

January 27, 2022

At the Special Called Meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen/women of the Town of Canton held at the Aramark Boardroom located at 398 Great Oak Drive, Canton NC, January 27, 2022, at 9:16 am with Mayor Smathers and Aldermen/women Mull, Hamlett, Proctor and Shepard present, the following proceedings were held.

A. Call to Order

Mayor Smathers called the meeting to order at 9:16 a.m.

B. Roll Call

Mayor Smathers stated that the Manager, Assistant Manager/ Town Clerk, Finance Officer and Communications Officer were present.

C. Pledge

Alderman Hamlett led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Approval of Minutes: January 13, 2022

Alderman Hamlett made a motion to approve the January 13, 2022, minutes as presented. Alderwoman Mull seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion.

E. Mayor Comments

Mayor Smathers thanked Mr. Kevin Lowery for allowing the work session to take place in Aramark's corporate boardroom.

Mayor Smathers stated that the new Communications Officer was doing a great job with the social media posts.

Mayor Smathers stated that it had been reported that the Pisgah Football stadium and Baseball fields has a less than 1% chance in being able to stay in the same location. Mayor Smathers stated that some work was currently being done and that he felt that the percentage was much higher than that for flood remediation to take place and he still has hope the stadium can remain in its current location. Mayor Smathers stated that the Town was providing all the services that they could to help in this process.

F. Aldermen/women Comments

Alderman Hamlett thanked the Town crews for a great job with

the snow removal and clean-up. Alderman Hamlett stated that Josh Piurowski did a great job on his first storm in charge. Alderman Hamlett stated that he appreciated Town staff working to restore everything that we can, like the Dog Park, for the Citizens. Alderman Hamlett said he hoped the public understood that the playground, swimming pool, and other recreation projects would take time as they must go through the FEMA process and we were not choosing one over the other, rather restoring what we can as quickly as possible. Alderman Hamlett asked the location of the annual Polar Plunge? Mayor Smathers stated that the Polar Plunge would be held at Lake Junaluska this year.

All other members agreed with Alderman Hamlett's comments.

G. Public Comments

N/A

H. Reports from the Manager

Manager Scheuer stated that the Sims family that had devastated flood damage from Tropical Storm Fred were the recipient of the furniture gift from Ms. Judy Bodicker and they truly appreciated the generosity of Ms. Bodicker. Mayor Smathers stated that people like Ms. Bodicker were a blessing to this community.

I. New Business

1. Façade Grant Application: Jeanne Forrest

Manager Scheuer presented an interior façade grant application from Mrs. Jeanne Forrest located at 473-477 Main Street. Manager Scheuer introduced Mrs. Forrest to present her plan to the Board. Mrs. Forrest stated that she had been looking for a location to open a business for some time in the downtown area. Mrs. Forrest stated that she would be opening a breakfast and lunch restaurant "The Grateful Table" that would be sourcing all local products. Mrs. Forrest stated that she would also have a grocery section for fresh produce and other local goods for purchase. Mrs. Forrest stated that she would have an investment of approximately 115,000 in the building with a 5-year lease and first right of refusal. Alderwoman Proctor inquired how many staff she would be hiring. Mrs. Forrest stated that at first it would be 6 employees. Alderwoman Proctor thanked Mrs. Forrest for utilizing local people first. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to approve the interior façade grant as presented. Alderman Shepard seconded the motion. Motion carried.

2. Temporary Town Hall Contract

Manager Scheuer reported to the Board he would like permission to advertise electronically to obtain sealed bids for the temporary modular trailers that would be used for the temporary housing for administration and police until a permanent place could be determined. The electronic advertisement would be Facebook, website, etc. to be able to move quicker in the bidding process, 3 sealed bids would still be required. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to approve the electronic advertising for the temporary housing (modular units) of administration and police department. Alderwoman Mull seconded the motion. Motion carried.

