because it could hurt for future funding. He indicated the town needed to be prepared to commit to the project and the funding. He indicated the USDA knows the amount the town had available going into the project. Additionally, Mr. Day conveyed if the USDA did give all the funding and then not do the projects then that would not be good.

Commissioner Hollinshed asked if the town would have to go to the Local Government Commission (LGC) for approval of this funding. Mr. Day indicated the LGC would be working with the USDA through all of the application and negotiations for funding.

Manager Report

Town Manager John Day gave the following manager's report.

400 Pollock Street Update:

Negotiations between Preservation North Carolina and the family on sale price and terms are complete and PNC will deliver purchase contracts this week to each of the known heirs, which the family indicates are identified in a will. The PNC executive committee has approved the purchase and financing is in place. PNC is in the process of hiring an attorney to perform the title search.

The family has been in contact with a contractor regarding weatherproofing and work is expected to be complete by the June 1 deadline.

Commissioner Harker indicated she was glad to see progress was being made.

Commissioner Hollinshed indicated she was glad to see they were moving forward.

Commissioner Hagle indicated he was glad the process was moving forward and the building would hopefully be saved.

COVID -19 Update

With Saturday's start of the Phase 1 of reopening North Carolina, the town's public restrooms were opened. Also, Public Works and Utilities crews all returned to regular duty today, with strict social distancing practices being exercised. Town work and office facilities remain closed to the public, and much of town hall staff still telecommutes.

I expect to reopen town offices and work facilities to the public with the implementation of Phase 2, with social distancing measures in place. Town Hall employees will transition from telecommuting to working in their offices.

We continue to track COVID related expenses for purposes of FEMA reimbursement. So far approximately \$100,000 has been spent.

Fire Department Ladder Truck

The new Pierce ladder truck arrived last Monday at a cost of \$994,724. Certifications are complete and crews are being trained on its operation, including sessions by the manufacturer next week. The truck is expected to be in service by the end of the month.

Items of Consent

A motion was made to approve the Items of Consent as presented.

Motion made by Commissioner Hagle.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Harker, Commissioner McDonald, Commissioner Carter, Commissioner Hollinshed, Commissioner Hagle

1. Voluntary Annexation for Old Seaport Development, LLC (153 Aqua 10 Road and 103 Aqua 10 Road) Doug Brady
2. Resolution Designating Applicant's Agent required by NC Department of Emergency Services for FEMA 4487-DR-NC
3. Draft Minutes for the March 30, 2020 Work Session, the April 13, 2020 Regular Meeting, the April 23, 2020 Special Meeting, and the April 27, 2020 Work Session
4. Revised Budget Calendar

Public Hearing

1. Case 19-12 Text Amendment - Lower Live Oak Overlay District

Town Planning Director Garner indicated the request was similar to the Cedar Street Overlay District. Some of the changes for the Lower Live Oak Overlay will be the overlay district will take precedence over any other zoning guidelines for the area. For signage along the overlay district the Planning Board would like consideration to not be given to amortization but to look at it from whether or not if the sign gets damaged more than fifty percent then it would have to bring it into full compliance. The final piece of the text amendment deals with the roof pitch being a 12 over 12. Other items such as set backs and driveways are very similar in the new overlay district.

Commissioner Carter asked why both options for amortization and/or sign destruction. Mr. Garner indicated that option was available. He recommended picking a specific time period.

Commissioner Harker indicated she felt the regulations could be blended. She indicated she could understand a business owner wanting to repair a sign but at some time the new regulations for signage would have to be replaced.

Commissioner McDonald asked about the driveways and asked Mr. Garner to please review that information again. Mr. Garner indicated the new text requires driveways to meet certain placement distances and limits the size of the driveway. Another requirement would be a driveway could not be within 100 feet of an intersection unless no other options are available.

Commissioner Hollinshed asked about the specific lower area corner lot and how is the building orientation decided. Mr. Garner reported the developer made that decision. She asked about existing buildings. She asked about the chicken on the corner of Cedar Street and Live Oak Street. Mr. Garner indicated the chicken was in the Cedar Street District. She also asked about the existing signage count.

Commissioner Hagle asked about the difference between what the Planning Board recommended and staff recommendations. He indicated the signs could be around for quite a long time if the requirement was based solely on the Planning Board suggestion. He indicated he felt it was a board decision on how eager they were to work on the signage being changed.

Commissioner Hagle made a motion to go into Public Hearing. All members of the board were in favor of the motion.

No comments were made during the Public Hearing.

Commissioner Hagle made a motion to close the Public Hearing. All members of the board were in favor.

The final decision will be made during the May 26, 2020 work session.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hagle regarding signage, Mr. Garner indicated he would recommend a combination of the requirements.

