

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF GASTON  
TOWN OF CRAMERTON

June 11, 2020

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Cramerton met on Thursday, June 11, 2020 at 6:00 p.m., as a virtual meeting via Zoom.

**Call to Order and Determination of Quorum.** Mayor Cauthen, Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas. Commissioners Abernathy, Atkinson, Neeley, and Rice verbally confirmed their attendance.

**Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance.** Commissioner Neeley provided the invocation and pledge of allegiance.

**Adoption of Agenda for this meeting.** A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to adopt the proposed agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rice. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor of adoption of agenda for this meeting.

**Note:** There will be Public Comments for this June 11<sup>th</sup> BOC meeting. The Public Comments Section for the month of June will be held at the June 25<sup>th</sup> BOC meeting.

**Proclamations**

- a. **Celebrating the Graduates of 2020:** A proclamation recognizing and celebrating the Graduating Classes of 2020 and their ability to persevere through the COVID-19 pandemic and strive for and achieve great success! The Town of Cramerton wishes all of you the best as you work towards your next great milestones! A copy of the proclamations will be placed in the minutes book.

**Consent Agenda (Action Item):** Consider approval of the consent agenda.

- a. **Minutes**
  - i. **May 21, 2020 meeting minutes.**
- b. **Budget Amendments for fiscal year (FY) 2019-2020**
  - i. **Budget Amendments #2020-13; #2020-14; #2020-15.** A motion to adopt by the proposed consent agenda was made by Commissioner Rice. Seconded by Commissioner Neeley. Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; and Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor of approval of the consent agenda. Copies will be placed in the minutes book.

**Agenda Items Requiring a Public Hearing**

- a. **A public hearing for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-2021 Cramerton Town Budget and Fee Schedule.**
  - i. **Open Public Hearing:** A motion was made by Commissioner Atkinson to open the public hearing. Seconded by Commissioner Rice. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes; and Commissioner Neeley voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor of opening the public hearing.
  - ii. **Staff Comments / BOC Q&A:** The Town Manager thanked the Board and financial staff for their help. A review of the budget message was provided. Discussion was held about collection of the proposed \$15.00 vehicle license tag fee. This fee can be approved at the June 25<sup>th</sup> meeting. If not approved it will not affect the proposed budget or affect the current Fund Balance. The town owes \$370,000.00 for the last paving project and would need to pay this loan off prior to requesting a new loan per the Finance Director.

- iii. Public Comments:** Attorney Wolter read into the public record from the email received from Astrid Duarte, 127 Berry Mountain Road, Cramerton.

“Dear Mr. Cauthen

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed budget. At this time we can reflect on our priorities for the kind of society we want to live in and then we have to determine the best route to achieve our goals. Cramerton has made incredible strides since I have lived here in regards to improved recreational access for our citizens. I believe that creates a healthier, happier and safer environment for all of us. In keeping with these accomplishments I would like to propose some ideas about redirecting resources to further improve our little corner of the world. I know that financing the police dept. is a large chunk of our budget, including the purchase of new vehicles. What I would like to discuss is whether some of the money earmarked for a traditional police force that is focused on “law and order” and rounding up the criminal element roaming our streets could be redirected to social programs that have been proven to create safer environments. The police have been called upon to handle drug overdoses, mental health problems, security at community events, disputes between children in school, and I’m sure other situations that I am not even aware of. The question is whether an authority figure with a gun is the right provider in these situations? I feel that many of society’s problems have been downloaded to a police force ill equipped to properly resolve and de escalate these occurrences. It’s not fair to the police or to the citizens. We will always need some mechanism to deal with the odd act of criminal violence but most of our societal problems cannot be rectified through the deployment of police as we know them today. What if a portion of the funds we are directing to police vehicles and armaments and surveillance equipment were spent on mental health support, housing, apprenticeship programs, after school programs and in school mediators? What If 3/4 of our police staff were not equipped with guns and vests and tazers and police cars but were empowered to be a social support team with the skills to make a real difference? I personally believe we would live in a community that is even safer than what we already have. Please don’t think of this as defunding but of redirecting our resources in a more positive manner to continue building our community.

If you would kindly distribute this email to the commissioners I would appreciate that.

Many thanks for your time and efforts.

Astrid Duarte”.

No other public comments were received.

- iv. Close Public Hearing:** A motion was made by Commissioner Atkinson to close the public hearing. Commissioner Rice seconded the motion. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes; Commissioner Neeley voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor of closing the public hearing. Due to the current virtual meeting law the town will accept public comments for the next 24 hours to be read into the record on June 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Note:** Compared to previous years, and due to COVID-19, the State of North Carolina is requiring that any municipal government wait at least 24 hours to make a decision regarding a public hearing matter. Therefore, in compliance with the State of NC Law, the Cramerton BOC will make their decision on the FY 2020-2021 Budget at the June 25, 2020 BOC meeting.

### **Agenda Items NOT Requiring a Public Hearing**

#### **a. Parks and Recreation**

##### **i. Central Park Capital Project**

- 1. Updated Timeline:** Eric Smallwood stated he is working with TRU to get water to the restrooms. TRU was able to locate an old account in their database system.

The contractor may be out next Thursday or Friday of next week to begin work on the restrooms. Commissioner Neeley asked if the restrooms would be ready by July 4<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Smallwood stated possibly if there are no issues. Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas asked about the various surface materials being used. Crushed concrete will be used for the enhanced natural surface trail and material similar to what is being used at George Poston Park for the biking trails. Any useable soil removed from the gulley repair will be placed to create earth mounds. Parking will be at the ballfields with additional signage and striping for this area similar to what is in the Lakewood neighborhood. The condition of the parking lot is comparable to the parking lot in the downtown area. Some improvements have been made repairs to the storage lot area along with visual blockage buffering and he plans to have this parking lot restriped for an addition of about twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) percent more vehicles. Trees and other landscaping for the park will be partnered with other groups such as the Boy Scouts, Eagle Scouts, and/or the U.S. Forestry Division in Mount Holly. MJC Renovations is the contractor for the bathrooms, Sherrill Backhoe and Landscaping is the contractor for the gulley grading, and the trail work is being completed by Blue Ridge Trail Works. The interactive public art area can be added at a later date.

**b. Planning & Zoning**

**i. Urban Farming Ordinance in Cramerton**

1. **Action Item:** The Planning Director stated a request was received to consider an amendment to the town's code of ordinances that would allow for the keeping of chickens on a limited basis. Scott Kincaid, 152 North Main Street, stated at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early March, he received six (6) baby chicks for his daughters from a co-worker. He stated he was not aware of the town's ordinance. Commissioner Abernathy was in support of adopting a stance consistent with what the Town of Belmont has done. Commissioner Rice stated his support but did add that he did not want this to be a burden for the code enforcement officer along with his other duties. Commissioner Atkinson stated his support. Commissioner Neeley stated her support. The Planning Director stated he wanted Chapter 90 of the Town Code to be codified as an amendment to the town's existing ordinance. As an ordinance change to the Town Code, no public hearing will be needed. No code enforcement actions will be taken while the ordinance is being amended. Mr. Kincaid thanked the Mayor and Board of Commissioners for listening to him and he loves the town. He stated Mr. Krimminger is a fantastic code enforcement officer and is doing a great job. Commissioner Abernathy stated her support of amending this ordinance; Commissioner Neeley voiced her support; and Commissioner Atkinson voiced his support.

**ii. VCM Phase 1B, Map 2**

1. **Action Item: Consider approval of VCM Phase 1B, Map 2.** The Planning advised that three (3) lots in Phase B were not adopted originally as the developer did not have the road built to the end of Phase 1B at the time of plat approval. The developer is working with Two Rivers Utilities about some issues and the staff will recommend approval of the plat once these issues have been resolved and the road has been completed. A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to approve the VCM Phase 1B, Map 2. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rice. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore voted yes. The motion passed 5 to 0 in favor of approval of VCM Phase 1B, Map 2.

- iii. **Weavers Run Traffic Study Update:** Following a citizen's request the Cramerton Police Department conducted a speed study. The speed study was evaluated under the town's traffic calming policy. The posted speed limit on Weavers Run is twenty (20) miles per hour. The study was completed in two phases. Results of the study showed an average speed of fifteen (15) miles per hour indicating a Class Z traffic issue. There have been no reported traffic collisions in the study area within the last twelve (12) months. Based on the findings, increased speed enforcement has been initiated. Mayor Cauthen asked that this traffic study be placed on the town's website.

c. **Public Works**

i. **NCDOT Projects in Cramerton**

1. **Action Item:** Update, review and provide additional direction (if any) regarding the \$750,000 in discretionary funding from Senator Harrington for Market Street Intersection improvements. Mayor Cauthen stated the original \$750,000 was part of discretionary funding from the state in 2015 to the Town of Cramerton and the Town of McAdenville for road improvements at Market Street and Wesleyan Avenue. The condition on this funding was to wait until NCDOT finished the Build A Better Boulevard widening project through the corridor. The Board discussed meeting with the Town of McAdenville council members and Senator Harrington to discuss spending this money. The Powell Bill could be reduced by twenty (20) percent for Fiscal Year 2020/2021. A resolution has been prepared by the City of Belmont asking legislators to retain the Powell Bill. NCDOT informed the town that the Cramer Mountain Road paving project has until 2021 to be completed by Asphalt Paving of Shelby. The Board consented to have staff gather additional information regarding possible reallocation of this fund or free this funding for the original project.

**Manager's Report: COVID-19 (Coronavirus):** Updated information will continue to be sent out. The administrative office of Parks and Recreation will reopen next week. The gym will remain closed until further notice. The pool is scheduled to open on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

Withers Ravenel is waiting on a debrief from the federal government regarding the brownfields grant.

The developer for the MT Land project has asked that the setting of the public hearing be rescheduled until August. The Board members consented to the July 16<sup>th</sup> meeting being held by Zoom.

Commissioner Atkinson asked if schematics had been received from Gary Fankhauser about the Veterans Memorial. The Town Manager stated no.

**General Staff Reports (as needed)**

- **Update from Two Rivers Utilities, Mr. Mike Bynum:** A copy of report in minutes book
- **Police Department:** Chief Adams voiced the police department's commitment to compassion for our services to the community. The biggest goal is training and evaluating procedures to accomplish this goal. He stated he has several officers that he will want to recognize. There have been several shootings and one of the officers provided lifesaving efforts to the one of the victims at the recent shooting.
- **Finance Department:** The Finance Director stated that budget amendment #15 needs to be amended. A motion was made by Commissioner Rice to reconsider the consent agenda without the budget amendment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atkinson. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes; and Commissioner Neeley voted yes. The motion passed 5 to 0 in favor.

Commissioner Abernathy requested the budget amendments be pulled from the consent agenda.

**Action Item:** A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to approve the May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 Board of Commissioner minutes. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Commissioner Rice voted yes. The motion passed 5 to 0 in favor.

**Action Item:** A motion was made by Commissioner Atkinson to approve the amended budget amendments. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rice. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes; and Commissioner Atkinson voted yes. The motion passed 5 to 0 in favor.

The Finance Director stated he should have information on the sales and tax fund tomorrow or Monday. This will be first month that should show impact from the COVID-19 The new auditing firm will begin their preliminary field work next Wednesday and Thursday.

- **Fire Department:** Chief Foulk had nothing to report.
- **Parks and Recreation Department:** Eric Smallwood had nothing else to report.
- **Planning and Zoning Department:** Josh Watkins had nothing else to report.
- **Town Clerk:** Nothing to report.
- **Town Attorney:** Nothing to report.

#### **Topics of Discussion for Each Commissioners:**

Commissioner Abernathy thanked the Finance Director for his pride in his work. She thanked Police Chief Adams for serving as the town's police chief and for our officers. She offered prayers for his safety and the safety of his officers and to all of his brothers and sisters that also serve in law enforcement. Chief Adams thanked her for her support and advised he would pass her sentiments to his officers.

Commissioner Atkinson asked about a future meeting with the code enforcement officer attending in person. The Planning Director stated a report from the code enforcement officer is included in the agenda at the second meeting of each month. An in-person report was scheduled to be held quarterly but due to the COVID-19 virus no in-person meetings have been held. Commissioner Atkinson asked when would the next Shred It be held. The Town Manager stated this even is usually included as part of the town's Earth Day festival. Commissioner Atkinson stated work continues on bridge lighting and a demo from the contractor should be scheduled soon. He thanked the police chief for his leadership

Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas had nothing to report.

Commissioner Neeley asked about the status of the natural path that is proposed for Cramer Mountain Road. Mr. Smallwood stated the natural trail path is a rezoning condition of the Villages at Cramerton Mills project. Mr. Watkins stated this part of the plan is under review as part of the phase that includes townhomes. She offered her congratulations to the graduates of 2020. She thanked the Town Manager for following up on the potholes she asked about. She thanked the Finance Director for all he does.

Commissioner Rice stated the fire department was able to hold their first in-person training this past Monday. He thanked the Public Works Department and the police department for their quick response about the stop sign that was knocked down in Lakewood. He thanked Chief Foulk and Chief Adams for the great work they do and for keeping us in a positive light working with the citizens.

Mayor Cauthen stated the town needs to partner with NCDOT to make sure that crossings on Cramer Mountain Road are actively marked with lighting for safety especially with the addition of the future natural trail path. Mayor Cauthen stated that the road signs behind the R.T. Hill Building have been knocked down along with damage to the grassy area. He stated his appreciation of the police chief and his department.

**Closed Session:** [N.C.G.S 143-318.11(5)] **To establish, or to instruct the public body's staff or negotiating agents concerning the position to be taken by or on behalf of the public body in negotiating (i) the price and other material terms of a contract or proposed contract for the acquisition of real property by purchase, option, exchange, or lease.** A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to enter into closed session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atkinson. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes; and Commissioner Rice voted yes. The motion was 5 to 0 in favor to enter into closed session.

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas to return to open session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Neeley. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; and Commissioner Rice voted yes. The motion passed 5 to 0 in favor of returning to open session.

**Adjournment:** Upon return to open session and no action taken by the Board during closed session, a motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Abernathy and seconded by Commissioner Rice. Commissioner Neeley voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. Commissioner Atkinson was not available via Zoom. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor of adjourning at 8:48 p.m.

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Mayor William Cauthen

**ATTEST:**

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Wilene Cunningham, Town Clerk