

**TOWN OF GRIFTON**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**WORKSHOP MEETING**  
August 7, 2012

**Present:** Mayor B.R. Jackson; Commissioners William Barnes, Jr., Mary Grace Bright, Richard Hill, Sammy Whitehurst; Manager Joe Albright

**Absent:** Commissioner E.F. Albritton

Mayor Jackson called the meeting to order.

Mayor Jackson led the Board of Commissioners in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

**Recognition of Persons to be Heard:**

\*Nellie Greene and Pastor Addie Prince came before the Board on behalf of Bread of Life Gospel Tabernacle Church located at 453 Queen Street. Mrs. Greene stated that last month she came before the Board and asked for mercy on the utility bill at this address. The bill was \$2256.50 because of a leak that happened when a pipe was broken on the side of the house. She and Manager Albright were supposed to set down and come up with a payment plan in order for this bill to be paid off in 8 to 9 months. Manager Albright stated that Pastor Prince called him and told him they would not be able to pay that much so Manager Albright instructed Pastor Prince to come back before the Board. Pastor Prince informed the Board of how the Church obtained the property and the property has 3 mortgages. After a lengthy discussion about how much to pay per month the Board asked Manager Albright to come up with a document between the two parties and let the Board review it at next week's meeting. Manager Albright feels the need to express to the Board the understanding that he will do so with warning about precedent and arbitrary rate setting and deal making when it comes to utility accounts.

Commissioner Bright stated that this should not be discussed at this point in the meeting but under the discussion items.

\*Mr. Bobby Jones of 312 Canal Street in Grifton came before the Board to express his concern with contracting out the utilities department. He stated that he had been a resident of Grifton for 67 years and he is concerned about the type of service and the guaranteed service the Town would be getting if the department was contracted out. He does not agree this should happen. He stated that "it stinks" to him.

\*Ardathy Spikes of 6748 Pitt Street Grifton came before the Board stating that she does not agree with contracting the utilities department out to an independent contractor. She stated that we have had better service with our own employees in prior years. She wanted to know

how we would be saving money if we still used our own equipment and had to maintain that equipment. She absolutely does not feel contracting is the way to go.

\*Annie Harrison of 6739 Church Street stated that she is against using contractor for our utilities. She said the Town should think about its employees and what they would do if they lost their jobs to contractors. She stated that “our guys do a great job” and that’s the way it should remain. Ms. Harrison asked how the public will know when this issue will be discussed.

Manager Albright stated that all meetings are public.

Commissioner Whitehurst stated that knowing the feelings of the public helps the Board make decisions.

### **Public Hearing**

Mayor Jackson called the public hearing to order.

The Purpose of the public hearing was to hear public input on Mr. Robert Dixon’s request for a conditional use permit to place a Class A mobile home on Pitt County Parcel#32660 located at 6724 Sherry’s Lane.

Manager Albright stated that the property is now zoned R8 which does allow Class A mobile homes as a conditional use.

Manager Albright stated that public notices and legal requirements have been met for this permit.

Manager Albright also stated that Planning Board has recommended approval.

Mayor Jackson asked for comments.

There being no comments Manager Albright recommended to close the public hearing and this item be placed on the consent agenda at the next regular meeting.

Mayor Jackson closed the Public Hearing

### **Discussion Items**

1. *2009 Water Supply Plan-Resolution No. 2012-08*

Manager Albright stated that the General Statutes of the State of NC requires that local government’s providing water service to citizens prepare a local water supply plan. This water supply plan must be adopted by the Board of Commissioners. Manger Albright recommends this item to be put on the consent agenda at the next regular Board meeting. The Board agreed.

2. *Street Improvements Project-Bond Referendum Timeline Update*

Manager Albright stated that he was asked by the Board to make modifications on the current timeline and he has done so as requested. He would like to give the Board the opportunity to discuss and move forward with the project. He also wanted to talk to the

Board about the approval to develop an informational brochure as a starting point to use in the water bills, facebook, website, etc. He would like to move forward with the timeline as it relates to how we get public input and wants input on how to proceed. He also stated that the funding options need to be discussed. Manager Albright recommended having a separate workshop specifically for this timeline. He feels it is necessary in order to move forward and make progress.

