

Walter M. Gardner, Jr.
Mayor

John Freeman
Administrator

TOWN OF WARRENTON
"Historically Great - Progressively Strong"
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July 11, 2011 Board of Commissioners Minutes

The July 11, 2011 meeting of the Town of Warrenton Board of Commissioners was held at the Fire Station on South Main Street.

Those present were:

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

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

Absent: Commissioner Audrey Tippett

In attendance: E. Lang Hunter, Attorney representing the Town on behalf of Glatfelter Insurance

Mayor Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. He then presented the proposed agenda for approval with the addition of one sewer adjustment request for Rosalyn Copeland. Commissioner Mooring moved that the agenda be approved with as amended; Commissioner King seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

There being no members of the public who desired to address the Board Mayor Gardner presented the consent agenda for consideration. Mr. Freeman explained that the request for a sewer adjustment by Rosalyn Copeland was caused by a water leak underneath her driveway. Her normal use is 7000 gallons and the current bill is for 51,000 gallons. The requested adjustment is for 44,000 gallons at \$12 for a total of \$528.00.

- A. Minutes of Board meeting June 13, 2011
- B. Minutes of Public Hearing June 13, 2011
- C. Y-T-D Cash Flow Report
- D. Y-T-D Tax Revenue Report
- E. Y-T-D State Shared Revenue Report
- F. Checks in excess of \$10,000
- G. sewer adjustment request--None
- H. Public Works Monthly Report
- I. WWTP Monthly Report
- J. Police Activity Report

With the addition of the requested adjustment for Copeland Commissioner Mooring moved that the consent agenda be approved; Commissioner Banzet seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Public Safety

In the absence due to illness of Chief Younts Commissioner Blalock said he had nothing to report apart from the activity report included with meeting materials. Commissioner Davie noted that there were two parking citations. With the difficulty experienced in hiring a parking enforcement employee Commissioner Mooring said that he thought police officers could park their vehicles and do parking enforcement while walking Main Street. Mr. Blalock said that the Fire Department had also been quiet and that there was nothing to report.

Public Works

Commissioner Davie asked Director Bill Perkinson for a report on the repair of the sewer force main along US Highway 158 West. Mr. Perkinson said that 183 feet of badly corroded ductile iron pipe was replaced last Wednesday. Mr. Freeman added that the cost of the repair was to be shared by the three users, Warren County, Norlina and Warrenton based on volume. Because Warrenton has few customers above the repair its share is likely to be between 5-6% of the project cost of about \$20,000. Mr. Perkinson added that there would be the additional cost of the two pump haulers required to maintain service to major customers during the time of the repair. Mr. Banzet asked about a repair on Front Street which Mr. Perkinson explained was a new water tap for the Episcopal Church. Mr. Davie asked about the status of pothole repair, noting the marked areas on the streets, which Mr. Perkinson said number about 110. Mr. Freeman said that bids had been received the previous Friday and that pending review and acceptance work would probably start in the next two weeks. He said that based on the low bid most of the areas could be repaired. Mr. Perkinson also reported on the clearing and repair of a sewer blockage in the Possum Quarter line. He said it demonstrated the importance of maintaining the rights-of-way which make it possible to see problems during routine inspections and to have access to otherwise remote areas, and that having the right equipment made it possible to make a proper repair quickly.

Finance and Administration

Mr. Freeman said that he did not have the yearend report completed and said that he hoped a preliminary report would be available for the next meeting. He said that it appeared that the year had ended within budget but that there were various accrual items that have to be identified and adjusted. He noted that property tax revenues had declined 2.3% from the previous year but that increases in Sales and Use Tax and Franchise Tax revenues had more than offset that decline.

Commissioner Davie then brought up the question of Town Hall renovation and the use of tax credits before having architect Eddie Belk come to a work session. Mr. Belk's specialty is historical renovation through the use of tax credits, and there was discussion about the limitation to 35% of the building for municipal purposes for at least five years. Mr. Freeman said that in addition to that restriction the Town would have to sell or convey Town Hall to a for-profit entity. He said that use of the building for its original purpose as market and community hall might make use of tax credits practical, with Town offices being moved to another location, but little support was voiced for the idea. He also recognized resident Lynn Stemle for two weeks of hard, hot work organizing and cleaning the upper floor of the building, making it possible to identify what could be sold, thrown out, shredded, etc. After discussion there was general consensus that use of tax credits was not appropriate for the building plans, that 35% of its space would not be adequate for Town functions and that transferring ownership would not be acceptable. Mr. Mooring asked if work sessions would be useful and Mayor Gardner stated his opinion that the priority for work sessions should be hiring the replacement for the town administrator. Mr. Mooring moved that tax credits not be pursued at this time; Commissioner Banzet seconded the motion which passed unanimously. There was, however, general agreement about the value of maintaining close ties with Mr. Belk, even at a cost, because of his expertise.

