

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

December 14, 2020

MINUTES

6:00 pm

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

Board Members Present: Mayor Pro Tem Taimoor Aziz
Alderwoman Sofia Cooper (via Zoom)
Alderwoman Jackie Jackson
Alderman James O'Garra
Alderwoman Fredricka Sutherland

Others Present:

Tim Garner, Acting Town Manager
Jonathan Charleston, Town Attorney
Catherine Bamba, Attorney (via Zoom)
Debora Johnson-Hudson, Town Clerk
Melissa Pereira, Deputy Town Clerk
Banard Lemon, Audio Visual Coordinator
Tonny McNeil, Economic Development
Jonathan Richardson, Interim Fire Chief

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Alderman O'Garra gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Agenda

Action: Approval of the November 23, 2020 regular meeting minutes. Mayor Pro tem made a motion to delete Item #7- North Carolina Preservation Grant Sandhills Family Heritage Association and G.S. 143-318.11(a)(4) Economic Development. It was seconded by Alderwoman Sutherland. Alderwoman Sutherland added discussion of LCG letter, item 8(d). Attorney Charleston added that this is something we can discuss in closed session under Attorney/Client Privilege. Alderwoman Sutherland stated she wanted to discuss in open session and anything additional we can discuss in closed session because it is public record. Alderman O'Garra seconded. Alderwoman Sutherland stated she had items highlighted that we can discuss in open session and the rest can be discussed in closed session. Attorney Charleston had some concerns, but left it to the board's discretion. Alderwoman Jackson agreed with the attorney stating we have to be very careful of what we say and what we don't. Alderwoman Sutherland stated we have 45 days to take care of this letter. Alderman O'Garra stated that this information should be discussed in open session because it talks about the town's finances. Alderman O'Garra stated this letter should have come to the board first not the attorney because he is not a board member. Attorney Charleston stated for the record he discussed this letter with each board member. Mayor Dobbins clarified that Alderwoman Sutherland is talking about the letter that came from the LGC. Mayor Dobbins stated this is item 8(d). Alderwoman Sutherland also added an update on Town

computers, Item #8(e), and for citizen's information the discussion of Water Department information, Item #8(f). Alderman O'Garra made a motion to add the second letter from Beth Wood, item 8(g).

Alderman O'Garra made a motion to approve the second letter from Beth Wood item 8(g). It was seconded by Alderwoman Jackson. The vote was unanimous.

8(d) – LGC Letter

8(e) – Update on Computers

8(f) – Water Department

8(g) – Letter from Beth Wood (the second letter)

4. Approval of Consent Items

Action: Approval of consent items for November 23, 2020, Regular Meeting minutes.

Motion by: Alderwoman Jackson

Second by: Mayor Pro tem Aziz

Vote: unanimous

5. Public Forum

Mike Campbell - No show

Mr. James Christian expressed concerns with the termination of the Fire Chief. Mr. James Christian discussed rehiring the Fire Chief. Mr. James Christian had concerns about the Town's audit.

6. New Business

Discussion to appoint members to serve on the Audit Committee

Mayor Dobbins asked the Board to appoint members to serve on the Audit Committee. Mayor Dobbins asked if two members would volunteer. There was no comment. No Audit Committee members selected.

Discussion of Board to consider the meeting schedule for December 28, 2020 Regular Meeting

Ms. Debora Hudson asked the board to consider cancelling the December 28, 2020 regular meeting. Alderman O'Garra asked if we had any business that was pressing? Ms. Debora Hudson stated no, not at this time. Alderwoman Sutherland asked what are the options? Ms. Debora Hudson presented the board with their options.

Action Approval of cancelling the December 28, 2020 Regular Meeting.

Motion by: Alderman O'Garra

Second by: Alderwoman Jackson

Vote: unanimous

Discussion of the responsibilities of Town Manager vs. Board of Aldermen

Alderman O'Garra stated the Board has done great things in the past. Alderman O'Garra has concerns about having a Town Chamber reestablished. Alderman O'Garra stated its not a good time to make irrational

decisions. Alderman O'Garra expressed concerns about hiring an Interim Town Manager. Alderman O'Garra had concerns about the email letter that Beth Wood, the State Auditor sent, and the fact the Board did not receive it.

Alderman O'Garra discussed the memo about the Fire Trucks. Alderman O'Garra showed the original memo was for FY 2022. Alderman O'Garra discussed those fire trucks should have never been picked up.

Discussion of LCG Letter

Alderwoman Sutherland expressed concerns about the LCG letter that was signed by the Board and Management and stated it is very critical. Alderwoman Sutherland discussed the Board's responsibilities.

Discussion of update Town Computers

Alderwoman Sutherland expressed concerns about the hacking of the Town's computers. Alderwoman Cooper had concerns about the citizens personal information, and stated letters should be sent out to inform citizens. Alderman O'Garra said he talked to IT, and they explained it would take about six weeks.

Alderwoman Jackson stated the Spring Lake Police Department and Tim Garner, Acting Town Manager, did an outstanding job with the traffic when the power went out. Alderwoman Sutherland thanked Tim Garner.

Discussion of Water Department Bills and Late Fees

Alderwoman Sutherland had concerns about the water bills because some citizens bills are higher and others lower. Alderwoman Sutherland said because of the computers being hacked, the online service bill pay was not operative. Alderwoman Sutherland had concerns about the late charges that incurred on citizens water bills and it's not fair for them to pay late fees due to the computers being hacked.

Alderman O'Garra had concerns about the early closing of the water department for citizens to pay their bills. Alderwoman O'Garra stated the Water Department to stay open another thirty minutes. Alderman O'Garra discussed that the late fees are our revenue. Alderwoman Jackson stated all late fees should be waived. Alderwoman Cooper stated no one can pay their bill online. Alderwoman Sutherland suggested all late fees to be waived.

Action: Approval of all water bill late fees to be waived until the Town's computer systems are back to normal.

Motion by: Alderwoman Jackson

Second by: Alderwoman Sutherland

Vote: 4-1

YES

Mayor Pro tem Aziz
Alderwoman Sutherland
Alderwoman Cooper
Alderwoman Jackson

NO

Alderman O'Garra

Alderwoman Cooper stated there should be no water shut-offs for the month of December 2020. Alderman O'Garra agreed.

Action: Approval of no water shut-offs for the month of December 2020.
Motion by: Alderwoman Cooper
Second by: Alderman O'Garra
Vote: unanimous

Email Letter from Beth Wood, State Auditor

Mayor Dobbins stated this would be discussed in closed session.

**7. Closed Session G.S 143.318.11 (a)(3) – Consultation with Attorney
G.S 143.318.11 (a)(6) – Personnel**

Action: The Board approved a motion to go into Closed Session pursuant to G.S 143- 318.11 (a)(3) Consultation with Attorney and G.S 143.318.11(a)(6) Personnel.
Motion by: Alderwoman Jackson
Second by: Alderwoman Sutherland
Vote: Unanimous

Alderwoman Cooper made a motion, seconded by Mayor Pro tem Aziz, to reconvene in open session.

8. Adjournment.

Action: There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.
Motion: Mayor Pro tem Aziz
Second by: Alderman O'Garra
Vote: unanimous

Larry G. Dobbins

ATTEST:
Larry G. Dobbins
Mayor

Melissa Pereira
Melissa Pereira
Deputy Town Clerk