

Walter M. Gardner, Jr.  
Mayor

Jeffery W. Parrott  
Administrator

## TOWN OF WARRENTON

*"Historically Great - Progressively Strong"*

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### The March 12, 2012 Minutes Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting

Those attending were:

Mayor Walter Gardner, Jr.

Commissioner Woody King

Commissioner Mary Hunter

Commissioner Julius Banzet

Commissioner Margaret Britt

Mitch Styers, Attorney

Bettie Davis, Finance Officer

There were 7 citizens in attendance.

Commissioner Al Fleming

Commissioner John Mooring

Jeffrey Parrott, Town Administrator

Goble Lane, Interim Police Chief

Bill Perkinson, Public Works Director

Jennifer Harris, Warren Record

Annette Silver, Minute Taker

#### Call to Order/Minutes/Agenda

Mayor Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The proposed agenda was approved unanimously following a motion by Commissioner Mooring and a second by Commissioner Banzet.

#### Public Comments

Public Comments were heard from Anne Harris, Lynn Stemle, Debbe Speer and Karla Hehl. Mrs. Harris noted that she had sent Mayor Gardner a copy of the Sunshine Week Open Government Proclamation, March 11 -17, 2012, commemorating the 261<sup>st</sup> anniversary of James Madison's birth. Mayor Gardner noted that he was happy to sign the proclamation and that it was included in the Board agenda. (The Sunshine Committee per James Madison allows citizens to arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives by having access to government meetings and public records.) Mrs. Harris read the proclamation and encouraged the Board to remain aware of citizen needs and concerns. Mayor Gardner complimented Mrs. Harris and Jennifer Harris (Warren Record) on their positive concerns for the Town.

Lynn Stemle expressed concern about the appearance of the Town. In view of upcoming projects, including Preservation Warrenton's Spring Tour, April 28-29, and the opening of Robinson's Ferry Restaurant as well as business brought to Warrenton by the opening of Quilt Lizzy. The area between N. Main Street to Church Street and Macon Street to Church Street by way of Bragg Street is of particular concern to Stemle because of

anticipated foot traffic. He said that Warrenton's appearance will make impressions on visitors and the alleyway between N. Main Street and N. Bragg Street will receive increased foot traffic because it is considered a shortcut. Stemle said that the area is an eyesore (dead trees, trash and hazardous fire lane) and a health hazard and suggested that the fire lane be paved by the Town. Commissioner Banzet and Attorney Styers stated area referred to is privately owned by property owners and the Town's is not responsible for its paving. Commissioner Mooring reviewed the County GIS maps online and offered that it lists no owners. Banzet and Styers reiterated that the fire lane is privately owned property. Commissioner Britt asked if the expense of repairing and paving the fire lane could be shared between Town and private owners. Immediately, it was stated the cost was very high and private owners present at the meeting voiced objection to such a plan. It was then suggested that the area be donated to the Town. Again, owners present (Anne Harris and Jennifer Harris) voiced objection to this plan. Stemle repeated that the area is important and should be cleaned. Also, referenced was the old Reynolds Tavern at 206 Williams Court, owned by James West, the vacant lot joining the car wash owned by Clarence Jones, and 210 E. Macon Street (the Cannon House/Julia Davis house) owned by heirs of Dr. Angela Williams. Stemle said that the Reynolds Tavern has "No Loitering" signs posted, but they are removed regularly. Interim Police Chief Lane stated that calls do come in for the Williams Court area and police do respond. Commissioner Fleming asked if the Tavern and condition of Cannon House fall under the Town ordinance concerning neglected buildings. Debbe Speer said that the Cannon House is a haven for stray dogs in town, another problem. Commissioner Britt said that the Beautification Committee will review the alleyway/fire lane issue and make a recommendation to Board.

Speaking next was Debbe Speer who stated that she appreciated that flags were on display at the meeting and asked that the Pledge of Allegiance be recited before future meetings. During the discussion, Commissioner Fleming stated that if it was good enough for Congress to begin meetings with the pledge and a prayer, he thought Warrenton could, also. Commissioner Fleming made a motion for Town to display flags, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and have a moment of silence/prayer before each meeting. Commissioner King seconded the motion and the vote was approved unanimously. Commissioner Fleming said that if there are objections by citizens attending, maybe they should enter meeting a few minutes late. Mrs. Speer next addressed the issue of stray dogs in town. She referenced vacant houses in S. Main Street area which could become areas of loitering and crime. Commissioner Banzet inquired as to what area of S. Main Street she was speaking. Commissioner Mooring suggested she get addresses to the police department so that they could contact owners of these properties. Concluding, Speer reiterated the need for cleaning up prior to this spring's scheduled events.

Karla Hehl addressed the Board concerning the accounting software used by Town, stating that it was inadequate and did not meet the administrator's needs. Mr. Parrott agreed but stated that the current budget does not permit an upgrade. He does hope to budget an upgrade in 2012-2013.