Human Resources/Information Technology

There was no general report but Mr. Freeman announced that 21 year employee Jerry Pettus was on short-term disability as transition to retirement. Pettus is suffering from vision problems that restrict him from driving heavy trucks or working with power equipment in the sun.

Mayor Gardner asked that the Board approve advertising and hiring of the part-time code enforcement officer included in the new budget. He said that the Fire Department board had approved this person working from an office in the Fire Station which is an important tie to his fire inspection and planning duties. Commissioner King moved that the position be advertised and filled; Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mayor Gardner then addressed the need to establish a committee and procedure to hire a replacement for the departing town administrator. He said 15 applications had been received with more expected by the deadline of July 15. He suggested that the Board Human Resources committee along with himself and the town administrator review the applications and select 3-5 to recommend for interviews. There followed discussion about the interview process and the consensus was that the entire Board would do the interviews even though it could be intimidating for the candidate. It was decided that copies of applications would be distributed to the Human Resources selection committee on Monday, and that committee would meet on Thursday morning, July 21 at 9:30am at the Fire Department to discuss the applications and make recommendations for interviews which would be scheduled during the day on August 2. It might then be possible to vote on a decision at the regular Board meeting on August 8 which would allow the newly hired administrator to overlap with the outgoing administrator for at least a few days.

Commissioner Davie then reported that the Town website was receiving a significant number of hits transferred from the older website that was intended for commerce. As a first step he asked if he could set up a counter to track these hits. As the new website is directed to government services that do not address the inquiries directed at the old site he asked if he could expand the website's focus to include economic development. Commissioner Mooring so moved; Commissioner King seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Revitalization/Historical

Commissioner King reported on the good news that the Town had been selected as one of five finalists for the Small Town Main Street Program. While selection would not bring funding it would provide two experts in small town development who would come to Town once a month for two years and be available after that. They would help evaluate Town needs, how to set and achieve goals, how to use the volunteers, assist with grant writing and streetscape design. These two experts toured the Town on June 29 and met with a group that included the Revitalization Committee, commissioners and several business people from downtown. They said Warrenton had a step-up on other towns because of the established committee and Town Café programs. Weldon, Zebulon and Roseboro were mentioned as other participating towns, with the latter used as an example of a particularly aggressive and successful program. Mr. Davie said mayor and commissioners of Roseboro had successfully gone out in the surrounding area to recruit investors and businesses that the Small Town Main Street program had recommended, and he hoped Warrenton's would participate actively as well.

Beautification/Facilities

There was no report in Commissioner Tippet's medical absence, but Commissioner Banzet drew attention to the overgrown nature of the former Super 10 store across the street from the Fire Department. Commissioner Mooring asked if the Town had billed the owner for previous work by Town employees to cut and treat weeds. Mr. Perkinson said it had takes 6-8 hours. Mr. Freeman said it had been done once or twice but not been billed in the past. Mr. Mooring moved that the owners of the Super 10 and lot behind it be formally notified by letter to clean up their properties or the Town would do so and bill them; Mr. Davie seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Mr. Styers said

Planning, Zoning and Annexation

Commissioner Mooring reviewed the proposal to annex the three parcels of Town-owned property outside the present Town limits that was the subject of a public hearing held immediately before this Board meeting. He explained that this would allow the Town police to take primary responsibility in areas that are now the responsibility of the sheriff. Mr. Mooring moved that the three out-of-town properties belonging to the Town be voluntarily annexed; Commissioner Davie seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Unfinished Business

The agenda items of Annexation and Town Hall Renovation were discussed earlier in the meeting.

New Business

Town Attorney Mitch Styers introduced the agenda item addressing revision of the current time-limited parking ordinance to reflect more recent state statutes that permit unlimited handicapped parking. Following discussion it was agreed that the revised ordinance:

- Include reference to both state statutes concerned with handicapped parking
- Replace the itemized information block of places and times where time-limited parking is permitted with a reference to “as marked”
- Revise “valid NC DMV issued handicap placard” to “valid state issued....” to make it clear that the policy extends to out-of-state vehicles
- It was also agreed that the policy includes both placards and license plates.

Commissioner Davie moved to adopt the revised ordinance with these changes; Commissioner King seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Resolutions

Attorney Styers then introduced the proposed resolution authorizing the town administrator to remedy tickets issued in certain situations to drivers with handicapped placards or license plates. The resolution states that the Town ordinance governing parking predates the state statutes and has been changed to reflect the current situation. Commissioner Davie asked if this would negatively affect the current court case but both attorneys Styers and Hunter concurred that it would not. Commissioner Blalock moved that the resolution be adopted with the addition of a second reference to state statute; Commissioner King seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Announcements

Mayor Gardner reminded the Board and public in attendance that the filing deadline for four commissioner seats was this coming Friday, July 15.

There being no further New Business Commissioner Blalock moved that the Board go into closed session to discuss a legal matter; Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously and the Board went into closed session at 8:10pm. The Board returned to open session at 8:25 and Commissioner Mooring immediately moved that the meeting be adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

John Freeman
Town Administrator