

Walter M. Gardner, Jr.
Mayor

John Freeman
Administrator

TOWN OF WARRENTON
"Historically Great - Progressively Strong"
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Board of Commissioners EMERGENCY MEETING February 3, 2011 Minutes

The February 3, 2012 Emergency Meeting of the Town of Warrenton Board of Commissioners was held at Town Hall.

Those present were:

Mayor Walter M. Gardner, Jr.
Commissioner Woody King
Commissioner Jules Banzet
Commissioner Robert Davie
Commissioner Mary Hunter
Commissioner Audrey Tippett
Commissioner John Blalock
Commissioner John Mooring

John Freeman, Town Administrator
Attorney Al Thompson (for Town Attorney Mitch Styers)
Police Chief John Younts
Public Works Director Bill Perkinson
Jennifer Harris, Warren Record

Mayor Gardner called the meeting to order at 2:00pm and stated the reason for the Emergency Meeting was informational relating to the major fire at Southern States the previous evening, and that there would not be any public comment or questions. He explained that he had been away in Charlotte at a seminar in conjunction with the Fire Chief's Association but had been on the phone continuously since the fire was discovered. He thanked the "many, many people involved" in this operation. He expressed sympathy for the Hehls, owners of the business and committed the Town to helping them get back into business as soon as possible. He praised Assistant Fire Chief Lee Edmonds for doing an excellent job and the men for responding. He thanked the many other departments that responded, as many as 16. He summarized by saying that the fire was tragic but it was a successful operation as the fire was contained in the original building, that the protocols were followed for calling for state and federal assistance, and because there were no injuries.

He said that evacuation and closing order had been strictly for health reasons as air sample testing had found unhealthy levels of CO₂ in the affected area. He said the air sample team was due back this very afternoon to test again and that people would be allowed to return as soon as possible. He asked for understanding for the Police Department which had the task of enforcing the order.

He asked Assistant Chief Lee Edmonds for comments, and he said that although the building could not be saved, from a personnel, performance and manpower point of view it had been successful. Fire Department Captain (and commissioner) John Blalock added that he had been talking with emergency management since early in the day to ensure that there would be additional testing this afternoon. He reiterated that he was pushing to get people back in their homes and businesses as soon as possible. He recognized the inconvenience but said that the evacuation order was necessary to keep people safe. He said the main priority of the fire fighting operation itself was to protect the buildings around the fire and was elated that no one was injured.

Mayor Gardner said he would be issuing a proclamation of a state of emergency to confirm the order given by county emergency services manager Doug Young the previous night at 7:20pm. He praised Woody King for

being such an effective spokesman to the media, and that he would continue to do so. He thanked the Public Works Department for employing a strategy to keep the firefighters supplied with adequate water. He explained that the reason the reason that fire suppression was called off was to reduce the amount of toxic runoff into Horse Creek. Mr. Blalock said that the Department of Agriculture had been testing the water that morning and that sand had been dumped into the creek farther down to absorb possible toxins, but the runoff had remained clean. He said that there were many operations going on at once.

Police Chief John Younts announced that the air quality testing team had just arrived, and that he hoped testing could be completed later today.

With that, Mayor Gardner said he had no more to offer and dismissed the emergency session at 2:12.

Respectfully submitted,

John Freeman
Town Administrator