

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF GASTON  
TOWN OF CRAMERTON**

**February 24, 2015**

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Cramerton met in a special meeting to conduct budget workshop session on Tuesday, February 24, 2015 at 8:30 a.m. in the G.M. Michael Room at the Cramerton Town Hall.

**Board members present:** Mayor Ronnie Worley; Mayor Pro Tempore Will Cauthen; Commissioners Sam Carpenter; Demetrios Koutsoupias; Tammy Lawrence; and Sandra R. Ware were present.

**Staff present:** Kevin Krouse, Interim Town Manager and Planning Director; Bill Brown, Town Attorney; Greg Ratchford, Chief of Police; Joel Lineberger, Finance Director; and Wilene Cunningham, Town Clerk. Mr. Cam Carpenter, Mr. Rodney Baker, Captain Rodney Robinson, and Michael McCumbee attended. Captain Foulk arrived later.

**Call to Order and Determination of Quorum:** Mayor Worley called the meeting to order and determined that a quorum was present.

**Review of Adopted Goals for Decision Making; Overview of Information to be Presented and Highlighting where the Choices and Decisions will need to be Made to Create a Balanced Budget:** Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated he would like to review the previous information regarding goals and objectives. Mayor Worley stated he liked the information being listed in a bullet style format. The large ticket items were displayed on a board. Commissioner Ware commented that improvements to Central Park were needed along with additional down town parking. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated fiscal responsibility needed to remain at the top of the list to include capital improvement plan and responsibly manage fiscal growth. He stated the previous point had been to improve the audit results and this now has been completed by the Finance Director.

Commissioner Ware commented on the importance of maintaining the Town's assets. Discussion was held by the Board stating this would include all safety equipment associated with the Parks and Recreation Department, roof improvements to Town Hall, and window replacement for the Community Center. Mr. Krouse stated roof improvements at Town Hall could be delayed for a year. Commissioner Ware stated concerns about areas under windows in Town Hall that are damaged. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated he was in favor of the flat roof being replaced. Mayor Worley stated some bubbling was occurring in several of the staff's offices. The Finance Director stated window replacement was not part of the original contract and the damage to the walls is some type of continuing water damage.

Mayor Worley stated that the employees were assets and he would like for the Town to promote a wellness plan. Discussion was held regarding a wellness fair. Commissioner Lawrence suggested encouraging fitness challenges between the employees. Cam Carpenter stated the Town was awarded the Fit Community designation in 2009.

The Board discussed the pavement cost for the streets and sidewalk maintenance.

Commissioner Ware commented about how busy down town was last night and the importance of parking. She stated the original parking plan added 29 spaces. Mr. Krouse asked about the parking arrangement with the Methodist Church. Attorney Brown stated a parking agreement was already in place allowing reciprocal parking between Town Hall and the Methodist Church. Mr. Krouse stated changing the streetscape could create more parking along with using the lot that the Town owns on Eighth Avenue at the railroad tracks.

Mayor Worley stated the Town has been promoted through regional publications such as the Montcross Chamber of Commerce and we need to contact AAA about promoting Goat Island as a day trip. The Board discussed having a reporter from "Our State" magazine be contacted for a possible article on the Town and Goat Island.

The Board discussed and encouraged the local businesses joining together and advertising. Mr. Krouse stated it would be to their benefit regarding advertising. Discussion was held regarding the impact of the industrial site and the creation of jobs at the Villages at Cramerton Mills. Commissioner Koutsoupas asked about the placement of job creation as a bullet point. The Board discussed assisting with the promotion of job creation through partnerships with public and private entities. Attorney Brown stated the Town works closely with the EDC to maintain a partnership with public and private entities.

Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated the Town continues to partner with the neighboring municipalities. The interlocal agreement for police services recently renewed with the Town of McAdenville. A joint Arbor Day celebration is planned with the City of Belmont. Mr. Krouse stated work continues with the City of Belmont and the Town of McAdenville regarding the Wilkinson Boulevard Corridor Study. Attorney Brown stated an ongoing discussion continues with the City of Belmont regarding golf carts and greenway usage.

**Finance Department:** Mr. Lineberger stated the new revenue neutral tax rate is 46.22 percent. There is a three to five percent growth rate increase expected. He stated the State allows only 98 percent to be budgeted. The Town should see an increase in tax revenue due to the property revaluation. An update on the ad valorem taxes will be available in two weeks. The Finance Director stated no funding has been set aside for the Veterans Memorial. Codification should be completed by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Lineberger stated a \$5.00 motor vehicle tax could be applied if the Board approved a resolution. Mr. Krouse stated that Bessemer City, Belmont, and Gastonia collect the motor vehicle tax. The Finance Director stated a property tax collection increase will be due to the recent revaluation. The ad valorem rate will remain the same for the next four years.

**Fire Department:** Chief Foulk stated there had been some discussion regarding paid personnel being at the Fire Department on Saturdays as this would assist with the ISO rating requirements and staffing needed for weekend events. Notification regarding a grant to assist with replacement of the 1978 brush truck will be released in May. The North Carolina Association of Rescue and EMS grant for the purchase of safety and rescue equipment will be applied for this summer. The total of the two grants is \$110,000.00 with a 50/50 match.

Chief Foulk stated with the purchase of a new fire truck and a brush truck then their fleet would be up to date. He did not recommend the purchase of a ladder truck. He stated the 1978 brush truck needs to be replaced due to its age.

The Finance Director reminded the Board that revenue is received from the interlocal fire department agreement with the Town of McAdenville.

Mayor Worley asked about the staffing of the fire department on Saturdays. Commissioner Ware asked if the cost of using public safety staff was part of the event fee. Attorney Brown stated the Board could consider adopting a special events permit and pass the costs along to the organizer of the event. Commissioner Lawrence recommended adoption of a minimum fee. Attorney Brown stated an increase of events will occur with the opening of Goat Park and greenway. Chief Foulk stated he had three additional certified firefighters join and he currently has a total of 35 firefighters.

**Parks and Recreation Department:** Cam Carpenter, Parks and Recreation Director, stated that renovations were made to the Community Center five years ago but that did not include replacement windows. Damage is occurring to the building due to water infiltration through the windows. Mr. Carpenter stated the pool will have to be resurfaced per the Health Department. Discussion was held regarding the practice fields at Stuart W. Cramer High School. Mr. Carpenter stated there has been interest shown by other groups that want to utilize the fields. Donations and sponsorships have been discussed. The Town currently uses the fields at Cramerton Middle School, New Hope Elementary, and Cramerton Christian. The HVAC unit for the weight room needs to be replaced. Park gates are needed for Goat Island as the barricades being used are not permanent and float away during flooding. New signage and gates are needed at the Riverside Park. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen asked what the cost would be for signage and gates for both parks. Mr. Carpenter stated it would be \$600.00 each. Mowing services are provided by Dixie Lawn with the Town's staff mowing the disc golf area and some right of ways. The Town owns a 1995 John Deere mower. A request was made for the purchase of a skid steer loader that would be used by the Parks and Recreation Department and Public Works Department. This piece of equipment could be used to clear out underbrush and placement of mulch at the playgrounds. The backhoe is too large for some projects. Mr. Carpenter stated Goat Island comprises thirty acres.

Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen asked about the availability of the Stuart W. Cramer High School practice fields for use by the Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Carpenter stated if the practice fields are scheduled for events planned by the school then access is offered for the baseball field. Mr. Carpenter stated access to the practice fields will require an access road with ADA accessibility. The practice fields need to be seeded and irrigated.

**Police Department:** The Finance Director stated the Police Department asked for the addition of two officers to their staff to assist with coverage for the Town of McAdenville. Chief Ratchford stated the Town of McAdenville council has asked for extra police personnel. Officer Marlow could be moved from part time to full time with no lapse in service and no additional training would be required. The Town receives assistance at night from the Lowell Police Department. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated additional police coverage will be required due to the construction of the Villages at Cramerton Mills along with residential construction in the Town of McAdenville.

