

Walter M. Gardner, Jr.
Mayor

John Freeman
Administrator

TOWN OF WARRENTON

"Historically Great - Progressively Strong"

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July 13, 2009 Board of Commissioners Minutes

The July 13, 2009 meeting of the Town of Warrenton Board of Commissioners was held at the Warrenton Town Hall.

Those present were:

Mayor Walter M. Gardner, Jr.	John Freeman, Town Administrator
Commissioner and Mayor Pro Tem Woody King	William Perkinson, Director of Public Works
Commissioner John Blalock	Jennifer Harris, Warren Record
Commissioner Bobby Edmonds	Town Attorney Mitch Styers
Commissioner Jules Banzet	
Commissioner Audrey Tippet	
Commissioner John Mooring	
Commissioner Mary Hunter	

Mayor Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. The first order of business was consideration of the proposed agenda. Commissioner Edmonds moved that the agenda be approved. Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mayor Gardner then presented the minutes from the meeting of June 8, 2009 for approval. Commissioner Blalock moved that the minutes be approved; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Mooring and was carried unanimously. Mayor Gardner presented the minutes of the Special Budget Meeting of June 29, 2009 for approval; Commissioner Banzet moved that they be approved; Commissioner Edmonds seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Public Comments

No member of the public had signed up to address the Board.

Committee Reports

Zoning

Commissioner Mooring referred to the draft of the Vacant Property Registry, copies of which had been distributed at this meeting. This draft is annotated with comments of the sub-committee and Mr. Mooring asked that the rest of the Board review it and add their comments. Mr. Freeman will email the document to Board members to make it easier to see the existing comments and to add their own. Mr. Mooring stated his intention of holding a sub-committee meeting to hammer out a final version that could be presented to the Board for approval at its next regular meeting.

Beautification/Streets/Sanitation

There being no further questions Mayor Gardner turned to Commissioner Tippet for a report. She in turn asked Mr. Freeman for a report on the continuing reorganization. He said that Streets and Sanitation departments were in the process of being merged into the Public Works department. They

had long been substantially on their own, without adequate support or supervision, which they will get as part of the larger Public Works group. Eddie Long has accepted the vacant position of Maintenance Crew Leader, and current employee Jerry Pettus had been promoted to the same position. Both have the necessary CDL license to drive the garbage truck (and other heavy vehicles) which would provide a backup that had not existed. Schedules for garbage, leaf and debris pickup were being reviewed for efficiency and likely would be revised with Board approval. Work schedules would be changed from 4:00-12:00 to 6:00-3:00 to allow work in business areas before traffic, provide lunch breaks and coverage in the afternoons. Daily assignments would be based on a work order system and made each morning at a departmental meeting. The vehicle and equipment maintenance program developed by Public Works would be extended to Streets and Sanitation vehicles.

There followed discussion about various specific problems relating to appearance and maintenance. Freeman reported that the Friday garbage collection route was changed last week without notice because the landfill was closed for equipment maintenance. Commissioner Banzet noted that very tall weeds and a junk car in front of the Super 10 made a bad impression at the entrance to the business district, as did the weeds at the former dry cleaner building across the street. He also asked about the responsibility for trees with dead limbs of which there were many. Commissioner Mooring asked about maintenance of the sidewalks and Freeman reported that the brick sidewalks had been weeded recently and planter areas weeded and mulched. Mr. Mooring asked about the street sweeper and whether employees could be scheduled to work at night to keep the downtown area cleaner. Freeman said there were limitations on its effectiveness as it is undersized and does not handle depressions and uneven pavement or gutters very well. Commissioner Edmonds said it had been used on sidewalks at one time and perhaps could be again. Freeman said he would address the weeds at Super 10 and he and Perkinson would evaluate the street sweeper.

Mayor Gardner said he knew of a possible buyer or tenant for the vacant Super 10 but had been unable to contact the owner. Freeman reported a similar experience but said that a business partner of a business partner of the owner had announced intentions to open an indoor-outdoor flea market there. He said zoning allowed the indoor use but a conditional use permit was required for the outdoor use; a meeting of the Zoning Board of Adjustment had been called but the gentleman had not appeared. Commissioner Mooring suggested the former Tar Heel Tire as a more appropriate location.

