

Town of Stantonsburg

Regular Board Meeting

July 15, 2024

Mayor Coley Rhodes called the monthly Town Council meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The following council members were present: Donnie Bass, Ben Harper, Jackie Grice, Eartha Butler, and Steve Mooring. Also present was Town Manager Brian Hawley, Town Clerk Alexis Whitley, and Town Attorney Slade Rand.

Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer: Mayor Rhodes led the Pledge of Allegiance and opened the meeting with prayer.

Approval of Agenda: Councilwoman Grice made a motion to approve the agenda. Passed unanimously.

Approval of the Minutes: May 30th Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes: Councilman Mooring requested "possession" be changed to the correct word of "position" on page 1 under presentations, second paragraph regarding the LGC. Page 3, paragraph 6, Councilman Mooring requested his statement not be paraphrased and state "Councilman Mooring stated the LGC said no to transferring enterprise funds to the general fund. He expressed concern about rates going up for our citizens." Page 4, paragraph 9, Councilman Mooring requested that meaning of "REPS" be removed as he did not make that statement. Page 5, paragraph 10, Councilman Mooring recommended the addition of there being no opposition therefore the board reached a consensus to increase the out-of-town garbage rate 50 cents. Page 6, paragraph 2, Councilman Mooring requested the word positive be replaced with the word confident as he did not state that he was 100% positive. With the amended changes, the minutes stand approved as written.

June 17th Regular Board Meeting/Budget Hearing Minutes: Page 4, paragraph 5, Councilman Mooring requested the removal of the business name regarding biohazard materials as he did not state a specific business name. With the amended changes, the minutes stand approved as written.

June 27th Continued Meeting Minutes from June 17th were approved as written.

Public Comment:

Amber Barnes, who resides on W. Julian Ave, was present to express her concerns regarding her child's safety. She requested the council's approval of a solid wooden fence higher than 4 feet around as much of the property as possible to protect him if he escapes the inside of the home, which happens pretty often even with multiple safety measures in place. She also requested an "Autistic Child Area" sign be posted in the area of W. Julian Avenue and S. Yelverton Street as well as a speed bump. Manager Hawley stated this request will require a variance with the Board of Adjustment/Planning Board.

Marie Edmundson, who resides on N. Saratoga Street, approached the council with 3 questions. 1. What method is used to hire for new job openings? 2. Are job openings being advertised? Manager Hawley answered stating that job openings are advertised if open. Currently, the town has a job opening on hold for the Electric Department. The department head makes the decision, but the Town Manager has

the final approval. 3. When was the last update the town had for job descriptions and pay level? Manager Hawley stated the town passed a new pay schedule for the budget year and is in the process of updating job descriptions and some of the job classifications.

Katherine Horton, who resides on Tyson Drive, presented her concern regarding the audio recordings and the General Records Schedule the town follows which is "Item# 1.50 Public Bodies: Audio and Video Recordings of Meetings: Destroy in office after approval of official written minutes." She is concerned that it was not approved by the council and stated that the audio recordings are the only way an immobile individual could listen to the meeting. She strongly encouraged that audio recordings be kept, and the town have the same set up as Wilson County with video and audio.

Robert Watson, who resides on N. Saratoga Street and is also the department head of the Streets and Sanitation Department for the town voiced concerns as a spokesman for all town employees. He discussed the possible change in work hours for all employees and some of the concerns that were brought to his attention. He stated that the same work schedule has been implemented for 15-16 years and reiterated that the employees do not desire a change in work hours as things run smoothly in town.

Alfred Sink, who resides on Tyson Drive, questioned the letter and the \$5.00 check he received from the town. Manager Hawley stated that it was a \$5.00 municipal vehicle tax that was collected. The town voted to do a \$5 fee last year, but it was not included in the budget ordinance. When the county started collecting those fees, they let the town know that it needed to be reimbursed back to those who paid as it was collected in error. The goal for this municipal vehicle tax is to use those monies to pay for the town park lease and/or the mulch to keep the park maintained.

Presentations: None

Financial Reports:

Manager Hawley informed the council that in the last couple of months expenditures have been exceeding revenues. Moving forward, grants will be assigned an appropriate line item. Example, grant monies should be in their own fund, so it does not affect the receipts and disbursement report.

June: Monthly Receipts: \$351,646.73 Disbursements: \$420,902.87 Difference: -\$69,256.14. Report referred to our auditors.

Councilman Mooring voiced his concern about an error for one of the accounts not included in the expenditure report and that books were closed on June 30th. Per Finance Officer, Victoria Lucas, books have not been closed and the town can work in multiple years. For instance, the town is still working in 2021 due to audits. Manager Hawley said the town has trial balance ready for Carr, Riggs, and Ingram, LLC (CRI). There is still no response regarding the contract with them.

