

MINUTES OF THE WHITSETT TOWN COUNCIL

January 14, 2025

Whitsett Town Hall Building

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

The regular meeting of the Whitsett Town Council was held on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, at the Whitsett Town Hall. The following members of the Town Council were present: Mayor Chip Bell and Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice, Council Members Craig York, Cindy Wheeler and Lee Greeson. Also present were Town Administrator Karen Horne and Town Clerk Barbara York along with five citizens.

Mayor Chip Bell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and noted that a quorum was present. He asked Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice to give the invocation which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Mayor Bell asked if there were any Speakers from the Floor and there were none.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Adoption of the Minutes

- Mayor Bell asked if he heard a motion to accept the minutes from the November 12, 2024, Regular Meeting as well as the Public Hearing. Council Member Craig York made the motion to adopt the November 2024 minutes. The motion was seconded by Council Member Lee Greeson and the adoption of the November 12, 2024, Town Council Regular Meeting and the Public Hearing minutes was carried by unanimous vote.

2. Update on Tree Trimming

- Mayor Chip Bell reported that the cedar trees behind the ballfield were just trimmed back off the powerlines rather than cutting them all the way back. The trees will look much better by doing it that way. The large oak trees were also cut back so there would be no damage to the powerlines should a storm come through.

3. Update on Renovation Project

- Council Member Craig York reported that the Town Hall now has a new metal roof on the entire building. He also stated that all the work underneath the building is finished. He let the Council know that we are approximately 2/3 of the way through the \$300K grant money. Mr. York will work on getting more grant money to continue with the Town Hall renovation soon.

4. Any Other Old Business

- Mayor Bell asked if there was any further Old Business and there was none.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning Board

1. Planning Board Chairperson Karen Horne stated there was no meeting in December.

Enforcement Officer

1. Town Administrator Karen Horne reported that we had a citizen make a formal complaint on 7209 Whitsett Park Road due to the owners storing many junk cars and old appliances on the property. She let the Council know that she had reached out to Guilford County, and they have recently hired a new enforcement officer. Guilford County is going to have this new enforcement officer investigate the Whitsett Park Road complaint.

Town Administrator

1. Update on Playground Area

- Town Administrator Horne reported that Cody Myrick was trying to get the new sliding boards installed. Mr. Myrick has been in western NC for several weeks helping with the Hurricane Helene relief work and Whitsett has also had extremely low temperatures during this time as well, so the equipment has yet to be installed.

2. 811 Membership

- Town Administrator Karen Horne informed the Council that we have had 19 tickets come in since we joined 811 on December 2nd. We paid one company two different times to mark the waterlines for Lumos installation of fiber optics. The cost for this was \$1400 each time they came to do the marking. Because we get so many tickets each week, Mrs. Horne has been driving around our town about every other week to respray these marks so we will not have to pay this company to come back again and again. She let the Council know that the cost for this was not in our budget because we did not know that by law, we had to be members of 811. We will need to make sure that we plan for this in next year's budget. Mayor Bell asked Mrs. Horne to make a list of these unexpected expenses that we have had so we can plan for them. The Town must provide this to our citizens as a utility provider. We may be able to recoup some of these expenses using our DCC's. Council Member Craig York suggested that the Planning Board investigate this charge. Mrs. Horne suggested that the charge should be about \$250.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Financial Report - ARPA

- Town Administrator Horne explained to the Council that according to our auditors, the Council passed an ordinance that the ARPA money was to be allocated for salaries over the next three years. This freed up our budgeted salaries to spend in other ways. So, we have been able to use ARP money for the playground equipment and other different items. We are going to use the remainder of this grant money to purchase the new water meters. We are still waiting on a final quote for these meters from Core and Main.

2. Approve 2025 Planning Board and Town Council Meeting Schedules

- Mayor Bell asked for a motion to approve the Planning Board and Town Council meeting schedules. Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice made a motion to approve the Planning Board 2025 meeting schedule. This motion was seconded by Council Member Craig York and the motion passed unanimously. Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice made a second motion to approve the 2025 Town Council meeting schedule which was approved by Mr. York, and this was also approved by the Council unanimously.

3. Approve Amendment to Audit Contract

- Mayor Bell signed this contract in December and it wasn't approved at that time since there was no Council Meeting. Council Member Craig York made the motion to approve the amendment to the Audit Contract and it was seconded by Council Member Lee Greeson. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Personnel Salary Review Handout

- Town Administrator Karen Horne provided the Council with a handout regarding staff salaries compared to other municipalities of comparable size. The Council scheduled a closed session retreat to discuss this on February 6, 2025. They also scheduled a budget meeting to begin creating the next fiscal year's budget on February 11th.

Mrs. Horne brought up that our museum curator Susan McKinney occasionally works in the office to answer phone calls and take water payments when the town clerk is out for the day. Mrs. Horne suggested that when Mrs. McKinney does this and the time puts her over her 8 hours' time allotment for the week, that she be paid for that time. The council agreed to this suggestion.

5. Discussion to Hire Withers Ravenel Engineering to Create a Water Grant

- Town Administrator Horne reached out to Neil Garrett from Withers Ravenel Engineering regarding grant writing to get grants to extend the town's waterlines at least up to the Town Hall (corner of Highway 61 and Whitsett Park Road) which will support the Whitsett Fire Department. This is especially important should the Town Hall catch fire; the fire department does not have immediate access to get plenty of water to put a potential fire out. Mr. Garrett said that his business only has two employees, and they would not have the resources to keep up with a lot of these engineering requests. He suggested that Mrs. Horne contact Withers Ravenel located in Raleigh which has a whole division that writes grants for municipalities. They work on a point system to review which municipalities have the greatest need for infrastructure/waterline grants. Based on the needs of the municipality, they are scored using this point system. He felt confident that our Town would score high because of the fire department not having direct access to water. This company does not charge for their grant writing as they include their costs into the actual grant. To run a waterline all the way down to TA Truck Stop would cost the town approximately one million dollars. Having the waterline go that far down Highway 61 would allow a commercial company to build across Highway 61 from the truck stop. PTRC also writes grants like this. Mrs. Horne will reach out to get more information to bring back to Council. Mayor Bell stated that he was going to reach out to Mr. Garrett for more information as well.

6. Any Items from Council Members

- Mayor Bell asked if there were any further items from the Council Members and there were none.

7. Announcements

- Town Clerk Barbara York informed the Council that she has two water customers that are not paying their water bills (for the meter access fees). There is no water use on either of these properties so the penalty of turning off the water until the bill is paid does not apply. The Council will discuss this situation when they meet for their closed retreat in February. Mayor Bell asked Town Administrator Horne to reach out to the Town's attorney to get his feedback.
- Ms. York also expressed her concern that there are a couple of structures on properties in our town limits that need to be looked at by the health department which may need to be condemned due to dangerous conditions. She asked that we contact Guilford County's Public Health Department regarding these properties.

8. Speakers from the Floor

- Mayor Bell asked if there were any speakers from the floor. One of the citizens in the audience came to the podium to introduce herself. She is moving back to Whitsett where she was born and raised. She commented that she sees a lot of changes to our town since she last lived here. The Council welcomed her back home!

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business before the Council, Mayor Chip Bell asked for a motion to adjourn. Council Member Craig York made that motion, and it was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice. The motion carried; and the January 14, 2025 Town Council meeting adjourned at approximately 6:55p.m. The next regular meeting of the Whitsett Town Council is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at the Whitsett Town Hall.

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_____/S/_____

Chip Bell, Mayor

Jerry Rice, Mayor Pro Tem

APPROVED: