

Walter M. Gardner, Jr.
Mayor

John Freeman
Administrator

TOWN OF WARRENTON
"Historically Great - Progressively Strong"
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February 14, 2011 Board of Commissioners Minutes

The February 14, 2011 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 John Blalock
Commissioner Mary Hunter
Commissioner Audrey Tippet

John Freeman, Town Administrator
Town Attorney Mitch Styers
Jennifer Harris, Warren Record
Public Works Director Bill Perkinson

Absent: Commissioner John Mooring
Commissioner Robert Davie

Mayor Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. He then presented the proposed agenda for approval, noting that he had received a written request from the Board of Directors of Fairview Cemetery for permission to install a directional sign. He suggested that this be added to New Business. Commissioner Blalock moved to approve the proposed agenda; Commissioner Banzet seconded the motion which passed unanimously. There being no member of the public in attendance to make comments Mayor Gardner then presented the consent agenda that included:

- A. Minutes of Board meeting December 13, 2010
- B. Minutes of Special Meeting January 24, 2011
- C. Minutes of Emergency Meeting February 3, 2011
- D. Y-T-D Cash Flow Report
- E. Y-T-D Tax Revenue Report
- F. Y-T-D State Shared Revenue Report
- G. Checks in excess of \$10,000
- H. Sessoms; Basket sewer adjustment requests
- I. Public Works Monthly Report
- J. WWTP Monthly Report
- K. Police Activity Report

Commissioner Banzet noted two typographical errors in the minutes of the December 13, 2010 meeting. With those corrections Commissioner Blalock moved that the consent agenda be approved; Commissioner Banzet seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Finance and Administration

Other reports were included in the consent agenda. Mr. Freeman said that the budget was on target but the Police Department looked to be over because there were several reimbursable expenses for which reimbursement had yet to be received and because several amendments were needed to update the budget. Mr. Freeman noted the Sales and Use Tax revenue had declined after three successive monthly gains but that forecasts were for an overall increase. He also noted that tax revenues were on target and virtually identical to last year. He said that budget preparations for the next fiscal year would begin in earnest very soon and Mayor Gardner asked commissioners to send their ideas and suggestions for the new budget to Mr. Freeman.

Human Resources/Information Technology

Commissioner Banzet reported that Maintenance Lead Worker Eddie Long had returned to work this very day after a lengthy absence due to a Worker's Comp injury to his shoulder. Mr. Freeman confirmed that Long was cleared for full duty.

Mr. Freeman reported that the website was functional but that he had only recently learned about what was required to list it with search engines, so it would not yet respond to searches. Indexing these requests takes 10-12 weeks, so it would be some time before it would respond to searches, but could be reached by entering its address directly. Mayor Gardner asked about linking with other agencies and groups such as Warren County and the Chamber of Commerce and Freeman said it was relatively easy, and that a request and permission was probably all that was required. He said the Police Department section included a number of links. In answer to Commissioner Hunter's question about who was responsible for managing the site he said that a number of staff members had gone through the phone and on-line training but that at this point it was primarily Barbara Medlin who had done the Police Department section and he who had done the rest.

Public Safety

Chief Younts being absent at training Commissioner Blalock said he did not have any additional report. Commissioner Banzet raised the question of a complaint that had been made about a recent traffic check point on North Main Street near Hazelwood. The complaint was that officers had raced down Hazelwood at "55 mph" and that this was a dangerous speed in a residential neighborhood. Mr. Blalock said that he had talked with the chief about this and that the Sheriff's Department had helped with this check point. He said that two vehicles turned on Hazelwood to avoid the check point and officers had pursued them. He said that the speed would have seemed higher than it was on residential streets but was probably not as high as the complaint claimed. Mr. Banzet said that he had measured the distance where the speeding claim had been made and that in 183 feet no car could have accelerated that quickly, and that the exaggeration spoiled the effectiveness of the complaint. Mr. Blalock said he had spoken to the complainant as well.

He then asked Mayor (and Fire Chief) Gardner about the recent Southern States fire that had demolished the building. Mr. Gardner said that the ATF investigators had told him there was nothing to indicate a suspicious origin of the fire. Mr. Blalock explained that the fire was allowed to smolder for several days because the fire department could not drown it until it had been released by the investigation, but that it had been completely extinguished now. There followed discussion about when it had started and how quickly it had spread. Mr. Blalock noted that the department had responded in minutes to the alarm and that photographs showed the fire well established before the aerial ladder could even be extended. Mr. Gardner said the earliest 911 call had been at 5:45 or 5:46 and that the report that it had been at 5:15 was erroneous, as illustrated by the conversation of the dispatchers. He said that he had declared a state of emergency to ensure the safety of citizens and to be eligible should state or federal assistance be required. Mr. Freeman said that it had been quite economical for a major fire but that records were being kept. Mr. Gardner said that as many as 240 fire fighters from 23 departments

collaborated and that many performed a variety of move-up and back-up work. He was especially appreciative of the residents who helped prepare food for the firefighters and for the Vance County department that delivered a great deal of food. He recognized the work of Commissioner King who served as Public Information Officer and made a very positive impression in the manner in which he represented the Town. Commissioner Tippett said she was proud of the performance of the firefighters who are volunteers and suggested a resolution expressing the Board's appreciation. Mr. Freeman added that the Police Department contributed greatly as did the Public Works department. Mrs. Tippett moved that the mayor draft a proclamation to honor all of those involved with fighting the fire; Mr. Banzet seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Revitalization/Historical

