

**Mayor**

Doris Underwood

**Commissioners**

Christopher Carlson

Edward Lowery Jr.

Daniel McColl

Tony McVickers

Benjamin Mahaffey

**Attorney**

Sarah Price



**Town Clerk/Finance Officer**

Raymie Day

**Utility Clerk**

Lana Penfield

**Interim Chief of Police**

John Micheals

**Public Works Director**

Joe Penfield

**Code Enforcement Officer**

Tina Odom

## WORKSHOP MEETING MINUTES May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

*Called to order by Mayor Underwood 6:29PM*

*Invocation by Doris Underwood*

*Pledge of allegiance led by Mayor Underwood*

### **The following members of the board of commissioners were present:**

Mayor Underwood

Commissioner Carlson

Commissioner Lowery

Commissioner Mahaffey

Commissioner McColl

### **The following members of the board of commissioners were not present:**

Commissioner McVickers

### **Overview**

- **Planning board** still seeking a fifth member; open to suggestions
- **Land use and zoning** updates discussed; need for updated books and documentation.
- **ETJ (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction)** status unclear if town attorney has filed; paperwork with county, awaiting finalization.
- **Land purchase** for Dr. Locklear's lot was debated; The \$80,000 offer discussed, but deed/title issues persist per board/attorney.
- **Sewer project** costs have increased; focus on prioritizing most urgent areas first.
- **Annual employee reviews** to be formalized in HR policy for budgeting raises.
- **Police vehicle fleet** aging; discussion on replacing older cars and budgeting for new ones.
- **CSX reimbursement** for property maintenance secured; \$4,800/year. A proposal to use it for a new lawn mower was raised.
- **Budget review:** chemical supply costs for water/sewer was debated. The decision was made to raise it to \$25,000.00. Utility Franchise tax was discussed and it is unclear where this income is from.
- **Water/sewer rates:** possible restructuring, administrative fee options, and legal limits on profit were discussed.
- **Capital management** accounts and reserve funds reviewed for future projects.
- **Facility upgrades:** need for improved police office and signage for town hall meetings.

### **Planning Board Membership & Status**

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- Plan board currently has four members; seeking a fifth.
  - Jim was recently sworn in as an official member.
  - Shevaun was absent;
  - Board remains open to suggestions for new members.
  - Quorum requirements discussed; fifth member needed.

### **Board Progression & Member Engagement**

- Discussed progression from one board to another.
- Identified Mark as next to take a step in board involvement.
- Emphasized need for Jim to gain experience, especially with zoning.
- Requested updates on adoption of recent land use changes.
- Lana tasked with collecting books for amendment updates.
- Plan to update and redistribute books with amended land use plans.
- Planning board members have been notified to bring their books to town hall so they can be updated and reissued.

### **Land Use, Zoning, and Subdivision Ordinance Updates**

- Subdivision ordinance copy needed; Tina requested to check with Robin for digital version.
- Subdivision ordinance updates still in progress; planning board review required.

### **ETJ Status, County Coordination, and Old Business**

- ETJ (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction) approval process discussed.
- Board previously voted to obtain ETJ; believed process was complete.
- Town attorney has not finalized ETJ.
- Cannot be confirmed if the attorney (Sarah) has submitted ETJ request to county; status remains unconfirmed.
- ETJ to remain in old business until the process is resolved. This Issue has persisted for 3-6 years without resolution.

### **Land Purchase Discussion & Deed Issues**

- Board previously voted to authorize Tina to act on town's behalf up to a specified dollar amount.
- Purchase offer was prepared but not delivered due to deed issues per town attorney.
- Deed lists ownership under an organization not registered with the state.
- Dr. Locklear claims ownership of both the organization the lot is deeded to.
- Town owns most land except this one block; Tina states that acquiring it would allow for expansion and grant eligibility as it is a shovel ready lot.
- Commissioner McColl proposed to reconsider \$80,000 land offer due to changed circumstances and existing land holdings.
- Seller distrusts town due to past delays; requires contract to proceed.
- Legal counsel recommended allowing time to resolve deed issue.
- Board needs to decide next steps regarding the offer and deed resolution. No motion made; further discussion and confirmation of asking price needed before next steps. Item has once again been tabled until the next meeting.

### **Grant Opportunities**

- Tina states that Fairmont received grant for new town hall; contact with grant advisor (Mr. Hill) is ongoing.
- Tina, Raymie and Lana are continuing work with Mr. Hill to find grants available: All 3 are working to assist with grants to better the town.
- Town may need additional grants for further work if funds are insufficient for the sewer project.

Prioritized addressing grants for the most critical infrastructure needs first. IE a maintenance shop.

### **HR Policy: Annual Reviews and Budget Planning**

- Reviewed project scope due to increased costs since grant application.
- Annual employee reviews to be added to handbook, scheduled for May each year.
- Focused on most expensive/deepest area (south of tracks, near wastewater plant) for initial work.

