

**TOWN OF GARLAND
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2021
6:00 PM**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Garland was held virtually via GoToMeeting on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

The following members of the Board of Commissioners were present:

**Austin Brown (Present in the Boardroom)
Eddie Bronson, Jr. (Present Virtually)
Jo A. Strickland (Present in the Boardroom)
Barbara A. Peterson (Present Virtually)
Carolyn R. Melvin (Present Virtually)**

Also present virtually: Town Clerk Pamela Cashwell, Mr. Bryon Scott of *Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co., PA* and Mr. Chase Jordan of the *Sampson Independent*. There were unidentified callers as well in attendance virtually.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and welcomed everyone in attendance. Town Clerk, Pamela Cashwell, was present recording notes for the minutes.

QUORUM

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown and Clerk Pamela Cashwell established there was a quorum present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown requested the Board review the agenda for approval. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried with a vote of 4 to 0 as Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson was unable to vote due to technical issues with her remote connection. (See attached).

PRESENTATION OF THE 2020 AUDIT

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown recognized and thanked Mr. Bryon Scott for the presentation of the 2020 audit. (See attached). Mr. Scott thanked the board members for allowing him to complete the audit. He praised the board members and staff for keeping the financial records for the town up to date and complete. He noted the contributions of the staff working with independent auditor, Mr. Scott Bridgers, as a key component in helping to prepare for the annual audit. Mr. Scott reviewed various chart statistics and noted the cash and revenue accounts as well as fund balance has steadily increased each year over the past five years, and he encouraged the board to continue their efforts as the financial stability of the town has improved significantly. No significant findings were identified during the audit and his firm was

able to provide an unmodified opinion on the financial statements which is the best opinion they can issue. The segregation of duties and internal controls yielded a repeat significant deficiency due to the nature of a small town with only two employees. The town board and staff have implemented internal control checklists that are completed monthly and he urged the board to continue with this practice. Mr. Scott informed the board members to contact him with any questions they may have as they review the complete audit. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown thanked Mr. Scott for the presentation and the staff for the work they do to keep the financials records accurate and timely. Commissioner Carolyn Melvin made a motion to accept the 2020 audit as presented, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland and carried with a vote of 4 to 0. Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson didn't vote due to technical issues with her remote connection.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were received.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

ADMINISTRATION

Mayoral Report- Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated Mayor Murphy had asked him to preside over the meeting tonight as she wasn't feeling well. He stated they would like to thank everyone for all they have accomplished in 2020. He stated they were able to get some streets paved that have been dirt streets for a long time, water infrastructure improvements were completed, grants were issued from the CARES ACT Funding to some local small businesses and the list goes on. He thanked the Garland Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department for being able to lower the fire rating for the citizens and the town. Mayor Pro Tem Brown stated with the board working together with staff, citizens and volunteers that more can be accomplished during this year.

FINANCE

Budget versus Actual - Clerk Pamela Cashwell provided copies of the current budget vs. actual reports for the Board. (See attached). Clerk Cashwell noted she has circled some line-item concerns in expenditures that will have to be amended as some expenses are increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. She once again reminded board members for the Street, Buildings and Parks & Recreation Committees that half of the fiscal year has passed, and they should get started on any large projects they have planned so as to not wait until the last month of the fiscal year to be starting these large projects.

Bank Statements/A.P. Check Listing - Clerk Pamela Cashwell provided copies of the bank statements for all three accounts as well as the AP check report from December 10, 2020 to January 15, 2021. (See attached).

Internal Control Monthly Reviews - Clerk Cashwell informed the Board that Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. is on the rotation schedule for this month to meet with the Mayor and Clerk to complete the monthly internal review checklist.

Credit Card Purchases – Clerk Pamela Cashwell reviewed and provided copies of the credit card purchases for the month with the Board. (See attached).

She noted fraudulent charges that were made on the account as well as fees related to the fraudulent charges. She informed the board that Mayor Murphy had notified the company the charges were fraudulent, and they agreed to open a file for investigating. Clerk Cashwell notified the credit card company of the fraudulent charges and they will contact the company to try and determine where the products were mailed. The card was closed out and they will issue the town a new card. Clerk Cashwell informed the board the card was last used at a local business in town prior to the fraudulent charges. The credit card company removed the fraudulent charges as well as the fees associated with them.