Commissioner King presented Board approval of a request from the Revitalization Committee to allow an information kiosk to be built and placed at the sidewalk edge of the vacant lot next to the Hardware Café on South Main Street. The building owner and lessee have given verbal permission. He said that what was envisioned was a typical information kiosk which the Revitalization Committee would maintain. Mayor Gardner said he would like to see a secure section on which public information could be posted as well as an open tack board on which the general public could post notices. Town Attorney Styers reminded the Board that it is difficult to restrict what messages are placed on a public notice board and Mr. Freeman suggested that it be cleared every week. Commissioner Blalock moved that the Board approve a kiosk at the location described; Commissioner Hunter seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. King then described the second Town Café event on March 15 that would build on the very successful first one that had been held on November 16. He said the location was pending a decision by the county Board of Commissioners on whether a fee waiver would be granted for the use of the Armory; their meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 15, and invitations would be mailed Wednesday morning with the location to be either the Armory or fire department. He thanked Board members for attending the first and urged them to attend the second. He said that all the feedback from attendees on the first event had been positive but that their message was to keep moving forward, and not to drop the momentum. He said that a list of concerns had been distilled from all those written at the first event and that the goal of the second would be for the community to choose the most important and achievable and to commit to helping.

Beautification/Facilities

Regarding the first agenda item Mr. Freeman asked that each Board member review the architect's Town Hall feasibility study of space usage and send him their suggestions and comments. He would consolidate those and send to the architect. As an example Mayor Gardner said that Commissioner Mooring had expressed concern for the need of a mechanical room for servers, communications, and other equipment.

Bill Perkinson reviewed the status of the Ridgeway Street sidewalk project, saying it was nearly finished. DOT has been working on a drainage problem on Harris Street and the contractor had some curb and gutter to install and miscellaneous items to complete. Commissioner Tippett reminded the Board of earlier discussion about having a special event to inaugurate the project and Mr. Freeman said Larissa Mills at the county Health Department had expressed support for the idea.

Commissioner Tippett said she had seen that the new leaf truck was still picking up leaves and Mr. Perkinson said that the Public Works was trying to pick up everything before removing the leaf collection box and converting the truck to general use. He said that the new truck and collection box had made a big difference in the speed with which the work could be done because better venting allowed the vacuum to pick up wet and frozen leaves which had required the backhoe in the past.

Commissioner Tippett noted that the litter problem had not improved and there were observations about how litter, leaves and sand tended to collect on the west side of downtown Main Street.

Commissioner Blalock asked about the cars parked at Fritz Vaughn's former repair shop on South Main Street. Mr. Vaughn had retired in December and many cars were left on his property. Attorney Styers said that they could be tagged if they met other requirements such as lack of current registration, or met the restrictions of the Abandoned and Junk Vehicle Ordinance. It was agreed that the Citizens Advisory Board be asked to make a recommendation. Mrs. Tippett also mentioned discussing a junk car on Church Street with Chief Younts; Mr. Styers said that the police could deal with that as it was on a Town street and not on private property.

Public Works

Mr. Davie was not present to report on the status of his discussions with historic property developer Eddie Belk, but Mayor Gardner said that Mr. Belk had been in Warrenton recently for a full day with one of his staff members and had met with local leaders and property owners.

Planning, Zoning and Annexation

Mr. Mooring was not present to report, but Mayor Gardner summarized the current effort in both state house and senate to impose a moratorium on involuntary annexations. He said that the League had produced a proposed program of 20 changes that would improve the process but opposed the moratorium. Mr. Gardner said he had communicated his concern to both Rep. Wray and Sen. Berger. He then presented a proposed resolution that would state the Town Board's opposition to a moratorium and support for the League's plan. Commissioner Banzet so moved; Commissioner King seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Commissioner Tippett noted that the state board of realtors was lobbying in favor of the moratorium bills.

There followed some discussion about whether the Town could prevent a residential property owner from boarding up a vacant house. Mr. Freeman said there was some control contained in the Historic District Ordinance, and that another property owner had submitted a request for such permission to the Historic District Commission, but that ultimately it could not be prevented.

Mayor Gardner then presented for consideration the "broken window ordinance" proposed by the Citizens Advisory Board. There followed some discussion with the consensus that it be referred to Commissioner Mooring and his sub-committee which should then return to the Board with a recommendation.

Unfinished Business

Commissioner Tippett addressed several issues with parking enforcement, noting that it was not being done regularly while the police department advertised for a replacement enforcement officers. She said that frustration had been expressed to her about the business owner who had originally sought enforcement was now parking on the street all day, and that this did not demonstrate support for the enforcement and ordinance changes that were in response to his complaint. Commissioner King said he would speak with this business owner, and Mayor Gardner said no Board action was necessary.

There followed some discussion about the reaction of business owners to the declared state of emergency and mandatory evacuation following the Southern States fire. Mayor Gardner said that the majority of opinion of owners was understanding that it was done for the safety of themselves and their customers, and that most understood even if all did not agree.

New Business

Mr. Freeman announced that the county had added an Electronic Recycling Program to the Solid Waste Program in which the Town participates. He said that this program is an amendment to the existing program and did not

require special action. There was some discussion about the fact that citizens utilizing the program would be charged, but that this was similar to the charges for disposal of white goods.

Mayor Gardner introduced the second item of New Business, reading a letter from the Board of Directors of Fairview Cemetery for a directional sign on Ridgeway Street. He said his opinion was that a sign would be permitted if permission was obtained from the property owner, that DOT requirements were met and finally, the requirements of the Town's sign ordinance. He said he assist the cemetery board by contacting DOT to see if a state sign would be available, noting that it would be at their expense.

Resolutions

Announcements

There being no additional business Commissioner Blalock moved that the meeting be adjourned; Commissioner Hunter seconded the motion and Mayor Gardner declared the meeting adjourned at 8:22pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Freeman
Town Administrator