

Walter M. Gardner, Jr.
Mayor

John Freeman
Administrator

TOWN OF WARRENTON
"Historically Great - Progressively Strong"
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May 9, 2011 Board of Commissioners Minutes

The May 9, 2011 meeting of the Town of Warrenton Board of Commissioners was held at Town Hall.

Those present were:

Mayor Walter M. Gardner, Jr.	John Freeman, Town Administrator
Commissioner John Mooring (7:30)	Town Attorney Mitch Styers
Commissioner Jules Banzet	Jennifer Harris, Warren Record
Commissioner John Blalock	Public Works Director Bill Perkinson
Commissioner Mary Hunter	
Commissioner Audrey Tippet	
Commissioner Robert Davie	
Commissioner Woody King	

Mayor Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. He then presented the proposed agenda for approval. Commissioner Blalock moved to approve the agenda; Commissioner Banzet seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

There being no member of the public who wished to make public comment Mayor Gardner then presented the consent agenda that included:

- A. Minutes of Board meeting April 11, 2011
- B. Minutes of Public Hearing April 11, 2011
- C. Y-T-D Cash Flow Report
- D. Y-T-D Tax Revenue Report
- E. Y-T-D State Shared Revenue Report
- F. Checks in excess of \$10,000
- G. Davis sewer adjustment request (\$1176)
- H. Public Works Monthly Report
- I. WWTP Monthly Report
- J. Police Activity Report

Commissioner King moved that the consent agenda be approved; Commissioner Banzet seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Public Safety

In the absence of Chief Younts Commissioner Blalock referred to the monthly report. Mr. Freeman said that the two "burglaries" were two more thefts of copper from vacant buildings and not break-ins of occupied buildings. He

said that it had been a relatively quiet month. Mr. Blalock noted that there were a fair number of vehicle citations as well.

Mayor Gardner said that the Fire Department had been quiet as well, and announced that on May 20 the county would be hosting a county government month event from 6-9:00pm on courthouse square honoring all first responders. Activities were to include demos and a blood drive.

Public Works

Commissioner Davie reported that he had attempted to link the town web sites but had to wait for the logon information to be updated. He then asked Director Bill Perkinson for a report. Perkinson said that the first stage of the collection system rehabilitation project was well underway as all of the problem sections were being surveyed. When that is done it will be possible to determine exactly how much of the problem lines can be replaced. Perkinson said there were deteriorating sections scattered around the system. Mayor Gardner asked if the project would help with the I&I issues and Perkinson said it would to some degree but was mostly to improve service. Mayor Gardner asked about the areas that contribute the most to I&I and Perkinson answered that it was probably the Possum Quarter but the problem is wide-spread. Mayor Gardner asked whether the lines had been smoke tested recently and Perkinson said it had been a couple of years or more but they were done in suspect areas as possible. Commissioner Blalock asked about the status of the Peck Dam and Mr. Freeman said he had sent a letter to the county manager the previous week, having been reminded of the potential damage from dam failure by national newscasts of major flooding. He said that the county Public Utilities Director Macon Robertson reported having met with representative Brian Short from the NC Department of Agriculture to inspect the dam. Mr. Short was to present three alternatives to the county manager, but Mr. Freeman had not heard since.

Finance and Administration

Mr. Freeman began by commenting on the current year budget and cash flow report. He said that all departments were on target but that property tax revenue was 3% less than the previous year. County tax collection was down about 1% and the county tax administrator thought the difference might be that more elderly property owners had received senior citizen exemptions. This explains a reduction in the General Fund cash flow. The Water Sewer Department has improved cash flow. Mayor Gardner asked if the Water Sewer Department work trailer approved at the previous meeting had been purchased. Mr. Perkinson said it had been ordered but there is a five week delivery period and it was not yet reflected in the cash flow report.

There being no further questions Mr. Freeman presented the proposed 2011-2012 budget. He said his goals were to reflect those of the Board, and to protect the Town's financial position while maintaining the positive momentum. He said that some of the challenges presented on the first page of the Budget Narrative are daunting and shared by other towns and counties. At a recent COG managers' meeting managers reported having to proposed tax increases of 8-13 cents and as many as 12 furlough days for employees. The Warren County manager had proposed a 3 cent tax increase and four furlough days. All agreed that it is more important than ever to protect fund balances because it appears that the current situation will go on for a number of years and perhaps indefinitely. Mr. Freeman said that counties have more difficult problems than towns but that it was sobering to look at those of Warrenton. That being said he presented a budget he said was intended to move the Town forward without a tax increase or harsh cuts. The proposed budget does include fee increases to be borne by utility customers on their monthly bills. Following a comparison of schedules it was agreed that the first budget work session would be at 6:30pm on Thursday May 26 and a second on Tuesday May 31.

Human Resources/Information Technology

There was nothing to report.

Revitalization/Historical

Commissioner King asked Mr. Freeman for a report on SpringFest on April 16. Mr. Freeman said it was a reasonably successful event considering that a major storm threatened. About 2/3rds of the vendors set up, there was a good band, and townspeople came out late morning when they realized the weather was good. However, the event broke up about 1:45 when a heavy shower sent everyone packing.

