

TOWN OF NEWLAND
09/05/2023
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING



ATTENDING:

MAYOR: Derek Roberts

ALDERMAN: Gail Haller, James Johnson, Lauren Turbyfill, Christie Hughes

GUEST: Teresa Foxx, Kenan Foxx, Christy Ray, Ruth Ann Shirley, Shawn Morris, Nancy Davis, Tammy Ramsey, Rick Brewer,

STAFF: Town Administrator Bill Bailey, Town Clerk Mackenzie Tipton, Finance Officer Jessica Buchanan, Police Chief Byron Clawson, Police Captain Michael Fields, Public Works Director Gary Lewis

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. Jamey made a motion to approve the August minutes; Gail seconded the motion, and all agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Jamey made a motion to adopt the agenda. Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

AGENDA

PROCLAMATION FOR NC DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Derek read the Proclamation from the *North Carolina Society Daughters of the American Revolution Crossnore Chapter* NSDAR and proclaimed the week of September 17th–23rd as Constitution Week.

N FOCUS

Bill stated that there are several different things going on with N-focus. He mentioned that there is a strict schedule and that a planning board is crucial.

PLANNING PROCESS

Bill stated the town needs a minimum of five and a maximum of seven people to be on the planning board, and the only legal aspect of it is that they must be within town limits. Theresa Foxx and Christy Ray volunteered. The topic of who to contact to become a member of the

planning board was discussed. Bill gave a brief explanation of the meeting agenda and planning board ordinance before stating that he hoped to have the members settled by the following day.

MOTION: Jamey made a motion to approve the planning board committee ordinance. Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

AIA RESOLUTION

Noting that the contractor has submitted the invoice to the state, but the state has not yet approved it, Bill clarified that this resolution was only to complete the documentation related to the AIA Grant.

MOTION: Lauren made a motion to approve the AIA resolution. Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

JOHN MILLIAN.

ABSENT.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Bill said he wrote a policy for the board to consider and approve at the upcoming meeting because he didn't want the same uncertainty as the previous year.

Alderman Christie Hughes called into the meeting.

The topic of whether staff members would get paid if inclement weather forced the town hall to close was discussed extensively. Bill stated that the municipality had historically followed the county's policies. Lauren asked about Bill's thoughts. Bill stated that he thought the town should pay. Gail asked about using vacation time. Bill stated that's what the federal and state governments do.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

Bill stated that he modified some of the language in his job description and added a clause allowing him to hire and fire all employees except for the police chief, public works director, and public utilities manager. Derek stated that he believed the description needed to be broader.

MOTION: Jamey made a motion to accept this. Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

TOWN TAXES

Prior to his employment, Bill said that there had been a sizable tax cut. He stated that the economy tanked, and inflation now stands at 5.8, so it takes a portion out of any dollar that is spent and demands more dollars to buy. Additionally, he said that supply chain problems are

driving up expenses and making money harder to come by. Bill stated that it's challenging to get a budget to balance and have the ability to do just the vital things, so he recommends a tax raise. Bill expressed his desire to establish a middle ground between the current rate and the previous one, rather than returning to the previous rate of .52. He stated that this rate will not affect the townspeople until next year if it is changed. Lauren stated that the county's reevaluation of each person's property was the reason for the tax reduction. Bill said that everyone should definitely think about raising taxes again, at least halfway. He fears that if the town doesn't do that, there may come a day when they may increase to 0.55 or 0.56 the next year, which will come as a huge shock to the public. Bill stated that he thinks right now if taxes can get up to 0.48 or 0.49, then it'll be a little bit of a shock, but the town will be able to sustain that for a longer period of time. Lauren stated she did some rough figuring, and if an individual only owned a hundred thousand dollars worth of property, taxes would increase by sixty dollars for them. Jamey stated he thought there were alternative methods to obtain money, and he didn't support a tax increase. Gail said that increasing the tax to .48 or to .49 would be acceptable. Bill said that it would be put on the agenda and that a decision would need to be made in December.

EVENTS

Bill indicated that while Lauren and Christy are in charge of most of the activities, the mayor is attempting to add activities here and there, and he is merely looking for a way to assist in organizing such events so that people are aware of them. Derek asked if Lauren and Christy had meetings. Lauren stated, No, they just put the events together. Derek suggested scheduling a meeting time to go over all of the events. He announced that skydivers would return to the town the following year and that a deposit check would be required. He also mentioned that there was a fishing tournament that was discussed but never held. Lauren asked about talking to Eric about next year's Independence Day celebration. Bill and Derek stated that all they wanted was a plan and improved coordination, not any changes. Derek said he didn't understand why the town didn't do a spring or summer billboard. Christy Ray asked about social media and stated that the website needed to be updated and events should be put on the page. Derek mentioned there were some issues with the social media accounts. It was decided that most of those issues would be resolved. Derek pointed out putting events on Spectrum News. Lauren asked if anyone else could think of an alternate method of promotion. Gail said she thought the signs were excellent. Bill mentioned the town has one sign out front and one mobile sign on the other side of town. Bill said that a lot of people live in Tennessee, which is why our eye-catching sign is located on that side of the town. Jamey recommended applying for a grant for some more signs. Derek asked if there was any interest in incorporating more festivals. Lauren said she does one festival a season.