Freeman then reported that the Ridgeway Sidewalk project was in the hands of DOT, awaiting final approval and a decision about \$25,000 of grant money that had been withdrawn. The Town had requested the return of that grant money which would make the project more practical. Mayor Gardner suggested checking the age of the winning bid to be sure that it did not expire.

Revitalization/Historical

Commissioner King recognized members of the county Jaycees in attendance, and presented the request of the Jaycees and Revitalization Committee that the Jaycee's parade and Revitalization Committee Prelude to Christmas be combined as one event on December 12 with the parade starting at 5:00pm. He stated that there were unresolved issues from last year's parade but that this was a strong recommendation of the two groups, and felt that all of the problems could be overcome. Chief Younts said he favors the combined event but is very concerned about safety and recommended that it begin at 4:00. He had submitted the need for a formal parade policy at a previous Board meeting but various factors had delayed discussion. He requested a month to work on the policy to present at the next Board meeting. Some of the changes he had recommended included reversing the direction so it would end at the Cast Stone Systems parking lot and a policy for clearing parked cars from the parade route. Mr. King suggested that he meet with the chief and representatives of the Jaycees and

Revitalization Committee before the next Board meeting. Mr. Freeman confirmed the agreement for planning purposes that the combined event was approved for December 12, with the starting time of 4:00 or 5:00 to be determined.

Commissioner King then turned to the Harvest Market scheduled for October 24 from 10:00-5:00. He said plans included an old time atmosphere tailored to traditional crafts and music with traditional instruments, home made goods, story tellers and an antique tractor show. The music would be in conjunction with the Smithsonian exhibit at the Library, and an art contest in conjunction with the Arts Council and Preservation Warrenton, the winner of which would be used as the logo of Spring Fest.

Public Safety

Commissioner Edmonds referred the Board to the Police Activity Report, and there were no questions. Chief Younts reported the hiring of new officer Cliff Wilkins who has nine years of law enforcement experience.

Mayor Gardner reported that there were challenges but that call volume was down. In answer to Commissioner Edmonds question, he said that the new truck was scheduled to be delivered before Christmas but they hoped to have it by Thanksgiving.

Mr. Freeman relayed a brief report from Fire Marshall Chris Wright who said that he had completed inspections of all but one of the buildings on the Nationwide Insurance block of South Main. Commissioner Mooring reminded Freeman to obtain copies of all the inspections completed for permanent record.

Human Resources

Commissioner Banzet asked Freeman for a report. He said that two employees were out for an extended time. Police Sgt. Ayscue for injuries suffered in a foot chase would be out at least until August, and perhaps longer if surgery were necessary. PW employee John Limer would be out for an extended time for hip replacement surgery.

Finance Report

Mr. Freeman reviewed the reports for the year-to-date through June. This is primarily a cash flow report which looked very close to the previous year. All departments except Sales Tax were under budget, and that is not a serious matter as the taxes are reimbursed. The higher revenue of 2007-08 was primarily due to larger loan proceeds. The apparent decline in Fund 38 surplus is primarily due to the reserve account which shows as an expense on this worksheet; that account is at least \$36,555. He said that the formal audit report would differ as it brings in depreciation and other calculated factors, and fortunately that audit is scheduled for August. This is much earlier than has been the case in recent years, and the completed audit should be expected earlier than usual.

There being no other questions about the financial reports Commissioner Mooring asked if there were a mechanism for developing tourism in Warrenton, and if not, if it were something that the Town could do. Mayor Gardner pointed to Commissioner Mary Hunter as the chairperson of the county wide joint organization. He suggested waiting to see how that group progressed before starting one in the Town. Mrs. Hunter said that the chamber of commerce is working on a county-wide plan involving a large group of stakeholders. There are no funds, but Mayor Gardner said it is heavily supported by the county Economic Development office and the chamber.

Commissioner Blalock had reviewed the checks in excess of \$10,000 and reported them appropriate.

Public Works

Commissioner Hunter deferred to Director Bill Perkinson for the monthly report. Starting with Public Works Perkinson said that a number of repairs had been completed successfully and that he was proud of a couple of large repairs that went well. A particular example was a major sewer line repair on Franklin Street that utilized a variety of staff capabilities and went smoothly. He reported that the water level behind the Peck Dam is good but that the spillway has worked its way behind the dam and will need to be addressed.