Chief Ratchford stated a 50/50 grant for \$84,000.00 has been submitted for the purchase of sixteen mobile data terminals. The new terminals are more durable than the current lap top computers the

officers are using. Officers would have the capability to dispense crash and citation information and accessibility to the County's DCI system. A request was made for the purchase of a covert black box that would track data for speeding and traffic counts. A grant for \$8,000.00 has been submitted to offset the cost for replacement of the hard plates in the protective vests. These vests are used ten to fifteen times per year and are worn when officers are involved in building checks. The Finance Director reminded the Board that revenue is received for the Police Department from the interlocal agreement with the Town of McAdenville and Gaston County for the school resources officer. Commissioner Ware recommended the additional officer being added along with the purchase of protective hard plates for the vests.

**Presentation by Freese and Nichols on Central Park Improvements:** Mr. Charles Archer stated the preliminary report has been completed. He stated Central Park would be used by mainly residents who live less than a mile away and would walk to the park. Mr. Archer stated they are recommending at least four access points to the park. He stated currently there is very little parking. Parking could be increased to six spaces with one handicapped space. The lot the Town owns on Washington Street is not large enough to use as a parking area. Sidewalks could be added from Brooklyn Avenue and the trail would be approximately 6/10<sup>ths</sup> in length. Sidewalk improvements would be considered for High Street and Washington Avenue. Access to Central Park is available from Eleventh Street.

Park improvements would include using the grassy area for overflow parking, an ADA accessible restroom, new picnic tables, an eight foot wide concrete trail down to the pavilion past the playground, a patio area, retaining wall, four foot bridges, benches, and the planting of 35 trees. Steps would be constructed and wheelchair accessibility would be available at the parking lot. Mr. Archer stated the tennis courts would be removed and this area could be used for soccer or football. The area near the streams would be restored after removal of the rip rap and the addition of small ponds for a water feature. The stream restoration would include using natural vegetation as erosion control. The cost for the improvements would be \$1.2 million. Mr. Archer stated this project could be completed in phases and their company would be glad to assist the Town staff with searching for grant funding.

Mr. Archer stated sidewalks were proposed to be constructed on Washington Street. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen commented that the trail leading to the condominiums at Cramerton Village seems to have minimal foot traffic. Mr. Krouse stated this may be due to there being no advertising for Central Park. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen asked about ongoing maintenance costs. Three different options were offered for the trail with concrete at a cost of \$4.00, asphalt \$3.50, or gravel for \$3.00 per square foot. Mr. Lineberger stated Powell Bill funding could be used for sidewalk construction. The cost for stream restoration is \$150,000.00. Mr. Archer stated the tennis courts could be removed and in order to receive additional funds the usage of the area would need to be changed. Commissioner Ware stated this park would be a good place to have a nature trail with the plants and trees labeled for identification.

**Public Works:** Mr. Krouse stated it would cost \$389,278.00 to pave Woodlawn Avenue, Washington Street, South Fork Lane, and Front Street. These four streets were at the top of the paving study list. A savings of \$80,000.00 could be possible if mobilization could occur in June or July. Mr. Krouse stated milling of these streets would be required. The drainage issue at the alley on Front Street is being discussed. Mr. Lineberger stated there was a cost increase for street lighting. Mr. Carpenter stated that the skid steer should last around eight to ten years and would be

used between departments. Commissioners Lawrence and Ware agreed that the skid steer was important.