3. Work-Session

Manager Scheuer explained to the Board that he would go through a power point presentation of items that were mentioned by the Board members as well as recommendations for the Board to consider during the budgeting process. Manager Scheuer stated that the Board members were welcome to interrupt and ask questions at any point for discussion or clarification. Manager Scheuer started off by stating that that the Town had suffered devastating damage to infrastructure, equipment, and automobiles during Tropical Storm Fred and it was a long process working with FEMA to help restore the Town better than before the storm. Manager Scheuer stated that the good news was tax collections was at 93% with a year end date goal of 99%. The re-evaluation increase year to date revenue is \$219,952.80 and sales tax revenue is up \$73,000 through November 2021 and this helps off set the monies that must be spent to operate and mitigate the storm damage as even with the most flood coverage that we can carry, numerous items will not be covered by insurance. Hopefully FEMA and the State will help to offset some of this. It is a long process, and we must continue to operate in the meantime. The Town has been fortunate to receive numerous grants for projects that were in the process before the storm so a lot of exciting new growth will be visible but will not impact the budget. Manager Scheuer stated that Infrastructure was very important to the Board as well as staff and to date Powell Bill funding was used to pave streets (Edgewood Dr, Cross St, Old Pisgah Dr, Holtzclaw, Rhoda, and Kimberly Dr) and portion of streets in the amount of \$288,506. Manager Scheuer stated that this gives you an idea of the cost of paving. The Town typically receives around \$160,00 a year in Powell Bill monies and of that \$100,000 goes to salt, equipment, gravel, and sealing. This leaves approximately \$60,000 for paving which does not go very far. Manager Scheuer updated the Board on

Chestnut Mountain Park. The Park is set to open the end of April and will be a great economic driver for Canton and Haywood County that was done by grant money, private fund raising, and the major land gift from Southern Appalachian Conservancy. The other phases of the park will begin soon also with grant monies. Manager Scheuer stated that the Town has been extremely blessed with such a gift and was excited to open the park. Manager Scheuer reported that the Splash pad would be started in the next month or so weather permitting and would be open this summer along with the addition of shade sails, park furniture, and landscaping that has already been purchased and paid for before the storm hit and by several grants the Town had received. Manager Scheuer expressed how the Town was fortunate to have such good people as employees and shared numerous promotions that have been within the organization from employees that had excelled and expressed interest in moving into key roles. Manager Scheuer reminded the Board that the Fire Department had a brand-new state of the art fire engine paid with monies from the American Rescue Plan. Manager Scheuer reported that the Champion Credit Union Aquatics Center clean up had begun and a specialized pool company would be coming in to assist with the draining and cleaning of the pool. The pool is hopefully going to be ready to open the end of May, with that said town staff is doing all the work that can be completed so as FEMA releases the project, we will be ready to begin. Manager Scheuer reported that the Dog Park was in the process of being graded and ready for fencing as soon a FEMA released the project.

Manager Scheuer talked about the rebuild of Town Infrastructures. Town Hall, Police Department, Fire Department are the main priority to either rebuild, relocated, or retrofit existing buildings. Manager Scheuer stated that the Armory and Colonial Theatre would be the next priority with Camp Hope and the Museum being last to restore. This would be based on revenue generating and most used structures taking top priority. Manager Scheuer reported that a lot of monies had been allocated from the state to help with Water and Sewer infrastructure and it would help with the ability to upgrade the filtration system to be able to produce more water and allow for any potential growth. Manager Scheuer went over a chart of FEMA projects and the amounts and percentage of completion to the Board, elaborating that it was certainly massive. Manager Scheuer made the Board aware that a new police fleet would need to be in the new budget for 22-23, stating that it was important to give our officers the equipment that they needed to be safe and do their jobs effectively. Manager Scheuer stated that he wanted to upgrade the playground to an All-Abilities playground and was currently working with the Kiwanis Club and other clubs, businesses, and

