

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF GASTON
TOWN OF CRAMERTON
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING**

January 30, 2016

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Cramerton met in a special called meeting session on Saturday, January 30, 2016 at 8:15 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 Houston Helms; Demetrios Koutsoupias; Susan Neeley; and Donald Rice.

Staff present: David Pugh, Town Manager; Bill Brown, Town Attorney; and Wilene Cunningham, Town Clerk.

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

Adoption of Agenda for this Meeting: A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen to adopt the proposed agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Koutsoupias and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Introduction of Facilitator: Darren Rhodes, Program Manager Rural Economic Development for NC Department of Commerce. Mr. Rhodes introduced himself to the Mayor and Board of Commissioners. He stated he has worked for the NC Department of Commerce for many years and had worked as a planner in the past. The Town Manager stated he worked with the Town of Midland as a facilitator and the cost for this service is for mileage only. Mr. Rhodes stated he traveled from Winston-Salem and it took about an hour and twenty minutes to arrive in Cramerton.

Mr. Rhodes stated today's meeting would focus on goals and objectives. He stated no one's ideas would be evaluated or judged and he would assist the group in trying to reach a consensus. Ground rules were discussed.

The first question addressed to the Board was what they wanted the outcome of this meeting today to be focused on and when they look back later in the day what was accomplished and did anything need to be clarified. Commissioner Neeley stated during her campaign that the citizens asked what some of the goals were for the Town. Commissioner Rice stated he wanted the current list of goals and objectives to be reviewed to see what has been accomplished to date and review the ones that still need to be accomplished. Mayor Worley stated the previous goals and objectives need to be completed to finish what has already been started. Some of the big ticket items have been completed and now it is time to get back to some of the basics such as fixing potholes and working on infrastructure. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated he would like to see five to six bullet points that could be the main focus for the next twelve months with code enforcement being at the top of the list. Commissioner Koutsoupias stated this meeting starts the budget process and a meeting will be held in March with all of the department heads. He stated he wants to make sure paving of roads is discussed. Commissioner Helms recommended the Board set up themes along with timely realistic goals and objectives.

Strategic Project Management: Mr. Rhodes asked the Board to begin by reviewing as a group the goals and objectives beginning with strategic project management. Commissioner Neeley stated restrooms on Goat Island need to be completed. The Town Manager stated this may be completed through funding as part of the \$100,000.00 NC Recreation Trails grant. Commissioner Rice stated maintenance of Goat Island is being provided by the Town's staff. There had been some questions from citizens regarding recent flood damage.

Commissioner Koutsoupias stated Goat Island had been one of the Town's larger projects and is now providing neighborhood connectivity. This is only one of several parks the Town needs to continue to maintain.

The second topic was completion of codification project. The Town Manager stated the codification has been completed and this information is available on the Town's website.

The next topic was discussion of the Veterans Memorial. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated set up of a community committee is upcoming and applications will be requested. The site selection should be achieved by the Board and then the committee will begin fundraising. He stated he would like to see groundbreaking on this project in twelve months. Commissioner Rice agreed and stated this project needs to be completed.

Commissioner Koutsoupas stated bylaws and the number of committee members needs to be determined prior to formation. Commissioner Rice stated this committee needs to be started immediately as he does not want to risk losing anyone by delaying the project. Mayor Worley stated the original discussion for the Veterans Memorial included possible set up as a park. The location, size, and cost need to be determined prior to formation of the committee.

Commissioner Helms stated the Veterans Memorial along with other community involvement projects need to be determined.

Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated he had concerns regarding the Villages at Cramerton Mills' project as there has been limited progress in the past eight years. The Town Manager stated the plat for Phase I was recently approved. Commissioner Helms asked what the goal was to remove the uncertainty and risk. Attorney Brown stated it would require staff vigilance. Mayor Worley stated the Town has not been paid for their property. The Town Manager stated the Town Planner continues to stay in contact with Nick Parker. The Board recommended that the staff use more diligence to protect the Town's interest and reduce risk. Attorney Brown recommended additional updates from the developer with details be received. The Board recommended that the staff follow up on this development requesting more information. Commissioner Helms asked for the Board to consider what the goal to remove the uncertainty and risk is. Attorney Brown stated the property may not get developed, the property changes owners, or the focus changes. The Town Manager stated he would request Mr. Parker provide an update to the Board at an upcoming meeting.

Commissioner Koutsoupas stated the greenway at the South Fork Village needs to be signed over to the Town. Attorney Brown stated the paperwork needs to be completed by the developer for transfer.

The Town Manager stated welcome packets are being mailed to all new residents each month when the information is received from Two Rivers Utilities.

Commissioner Helms stated he would like to have each neighborhood to have a Board member as their contact person. Commissioner Rice stated this would be also be a part of the community committee outreach. Commissioner Helms asked the status of other developments. The Town Manager stated there is ongoing construction at Timberlake. The Newport Landing and Old Course neighborhoods are almost fully built out.

