

Walter M. Gardner, Jr.
Mayor

John Freeman
Administrator

TOWN OF WARRENTON
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January 11, 2010 Board of Commissioners Minutes

The January 11, 2010 meeting of the Town of Warrenton Board of Commissioners was held at the Warrenton Town Hall.

Those present were:

Mayor Walter M. Gardner, Jr.	John Freeman, Town Administrator
Commissioner and Mayor Pro Tem Woody King	
Commissioner Jules Banzet	Town Attorney Mitch Styers
Commissioner John Blalock	Public Works Director Bill Perkinson
Commissioner Robert Davie	Police Chief John Younts
Commissioner John Mooring	Jennifer Harris, Warren Record
Commissioner Mary Hunter	
Commissioner Audrey Tippet	

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

Mayor Gardner then presented the minutes from the meeting of December 14, 2009 for approval. Commissioner Banzet moved that the minutes be approved; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Tippet and carried unanimously.

Public Comments

No members of the general public were in attendance or signed up to speak.

Committee Reports

Finance Report

Commissioner Hunter had reviewed the December checks in excess of \$10,000 and reported them appropriate. They were \$11,556.87 to MIT for the monthly cost of health insurance and \$12,155.00 to AECOM, which was a reimbursable grant payment for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. She then asked Mr. Freeman for the monthly financial report. He began by referring to the written response to the letter from Sharon Edmundson of the LGC who had made several specific recommendations based on analysis of the 2008-2009 audit. A copy of the response had been included in the Board meeting preparation packets.

He then reviewed the month-to-date cash flow report. With the year 50% past the budget continues to be on target. He noted several departments for which an explanation would be helpful. The Police Department appears

over-budget but is actually on target considering that the combination of loan payments being concentrated in the first months of the fiscal year and the budget not yet amended to reflect the unplanned purchase of a new vehicle as replacement for one that was wrecked. The Sign/Street Lights Department is over-budget because there were additional expenses associated with the new procedures for the Christmas Parade and Prelude. This is expected to be an important event which it would be helpful to track separately in the future and a budget amendment will be requested to allow the expenses to be gathered in a single line item. The Street Department is over-budget due to \$1000 of unexpected repairs and a loan payment in October but should end the fiscal year close to budget.

Freeman then reviewed the ad valorem tax revenue report, which shows collections running 4.7% ahead of the previous year at a nearly identical rate of 34% of the total budget. Referring to the Sales & Use Tax Revenue report he said that the decrease had leveled out somewhat with the month of December at just 6.5% less and the year-to-date decline at 9.7%. This reduction had been anticipated in the budget, which forecast a 20% decline. The Utility Franchise Tax revenue increased by 5.6% year-to-date.

Human Resources/Information Technology

Commissioner Banzet turned to Mr. Freeman who had nothing to report for Human Resources. Mayor Gardner asked Commissioner Davie for a report on his investigation of solutions for the Town website which had been taken down some time ago because it was out of date and difficult to maintain. There was some discussion about the domain names available and formerly used. Mr. Davie reported on his review of a template based system produced by govoffice.com specifically for towns, recommending that this approach would be more effective than independently developing a standalone website. The templates are easy to use and would allow the website to be maintained by future employees without lengthy training or rights issues. Mr. Freeman said that this program is endorsed by the NCLM. Commissioner Mooring concurred that a template based website would be most cost effective and that training would be much less than the alternative. Mr. Davie reported that upfront costs would be about \$1500 with an annually recurring fee of \$360. He had spoken with town staff at Surf City, which uses this program, and had positive feedback. They appreciated the feature that allows web pages to be isolated and maintained by separate departments. Mr. Davie also said the program produces use statistics and tracks forms in its database. Mayor Gardner thanked Mr. Davie and suggested that the Board keep this in mind as part of budget development.

Public Safety

Commissioner Blalock asked Chief Younts for a review of the monthly activity report. Chief Younts asked if there were any questions and a discussion about the definition of speeding misdemeanor and infraction ensued. In answer to Mayor Gardner's question Younts said there had not been anything unusual during the month. As a followup to the Christmas parade he said that the initial positive reactions had been confirmed by about thirty phone calls that commended the changes. There had been two complaints, one about Main Street being closed to parking (an explanation persuaded this caller that it was an improvement) and one about participants throwing hard candy.

Commissioner Blalock reported that the Fire Department had been quiet for the last two weeks which was unusual in winter. Mayor and Fire Chief Gardner said he was to go to Kentucky later in the week to inspect the new fire truck, approximately 90% of the cost of which was to be paid by federal grant funds. This is an "urban interface" vehicle which is 4 wheel drive that can operate off road as an urban pumping station utilizing ponds or other water sources, can utilize foam for car and hay fires, and has crew cab space for personnel. In answer to Commissioner Banzet's question about whether this would be a replacement for a vehicle that would be decommissioned Mr. Blalock said that the old Town of Warrenton pumper truck would be returned to the Town Plummer Hook & Ladder Museum at no cost.

