

**TOWN OF GARLAND  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2021  
6:00 PM**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Garland was held virtually via GoToMeeting on Tuesday, July 20th at 6:00 pm.

The following members of the Board of Commissioners were present:

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

Also, present virtually: Mayor Winifred H. Murphy, Town Clerk Pamela Cashwell, Mr. Mike Barnette and Mr. Rich Moore of *McDavid Associates, Inc.* Mrs. Emily Williams of the *Sampson Independent* was present virtually as well as five callers.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Winifred H. Murphy 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 Winifred H. Murphy called the roll and established there was a quorum present.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Winifred H. Murphy requested board members review the agenda for approval. Mayor Murphy requested to add under public comments: Application approval for the CDBG-NR Grant by Mr. Rich Moore and Mr. Mike Barnette of *McDavid Associates, Inc.* Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve the agenda with said changes, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried unanimously. (See attached).

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments were received from the public.

**PRESENTATION OF PROPOSED 2019 CDBG-NR & PARK IMPROVEMENTS**

Mr. Rich Moore of *McDavid Associates, Inc.* provided an update on the Park Improvements for the C. D. Cain Memorial Park that includes a quarter mile walking trail and bathrooms. He stated the recommendations made by board members have been incorporated into the plans and he plans to advertise for bids next week with a goal to award the bid in the September 2021 Board meeting. Mayor Murphy stated this grant was awarded in 2019. Mr. Rich Moore said the Covid-19 Pandemic

impacted moving forward with this grant due to delays with supplies and contractors. Mr. Mike Barnette stated the grant agreement was signed in December 2019 and the release of funds were on September 22, 2020.

The 2019 CDBG-I Grant was awarded to the town in the amount of approximately \$700,000.00 for replacing sewer lines specifically on Front Street and N. Herring Avenue. Bid design package will be submitted to the state next week for approval and hopefully we will be moving forward with construction by the end of this year.

The \$150,000.00 AIA Grant was awarded for the data collection of all inventories of the sewer system. This electronic database will be downloaded on the town's computer system in a couple of weeks and staff will receive training on the use of the electronic database that will be especially helpful to new staff and board members.

The town has been experiencing several issues at the Wastewater Treatment Plant secondary to an invasion of nutria. The stability of the dykes was compromised when the nutria bored holes in the sides of the dykes. Some areas are prone to collapsing due to the tunneling caused by the rodents. An application will be submitted in September 2021 for CDBG-I Funding in the amount of \$1,300,000.00 to make needed improvements at the WWTP to include a screening and grinding system to decrease the debris that currently flows into the sewer system as well as stabilization of all three of the sewer ponds.

Mr. Mike Barnette reported the 2019 CDBG-NR housing rehabilitation included rehabilitating eight houses and replacement of one house. Most of the bids have been secured for the houses that are to be rehabilitated and he is awaiting bids for one of the rehab houses and for the house that will be replaced. He stated he has clear titles on four of the homes. He stated one of the homes isn't occupied by the owner of the house so he will have to investigate who is living in the home before he can move forward with this home as part of the grant.

Mayor Murphy and Board members recognized Town Clerk, Pamela Cashwell on her seven-year anniversary with the town. They spoke of her dedication and praised her for the work she performs for the town. Clerk Cashwell thanked everyone for their kind words and for their support over the last seven years.

## **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

### **ADMINISTRATION**

#### **FINANCE**

**Credit Card Purchases** – Clerk Pamela Cashwell reviewed all the credit card purchases for the month. (See attached). Clerk Cashwell noted three filing cabinets have been purchased to store paperwork in for each fiscal year and she thanked Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown for his hard work in cleaning out the back office and turning it into a filing room for paperwork. All annual reports have been completed to date and all bills are up to date. Bank reconciliations have been completed on all three banking accounts for the month of June 2021. Clerk Cashwell noted she has several sets of minutes to complete and then she will be current on all tasks.

## **BUILDINGS/CEMETERY**

**Cemetery Updates-** Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown is working on updating records on the old side of the Garland Community Cemetery. He states he has also been verifying and locating burial plots as requested. Mayor Murphy discussed issues with the way grave plots have been laid out at the Garland Community Cemetery and stated they have been unable to get a surveyor to survey the cemetery to date.

