

4/20/20

The Board of Commissioners of the Town of Wade met in regular session April 14, 2020 at 7:00 P.M. at the Clayton (Sam) House Community Center due to COVID-19 meeting restrictions.

**Board Present**

Mayor Joseph Dixon  
Commissioner Johnny Sawyer  
Commissioner Jennifer Weaver  
Commissioner Kenneth Griffin  
Commissioner Johnny Lanthorn  
Commissioner George Strater

**Visitors**

Mr. Thomas Neville, Town Attorney  
Ms. Ivana Washington, *Ponderosa News*

Mayor Joseph Dixon called the meeting to order and opened with prayer.

**Agenda Adoption**

Commissioner Lanthorn made a motion seconded by Commissioner Sawyer to adopt the agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**Minutes**

Commissioner Sawyer made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2020 regular session. Commissioner Griffin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Financial Reports**

Board Members reviewed the March Financial Reports and Commissioner Lanthorn made a motion to approve the reports as presented. Commissioner Sawyer seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

**Water Report**

Board Members reviewed and discussed the March Report. Commissioner Lanthorn made a motion to approve the Water Report and Commissioner Sawyer seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Agenda Business Items**

**Speakers From the Floor**

Mayor Dixon informed Board Members that no one had signed up to address the Board under the Speakers from the Floor agenda item.

**Committee Reports**

**Beautification** – Mayor Dixon explained that no spring planting had been completed because of the inconsistent weather.

**Park** - Mayor Dixon reported that he had met with Parks & Recreation regarding the multi-purpose field. He explained that the area had been staked out, but he was not sure when construction would begin. Mayor Dixon also informed the Board that the emergency call box would soon be installed. He informed the Board that he had also discussed with Parks & Recreation about cleaning up the piles of debris that were located at the back of the Park.

**Streets** – Mayor Dixon stated that with the weather change, the streets would need to be sprayed for weeds & grass. Commissioner Weaver expressed an interest in having the property located at the intersection of Main St. & Church St. cleaned up. The Board held a general discussion concerning how to best handle the matter. Town Clerk Cindy Burchett agreed to mail the property owner a letter asking for their assistance in cleaning up the area.

### **Audit Request for Proposals**

Town Clerk Cindy Burchett reminded the Board that requests were mailed to Denning, Herring, Sessoms & Company, Haigh, Byrd & Lambert, LLP and Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Company. She explained that Denning, Herring, Sessoms & Company did not return a proposal. Board Members reviewed & discussed the two submitted proposals. There was a general discussion concerning the amount charged by McFadyen & Sumner in previous years. Commissioner Lanthorn stated Haigh, Byrd & Lambert was the least expensive and that the Wade Community Fire Department had used this firm and had good experience. Commissioner Lanthorn made a motion to accept the proposal from Haigh, Byrd & Lambert, therefore approving them to perform audit services for the Town of Wade. Commissioner Griffin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

### **2020-2021 Budget**

Town Clerk Cindy Burchett informed the Board that the information in the agenda packet simply presented the Board with different figures that could be used to help determine how best to proceed with matters such as tax rate and water rates for the upcoming fiscal year. She also reminded the Board that based on information received from the auditor and the Fire Department serious consideration needed to be given to doing a tax increase. Board Members reviewed & discussed the information for a possible \$0.04, \$0.05 or \$0.06 tax increase. Mayor Dixon stated that the future plans for building homes in the Town would also help generate additional revenue. Town Clerk Cindy Burchett explained the figures for the 2019-2020 tax levy. She stated that she needed direction from the Board in order to proceed with a proposed budget for the May meeting. Board Members held a general discussion concerning what would be best and Commissioner Sawyer made a motion to approve a \$0.06 tax increase for the 2020-2021 fiscal year which would raise the rate to \$0.32 per 100 of valued property. Commissioner Lanthorn seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Board Members reviewed the NC Rural Water Rate Study, Rate Comparisons and overall Water System Analysis. Commissioner Sawyer questioned the \$27,610 loss for the water system in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Town Clerk Cindy Burchett reminded the Board that this loss included large one-time expense for upgrading the Autocon system so that it would be radio feed instead of using phone lines. Mayor Dixon stated that the Town was fortunate to have good water and so there was not significant deterioration of the system as a whole. Mrs. Burchett stated that out of 312 total

