

Town of Spring Lake
Regular Meeting of the Board of Aldermen
Municipal Building
300 Ruth Street
Spring Lake, NC 28390

October 28, 2013

MINUTES

7:08 p.m.

The Spring Lake Board of Aldermen held a regular scheduled meeting in the Grady Howard Conference Room of the Spring Lake Municipal Building with Mayor Chris V. Rey presiding.

Board Members Present: Mayor Pro Tem Napoleon Hogans
Alderman James Christian
Alderman Richard Higgins
Alderman James O'Garra
Alderwoman Fredricka Sutherland

Others Present:

Ken Metcalf, Town Manager	Tony Buzzard, Town Attorney
Byron Blumenfeld, Water Resource Manager	Allen Coats, Finance Director
Tony Porter, Building Inspector	Tom Spinks, Inspections Supervisor
Troy McDuffie, Police Chief	T.J. McLamb, Fire Chief
Rhonda Webb, Town Clerk	

2. Invocation

Alderwoman Sutherland gave a non-sectarian invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Rey led the meeting in the pledge of allegiance.

4. Additions or Deletions to Agenda

A discussion about water bills was added to the agenda.

Action: The Board approved a motion to add a discussion about the water bills to the agenda as item 10d.

Motion by: Alderman O'Garra

Second by: Alderman Higgins

Vote: Unanimous

5. Approval of Agenda

The Board approved the agenda as amended.

Action: The Board approved a motion to approve the agenda as amended.

Motion by: Alderman Higgins

Second by: Alderwoman Sutherland

Vote: Unanimous

(A copy of the agenda is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment one.)

6. Approval of Consent Items

The Board approved the consent items:

- a. Minutes of the October 14, 2013 Special Meeting
- b. Minutes of the October 14, 2013 Regular Meeting
- c. Minutes of the October 17, 2013 Special Meeting
- d. Proclamation, Purple Heart Town and Purple Heart Day

Action: The Board approved a motion to approve the minutes of October 14, 2013 Regular Meeting, October 14, 2013 Special Meeting, October 17, 2013 Special Meeting and Proclamation Purple Heart Town and Purple Heart Day.

Motion by: Alderwoman Sutherland

Second by: Alderman Christian

Vote: Unanimous

7. Public Forum

No one spoke at the Public Forum.

8. Presentation

a. Bragg Hospitality – Fall Clean Up

Mayor Rey announced that the Town had prepared a certificate of appreciation for Bragg Hospitality for their contribution of breakfast items for the Fall Litter Sweep. No one was able to attend the meeting from Bragg Hospitality.

(A copy of the agenda memo is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment two.)

b. On Time Communications, LLC & Copper River, IT, LLC

Due to an emergency the representative from Copper River, IT, LLC was not able to attend the meeting. Mr. Michael Alston from On Time Communications gave a brief presentation about broadband in Spring Lake. He stated that broadband is an economical way to provide connectivity for the internet. He reviewed the services and benefits of bringing broadband technology to Spring Lake and asked the Board to consider approving a non-binding resolution welcoming On Time Communications and Copper River to the community and approving them to explore the options of developing broadband in the community.

(A copy of the agenda memo and presentation is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment three.)

c. Fire Department, Community Risk

Chief McLamb shared with the Board what the Fire Department is doing now and what they would like to do in the future. He stated receiving community input on what they do will enhance their operations. He advised the Fire Department performs fire suppression which includes fire control, fire investigations and live fire training. They also perform rescue operations including vehicle extrication, technical rescue, hazmat operations, search and rescue of lost persons. They hope to incorporate swift water rescue boat operations in 2014. He stated the bulk of their calls are medical based. They perform basic life support as medical first responders. The Department has increased their public fire education program because educating the public helps prevent fires. They also perform school fire education. They have educated approximately 11,035 adults and 2,200 children this year. They perform neighborhood canvases to promote the smoke alarm project called "No Home Left Behind." To date they have installed 461 smoke alarms. They perform child

passenger safety and fire code enforcement. Chief McLamb also provided the Board with information about the Town's ISO rating. This form is produced by the Office of the State Fire Marshall's office and is what is used to determine the insurance rate a home owner pays for insurance. Fire Departments are rated on their performance and other variables. Chief McLamb clarified for Board members that the Fire Department does not always go on every medical call. They are centrally dispatched and based on what information the caller gives to the dispatcher is how they are sent to calls.