Derek said that in the coming week, he would be cleaning the gutters and sweeping the sidewalks. Derek asked Bill and Gary to meet and discuss what more could be done to improve the town's appearance. Lauren suggested recruiting a team of volunteers to help. Derek mentioned planting flowers as you come into town and getting some strings of lights to put throughout the town.

Derek asked about the streetlights. Bill stated that materials cost \$273,000.00, and there is only \$180,000.00 in the budget. His recommendation was that the town buy the poles because the manufacturing process could change. Bill stated that the price includes the bases, the mounting

brackets, and everything else from the ground up, so all the town would need to do after that is purchase labor and equipment. Derek asked Christie, Gail, Jamey, and Lauren whether they still wanted the lights, adding that he wanted them finished. They all agreed that they also wanted the lights. Bill explained he needed another \$140,000.00 to complete the lights in full. Derek requested that the funds be taken out of the bank accounts. Bill said he could adjust the budget and transfer the funds if the board decided to take the money out of the bank accounts. Derek stated that the dog park was completed, adding that the streetlights were the one project he wished to see completed during his term as mayor. Jamey asked if the dog park was finished. Bill mentioned that while the dog stations are installed and the fencing is complete, a few more tasks still need to be completed. He outlined that they mulched the entire dog park and are working on cleaning out the pond there since part of the problem with the dog park was water sitting. Bill mentioned that now there is flow through there, and the area will dry out. Gail said the dog park looks fantastic. Bill noted that all the work done at the park is now interlocking together, but the dog park has been used every time he goes there, and there are at least three or four people down there who love it. Bill mentioned he's got a lot of positive feedback and only one negative feedback. Derek said he would like to address the streetlight issue because Christie attempted to complete the dog park before he took over, but it took four years for a \$28,000 project. Jamey recommended making the motion for the lights at the end.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The operator of Sips Soda Shop, Tammy Ramsey, expressed gratitude to Lauren and the town for helping to make Thursday night's food truck event a success. Tammy pointed out that the county is growing, and she has had comments from all around about the different businesses in town. Jamey asked about doing food trucks on Fridays with a band. Rick Brewer, the owner of Diggy Donuts, and Tammy said they were too busy on the weekends, but Lauren is fantastic at marketing for Thursdays. Jamey suggested having a band on Thursdays. According to Rick, it didn't really matter if there was a band or not. Tammy believed it was a good idea and pointed out that food trucks on Thursdays bring a lot of fellowship to the community. Lauren asked about having food trucks every Thursday next summer. Rick and Tammy stated that would be too much for them, and the current system is working great. Christie thanked the vendors for coming and being so professional. Christie stated that the fellowship that the food trucks bring is a great thing for the town. Lauren announced the last dates for the food truck event and said that Treat Street will be held on Halloween this year. Lauren asked if the vendors would come on Halloween. Bill stated he tried to do a rough count of Halloween last year, and his estimate was around 1,500 people. Lauren asked Byron about making Treat Street a little more pedestrian-friendly and mentioned working with the county sheriff's office.

Ruth Shirley came to express her appreciation to the town for the dog park. She stated that it means a lot to her as well as those around her. She added that it meant a lot to her that the town paid attention to her request and that the cleanup around the park has actually improved the neighborhood as a whole. She explained that the clean-up was beneficial and made everyone feel safer walking in town. Derek asked what else Ruth thought the riverwalk might use. Ruth stated benches, but she was weary of skateboarding. Ruth stated she checks up on the dog park and cleans up around it in the morning and at night, and she asked about putting in a faucet for the dogs to have water. Ruth said that while she lives directly outside of Newland, Roger and the

public works department are always fast to respond and take care of any problems that arise from the septic station setting off. Christie thanked Ruth for helping clean up. Ruth added that every Sunday afternoon, there are people in Newland who pick up trash.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Gary mentioned they've been trying to keep Highway 181 mowed. He also explained there was a lot going on with the park, and they fixed the leak at Sokassa. Gary indicated that there was currently a problem with well number four, and he's having it looked at.