Beautification/Facilities

Commissioner Tippet reported on a presentation of the Rural Center NC STEP (Small Towns Economic Prosperity Program) attended the previous Thursday by her, Commissioner Woody King and Town Administrator John Freeman. She said there was consensus among the group that it was potentially a valuable program but that there is not enough time to prepare the application by the February 12 deadline. This is a biannual program and the next opportunity would not be until 2012, if it was to be continued.

As the STEP program could be used for the purpose of planning the renovation of Town Hall Commissioner Mooring asked whether the funds budgeted by the Board for repairs had been utilized, and if not, where they were. Mr. Freeman answered that bids for roof and soffit repairs had been sought but funds had not yet been spent. The funds had not been spent elsewhere but were part of the fund balance. In addition to the attention required for the roof Commissioner Tippet mentioned the need to remodel the men's rest room as well.

Revitalization/Historical

Commissioner King reported his impressions of the STEP program and his agreement that the application could not be achieved in such a short time. Mr. Freeman said that the emphasis was on the participation of widely diverse groups in the community and all participant groups had to demonstrate full support of the program. Mr. King said the process of doing the application would be valuable in itself, something that should be done anyway as part of long term planning. He sees the Town's needs as right on target for the program which includes \$25,000 for planning and \$100,000 for implementation with the support of an assigned "coach" from the Rural Center. In answer to Commissioner Mooring's question Mr. King said that 45 towns were in the program and the plan was to add 10 this year. He said the presentation was enlightening and that the Williamston town manager had some helpful suggestions for an alternative approach.

He went on to report that the Revitalization Committee was now gearing up for SpringFest on April 24. It would be coordinated with Warren County in observance of national county government week. The county was planning a block party on Friday evening, April 23, and Saturday events would include music and a vendor show from 10:00-5:00. He said that the Revitalization Committee was committed to planning such events but at its last meeting had discussed that events should not be the its only scope as a committee. It plans to re-evaluate its goals and look to pursuit of programs such as NC STEP as part of its scope. He requested Board input about future direction for the Revitalization Committee.

Commissioner Tippet asked Mr. Freeman about the status of building inspections and he answered that he had spoken with Baron Williams of the Warren County Code Compliance department but had not been given any copies of permits. Mayor Gardner had received a fire inspection report from Fire Marshall Chris Wright for a paint booth installed at JR's body shop on Franklin. Mr. Freeman said that the owner had obtained the proper zoning permit first, then the required county permits. Mrs. Tippet asked about recent zoning questions and Mr. Freeman reported two, one about a tattoo parlor and one a sports bar/club at the former location of the Picket Fence store on Main Street. He said the tattoo parlor appeared to be allowed but there were various issues with the sports bar, including the mention of pool tables that would not be allowed, electronic games and video poker that would require special use permits, and noise in general.

Public Works

Commissioner Davie introduced the biggest issue which was the request of the Public Works Department to establish an ongoing vehicle replacement program. The Board Finance Committee had met the previous week to discuss it and referred to the memo from Mr. Freeman that had been addressed to the Finance Committee and included in all Board Packets. Mr. Freeman reviewed the problem which is that the Public Works Department depends on a group of aging and increasingly unreliable work trucks that were not designed for commercial work. He said that the problem had been masked by the department's maintenance and repair program, and that he had planned to make this request part of the upcoming budget discussion. However, two of the aging vehicles

required about \$5000 in repairs, and rather than continue to spend a significant amount on ongoing repairs he decided to bring it to the Board at this time. These are work vehicles that employees depend on for all types of service at all hours, often in the worst weather conditions, and the current average vehicle age is 1997, or 13 years. Many of these vehicles are approaching 200,000 miles. PW Director Bill Perkinson summarized the need expressed in Freeman's memo (attached to the minutes).