sponsors to help bring this to fruition as the playground would not be covered by FEMA or insurance. Finance Officer Natalie Walker stated that it was important to start planning for the new budget and she had several items that was important to the Board, however, explained she wanted to give them examples so that they could put it into perspective. Finance Officer Walker explained that in this current fiscal year the paving projects that were implemented cost \$288,506 dollars leaving a balance of 50,000 in that department. This would be utilized for salt and snow equipment repair etc. for the rest of this fiscal year. The State typically awards the Town with approximately \$160,000 a year for Powell Bill of which around \$100,00 was used for gravel, sealing, sidewalks, salt, sand, and equipment. She stated that in Fiscal year 22 we paved 14, 409 square yards which is less than a mile depleting the reserve Powell Bill money. In short, you cannot do a lot of paving with approximately \$75,000 that is left in the fund. The Board has asked several things of staff to prepare for what if we purchased certain items, do we have the funds, if not, how do we achieve the goal? Finance Officer Walker stated that one way would be to implement the unpopular vehicle tax that would add \$30 per resident per vehicle that would go exclusively to street maintenance. This would generate approximately \$120,000 a year to add to the approximate \$75,000 in Powell Bill. This would allow you to pave a certain yardage of streets a year. Finance Officer Walker reported that almost all municipalities in the State implemented this tax ranging in fee but \$30 was the maximum and would allow the largest impact on street maintenance. Manager Scheuer remarked that this would be at the Board's pleasure although, reminding them at the last public hearing the opponents stated that if the Powell Bill money was spent down then they would not have an issue to the tax with it being exclusively for street maintenance. Manager Scheuer stated that this was an issue for the Board to think about and decide if this was an option. Manager Scheuer reminded the Board that Labor Day was scheduled with Diamond Rio this year keeping the same schedule as before for entertainers, however, with the loss of revenue and the constant drain on monies from the flood, staff proposed for their consideration to charge for both day of Labor Day as well as allow alcohol sales and maintain a percentage of the profits. The fee would be \$10 per day or \$15 for both. Manager Scheuer remarked that you could not go to any other music concert that inexpensively. Assistant Manger Stinnett updated the Board that Balsam Range was on hold by the production team in conjunction with Mike Drudge production Manager for Balsam Range with the first right of refusal from last year being the scheduled act retired and Balsam was slated by staff for the following year. The discussion of contract fees etc. was in the process. Assistant Manager Stinnett stated that she was happy to have them back

in the line-up stating that everyone also appreciated the donation they gave to the flood victims fund last fall. Assistant Manager Stinnett then moved on to discuss the Christmas Tree and decorations. Ms. Stinnett gave the Board examples of the tree that the Board wanted to construct in Sorrells Park. The 26-foot plain tree with light would cost approximately \$28,000 dollars, if you added the commercial garland on the bridges, snowflakes on the power poles, and lights across the Main St, it would cost around \$85,000. If the Board chose the bright, life like, animated tree that they wished to have as focal point it would cost approximately \$50,000 dollars. If you did everything as presented it was an approximate cost of \$115,000 dollars. Assistant Manager Stinnett stated that the Board might consider starting with one item per budget year until they achieved the desired look. Unfortunately, commercial decorations are pricey and with the current circumstances of Town infrastructure it is probably the most logical decision to scale back. Manager Scheuer reported that the last topic was one of the most important, the staff. Without the staff and retaining staff the services can not be provided at the highest level in the area. Manager Scheuer stated that he would like to see two new positions in the water, two positions in the street department, and a new planner. Manager Scheuer reminded the Board that over the years positions had been cut or not replaced after retirement, however with the continued growth he felt that it was necessary to have enough staff to provide the services that was expected. Also, Manager Scheuer asked the Board to consider a 1% to 3% cost of living to all full-time employees, the 1,000 Christmas bonus, possible merit raise from \$0.50 to \$3.00 based on evaluations, and continued 100 percent medical, dental, vision, short term, and life insurance for employees as well as board members, and develop departmental career paths. Manager Scheuer concluded by saying that the goal was to build back better with major town wide improvements and take care of and retain our employees.

The Board discussed the options presented and asked the Manager to schedule another work-session to include the department heads for any questions and input. The Board also asked for a separate work-session to discuss and explore future uses for the Armory and Theatre. The Board thanked staff for a 20,000-foot ideal look as well as a more practical option. The Board remarked that they would love to have it all but, understood that being good stewards of taxpayer dollars would require a conservative yet progressive compromise and had faith in the Finance Officer and Managers to put together a responsible budget for their consideration.

4. Closed Session Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(4)(5)(6)

Alderman Shepard made a motion to enter closed session at 1:27pm. Alderwoman Mull seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Alderwoman Mull made a motion to enter open session at 2:06 pm. Alderwoman Proctor seconded the motion. Motion carried. No action taken.

J. Adjournment

The next Special Called meeting will be on Thursday, February 10, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. at the USW Local 507 office located at 111 Park Street, Canton, NC 28716. There being no additional business, Mayor Smathers adjourned the Meeting at 2:07 p.m.

Melisa Stinnett, Town Clerk