

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

June 4, 2018

MINUTES

9 a.m.

The Spring Lake Board of Aldermen held a special meeting in the Grady Howard Conference Room of the Municipal Complex with Mayor Larry Dobbins presiding.

Board Members Present: Mayor Pro Tem James O'Garra
Alderman Christian
Alderwoman Cooper
Alderwoman Jackson
Alderwoman Fredricka Sutherland

Others Present:

Daniel Gerald, Town Manager
Claiburn Watson, Finance Director
Rhonda Webb, Town Clerk

1. Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Dobbins called the meeting to order.

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

2. Invocation

Mayor Dobbins gave the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Dobbins led the meeting in the pledge of allegiance.

4. Board to Determine Final Changes to FY 2018-2019 Budget

Mr. Gerald reviewed the Rate and Fee Schedule, page by page. It was clarified that any text in red strikethrough will be deleted. The Board questioned the open burning permit and determined that it needs to be clarified if this is allowed and if not, it should be removed. The section under employee subsistence should be amended to read "for all approved travel, employees will be paid up front per diem and must show receipts." The also determined that because of a previous Board decision, we need to delete the section regarding the fee for employees who take home a Town owned vehicle. Any changes that are made that link back to an Ordinance will require an amendment to the Ordinances.

It was clarified that the Town pays Cumberland County Planning Dept \$34,000 annually for services that they

provide to the Town.

In the Recreation fees the Board asked that we further define gymnasium and fitness room no charge using a double asterisk with an explanation.

At 9:47 the Board took a 5-minute break. Open session resumed at 9:52

There was a discussion about Spring Lake citizens not being able to use the Manchester Sanitation Collection Station. The Board requested that we check into this since they are County residents also and pay County taxes. Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra stated that they usually take anyone's trash without asking questions.

Mayor Dobbins stated that the recent unfortunate issue with Garden Grove is like comparing apples to oranges. Wellons was a contract and we had to operate Wellons under the contract and Garden Grove is a regular customer, which means that they follow the same standards as any other customer. Alderwoman Sutherland stated that residents do not know the difference between the two and we just need to make sure that we communicate this to the people asking questions because the people who had Wellons water continued to have water but the Garden Grove people's water was turned off. Mr. Gerald clarified that Wellons had a contract that included when the water can and cannot be interrupted. Wellons paid what they were billed which would not have triggered a cut off even without the contract but the Garden Grove situation was a issue with the owner not paying a bill. This all boils down to one paid what he was billed, even though it was underbilled, and the other did not pay their bill. Mayor Dobbins further explained that some of the water goes to the residents and the rest goes out into the river which is causing an environmental issue. He stated that we cannot compare the two. He stated now that we understand the difference we can educate the citizens. Alderwoman Cooper requested that we put something out in the public to let people know that this issue is apples and oranges because that is one of the most asked questions we receive.

Alderwoman Jackson inquired about payment plans and stated that we set Garden Grove up on a payment plan. Mr. Gerald stated that we did put them on a payment plan but they did not abide by it. He also stated that we offer that option to all water customers who may need it.

Alderwoman Cooper stated that she believes the policy on water bill adjustments is too harsh. She believes citizens should be able to get more than one adjustment per year should something drastic happen. It was determined that the Ordinance allows the Revenue Supervisor to give only one adjustment per year per customer; however, the Town Manager may authorize other adjustments. The Board requested that the statement on the bill reflect what the Ordinance says and the best way to fix that is to just add "Revenue Supervisor" to the statement.

Mr. Gerald stated the only other change is that there is a 5.1% increase in the water rates. The deposit amount did not change.

Authorized Employee Positions

Alderman Christian said he believes it is a mistake to eliminate the HR position and the IT Technician position. He stated that he cannot support a budget that eliminates these positions. He believes we should keep a

separate HR position that handles only HR matters. He stated given today's society with legal matters and law suits being filed against us, it is a mistake to eliminate this position and he would like to see it restored. He stated that he believes the IT Tech position should be handled by a staff member and not outsourced. Alderwoman Jackson stated she did some research on the IT Technician position and discovered they typically that position installs desktops and laptops, handles the network and deals with software. She asked if the position we are not wanting to fund handles these duties and if the person we want to contract with will handle those duties? Mr. Gerald stated no, the position recommended for elimination doesn't even do that and the job description for that position probably isn't even listed right. He is recommending to contract with someone to update the website and other social media outlets and to serve, like the current position does, as an information output person. He stated that Alderwoman Jackson is correct in the definition of the position and the Town has that position and the person who handles those duties is Walt Pedrojew. Alderwoman Jackson inquired if the person in the IT position that we are still funding is qualified to do the required duties as she read them and Mr. Gerald stated yes, that is what that person is already do now. She then asked if we need to write a position that will do the other IT duties to make sure we are covered in all areas of IT and Mr. Gerald stated he does not believe so because we can contract for that position for approximately \$1,800 as opposed to funding a full-time position for approximately \$53,000 (salary and benefits).