**Buildings Updates-** Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson stated the broken window has been boarded up at the old gymnasium and she has been helping to clean up and remove debris from the demolition of the old depot.

**Abandoned Buildings Update-** Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. stated, hey we need to get busy on the old theater located beside my house. Mayor Murphy stated she tried to get in contact with someone today and was unsuccessful. She stated this is something we need to get done immediately. Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. asked so what are we going to do about the building? Mayor Murphy stated she didn't have that answer that maybe the board does or the attorney. Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. stated I would like to make a motion that the town begin work demolishing that building and send him the bill. Motion died from a lack of a second. Attorney Maynard suggested tabling this discussion until closed session.

**Purchase Request for seven new lights and ceiling tiles for town hall-** Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to purchase seven new lighting fixtures and replacement ceiling tiles for town hall, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Jo A. Strickland asked when they were going to address the mold issues in the bay at town hall and the potential of it causing air quality problems that could be unsafe for employees and visitors to town hall. Mayor Murphy stated this item wasn't on the agenda. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated we just discussed making improvements to tall hall, how could this not be related? Mayor Murphy replied, we have moved on. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland requested this item be placed on next month's agenda for discussion.

**Building Security-** Mayor Murphy made a recommendation to the board that the Mayor & Mayor Pro Tem be the individuals with access to the security cameras at town hall. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to accept and approve this recommendation, seconded by Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland disagreed with this recommendation and stated this is a security issue, how can safety not be involved. The motion carried with a vote of four to one with Commissioner Jo A. Strickland casting the dissenting vote.

## **PARKS/RECREATION**

**Updates-** Mayor Murphy discussed the historical background of the C. D. Cain Memorial Park and the different phases former Commissioner Judy C. Smith had planned for the development of the park. She recommended the board concentrate on completing some of those phases such as age-appropriate playground equipment, fencing and additional landscaping. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland asked how much money was in the Parks and Recreation department, restricted and unrestricted. Mayor Murphy replied over \$6,000.00 was restricted to the C. D. Cain Memorial Park

and \$25,000.00 was in the Parks and Recreation budget. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated the board needs to look at the budget and determine the needs of all the parks and recreation areas and divide the money among the needs such as the softball complex and soccer fields. Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin stated they are aware there are a lot of maintenance needs at the softball complex, and they are enroute to getting a complete assessment of the needs, a cost estimate for the repairs identified so they can move forward with a plan to correct the safety issues. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown and Commissioner Jo A. Strickland agreed with the approach brought forward by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin. Mayor Murphy stated there needs to be an assessment completed and the repairs should be completed in phases like the C.D. Cain Memorial Park. She stated grants could be applied for to assist with parks and recreations needs and she would be willing to assist with grant writing if someone was willing to spearhead taking the lead on these projects.

### **STREETS**

**Updates-** Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown reported the annual street assessment has been completed and updated maps are available at town hall if board members would like to review them. P.W. employee, Randy Boone accompanied the surveyor, and a recording was made of the concerns and maintenance issues that need to be completed. As soon as Clerk Cashwell has time to listen to the recording and compile the list of concerns, he will report them to board members.

### **PUBLIC WORKS – WATER/SEWER/GARBAGE**

**Truck Repairs Update-** Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown reports both trucks have been repaired and new decals added status post the burglary of both vehicles. Stolen equipment has been replaced and the vehicles and equipment are now being housed in the bays at town hall for increased security.

**Purchase Requests-** Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown reported one of the town trucks needs new tires. He stated he would obtain several quotes and present them at next month's meeting.

Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. stated there are mattresses that have been on E. Front and Kerr Street for two and a half months, and he wants to know when someone is going to get them up. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated when Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. reported this at last month's meeting, he called Randy Boone the next morning. He stated Randy said he was aware of them and would get them removed. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown asked Commissioner Bronson Jr. if he would like to follow up with Randy on this in the morning. Commissioner Bronson Jr agreed he would speak with Randy in the morning about this issue.

## **SAFETY**

Commissioner Jo A. Strickland reported there is nothing new in safety to discuss.

