

TOWN OF NEWLAND
06/04/2024
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING



ATTENDING:

MAYOR: Derek Roberts

ALDERMAN: Kenan Foxx, James Johnson, Gail Haller, Christie Hughes

GUEST: Theresa Foxx, Christy Ray, Mike Tolson, Bert Valery, Beverly Hoyle, Faith Lacey, Larry Hoyle, Sammie Jones, Vanessa Angrasani, Julie Banner, Victoria Bowman, Susan Rash, Rick Roberts, Nathan Gitter, Nancy Davis, Anita Johnson

STAFF: Town Administrator Bill Bailey, Finance Officer Sandy Lewis Town Clerk Jessica Buchanan, Police Chief Michael Fields, Police Captain Chris Clark, Public Works Director Gary Lewis, Town Attorney Gerald McKinney

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., reminded everyone of ethics awareness, and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Alderman Johnson motioned to approve the May minutes; Mayor Pro Tem Foxx seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. The Mayor recommended not to add items to the agenda a week before the meeting. The board agreed. Alderman Johnson motioned to approve the agenda. Mayor Pro Tem Foxx seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

AGENDA

MAYORS REPORT

Mayor Roberts stated he had been working with some gentlemen from VFW to have all the flags out throughout town. Citizens have been calling, saying how much they appreciate seeing them.

MIKE TOLSON – MACK GAY ASSOCIATES

Mr. Tolson explained one of the first projects proposed for the town was sewer rehab for the town selection system. The project was divided into two contracts, and the State approved some plans to use the appropriation money. Bids were open to complete the work for the first contract, which included cleaning and video inspection of everything in the town's collection system, including all the sewer pipes, opening every manhole, and cleaning them out. In the end, a focused inspection of the pipes where leaks and other damage need to be repaired will be located. There were three bidders, and Tri-State Utilities was the lowest bidder. This type of project is their primary form of work. Their bid came in at \$1.5 million, not costing the town any money except for people lining and blocking traffic. They will clean 57,000 feet of sewer pipes.

Mayor Roberts asked Mr. Tolson who would monitor Tri-State while they were working. Mr. Tolson said he would and has worked with them several times. Alderman Johnson asked if the system would be down during this process. Mr. Tolson replied not typically. Usually, they can cure most by stopping it and putting a bypass port on the pump. MPT Foxx made a motion allowing the Mayor to sign a contract with Tri-State. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

Mayor Roberts asked how long the project would take. Mr. Tolson replied it is a 7-month project. Project two was opened for bids, and two were received from Tri-State and Step Construction. Step Construction came in with the lowest bid at \$575,175, which is the manhole rehab part of the project. Mayor Roberts asked Mr. Tolson if he had worked with Step Construction before. He replied he had fixed over 1,000 manholes with them. Mr. Tolson explained that this is a two-part project because you will seal your lining first and then come back through and seal the manholes. Once completed, the town will have a completely sealed system. MPT Foxx made a motion allowing the Mayor to sign a contract with Step Construction. Alderman Hughes seconded the motion. All Agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Mr. Tolson stated those two contracts would use roughly \$1.8 million of the appropriated \$3.2 million. There is some equipment malfunctioning at the waster water treatment plant. They are going through the process of getting these approved as emergency repairs with the money. A pump should also be installed at the Tweetsie lift station. Mr. Tolson has prepared a rate study and will present it at next month's meeting. He said our rates were incredibly low for the area and needed increased.

VICTORIA BOWMAN

Ms. Bowman is the board chair at the County Chamber of Commerce and the volunteer chair of the Wooly Worm Festival. The board was approached at their meeting this morning about supporting the Christmas Tree festival that is trying to be launched in Newland this year. They decided it would be a massive conflict of interest because the dates overlap with the Wooly Worm festival. She stated the festival funds half, if not more, of the operational budget of the Chamber. She asked if there was a possibility of looking at a different set of dates for the Christmas Tree festival. The Valle Crucis festival also falls on the same Saturday, October 19th. Mayor Roberts explained that those dates were chosen because of when the Christmas tree was going to DC. He also stated that a few years ago, the Chamber wanted a third festival on the same weekend. Ms. Bowman indicated that the comment came up at their meeting this morning, and they were all unaware of where the comment came from. Mayor Roberts suggested having another meeting with Ms. Bowman and Jason because he feels that the Chamber does not support this side of the County. Ms. Bowman stated she would like the Chamber to be more involved on this side of the County. She will give Jessica her information so that she can meet with the Mayor later.

