

August 24, 2023

At the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen/women of the Town of Canton held at 85 Summer Street, Canton NC, August 24, 2023, at 6:30 pm 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 6:30 pm.

B. Roll Call

Mayor Smathers stated that the Manager, Assistant Manager, and Town Attorney were present.

C. Pledge

Alderwoman Proctor led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Approval of Minutes:

Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to approve the August 10, 2023, minutes as presented. Alderwoman Mull seconded the motion. Motion carried.

E. Mayor Comments

Mayor Smathers thanked Senator Tillis for coming to Town and helping with all the flood recovery and mill closure issues. Mayor Smathers also thanked Governor Cooper for coming to show his support for this Town and performing the coin toss for the first football game in the home stadium since Tropical Storm Fred.

Mayors Smathers recognized Recreation Director, Sam Dunbar for doing an exceptional job keeping all the grounds and facilities clean. Mayor Smathers stated he had received numerous compliments on the cleanliness and operations of the Recreation Park.

F. Aldermen/women Comments

Alderwoman Mull thanked everyone for coming. Alderwoman Mull stated that she and Alderman Hamlett attended the WPTL 60th birthday party commenting that it was a great event. Alderwoman Mull stated that she and Alderman Hamlett also

attending the Canton High 1957 class reunion as guest speakers.

Alderman Hamlett thanked Natalie Walker and staff for all their work and originating the ideas for the Passport to Canton Campaign.

Alderwoman Proctor stated that the shade sails looked great in Sorrells Park, and she is sure that everyone will be happy to utilize them.

Alderman Shepard stated that it was great to see all the kids and community back in the Stadium after 2 years. Alderman Shepard thanked Governor Cooper and his staff for coming to the first game. Alderman Shepard thanked Michael Gantt for all his help during the Stadium renovations.

G. Public Comments

Mayor Smathers started the public comment section off with some guidelines for the meeting and an update on what most people were in attendance to comment about. Mayor Smathers started off by saying that rumors and untruths resulted in panic and fear, and he wanted to explain the legal process of how things would happen. Mayor Smathers reported to the public that McGill Engineering was hired to find numerous locations that would be suitable for a future wastewater plant. Mayor Smathers stated that he nor any Board members had seen any plans or drawings for this project to date, that the property locations was the current phase the engineering firm was in. Mayor Smathers stated that the mill would be required to treat the wastewater for two years then the Town was in negotiations with the mill to work out a deal to allow the town to operate that facility until a new one could be built, which would take at a minimum 6 years. The Board will have to choose a site for the wastewater plant somewhere and when that was chosen the Board would be required to post the property, hold public hearing for community input and concern before the project could even be voted on. Mayor Smathers reiterated that the Town was not close to that time. Mayor Smathers did state that he was unaware until Secretary Biser asked to see the leachate landfill and when they reached the destination, he saw all the green ponds that were alarming that sat right behind this property that was in question off Pigeon Ford Road.

Mrs. Kathy Taylor resident of Pigeon Ford Road and owner of KT's Orchard explained to the Board the time, money, and strict guidelines that she has been putting into this orchard to be able to provide the school system and community with fresh fruit that met all the agricultural requirements. Mrs. Taylor's

concerns were animals, cars and the like bringing contamination into the orchard. Mayor Smathers assured Mrs. Taylor that all the people that need to weigh into the effects of the wastewater would be consulted with when the project reached that point.

Mr. Don Smart a Haywood County resident stated that he lived beside an old wastewater plant in Waynesville and the smell was awful and he also encouraged the Board to preserve the farmland at all costs. Mayor Smathers stated that public hearings would be conducted, and a lot of input would be gathered before the Board took action to construct the wastewater facility.

Mr. Howard Taylor resident of Pigeon Ford Road and owner of KT's Orchard said that he worked in the mill for years and he knew how the wastewater worked and the landfills it required. Mr. Taylor stated that he had seen plans and site drawings. Mayor Smathers asked who showed him the plans? Mr. Taylor said he wasn't saying but he had seen them. Mayor Smathers was puzzled due to the Board having never seen any plans for any site.