Fiscal Responsibility. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated he would like to be aware of the capital improvement cost of maintenance for all of the Town's assets. He stated he was concerned about things such as the windows at Town Hall already in need of repair. Commissioner Helms stated he would like to see a list of all assets along with estimated maintenance costs and life expectancies including the Town's roadways. He stated his goal was to remain tax rate neutral and to avoid a tax increase.

Economic Development and Marketing. The Town Manager stated the branding and marketing process is ongoing. The Town's website offers a good strategic plan but needs to be updated. The Board discussed the Wilkinson Boulevard frontage property and the effect of development. Mayor Worley stated he would like to see a list of all available properties from the largest to smallest commercial property. The Town Manager advised the Board that he would have this information gathered for their review. Commissioner Koutsoupas stated people traveling on Wilkinson Boulevard need to be aware of the Town. The Board discussed the importance of upgrading the Town's website, wayfinding signs, marketing of the parks, and being active with the Montcross Chamber of Commerce to encourage industry. Commissioner Helms spoke about the importance of having a partnership with the county to encourage regional cooperation. The Board discussed continued involvement with other municipalities and to assist in the marketing of the parcels that are available. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen commented on the reuse of the lodge on Cramer Mountain and it now has eighty employees. The Villages at Cramerton Mills contains a light industrial phase. Commissioner Helms recommended that the Board attend meetings at other municipalities

and discuss what is happening with economic development in other areas. Mr. Rhodes stated the Department of Commerce could assist the Town with this endeavor.

Intergovernmental Collaboration. Commissioner Rice commented on the e-mail received regarding a thank you letter the Cramerton Fire Department received. The interlocal fire department contract is in the final year and will need to be renegotiated. The Town Manager explained that the contract will be presented to the Town of McAdenville's council for review. Attorney Brown stated there will be negotiation and the fire marshal's office will be involved.

Commissioner Helms asked if the eastern part of the county has similar goals and objectives and could we work towards regional cooperation. Commissioner Rice stated the Build A Better Boulevard project is not just for Cramerton. Commissioner Helms stated meetings could be held with other local municipalities to discuss their goals and objectives.

Commissioner Koutsoupas stated the Town uses the Stuart W. Cramer High School gym for some activities. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated the high school has the largest seating venue in the county but is not being fully utilized. The Board discussed using the school for an art crawl with possible formation of an arts council in order to allow alcohol sales. Attorney Brown stated Cornelius changed their Parks and Recreation Department to include an arts component. The Town Manager stated he serves as a member on the Gaston Arts Council. Mayor Worley stated that a discussion could be held with the school superintendent. Commissioner Koutsoupas recommended the Gaston Arts Council be involved. The Board discussed the amount of staff time required to plan events such as the Centennial Celebration.

Increase Citizen Involvement and Awareness. Commissioner Koutsoupas stated when new residents have their water and sewer service started by Two Rivers Utilities they provide that list to the Town Clerk and she sends them a packet with the Town's information. Commissioner Helms encouraged proactive meetings with neighborhood groups and homeowner associations. Commissioner Neeley recommended the Board members consider going door to door on a possible quarterly basis to maintain communication with the residents. Commissioner Rice stated many residents he spoke to had never been to a Town meeting and their opinions had never been shared. One comment received from residents was the lack of activities for teenagers at night. The Town Manager stated that several other Town parks are open besides Goat Island.

Commissioner Koutsoupas stated he wanted continuation of encouraging volunteers and to ensure they receive proper information and empower the committees with guidelines and direction from the Board. Commissioner Helms stated the Board could set the expectations. Commissioner Koutsoupas stated the committee members should be informed that their opinions and suggestions will be considered but the Board will make the final decisions. Commissioner Koutsoupas asked that the protocol already in place for advisory boards and committees continue to be used. He stated the advisory boards should review applications and then submit to the Board of Commissioners as to who they would like to see serving. Commissioner Rice stated the members need to be given projects to accomplish. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen recommended offering deliverables with dates and expectations. The Board discussed each of the advisory boards receiving orientation and proper training.

Commissioner Helms encouraged the high school becoming involved with government with participation by the youth. Commissioner Rice stated the police department could possibly offer a program with the canine unit. Commissioner Koutsoupas stated leadership requirements could be part of their curriculum.

Transportation: Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated the Build a Better Boulevard is on track and the sidewalk project will provide connectivity. Improvements to the Market Street intersection are being reviewed by NCDOT. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated the lighting for this intersection needs to be completed as soon as possible. The Board discussed the importance of the sidewalk project on Cramer Mountain Road, Lakewood sidewalk project, improvements to Market Street intersection, and street paving. Commissioner Rice asked if parking is considered a component of transportation. Mayor Worley stated parking is available but sometimes the spaces may not always be convenient. Commissioner Rice commented that many down town spaces in front of the buildings are being used by the boot camp members. Attorney Brown stated the spaces being used are for public parking. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated one consideration is purchase of the Masonic Lodge building which would provide additional parking and possible use of the building for a multi-functional structure. Commissioner Koutsoupas asked about the fog line striping on North Main Street. Attorney Brown stated consideration should be given regarding a possible down town parking study. At this time the Board took a ten minute recess.