customers, the system currently had 77 customers that used less than 1,500 gallons a month which meant that the Town only collected the base rate of \$18. She explained that the lack of large users of course generated less revenue. There was a general discussion held regarding the benefit of charging a flat rate or access to the service for 0 gallons and then charging a per 1,000 gallon rate for overall usage. Town Clerk Cindy Burchett explained that based on conversations with Mayor Dixon she had proposed 4 different options for possible water rate increases. She also explained the drastic rate increase proposed by NC Rural Water. There was a general discussion concerning these options. Board Members agreed that an increase was a necessary evil. Commissioner Strater asked if a substantial increase would keep the Town from having to discuss the issue again. Mrs. Burchett stated that a larger increase may mean that the Town could do smaller increases over time for the Water System, but a \$0.06 tax increase would more than likely be sufficient for several years. Commissioner Sawyer made a motion to approve the following rate increase: flat rate would increase by \$1 for 0 gallons and the per 1,000-gallon price would increase by \$0.30 cents across the Board for all Town of Wade Water System users. There was a general discussion of how this would affect rates and Commissioner Lanthorn seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Founder's Day**

Mayor Dixon stated that with COVID-19 and all the issues surrounding the virus he felt that it would be best to postpone Founder's Day until September. He stated that because of the restrictions caused by the virus problems may arise in trying to plan such a large event and due to the economic problems people may not have funds to spend with the vendors. Commissioner Lanthorn stated that a September date would hopefully bring cooler weather. Board Members agreed to move Founder's Day to September 12<sup>th</sup> provided that the situation with the virus would allow such an event.

### **Announcements**

Mayor Dixon stated he was disappointed, but due to COVID-19, the 2020 National Day of Prayer Observance that was scheduled for May 7<sup>th</sup> would have to be cancelled. He stated that there was no way to host such an event and comply with the CDC restrictions.

Attorney Thomas Neville presented the Board with information for a proposed letter to the County Commissioners regarding the enforcement of minimum housing standards. Mr. Neville informed the Board that he would like to take a look at one more statute before preparing the final letter. He informed the Board that it may be a good idea to wait on sending the letter until the issues with the coronavirus subsided. Board Members held a general discussion concerning the letter and exactly what the letter should request in regard to meeting with the Commissioners. Commissioners Lanthorn and Sawyer stated that they would like to have a face to face meeting. It was agreed that each of the County Commissioners as well as the County Manager should receive a copy of the letter. Mr. Neville stated that the bottom line for the letter should be that the Town has found out from its insurer that if the Town accepts the County's agreement the Town would not be covered and so what does the County expect the Town to do. Board Members discussed the matter and agreed to continue working on the issue.

Commissioner Lanthorn stated that he would like to work with Commissioner Weaver to do some roadside beautification around the Town of Wade signs.

Commissioner Strater stated that he would like for the Town to communicate better with the citizens. He stated that he had looked at the Town of Wade website and discovered that it needed to be updated and that there were items that could be added to the site to keep citizens more informed. Town Clerk Cindy Burchett agreed to contact and work with Howard Piland, website administrator, to update the site. Mayor Dixon informed Commissioner Strater that in previous years the Town had held Citizen Input Meetings and they were discontinued when no one showed up at the meetings. Commissioner Lanthorn suggested using the marquee at the Community Center to share information. There was a general discussion about different ways to communicate with citizens.

Commissioner Sawyer reported that all the events for the Joint Appearance Committee have been pushed back. He stated that the awards ceremony would also not be held.

Town Clerk Cindy Burchett read a thank you note from the Joe Dixon & Janis DeCarlo family for the calls, cards, prayers and memorial during the time of loss of their mother.

#### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Lanthorn made a motion seconded by Commissioner Sawyer to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Cindy C. Burchett  
Cindy C. Burchett, Town Clerk

Joseph Dixon  
Joseph Dixon, Mayor