He reported that a number of repairs had been completed at the WWTP, and the telemetry system had been upgraded and now provided a greatly enhanced warning system. This is a system that had been designed as part of the original plant but never fully installed. He also reported that he was proud to announce that employee Oscar Davis had received his Grade 3 Waste Water Operator Certificate and that Al Alexander had received his Grade 1.

Commissioner Mooring asked about the Ridgeway Street sewer repair and whether the county and Director Macon Robertson were still waiting for answers from the Town. Freeman said that the county had provided the answers and he had written to County Manager Linda Worth to give the go ahead, just asking for a commitment to utilize chemicals to mitigate the odor if any remained after the work. In answer to Commissioner Blalock's question Perkinson explained that the new pressure line will basically parallel the existing gravity line with the goal of eliminating the steep drops in the gravity line that are thought to cause the odor problem. Freeman added that it was a major commitment on the part of the county and Mayor Gardner said it involved a major upgrade to the Soul City pump station as well. Bids were opened on June 30 and it is hoped that the project will be finished this year.

There followed discussion about the chemicals and whether they might help reported problems in the Town system, with specific reference to Eaton Avenue. Perkinson said that he was surveying the source and extent of the problem. Chemicals might be used but there are different ones for different purposes and their application varies from timed pumps to blocks.

Unfinished Business

The Tucker Building had been the focus of the Citizens Advisory Board as the building had been demolished but there remained foundation pillars and considerable debris. Mr. Freeman said the county building inspector had quoted a state statute that "where a structure has been demolished or removed, the vacant lot shall be filled and maintained to the existing grade..." Freeman stated that he had requested that the county building inspector notify the owners of the necessity of finishing the job, which if unsuccessful, would be followed by a letter from the Town Attorney.

The next item of unfinished business was consideration of the proposed ordinance requiring that animal waste such as dog feces be cleaned up by owners. There followed discussion about whether bags and/or receptacles should be provided, and the consensus was to agree with Commissioner Mooring's suggestion that the ordinance be adopted and that the response be evaluated before buying receptacles. The second point of discussion was whether this directive to dispose of the waste was in conflict with the Town ordinance specifying what would not be picked up by the sanitation crew (50.01). Attorney Styers said that animal waste was not included in the ordinance but had been on information distributed to citizens. Those guidelines could be changed without affecting the ordinance but would need to be communicated to citizens along with the information about the new ordinance. There followed discussion about adding a fine and the ability to collect, but Attorney Styers said 90.99 defines the penalty for any ordinances in the chapter so the new ordinance would

not need to specify a separate one. Commissioner King moved to adopt the new ordinance; Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Freeman reported that the Farmers' Market had just had its third week and that it seemed to be going very well. The growers were doing well and there were residents already planning their weekly visit. Traffic cones had been provided to experiment with traffic control as cars could pass closely by pedestrians. Commissioner Hunter asked if business owners accepted this and Freeman said he would check with the one affected but he thought it was acceptable.

New Business

Commissioner Tippet had requested discussion about gestures that would demonstrate the Board's appreciation for Town employees during a time in which cost of living raises could not be granted. She suggested birthday social hours or the possibility of birthday time off, citing the county's policy of a birthday holiday. Commissioners King and Mooring agreed with the need for recognition, and the need to consider financial implications. Chief Younts said a day off could be a problem for police officers as they work 12 hour days. Commissioner Mooring suggested a gift certificate for dinner at a local restaurant but would want to see a financial projection. Mayor Gardner reminded the Board that it does show its appreciation with the \$25/\$50 Christmas bonuses. He suggested that the Human Resources Committee meet and come back to the Board with a recommendation.

The second items of New Business was the request of Debby Sipe for a sewer adjustment of \$157.50. Her house at 123 Battle Ave. had suffered a leak and Freeman confirmed that this amount would adjust her sewer charge to her average use. Commissioner Blalock moved to grant the adjustment; Commissioner Tippet seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Resolutions

Mayor Gardner presented a resolution authorizing him and the Town Administrator to seek financing for \$50,000 for two new police cars and to enter into a financing agreement for a term not to exceed four years or 4% interest. Commissioner Mooring so moved; Commissioner Edmonds seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Announcements

Mayor Gardner reminded all who intended to run for election in November to file by 12:00 noon on Friday.

There being no further business Commissioner Blalock moved to adjourn, and Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion; the meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Freeman
Town Administrator