

MINUTES OF THE WHITSETT TOWN COUNCIL
July 14, 2020
Whitsett Town Hall Building

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

The regular meeting of the Whitsett Town Council was held on Tuesday, July 14, 2020 at the Whitsett Town Hall. The following members of the Town Council were present: Mayor Richard Fennell, Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice, and Council Members Cindy Wheeler and Lee Greeson. Absent was Council Member Jamie King.

Also present were Town Administrator Ken Jacobs, *The Alamance News* reporter Tomas Murawski, and two Town residents. Absent was Planning Board Chairman Bob Maccia.

Mayor Fennell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., noted that a quorum was present; and asked Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice to offer the invocation.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Mayor Fennell asked for any speakers from the floor, and no one asked to be acknowledged.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Adoption of the Minutes

Mayor Fennell asked for any changes to the minutes from the June 9, 2020 regular hearing; and with none, asked for a motion to adopt the minutes. A motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice; motion seconded by Council Member Lee Greeson. The motion to adopt the June minutes carried by unanimous vote.

2. Any Other Old Business

Mayor Fennell asked if there were any other old business; and there was none.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Planning Board

In the absence of the Planning Board Chairman Bob Maccia, Town Administrator Jacobs explained that Planning Board activities remain suspended until further notice.

2. Enforcement Officer

Enforcement Officer Jacobs reported that one development clearance certificate had been issued since the June Council meeting to John Moore at 7010 Dow Drive to construct a portable storage building in accordance with setbacks.

3. Town Administrator

Town Administrator Jacobs reported the following informational items:

- **Town Hall Activities:** Major portion of time was spent on developing the annual operating budget covering the entire fiscal year 2020-2021. Much like the June interim budget for July and August 2020 only, the tack for preparing the annual budget had followed suit, including first necessary funds to keep the Town office operational, e.g., salaries, utilities, and contracted services. In contrast, though, the annual budget included revenues, which could only be estimated since the full impact of the COVID pandemic on income could not be fully predicted and had only been minimally realized to date. As for a major expense for which the groundwork had been laid well back in 2019, the conversion of the concession building into a Parks and Rec public restroom, could be funded by raking off the interest of 4 out of the 5 CDs. Mayor Fennell and Finance Officer Jerry Rice concurred with this transaction, and it will be pursued as plans are finalized. Town expenditures overall will be monitored closely to ensure conformance with the August-adopted budget.

Meetings included: (1) a visit from DEQ's Public Water Supply Section representative Mike Painter to conduct the annual (or sometimes biennial) water system audit, which proved no deficiencies. An evaluative summary report would be forthcoming. (2) an assessment of the Town's playground by NCLM risk management staffer TJ DeLuca to determine any safety hazards that may exist, prompted by an increase in state-wide lawsuits relative to recreational activities. Two items cited for repair were broken bracket welds and additional certified mulch around the equipment. Fire Department Chief Leon Apple will handle the welding of the brackets; and American Mulch will see to sufficient mulch.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Presentation of Proposed Operating Budget for FY 2020-2021

Prior to this meeting, Council Members received in their delivered packages a copy of the proposed operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year for preview. Mayor Fennell asked if after review, did Council Members have any comments. With no comments or discussion, Mayor Fennell moved on to setting a public hearing date for the resultant purpose of adopting the 2020-2021 Town budget.

2. Set Public Hearing Date of August 11, 2020

Mayor Fennell asked for a motion to set the August public hearing in order to invite public comment on the proposed 2020-2021 operating budget. Council Member Lee Greenson made a motion to set the hearing date of August 11; motion seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice. The motion carried by unanimous vote; and the public hearing shall be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation.

3. Approval of Contract Annual Financial Audit NTE \$10,750

The CPA firm of Cobb, Ezekiel, Loy and Company LLC (CEL) had submitted its proposal to audit Town financial records for the budget year ending June 30, 2020, which included a sizable cost increase ranging from \$1,500 to \$2,500 over that of last year's \$8,250 fee. This raised major concern among Council Members who preferred to table approving the contract until ample explanation from CEL justifying the increase could be offered to Council's satisfaction.

Town Administrator Ken Jacobs will contact CEL to invite a representative to next month's meeting to address the issue, and/or provide justification to be conveyed to Council Members if CEL is unavailable.

4. Any Items from Council Members

Mayor Fennell asked for any items from Council Members; and Council Member Lee Greenson asked about closing and cordoning off the playground, mostly for liability reasons. Town Administrator Jacobs offered to post signs and padlock the entrance.

5. Announcements

Mayor Fennell asked for any announcements; and there were none.

6. Speakers from the Floor

Mayor Fennell asked for any speakers from the floor, and no one asked to be recognized.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Council, Mayor Fennell invited a motion to adjourn. Council Member Lee Greeson made the motion to adjourn; motion seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice. The motion passed by unanimous vote; and the July 14, 2020 Town Council meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:21 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Whitsett Town Council will follow the public hearing scheduled for 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, August 11, 2020 at the Whitsett Town Hall.

/s/

/s/

Jo Hesson, Town Clerk

Richard Fennell, Mayor

APPROVED: August 11, 2020