(A copy of the agenda memo and presentation is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment four.)

d. Ruth Street Park

Mr. Metcalf advised the idea of the Ruth Street Park was formed out of public input meetings held in the spring of 2013. He also presented the Ruth Street Park Master Plan and requested approval to proceed with developing a grant application to the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. Mr. Metcalf clarified that the Board is not committing to anything except the approval to submit for a grant. The total estimated cost is approximately \$493,000. If the Town is awarded a grant the Town's match is \$246,000.

Action: The Board approved a motion to approve the Recreation Ruth Street Park grant application.

Motion by: Alderwoman Sutherland

Second by: Alderman Christian

Vote: Unanimous

(A copy of the agenda memo and presentation is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment five.)

9. Old Business

a. Ordinance (2013) 13, Demolition Case 2013-057, Lot 16, E Street

Mr. Spinks presented Demolition Case 2013-057, Lot 16, E Street. He stated the property owner, Mr. Lee, failed to comply with an order to remove, repair or demolish this structure in the allotted time and requested the Board approve Ordinance (2013) 13 to demolish this structure. He reminded the Board that Mr. Lee made a request at the last Board meeting during the Public Forum requesting additional time to comply with this Ordinance. He advised Mr. Lee agreed to a six month extension due April 28, 2014.

Action: The Board approved a motion to approve Ordinance (2013) 13.

Motion by: Alderman Christian

Second by: Mayor Pro Tem Hogans

Vote: Unanimous

(A copy of the agenda memo and Ordinance (2013) 13 is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment six.)

10. New Business

a. Resolution (2013) 27, Surplus Equipment

Mr. Coats presented Resolution (2013) 27 to declare several police vehicles as surplus and auction them off on GovDeals. He advised the Fleet Maintenance Department has recommended that the vehicles be declared surplus as they have outlived their useful life for the Town. Chief McDuffie

clarified that police vehicles that are ready to be declared surplus are not done so based on a certain mileage. They determine the usefulness of vehicles based on the overall maintenance of the vehicles in addition to mileage but mileage alone is not a determining factor.

Action: The Board approved a motion to approve Resolution (2013) 27.

Motion by: Alderman Higgins

Second by: Alderman O'Garra

Vote: Unanimous

(A copy of the agenda memo and Resolution (2013) 27 is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment seven.)

b. Board Discussion on Bonus Pay for Town Employees and Selection of Methodology

Mr. Coats presented for consideration a one-time bonus pay for employees and gave the Board two different methodologies to choose from. Management proposes either an across the board \$500 bonus per employee or a tiered bonus that is based on where employees fall in the salary range. The tiered method provides a higher bonus amount for lower salary employees. Concern was expressed with never being able to give a cost of living increase to employees and not having enough information to determine which method is best for employees. There was some discussion about which system would be best. It was clarified that when staff calls this a "one-time bonus" they are referring to a one-time bonus in a particular fiscal year. Staff clarified that cost of living increases are a recurring expense to the Town and that is why the one-time bonus is being recommended. It was also stated that with the Government shut down, Spring Lake employees have been treated great.

Action: The Board approved a motion to approve a \$500 across the board bonus for employees.

Motion by: Alderman Christian

Second by: Alderman O'Garra

Vote: Unanimous

(A copy of the agenda memo and bonus methodology cost data sheet is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment eight.)

c. Board to Determine Meeting Schedule for November 11, 2013

Mayor Rey advised the Board that the regular meeting schedule for November 11, 2013 falls on Veteran's Day which is a Town holiday. He asked the Board how they wanted to handle the meeting schedule.

Action: The Board approved a motion to cancel the November 11, 2013 and call a special meeting if necessary.

