

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

**March 18, 2021**

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Cramerton met on Thursday, March 18, 2021, at 6:00 p.m., as a virtual meeting via Zoom.

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

**Staff Present:** David Pugh, Town Manager; Attorney Karen Wolter; Josh Watkins, Planning Director; Police Chief Adams; Joel Lineberger, Finance Director; 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 advised that Commissioner Helms had requested that the agenda be amended to add discussion regarding downtown parking. A motion was made by Commissioner Helms to adopt the proposed agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Neeley. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor of amending the agenda. Commissioner Helms restated his motion to adopt and amend the proposed agenda. Commissioner Neeley seconded the motion. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor of adopting the amended agenda.

**Public Comment (electronic):** Attorney Wolter read the following emails into the record from Jena Goodman regarding the Del Webb Community Rezoning of 462 acres and two (2) emails from Wendy Cauthen regarding the asphalt trail in Riverside Park and raising penalties for littering.

**From:** jenagoodman  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 18, 2021 11:42 AM  
**To:** [planning@cityofbelmont.org](mailto:planning@cityofbelmont.org)  
**Subject:** ZA2020.02 Belmont (Del Webb)  
**Importance:** High

**March 18, 2021**

**To:** City of Belmont Planning and Zoning Board Chairman and Board Members

**Reference:** ZA2020.02 Del Webb Community Rezone of 462 acres.

As a citizen within the Belmont/Cramerton community that utilizes the road network, schools, and community amenities the current infrastructure cannot support the proposed growth and ultimate impact the rezoning proposal would inflict. I am concerned that the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) was performed during a pandemic when the majority of school and working patterns were not normal due to teleworking and in some cases so much so that several insurance companies offered compensation refunds on auto policies. The TIA should be performed when conditions normalize and timelines are set in motion for the Belmont/Mount Holly connector funding and how that will impact the community with the additional proposed connections to Nixon, South Point Road, South Ridge Community, and Gaither Road.

Lastly, I would like to express concern with the commercial component of the development as out parcels within a residential corridor. What conditions will be placed that would ensure the commercial properties will not add additional traffic patterns and also fit in the area with the existing residential structures fronting on Armstrong Ford Road.

In closing this rezoning/development should be postponed until current conditions are stabilized and sufficient up-to-date studies for Traffic and Environmental Analysis are completed to ensure a Healthy River community and to make certain the impacts do not directly affect the current citizenry.

Respectfully,  
Jena Goodman

Email from: Wendy Cauthen  
512 Standpipe Hill

Good evening Mayor and Commissioners. I wanted to address the unsafe condition of the asphalt trail in Riverside Park. Over the past couple of years, I have noticed that the condition of this trail is deteriorating due to roots breaking up the asphalt and causing large cracks, potholes and raised areas. This park is used daily by people walking, running, riding bikes and scooters. Last week, I was using the trail and tripped over one of the raised cracks. Thankfully, I was able to keep my balance and did not injure myself. However, a young lady running by me twisted her ankle on the uneven asphalt.

Over the past several months, I have heard many requests during Commission meetings to repair the service bridge leading to Goat Island as some of the boards are uneven and are causing a hazard to our citizens. I agree that there is an issue with a few of the boards as I use this trail often, too. However, I believe the condition of the Riverside trail is a greater hazard to visitors coming to town and our citizens. I am asking that the Riverside Trail receive the attention and concern that the Goat Island service bridge receives and ask that this trail be repaired properly.

For your reference, I am attaching several photos that I was able to take today while on my walk.

Our Town is blessed to have so many greenways and trails and it is important that they are maintained properly and kept in good repair so our citizens and visitors can use them without the fear of injury. Thank you for taking the time to review this issue.

Email from: Wendy Cauthen

Hi all! In light of the incredible amount of trash that was collected this past weekend, could we please look into following the lead of Gastonia and raise penalties for littering. I noticed again tonight that there is significant trash at the basketball courts. Would we be able to do surveillance cameras of some type in the areas that are constantly trashed (Riverside Basketball Courts, Baltimore Pier, Lakewood Road right after the CC Dawson Bridge and Cramer Mountain Road pull off). Your consideration and help with this is greatly appreciated.