Commissioner Barnes thinks the separate meeting is a good idea because everybody needs to be on the same page.

Commissioner Whitehurst wants to go ahead with the educational process and then schedule a separate workshop to discuss options.

Manager Albright feels that a workshop meeting dedicated solely to the streets issue would produce a better outcome.

Commissioner Whitehurst would like to set a date at the next regular meeting.

Commissioner Bright thinks the timeline is great but she feels the Board needs to solicit public input.

3. *Golf Cart Operation on Town Streets- Ordinance No.2012-02*

Mayor Jackson asked that this item be tabled until the next workshop meeting.

4. *Contentnea Creek Woods-Walk Project – Grant Applications and Award*

Manager Albright explained that in 2011 the Town acquired, through donation, approximately 40 acres of land on the Contentnea Creek. After acquiring the property, the CDC met and talked about how to utilize this area. The Committee referred to previous planning documents for this and other areas in Town and came to the conclusion that they all involved a trail/boardwalk system throughout the property. The Committee began exploring grant ideas and opportunities. One of the grant opportunities explored was through U.S. Fish and Wildlife. The grant was awarded for \$10,000 and requires an equal match from the Town. However, the match from the Town is allowed to be in the form of “in-kind” services instead of actual monies.

Commissioner Hill asked how much it would cost to complete the project.

Manager Albright asked Committee member Wayne Hardee to speak.

Mr. Hardee stated it’s about a \$35,000 project and the only cost to the Town would be the use of some labor and equipment. Most of the labor will be donated by local organizations.

Manager Albright recommended accepting this grant by adopting Resolution No. 2012-09. He asked that this item be put on the consent agenda at the next regular meeting. The Board agreed.

Mayor Jackson did express his concern about how much it would cost the Town in the future.

5. *Sewer Rehabilitation Project-Bid Update*

Manager Albright explained that the Bid openings for the Sewer Rehab Project were opened on July 31<sup>st</sup> and the bids have been certified. However, the lowest bidder is more than \$500,000 over budget. The engineers are working with the contractor to

make sure the bid numbers are correct. He also stated that we have spoken to USDA Rural Development about additional funding if it is necessary. Manger Albright stated that he would have more information at the next meeting.

Commissioner Bright asked about the timeline on this project.

Manager Albright responded that this project should take at least 1 year.

### **Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Bright stated that she would now like to talk about the Church's utility bill and give Manager Albright direction on how to proceed.

Manager Albright reiterated that he strongly cautions stretching the payment plan out because we are setting precedent and we have no collateral. He strongly recommends tying the payment to the Church.

Commissioner Bright stated that because it is such an extreme circumstance she is more inclined to work with them and agrees that tying in collateral is a good idea.

Commissioner Hill wants to give them a break because they are a Church and have always paid their bill on time.

Commissioner Barnes asked if something happens in 2 years and payments are missed is the only thing we could do is cut the water off to that building. He asked if the house is sold is there any way we can demand the bill be paid in full or hold the new owner responsible.

Manager Albright stated we cannot put someone else's debt to the new owners.

Manager Albright stated that we could place a lien on the house if the Church agrees to the terms. He will check to see if this procedure is legal because he wants the Town protected.

Commissioner Hill stated that they should pay the bill but it should not be tied to the Church.

Commissioner Bright recommended setting up a \$90.00 per month payment plan if it is tied to the Church and if they do not want to do that then the payment should be higher.

Commissioner Barnes stated that we still have lines hanging down around Town and it has been a year since Irene. He also stated that with recent rains the water has evacuated out but lots of sink holes are popping up. He stated that he has been receiving lots of input from the public on the utilities and streets situations.

Manager Albright stated that if the Board would like for him to expedite the information concerning the contracting of the utilities department out and bring back to next week's meeting he would but he would like to have more time to investigate.

Mayor Jackson stated that there have been lots of rumors but nothing has been voted on yet.

Commissioner Bright made a motion to enter into Closed Session concerning a Personnel Matter as authorized by N.C.G.S.143-318.11(a)(6). Seconded by Commissioner Barnes. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Barnes made a motion to exit the Closed Session. Seconded by Commissioner Hill. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Barnes made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Hill. Motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted

Angel Hudson

Town of Grifton