

## TOWN OF COLUMBIA BOARD MINUTES

August 12, 2024

The Board of Aldermen of the Town of Columbia met in regular session at 7:PM, Monday, August 12, 2024 in the meeting room of the Columbia Municipal Building. Aldermen attending were Hal Fleming, Sandra Owens, Lynda Mastronardo and Bryan Owens. Mayor James W. Cahoon presided.

Mayor Cahoon called the meeting to order and asked Alderman B. Owens to offer a prayer for the Board.

Upon motion of Alderman Fleming with unanimous vote the Consent Agenda was approved. This

included:	Minutes of the July 8, 2024 Regular Session of the Board of Aldermen	
	Minutes of the July 25, 2024 Special Session of the Board of Aldermen	
	Tax Releases – Matthew Leary	\$435.28
	Water system downward adjustments	
	Carolina Cottonwood Properties	\$ 26.87
	Robert Cave	\$ 23.45
	Diamond Solid Investments	\$ 50.99
	James Cahoon	\$ 15.53
	Marvin Silva	\$ 25.60
	Gladys Cariel	\$ 53.73

Mayor Cahoon opened the Public Comment Period, inviting comments and suggestions from the public. Ms. Clydette Overton, a resident of Scotsville Street asked that the overhanging shrubs along Ludington Drive be trimmed. It was noted that Ludington Drive is a State owned and maintained roadway. There were no additional comments so the Comment Period was closed.

Sheriff's Deputies Rebecca Phelps and Holden Brickhouse presented the June and July Law Enforcement Reports. Ms. Phelps reported that 109 vehicle citations were issued in June. Eighty-six were issued in July. She noted that July included a murder investigation and arrest. Total June milage while patrolling the town was 7,085 miles. July milage on town patrol was 9,716 miles. Ms. Phelps said the Sheriff's Office is regularly patrolling the S. Road Street and Rail Road Street communities.

Harbor Town Ferries and Boardwalk repairs attracted 14 persons voicing their opinions on how to use the Harbor Town Ferries funds from the State. Sara Phelps was the primary spokesperson for the Tyrrell County Tourism Development Authority and "stakeholders" that attended. She presented a list of projects that her organization suggested be done, including relocating the Town Hall and creating another waterfront park. Mayor Cahoon reported on a meeting with Peter Thompson of the Harbor Towns Committee that identified what the funds can be used for. He said suggestions from throughout the community will be reviewed, discussed and considered.

attachment # 1

The boardwalk and waterfront repairs and additions will be made possible by \$2 million in State Funds to the Harbor Town Ferries, enhancing the waterfronts in each of the Harbor Towns communities. After discussion, Mayor Cahoon was asked to organize one or two Board work sessions to consider any proposed improvements.

The Town Manager, Rhett White, reported on an exchange with Dylan Burt concerning the status of the proposed ZIP Line. He said Mr. Burt indicated that he is still working with contacts who have an interest in developing and operating the proposed outdoor recreation attraction.

The Board directed the Manager to begin searching for funds to undertake the Bridge Street/Virginia Avenue drainage project.

The Manager reported that the Free 'n Easy property transfer and the pontoon boat funds are now available. He said a contract with Cross Trails Outfitters must be developed and a lease agreement with the Partnership for the Sounds for the boat. Town Attorney Will Crowe will oversee the documents.

There was no action on the Social District proposal.

Sara Phelps shared graphics of the proposed wayfaring signage for the town, a project of the Tourism Development Authority.

The planned 22.23 % increase in Dominion NC Power rates was discussed. Upon motion of Alderman Mastronardo the vote to send a Resolution objecting to the rate increase was unanimously approved. The Town Manager will submit objections at the September meeting of the NC Utilities Commission.

By consent the planned 11.7% natural gas rate increase received similar attention and action.

Mayor Cahoon said he awaits a ferry schedule.

Tax Collector MaryAnn Hassel reported that tax collections stand at 89.15%. She said four or five commercial properties are still unpaid. This compares to a 93% collection rate at the end of the previous fiscal year. She said new tax bills will be sent as soon as information is provided by the county.

Fiscal Officer Monica Mauffray noted the on sit phase of the annual audit has been completed. She reported plans to place CDAR deposit to generate maximum interest income.

The Manager's Report followed. Brian Nicholson is the new employee in the Water/Sewer Department. Columbia has been selected for flood mitigation attention, although the Town would have to up-front the funds to elevate a structure with the property owner responsible for \$10% of the cost. Twenty homes in Columbia qualify.

