

**TOWN OF GRIFTON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP MEETING**

February 4, 2014

Present: Mayor B.R. Jackson; Commissioners E.F. Albritton, Mary Grace Bright, Will Barnes, Mike Coles; Manger Joe Albright

Absent: Commissioner Sammy Whitehurst

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: None

Discussion Items

1. *2004 Doubtful Utility Account Write-Offs*

Manager Albright explained that it is customary to do this procedure every year for accounts that are 10 years or older. He provided a list of accounts to be written off to the Board and recommended this item be put on the consent agenda at the next regular meeting. The Board agreed.

Commissioner Bright asked if we still keep a record of people who owe even though they have been taken out of the system.

Manger Albright replied by saying yes we do keep a log of people who owe they are only removed from the accounting system.

Commissioner Bright recommended restricting people from renting the Depot until the account for the past due utility bill has been paid.

Commissioner Albritton asked how the bills where such high amounts.

Manager Albright explained that it is a couple of month's worth of bills.

Commissioner Bright stated that she felt that office personnel knew some of these people.

Commissioner Coles pointed out that if no valid forwarding address was provided when the account was closed it is very hard for those people to be contacted.

2. *Auditing Firm Selection Recommendation*

Manager Albright stated that the Board asked him to rebid the auditing services. He stated that he has received the bids and he and the Clerk have narrowed down the selection. He informed the Board that he will give them either a single recommendation or a couple of recommendations. He also informed the Board that he would provide the information for the top 3 chosen to each Board member for them to look over.

3. *Annual Board Retreat – Agenda Discussion*

Manager Albright explained that at the annual Board retreat he usually presents the previous year, operations, cost and the upcoming year. He asked for direction from the Board on what further information they would like to be provided.

Commissioner Barnes would like to talk about setting goals for what the Town would like to do on future enhancements to the Town.

Manager Albright stated that Dr. Weitz from the ECU Planning Department is working on a comprehensive plan for us and it is on the schedule to present at the retreat. He also recommended that the presentation begin the meeting.

Commissioner Barnes would like to see some long term goals for the Town.

Commissioner Bright feels that all departments should present a 5 year plan and we need to lobby for consideration of sidewalks while they are paving the streets.

Manager Albright informed the Board that he has spoken to a representative from D.O.T. and they are aware of what we are doing and it has been agreed internally that the D.O.T. streets would also be paved in the Town of Grifton.

Commissioner Bright would also like for Manager Albright to give a mid-year update of the Manager's goals.

4. *Depot & St. David Street Park Building Renovation-Architect Services*

Manager Albright has met with an architectural firm concerning the Depot renovations and the St. David Street Park Building. He has a proposal for service and would recommend this item be put on the consent agenda at the next regular meeting.

Manager Albright stated that this is just securing the services.

Commissioner Coles asked about the porch ceiling.

Manager Albright explained that the ceiling is functional however, we need to replace or paint it. He would like to ask the architect if there is another viable way to keep the birds out. He also stated that the problem with the way it is now is it presents a problem when a light goes out in the fixtures because you have to take the tile out to do repairs. The Board agreed to put this item on the consent agenda.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Bright stated that the building on the corner at the end of the block the group home is on is in need of repair. She stated that she didn't know if it was a safety hazard but would like for Manager Albright to take a look at it and make contact with the owner.

Commissioner Bright asked if we put ice melt down on the sidewalks prior to the snow.

Manager Albright replied by saying yes we put ice melt in front of Town Hall. He also stated that the code or ordinances says that each business owner is responsible for their part of the sidewalk the same way they are responsible for the grass in our right of way.

Commissioner Bright asked about the other sidewalks in Town that are not in front of the businesses.

Manager Albright stated that they are our responsibility but we did not put ice melt on those areas. He stated that this would be a hard task to undertake in our current situation.

Commissioner Bright stated that she felt that all the business owners may not be aware that they are responsible for the sidewalks. She feels the business owners should be made aware of this ordinance. She also stated that on Saturday there were still parts of the sidewalks that

were icy. She feels the utilities department should have scraped them on Friday for safety reasons.

Mayor Jackson stated that Ben Gaskins did take the backhoe and scrape the areas in front of the businesses so people could park.

Commissioner Bright would like to see some plans drawn up for major storms. She stated that she was not happy with the way the Town responded after the snowstorm nor after hurricane Irene. She feels we need something in place for these types of situations.

Commissioner Coles asked if she was referring to a Severe Weather Emergency Plan.

Manager Albright stated he would try to present something of this sort at the retreat.

Commissioner Coles stated that he has received complaints concerning the entrance of the golf course. He says it needs to be cleaned and asked Manager Albright to send a letter to the owners.

Commissioner Coles also asked if there was some way we could keep people from driving on the grass at the St. David Street Park. He stated that he noticed after the snow that there are huge ruts in the grass by the building.

Manager Albright stated that he would take a look at the ruts.

Mayor Jackson asked Manager Albright to have Ben fix the ruts when the weather is agreeable.

Commissioner Bright suggested a no driving on grass sign.

Commissioner Coles also noticed a place on the sidewalk near Stokes Lane where the surface is much higher than the driveway and it creates a bit of drop and drag. He feels a load of sand or something needs to be put there to fill in the area.

Commissioner Coles stated that concerns have been raised to him concerning the legality of the sweepstakes parlors and churches on Queen Street. He commented that we didn't want to be known for sweepstakes parlors.

Manager Albright stated that churches are permitted as a conditional use in the ordinance.

Sweepstakes are permitted as a general use. In the zoning ordinance CBD it will tell you the zoning administrator should interpret the list of allowed uses as all inclusive. However, he did state that sweepstakes are allowed on a county by county basis.

Commissioner Coles asked if we could deny any others.

Manager Albright stated that they would have to be handled the same as they have been in the past.

Commissioner Coles asked what the Town gains from the parlors.

Manager Albright stated that he would not say we would gain anything. However, they are using utilities, paying landlords rent, and it could be argued that when they are here they will have to eat so they will utilize the restaurants.

Commissioner Coles asked if they could be considered entertainment.

Manager Albright stated that an argument could be made that it is entertainment and retail.

Commissioner Coles asked if we could impose a local use tax.

Manager Albright stated that some Towns charge a very high privilege license and we will take a look at that at the retreat during the fee schedule discussion.

Commissioner Coles feels the owner of the machines should not be making all the revenue. He also commented that we are providing police protection.

Commissioner Barnes stated that there are some severe potholes that have popped up since the snow.

Commissioner Barnes asked what was going on with the Sewer Rehab Project.

Manager Albright informed the Board that some of the work you are seeing are punch list items and some lift station rehab. He also informed the Board of the situation with Carolina Vinyl Products that popped up last week. The problem was that when the slip lining company done the line they did not cut the hole out. He stated that all costs for this will be reimbursed to the Town and the issue has been resolved.

Commissioner Barnes asked Manager Albright if he had any ideas for an attorney since Mr. Houston is retiring March 1, 2014.

Manager Albright stated that this is another issue that will need to be discussed at the retreat.

Commissioner Albritton asked if we have heard anything on the Stormwater fees.

Manager Albright stated that we are still waiting on the county to do the collection information and hopefully by July 1, 2014 we will have an ordinance and a stormwater fee.

Commissioner Albritton made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnes. The motion was carried unanimously.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted

Angel Hudson

Town of Grifton