FINANCE REPORT

Jessica stated that she has been working on the town audit for 2021–2022, which she expects to finish by the end of October and then she will start working on 2022–2023. Jessica said she also submitted the annual worker's compensation self-audit. Gary commented that he's only heard positive things about the improvements made to the dog park. Jamey asked if there was water running into the pond all the time. Gary explained that it depends, and it will fill up with a lot of rain. Jamey asked about having a community fishing pond there and stocking it. Gary stated that he wasn't sure if it was deep enough. Bill mentioned that they might be able to work things out and that it's a grant project that requires upkeep.

POLICE REPORT

Byron reported that they had a hectic month, making three drug-related arrests, and they have been putting a lot of effort into stopping vandalism in the community.

ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

Bill wished to draw attention to the park's vandalism. Bill said he wants everyone to know that things are beginning to happen. Bill said that while performing this maintenance on the park, he is trying to keep things maintained and make things safer. Bill mentioned he was also looking at the way we provide power at the event area because it is not sufficient. He also added that the way the town provides water is not accurate; the town basically runs a hose across the river, and he is looking at ways to change that and getting prices to see if he can work it into this budget; if not, then the next budget to get things running smoothly. Derek asked about water taps. Bill said that it depends on the complexity, and there is one that will require two to three weeks to complete and calls for a contractor. Bill mentioned that if Public Works completes the job, it will take less time, but he is having trouble finding parts. Gary said that because he has had numerous leaks over the last few months, he just has four yolks left and needs to order more.

~~Bill stated he received numerous requests for passports, and since it was simple for the town to reapply, he is now in the process of getting that service back up and running.~~

Derek inquired about finishing the streetlights. Bill stated he needed a directive. Lauren asked where the \$273,000.00 came from with the \$180,000 budgeted. Bill explained that the actual quote for materials was \$256,200.00 plus an additional \$37,400.00 for the galvanized breakaway

anchor bolts, and then there's the installation cost, which he's estimating to be \$50,000.00. Bill said it could be cheap or expensive for installation, depending on what's found in the ground and how difficult it is to set the anchor bolts. Bill stated he didn't have a price for photocells or timers yet, which would be an estimated extra five thousand dollars. Derek questioned the necessary amount. In order to begin the procedure, Bill said he required an extra \$224,000.00. He also said he wanted guidance on where to find this money. Bill stated the budget may be changed, but that would require approval at the following meeting. Lauren asked how much of the budget would need to be amended. Jessica explained that \$223,368.00 would need to be pulled from somewhere else. Bill stated that \$180,000.00 was already budgeted. Jamey stated that the budget was already short. Bill said once the CD matures, he will have the shortfall taken care of. Gary explained that he knows it's a lot of money for the streetlights, but it's not going to get any cheaper. Derek explained that he understood that the town must keep so much money for operating expenses. Bill stated that the town has plenty of operating expenses. Jamey asked what fund those expenses were in. Bill stated that the operating funds are in the trust funds.

MOTION: Gail made a motion that we make a budget amendment to take the money that's needed to complete the lights. Lauren seconded the motion. Gail and Lauren agreed by showing hands and stating aye. Jamey disagreed.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Jamey explained that he wanted the lights, but they were priced three years ago, and it falls back to the last people in charge not getting them. Derek pointed out how the lights were priced this year. Jamey asked why the lights weren't in the budget then. Bill stated the oldest quote was from April 18th. Jamey asked if it was put into the budget. Derek stated it was split between the dog park. Bill stated they budgeted \$674,000.00 for labor and any issues to come. Bill also mentioned their materials were \$170,000.00 more than the CED quote. Jamey asked why the entirety of the price wasn't budgeted for this year. Bill stated that the number budgeted was up to the board, and he only got estimates for the dog park and the street signs, so the money he budgeted was for those two things plus whatever was left over. Derek added that they had discussed paying \$5000 per light when he was elected mayor. Jamey stated that he just wanted to know why they weren't in the budget. Lauren explained that it was originally going to be done in phases. Derek declared that the lights would not be done in phases, and they were all going up at once. Derek requested an estimated time frame; Bill stated he needed to order them, and they are six weeks out.

ADJOURNMENT

Derek asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

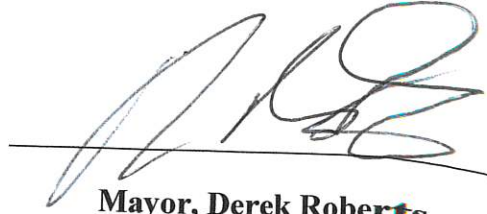
MOTION: Gail made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jamey seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating, Aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.



Mackenzie Tipton

Town Clerk, Mackenzie Tipton



Derek Roberts

Mayor, Derek Roberts