Invoices for Payment:

Councilman Mooring questioned the amount spent at the Hasty Mart. Manager Hawley stated it is for the purchase of bottled water for the employees.

Councilman Bass questioned the multiple individual checks written to employees. Manager Hawley stated that they are mainly travel reimbursements.

Councilwoman Grice made a motion to approve invoices. Passed unanimously.

Old Business:

Employee work hours were discussed.

Councilwoman Grice asked what the hours are for each department. Manager Hawley stated that office staff work hours are 8:00AM-5:00PM Monday-Thursday and 8:00AM-12:00PM on Friday. Departments work Monday-Thursday. The Sanitation and Streets Department hours vary depending on their duties for that day. Electric Department is 7:00AM-5:00PM. The Water and Sewer Department is typically 6:00AM-4:00PM.

Councilwoman Butler requested a workshop date to discuss hours more in detail.

Manager Hawley did investigate hours in the Town of Farmville and the Town of Fremont for comparison.

Councilwoman Grice asked Finance Officer Victoria Lucas what percentage of customers pay online. Victoria stated, "I can't give you the exact percentage, I can look it up, but it is a high majority". Victoria asked Town Clerk Alexis Whitley if she agreed. Alexis agreed.

Councilwoman Grice stated, "my preference is to leave work hours as they are but if anyone else wants to chime in or have a workshop, I'm listening."

Councilman Bass stated "I'm fine like they are. I see the responses from employees that were given to us tonight, and I perfectly agree. I don't see any issues; I don't know if there have been any complaints as far as anyone having trouble getting in touch with someone, but I look at it as I don't go to Chick-Fil-A on Sundays because I know they are closed. So, if I know the hours of the town staff for Monday-Thursday and half a day on Friday, and have a question, I'll ask during business hours. I don't personally feel the need for a workshop."

Town office staff rotates on Fridays.

Councilman Harper stated "you know where I stand, I stated that last week. The department heads know their guys. So I'm good with the way they are".

Mayor Rhodes stated town hall should post the hours some way. We don't have it outside."

Town Clerk, Alexis and Finance Officer, Victoria stated the hours are posted on the sign outside and the door. Manager Hawley stated that we will check where it is posted and on social media and the bills.

It was the consensus of the board to leave work hours as they are. Monday-Thursday 8:00AM-5:00PM and Fridays 8:00AM-12:00PM.

The Bulk Goods Policy and Rates were discussed.

Manager Hawley stated that the bulk pick up is limited to 3 items. He recommended that the council just look at it weekly and/or on a monthly basis. He can advise if he sees the need to. The schedule will still be the first and third Wednesday of each month.

Councilwoman Butler is concerned about keeping costs as low as possible for those who aren't able to afford it.

Councilman Mooring stated that other municipalities charge per container. He recommended that the town look at what the businesses are doing with regard to the numerous containers before passing the law of additional costs to the citizens because the citizens are paying for that too and he thinks it needs to be adjusted.

Councilman Harper questioned if it's the businesses who really require dumpsters instead of trash containers that need to be addressed and he asked for clarification on what the town is looking to get out of the new policy.

Manager Hawley stated that the goal is to mitigate problem areas where residents put numerous bags of trash out every week that can fill 3 containers. Councilwoman Butler would like Manager Hawley to monitor the bulk items for a couple of more months.

Councilman Mooring requested additional items be discussed.

Councilman Mooring stated that in the June 27th town council meeting there was discussion on employee work hours, and he made a statement that one of the reasons the town was on the Unit Assistance List is attributable to internal control issues. One of the issues were a material weakness finding regarding segregation of duties for office staff and discussion ensued after he made that statement. He maintained that what he said was accurate and that not completing the statutory audit on time will get you on the Unit Assistance List. He provided a page from the State Treasurer's website that showed Stantonsburg year 2022 UAL based on audited data as of June 30, 2021, compiled as of October 31, 2022, which is the last audit that the town was able to complete. Listed were internal control issues, financial issues in general fund and financial issues in water/sewer fund. In addition, he passed out information from Dale Folwell, NC Department of the State Treasurer, regarding the UAL and he also referred to the July 11, 2022, letter from the NC Department of State Treasurer from Sharon Edmundson letting the Town know they are on the Unit Assistance List. He shared this as clarification for some who were here and should have knowledge of this and some who are new and may not understand this. He clarified that the reasons listed in the letter are the reason the town is on the UAL. Councilman Mooring does not like that the town is on the Unit Assistance List.

Manager Hawley stated that the NC Department of the State Treasurer recommends going by their standards, therefore, when the town did their cash management policy it was based on their 2-person model and when the town redid the policy, it was based on their 3-person model. All small towns seem to have material weaknesses due to not having the staff or manpower which is fairly common.

