

TOWN OF COLUMBIA BOARD MINUTES

May 6, 2024

The Town of Columbia Board of Aldermen met in regular session at 7:PM, Monday, May 6, 2024 in the meeting room of the Columbia Municipal Building. Aldermen attending were Lloyd Armstrong, Hal Fleming, Sandra Owens, Lynda Mastronardo and Bryan Owens. Mayor James Cahoon presided and asked Alderman B. Owens to offer a prayer for the Board.

Upon motion of Alderman Armstrong the consent agenda was unanimously approved. This included:

1. Minutes of the April 6, 2024 Board Meeting
2. Tax Discovery – Tracy Gordon \$ 37.00
3. Water/Sewer downward adjustments
 - a. Tyrrell Senior Center \$624.25
 - b. Ma Teresa Soto \$149.60
4. Water/Sewer upward adjustments
 - a. Clara Gallop \$233.68
 - b. Dorothy McCabe \$191.57

Mayor Cahoon announced the Public Comment period and invited comments from the audience. Earl Owens spoke about the trash on Railroad Street and the trash cans turned over by dogs. He said he was helping keep the area clean but the roadside needs more frequent mowing.

Mayor Cahoon said the Town will increase mowing frequency and will provide trash bags for the trash collecting. With no other comments Major Cahoon closed the Public Comment period.

Romana Armstrong representing Pocosin Innovative Charter School and a student, Ray Keyworth, informed the Board that the school's Junior Beta Club will compete in national competition. They said the students are raising funds to finance their trip and competition.

Upon motion of Alderman S. Owens the vote was unanimous to contribute \$500 to the school for use in the Jr. Beta Club competition.

Sheriff Kevin Sawyer presented the March Law Enforcement Report. He noted 30 charges were issued in the town during March. He reported that two officers drove 4,917 miles patrolling the town during the month. He indicated that extra attention is being paid to Railroad Street and South Road Street.

Discussion about a possible "Social District" designation was discussed. Alderman B. Owens said such a district would benefit the town and may encourage more restaurants. He said it would be an advantage to the Harbor Town Ferries that will bring folks to Columbia for a few hours.

Mayor Cahoon said he was not in favor of the proposed district and Sheriff Sawyer said the concept was new to him. After discussion Alderman B. Owens made a motion to appoint a

committee to plan for social district then come back to the Board for discussion and possible approval. The motion passed unanimously and the following committee members were appointed: Alderman B. Owens, Sheriff Sawyer, Alderman Armstrong, Alderman S. Owens and Nancy McCabe. Alderman B. Owens will serve as Chairperson.

The Board reviewed correspondence from the NC Department of Public Safety concerning FEMA requirements relating to construction, building permits, record keeping and renovation of homes. The Town has responded to requests from the NC Division of Emergency Management and has adopted new practices in issuing building permits. The NC Division of Emergency Management has put the town on notice to either make changes or risk the Town of Columbia being denied FEMA services or flood insurance.

It was noted that some of the questioned paperwork goes back to the 1990s, but FEMA requires that records be kept forever. Mayor Cahoon and the Town Manager hope to schedule a face-to-face meeting with Emergency Management officials.

It was announced that Joie Spencer has resigned as Tyrrell County Building Inspector, meanwhile they will use the services of the Washington County inspector. Town Manager Rhett White said he had discussed the agreement with Tyrrell County for town inspector services and that remains in place at this time. He said a third party inspector will complete the large projects that are currently underway Black Dirt Café, Royal Farms and the High School Learning Lab.

Mr. White reported that Cross Trails Outfitters is preparing a budget for the Free 'n Easy property which is required by the State office of Management and Budget, before the \$371,000 can be released. The Pontoon Boat awaits funding from the \$371,000 State appropriation.

Mr. White reported that the perimeter of Oakwood Cemetery has been trimmed. He said the Friends of Oakwood Cemetery issue needs to be resolved.

Mayor Cahoon announced that the kick-off of regular Harbor Town Ferry Service is scheduled for Friday, May 17th. Other Edenton to Columbia trips are scheduled for May 22, 26 and 29.

Tax Collector MaryAnn Hassel reported that collection rates are at 84.73% and that garnishment notices are going out. She listed several things that need to be changed or updated. This includes a non-ADA compliant web site, bad checks, underpayments and need for Social Security numbers to use the State Department of Revenue collection services.

Monica Mauffray, Finance Officer, reported on the budgets. She noted that General Fund revenues are 98% realized while expenditures are at 79%. It was noted that there are a number of bills that come due at the end of the fiscal year. She said the audit is scheduled for August 5th.

She noted that Water/Sewer revenues are at 100% received. Expenses are at 74%. She announced that the Town received \$113,362 from the NC Department of Adult Collections to mitigate the loss of sewer revenues from the Tyrrell Prison Work Farm.

She also asked the board to authorize moving \$200,000 plus \$3,000 from the general fund checking account to a money CDAR account at First National Bank. Upon motion of Alderman B. Owens and unanimous vote the transfer was approved.

The Town Manager presented the proposed budget for 2024-2025. He proposed a combined budget of \$1,608,421.00, without a tax increase and without a water/sewer rate increase. That leaves the proposed tax rate at \$.72 per \$100.00 valuation.

Upon motion of Alderman Fleming and unanimous vote, the Public Hearing on the Budget was set for Monday, June 3, 2024, at 7:45 PM.

Upon motion of Alderman S. Owens the Columbia Local Water Supply Plan was unanimously adopted. addendum # 1

The Manager reported on efforts to secure a one-acre site for a new water well. He also said the source of the large pile of trash that was located at the intersection of Scuppernong Drive/S. Road Street has been identified and the individuals responsible will clean up the assorted debris.

Alderman Armstrong asked if trees on Railroad Street can be cut at the request of the fire department. He also reported that the sidewalk at the Mitchell house on Main Street is broken.

Alderman B. Owens announced that the Columbia High School baseball team is on the way to the State Playoffs.

Upon request of Mayor Cahoon and motion of Alderman B. Owens with unanimous vote, the Board went into closed session at 9:12 PM under G.S.143.18-11 to discuss possible property acquisition.

The Board returned from closed session without report at 9:45 PM.

With no additional business and motion by Alderman Armstrong the vote to adjourn was unanimous. Mayor Cahoon adjourned the meeting.

This the 6th day of May, 2024.

James W. Cahoon, Mayor

ATTEST:

Rhett B. White, Clerk