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Wendy W. Cauthen

A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to enter into closed session. Commissioner Helms seconded the motion. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

Upon return to open session Mayor Cauthen requested a roll call to confirm attendance. Commissioner Abernathy present; Richard Atkinson present; Houston Helms present, Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas present; and Commissioner Neeley present. A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to return to open session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Helms. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

Mayor Cauthen asked for a motion to direct staff to begin preparation April 1<sup>st</sup> for discussion with public comment and the discussion of acquisition by condemnation of the parking lot area only owned by the Masonic Lodge for purposes of expansion of Centennial Center. Commissioner Helms made the motion to direct staff to place on the April 1<sup>st</sup> agenda for discussion under public comment to discuss the acquisition by condemnation of the parking lot area only owned by the Masonic Lodge for purposes of extension of Centennial Center. Commissioner Neeley seconded the motion. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

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

*Note: If any item requires further discussion, it should be removed from consent and placed appropriately on the agenda.*

a. **Planning & Zoning**

- i. Set public hearing for the Cramerton BOC April 15, 2021 meeting at 6 p.m. (held via Zoom) for New Style Communities' annexation request for Parcel ID #188811 into the Town of Cramerton's Municipal Limits.

*Note: This parcel was approved by the Board for a development consisting of 30 single family detached age restricted lots as well as two 6,000 square foot office/retail buildings along the frontage of S. New Hope Road.*

**b. Budget Amendment #2021-10**

*Note: Funding has already been established for the 2021 Road Maintenance Project by Capital Project Ordinance #2021-01. This is to establish revenue and expenditure accounts as authorized.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Atkinson to approve the proposed consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Helms. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Neeley voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

**Agenda Items Requiring a Public Hearing:**

- a. A Public Hearing to receive public comment regarding proposed refinancing of Cramerton loans with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which would result in overall savings by decreasing the interest rates (4.375%, 3.375% and 3.50% to 2.85%) and shortened loan terms of 20 years from remaining terms of 28, 30 and 33 years for Public Works Facility, Town Hall/Police Department and Goad Island notes, respectively.**

*Note 1: This public hearing is required as part of the NC Local Government Commission (LGC) process for the municipal loan refinancing.*

- i. Open Public Hearing** – A motion was made by Commissioner Atkinson to open the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Helms. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Neeley voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor.
- ii. Staff Comments/ BOC Q & A** – The Finance Director provided information regarding the refinancing of the Town’s current USDA loans. An opportunity exists to save a significant amount of interest (approximately \$1,190,000) if existing USDA notes are refinanced. Refinancing these loans will require LGC approval that necessitates a public notice advertisement and a public hearing as part of the LGC application. The current interest rate being offered by Truist is 2.99% and is guaranteed through May 31<sup>st</sup>. Mayor Cauthen asked if a special called Board meeting needs to be scheduled for the public hearing requirement per LGC. The Finance Director stated yes that a special called meeting would be required in order to meet timelines from the LGC. Resolutions will also need to be prepared. The minutes from the special called meeting will need to be on the April 1<sup>st</sup> agenda for approval as the LGC will need a certified copy from the Town Clerk. The Town Manager advised that a special called Board meeting could be scheduled via Zoom for Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. The Finance Director provided information about early payoff of the current South State Bank loan to take advantage of interest rates. Commissioner Abernathy thanked Mr. Lineberger for the excellent work he does for the Town. A motion was made by Commissioner Helms to schedule a special called meeting for Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. to be held via Zoom to discuss installment financing debt and refinancing options along with consideration of approval and adoption of Resolutions 2021-06 and 2021-07. Mayor Cauthen asked that Commissioner Helms hold that motion.
- iii. Public Comments** – No public comments received.
- iv. Close Public Hearing** – A motion was made by Commissioner Helms to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Neeley. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor of closing the public hearing.

Attorney Wolter stated the Board would need to wait 24 hours before voting per COVID 19 restrictions regarding this public hearing. Mayor Cauthen called for a special meeting to be held on Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom and the Board can vote on the refinancing at that time.

## Agenda Items NOT Requiring a Public Hearing

### a. Planning and Zoning

#### i. Del Webb Development (in Belmont)

1. **Action item: Resolution #2021-05 – Supporting the alignment of the Belmont – Mount Holly Connector as part of the South Fork Senior Community Development Proposal and as adopted in the GCLMPO Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP).** The Planning Director stated this project was seen as a sketch plan phase at an MPO meeting. The City of Belmont brought it to our attention as it includes the Belmont-Mount Holly Connector. The proposed development would connect to Eastwood Road which is a Cramerton street and in our jurisdiction. The City of Belmont noted that it was an important connection to have as part of regional connectivity. The Planning Director stated he has been discussing this project with Bridget Grant as she was hired by Del Webb to assist with this project. Because of the utility situation with the power lines, it was going to be difficult to connect the primary road through the development to Eastwood Drive. Duke Power utility poles are already in place at this intersection. The proposed development would include 904 single-family age restricted homes for 55 and older. The site consists of thirteen (13) acres and would include 103,000 square feet of office and retail space on Armstrong Ford Road. Commissioner Abernathy asked about Jena Goodman's comment in the email read during public comment about the "current infrastructure cannot support the proposed growth and ultimate impact the rezoning proposal would inflict. I am concerned that the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) was performed during a pandemic when the majority of school and working patterns were not normal". Commissioner Abernathy asked what our options are as we are next door to this project. The Planning Director stated we have not been a part of all conversations regarding the traffic impact analysis. He advised that Jena Goodman serves on the Cramerton Planning and Zoning Board and is employed with Gaston County as a planner. The Planning Director stated that traffic impact analyses are typically conducted while schools are in session. Traffic impact analyses can be conducted without school traffic and the background numbers can be inflated for trips not counted. The Town Manager stated that the resolution can be amended to add additional language from the Board about Eastwood Road being a more desirable connection and having the best outcome regarding infrastructure. Kimley-Horne was contacted about possible construction of a roundabout at Cimarron. Due to cost restraints, the final outcome at Cimarron Boulevard was a four-way stop. Commissioner Atkinson asked since Eastwood Road comes in perpendicular to Armstrong Road could the 120-foot right of way be used and connect the roads with an overlapping right of way with the power lines. Eastwood Drive is owned by the Town and will be part of the Belmont Mount Holly Connector. Eastwood Drive is used as a shortcut from the Timberlake neighborhood. Commissioner Neeley asked if Armstrong Ford Road would be widened. The Planning Director stated that signalized lighting would be required in phase 3 of the Del Webb project with the development of the shopping center. Mr. Watkins stated he has asked that the lighting be installed in phase 1. Mayor Cauthen said if the proposed intersection aligns at Cimarron Boulevard then consideration will need to be given to traffic calming at Cimarron Boulevard and Timberlane Drive. This cost should be addressed by the developer. The Board discussed the timeline for this project and continued discussion with the City of Belmont regarding their autonomy and outlying concerns. The Town Manager could put this resolution on the special called meeting agenda if the Board wants to make amendments or modifications. The Town Manager stated he spoke with Adrian Miller with the City of Belmont regarding the proposed resolution. Mayor Cauthen asked the Board to direct staff to make some modifications during the interim and for each Board member at their own discretion to reach out to Belmont counterparts sharing our concerns about the alignment of the proposed connection. A full consensus was given by the Board to direct staff to continue modifying Resolution 2021-05 and present at the March 26<sup>th</sup> special called meeting. No action was taken by the Board.

## 2. Parks and Recreation

### i. Rocky Branch Trail

1. **Action Item:** Consider approval of the proposed right of access agreement with Gaston County Schools for the Rocky Branch Trail construction and directing staff to move forward with the necessary document execution. A copy of the draft temporary right of access agreement that would save the Town \$5,000.00 on mobilization costs and would allow Cramerton's trail contractor at the Stuart W. Cramer High School entry was included as part of the agenda packet. A motion was made by Commissioner Helms to approve the proposed right of way access agreement with Gaston County Schools for the Rocky Branch Trail construction and to direct staff to move forward with the necessary document execution. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Atkinson voted yes; Commissioner Neeley voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor.
2. **Downtown Parking** – Commissioner Helms stated he had nothing else to add. He said some of the visitors are using private parking areas for access to our parks and that is an issue.

**BIG BOARD** – The Town Manager said the entrance to Central Park off Washington Street is looking good and the Parks and Recreation staff did a great job. Drone footage and documentation will be sent to U.S. Representative Foxx's office for review regarding the Brownfield's Grant. The Planning Director will provide an update later in the meeting regarding the Cramerton and McAdenville Northern Connector Greenway.

**Manager's Report** - COVID 19 vaccines are available for staff and elected officials with CaroMont.

The Code Enforcement Officer left educational information on Center Street where garbage carts have been left on the curb. Anyone having issues with their carts due to medical reasons were advised to contact Town Hall about back door pickup by Waste Management. Commissioner Neeley stated at the recent River Sweep cleanup there were several oversized tires left behind the former Boot Camp. Mayor Cauthen stated these tires had been donated to Boot Camp after they had already relocated. Mayor Cauthen stated he spoke with Chuck Craig, owner of Mayworth's, about the 18 to 20 residential carts that are currently behind the Center Street businesses. There is some unauthorized dumping of garbage after business hours due to how quick the bins are filling up. The downtown businesses have asked for the Town's assistance regarding this matter.

The Town Manager stated that leveling of about nine (9) to ten (10) planks on the utility maintenance bridge on the Lakewood side of Goat Island should be completed the last week of March. Commissioner Atkinson recommended the boards be processed by an electronic planer instead of sanding. Commissioner Abernathy said she spoke with the Town Manager earlier about the walking trail at Riverside. She stated she thought that either at the last budget meeting or a meeting prior to that that discussion was held about capital projects and that monies had been appropriated for trail improvements. The Town Manager stated that would be included as part of the larger infrastructure of the upcoming paving project. The engineers will include this as part of the paving specifics for consideration. The Town Manager stated concerning the littering issue, the inmate program has been placed on hold due to COVID 19 and this had affected the amount of time that Public Works was able to allocate to this task. The basketball court at Riverside Drive is a problem area due to the amount of garbage being left on site. Citations are issued by the police department if someone is caught in the act of littering. Mr. Smallwood is going to place signage at the basketball courts that you can be fined if you are caught in the act of littering. Commissioner Neeley asked if someone could check the bathrooms at Riverside as the inside locks on the stalls are broken and there was no toilet paper or paper towels available. Mr. Smallwood stated he would follow up with his staff regarding this matter.

### General Staff Reports (as needed)

- **Update from Two Rivers Utilities, Mr. Mike Bynum** – A copy of report to be placed in the minutes book.
- **Police Department:** Chief Adams stated officers have been undergoing refresher training in OC Spray and expandable baton in conjunction with de-escalation

training. These resources assist the officers in making arrests while keeping them safe and reduces injuries to suspects. This training is being offered in house.

- **Fire Department:** Chief Foulk stated one of the firefighters just completed EMT training. This person had to start over as he was unable to complete his clinicals due to COVID-19 restrictions. At this time the fire department has twenty (20) plus EMT's.
- **Parks and Recreation Department:** Mr. Smallwood stated that the restrooms are checked three (3) times a day. He said there had been an issue with restroom supplies missing due to COVID 19. Commissioner Abernathy asked about the paving of the Riverside Park Trail. Mayor Cauthen stated that it was presented in the former fiscal year but it was not prioritized to be done. The Town Manager stated that it will be included in the paving project this time.
- **Planning and Zoning:** The Planning Director stated two plats will be on the April 1<sup>st</sup> agenda for review. The plats are for the Courtyards at Cramerton and VCM Phase 1F. Due to funding being opened up by NCDOT, discussion is being held about the extension of the sidewalk from the South Fork Village into the Town of McAdenville's jurisdiction and this money has been officially moved. The Wilkinson Boulevard Bridge has been put back on the project list and this will assist in completion of the River Link Greenway. The improvements on Market Street are also back on the project list. The Lakewood Road pedestrian bridge and sidewalk will be also back on the project list and we may be able to apply for a municipal agreement with DOT in the near future.
- **Town Clerk:** Nothing to report.
- **Town Attorney:** Nothing to report.

### **Committee Reports:**

**Community Committee** – Commissioner Neeley stated 100 to 150 face masks have been finished and provided to the children at Belmont Central. A cleanup is scheduled for the Historical Baltimore School. The River Sweep event was quite successful. She stated that the restaurants on Central Avenue might consider having a built-in area where they can store the receptacles and lock the area down. She said the Float the Boat event is coming up. Olivia Smallwood is in charge of painting manhole covers. Commissioner Neeley stated there is a storybook walk on the River Link Greenway. She thanked Wendy Cauthen for all her hard work.

**Parks and Recreation Advisory Board** – Commissioner Abernathy stated the advisory board members have been working on conducting assessments on the Town's park amenities. She thanked the advisory board members for all of their hard work.

**Cramerton Historical Committee** – Commissioner Atkinson invited the Board members to visit the museum after the Board's budget session on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

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

Commissioner Abernathy stated while she was out walking around town the other day she noted that the Town's ordinance officer was conversing with one of our citizens and it was so professional. The citizen seemed very receptive to his visit. She said she was super impressed and it made her proud that we have that position in our Town. She thanked the Fire Department for the professional firefighters for their bravery and for keeping us safe.

Commissioner Atkinson stated there is a pothole in front of the entrance at Cramer Mountain as you turn out. He stated he knew it was a state road but asked if the Public Works Department could follow up on it. He stated there was an article in today's Gaston Gazette about the annual cleanup for pickup of bulk items. He asked if maybe the Town should promote something like this type of event to encourage citizens to get rid of bulk items. Mayor Cauthen stated that the Town's Public Works department picks up bulk items on a weekly basis. Commissioner Atkinson stated this information needs to be promoted as an educational item to the residents. Commissioner Atkinson thanked the Town Manager for being in attendance at tonight's meeting and being available this week as he knew Mr. Pugh had been feeling under the weather.

Commissioner Helms said everyone did a good job on the River Sweep. He said he would like to see the Town being proactive regarding enforcement of littering violations and how can the Town enforce this. He apologized for missing the Goals and Objectives meeting and he is looking forward to identifying possibly quarterly quantitative measures and how we are tracking on these. He stated he received an email from Chris Leazer and he advised him that there was an inventory list of the historical items the Town has. Commissioner Helms recognized the Police and Fire Departments for their assistance at the River Sweep. He said he would continue to discuss parking at upcoming meetings. Commissioner Atkinson asked for a copy of the inventory list.

Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas had nothing to report.

Commissioner Neeley commented on recent incidents where she is being passed on Cramer Mountain Road at 6:45 a.m. by someone driving a corvette. She reminded everyone to remember their 3w's: wear your mask and double mask if possible; keep your social distance; and wash your hands and if soap and water aren't available then use sanitizer.

Mayor Cauthen stated there was about seventy (70) volunteers at the River Sweep. He stated it was an amazing event and he thanked the Town staff and all of the volunteers that helped out.

**Adjournment:** A motion was made by Commissioner Neeley to adjourn at 9:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atkinson. Commissioner Abernathy voted yes; Commissioner Helms voted yes; Mayor Pro Tempore Koutsoupas voted yes. The vote was 5 to 0 in favor.

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Will Cauthen, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Wilene Cunningham, Town Clerk