## **MAYORAL UPDATE**

Mayor Murphy reported she is excited over the news that the former *Brooks Brothers* facility was sold to *Garland Apparel Group, LLC* since our last meeting. She attended an economic development meeting with state and local officials on June 16<sup>th</sup> and she stated she feels the town is poised for growth in economic development in the next several years. She stated the Construction Professionals Network Institute, a non-profit coalition is interested in collaborating with town officials, business leaders and citizens to assess economic needs of the town. She stated this will require a commitment if the town moves forward with this offer. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he is interested in this assessment and is willing to commit to being a part of the collaborative group.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Cares Act Funding- Current Expenditure Report- Clerk Cashwell presented the current expenditure report. (See attached). She noted there hasn't been any purchases since the last meeting. She encouraged board members to think about items that need purchasing as most municipalities have already spent their funding at this point. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland voiced interest in purchasing touchless hand soap and towel dispensers for the bathrooms for all the park areas. Mayor Murphy also discussed the possibility of purchasing tablets for board members to use for virtual meetings as agenda and other items could be loaded to the tablet for use during virtual meetings.

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to give the Garland Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department, Inc. their allocation for fire services during the next check write, seconded by Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson and carried unanimously.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Zoning Recommendations- Mrs. Hanna Brown, Chairperson of the Planning and Zoning Committee gave the following zoning reports and recommendations: Mr. R. Richardson has been working cooperatively with the zoning board to correct having moved a storage building in 2019 onto property without the proper permits. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to allow Mr. Richardson to continue working with planning and zoning and not to assess any penalties or fines to him, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland and carried unanimously. *Cleaves Auto* completed the permit process for a storage building and fencing around the property. Prior to receiving approval for the permits, the work was completed. They have been working cooperatively with the planning and zoning to correct this and the property looks much better with the work they have completed. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland made a motion to allow the business to continue working with planning and zoning and not to assess any fines or penalties to the business, seconded by Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson and carried unanimously.

**ARPA Grant Project Ordinance-** Clerk Cashwell read aloud the project ordinance in full. (See attached). Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve the ordinance as presented, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland 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.

**Closed Session**

Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin made a motion to enter in closed session (*Pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11-(3) Attorney-Client Privilege and (6) Personnel*) at 7:26 pm, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland and carried unanimously.

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to exit closed session at 7:55 pm, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried unanimously.

**Open Session**

No action taken in closed session.

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to give Town Clerk, Pamela Cashwell a \$1.00/hour increase in pay retroactive to her anniversary date of July 2, 2021. Mayor Murphy stated it is a 3.5% increase in pay. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated the board approved a \$1.00/hour increase in the budget for Clerk Cashwell. Mayor Murphy stated she has already received that increase. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown asked Clerk Cashwell if she had already received the \$1.00/hour increase and Clerk Cashwell replied no she hasn't. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he didn't think so and his motion still stands. Mayor Murphy stated she thought Clerk Cashwell had received that in May when it was approved. Clerk Cashwell stated she figured the board would decide on the increase in July on her anniversary date. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson and carried unanimously.

Mayor Murphy stated the second thing, do we need to approve Attorney Maynard trying to contact Mr. Glover, start the process. No replies were received. Mayor Murphy said I recommend, and then asked Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. if he wanted to make that motion. Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. replied yes ma'am I do. Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. made a motion that Attorney Maynard contact the owner of the old theater. Mayor Murphy stated seconded by, no response was received. Mayor Murphy asked is there a second? She then asked, can you guys hear me? She said Mayor Pro Tem and he replied, yes, we can hear you. She asked again, is there a second? Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. replied no problem mayor, you can advise them not to spend their coffee change. Mayor Murphy replied, okay is no one seconding this motion for Attorney Maynard to follow up on this process? No response was received. Mayor Murphy said Commissioner Carolyn and no response was received. Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. laughed and stated they got them

snowed. Mayor Murphy stated okay, it died from a lack of a second and Attorney Maynard, I will follow up with you tomorrow in reference to this, because this makes no sense, this makes absolutely no sense.

