

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

**January 21, 2021**

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Cramerton met on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., as a virtual meeting via Zoom.

**Call to Order and Determination of Quorum.** Mayor Cauthen, Commissioner Abernathy, Commissioner Atkinson, Commissioner Neeley, and Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas confirmed their attendance for the record.

**Staff Present:** David Pugh, Town Manager; Attorney Karen Wolter; Josh Watkins, Planning Director; Police Chief Adams; and Wilene Cunningham, Town Clerk.

**Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.** Commissioner Neeley provided the invocation and the pledge of allegiance was given by all.

**Adoption of Agenda for this meeting:** Mayor Cauthen stated that there would not be any in person public comments at tonight's meeting as it is being held via Zoom. The Town Manager stated that under the "Agenda Items not Requiring a Public Hearing" that discussion for downtown parking needed to be added along with the addition of information regarding the setting of two (2) public hearings. A public hearing needs to be set for February 4<sup>th</sup> for the LGC loan approval under "Public Works". A public hearing needs to be set for a rezoning request for the Terraces motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to adopt the amended agenda. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes. The vote was 4 to 0 in favor of adoption of the amended agenda.

**Public Comment (electronic):** The Town Manager advised there had been no public comments being received.

**Presentations**

**a. Gaston County Updated 2040 Vision Statement and Strategic Plan**

- i. **Initial overview presentation by Gaston County Planning Staff.** David Williams and Gena Shell introduced themselves to the Mayor and Board of Commissioners. A presentation was provided offering an overview of the planning process for the Gaston County Community Vision 2040 vision statement. Other members of the group include Del Murphy with CaroMont Health, Donna Locke with Gaston Together, Matt Blackwell Economic Development Administrator for Gaston County Economic, and David Fogarty with Cooperative Extension. Discussion included why create a vision and the expectations for the visioning process and product. Corollary data include the creation of a community data dashboard and involvement of residents. In 2019 the Gaston County Board of Commissioners hired a consultant, Ted Abernathy, and he conducted an economic development assessment and how the county is growing and who we needed to be prepared for that growth. Stakeholders stated they were interested in development of a broader vision and where the county wants to be with the health of its residents, its infrastructure, and education as part of a healthy thriving community. The process would include formation of a steering committee to be led by engaged, energetic, and diverse individuals representing business, government, service/non-profit, faith/clergy, and various representatives from the community of various ages and demographic backgrounds. There will be a creation of an online community data dashboard to collect census data from municipalities and the county which will be available to everyone. Phase 1 is outreach to stakeholders and creation of leadership structure; funding strategy will be a public/private approach; and selection of an experienced consultant sometime in January 2021; Phase II will be community engagement, dialogue, ownership; organization stakeholder dialogue; Phase II creation of vision, establishment of goals, accountability, and implementation approach (winter 2022); and Phase 4 Vision in Action will be ongoing.

## Proclamations

- a. **A Proclamation to honor the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and recognize Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on January 18, 2021.** A signed copy of the proclamation will be placed in the minutes book.

## Old Business

- a. **NewStyle Communities, Inc. Rezoning Consideration**
  - i. **Action Item: Consider the request from NewStyle Communities, Inc. to rezone approximately 13.42 acres off of S. New Hope Road for a single-family age restricted development. This rezoning request would allow for 30 single-family detached homes and two 6,000 sq. ft. commercial buildings.** The Planning Director advised the public hearing to discuss changes to plans as stated above was held on January 7<sup>th</sup>. Per the rules for virtual public hearings this is the follow up meeting to allow for any additional public input. Staff recommends approval by board. A motion to approve by Commissioner Neeley. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atkinson. Commissioner Abernathy yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 4 to 0 in favor.

**Note:** This action is being taken in accordance and compliance with NC Law. The Cramerton Board held the official public hearings for the NewStyle Communities, Inc. conditional rezoning request at the October 1, 2020 and January 7, 2021 meetings, and has accepted public comment for at least 24 hours after the close of the public hearing before considering adoption. Cramerton has also continued to take public comment on this item and will read any additional comments into the record on this section of the agenda.

- ii. **Action Item: Consider adopting a consistency statement regarding NewStyle Communities, Inc Conditional Rezoning request.** A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to adopt the consistency statement regarding NewStyle Communities, Inc. conditional rezoning request. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atkinson. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 4 to 0 in favor of adopting the consistency statement.

## Agenda Items NOT Requiring a Public Hearing

- a. **Parks and Recreation**
  - i. **Parks and Recreation Advisory Board**
    1. **Action Item: Consider approval of changes to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board By-Laws (as recommended by the Advisory Board).** Mr. Smallwood advised the Parks and Recreation Board to change the bylaws to reflect seven (7) voting members instead of five (5) voting members and two (2) alternate members. Four (4) out of seven (7) members would constitute a quorum. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board unanimously recommended these changes. Staff also recommends these changes. A motion was made by Commissioner Abernathy to adopt the amended Parks and Recreation Advisory Board bylaws. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Neeley. Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 4 to 0 in favor of approval of changes to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board bylaws.
- b. **Public Works**
  - i. **Road Capital Projects 2021**
    1. **Loan Options and Discussion**
      - a. **Action Item: Review and consider approval of loan options and amount and direct staff to begin the application approval process to the NC Local Government Commission (LGC).** The Town Manager stated staff is recommending procurement of a loan for \$2.5 million loan request to the NC Local Government Commission. The loan would be for ten (10) years which would be an amount of \$278,316 appropriated annually. Any loan requests above \$1 million for projects need to be presented to the NC Local Government Commission. A public hearing needs to be published. Preparation of paperwork will need to be started by staff. Commissioner Abernathy

asked about the \$84,503 listed as additional General Fund and will this amount be taken out of the General Fund each year. She asked if \$84,503 would be taken out for the next ten (10) years. The Town Manager stated this would be an amount in the Town's annual budget and not part of the Fund Balance. The Town Manager stated this amount could change based on a possible increase of monies received from the Powell Bill and the tag and tax fee due to growth of the Town. Commissioner Atkinson asked how growth impacts the monies received from the Powell Bill. The Town Manager stated that the Powell Bill amount is calculated for each municipality based on a formula based on the amount of road mileage and population. The state calculates the Powell Bill for each municipality with a formula based on road mileage and population. The Finance Director stated 75% of the allocation is based on population and 25% on road mileage. The Town has 15.91 miles of public streets as defined by Powell Bill criteria. A motion was made by Commissioner Atkinson to direct staff to begin the loan application process and approval process by the NC LGC. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Abernathy. Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes; Commissioner Neeley voted yes. The vote was 4 to 0 in favor.

- b. **Public hearing: Set a public hearing for 2.4.2021 board meeting.** A motion was by Commissioner Neeley to set the public hearing for February 4, 2021. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atkinson. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 4 to in favor of setting the public hearing for February 4, 2021.

c. **Board of Commissioners**

i. **Cramerton Board of Commissioners Vacancy**

1. **Action Item: Consider amending Section 2 of the Town of Cramerton Appointment Policy to Fill Vacancies on The Board of Commissioners.** Attorney Wolter reached out to the Board of Elections and based on the Town's charter which states that Town vacancies are filled for the remainder of the term as opposed to the state term to fill out the current vacant term. Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas asked for an explanation as to when general law takes precedence over state law. Attorney Wolter advised that the Town's charter takes precedence over state law regarding the vacancy and this is because the Town's charter was after the state had passed election vacancy laws and the state accepted this exception. A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas to amend Section 2 of the Town of Cramerton's appointment policy to fill vacancies on the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Atkinson seconded the motion. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Neeley voted yes. The vote was 4 to 0 in favor of amending Section 2 of the appointment policy to fill vacancies on the Board of Commissioners.
2. **Action Item(s): Consider approval of the vacancy candidate interview schedule proposed to take place before the February 18, 2021 BOC meeting.** Commissioner Abernathy asked if the interviews could be scheduled to be held on a Saturday in consideration of candidates who work during the week. She recommended February 6<sup>th</sup> or the 13<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Neeley made a motion to conduct the interviews on Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Abernathy seconded the motion. Discussion continued regarding staff involvement. The Town Manager stated that he and the Town Clerk are usually involved to assist in organizing the process. The Town Manager said he would be available for attendance for a Saturday meeting. Commissioner Neeley made a motion to conduct the interviews on Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup>. The motion failed due to lack of a second. Attorney Wolter reminded the Board that the applicants to be interviewed will need to be chosen at the February 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to conduct the interviews on Saturday, February 13<sup>th</sup>. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Abernathy.

Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupias voted yes.

**ii. Cramerton Planning & Zoning Board Vacancy**

- 1. Action Item: Consider appointing BOC sub-committee (Mayor and two Commissioners) for the P&Z Board vacancy search.** A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to appoint Commissioner Atkinson and herself to serve on the BOC subcommittee for the Planning and Zoning Board vacancy search. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Abernathy. Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupias voted yes. The vote was 4 to 0 in favor. The Town Manager stated the vacancy has been published in the local newspaper and posted on the Town's website.
- 2. Masonic Lodge Parking Lot Update:** The Town Manager stated the Board passed a resolution for an exemption from the Mini-Brooks Act at the December 10, 2021 meeting allowing the procurement of LaBella Engineering to get the bids distributed quickly. A bid package should be issued next week. Changes to the parking lot area include a one-way ingress off of Eighth Avenue and exiting onto Ninth Street. Parking lot will be extended into a square formation to include an area for a shade structure and electrical outlets to be used for vendors. Mayor Cauthen stated discussion has been ongoing with the Masonic Lodge for twenty-six (26) months. A negotiated lease offer was presented to the Lodge from the Town on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020 for their consideration. The Lodge stated they wanted to have their attorney review but to date they have not retained an attorney and are planning to choose an attorney at their next Lodge meeting to be held next week. Mayor Cauthen requested that a motion be presented from this Board to notify the Masonic Lodge that the Town is withdrawing the current lease offer on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021. A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to withdraw the current lease offer to the Masonic Lodge as of February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Abernathy. Commissioner Atkinson asked if lighting would be considered as part of the parking lot update. Mayor Cauthen stated there would be additional decorative lighting installed that would be similar to the lighting already in place. Commissioner Atkinson if there would be a sidewalk adjacent to the parking lot towards the open plaza area. Mr. Smallwood stated a full eight (8) foot wide sidewalk would be placed adjacent to the Center Street parallel to Ninth Street on the green space side which would allow for vendor setup. Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupias voted yes. The motion was 4 to 0 in favor. Mayor Cauthen asked staff to notify the Masonic Lodge contacts of the decision made at tonight's meeting.

**BIG BOARD:** The Town Manager stated the Masonic Lodge plans to review the proposed lease agreement once they have procured an attorney. Staff will be sending out the draft "design competition" Neighborhood Sign request for proposals to the Wayfinding Sign Committee for review. After comments and edits a draft of the "design competition" request for proposal will be reviewed by the Board of Commissioners at the February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting. Staff is procuring a firm to create a drone video of the brownfield property for use during a future Zoom advocacy call with our North Carolina and federal representatives. Board members will be invited to join this Zoom meeting.

**Manager's Report**

- a. COVID-19 (Coronavirus):** Gaston County is in Phase 1 and 2 vaccine stages. Phase 1 includes law enforcement and first responders along with people age 70 and older. Phase 2 will include people age 65 and older. This information has been included with the Town's newsletter which is being distributed next week and will also be posted on the Town's Facebook page.
- b. Discussion of 2021 Goals and Objectives meeting to be held fully via Zoom OR an in-person hybrid model.** The Town Manager recommended to delay and reschedule the Goals and Objectives meeting that is currently scheduled for Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup>. With the continuation of COVID-19 virus cases in our area

and being only in the early stages of the vaccine it was recommended that the Goals and Objectives meeting be delayed and rescheduled until the end of February or the first of March. This would also allow the Board to fill the vacant seat left by former Commissioner Rice. The Town Manager recommended February 27<sup>th</sup> or March 13<sup>th</sup> as those would be Saturdays between the Board meetings. Commissioner Neeley made a motion to hold the Goals and Objectives meeting on Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Cauthen advised that that the River Sweep is scheduled for March 13<sup>th</sup>. A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to hold the Goals and Objectives meeting on Saturday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atkinson. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupias voted yes. The vote was 4 to 0 in favor.

#### **General Staff Reports (as needed)**

- **Update from Two Rivers Utilities, Mr. Kyle Butler:** A copy of the report will be placed in the minutes. Mr. Butler stated final acceptance has been completed for the Villages at South Fork Phase 3. The Town Manager asked if testing has been completed at the on one of the water pumps at the Baltimore Pump Station. Mr. Butler stated he would follow up on this request and get back in touch with Mr. Pugh.
- **Police Department:** Chief Adams stated a recent Presidential Executive Order on Safe Policing and Safe Communities was directed and passed to the Justice Department. They were directed to not release any funds to any agency that was credentialed by an independent agency. The Police Department has been approved and is now credentialed and can receive federal funds. Captain, Jones, Sergeant Harris, and Officer Corum finished de-escalation instructor training and will allow in-house training.
- **Fire Department:** Chief Foulk stated he had nothing to report. Mayor Cauthen wished him a happy birthday. Commissioner Neeley asked if the fire department offered any type of free fire extinguisher program. He stated no but the county does have a smoke detector program but not a fire extinguisher program.
- **Parks and Recreation:** Mr. Smallwood stated reinforcement of concrete borders are being completed on Goat Island and should be completed at the first of next week the next week. Placement of mulch will be placed the following week. The park is currently closed due to heavy machinery working on the playground revitalization.
- **Planning and Zoning:** The Planning Director reminder everyone to please fill out the Catawba Crossings survey as this is very important for NCDOT to see this data. The link will be sent to the Board of Commissioners. The link was placed on the Town's Facebook page at the last Board meeting.
- **Finance:** Mr. Lineberger was absent.
- **Town Clerk:** Commissioner Neeley asked about updates on the front door at Town Hall. The security update request should be completed soon along with the placement of the Town's Seal and office hours. The lighting has been changed to a flush mount light. The Town Manager thanked the clerk for her assistance with research on the Board of Commissioner's vacancy.
- **Town Attorney:** Nothing to report.

#### **Committee Reports:**

- **Parks and Recreation Advisory Board:** Commissioner Abernathy stated that Eric Smallwood provided the update earlier in the report.
- **Community Committee update:** Commissioner Neeley stated that the Community Committee met and discussed goals and objectives and projects for the upcoming year. The committee was recognized by the Gaston County Schools for making masks for the children and making cards at Christmas.

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

Commissioner Abernathy asked about bridge repairs on the Lakewood side of Goat Island. The Town Manager stated sanding of the bridge should take place in mid-March and correction of the board plank transition issue. She congratulated the three (3) officers who completed de-escalation training. She congratulated the Chief and his team for their certification training and thanked them for all they do to keep us safe.

Commissioner Atkinson stated he received his first COVID-19 vaccine shot and is scheduled for the follow-up shot in February. He stated he was really proud of the City of Gastonia and Gaston County for the organization for the vaccinations at the Farmers Market. He stated this was very well organized for such a large event.

Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas had nothing to report.

Commissioner Neeley congratulated the police department for the training they received. She reminded everyone to remember the 3w's – wear your mask; wash your hands; and wait six (6) feet to maintain social distancing. If you don't have soap, use a sixty (60) percent hand sanitizer.

Mayor Cauthen stated a meeting will be held next Monday of the South Fork River Health meeting. Commissioner Atkinson and Eric Smallwood will be in attendance. Scott Attaway with Lowell will also be in attendance. Mayor Cauthen stated that Colonel Bob Meeks, District Director, is leaving his post with U.S. Congresswoman Virginia Foxx's office and his replacement will be in attendance. John Searby of the Catawba Riverkeepers will be providing a state of the river.

**Adjournment:** A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atkinson. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 4 to 0 in favor.

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Mayor William Cauthen

**ATTEST:**

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Wilene Cunningham, Town Clerk