

MINUTES OF THE WHITSETT TOWN COUNCIL

March 12, 2024

Whitsett Town Hall Building

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

The regular meeting of the Whitsett Town Council was held on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at the Whitsett Town Hall. The following members of the Town Council were present: Mayor Chip Bell, Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice and Council Members Craig York, Lee Greeson and Cindy Wheeler. Also present were Becky Loy from Cobb, Ezekiel and Loy, Town Administrator Elaine Garner and Town Clerk Barbara York as well as 5 citizens of Whitsett.

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and noted that a quorum was present. He asked Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice to give the invocation.

Mayor Bell recognized Becky Loy who then spoke to the Council about the results of the 2022-2023 audit. She passed out the audit result books and letters with all the results of the accounting. Overall, the audit went very well, and Mrs. Loy discussed some changes and thoughts for the Council and Budget Committee to consider when creating future budgets. One of her main suggestions was to consider how we can increase our water budget so in case there were a water infrastructure emergency, the Town would be able to pay for it.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Adoption of the Minutes

- Council Member Craig York called for a motion to accept the December 2023 minutes. There was no meeting in January due to weather issues. Mayor Bell made a motion to accept the minutes from the December 12, 2023, Town Council Meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice seconded the motion and the adoption of the December 12, 2023; minutes was carried by unanimous vote.

2. Any Other Old Business

- Council Member Craig York asked if there was any further Old Business and there was none.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Planning Board

- Planning Board Chairperson Karen Horne reported the Board did not meet this month due to lack of a quorum. She also made the Council aware the Vice Chairperson Charles Sedoris had resigned his position on the Board. Dr. Matt Martin has agreed that he will change his position of an alternate to that of a Board Member. There is still an opening on the board for vice chairperson that needs to be filled.
- Mrs. Horne also let the Council know that there is currently a home in the Whitsett Town Limits in which the owners are advertising as an Airbnb/camping nightly rental site. The owners have converted a storage building into a bungalow type dwelling. In speaking with Guilford County, that this property is zoned agricultural and as our ordinance states can have scattered nonfarm residences on the track of land. The key word in the ordinance is "residence" and in order to be a residence there must be hot and cold water, a place to sleep, a place to prepare food and wastewater facilities (toilet). Per the photo there is a porta-john as their waste collection system and Guilford County does not allow that. Mrs. Horne and Town Administrator Elaine Garner have called Guilford County asking for an investigation into this matter. If there is going to be a second residence on this property, it must meet the standards of a residence. Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice asked for them to include in the investigation the improper fencing that this owner has on someone else's property.

2. Enforcement Officer

- Town Administrator Elaine Garner let the Council know that there was nothing to report in this area.

3. Town Administrator

NEW BUSINESS

- **Approve Amendment Extending Interlocal Agreement on Tax Collections**
 - Mayor Bell explained that this document is standard procedure year after year and there will be an increase in the amount of taxes that are being taken from the Whitsett residents' taxes. The budget committee will need to keep this in mind when working on the upcoming budget. Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice made a motion to accept the Amendment Extending Interlocal Agreement on Tax Collections. Council Member Lee Greeson seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.
- **Streetlight(s) at front of Town Hall**
 - Town Clerk Barbara York discussed the need for more light at the front of the Town Hall. At night when leaving meetings, the parking lot, front steps, and handicap ramp are all very dark. Ms. York had spoken with Duke Energy about getting street/flood lights put in the front lawn to light up the areas from the kitchen entrance to the handicap ramp on the other side of the building. The Council had questions about what the light ordinance says about this topic. They do not want lights to be a disturbance to the Town Hall's neighbors. It was suggested that porch lights be investigated rather than streetlights. Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice made a motion to table this discussion until the best option for lighting the front of the Hall is further investigated. Council Member Lee Greeson seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.
- **Water bill late fees – Karen Horne**
 - Planning Board Chairperson Karen Horne explained that there are currently a couple of water bill customers that are working the system to only pay their bill every other month and it only costs them \$7 for a late fee. Ms. Horne has researched late fees in other towns and found that some towns allow 20 days (rather than our 30 days) to pay their bill. If they don't pay their bill within the 20 days, there is a \$20 late fee. If they still haven't paid their bill after 40 days, their account becomes delinquent, and they must pay \$30 for a late fee as well as disconnect and reconnect fees. The Planning Board is going to study this further as changing our policy and the structure of the Utility Fees to something like this would require a Public Hearing. In the meantime, Council Member Lee Greeson made a motion to put this topic on the agenda for the Public Hearing and Council Member Craig York seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.
- **Water Meters and Cellular reader**
 - Planning Board Chairperson Karen Horne explained to the Council that there has been some discussion about upgrading the new water radio read meters that we recently purchased to cellular capable readers. They also are looking into the cellular reading device which would send readings daily to the Town's computer rather than only one time per month. This cellular reading device is quite expensive, and our current budget is unable to pay for that at this time. Ms. Horne recommended that we not purchase the cellular device at this time. She did ask the Council to consider whether they want to go ahead and purchase the cellular capable meters in case in the future we decide to get the cellular reading device. The Council asked that she get information on the Cellular vs. Noncellular options including yearly costs and the longevity of the cellular meters to bring back to the Council.
- **Any Items from Council**
 - Council Member Craig York asked if there were any other items from the Council. Council Member Lee Greeson requested that Town Clerk Barbara York call the Town's lawncare service and ask him to remove the leaves from around the ballfield fence.
- **Announcements**
 - Mayor Bell asked if there were any announcements and there were none.
- **Speakers from the Floor**
 - Council Member Craig York asked if there were any Speakers from the Floor. Tanisha Dukes, who is running for NC House of Representatives for District 59 stepped forward to update the Council on her platform for our area. The Council requested that she address the terrible traffic issues our area is currently experiencing, and which will get much worse as all the developments start having residents move in. Regarding these developments, where will all the children be going to school as the schools are already full. The lack of law enforcement in Whitsett is also a big problem.
- **ADJOURNMENT**
 - With no further business before the Council, Council Member Craig York invited a motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice and seconded by Council Member Lee Greeson. The motion carried; and the

February 13, 2024, Town Council meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:57 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Whitsett Town Council is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 12, 2024, at the Whitsett Town Hall.

Chip Bell, Mayor

Elaine Garner, Town Administrator

APPROVED: