

TOWN OF COLUMBIA BOARD MINUTES September 3, 2024

The Town of Columbia Board of Aldermen met in regular session at 7:PM, Monday, September 3, 2024 on the meeting room of the Columbia Municipal Building. Attending were Aldermen Hal Flemming, Sandra Owens, Lynda Mastronardo and Bryan Owens. Mayor James W. Mayor Cahoon presided.

Mayor Cahoon called the meeting to order, asked Alderman S. Owens to offer a prayer for the Board and welcomed those attending.

Upon motion of Alderman B. Owens and unanimous vote, the Consent Agenda was approved. This included:

1. Minutes of the August 12, 2024 Board of Aldermen Meeting
2. Water/Sewer downward adjustments

Jennifer Scott	\$264.00
Marilyn Basnight	\$118.19

Mayor Cahoon announced the Public Comment Period and invited remarks from the audience. Jean Lambert said there needs to be a sense of urgency in spending the Harbor Town Ferries funding. She said additional boat dockage is needed so more large boats can dock at the waterfront. With no further comments the Public Comment Period was closed.

Deputy Bowen presented the August Law Enforcement report. She reported that 57 speeding citations were issued during the month. Other actions resulted from domestic assaults, property damage, misuse of 911, failures to appear, drug charges, assault, stalking, firearm possession and rape. Deputies drove 7,974 miles on town patrols during August.

Discussion of Harbor Town Ferries followed. It was emphasized that the boardwalk and waterfront will take precedence in spending and will include the \$500,000 Congressional appropriation as well as funds from the \$2,000,000 Harbor Town funding. Mayor Cahoon asked the Board to keep open for suggestions.

Docking for the Dinner Boat was discussed followed by a motion by Alderman Owens to remove three pilings at the waterfront to accommodate the vessel. The vote to approve was unanimous.

Discussion turned to the current Municipal Building. By consent the decision was to leave it alone for now.

Mayor Cahoon presented a list of Work Group appointees for consideration. Upon motion of Alderman S. Owens, the Harbor Town Ferries Work Group was unanimously approved. attachment # 1 & # 2

The absence of ferry schedules was noted.

There was no further report on the proposed ZIP Line attraction.

The Town Manager reported that the town is still awaiting the transfer property documents on the Free 'n Easy plantation house from the NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

Alderman B. Owens said he would have a report on the proposed Social District after talking with the Sheriff.

Upon motion of Alderman S. Owens and unanimous vote, an agreement to lease the new pontoon boat to the Partnership for the Sounds for \$1 per year was adopted. attachment # 3

It was noted that two letters of interest have been received indicating interest in the vacant Alderman position. Mayor Cahoon said anyone interested in serving on the Board should submit a letter of interest to the Town.

Tax Collector, MaryAnn Hassell, reported that collections at year's end were at 89.18 %, but taxes will still be collected on the 2023 tax year. She said tax bills will be mailed by late September. She noted a new law that will cost the Town an advertising fee on delinquent taxes. She also reported on the NC Debt Set-Off program that helps collect back taxes.

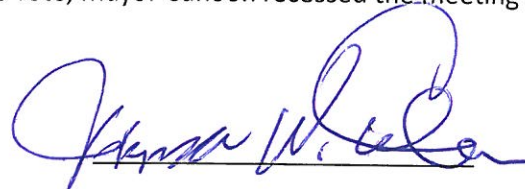
The budget and finance report was made by the Fiscal Officer, Monica Mauffray. She noted that revenues are at 10% after one month of the year while expenditures are at 20%. She noted that the water/sewer revenues are at 20% of budget while expenditures are at 15%.

The issue of weeds, high grass, derelict vehicles and similar unsightly property owner problems was discussed. The Manager will continue to contact property owners about these problems and in extreme cases have the yards mowed and send a bill to the property owners. The Manager announced the invitation from Royal Farms to their grand opening, 10:AM, Monday, September 23, 2024.

Alderman S. Owens emphasized the overgrown grass and weed problem. Alderman Mastronardo said the Royal Farms operators are using the Library to recruit employees.

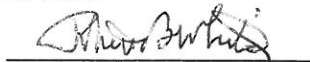
Upon motion of Alderman Mastronardo, with unanimous vote, Mayor Cahoon recessed the meeting to Monday, September 16th, 7:PM.

This the 3rd day of September, 2024.



James W. Cahoon, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rhett B. White, Clerk

TOWN OF COLUMBIA/HARBOR TOWN WATERFRONT PROJECT PROPOALS

**** (The number 1 priority is to replace the current boardwalk including existing bulkhead, water, electrical and sewer access, install security cameras and additional overhead lighting along the boardwalk to deter vandalism and provide a safer boardwalk experience for residents and visitors.)**

POPOSED PROJECTS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Acquisition of 807 Main Street for relocating administrative offices

OFF THE TABLE

2. Demolition of current town offices

OFF THE TABLE

3. 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.

KEEP ON THE TABLE BY CONSENT

4. Restore the Town of Columbia Municipal Building properly and have a mural painted on the west end of the building with the town seal and artwork reflecting the history of the town.

YES BY CONSENT

5. Demolish the storage building on the south side of the municipal building and construct a new pavilion in the space between Black Dirt Café and the town municipal building. Appropriate pedestrian access should be considered as well as including a gazebo, a sheltered picnic area, renovation of the boathouse for visiting boaters (possibly enlarging it to include a small "Captain's Quarters"). Appropriate landscaping should also be considered to make the area attractive and inviting.

YES BY COSENT

6. "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 sizeable sign, similar to the one in Tarboro, NC.

OFF THE TABLE

7. Wayfinding signs, Kiosks, new benches, etc.

KEEP ON THE TABLE

8. Update the Town Commons with new benches made from durable, quality material, a new water fountain and replace the Gazebo with a vinyl gazebo equipped with appropriate electrical services.

OK BY CONSENT

9. Update the Town Commons with new benches and a new water fountain. Do away with the Gazebo.

OFF THE TABLE

10. Acquisition of 201 N Water Street property, the last greenspace on the downtown waterfront.

OFF THE TABLE BY VOTE

11. Replacement of bulkhead and pier, including a new kayak launch. (at 201 Water Street)

OK WITH CONDITIONS (LOCATION)

12. Replace the canoe and kayak launch at the current location


OK WITH CONDITIONS (LOCATION)

13. Purchase the waterfront property at 201 N. Waterstreet, do appropriate upgrades and lease property to Adventures Group to use as a Zipline departure location and as a watercraft rental site.

Ok TO KEEP

14. Connect an L pier at the western end of the farthestmost northern pier of the town dock running 50 feet north. Extend 50-amp electrical service as well as water and sewer services to this pier so that some larger boats traveling the Albemarle Sound can dock on the waterfront and have convenient access to needed services.

OK BY CONSENT

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15. Replace the Christmas lights on buildings around town for the purpose of enhancing the town's appeal to residents and visitors, particularly during festivals, celebrations and special events.

KEEP ON PRIORITY LIST BY CONSENT

16. Add an extension onto the far north end of the town boardwalk, expanding westward with a covered shelter & benches for small gatherings.

OFF THE TABLE

17. Install an outdoor public address and speaker system that can be used for special events and occasions throughout the year.

KEEP ON FOR PLANNING

ADDITIONAL EXPENSES TO CONSIDER



Legal and administrative costs

Engineering Costs including Plan and Design

Contingency funds allocated for proposed projects

Landscaping costs

Consultation and facilitation costs



TOWN OF COLUMBIA HARBOR TOWN FERRIES WORK GROUP

Mayor James W. Cahoon

Alderman Sandra Owens

Alderman Hal Fleming

Janet Walker (Planning Board & Partnership for the Sounds)

Barbara Spencer (Planning Board)

Kim Wheeler (Econ. Devp. Committee)

Marlene True (Econ. Devp. Committee)

Debbie Olson (TDA)

Eric Roughton (Chamber of Commerce)

Durwood Cooper, Jr. (at-large)

Tim Nielsen (at-large)

Rhett White, Town Manager