Budget Amendment 2020-2021-03- Clerk Cashwell read the proposed budget amendment to the board members and noted money was being moved from Contingency to several expenditure line items to ensure adequate funds are available for expenditures. One of the expenditures was to the State Employment Security Commission in the amount of \$2,317.00 to cover charges from a former employee drawing unemployment benefit. (See attached). Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve Budget Amendment 2020-2021-03 as presented, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland and carried with a vote of 4 to 0 with Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson not voting due to technical issues with her remote connection.

Budget Planning Sessions- Clerk Cashwell asked the board members how they would like to begin budget planning sessions. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown suggested we use the same process as we did last year with the clerk meeting with the two board members from each committee to get initial requests prior to meeting with the full board. Clerk Cashwell agreed to set up sessions with each committee members.

BUILDINGS/CEMETERY

Cemetery Updates- Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown reported Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson has worked several Saturdays on getting information from the cemetery to update the records. He thanked her for this and encouraged her to keep up the good work. Clerk Cashwell reported she attended a virtual meeting hosted by *Southern Software* introducing the new cemetery module they have developed. She plans to request a quote for the new module to discuss during budget planning.

Buildings Updates- None provided.

Library-Repairs for Doors and Window Updates- Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. reported Mr. Harvey Herring has completed the repair work on the doors and window at the library.

Abandoned Buildings- Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. reported he has reached out to the Fire Marshal's office and the Sampson County Building Inspections office regarding the abandoned building beside his home and they haven't responded back to him. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he would provide a contact for Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. to contact regarding the abandoned building.

Fire Inspection-Old School/Fencing Repairs- Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated public works staff purchased the needed supplies and repaired the fencing around

the old boiler unit at the former school. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown asked if anyone had signed up for the zoning class inservice as the deadline was approaching. No one responded to his question.

PARKS/RECREATION

Updates- Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. stated he had asked Mr. Neil Carroll about three meetings ago to paint the concession stand where someone had vandalized it with drawing a heart on it. He stated he guess he would need to have a work order placed to get this done. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he had spoken with Mr. Carroll and he had gone over his forty hour a month limit and wouldn't be able to start the painting in the classroom in the former fire department the board approved until March.

Lighting Fixture Update at Ball Park- No further updates at this time.

STREETS

Sink Hole on Church Avenue & W. Warren Street Update- Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated the repairs have been completed and Mr. Tim Dudley was waiting for the area to dry out before resurfacing the pavement. This repair turned out to be more extensive due to some substandard work previously completed in this area. He stated Commissioner Jo A. Strickland had shared pictures of the area in an email to everyone as the work was being completed. Clerk Cashwell noted the repair work ended up being an additional \$2,000.00 from the initial quote once the area was fully uncovered and the extent of the repair was assessed.

Powell Bill Street Assessment Update- Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he was going to discuss areas that needed work according to this assessment with Mr. Tim Dudley as soon as he had completed cleaning the ditches on the east side of town. He stated he would give an update on the cleaning of the ditches at the next monthly meeting.

Accountability for Water/Sewer Line Damages- Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown reported he had contacted officials with the NCDOT back before the pandemic hit and since the pandemic regarding cleaning ditches on West Second to the end of East Second Street as well as storm drains that needed cleaning out. They came last week and began the work and hit a water line that was connected to a fire hydrant on the east side. Mr. Tim Dudley was in the area and was able to fix the water line break. Clerk Cashwell noted the bill was a little over \$400.00 for this repair. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland contacted Mr. Keith Eason of the NCDOT regarding paying for this repair and was told they couldn't be responsible for lines that weren't at least two feet below ground. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated our vendor stated the lines were the correct depth prior to the ditches being dug out. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated she was advised the NCDOT doesn't call for locate for ditch work. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated the town will need to reimburse Mr. Dudley for the repairs and Clerk Cashwell noted she has processed the bill for payment.

PUBLIC WORKS – WATER/SEWER/GARBAGE

Violation Letters Update- Fines have been paid in full for the settlement agreement issued by the Division of Water Resources.

Clock Repair- No updates.

Purchase Requests- Commissioner Jo A. Strickland made a motion to purchase six valve boxes, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown and carried unanimously.

Update on Holes in Roofing on Influent Building at Lagoon- Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he has spoken with Mr. Michael Buchanan and he plans to repair the roof under warranty. He stated Mr. Buchanan did state it look like some type of rodents were causing the damage to the roof. He plans to coordinate with the public works staff to repair the roof.

Update on the Status of Generator at the Lagoon- Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated as far as he is aware the generator is working. He stated he thought *Terry Long Electrical* had completed the repairs. Clerk Cashwell noted she hasn't received a bill for this as well as not receiving bills from the vendor that calibrated the pump at the lagoon or billing from *Keen Plumbing* for the last vacuuming of lines. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he would reach out to Mr. Brandon Hairr and request he follow up on these outstanding bills.