Mr. Freeman said this was a request to endorse the plan and approve the borrowing \$60,000, the cost of which would come from increased water sewer user fees which he suggested be part of the budget process for next year. This began a discussion about the amount of increase and on which customers. Mr. Freeman reported that a recent rate study done by the NC Rural Water Association had indicated that in-town rates were on target for the current included 3000 gallons of water, while out-of-town rates were approximately \$12 per month too low. He said that he was considering proposing a revision of the rate structure that would set an access charge based on infrastructure costs and a use rate based on operational costs. Under the current structure the new loan payments of approximately \$22000 per year would be raised by increasing out-of-town rates by \$1 on excess water and sewer charges without increasing any base users. Commissioner Mooring said he was basically in favor of replacing the vehicles, seeing the benefit of regular replacement, standardization and residual value, but was strongly opposed to increasing in-town rates. He expressed the opinion that the rate increase should be borne by out-of-town customers who apparently were paying less than the rate study recommended and might also see this as an incentive for voluntary annexation. Commissioner Blalock said that one consideration of waiting until the new budget year in July to raise the rates is that the department would be six months short on revenue when the first payment came due next January. Mayor Gardner said that could be budgeted for. In answer to Mr. Mooring's question, Chief Younts said that after this year the police car rotation was up to schedule. Mr. Mooring said he did not see how this request could be approved until the Board knows exactly where the money would come from. Mr. Blalock suggested a separate fund but Attorney Styers said it should be put in the normal operating budget. In answer to Mr. Davie's question Mr. Freeman said the current budget would not need to be amended because the first loan payment would not come due until the next budget year. Relating to the concern of Mr. Mooring that the cost be borne by out-of-town customers Mr. Blalock pointed out that the expensive repairs on the aging vehicles (already over budget without counting the immediate repairs required) would be borne by in-town as well as out-of-town customers. He also pointed out that the revised rate structure might actually result in reduced monthly charges for those who use less than the current 3000 gallon inclusive rate. Mr. Davie reported "an earful" from citizens about rates and would want to know the source of the funding. Mr. Mooring said he would agree if average out-of-town rates could be balanced according to the Rural Water Study. He asked Mr. Perkinson if the department could manage with replacing one vehicle now and one later, but Perkinson said that one of the old vehicles would still need to be repaired. Mr. Blalock said that even if the Board approved the vehicle replacement plan in principle it would still evaluate and approve every requested purchase. Mayor Gardner added that the proposed plan would not affect larger vehicles such as the garbage truck which would be considered separately as needed. Commissioner Hunter said that the rate review would be part of the budget process that could not be determined at this meeting but that the decision about the 2 trucks could be made now. Mr. Blalock said that the Board could approve the purchase of the 2 trucks now as the same Board would be deciding on the budget in a few months. Commissioner Tippett said there was some urgency here and employee safety was a major consideration. Commissioner King moved that approval be given for the purchase of two trucks for the Water Sewer Department to be financed by a loan to be negotiated and signed by the mayor and town administrator, and with the intent of revising utility rates as part of the upcoming budget process to pay the cost of the loan. Mr. Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Perkinson then reported on several items relating to the sewer system. The county project to replace part of the sewer line running across Ridgeway Street, behind county offices in the old hospital to connect with the main line has run into the problem of unanticipated corrosion in the iron pipe. Their Public Utilities Director is searching for emergency funds for the necessary repair to replace the ductile iron pipe running under Horse Creek. Town staff is inspecting the section to be bypassed and left for Town customers to see if this problem

affects this section. The county has taken its flow but left the old sewer for local Town users, and it is a concern that the Town could be left with the cost of a repair necessitated by county sewage. Mayor Gardner stated the Town position that county sewage corroded Town manholes and possibly pipes. Commissioner Mooring asked that a formal request be made to the county to include Town repairs in their funding request; Mr. Freeman said he would do so.

Mr. Perkinson then reviewed Public Works operations. He said that leaf pickup was caught up and that the vacuum was working well. Flow at the Waste Water Treatment Plant had been 26.5 million gallons in December, about double the normal dry season flow. There were two significant repairs planned for the Waste Water Treatment Plant. The first is rebuilding the concrete stormwater swale that had collapsed at a cost of approximately \$5000. Second is replacement of a grit pump at approximately \$7000. Commissioner Mooring asked about the average life of such pumps and Mr. Perkinson answered 2-3 years while this one is 4-5 years old. Because of the rough service these pumps can only be repaired a limited number of times. Commissioner Blalock asked about the status of funding requests and Mr. Perkinson answered that county manager Linda Worth has continued to work with DCA for grants and USDA for loans.

There followed discussion about scheduling the planned tour of the WWTP for Norlina, Warrenton and Warren County commissioners, with agreement reached for Friday, January 29 at 1:00.

Zoning

Commissioner Mooring said he was still gathering information about the cost of infrastructure as it relates to areas eligible for annexation. After receiving the information being researched by Mr. Perkinson and Chief Younts he planned a meeting with the Board subcommittee to discuss recommendations.

Unfinished Business

No unfinished business was brought forward.

New Business

No new business was brought forward

Announcements

Mayor Gardner reminded the Board of the forum on economic conditions to be presented by Senator Berger and Representatives Allen and Wray, on January 28 at Vance Granville Community College. The program is scheduled from 10:00-2:00 and includes lunch. Mr. Freeman added that he had been impressed with the last forum which he had attended.

There being no further business Commissioner Banzet moved to adjourn. Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Mayor Gardner declared the meeting adjourned at 9:52pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Freeman
Town Administrator