Councilman Mooring mentioned the discussion of 911 costs in the June 27th meeting and that Town Attorney Slade Rand was going to follow up on that.

Manager Hawley stated that there are some records we are waiting on from the county.

Councilman Mooring discussed 312 S Main Street and Turpentine Design coming. Manager Hawley stated that the principal owner along with her engineering team will be evaluating the property one last time before completing blueprints to understand where load-bearing walls or other issues may be. Once blueprints are completed and approved, the project will be open for bids.

Councilman Mooring discussed the May 30th meeting MINUTES where the town needed an accountant to make payroll corrections to avoid penalties. He asked if Danna Layne was able to accomplish that and if the town knew what the penalties would be.

Manager Hawley stated that they do not believe there will be a penalty as the town paid more in than we should have. If the town does receive penalties, the plan is to appeal.

New Business:

Manager Hawley presented the Facade Grant. Randy Davis and Edwin Bynum from Stantonsburg Industrial Development Corporation have been working with the town on this grant to help with the aesthetic of downtown. The Stantonsburg Industrial Development Corporation will be holding the funds. The limit would be a matching grant up to \$10,000.00 and the Stantonsburg Industrial Development Corporation would match \$5,000 of that to be administered by town. Applicants will go through a process to apply, once standards are met and the project is completed and approved, funds will be disbursed to the town, and the town will reimburse the applicant. The applicant can be a lessee or property owner. It is for the exterior of the building excluding roofs. The building must be zoned commercial and in the business district. The proposal is that the appearance commission will be involved when applicants apply. The staff, the council, and the appearance commission will decide which applicants are approved.

Councilman Mooring stated that he would not be eligible for the facade grant, and he requested the approval from the town council for an awning or canopy on the front of the building he owns next to the library, recusing himself from the vote. He stated that per the town ordinance, permission must be obtained from the town council.

Manager Hawley stated that he would have to reread the ordinance, as permission from the town council may not be required.

Department Reports:

Police report reviewed.

Town Manager Report:

Manager Hawley discussed the meeting he and Attorney Slade Rand had with SCLC and the town's UTEC consultants on solar policy. He is currently working on a policy to do a pilot test program for 12-18 months. The policy will be presented to the council once completed. The town's goal is to look at it and compare. It would be a net metering program compared to a standby rate program.

Manager Hawley discussed Servpro coming to remove the records in the building at 110 E Commercial Avenue. The records will then be properly disposed of, and the town can move forward with the sale of the building.

Councilman Harper discussed the estimate to fix the deck of the John Deere lawn mower. He recommended that the town should trade it in for a new one instead of replacing the deck. Manager Hawley stated that the leaf vacuum budgeted allowance could be used for the purchase of a new mower.

Manager Hawley discussed the NCDEQ water quality report. The State has changed their standards on how much the Department of Environmental Quality can withhold on any appropriations given. Changing their standards dropped the rate of how much they can withhold, the town will get approximately an additional \$39,000.00 for the Waterline and Well project.

Mayor and Council Comments:

Councilwoman Grice asked what the EVP website regarding the CDBG Grant. Manager Hawley stated it is where the town puts solicitations for bids for the State and it must be posted in the EVP before advertised in the newspaper to bring in contractor bids for the project itself. He will update the council in the next few days about the selection committee in the case of titles not being cleared.

Councilwoman Grice asked the location of the park for the NC Attorney General grant that was submitted. Manager Hawley stated that Wilson County approached the town looking for a location along the creek with owned property adjacent to it. The town worked on a grant proposal with Wilson County to get approval from the State to assist with Phase I on a potential park with walking trails, possible boat ramp remodel, and more for that location.

Councilwoman Grice asked for an update on the Crepe Myrtle Festival. Manager Hawley stated that everything is lined up and ready to go, but he may have to look at making an adjustment regarding the budget. Revenues have been received and Town Clerk Alexis Whitley stated all vendors spaces have not been filled yet.

Councilwoman Grice requested the condition of the board room be addressed. She asked how many employees have their CDL's and if there are any who have restrictions. Manager Hawley stated one employee in the Electric Department, and two employees in the Sanitation and Streets Department do not have their Commercial Driver's License. The employee in the Electric Department is still on a probationary period and enrolling the other two employees has been previously discussed.

Councilwoman Grice discussed the public comment made by Katherine Horton regarding the change in policy for audio recordings. Manager Hawley stated that there is no change to policy. The town does not have a policy for audio recordings, therefore, the State's archive standards on disposal of audio recordings have been followed. The town currently has all recordings until the council decides otherwise. Ms. Horton did receive the audio recordings she requested with the exception of June as minutes were not approved by the council yet.