Alderwoman Cooper stated she is strongly against not maintaining the Human Resource position. She stated with the society we have now, people are more litigious and know their rights and we open ourselves up to more litigation when we don't have a Human Resource person on staff. The IT Technician needs to remain to run the website and we need someone to keep us informed. Communication is really important. We have been blindsided too many times lately and that is the worst position to be in as an elected official. She stated her other concern is the Senior Maintenance Technician position. She would like to know what the true savings are of what we get based on the contracted person. Mr. Gerald stated that we already have a company who cleans the floors and we just extended the contract to include janitorial services. The Town should see a savings of approximately \$34,000. She would also like to see what all the Town contracts out. She is sure that there are some things we should keep in house.

Mayor Dobbins stated that we all can agree that we were top heavy. In terms of the HR Officer, what has taken place is that the responsibilities have been shifted to two people who the Manager deems capable of handling the duties of HR. He stated that he believes people are galvanized to come together on behalf of a certain person, which he finds that to be very unprofessional. He stated he was concerned about the way the whole thing went down. He stated the intent was to save two people, not positions, and that we are not supposed to be so partial that we are going to favor one person over another. We must be impartial to all employees who work here. Five positions were cut and he does not hear anyone coming to the aid of the other three defenseless people. He stated that if the Town Clerk feels that she can do the HR duties – we need to tell the citizens that we are getting the same service but are saving money.

Alderwoman Cooper stated her objection is not in favor of a person. She has done research and she believes we need an HR person, we need IT position and she believes we need to look at whether we are really saving by eliminating the Maintenance position. She stated she questioned three positions. Alderman Christian stated that he echoes Alderwoman Cooper's concerns and comments. He stated that he is not advocating on behalf of any individual. He would like to see the Town stay in the position that we are in with a strong HR Officer and

a strong IT position. He requested a consensus from the Board on the positions.

Alderwoman Sutherland stated each Board Member has a right to how they feel regarding positions. She stated it is never about the individuals, it is about the positions. She stated that at previous meetings she thought all the Board Members were on the same sheet of music because we are top heavy. She also stated that on the IT position, she does not know when it was reclassified for IT because we already had an IT person who is Mr. Walt. He has been here for twenty years and is vary capable. At some point, positions were switched and the second IT position was reclassified for a person by Mr. Metcalf.

Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra stated that he has been here a long time and he learned that people come and people go. The IT position is something we can work around. He stated that he does feel a little something about the HR position but he is going to go along with the Manager's recommendations. He hopes not one takes it personal.

Alderwoman Jackson stated that every position needs to have a job description and the people who are in that position should meet the qualifications. Alderman Christian stated this meeting was for the Board to determine what positions they are going to keep and that is why he wants to get a consensus. He stated that he feels strongly because the HR position is an extremely, extremely important position.

Mayor Dobbins requested Mr. Gerald clarified the savings that he is stating we will see. Mr. Gerald stated that the Water and Sewer Fund has been helping to fund these positions at approximately \$400,000 each year. He stated that he does see the HR position is very important but he believes the HR position fits best with the Clerk since she reports independently of the Manager. Mayor Dobbins stated that HR for a business where the bottom line is the final outcome is different from local government. He stated the bottom line for us is how the tax dollars are being spent.

Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra stated that when he came on board Ms. Cora was the Town Clerk and Personnel Director and she did both duties for a long time. He stated that he remembers Rhonda also performing HR duties many times. He also inquired about Ms. Smith and her experience with HR. Ms. Webb stated Ms. Smith is working on her Master's Degree in HR. Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra stated that it seems the HR duties are pretty well covered.

Mr. Gerald stated that the budget totals proposed reflect the proposed changes to the authorized positions. The Board's consensus was to approve the recommended position changes. Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra, Alderwoman Jackson and Alderwoman Sutherland stated they will go along with the changes that are proposed by the Town Manager and Alderman Christian and Alderwoman Cooper stated they do not agree with the proposed changes.

Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Gerald stated the Town has been giving the Spring Lake Chamber \$35,000 for economic development. He is proposing to cut that funding and use those funds to put toward the new Economic Development position the Board approved.

Alderwoman Jackson stated the Chamber is very important to the Town and she believes we should fund them up to \$10,000. Alderwoman Cooper stated she agrees with Alderwoman Jackson that the Chamber is very important to the Town and not funding them would send a message that we do not care about their work and about the businesses. She proposes to fund them \$10,000 to \$20,000. Alderwoman Sutherland stated she agrees that we need the Chamber but would like to understand the reason we are giving them the funds. Alderman Christian agrees that we should fund them but he would like for them to bring a proposal as to what they need and fund them between \$5,000 - \$20,000. Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra stated he agrees with supporting the Chamber and believes \$10,000 is a good amount. Mr. Gerald is going to work with the Chamber to help them increase their networking.

The consensus of the Board of Aldermen is to fund the Chamber for \$10,000 contingent upon them producing a document outlining what the funds will be used for.

5. Adjournment

Action: There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 11:17.

Motion: Alderwoman Cooper

Second by: Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra

Vote: Unanimous



Rhonda D. Webb
Rhonda D. Webb, MMC, NCCMC
Town Clerk

ATTEST:

Larry G. Dobbins
Larry G. Dobbins
Mayor