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown asked Commissioner Jo A. Strickland to update the board members on her meeting with Mr. Neil Carroll and Mr. Brandon Hairr. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated the rodents are causing a lot of damage at the lagoon noting large holes in the lagoon walls stating this is a major issue. She stated Mr. Carroll has spoken with a trapper to help eradicate these issues with the rodents. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland made a motion to have Mr. Carroll contact the trapper to come out and give a quote to trap the rodent and get this issue resolved prior to more damage occurring, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown and carried unanimously.

SAFETY

Security Camera Quotes for Town Hall- Commissioner Jo A. Strickland presented and reviewed the pros and cons of three quotes she received for security coverage for town hall. (See attached). Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve the quote submitted by *Safe Haven Security, Inc.* for \$3,200.00, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried unanimously.

Board Member Communication- Commissioner Jo A. Strickland voiced concerns with communication among board members. She stated she emails the board with pictures and other concerns that are going on with the town in an effort to keep them informed and she received no feedback from these communications. She stated a simple reply of okay, received or anything would at least indicate they had received her emails. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he thought they should all indicate how they wish to receive communications from each other to improve communications among each other. He stated he preferred to receive either emails or texts, Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated she preferred either a text to read her email or calls, Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson preferred text or a call, Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin preferred to receive either a text or a call and

Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. preferred to receive a call or to call his wife at his home number.

Exterior Lighting Quotes needed for Town Hall- Board members agreed for Commissioner Jo A. Strickland to obtain lighting quotes for both sides of town hall to ensure proper lighting is secured for the security system to work effectively.

Former Police Department Inventory & Equipment- Commissioner Jo A. Strickland reported once she was able to access the former police department and safe which was no easy task, she discovered a lot of equipment that is in there that needs to be inventoried and removed so it can be salvageable. She reported the building is full of mold and the flooring is soft when walked on which is hazardous. She stated there are already several large holes in the flooring and the building is in bad shape. She stated there are thousands of dollars' worth of equipment that was either purchased or donated to the town that needs to be moved out of the building. She stated two handguns were retrieved from the building noting moisture isn't good for firearms. She reported everything the former chief told her he left in the building was in the building as he had indicated. She stated she had discussed with Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown regarding going in and removing equipment and inventorying it as it moved out to try and salvage what is left in the building. She stated she was the lightest in weight and would be willing to access the building with the precarious flooring to remove the items with the assistance of Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown. No feedback was received from other board members.

OLD BUSINESS

Cares Act Funding-Current Expenditure Report- Clerk Cashwell reported all required reports have been completed for the Cares Act Funding and a current report of revenues and expenditures were provided to the board members. (See attached). We have spent of total of \$23,430.30 to date and have \$27,389.70 left over. Clerk Cashwell stated the deadline to spend the funds has been extended and encouraged the board to decide on what needed to be purchased. Clerk Cashwell reported the soap refills for the dispensers ordered wasn't working properly and Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he would provide the clerk with the link to purchase the soap refills for the soap dispensers. Clerk Cashwell also asked the board if she could purchase some cleaning and disinfecting supplies needed from local businesses to help them out during this pandemic. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to allow Clerk Pamela Cashwell to purchase the cleaning and disinfecting supplies from the CRF from local businesses, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland and carried unanimously.

Business Sub-Grant Awards- Clerk Cashwell reported the following small businesses received subgrants from the CRF: Hair Masters \$1,652.99, Carter Funeral Home \$2,000.00, Summerville-Boykin Mortuary \$2,000.00 and Carolyn's Flower Garden \$2,000.00.

MINUTES APPROVAL

Plan devised to get Minutes Up to Date- Clerk Cashwell reported to the board she has devised a plan to get caught up on six sets of minutes that are outstanding due to


issues with staffing and orientation of a new employee. (See attached). She requests to work remotely for six days prior to the next meeting in an effort to concentrate solely on minute preparations. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve the request as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson and carried unanimously.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CONDOLENCES

Condolences: The Town of Garland sends our sincerest condolences to all of those who have recently lost loved ones.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried with a vote of three to none with Commissioners Eddie Bronson Jr. and Jo A. Strickland not voting due to having stepped out of the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 7:16 pm.



Pamela Cashwell, Town Clerk

Board Approved:



Austin Brown, Mayor Pro Tem