Mr. Jay Shoals of 415 Pigeon Ford Rd stated that the Town should take the money they have and give it to Waynesville and send out wastewater to them to be treated. Mr. Shoals stated that the Board needed to care of their community.

Mrs. April Harper resident of Pigeon Ford Road stated that she was horrified at having a wastewater treatment facility near her property. She stated that the residents were in attendance not from rumors but fear of what was happening in their neighborhood. Mayor Smathers stated that he understood and when the Board had facts that it would be required by law to hold public hearing to allow all the facts to be discussed.

Mr. Gary Taylor resident of Pigeon Ford Road asked the Board to take into consideration that this community was families and that he and many generations had lived in this neighborhood their entire lives. Mr. Taylor stated that his concerns were that he understood that it would require widening the roads which would take their wells and most of their properties along with heavy industrial traffic that would ruin the community. Mr. Taylor inquired how the public hearings would be advertised? Mayor Smathers stated that the ads would be in the newspaper, website, social media as well as posted on the property and adjacent owners be notified.

Mrs. Henderson resident of Pigeon Ford Road stated that a real estate agent told them about a possible wastewater plant prior to them buying the property and inquired how they knew

before the property owners? Mayor Smathers stated that the wastewater had been being discussed for the last two years.

Mrs. Kathy Taylor asked why a regional wastewater was not being done and that it had been talked about in the past. Mayor Smathers stated that it was investigated but was not going to be feasible. This is why the Town has an engineer investigating numerous properties for a possible site currently.

Upset gentleman that lives across from Mr. Taylor very emotionally expressed that if the plant goes in, he will have to move his family and his job as he just moved here and hope to stay here forever to raise his family in this community. Mayor Smathers reiterated that a site had not been confirmed but at the time that it was the Board would be transparent with all the details at that time.

Alderman Shepard stated that he was glad the community came to the meeting and that the Board would be transparent with the entire process of the construction of the wastewater plant and when public hearing took place the Board would be happy to hear all sides of the issue. Alderman Shepard stated that the Board would not make any decision without public input.

Alderman Hamlett commented that rumor and innuendo spark fear and that troubled him. Alderman Hamlett stated that the Board would make a choice that would be best for the Town but not without input from the community. Alderman Hamlett stated that this Board would have several input sessions for public concerns.

Susan Link a Star Ridge resident speaking for a Pigeon Ford resident asked how the process worked? Mayor Smathers stated that after an offer to purchase on a site that the Town would have a due diligence time that allowed them to visit other sites, speak with Dept of Agriculture, and other issues to get all the facts. Then the Board would hold public hearings and discussions before the offer is final or the project is approved which would all be done in open meetings.

Gary Taylor thanked the Board for any consideration in the matter being this is where they live and raise their families for generations. Mayor Smathers commented that this Board would take all things into consideration for sure, but at the end of the day would be task with making somebody somewhere unhappy and the Board will take no pleasure in any of this, but it will be a necessity.

David Zachary of Buncombe County stated that he was concerned and in support with KT's orchard as a fellow

beekeeper but stated that the Town should have been talking about this prior to this all happening and should plan better and he did not miss the smell of the mill. Mayor Smathers stated that he missed the familiar smell as he was sure the people that lost their jobs did as well. Mr. Zachary stated he was sorry for the job loss.

Jill resident of 617 Pigeon Ford Road stated that she had previously lived by a wastewater plant and the noise and traffic was constant and encouraged everyone to visit a new facility before making any decisions to see what it would do to the community because in her opinion it would devastate the entire neighborhood.

Kathy Taylor invited the entire Board to come and visit the orchard to see what they had accomplished either as a group or individually.

Mayor Smathers stated the Board would take a 5-minute break at 7:28 before finishing the meeting.

The Board thanked attendee Carl Cortright for always trying to get the truth out about the meetings and things going on in Town.

H. Reports from the Manager

Manager Scheuer gave the cash report.