SWEET WATER RANCH

Bill stated the project could not be adopted last time because the area was too large. The town has limitations on how much satellite annexation you have by Statute. Mr. Valery is presenting the same project to the board. However, he has reduced it significantly to a portion of his property. The board will go through the same process, with this being the introduction, and if they would like to move forward, the clerk will do research, and then a public hearing will be held. MPT Foxx made a motion to move forward with the process and direct the clerk to conduct

research. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. The clerk will bring back her report at July's meeting. Then, the public hearing will be held before August's meeting.

POLICY – CONFLICT OF INTEREST (GRANTS)

Bill stated that the State requires two policies to handle the two grants Mr. Tolson is helping us with. Gerald has looked over them and said if it is what the federal government is making us do, then we have to do it. MPT Foxx made a motion to approve the policies for the ARPA funds. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

TOWN CHARTER

Gerald asked the board if they wanted to move forward with changing the form of government from mayor-council to council-manager form of government. He stated there are two ways to change it: either change the ordinance tonight. Or the board can put it for a referendum. MPT Foxx motioned to adopt the ordinance to change the charter to a council-manager form of government. Alderman Hughes seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

POLICY – COST PRINCIPLES POLICY

Bill stated that this was the other policy that needed to be in place for the ARPA funds. The federal government requires it. MPT Foxx made a motion to approve the policy for the ARPA funds. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

CHRISTIAN GARDNER – FISHING TOURNAMENT

When the town has events for the Fourth of July, Christian has put together a fishing tournament for the kids. Appalachian Holler Hunters will stock 2100 fish and hand out maps showing where the fish will be stocked. Christian stated he has several prizes to give away and will need funding for fishing poles and other things, such as bait. Christian said the tournament will start between 8 and 8:15 a.m., and Adam Church will begin at 12. Alderman Johnson asked Christian how much funding he thought he needed. Christian said that getting around \$500 would be great, and he would take care of all the advertising. Alderman Johnson made a motion to give Christian \$500. Alderman Hughes asked what the \$500 would cover. Christian stated it would cover the extra prizes and would like to do half-hour door prizes. Alderman Johnson said he would contact Ingles to see if he could get some corn donated as bait. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

RIVERWALK

Mayor Roberts stated he had received several emails about a specific area on the Riverwalk near the church. It's low, and it fills up with water when it rains. He wants to drain it and bring in some asphalt to fix it. Alderman Haller stated there was also a spot near Kay's that needed to be fixed. Gary said he spoke with the guys behind the town hall, and they may have some extra funding that we could use to fix some of the areas. Alderman Johnson asked if part of the discussed area wasn't part we traded with the church. Bill stated we were never able to do that. Mayor Roberts asked Gary to get some asphalt prices.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Gary said he fixed four leaks last month and seven 811 reports. He received a quote from Carolina Lift Station to fix the bad bearings at the WWTP, which will be around \$41,000. Will has gone through all the Christmas lights, removed most of the bad bulbs, and replaced them with new ones. The work order system is up, and Gary has put in 18 work orders in the last seven days. Alderman Johnson asked Gary if there was a way to have all the streetlights come on at once. Gary said all the timers are being replaced, and once that is completed, they should all fall in place.

