

Walter M. Gardner, Jr.
Mayor

John Freeman
Administrator

TOWN OF WARRENTON
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December 14, 2009 Board of Commissioners Minutes

The December 14, 2009 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 Bobby Edmonds	Police Chief John Younts
Commissioner John Mooring	Jennifer Harris, Warren Record
Commissioner Mary Hunter	Richard Hunter, Clerk of Court
Commissioner Audrey Tippet	

Commissioner Elect Robert Davie

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

Mayor Gardner then presented the minutes from the meeting of November 9, 2009 for approval. Commissioner Mooring moved that the minutes be approved; the motion was seconded by Commissioner King and carried unanimously.

This being the meeting of transition with newly elected commissioners assuming their positions, Mayor Gardner welcomed that new leadership and commended retiring Commissioner Bobby Edmonds for his long service to the Town and all its citizens. He then asked Clerk of Court Richard Hunter to swear in the newly re-elected mayor, himself, which Mr. Hunter did to applause from the Board. He then asked Mr. Hunter to swear in the newly elected Commissioners, Jules Banzet (incumbent), Mary Hunter (incumbent) and Robert Davie (newly elected). Mr. Edmonds then addressed the Board saying he had been privileged to serve with so many good people over the years, all of whom had worked for the best interests of the Town.

Mayor Gardner then asked for nomination for Mayor Pro Tem. Commissioner Banzet nominated Woody King, who had served in the position for the past two years. There being no other nominations Commissioner Banzet moved that Woody King be re-elected Mayor Pro Tem; Commissioner Blalock seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mayor Gardner then presented his recommendation that the following appointments be made:

John Freeman as Town Clerk and Treasurer
Bettie Davis as Tax Collector and Assistant Treasurer

He recommended that the following appointments be confirmed:

John Freeman as Town Administrator
John Younts as Chief of Police
Bill Perkinson as Director of Public Works

Commissioner Blalock moved that all be approved; Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mayor Gardner then presented his list of recommendations for those serving on various citizen boards and committees. These were reappointments with the new terms and members noted. There was some discussion about Commissioners serving on the Citizens Advisory Board and Mr. Freeman said that the membership intended to nominate two new members from the general public. Commissioner Blalock moved that the citizen boards and committees be approved as presented; Commissioner King seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mayor Gardner then presented his list of Board Committee membership which are his prerogative. Each Board member is to serve as chair of one committee and as member of two others. He stated his goals for the year:

- long range financial and infrastructure planning in Finance, including an emphasis on the maintenance of Town Hall.
- continued work on the efforts to obtain financing for the WWTP rehabilitation project
- improving information technology, reestablishing the web site and bringing the Town into the information age.

Public Comments

Resident Susan King spoke to her perception of the need of the Board to better communicate with citizens about its accomplishments. She said she knows the hard work the Board does and what they have accomplished but many in the public do not. She advised the Board to be more proactive and explain how and why decisions are made. She said there is a need to publicize Board activities through the web site and/or a regular article or letter to the newspaper. She also gave her opinion that all Board members should be visible at all Town functions, to demonstrate their support and that they are not “just a sitting board.”

Committee Reports

Finance Report

Commissioner Blalock had reviewed the checks in excess of \$10,000 and reported them appropriate. He then asked Mr. Freeman for the monthly financial report. He began by referring to an email from auditor Carleen Evans explaining the two material weaknesses that had been addressed to the Board in the form of a letter with the annual audit at the November meeting. To summarize, she said that the weaknesses are limited staff cross-training and not preparing all financial statements, which are typical weaknesses for small towns without the resources to do their own. He then reviewed the year-to-date statement saying that revenues and expenditures are basically on target. The Police Department expenses for November were higher than expected but included the cost of the new car which replaced the one wrecked in October, and for which the budget had not yet been amended. He

also pointed to the previous year's higher revenue for the W/S Fund as including loan proceeds of approximately \$36,000.

Freeman then reviewed the ad valorem tax revenue report, saying that comparisons were somewhat difficult as all utility company tax revenue was included in the previous year's November total, the result of an error found by the county tax collector. In the current year those revenues are recorded as received over several different months. Referring to the Sales & Use Tax Revenue report he pointed out that revenues continue to be less, as predicted, but for the month of November the reduction was less than previous months.

Human Resources

Commissioner Banzet asked Mr. Freeman for a personnel illness report, and he reported that PW employee Jerry Pettus had been absent with back problems and was facing surgery. He was missed but his duties were being covered by fellow PW employees.

Mayor Gardner then asked for feedback on the Essentials of Municipal Government program attended by new commissioners Mary Hunter and Robert Davie. Both agreed that it was a valuable program that provided a good basic introduction to municipal government. Mayor Gardner reminded other commissioners that they would all need to take the same ethics training provided at the Essentials program during the next year. There was some discussion about whether ethics training required in other professions might qualify, but it was agreed that they would probably not. Mayor Gardner said the Mr. Freeman would keep the Board informed of dates and opportunities for this mandated training.