Motion by: Alderman Higgins

Second by: Alderman O'Garra

Vote: Unanimous

(A copy of the agenda memo is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment nine.)

d. Board Discussion Regarding Water Bills

Alderman O'Garra stated the water bills were raised about a year ago so the Town could do some projects around town. He stated the project bids came in lower than expected and requested the Board lower the water bills. He stated this is something the citizens deserve. Alderwoman Sutherland stated she has always considered the water bills high and when it was brought before the Board she did not vote to raise the rates. She does not think things should have gotten to the point anyway and if three Board members would have felt the same way the rates would not have been raised. She stated she finds it interesting that it is being brought up now during campaign season and that it should have been of interest the whole time knowing it would affect the citizens. She stated we need to be concerned about the citizens not just during campaign time but all the time. She thanked the Town Manager for trying to find ways to give back to people who pay their bills on time. She stated as a Board Member we always take the citizens into consideration and not just during campaign time does she think citizens are important enough to not raise the bills, they should have never been raised and she fought that in the beginning. Alderman Higgins stated, to put a little clarity in this situation, we have done a lot of major improvements to our system which costs a lot of money. We have a small customer base and we have to pay our bills. We have to continually try to bring new customers into the system and until we can do that we will have to pass along the costs to the customers. The more people on the system the less each one pays. We have few people paying for the service. The Board is going to have to sit down and look at what the future of the system is. Can the Town continue to maintain its own water and sewer system if the customer base does not grow? This is what we are facing and it is something that we have to look at. Alderman O'Garra stated he is concerned that people are not going to be able to afford to live here. We do have the highest taxes around and the highest water bills around. He stated the citizens here tonight are here to tell us that we need to do something. They should have a voice. He stated this has nothing to do with election time this is just something he ran into while he was trying to get something done. Alderman Christian stated this is something we should tackle sooner than later. He stated he voted for the change and did so based on the information he had at the time. He also stated it is obviously not working and we need to look at it again. He stated he appreciates his fellow Board Member and staff for looking into this. Mayor Pro Tem Hogans stated we took a thorough review of the water system and the prices and literally put the staff through its paces giving us options on what to do and to stay within certain perimeters. We took selling the system off the table and said we want to maintain the system and do it at the best price we can possibly do it. We went round and round and round and finally came up with the best price that we could come up with. I think this is a bunch of campaign hot air coming up here acting like the Board has not considered these heavy weight problems and everything is out of control. This is just outrageous. If we want to take a review of the system we need to task staff with this. We need to review the system and not take anything off the table this time. If it is a better deal for this community to sell the system, then it should be considered. But do not come here with a bunch of campaign hot air, telling these citizens that we have not done our due diligence here. It is unfair to everyone sitting up here and it is unfair to these citizens. He formally requested management undertake another review of the water system and all our options. Alderman O'Garra stated he was told in June that we would lower the prices on the water bills because the bids came in lower than we expected and June never came around. Mayor Rey stated we have heard the concerns of our Board Members and we have heard the concerns of our citizens as it relates to the water system and I think it is fair to say that everyone, whether it is during campaign season or not, has heard from the citizens as it relates to the water bills. We will have to take a look at our system. He also stated the citizens need to know that there have been a lot of projects that have been kicked down the road for many, many years and a lot of those projects have come home to roost. When you have failing infrastructure, failing roads, a failing wastewater treatment system and pipes in the ground that have not been attended to for twenty or thirty years there comes a time when all of

these things have to be addressed. When you piece meal it together sooner or later it all comes to hilt at the same time and that is where we are right now. We hope that in the future, based on the protocols that have been put in place, this will never happen again. But, right now we are in a very tight situation. Revenue is what it is and until we have homes that allow for a higher tax base to come into Spring Lake and until we have more businesses that come into Spring Lake, our budget is what it is and our citizens have to be told the truth. When we look at our current system we have to be honest about the debt that we have because the upgrades were needed. You do not get new homes or new neighborhoods if you don't have the infrastructure. We will go back and look at the current formula because I do think there is something that we did miss. I would hate to leave here tonight thinking the citizens of this community don't think that the Board Members here did not make decisions that were in the best interest of this community because we had failing infrastructure and I don't want this Board to go out of here thinking that this is all just politics. I look forward to this discussion in the very near future and we will make the best decision possible whether it is to sell the system or maintain the current system while maintaining our debt load. These decisions will be made, that much I can promise you.

11. Closing Comments

Mayor Rey stated all comments have been made and asked for a motion to adjourn.

12. Adjournment

Action: There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Motion: Alderwoman Sutherland

Second by: Alderman O'Garra

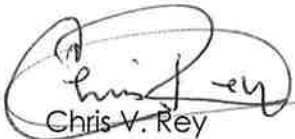
Vote: Unanimous



Rhonda D. Webb

Rhonda D. Webb, MMC
Town Clerk

ATTEST:


Chris V. Rey
Mayor