Manager Scheuer updated the Board that a sink hole on Park Street had been repaired from a large stormwater culvert collapse that was installed in the 40's. Manager Scheuer stated that this is why the Town was working diligently to secure a grant to upgrade the aging infrastructure on Park, Newfound, Main and Bridge Street.

Manager Scheuer updated the Board on the Rhoda Street Project. The delay in the project is the Town received \$80,000 from FEMA and the project would cost around \$970,000 dollars to complete. The Town secured grant funding and the project was currently in the permitting process at the State level due to the remapping of the stream. Once this was complete the right of way easement and construction phase would begin in the late fall.

Manager Scheuer stated that the shade sails were in place in Sorrells Park just in time for the Labor Day Festival.

Manager Scheuer reported that all abilities playgrounds would have groundbreaking in the late fall, but equipment would most likely start in the Spring of 24.

Manager Scheuer reported to the Board that a job advertisement would be published on Friday for a Planning Director/Recovery Officer that would be grant funded for 3 years at which time the Town if able would fund the position permanently.

Manager Scheuer asked the Board's pleasure in scheduling a public hearing for September 14th at 6:30pm to consider the site plan approval for the new Champion Credit union site. The Board gave consensus.

I. New Business

1. Pigeon River Garden Club Co-Sponsorship Request

Manager Scheuer recognized Mrs. Marty Yates of the Pigeon River Garden Club. Mrs. Yates explained the request for the co-sponsorship (see attached). Alderman Hamlett made a motion to approve the co-sponsorship Alderwoman Mull seconded the motion. Alderman Hamlett asked Assistant Manager Stinnett to give her recommendations for the event. Assistant Stinnett stated that the group was a great asset to the community and had no doubt that the event would be great. Assistant Stinnett stated that road closures (barrels, cones, and traffic signs) would be no problem, however her recommendation would be that no staff time, monetary allowance for porta Jons be allowed due to staff restraints and monetary cutbacks. Assistant Stinnett also added the stipulation that the MOU's for the Orchard and Flagpole project be submitted prior to the event to receive the co-sponsorship (See attached). Mrs. Yates explained to the Board this would be used as a fundraiser for the club and after a brief discussion settled on November 5th from 12 to 6pm for the event. Mrs. Yates again asked if the porta Jon could be covered. Alderwoman Smith stated that unfortunately the Town was having to be mindful of spending with the closure of the mill and loss of revenue. Motion carried.

Carl Cortright inquired if it was illegal to park in the weird circle at Riverview Farm and Gardens. Manager Scheuer stated he did not see an issue for walkers to park in that area.

Alderwoman Proctor commented that the pickle ball courts were packed day and night, and it was great to see.

2. The sale of K-9 Reilly

Manager Scheuer explained to the Board that K-9 Officer Reilly's handler had left employment with Canton and went to the Sheriffs Department. Due to the time to retrain and the

issues that sometimes causes the Sheriffs Department agreed to purchase Officer Reilly (see attached). The sale amount of \$11,500.00 dollars would allow for a new K-9 dog and handler training. This would be in the best interest of all involved. Alderman Shepard made a motion to approve the sale of K-9 officer Reilly to the Haywood County Sheriff's Department. Alderwoman Mull seconded the motion. Motion carried.

J. Closed Session: Pursuant to N.C.G.S 143-318.11 (a)(3)(4)(5)

Alderwoman Mull made a motion to enter closed session at 8:15 pm pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a)(3)(4) economic development and Attorney Consultation. Alderwoman Proctor seconded the motion. Motion carried.

After a lengthy discussion with no action taken, Alderwoman Mull made a motion to enter open session at 8:49pm. Alderwoman Proctor seconded the motion. Motion carried.

J. Adjournment

The next meeting will be on Thursday, September 14, 2023, at 6:30p.m. at 85 Summer Street, Canton, NC 28716. There being no additional business, the meeting adjourned at 8:54pm.

Lisa Stinnett, Town Clerk