## **Consent Agenda**

- A. Minutes of Board meeting February 13, 2012
- B. Year-to-Date Revenues and Expenditures Reports (Budget vs. Actual)
- C. Monthly Checks Report
- D. Sewer Adjustment Requests –Warren Hills
- E. Public Works Monthly Report
- F. WWTP Monthly Report
- G. Police Activity Report

The consent agenda was approved unanimously following a motion by Commissioner Hunter and a second by Commissioner Banzet. Commissioner Fleming had questions concerning specific expense items. Mayor Gardner and Mr. Parrott suggested that any concerns (of Board members or town citizens) be brought to Town office for discussion with either Mr. Parrott or Mrs. Davis because they did not bring documents with them to the Board meetings that would answer the questions. Mrs. Harris (in the audience) asked for the copy cost for Town documents. Discussion ensued and per-sheet cost suggestions were made by commissioners. It was stated that there is no current policy on file regarding copy cost. Jennifer Harris, with the Warren Record, offered that “the public records act guide to open government and public records published by NC Attorney General’s Office states “copies of public records may be obtained free or at actual cost, unless there is another law that specifies otherwise. Fees for certifying copies of public records are to be charged as prescribed by law. For uncertified copies, agencies may not charge fees that are higher than the actual cost of making the copy. “Actual cost” is defined as “direct, chargeable costs related to the reproduction of a public record as determined by generally accepted accounting principles.” Commissioner Hunter offered to call some surrounding municipalities and get an idea of what others charge for copies.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Public Works**

In absence of Commissioner Davie, Bill Perkinson reported that the surplus sale in January netted \$4,200 and all vehicles were disposed of. A question was asked concerning debris pick-up on Bragg Street, and Perkinson explained the schedule. All other business was included in the Board agenda.

### **Public Safety**

Commissioner Banzet and Interim Police Chief Lane reported that the mutual aid agreement with Norlina has been completed and filed. Chief Lane plans to get names of owners of vacant houses for department review. Commissioner King asked if street parking lines would be painted soon. Perkinson replied it is among the Spring Projects of his department. As stray dogs were discussed earlier, police department is aware of concerns and does answer calls. Police Chief Lane said that he has talked with Mrs. Elma Rae Greene, Animal Control Director about the Town’s concerns. He stated that Warren

County does not have a leash law and Warrenton does, which causes some problem. There is an agreement between the county and Town of Warrenton concerning stray dogs; however, there is a difference of opinion regarding the interpretation of the ordinance. Commissioner King asked if Warren County is upholding their part of the agreement with the Town. Attorney Styers and Mr. Parrott think the wording of the ordinance needs to be reviewed in order to aid in enforcement. Police Chief Lane reminded the Board that dogs are not the only animal problem in Town – cats are as well.

### **Finance and Administration**

Commissioner Hunter had no report to add to what was included in the Board agenda.

### **Human Resources/Information Technology**

Commissioner Fleming requested per NC Statute Article 33C meetings of Public Bodies 143-318.11 (a) (6) to have a closed session meeting after the regular meeting tonight to discuss items from February 28, 2012 meeting as related to filling the position of Police Chief.

### **Revitalization/ Historical Committee**

Commissioner King had no report from the Historical Committee. He noted that the planters on Main Street commissioned by Town are still a work in progress with Garden Club and that Revitalization has plans for expansion to other blocks. Commissioner King extended a thank you to the Garden Club for continued support. Commissioner King reminded Board members and those in the audience of the Tuesday, March 13, 2012, Small Town Main Street Community Update Meeting at the Warrenton Rural VFD.

### **Beautification/Facilities**

Commissioner Britt thanked Bill Perkinson and staff for pruning trees and cleaning storm drains in a timely fashion. Commissioner Britt echoed earlier concerns regarding the appearance of the Cannon House and Reynolds Tavern.

### **Planning/Zoning/Annexation**

Commissioner Mooring had no report.

### **Unfinished Business**

Commissioner Mooring said that he was still compiling information with funeral directors and had no report, but hoped to at the April meeting.

Commissioner Fleming said that recommendations on filling the police chief position will be discussed in closed session. Mayor Gardner said that the Town Hall Renovation Survey Committee has not met, but is making plans to meet and should have a report in April.

Mayor Gardner and Mr. Parrott spoke to the moving of Town Hall offices during renovation work. Mr. Parrott suggested that the King Street Water Complex would be a less costly move than leasing and renovating another building because it is owned by the Town and offered to conduct a feasibility study to determine if the space would be suitable for temporary Town Hall quarters. Commissioner Mooring asked if 222 S. Main

Street (Willoughby Harris' building) was still being considered with the possibility of the police department remaining there. Mayor Gardner says it is still a possibility as nothing has been finalized. At present the cost of using the King Street building would be in the neighborhood of \$50,000 in comparison to \$100,000 for other buildings. There will be a cost for having a blueprint drawn regardless, because it is a requirement by county for inspection. Commissioner Mooring made a motion to do a feasibility study before further steps are taken. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fleming. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner King reminded Board members of the mandatory campaign finance meeting that will be conducted by Board of Elections. Mayor Gardner showed the group the January issue of *Southern City* newspaper featuring Warrenton and Warren County.

A motion was made by Commissioner Fleming, with second by Commissioner Banzet, to go into closed session at 8:35 PM to discuss a personnel issue. The motion passed unanimously. The Board came out of closed session at 9:45 PM. No action was taken. A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Mooring with second by Commissioner King. The motion passed unanimously.