**Planning Department:** Mr. Krouse stated the engineering estimates have been very conservative and the engineering costs will be exceeded. An easement is needed from Mr. Rudisill prior to June in order to meet the grant guidelines. The Planning Director stated USI has been very responsive and Withers and Ravel is doing a good job regarding the greenway. Mr. Krouse stated McGill Associates made a mistake with their cost estimate on the Lakewood greenway trail. A discussion was held with USI regarding this mistake. Mr. Krouse stated additional funds will be required from the Town regarding this project. Attorney Brown asked if McGill Associates had errors and omissions coverage as this oversight might be covered. Commissioner Ware recommended McGill Associates be taken off the approved vendors list. Attorney Brown stated a list should be considered of who the top vendors are in the state. He explained the Mini-Brooks Act to the Board and how the process works regarding engineering proposals. The Board would choose a vendor and then the cost for services would be discussed.

**Budget Preparations:** Commissioner Ware asked about the gating at the parks. Mr. Krouse stated barricades are currently being used and they are not stationary during flooding. The cost for replacement playground ropes is \$7,500.00 and they are replaced every three to four years. The cost for the concrete t-boxes for disc golf is and \$7,200.00. These items are part of the contingency fund. Mayor Worley stated the flat roof on Town Hall has issues with leaking at the glass block windows. Mr. Krouse stated this possibly could be delayed for another year. The Board discussed the information technology assessment and the need to at least upgrade the police department's server. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated the technology upgrade was important.

The Board consented that they did not want to add a motor vehicle tax. Commissioner Lawrence stated she would like to waive a pay increase for the Board and move this money to the Veterans Memorial. The Stuart W. Cramer High School practice fields financing was removed from the proposed list. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated he thought the covert radar system was important. Chief Ratchford stated there was no grant money available for this purchase. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen asked about the amount of usage for the gates at the parks. The Board agreed to remove the park gates as part of the proposed budget.

Commissioner Carpenter asked to add a budget request for \$25,000.00 for an additional staff person and to make the Town Clerk a full time employee of the Board. Mr. Lineberger stated the staff was structured so there was a separation of duties to assist with internal control.

Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen, Commissioner Ware and Commissioner Lawrence were in favor of adding an additional police officer in December. Commissioner Koutsoupas and Carpenter were in favor of waiting a full year.

Commissioner Koutsoupas recommended the installation of a new HVAC system at Parks and Recreation be delayed.

Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen asked about the Veterans Memorial. Mr. Lineberger stated there was a balance of \$6,000.00 currently in this account. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen recommended \$5,000.00 be transferred into a capital project fund leaving a balance of \$11,000.00.

Commissioner Lawrence asked if the \$25,000.00 for the multi-purpose use fields at Stuart W. Cramer High School was being held in a capital project fund.

Chief Ratchford stated the number of mobile data terminals could be reduced by five units.

**Goals and Objectives:** Commissioner Lawrence stated discussion regarding how to better the communication process to inform citizens that they can use the tennis courts at Stuart W. Cramer High School. Mr. Krouse stated a phone app could be considered offering information regarding where to eat and shop along with a map. Informational kiosks could be set up around Town.

Commissioner Carpenter left at 12:45 p.m.

Mayor Worley stated the Board needed to continue supporting the Garden Parkway. Commissioner Koutsoupas commented on the street manual. Mr. Krouse stated he would discuss this further at another meeting. Commissioner Koutsoupas stated the Board may want to consider setting future Board dates to start at an earlier time or additional meetings in order to discuss goals and objectives.

The Finance Director stated there were several large expenditures this year including the purchase of fire apparatus, parking lot, and construction of canoes and portages. Mr. Lineberger stated the Town Clerk has acquired over 240 hours of compensatory time and he recommended payment. The personnel policy allows 80 hours of compensatory time each year.

The Board discussed holding a closed session meeting regarding personnel to be scheduled for Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> or Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Board agreed to meet on Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 8:30 a.m. Attorney Brown stated he would not be able to attend.

**ADJOURNMENT:** A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen to adjourn the meeting at 1:09 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lawrence and approved by all. The vote was 5 to 0 with Commissioner Carpenter being counted as a “yes” vote since he was not excused at the time he left the meeting.

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Mayor Ronald E. Worley

**ATTEST:**

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Wilene Cunningham, Town Clerk