### **Burn Barrel Ordinance Update**

- State law prohibits open burning due to available pickup service; town cannot override this.
- Town ordinance cannot be updated to allow burn barrels or open burning.

### **Police Vehicle Fleet: Maintenance, Replacement, and Budget**

- Discussion on divesting older police vehicles; no immediate action planned as they currently serve as backups.
- Recently acquired two vehicles for \$500 each; both near end-of-life per county standards.  
One vehicle has over 200,000 miles and recurring repair costs (\$500-\$2,000 per year).
- Plan considered: purchase newer patrol car, move current vehicles to reserve, remove oldest from fleet. New police vehicle (e.g., Ford Explorer) estimated at \$42,000 with lights; outfitting costs approximately \$15,000-\$20,000 per vehicle. Commissioner Carlson will be doing research to present what a new vehicle will cost the department.

### **CSX Reimbursement and Depot Refurbishment**

- CSX contacted regarding property upkeep and potential funding.
- CSX agreed to pay town \$4,800/year for maintenance.
- CSX exploring additional funds for train depot improvements. Currently the Depot exterior painted, windows fixed, outside refurbished.

### **Mosquito Sprayer, Jetter, and Equipment Needs**

- Discussion on setting up mosquito spraying for the season.
- Mosquito sprayer calibration was confirmed and is ready to be used.

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- Commissioner Carlsons offer remains to spray chemical along yard perimeter for deeper woods coverage.
  - Resident who previously inquired about not spraying on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street has moved so that location can now be sprayed.
  - Plan to acquire a new mosquito sprayer was mentioned.

### **Budget Review and Approval Timeline**

- The draft document prepared for the board was reviewed.
- Final approval is required before implementation. Readiness date was set for the workshop meeting in June with a budget launch date of **July 1**.
- Utility franchise income budgeted at **\$35,000**, actual received **\$25,000**; next year proposed at **\$25,000**. Research needed to identify which income source this is. Interest on investments increased due to capital management accounts; potential to earn **\$30,000** if surplus funds are invested.
- Testing for the new well (well four) will require more frequent and expensive chemicals; ongoing testing for well one also required. Because of this the chemical and testing costs are expected to rise with the new well coming online; Request was made to raise the chemical testing and supply budget to \$25,000. Raymie will tell Robin to adjust the budget as needed for the new amount.

### **Water/Sewer Rate Structure, Administrative Fees, and Legal Limits**

- Cannot profit from water services; Legal restrictions prevent making a profit on water services.
- Lana proposed reducing base usage from 3,000 to 2,000 gallons to protect small users from rate increases and increase the higher usage amounts.
- Sewer rates are low compared to other areas; possible need for increase.
- Consideration of a \$2/\$3 administrative fee on sewer bills; could generate ~\$1,200/month. Administrative fee could be flat or percentage-based; current system supports a flat fee.
- No reserve funds for sewer or water line breaks; need for contingency planning.
- Budget is nearly break-even; staff income still needs to be subtracted and returned to the general fund.
- Options discussed: rate restructuring, nominal fee increase, sewage rate increase.  
Need to determine required budget for water/sewer department sustainability.

### **Financial Concerns**

- Accounts tracked in the Excel spreadsheets; need to be relabel for clarity.
- Closed accounts to be removed from spreadsheets after two months.
- General fund and water/sewer have separate high-yield accounts.
- Outstanding loan (~\$30,000) due in June; related to water/sewer project.
- Discussion on budgeting for equipment (e.g., jetter) to maintain sewer lines.
- Grant received for water/sewer improvements (~\$1 million); Working with Mr. Honeycutt to keep costs within the budget of the grant.

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## Marketing

- Social media updates have improved community engagement and will continue.
- Suggestion to install an information sign for public announcements.

## Building Maintenance

- Quote received for the police station and town hall front windows to include privacy tent and vinyl lettering \$1,200 \$1,500. Mayor Underwood requested to include the two side doors in the quote. Raymie will follow up on the quote.
- There is also a quote pending for vinyl only from another company.

## Action Items

- **Follow up with Sarah on ETJ finalization**  
Mayor Underwood - will be contacting Sarah to confirm status of ETJ paperwork with the county and report back.
- **Collect and update board books**  
Mark Autry - Gather all the planning board information so that the books can be updated to with the amended land use and zoning information.
- **Adjust budget draft for review**  
Robin Fitch - Increase the chemical section in the Water Sewer budget to reflect \$25,000.00 instead of \$15,000.
- **Obtain quotes on a new police officer vehicle**  
Commissioner Carlson - Gather quotes on what the cost of a new police vehicle would be.
- **Run water/sewer billing scenarios**  
Lana Penfield – Run mock administrative fee options in RVS (flat vs. percentage) and report on software capabilities.
- **Clarify and relabel account balances and tint adjustment**  
Raymie Day - Update spreadsheet to clearly label capital management and operating accounts for water/sewer and general fund. Speak with signorama on the quote for the police dept and town hall doors.