2. Case 19-13 Lower Live Oak Corridor Overlay District

Town Planning Director Garner indicated this discussion would center around the area to which the Lower Live Oak Overlay District will cover. He indicated the overlay will cover thirteen properties. The overlay supports the Small Area Plan approved by the board in 2018. The current zoning is B-1 General Commercial and the height will not be over forty feet.

Mr. Garner indicated the overlay district was consistent with the CAMA Land Use Plan even though there were some properties that were not General Business.

Commissioner Harker asked if the signage recommendations needed to be addressed at this time. Mr. Garner indicated this was just to apply the boundaries of the district.

Commissioner Hagle asked about the property on the west side of the district. Mr. Garner indicated the properties on the west are not general commercial but low density residential. Since the plan is to not change the underlying zoning, then the low density residential would not be a problem.

Commissioner Hagle made a motion to open the Public Hearing. All members of the board were in favor.

There were no comments made.

Commissioner Hagle made a motion to close the Public Hearing. All members of the board were in favor.

The final decision will be made during the May 26, 2020 work session.

Items for Discussion and Consideration

1. FY 20 Budget Amendment #12

Finance Director Wood indicated the request was for:

General Fund -. This amendment requests an appropriation of:

1. Other Revenues- Insurance reimbursement for Engine #4 \$14,354, Sales of Surplus Property for

Public Works vehicle replacement \$14,882, Misc. Police Department Revenue for Crime Prevention \$7,800

2. Appropriated Restricted Fund Balance (Public Safety- Fire Department) – for vehicle maintenance and repair \$3,421

3. Appropriated Fund Balance- for expenditures related to COVID-19 \$100,000, Contingency for any unexpected expenditures that may occur prior to June 30, 2020 \$100,000.

Utility Fund - This amendment requests the appropriation of:

4. Water and Sewer Tap Fees to fund the purchase of new water meters being installed in new developments, \$23,625.

5. Fund Balance as a contingency for any unexpected expenditures that may occur prior to June 30, 2020, \$25,000.

Commissioner Carter asked about the \$100K and if it would be reimbursed from FEMA. Ms. Wood indicated the appeared the expenses occurred to date should be reimbursable. She also asked if the contingency funds would be returned to Fund Balance if not used. Ms. Wood confirmed.

A motion was made to approve the FY20 Budget Amendment #12.

Motion made by Commissioner Hagle.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Harker, Commissioner McDonald, Commissioner Carter,

Mayor/Commission Comments

Commissioner Hollinshed asked the board members to consider measures to help businesses by providing a common public space for outside dining to help when restaurants reopen. She proposed the board consider using one of the downtown parking lots as an area for dining for those providing take out areas. Mayor Newton asked if the decision could wait until the May 26, 2020 work session. Commissioner Hollinshed asked for the board to consider the action sooner than later. She indicated the restaurant owners should be willing to help form a plan.

Commissioner Carter indicated she felt the idea was good and recommended it begin sooner than later.

Commissioner Harker indicated she thought it was a good idea as well as monitor and let the businesses figure out the specifics. She urged the participants to please observe social distancing and hand washing stations.

Commissioner McDonald indicated he felt it was a good idea but would like to hear more about the proposal.

Commissioner Hagle indicated in order to help businesses the decision should be made quickly. He recommended tentative approval and then let the businesses help with specifics.

Town Manager Day indicated he understood about the timing concerns so he recommended if the board would approve the use of the parking lots then staff could work with the businesses and restaurants to develop reasonable regulations consistent with DHHS recommendations.

Commissioner Hagle made a motion to authorize the use of a parking lot for outdoor dining based on regulations defined by the Town Manager and business owners. Town Attorney Jill Quattlebaum indicated she felt the general approval was good for this time. All members were in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Harker spoke about Hurricane Preparedness and encouraged citizens to prepare early. She also indicated she was glad to see everyone out and about the past weekend. She also spoke about the Front Line Appreciation Group (FLAG) and thanked the group for their work in supporting the front line workers.

Commissioner Hollinshed thanked the board for their support of the dining option. She indicated there is hunger all around. She commented on food drives that were being held to help those in the community.

Commissioner Hagle indicated people were suffering even though it may not be seen by all. He thanked all of the first responders, front line workers, grocery store workers, and police departments. He expressed concern over the closing of the schools and the events the graduating seniors had expressed. He indicated it was great to see progress on Randolph Johnson Park.

Mayor Newton indicated he was thankful for the thoughtful and caring town staff and the work they continue to do. He also thanked the commissioners for recognizing the needs in place in the community. He indicated there was a perception of everything being back to normal and that was not the case.

Adjourn

Commissioner Hagle made a motion to adjourn the meeting. All board members were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Mayor Everette S. (Rett) Newton

Michele Davis, Town Clerk