

Town of Macclesfield  
Board of Commissioners  
Regular Session Board Meeting  
April 10, 2023  
6:00 pm

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Emily Turner at 6:01 pm. Members in attendance were as follows: Mayor Emily Turner, Mayor Pro-Tem/Commissioner Paula Lewis, Commissioners Joyce Braxton, Charles Lewis, and Jean Wooten-Jiles. Staff members present were as follows: Public Works Director, Benjy Lassiter; Utilities Clerk, Gracie Etheridge; Town Clerk, Jennifer Stanley, and Interim Administrator, Ralph Clark. Special guests present were Jennifer Fields, Edgecombe County Physical Activity and Nutrition Coordinator and Ethan Strickland, Macclesfield Rural Volunteer Fire Department.

Commissioner C. Lewis offered the invocation and all in attendance recited the Pledge Allegiance to the American Flag.

Town Clerk, J. Stanley asked for two additions to be made to the agenda. Both items will go under New Business. Number 5 will be the audit contract and Number 6 will be the training required for Distressed Systems. Commissioner P Lewis made a motion to approve the agenda with the additions. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Wooten-Jiles. With none opposed, the motion passed.

Commissioner Wooten-Jiles asked if there could be two corrections made to the March 13, 2023 minutes. The first was that she wanted the following change made to the wording of the first sentence on page 3 (highlighted in supporting documents) "Commissioner Wooten-Jiles mentioned that Commissioner C Lewis' daughter Tynesha Lewis' ECSU Women's Lady Vikings basketball team are the CIAA Champions for the first time in the school's 132 year history". Commissioner Wooten-Jiles asked for it to be noted that when she said that money would not be a problem "she did not realize that the committee would be responsible for paying Public Works Staff". Commissioner P Lewis made a motion to approve the minutes with corrections. Commissioner C Lewis seconded the motion and the motion passed.

There were no citizens present with any concerns.

Mrs. Stanley gave an update on the egg hunt. There were 54 children registered for the hunts, but it looked like there were many more than that. It was a very good turn-out. The thank you notes have been sent out.

Commissioner Wooten-Jiles gave an update on Tynesha Lewis Day. The town was very well represented, there were several elected officials present, and Washington Branch Church graciously opened their church for the ceremony. Commissioner Wooten-Jiles thanked the committee, the town and the staff for their help in making it a successful event. Commissioner C Lewis thanked everyone for their part in the day.

Mr. Lassiter gave an update on the community building repairs. The completion date is still estimated to be the end of April. The plank flooring and cabinets should be installed by the end of the week. The hot water heater is installed in the corner of the storage room and is a little larger than needed but was what was in stock.

Commissioner Wooten-Jiles asked again about the statistics from the ABC store and Mrs. Stanley stated she had the information in her office. The town had kept the rent low for the ABC store to not run them away. Mr. Lassiter stated that maybe we could offer an incentive to them (free utilities for x number of months) if they would consider returning.

Commissioner Wooten-Jiles asked if Dollar General was still coming to town. Mrs. Stanley informed the board that Dollar General is in the process of determining where they would like to build the store. It was mentioned that John Felton's land may be available for a senior living facility – maybe name the facility after him. It was stated that it is 20.1 acres. Commissioner P Lewis said she would reach out to Trey for the developer's contact information.

The new Fire Chief, Ethan Strickland, began speaking with a little of the fire department history. The Macclesfield Fire has an ISO rating of Class 6. When the fire department split into Macclesfield and Maccripine, the latter receiving fire tax but Macclesfield does not receive any fire tax from residents. He is recommending that the town pass a resolution allowing the county to collect fire tax of approximately \$0.08/\$100. The town would also need to draw up a contract between the town and the fire department for fire protection. Mr. Clark recommended that the town attorney look over the resolution and for the board to take time to study the resolution and what exactly would be involved in adding the fire tax for the residents. The fire department and town should partner together for the community benefit. The fire department will be receiving an LED sign and would be able to advertise town events as well as help with the fire fighter recruitments. Mr. Strickland mentioned that if the town was having fireworks again this year that the town would need to download the pyrotechnic permit off the county website and have that turned in as soon as possible. The Board decided to table this subject until the May meeting, to give time for the resolution to be reviewed by the attorney and Mrs. Stanley and Mr. Clark could do some research as well. There would need to be a contract drawn up by the town allowing the fire department to operate inside the town limits.

Ms. Jennifer Fields, Edgecombe County Physical Activity Coordinator, came to explain what a walk audit is and how it can benefit the town. Once we complete the walk audit it can be used as a tool to apply for grants – signage, sidewalk upgrades/additions. The walk audit would cover the block where the Town Hall is located and around the park. Mrs. Stanley will coordinate with Ms. Fields on setting up a date for training of Mrs. Stanley and Commissioner Wooten-Jiles.

Mr. Clark brought to the attention of the board that there has been conversation between he, the audit contractor, and the LGC regarding the FY 22 audit. It was agreed that since it is getting so late in the fiscal year, it would be more feasible to perform the FY22 and FY23 audits at the same time. The audit for FY22 will be completed June 30 and FY23 will be completed in October, bringing the town current on the audits.

Mrs. Stanley explained to the board that Mr. Dwight Lancaster of NC Division of Water Infrastructure stopped by this morning and informed Mrs. Stanley of a required training for towns on the LGC Distressed Systems list. It is required that 2 elected officials, utilities director, and the Finance Officer attend the training. The training is two-part and the first is in person on May 2 with part two being virtual. It was agreed that Commissioner Wooten-Jiles and Commissioner Braxton would attend the training on May 2 in Williamston.

Mrs. Stanley reminded the board that the finance balance sheet was included in the agenda packet and with no questions on that report she began to explain the Budget Amendment #5. It was explained that the budget amendment was simply some "housekeeping" to clean up the current budget. Commissioner Wooten-Jiles made a motion to accept Budget Amendment #5. Commissioner C Lewis seconded the motion and with none opposed, the motion passed.

Mrs. Stanley reported that she and Mr. Clark have been working on the budget for FY 23/24. They have the General Fund balanced, the Electric Fund is very close, and they are still working on the Water and Sewer Fund. In response to the board's concerns that there have not been any "work sessions" for the budget, Mr. Clark informed them that it would ready to be presented to the board before June 1 and would be ready for a public hearing before June 30.

Public Works Director, Benjy Lassiter reported that he has contacted McDavid & Associates regarding the surveying of the lot for the ATM. Once the survey is completed, it can be taken to the county and the county will assign the parcel number. After the parcel number is assigned, the project can move forward for the ATM installation.

In regard to the tree limbs that need cutting: Mr. Lassiter has been back and forth trying to contact Asplundh. They have promised they would have a crew in town but have yet to show up. He is still trying to contact someone that can perform the work needed.

Mr. Lassiter has also requested to be able to attend the NCRWA conference in May. If he is able to attend the conference, NCRWA is offering the training required for Division of Water Infrastructure during the conference. There is also a grant available that will reimburse the conference registration and the mileage. Commissioner P Lewis made a motion to allow Benjy to attend the conference. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Braxton and with none opposed, the motion passed.

Mrs. Stanley reminded the board that they would need to vote on the closed session minutes from the March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. Commissioner P Lewis made a motion to approve the March 13<sup>th</sup> closed session minutes. Commissioner Wooten-Jiles seconded the motion and with none opposed, the motion passed.

Mr. Clark explained to the board that he had some "Thoughts, Observations, and Recommendations" to go over with the board. One point made was that the town's electric rates are approximately 25% higher than City of Wilson. With the rates and also the condition of the system, Mr. Clark recommends that the town bring in Mr. R L Willoughby to evaluate the system overall. The fee for the evaluation would be no more than \$5000. He would come in person and some virtual to do the evaluations. The evaluation would take approximately 60 days to complete and he would give his recommendations as far as the best option for the town. There are several options available including leasing the operational side out, selling the system outright, or repairing the system and retaining control of it. The electrical system is

worth approximately \$350,000 (\$1000/customer). Commissioner Wooten-Jiles made a motion to hire Mr. Willoughby to come evaluate the electric system. The motion was seconded by Commissioner P Lewis and with none opposed, the motion passed.

Mr. Clark spoke about the planning and zoning and recommended that the town look into letting the county handle any zoning issues in the town since they already have trained staff and their zoning ordinance is up to date and the town's ordinances are so outdated.

Mr. Clark recommended that the board appoint Mrs. Stanley as Town Administrator effective immediately. He stated that he feels she is learning quickly and is capable to perform the duties of Administrator. He also stated that he knows the town cannot afford to continue to pay him his hourly rate but he will not leave until he feels Mrs. Stanley is ready. There will be conversations about the budget numbers and how he came to those and he will be sure that Mrs. Stanley understands.

Commissioner P Lewis made a motion to appoint Mrs. Stanley as Town Administrator effective tonight. Commissioner Braxton seconded the motion and with none opposed, the motion passed.

It was asked if Mrs. Etheridge would be promoted to Town Clerk as well and it was agreed. Commissioner P Lewis made a motion to promote Mrs. Etheridge to Town Clerk effective tonight with a new probationary period. Commissioner Braxton seconded the motion, and with none opposed the motion passed.

Commissioner Braxton asked how to add someone to Meals on Wheels. Mrs. Stanley informed the board that if anyone needed to be added to Meals on Wheels, they could give the name and contact information to her and she would contact Ms. Warren.

Commissioner C Lewis asked who the pastor of Rivers of Life Church is. He knows of someone that could make use of the restaurant building of theirs. Benjy will contact Mr. Harrell to find out about the restaurant.

Commissioner Wooten-Jiles brought before the board that she wanted to attend the City Vision conference in Concord later this month. When asked if the funds were available, Mrs. Stanley reported that there was not enough for the conference and room. Mr. Clark stated that he thinks we could make it work if the commissioner wants to attend.

Commissioner Wooten-Jiles asked when the amount of copies was made \$0.25 per page. It was discussed that it was with the new budget and there has been a sign on the front counter for some time. She also mentioned that the town needed policies regarding events so no one would be caught off guard. The DJ that was booked for Tynesha Lewis Day stated to Commissioner Wooten-Jiles that he applied the deposit for that day to the July 3<sup>rd</sup> event. It was explained that the town cannot reimburse her as it was not a town event therefore the DJ will need to reimburse her.

Commissioners Wooten-Jiles, P Lewis and Mayor Turner mentioned that they are unable to access their town emails. Mrs. Stanley stated that she would contact Mr. Will Burge in the morning to see if he can assist them. She will also ask about the internet hub that was discussed in the past.

Mayor Turner stated that she has spoken with Mr. Weaver regarding his properties and he stated that if he could get a list of the properties of complaint, he will get them repaired.

Commissioner P Lewis made a motion to enter into closed session. Commissioner C Lewis seconded the motion and with none opposed, the board entered closed session at 8:57 pm.

Commissioner C Lewis made a motion to return to open session. Commissioner P Lewis seconded the motion and with none opposed, the board returned to open session at 9:24 pm.

Commissioner C Lewis made a motion to award Gracie with a one time bonus of \$150 for becoming a notary. Commissioner P Lewis seconded the motion. Commissioner Wooten-Jiles opposed the amount. The motion passed 3-1.

Commissioner C Lewis made a motion to award Austin a one time bonus of \$500 with a raise in July. Commissioner Braxton seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Mrs. Stanley reported that she had been unable to access the salary study for the league until today due to technical issues. The salary study was tabled until the administrative study could be discussed.

Commissioner Braxton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Wooten-Jiles seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 9:34 pm.