

Town of Spring Lake  
Board of Aldermen Special Meeting  
Spring Lake Multipurpose Community Center  
245 Ruth Street  
Spring Lake, NC 28390

January 9, 2020

**MINUTES**

910 p.m.

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

**Board Members Present:** Mayor Pro Tem Aziz  
Aldermember Soña Cooper  
Aldermember Jackie Jackson left at 12:42 p.m., came back at 1:10 p.m.  
Alderman James O'Garra arrived at 12:11 p.m.  
Aldermember Fredricka Sutherland

**Others Present:**

Daniel Gerald, Town Manager  
Melissa Pereira, Deputy Town Clerk

Ellis Hankins, Town Attorney  
Rhonda Webb, Town Clerk

**2. Invocation**

Mayor Dobbins gave the invocation.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Dobbins led the meeting in the pledge of allegiance.

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

**4. Staff Development**

The following items were discussed concerning staff development:

- **Team Building**  
Staff and the Board need to work toward rebuilding the team. This may include hiring someone who can help with the team building process. "One band, one sound." The Town Clerk provided information from the League of Municipalities for team building services that are available through the League.
- **Communication**  
Communication is a problem and we need to communicate better, not only for the Board, but for the community. Board Members should learn the same information at the same time. The Board should be alerted when things like water outages happen. Information to the community will have to be done through some sort of service like "Red Alert." Staff should be telling the Board what is going on and if the Board makes a decision it should not be changed and if it has to be the staff should be telling the Board. A possible solution is to have a mass meeting with all employees and Board Members to provide the opportunity for people to express concerns they have, share solutions to issues, etc.
- **Duties and Responsibilities**  
Mr. Hankins stated we have had discussions about the lanes that everyone is to operate in and at times, those lanes merge. He restated that except for the Town Manager, Town Attorney, Town Clerk and Finance Director, the Board should not have any input or opinions as to how the Manager handles personnel. The Board needs to be careful not to interfere with the Manager's authority. He also stated that the Board should be very careful when speaking with employees one on one. He stated that not everything you hear is the truth and is not supported by the facts. It is ok to listen but Board Members should not feel like they need to provide an answer. They should go to the Manager or encourage the employee to speak with their supervisor

or the Town Manager. Mr. Hankins stated that he shared one piece of advice with the Manager and that is to forget what happened in the past. Start new, treat each Board Member the same. Training to clarify what the Board's lanes are would be helpful.

## **5. Performance Evaluations**

The following items were discussed concerning performance evaluations:

- ***Mayor, Board Members, and Town Manager Feedback***

The idea of having anonymous evaluations from staff for the Mayor, Board Members, and the Town Manager was introduced. This could be used for citizens to offer feedback as well. The comment box was mentioned and it was determined that is a good way for people to provide feedback. The Clerk was asked to revive the form and the Town Manager was tasked to build a strategy for getting feedback from the employees.

- ***Town Attorney Evaluation***

The Board reviewed three proposed evaluation forms to use when evaluating the Town Attorney. This is not for an increase but for feedback so the Attorney will know how he is doing. The Board's consensus was to use the five-page form once the Town Attorney makes a few revisions.

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

- ***Town Manager Evaluation***

The Board reviewed two proposed evaluation forms to use when evaluating the Town Manager. The Board's consensus was to use the same evaluation form that was used last time. They will evaluate the Town Manager on March 23, 2020 for a three-month evaluation and determine future times after that. They also determined that to some extent the mentor will be involved in the Town Manager evaluation process.

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

- ***Town Finance Director Evaluation***

The Board reviewed a proposed evaluation form to use when evaluating the Town Finance Director. Their consensus was to use the existing form and evaluate the Finance Director on February 3, 2020 and discuss the evaluation in a closed session on February 10, 2020.

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

- ***Town Clerk Evaluation***

The Board reviewed two proposed evaluation forms to use when evaluating the Town Clerk. Their consensus was to use the same form that was used the last time and evaluate the Town Clerk in November. The Clerk told the Board that she would not be here in November, that she was going to retire at the end of May or the beginning of June. The Board then decided to evaluate the Clerk on January 20, 2020 and discuss the evaluation in a closed session on January 27, 2020.

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

## **6. Organizational Structure**

The following items were discussed concerning organizational structure:

- ***Supervision of the Finance Director***

The Board was provided with a proposed organizational chart. The Town Manager requested that the Board amend the Charter to move the supervision of the Finance Director under the Town Manager. This would provide a cleaner organizational chart and would cause the Town to operate a little bit smoother. An example of what he is referring to is getting the OPEB report. Mr. Hankins stated that the OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) report is an annual actuarial report that has to be submitted during the audit and this is the information that has held up the audit. He further stated that the information has been provided and has

been sent to the auditors for completion of the previous year's audit. We do not have an estimated time for the audit to be completed but Mr. Gerald stated that if he has control over it he could better inform the Board and with his oversight and strategic planning, a late audit will never happen. Mr. Gerald stated the issue is not with the Town Manager it is with the Finance Director, but if the Board changes the supervision of the Finance Director the issue would then be with the Manager. He also reminded the Board that the audit is always a year behind. Mr. Hankins stated the supervision of the Finance Director is done both ways but it is more prevalent for the Finance Director to report to the Manager. He stated the Board cannot make this change and it will require a local bill approved by the General Assembly. He stated the bill can say that the Finance Director still has a fiduciary responsibility to the Board of Aldermen under the supervision of the Town Manager. The Board's consensus was to keep the supervision of the Finance Director as is for now and revisit this once everything is cleaned up and when the Board has more confidence in the Town Manager's supervision of the finances. Mr. Hankins requested an agenda item on the January 27, 2020 meeting for an update on the audit. He stated that since the letter from the LGC arrived, he will ensure that this matter is cleared up. He stated the Finance Director has the primary responsibility; however, the Town Manager and the Town Attorney have areas of responsibility also. He stated that both of the audits will be completed as quickly as they can be done and from here on, he has a legal obligation to ensure it is done and he will keep the Board informed. Mr. Hankins stated that there are statutory responsibilities and requirements under G.S. Chapter 159 that are the Finance Officer's responsibilities. In this respect, no matter who the Finance Director reports to, when these statutes are violated, the Finance Director is responsible to report violations to the Town Manager and if the violations are made by the Town Manager, the Finance Director would have to report this to the Town Attorney and then the Board of Aldermen. It was determined that the Finance Director supervises the Payroll and Accounts Payable Technicians and the Revenue Department under the supervision of Ms. Robinson. The Board requested an updated organizational chart.

- *Town Clerk/HR Officer Position*

The Board inquired if the Town Clerk and HR Officer positions will be separated out and Mr. Gerald stated they need to have that discussion but at a later date. He stated that the HR Officer position was not deleted, just unfunded. Mr. Hankins stated this is a topic that will need to be discussed during the budget process for July 1, 2020.

- *Town Engineer Position*

The Board inquired if Mr. Gerald is still looking to fill the Town Engineer position and he stated this position was funded in the current budget, we just haven't been able to find anyone yet. He stated we have been sub-contracting out most of this work. The State has not adopted a budget yet but when they do we will need someone to manage the multiple projects that will be implemented.

- *Economic Development Position*

Economic Development Department was discussed to include the fact that the expenditures for this operation were never discussed and a budget for this Department was never created. The Board requested more reporting from this position. They also requested the total funds expended by and for this Department. Mr. Gerald stated that this question will be answered during budget workshops. Concern was expressed about allowing the Economic Development Director to spend funds without some kind of accountability. Mr. Gerald stated that you have to speculate on the funds needed for economic development. Board Members also asked if the Board could be informed about projects other than just by a code name. Concern was expressed in giving out information that may be dispersed by accident and jeopardize a project. Mr. Hankins clarified that the Board would appreciate better communication from their point person (Economic Development Director), under the supervision of the Town Manager, about his plans and activities and stated that the Board does need better accountability.

- ***Spring Lake Chamber of Commerce***

The Board discussed the Spring Lake Chamber of Commerce and whether the Town will expend funds for the Chamber. Mayor Dobbins stated that the Town should become a dues paying member and do what we can as a member to help. Mr. Hankins stated that Chambers of Commerce are independent and are not for profit corporations. It is a membership corporation and the membership usually fund the Chamber with dues. There needs to be, ideally, a very close, cooperative and productive relationship between the Chamber and the Town Government. Often there is a contractual relationship, like the ones this Board approved in the past under which the Town appropriated some funds to the Chamber. There must be an effective, productive organization so that the Town will have confidence in doing that. In entering into a contract with the Chamber for funds does not mean the Town is taking over the Chamber or will serve as the Board of Directors for the Chamber. His opinion is that the discussions need to continue so that we will have a working relationship with the Chamber when they reorganize and get back on their feet. This may include funding but not necessarily. The consensus of the Board was that the Chamber should be self-sustaining and the Town will be a dues paying member and will do what we can to help.

The Board paused for a short lunch break at 12:21 p.m. and resumed the meeting at 12:42 p.m.

## **7. Goals/Objectives for the Town**

- ***Long Term***

- Economic Development, creating jobs
- Big Box distributors that create more than 30 or 40 jobs, we do not necessarily want call centers
- A phone app like the one we used to have called "I Love Spring Lake"
- Extension of the Recreation Center gym (the gym is to capacity when we are having the boxing matches so this is an item that needs to be discussed)
- Festivals, determine is multiple small events or one to two large events are best (possibly have something at Carver's Creek State Park – 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festival – Dr. Seuss Parade)
- Various types of entertainment (economic development is working on this)