Mr. White reported that he is submitting a \$10,000 grant application to the Albemarle RC&D Council to address silting and the need for a flood gate on the Busch Harrell Canal. He reported that agreement has been reached to purchase a one acre well site east of town using ARPO funds.

Mr. White was asked to solicit applications for the vacant Alderman position. Interested individuals should submit a letter of interest.

Mr. White reported that \$160,000 in ARPO funds can be used to re-stucco and paint the Municipal Building. Request for bids should go out within a month.

Alderman S. Owens noted instances of grass and weed clippings going into the storm drains. She also noted that curb-side recycling is no longer a service of the county.

With no other business and motion of S. Owens, unanimously carried, the meeting was adjourned by Mayor Cahoon.

This the 12<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2024.

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James W. Cahoon, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Rhett B. White, Clerk

**Town of Columbia's Harbor Town Grant Projects:**

**Grant Amount: \$2,000,000**

Acquisition of 807 Main St for relocating the town's administrative offices	\$ 356,320.00
Demolition of current town offices, relocation expenses, furniture, IT costs, etc.	\$ 160,000.00
Construction of a new pavilion featuring a gazebo, boathouse for transient boaters, landscaping, etc. These new facilities will match the design of the recently renovated visitors center for uniformity along the waterfront.	\$ 400,000.00
"Welcome to Columbia" signage on the southwest side of the Scuppernong River bridge. This sign will be built on pilings with lighting for nighttime visibility. It will be a sizable sign similar to the one in Tarboro on Hwy 64.	\$ 60,000.00
Wayfinding signs, kiosks, new benches, etc.	\$ 150,000.00
Acquisition of 201 N Water St property, the last green space in Columbia on the downtown waterfront.	\$ 422,380.00
Replacement of bulkhead and pier, including a new kayak launch (at 201 Water St).	\$ 200,000.00
Architectural consulting and basic design	\$ 50,000.00
10% contingency	\$ 201,300.00
	Total: \$ 2,000,000.00

\*The town docks replacement has not been included here, as we believe there are sufficient funds already provided by the other grant received.

\*We are confident that each of these projects align with the goals of the Harbor Towns grant, aimed at increasing Columbia's capacity to welcome and engage tourists and visitors as a destination.

**RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
TOWN OF COLUMBIA**

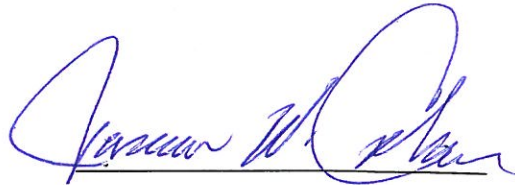
**Contract # 12521, General Assembly Grant**

**WHEREAS**, THE Town of Columbia has been awarded \$371,368.00 in State funds through action of the North Carolina State Legislature; and

**WHEREAS**, the town will have until 2026 to use the allotted funds,

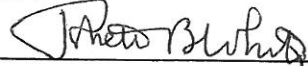
**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Town of Columbia Board of Aldermen that Columbia hereby accepts the State funds in the amount of \$371,368.00, and **BE IT ALSO RESOLVED THAT** James W. Cahoon, Mayor, is hereby authorized to accept this grant offer on behalf of the Town of Columbia and execute the grant agreement and funding approval.

This the 12<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2024.



James W. Cahoon, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rhett B. White, Clerk

**TOWN OF COLUMBIA**  
**AMENDMENT TO THE 2025**  
**TOWN OF COLUMBIA BUDGET**

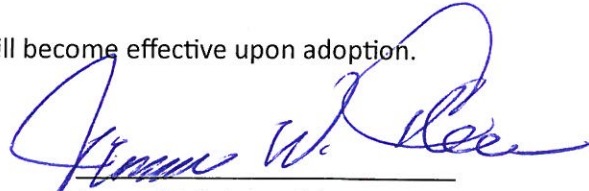
**WHEREAS**, the following resolution is introduced to amend the 2025 General Fund Budget of the Town of Columbia in order to adjust funds and departments for unanticipated income and expenses,

**BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Board of Aldermen that Fund 25 is created and the following line items are established as follows:

<b>INCREASE:</b>	Fund 25 Revenues (Legislative appropriation)	\$371,368.00
<b>INCREASE:</b>	Fund 25 Expenditures	
	Free 'n Easy Renovation/Repairs	\$300,000.00
	Ponton Boat	\$ 51,749.00
	Equipment	\$ 19,619.00

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this amendment will become effective upon adoption.

This the 12<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2024

  
James W. Cahoon, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Rhett B. White, Clerk