FINANCE REPORT

Sandy said the 21-22 audit had been completed. The auditor will be here on Thursday for the 22-23 audit. The USDA 23-24 loan was drafted earlier this month; this payment comes out once a year. She asked the board if they would prefer her spreadsheet to be in a fiscal year format, a 12-month rolling format. The board state fiscal year is fine. The new police officer has 48 hours from Sugar Mountain and 1683 from Mitchell County. The board can approve 40 hours initially and then, after a year, approve the remaining hours. Alderman Johnson made a motion to approve the 40 hours. Alderman Hughes seconded the motion. All agreed with a show of hands and stated aye.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Fields stated they had six arrests and 15 felony charges last month. Chris and his dog Kody assisted on two cases involving drug charges. He has the new officer, David Buchanan, and paperwork has been submitted to the State. He is just waiting to hear back from them. Chief Fields informed the board about a law enforcement program called the Support Services Program through the military. They can get equipment at no cost to the department. Alderman Haller asked Chief if they had checked behind Martha Guy's house. He said yes, they patrol it regularly.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Bill stated that all the streetlights had been installed on Cranberry Street, and most bases were set for Linville Street. Bill has had a dozen phone calls from people wanting the old street lights and asked the board what they wanted to do with them. Mayor Roberts suggested selling them for \$50 a light. Before selling them, we need to choose the lights to use around the Riverwalk. MPT Foxx motioned to take what we needed for the Riverwalk and then sell the rest of them for \$50 apiece. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Bill mentioned that the next planning board meeting will be next Thursday and that the planning board has decided to accelerate the process. We will probably come to the board in August with an adoption plan. Several citizens and the planning board ask what is happening at the old Lowe's building. They want to utilize it for residential and commercial use; however, a 2-inch line does not meet standards, and a 6-inch line will need to be extended. The consultant has drafted an ordinance stating nobody can connect to our water and sewer in that area until the 6-inch line is extended. Bill asked the board if they wanted to adopt and update the town's water and sewer ordinance. Bill said he would email it out to the board so they could read over it.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Anita Johnson from the Avery County Historical Society came to speak to the board about the NC Department of Natural Cultural Resources and celebrating America's 250th anniversary.

Avery County's committee was created in March 2024. Our leaders in this area were the over-the-mountain men. The Historical Society hopes to receive a grant to paint a mural on the side of Town Hall.

Christian Gardner asked the board if they would work with him and allow him to have food trucks at the County fair for the week. Alderman Hughes told Christian to talk to Tammy Ramsey.

Rick Roberts requested an update on transferring the well from the old IRC building (Structall) to the town. Mr. Mckinney said he was drafting an agreement, and it is in process. We must abide by federal and State laws.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Alderman Johnson thanked everyone for being there tonight and thanked Christian for the fishing tournament.

Alderman Johnson motioned to go into a closed session to discuss personnel. MPT Foxx seconded the motion. All agreed with a show of hands and stated aye.

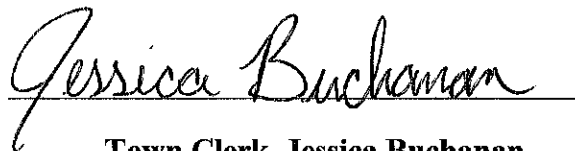
CLOSED SESSION

Alderman Johnson motioned to hire Michael Hanna for the public works position. MPT Foxx seconded the motion. All agreed with a show of hands and stated aye. Alderman Johnson motioned to hire Julie Banner for the tag office position. MPT Foxx seconded the motion. All agreed with a show of hands and stated aye.

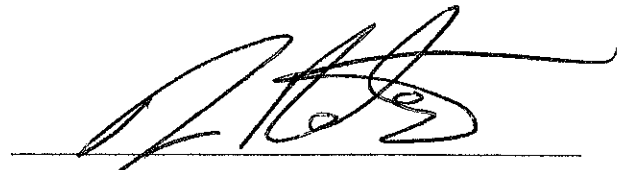
ADJOURNMENT

Alderman Johnson moved to adjourn the meeting, which Alderman Hughes seconded. All agreed by a show of hands, stating aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.



Town Clerk, Jessica Buchanan



Mayor, Derek Roberts