Public Safety

Commissioner Blalock asked Chief Younts for a summary of the monthly activity report. Younts said the backlog of data to enter was nearly finished. In answer to Mr. Blalock's question he said the department was at full staff with five officers including himself plus his administrative assistant. In answer to Mr. Blalock's question about the status of the COPS grant that would fund two additional officers for three years Chief Younts answered that he had been notified that the Town is on the approved list awaiting additional federal grant funding. The approved list is not prioritized so it is not possible to know when the grants might be made. There was some discussion about how quickly those officers would have to be hired should the grant be received and Younts said that rural areas like Warrenton were allowed a longer period than metropolitan areas like Raleigh or Durham. He said there is not a requirement to pick up the positions following the three year grant but that every reasonable effort would have to be made. Commissioner King asked the names of the current staff and the Chief listed:

- Himself
- Sgt. Ayscue
- Officer Wilkins
- Officer Mazor
- Officer McPherson
- Admin Assistant Barbara Medlin
- Reserves Dozier and Campbell.

Referring to the activity report Commissioner Banzet noted that 95% of the incidents related to motor vehicles and Younts answered that those motor vehicle stops have led to many other arrests.

Commissioner Blalock noted that drug arrests had gone down and Younts said that department efforts had pushed much drug dealing out of town, beyond the ETJ. He said it is even difficult now to make undercover buys in Town, and Commissioner Mooring noted that the efforts are working. Commissioner Tippett said she had observed that many communities had experienced fatal motor

vehicle accidents, which department enforcement efforts had effectively reduced in Warrenton. Chief Younts complimented the work of his officers for their enforcement efforts.

In a review of the Christmas parade of two days previously, Chief Younts reported that the newly implemented parade policy had worked well on its first time. There were still problems with the horses as their owners bypassed the Cast Stone Systems parking lot to use the library, thus counteracting the plan which was in part implemented because of them. Younts reported the streets cleared within 12 minutes of the parade's end, which was efficient enough to cause some comment that it would be better to hold at least the courthouse block for 30 minutes more. Mayor Gardner was impressed at how well parents kept their children close to the curb and Commissioner Blalock said the department had done a good job. Commissioner Mooring commented positively on the participation of sheriff's deputies, six of whom had been hired as off-duty officers to assist.

Mr. Freeman added that the new police car (replacing the one wrecked in October) had been delivered and had participated in Saturday's parade. Commissioner Banzet asked about surplus vehicles and Freeman said he intended to dispose of them soon, after consulting with Attorney Styers about the appropriate means.

Mayor Gardner reported that there had been no major calls for the Fire Department but that the annual Thanksgiving breakfast had been very successful and is the department's major fundraiser.

Revitalization/Historical

Commissioner King began his report on the Revitalization Committee by presented two nominations to replace resigned committee members. He nominated Cheryl Bell to fill out the term of William Perry (2010) and Susan King to fill out the term of Shawn Corker (2011). After some discussion about the nominees Commissioner Blalock moved that they be approved; Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Commissioner King then reported on the Christmas parade and Prelude, held on Saturday, December 12. He agreed with Chief Younts' positive evaluation of the new parade policy, saying that many new things had been tried this year and they all worked beautifully. He reported the Jaycees, sponsors of the parade, as being satisfied after early misgivings. This was the first year that parade and Prelude had been combined and the combination worked well. He strongly encouraged commissioners to attend all public events to show support and be available to the public.

Commissioner Blalock asked about the absence of the high school band and Commissioner King mentioned a rumor confirmed by Chief Younts that its absence was the result of a boycott because of its dissatisfaction with the Homecoming parade in October. Proper notification had not been given by the organizers and the parade route was changed from Main to Front Street. It was apparent that the students were not told of the reason, and Chief Younts said that band director Whitehead had not attended a scheduled meeting of Younts and the principal to establish future responsibilities.

Mr. King then introduced the subject of the proposed ordinance (153.05-.14) to empower the Historic District Commission. No member of the public had commented during the public hearing that had been held at 6:30pm preceding this meeting. Commissioner Mooring moved that the ordinance be adopted and Commissioner Hunter seconded the motion. There was some discussion about the effective date with Commissioner Mooring suggesting that February 1 would give citizens some time to become familiar with the new requirements. Commissioner Tippett expressed her preference for not postponing its effective date, saying that several projects were starting that it might be desirable to influence. Commissioner Mooring amended his motion to set January 1, 2010 as the effective date; Commissioner Hunter seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Beautification/Streets/Sanitation

Commissioner Tippett asked PW Director Bill Perkinson for a report on the leaf collection. He said that the rainy weather had been a challenge, and the backhoe and dump truck had to be used because the leaf machine is not effective with heavy, wet leaves. They are making progress and plan to finish with a final cleanup using the leaf machine which has been fitted with a new pick up hose. Mrs. Tippett said that notices had been placed in the newspaper requesting that residents separate sticks and debris from leaves, and that everything possible was being done to pick up the leaves.

Commissioner Tippett asked Mr. Freeman for a report on membership questions relating to the Citizens Advisory Board. He said that the CAB had agreed at their previous meeting that it should be a citizens board that advised the Board of Commissioners, and that BOC commissioners should not also be on the CAB (in essence commissioners advising themselves). They plan to nominate two new members, with Mrs. Tippett continuing as the BOC liaison.