- ***Short Term***

- Town beautification
- Landscaping
- Increase our water capacity (which means a water rate increase)
- Water study to find another source of water (Mr. Gerald stated since he has been Town Manager, he has saved the Town \$1.1M and with the money that we are able to save this year he wants to fund the water study)
- Creating better roads
- Finding land (when the Town owns land, it is easier to make a deal for what we want)
- Speed bumps – Mr. Gerald priced them at \$78/per strip of rubber. Old Holly Hills, New Holly Hills, and Laketree Blvd. need the strips. Odell Road needs a line painted down the center. Mr. Gerald will report back to Alderwoman Cooper on this.
- Third Street at the Bridge – NCDOT is not going to put lights on the bridge. Alderman O'Garra suggested that the turn lanes on Third Street be eliminated to help eliminate vehicles from hitting the guardrail when they turn onto the Bridge. A round-a-bout on that side of the bridge would be a solution.
- Water bill leak adjustment policy amendment

Mr. Gerald stated we did receive funding for a walking trail on the Mutzburg property. He stated we also have sidewalks coming in to make the community more walkable. We are trying to have connectivity with all the sidewalks.

It was clarified that grants are written by outside engineers and by staff.

A concern was expressed about Board Members not being included in some of the meetings. The concern was not with the Mayor and not about the Mayor Pro Tem when he is serving in the absence of the Mayor but with the Mayor Pro Tem having more access than the rest of the Board Members. It was stated that the Mayor Pro Tem is not over the rest of the Board Members, they are equal members. Mr. Gerald stated that it is different with economic development and the Board Members are told in closed session. All some Board Members are asking is to have a seat at the table. She also stated for voting purposes we are all equal. Alderwoman Cooper stated that if you and the Mayor have a meeting that is fine. Also, if the Mayor Pro Tem is attending in the absence of the Mayor, that is fine. But, if the Mayor Pro Tem is invited along with the Mayor, the other Board Members should have an opportunity to attend. It should be all or none. Alderman O'Garra stated that it is important for the Mayor Pro Tem to know what is going on and at least have a general knowledge of things in case he has to step in as Mayor.

Alderwoman Sutherland and Alderwoman Cooper stated that it would be nice to have our Economic Development Director share some of the community concerns with the owners of Compare Foods.

Mr. Gerald stated that he would like to fund a study for the water tank or a well out of this year's budget. He estimated it to cost approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000. He stated once you pay for the water tower you make more money on the water and may be able to lower the tax rate. Mayor Pro Tem Aziz stated that having to purchase water from PWC and Harnett County restricts our ability to grow and having our own water source would allow us more freedom. He stated we are looking to extend the Town's borders.

Alderwoman Jackson asked if we can work on the water bills. She stated that if a person has a leak in January that was fixed in February the customer can get an adjustment on the January bill but not on the February bill. Mr. Gerald requested that Alderwoman Jackson bring this item back during the budget workshop.

#### **8. Preliminary Budget Discussion**

Mr. Gerald stated this item should wait until we have a budget workshop.

#### **9. Expectations of Board**

- *Decorum*

Mr. Hankins reviewed the Board's Code of Ethics Policy. He stated civility is important. We are losing the ability to treat others with respect. He requested that the Clerk make copies of this policy and provide a copy to each Board Member. He stated there is a great book called *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy* by Stephen L. Carter and it would be a really good idea for everyone to read it. Alderwoman Sutherland asked the Clerk to purchase the book for everyone from her travel and training budget.

Mayor Dobbins made the following statement regarding decorum during the Board meetings. He stated that when someone turns on their light, he will call on them to speak and everyone will get their turn. He read about a practice that he would like to follow to see if it will help bring some order to the deliberations. He stated he will allow each Board Member 10 minutes the first time to speak on a topic and five minutes the second time. This should be enough time to get one's point made. He stated we do not need to be going back and forth. He also stated it is never appropriate to "amen" something that is said. We also need to watch how we roll our eyes and squirm in our seats when we disagree with something. We must act professional and act as a team.

Mr. Hankins stated that he will put together rules of procedure in a document that the Board can adopt. It will be something that the Board can change and then live by. He suggested a workshop to go over the rules so the Board understands the rules they adopt.

At this time Mr. Hankins had to leave.

**Miscellaneous Discussion**

Aldерwoman Sutherland asked about the longevity bonus and stated that if an elected official serves all year but is not re-elected, they should get the bonus. It was determined that this item should be discussed at the January 27, 2020 Board Meeting.

Pedestrians who cross anywhere other than at a crosswalk should be cited with a warning because they create a hazard.

Mr. Gerald was requested to follow-up on the road markings and speed strips on Third Street behind Zaxby's.

Mayor Dobbins will make sure the Board knows if anything is going on with personnel who are supervised by the Board.


Mr. Gerald will make sure the Board Members receive a text message when he is going to be out stating who will be the acting manager in his absence.

**Action:** There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

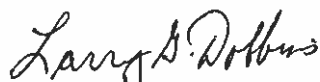
**Motion:** Aldерwoman Jackson

**Second by:** Mayor Pro Tem Aziz

**Vote:** Unanimous

  
Rhonda D. Webb, MMC, NCCMC  
Town Clerk

ATTEST:



Larry G. Dobbins  
Mayor