Councilwoman Grice asked how the event by the police department turned out. Town Clerk Alexis Whitley stated that it was cancelled due to inclement weather and will be postponed at a later date to be announced.

Councilwoman Butler asked if the rate and fee schedule is posted. Manager Hawley stated it is posted on the website and the link to view it on the website is posted on Facebook and that a copy is available at Town Hall. Information is also added to the back of the monthly bills, when changes are made.

Town Clerk, Alexis recommended making one post on Facebook stating the increases and decreases that the customers should be aware of rather than the entire schedule.

Councilwoman Butler discussed the T-Mobile grant and the self-checkout option and the story walk. She stated that it would still benefit the town. Manager Hawley stated that he has already started on the

grant paperwork, and he feels the council should be a part of the deciding process on how those funds can be best used. If the council wishes, he will complete the grant and apply.

Councilman Bass agreed that the library does benefit the town but stated that the town provides a place for the Wilson County Library to work out of and then the funds being applied for by the town will go directly to the Wilson County library and he asked if the library is planning to help offset the costs. Councilwoman Butler further discussed the grant.

Manager Hawley stated the paperwork is filled out and he is waiting on ideas from the council for what they want to use the money for. He would need 5 letters of support for that particular project or projects and then paperwork would be submitted.

Councilman Bass requested staff notify the Board of Adjustment of a call meeting to address the Barnes family concerns for a fence. Manager Hawley stated the Board of Adjustment/Planning Board meets as needed.

Councilman Bass asked how flushing water lines went today. He asked for an update on the ice machine to make sure it is working okay. Manager Hawley stated one of the lines looked like mud coming out but eventually cleared up. Possibly just a stagnant line sitting. He stated the ice machine is working great.

Councilman Bass questioned if the NCDOT/811 situation has been resolved. Manager Hawley stated they are still fighting the repair costs. NCDOT did not call 811 before digging to make repairs.

Councilman Bass commended office staff for the way work orders are handled and sent out quickly.

Councilman Mooring mentioned the overtime report and that it was \$2,600.00 less than the previous month. The town is down to 115 hours and spent \$4,247.00 in overtime this month. He recommended keeping overtime as a focus item.

Councilman Mooring discussed the website being hacked this week and wanted to remind the council of findings in previous audits on network security and firewall settings. He asked office staff to review current settings before there is a larger issue. Previous audits stated that the firewall was turned off due to work activities. Office staff will check with Computer Central on firewall and network settings.

Councilman Harper voiced his concern about cats in town. Manager Hawley stated that Stantonsburg is a drop off location for the Trap, Neuter or Spay, and Release program in which cats are brought to the animal clinic to get spayed or neutered then they are supposed to be returned to their pickup location.

Councilman Harper discussed the firework show the town had a few years back. He wants to revisit the idea of having a Fourth of July event with fireworks.

Councilwoman Grice made a motion to go into Closed Session for G.S. 143.611 a (5)(6). Passed unanimously.

Councilman Mooring made motion to go into open session. Passed unanimously.

Councilwoman Butler began a discussion about the "polling" of the employees and their responses. Board members pointed out the misconceptions mentioned in their comments and wondered where they received their misinformation. The board questioned the "rumors" that Manager Hawley brought to the board's attention that the employees were circulating.

The board discussed the derogatory remarks made by some employees, threats of seeking other jobs, claims of "harassment," the wrong assumption that "More hours more pay" is what the council is seeking and the negative attitude of most of the comments.

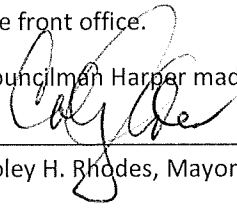
Mayor Rhodes read from the Town Policy that one of the responsibilities of each employee is to "refrain from spreading rumors or engaging in other activities which have a disruptive influence on morale or work progress." It also states, "An employee violating any of the provisions of this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, as well as prosecution under any civil or criminal laws which have been violated." Councilman Harper mentioned that we have the hours we do for the benefit of the employees, taking into consideration the weather.

After much discussion, Town Attorney Slade Rand reiterated that it is the town manager in a council/manager form of government which we have, that is responsible for the management of the employees. Town Manager Hawley said that he is going to have meetings with personnel to make certain the correct information is "out there" and not skewed.

Manager Hawley expressed the need for a street sweeper brush. Councilman Harper offered to look for a used mower.

Manager Hawley also has the mapped-out areas for street sweeping to be addressed by maintenance in the front office.

Councilman Harper made a motion to adjourn. Passed unanimously.



Coley H. Rhodes, Mayor



Alexis L. Whitley, Town Clerk