Mr. Freeman then reported on the status of building permits and said he had met with county code compliance administrator Baron Williams that morning. He had not received any copies of permits or inspections to date although a number had been issued, more than immediately apparent as many people do not post them conspicuously as required. Commissioner Mooring asked about the possibility of withholding utility service until inspections had been completed and Freeman said he would consult with Town Attorney Styers. Commissioner Tippett asked about the status of the demolition of the Tucker Building and Freeman said it was the position of the owners that the remaining foundation columns and debris posed no public health hazard the they had no responsibility to do more. He had discussed it with Baron Williams who would discuss it with other resources. Mr. Styers explained that there is a difference between Mr. Williams condemnation letter of two years before warning the owners of the danger and their responsibility to remove it, and a judicial condemnation that would result from legal action by the Town.

Mr. Freeman reported that he had heard that the owner of the Cannon House, another condemned property a block from the Tucker Building, was to receive a new roof. He also said that Michael Layne, owner of a collapsing house on South Main Street, had told him of his intentions to reconstruct it. Commissioner Mooring commended Layne for his work on roof and facades of his downtown commercial buildings.

Public Works

Commissioner Hunter asked Director Bill Perkinson for any information to supplement the written summaries in the Board preparation packets. He reported that the inspection of the sewer collection system was nearly finished with 160 hours of work. Its purpose is to identify problem areas. He said that heavy rain events of the previous two weeks had caused high flow situations with considerable overtime and utilization of haulers, but without any spills.

Regarding the WWTP, he said that efforts to obtain funding for the urgently needed repairs continued, with county manager Linda Worth leading the effort with the USDA and DCA. The department had been challenged by the recent rain events, treating about twice the normal flow. It takes time between events for the plant balance to recover and there had not been enough time between rain events for this to happen. There had been no spills and discharge quality had remained good, but careful monitoring and overtime was required as someone had to stay at the plant throughout the weekend. Mayor Gardner and Commissioner Blalock thanked Perkinson and the PW staff for their hard work.

Commissioner Blalock asked about the extent of county Ridgeway Street sewer upgrade and Mr. Perkinson answered that it ran from a manhole near Lee Roy West Hardware, across the street, behind the old hospital where it would rejoin the main sewer line. The object is to remove the steep drops that cause the flow to vaporize and smell. Theoretically the odor problem would be solved with the elimination of these drops.

Zoning

Commissioner Mooring reported that he had requested cost effectiveness analysis from Chief Younts and Public Works Director Perkinson regarding the potential annexation of areas declared eligible by the DCA. When that information was consolidated he would distribute it and call a meeting of the sub-committee.

He then addressed the proposed Vacant Property Registry for which there had been a public hearing immediately before the BOC meeting at 6:45pm and at which no member of the public had appeared to comment. Attorney Styers said that a registration form was still needed but that it should not be included in the ordinance so that it could be changed as needed. Commissioner Davie inquired about the penalties and how often they could be charged. Mayor Gardner said that a failure to comply would occur every 10 days which would result in another penalty. Mr. Mooring said the penalties were not intended to create revenue but to motivate property owners to make the required improvements. Commissioner King moved that the ordinance be adopted with an effective date of February 1, 2010; Commissioner Blalock seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Mr. Mooring said that informational notices would be sent out until July 1, 2010 at which point penalties would be applied.

Unfinished Business

Commissioner Blalock asked Attorney Styers about the question raised at the previous meeting about the authority to hire and fire employees. Mr. Styers said he had not yet done the necessary research but would for the next meeting.

New Business

Under new business Mr. Freeman presented a contract with Blackmon Contracting for approval. The contract for \$144,975.20 is a reimbursed part of the grant from the Cleanwater Management Trust Fund for jetting and videoing the sewer collection system with the goals of identifying sources of I&I and future needs for repair. The contract had been reviewed and recommended by engineer Reid Campbell of AECOM. Commissioner Banzet moved that the contract be awarded with authorization for the necessary signatures; Commissioner Mooring seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Freeman said that the other CWMTF grant had an education requirement that would be fulfilled with a planned tour of the WWTP available to groups on a reserved basis. Mr. Perkinson and staff were working on the agenda and it was planned that the first group invited would be the commissioners of Norlina, Warren County and Warrenton. Commissioner Blalock recommended scheduling a tour of all Town facilities for the Warrenton commissioners, similar to that held two years before.

Announcements

Mayor Gardner reminded the commissioners of the annual employee appreciation luncheon on Wednesday, December 16.

There being no further announcements or business Mayor Gardner declared the meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

With all commissioners still present, he then reconvened the meeting at 8:52 to request that the Board vote on the proposed annual employee bonuses of \$50 for each full time employee and \$25 for each part time. With the assurance that this was a budgeted item Commissioner Mooring so moved; Commissioner Blalock seconded the motion which passed unanimously. There being no further business Mayor Gardner declared the meeting adjourned at 8:54pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Freeman
Town Administrator