Review of Goals and Objectives: Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated he would like to discuss minimum housing and code enforcement. He stated he would like to review the budget and policy for the next twelve to eighteen months and discuss further at the March meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated there is a handful of property owners who have property that is run down. He stated one of the properties is located on Eighth and another one is located on Main Street. The Town has demolished six homes. Jeremy Wilcox and Allen Durst are using private funds to buy and refurbish homes. Commissioner Helms asked about any changes in the crime rate. The Town Manager stated there had been several drug overdoses and the police department is working with other agencies regarding drug usage in the area. Commissioner Rice stated the police department needs to be empowered with quality officers and detectives as the quality of reports and investigations play a major role in court cases. He stated prescription drugs, meth, and heroin are the biggest regional drug problem in this area. Attorney Brown stated the town's ordinance could be reviewed. Commissioner Helms stated some citizens asked why the police don't get out of their cars. Attorney Brown stated that without a warrant they have limited powers. The Board discussed ways to help residents who need assistance with repairs to their home. Commissioner Helms stated he was concerned that the town will have residents move due to issues with a neighbor not maintaining their property.

Attorney Brown stated the town has a contract with Gaston County to complete minimum housing inspections and a hearing. Commissioner Helms asked if enough support is being offered or should it be provided by someone other than the police department. The Town Manager stated the code enforcement officer is a sworn police officer. Attorney Brown stated some municipalities use a third party contractor for this service who usually works two to three days a week. The Town Manager stated this person would look at all properties for possible issues. Attorney Brown stated the process is currently complaint driven. Commissioner Rice stated that multiple cars, boats and trailers are parked in some yards.

Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen recommended that a volunteer group work on Central Park. The Town Manager stated Cam Carpenter is working on a PARTF grant. Commissioner Koutsoupas stated the fencing was taken down and he would like to see another small project completed. The Board discussed possible uses for Central Park such as biking and walking trails.

Commissioner Helms stated there will be some personnel changes with the Police Chief and Attorney retiring. He commented that one police officer went to work for Dallas. Commissioner Rice stated there is an overall problem with filling vacancies. The Sheriff's office lost twenty-five employees and expects to lose seven more each year due to retirement. Commissioner Rice stated the base pay for officers is lower than the City of Gastonia's and Gaston County's base rates. Commissioner Helms stated that he wanted to preserve leadership. The Board stated base pay rates would be discussed at the budget meeting in March.

Commissioner Rice stated that road maintenance needed to be discussed. The Board discussed the importance of which roads would be at the top of the list and when will the process begin. Mayor Worley stated this information needs to be provided to the public. Commissioner Rice asked if the sidewalks could be cleaned with pressure washing. Attorney Brown stated the sidewalks need to be inspected and maintained.

Commissioner Koutsoupas stated he would like to have additional information regarding capital improvement projects and the cost of maintenance and possible addition of staff. The Town Manager stated the Public Works Department resumed leaf collection for Cramer Mountain this year without the addition of staff.

Commissioner Koutsoupas stated he wanted to ensure that advisory boards and committees are properly informed. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen recommended that any expenditures under \$500.00 could be initiated without authorization from the Board.

Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated there needs to be continued smart growth and management of the property on Wilkinson Boulevard and Villages at Cramerton Mills. Attorney Brown stated the Board will be receiving information at an upcoming meeting regarding rezoning on Wilkinson Boulevard. The Town Manager stated work continues regarding branding and marketing along with wayfinding signage.

Mr. Rhodes began a review of the Board's goals and objectives. Commissioner Helms recommended the budget process be part of the workshop meetings. Commissioner Koutsoupas recommended asking Nick Parker to attend an upcoming meeting to advise the Board of the progress at the Villages at Cramerton Mills' project. He also asked that someone from the

Montcross Chamber of Commerce be invited to a workshop meeting. The Town Manager stated if necessary the workshop meeting time could be changed to 6:00 p.m. instead of 7:00 p.m. Commissioner Helms asked that a list of topics to be discussed at each meeting be determined in order that the public can be notified and citizens encouraged to attend.

The Board discussed having the Town Manager prepare a recap of the 2015 projections along with the projected 2016 projections. Mayor Worley asked for a Gantt chart. The Board discussed the paving of roads, Community Committee, and Veterans Memorial as topics for upcoming meetings. Mayor Worley suggested that a groundbreaking date be chosen for the Veterans Memorial. Commissioner Helms asked about the process to hold special meetings if needed. The Town Manager stated the process begins with discussion with the Mayor, notice to the media, and preparation of the agenda. The Town Manager stated he will begin scheduling meetings with department heads to discuss the budget. The Mayor and Board thanked Mr. Rhodes for facilitating today's meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen stated he would encourage follow up with the Department of Commerce regarding economic development.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Cauthen to adjourn the meeting at 12:12 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Neeley and approved by all.

Mayor Ronnie Worley

ATTEST:

Wilene Cunningham, Town Clerk