Mr. King then reported on the followup to the second Town Café at which attendees signed up for five committees. The Thriving Downtown committee had already met twice on the subject of an electronic kiosk to provide information to visitors to downtown. Mayor Gardner noted that the Investment/Economic Development Committee was to meet on May 16.

Mr. King said that the next project of the Revitalization Committee was completion of the application to the Small Town Main Street program, due on May 31. This is a competitive program of the NC Department of Commerce through which 3 small towns would be selected to receive the assistance of experienced planners and consultants.

Beautification/Facilities

Commissioner Tippett noted the Town Hall feasibility study that had been included in the meeting preparation materials. Commissioner Mooring asked about the single floor option for which there was no separate cost estimate, and Mr. Freeman said he would request it. Commissioner Davie said he had forwarded it to historic developer Eddie Belk who has said it would be possible to qualify for historic tax credits if the Town utilized no more than 35% of the space and leased out the rest. Mr. Freeman said that other ideas for more historical use might reduce renovation costs by qualifying for more historical tax credits, using the example of returning it to the open air market it was originally and moving Town offices elsewhere. He also said there may sources other than USDA for grant funding but none had been found yet. Mr. Styers suggested contacting Golden Leaf.

On another subject Commissioner Tippett asked the Board at large if it would consider changing street signs to include North/South/East/West designations where appropriate, saying it was difficult to give directions to those unfamiliar with Town. Commissioner Mooring said he thought some had it and there was some discussion about the cost. Mayor Gardner suggested that the signs be inventoried and a cost estimate developed. Most streets do not have the designation which would reduce the cost and they could be replaced as the signs cycled through.

Planning, Zoning and Annexation

The report was in fact the item of Unfinished Business

Unfinished Business

Commissioner Mooring introduced the agenda topic of the proposed “broken window ordinance” that began a lengthy discussion. The public had been offered an opportunity to comment at the Public Hearing preceding the Board meeting but no one had appeared. Discussion focused on a draft that had been circulated among the Board.

Mr. Mooring said that his goal was to create an ordinance that would defer to the Historic District Commission and its guidelines. Property Owners would have to apply for Certificates of Appropriateness to assure that their repairs met historic district requirements. One issue was definition of “temporary” applied to boarded up windows and whether any boarded up when the ordinance was passed should be grandfathered. This could range from crudely covered to a change in architectural feature such as the Cullom Baptist Association office. Mr. Banzet observed that the Dameron Building had 14 windows on each of two sides, most of which were boarded or bricked. Mr. Mooring noted two issues there. First that bricked up windows are a structural change that cannot safely be undone, and that in some cases it was impractical or a financial hardship to reverse boarded up windows. In either case he said the Historic District Commission would decide, and might approve of some and not others based on condition, appropriateness and financial hardship. Commissioner King expressed his concern that the ordinance could become onerous, especially because of the power of the HDC and the potential for abuse by some future

commissioners. Mr. Styers said property owners with existing boarded up windows must be given time to respond and there followed discussion about what would be reasonable, finally agreeing by consensus that these property owners should have 90 days from the receipt of a notice send by certified mail to submit their application for a COA to the HDC. From that point the schedule would be governed by HDC guidelines. Failure to comply would invoke a civil penalty of \$25 per window per month. Mr. Davie expressed his concern that the ordinance might not be consistent with the Vacant Property Registry that sets standards only for first floor street level windows and allows boarded windows by implication. Mr. Styers recommended that any reference to boarded up windows be removed from the Vacant Property Registry to make them consistent. Both he and Mr. Blalock expressed their concern about adding a difficult and time consuming task to existing Town staff with Mr. Styers saying it would almost mandate a zoning and enforcement officer. Mr. Mooring said that the Citizens Advisory Board could help with observations and recommendations but that board has other responsibilities too. There were suggested revisions to the draft that Mr. Mooring said would be made and circulated for further comment. Mayor Gardner added that organizations with renovation grants such as Preservation Warrenton and its paint program might be persuaded to extend their grants to windows which would encourage property owners to comply.

New Business

Mr. Freeman presented the proposed annual contract for auditing services from Winston, Williams, Creech, Evans & Company, LLP. The proposed fee increased from \$12,000 to \$12,850 for the audit and remained at \$5,000 for compiling financial reports. Mr. Freeman said they have the expertise and had served the Town well for the past several years. Commissioner Blalock moved that the contract be awarded to Winston, Williams, Creech, Evans & Company, LLP; Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Resolutions

Mayor Gardner presented the proposed resolution in support of the Town's application for the Small Town Main Street program. In answer to Commissioner Mooring's question about the commitment Mr. Freeman that it demonstrated the Board's support for the associated costs as well as for supporting the program itself. The cost is for travel time from Raleigh, estimated from \$3000-\$5000. Mr. Freeman said he had included \$3000 in the proposed budget on the assumption that Warrenton is close to Raleigh. Mr. Styers recommended the addition of the phrase "at State of North Carolina reimbursable rates." Commissioner Blalock moved that the resolution be adopted with the change recommended by Mr. Styers; Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Announcements

There being no announcements and no additional business, Commissioner Banzet moved to adjourn; Commissioner Blalock seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 8:47.

Respectfully submitted,

John Freeman
Town Administrator