

TOWN OF NEWLAND
03/05/2024
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING



ATTENDING:

MAYOR: Derek Roberts

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

GUEST: Drema Hayes, Will Gittner, Nathan Gittner, Susan Rash, Melodie Johnson, Nancy Davis, Theresa Foxx, Christy Ray, Beverly Hoyle, Larry Hoyle, Christian Gardner, Faith Lacey, Donnetta McKinney, Melina McKinney, Vanessa Lawson-Angrisani, Greg Jenkins, Nicole Hogan, Jim Rickard

STAFF: Town Administrator Bill Bailey, Town Clerk Mackenzie Tipton, Finance Officer Jessica Buchanan, Police Chief Byron Clawson, Police Captain Michael Fields, Deputy Chris Clark, Deputy Nathaniel Ruppard, 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 Foxx motioned to approve the February minutes; Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Alderman Foxx apologized to the Newland community for the board's conduct. Alderman Johnson made a motion to adopt the agenda. Alderman Foxx seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

AGENDA

GAIL HALLER

Alderman Haller extended a public apology to the residents of the town for the actions that she had taken during the board meeting that took place on February 13, 2024.

GLENN JOHNSON

ABSENT.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Gerald indicated that Bill's contract consists of five bullet points. The town will hire Bill Bailey as an independent contractor for a duration of 90 days. He will be responsible for carrying out the tasks outlined in the policy handbook and has the authority to spend up to \$2,500 without requiring approval from the board. Mr. Bailey has the option to terminate the agreement by

providing notice. In such a case, his rate of compensation would be set at forty dollars per hour. Gerald indicated that the alderman are carefully considering the possibility of amending the town charter to allow for the appointment of a town manager in place of a town administrator. However, this undertaking may entail a considerable amount of time. Alderman Hughes reached out to Dudley Greene to find out about the feasibility of amending the charter during a short session year. Gerald expressed that the board is eager to progress with the topic once they acquire additional information on the short session year. Bill stated that he delivered the contract to his attorney, which has left him in a condition of uncertainty. Bill expressed his belief that the contract is a temporary resolution and lacks any safeguards. Bill said that changing the structure of government would provide protection for the board, and the most straightforward course of action would be to modify the ordinance. It was concluded that in order to modify the ordinance, it was necessary to hold a public hearing and pass a resolution. Gerald suggested implementing a resolution to lengthen Bill's contract duration to a range of 120-180 days in order to establish a timeframe that would provide Bill with a sense of security.

MOTION: Alderman Foxx made a motion to extend the time under the interim contract to one hundred eighty days and that the town adopt a resolution to amend the town's form of government from council-mayor to council-manager and set in motion the public hearing. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

STREETLIGHTS

Mayor Roberts announced that streetlights will be installed around the end of March assuming there are no further inventory issues. Jessica mentioned that the lights arrived and are in the garage, but the poles are on backorder. Mayor Roberts mentioned widening the riverwalk to private land.

MOWING

The mowing was decided to be put out for bid.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW BOARD MEMBER

MOTION: Alderman Haller made a motion to appoint Dave Calvert to the board. Alderman Foxx seconded the motion. The motion held with a three to one vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Nathan Gittner asked about the availability of additional lights and expressed his gratitude to the board for discussing the town's structure.

Jim Rickard mentioned that he regularly walks along the river walk and noticed a significant amount of clutter behind the tire business that needs to be tidied up. He said that he filed a complaint two years ago and no action was taken to address the issue.

Melodie Johnson said that she received a letter from the town regarding her chickens and dogs. She expressed the belief that the mayor utilized the ordinance to his advantage. Furthermore, she stated that she had had dogs since 2011 and asserted that she had never received a letter before. She stated that she had observed other individuals in the town keeping chickens without

receiving any correspondence. The mayor stated that there were complaints, so the letter was sent. Mrs. Johnson voiced her dissatisfaction with the mayor's action of contacting her son's school to inquire about his involvement in the FFA program.

Greg Jenkins addressed the need for veteran housing in Avery County and indicated that he had nothing to do with the White Rabbit.

Donneta McKinney indicated that she spoke with the prior administrator, Brenda Pittman, about the Livestock Ordinance, which was specifically created to prohibit chickens.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Gary discussed the cost differences between chemical tests and water labs, stating that the expenses had increased dramatically after 2020. Gary noted that wells one and two will require new roofs shortly, and four manual meters will need to be replaced. Gary also said that the town has gone live with 811, which means that the town will now receive notice when someone calls in.

FINANCE REPORT

Jessica noted that the clerk is working on sending out late tax notifications and she has been consulting with other local towns about what to include in the contractor's packet. Jessica indicated that if the board requires anything beyond what she offers each month, they are welcome to come and ask, and she will provide anything she can.

POLICE REPORT

Mayor Roberts requested a motion to hire Police Captain Fields as chief once Chief Clawson retires in May.

MOTION: Alderman Foxx made a motion to Promote Captain Micheal Fields to Chief when Chief Clawson retires. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

Captain Fields provided the police report, noting that they have been working on a new wreck reporting system and that they are collaborating with the state on concerns in town.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

MOTION: Alderman Foxx made a motion to add Susan Rash to the planning board. Alderman Johnson seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

Mayor Roberts thanked Alderman Haller for her apology to the town's citizens.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Alderman Foxx made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alderman Johnson seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 pm

Town Clerk, Mackenzie Tipton

Mayor, Derek Roberts