Mayor Murphy stated anyway, we thank you for your input this evening and we are finishing up close to 8 which is what we projected we would go from 6 to 8. She stated she will continue to work diligently for the town even though she may not be on the board, I will not be on the board come December. I will continue to work with the cemetery project and economic development, we will continue to move forward with all the different projects. I hope and pray that whoever the mayor and commissioners are will move forward with this and work for the best interest of Garland and not just for a small group of people. She continued, I will say that I am just very, very disgusted with the Garland Softball League, they have made allegations of embezzlement and maleficence toward me, my husband and town clerk and I really don't appreciate that. She said I didn't say a lot in front of the people, but I will say, it does not make any sense for people to get a little bit of information, wrong information and harass someone and make personal attacks on people, that is ridiculous. So, of the 107 young people that played ball this summer, 79 of them are from outside the Town of Garland. They come from Autryville, Bladen County, Ammons, Rose Hill and its not right for the Town of Garland to fund the softball league at that expense when there are so many other different town projects there. So, if anyone would like to go back and tell Wendy Norris Taylor, that she's making personal attacks on me, please do so. She continued, I really was expecting them to come out for public comments this evening, but since they didn't, I will say that, as long as I'm mayor, I will fight for the entire town, not for a select group. No money needs to be spent on that Garland Softball League until we know exactly who they are. Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. interjected and said Madame Mayor, she replied yes Commissioner Bronson. Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. said I would like to make a motion; that we close it down until we find out what's what. Mayor Murphy said Commissioner Bronson has made a motion that we close it down after this season until we find out what's what. She asked is there a second. Commissioner Eddie Bronson Jr. laughed and stated they're scared. Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin seconded the motion. Mayor Murphy stated Commissioner Melvin seconds it. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated Madame Mayor, and she replied yes. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown said as I heard Commissioner Bronson say they're scared; I'm not scared so therefore I'll second the motion. Mayor Murphy replied, Commissioner Melvin seconded it, Mayor Pro Tem Brown replied okay then, call for the vote. Mayor Murphy said call for the vote and asked if there was any discussion before the vote. She continued, call for the vote to close the Garland Softball field until its assessed and repairs are made. She said I'm not saying I'm against softball. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown interjected and said Madame Mayor, it's not just you three that were attacked, it was the entire board because they said we were all uneducated, you forgot to add that. Mayor Murphy replied, we were uneducated and they consider their citizens peasants. They don't have any knowledge, they requested information from the FOIA and they don't understand it. They go out and harass and the emails

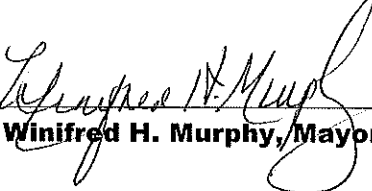
sent to us were also sent to the LCG and were also sent to the State Auditor hotline. All of that was false, the information about the insurance, the light poles were not an insurance claim, they are rotten poles. Whoever is giving them wrong information is guilty of lying on the board, on me and on this entire board, especially Pam, and I don't appreciate it, so I'm calling for the vote. The motion carried with a vote of four to one with Commissioner Jo A. Strickland casting the dissenting vote. Mayor Murphy stated when the tournament is closed, the ballpark is closed until an assessment is done, repairs are made, we find out who the Garland Softball League is, because the articles of incorporation list Judy Smith, who is deceased, Gary Long, who is no longer a part of it, Leo Skinner, who is no longer there, only Wanda Smith Johnson. She continued and the address listed is 190 S. Church Avenue which is town hall. Yet they claim the town has nothing to do with the softball league. They're asking for all kinds of information, and we need information from them as well. People who are talking about what we're not doing and accusing us of embezzlement is not right and I do not appreciate it, I do not appreciate it for this board and especially for Clerk Cashwell, our finance officer. Anyone would be proud to have Clerk Cashwell as finance officer, in keeping up with all this information and at a time when she's trying to close out a year, starting up another one, is sick; they're accusing us of being nontransparent. If we were being nontransparent, then whoever gave Wendy Taylor Norris, Wendy Norris Taylor, the information about our bank account, that's not right and whoever did that, she doesn't understand it; and says we have 1.7 million dollars in the bank and doesn't understand fund balance. You are just as guilty as she is for harassing us. She stated Okay, I'm through and ask if there was anything else for open session. She said, so whoever wants to tell Wendy Norris Taylor, Wanda Smith and Todd Marshall, who's all into this, you can call them up right now.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson and carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela Cashwell, Town Clerk/Finance Officer

Board Approved:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Winifred H. Murphy, Mayor