

January 20, 2025

At the Special Called work Session Meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen/women of the Town of Canton held at the Town Hall at 85 Summer Street, January 20, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. with Mayor Smathers, and Aldermen/women Mull, Proctor, Hamlett, and Shepard present, the following proceedings were held.

A. Call to Order

Mayor Smathers called the meeting to order at 9:46 a.m.

B. Roll Call

Mayor Smathers stated that the Manager Stinnett, Assistant Manager Walker, and Clerk were Dunbar present. Town Attorney Morgan was absent.

C. Public Comments

There were no public comments

D. Work Session

Mayor Smathers stated that the flooding crisis is donating to the entire region. Mayor Smathers stated that our story is different from others, we must do what is good in our back yard, 2025 can be a very good year for the Town of Canton.

Manager Stinnett asked The Board how do you want to move forward with these flood structures. Old Town Hall will be in the flood buyout. Manager Stinnett stated that the Fire Department is the next issue, we need guidance to move forward. Do we do the buyout or repurpose the building?

Mayor Smathers asked if old Town Hall will be leveled. Manager Stinnett answered yes to Mayor Smathers. Alderman Hamlett asked Manager Stinnett why is old Town Hall classified for Hurricane Helene and not Tropical Storm Fred? Manager Stinnett stated that FEMA just made it easier to just do a Helene project. Mayor Smathers asked for timelines for these projects and buy outs. Mayor Smathers stated that these things take some time, and tear down does not happen the next day. Alderman Hamlett talked about his own struggles with Tropical Storm Fred and that he is still awaiting his buyout.

Manager Stinnett said the Fire Department is in the buyout process, but it can be taken off. Alderwoman Mull asked how

much and could we ever build back. Alderman Shepard asked what we could repurpose the Fire Department for. Manager Stinnett answered that the building could be used for equipment storage. Mayor Smathers said that Spirtas will be using some of Evergreen's buildings as their offices. Mayor Smathers asked the board to tear down the Fire Department, board consensus.

Manager Stinnett said the next step is the museum, tear down, redesign and re-open, or move. Manager Stinnett stated that the museum is in the flood way. Mayor Smathers asked when the board need to decide. Manager Stinnett said that the museum was a completed FEMA project from Tropical Storm Fred, the museum is in the buyout program, the longer we wait to decide, the longer we must wait for the FEMA project. Alderwoman Mull asked if we did tear down the museum, could we keep the mural.

Alderwoman Proctor stated that this is an emotional decision to make. Alderwoman Mull stated that we will get backlash no matter what we do. Mayor Smathers said that we must keep our heritage somehow, is it the current museum or is it another building.

Mayor Smathers asked Dunbar about the possibility of using some of these buildings as storage for recreation or offices. Dunbar answered there is a possibility to use these buildings as storage. There was a discussion about the possibility of storage in recreation and office space. Alderman Hamlett is in favor of the tear down, buy out. Alderwoman Proctor stated that we cannot keep throwing money into a place that continues to flood. Assistant Manager Walker stated that the insurance on the museum is \$4,000 a year.

Alderwoman Proctor asked when do we stop paying for the insurance on these buildings. Assistant Manager Walker answered that we stopped paying for the insurance when the buildings were torn down.

Alderman Hamlett said he was in favor of tearing down the museum. Alderman Shepard said these types of stuff he is worried that the museum can be forgotten. Alderman Shepard suggested that we make a museum fund with the insurance money from the museum. Alderman Shepard suggested that we can assure the public that there will be steps to bring back a new building. Manager Stinnett said that keeping a museum will remind people of what we came from and how important it is now after the flood, and the mill closure. Mayor Smathers said that building was not a good representation of the history of Canton. Mayor Smathers wants to bring the friends of the museum to a board meeting. Manager Stinnett stated good

they are coming Thursday. Mayor Smathers asked what the friends of the museum thinks about the building not being there anymore? Alderman Shepard asked how we can save the money for the museum? Mayor Smathers and Alderman Shepard asked if all of the stuff in the museum is locked up and safe.

Colonial Theatre

Manager Stinnett said same options teardown, buyout, maintain building, until a future time, or sell or lease the building. Alderman Hamlett said the theatre is extremely unique and it has been a part of Canton for so long. Alderman Hamlett said I cannot bare the thought of that building being gone. Alderman Hamlett does not want to sell because it could lose our history. Alderman Hamlett stated do not give away and do not tear down. Assistant Manager Walker said the insurance base \$20,000 and had to find an excess policy of \$16,000 in insurance which was required. Alderwoman Mull agreed with Alderman Hamlett. Alderwoman Proctor said making this decision sucks and she has a hard time justifying keeping the insurance on a building. Alderwoman Proctor feels guilty about using town resources on maintaining that building. Alderman Shepard does not want to tear it down and agrees with Alderman Hamlett. Alderman Shepard, however, \$36,000 a year in insurance. Alderman Shepard is in favor of leasing or selling. This will put the building back into use, since this building is on the historical registry, they have strict rules. Alderman Shepard this building has the potential to be a driver if the right person comes in. Alderwoman Proctor said there are members of the community who are interested in putting money into this building. Alderman Shepard is a fan of option 3.

Mayor Smathers not in favor of tearing it down, but nostalgia can make you weak. Mayor Smathers we must gamble on the future of Canton. Mayor Smathers said we have never used this building as it was attended. Mayor Smathers said we do not have the money to put into this building, but if we do not have this building in the future, we will regret it. Mayor Smathers said the right person can get the Colonial to where it needs to be, it is just not us. Alderwoman Proctor asked the board not tear down and to gut it and then lease it. Manager Stinnett said this could still be a lengthy process. Alderman Shepard asked if we strip the building will that lessen the insurance? Mayor Smathers asked if we could build it, Manager Stinnett said it must be 1 foot above base flood level.

Turner Stage

Manager Stinnett said the stage was substantially damaged. Tear down as green space or tear down and rebuild. Mayor Smathers asked if pickin in the park could be in the armory. Manager Stinnett said FEMA calls us complicated because of the

multiple floods. Mayor Smathers asked Clerk Dunbar if the stage is torn down, what recreation could replace it with. Alderman Hamlett said, if we rebuild, we are just rebuilding for the pickin in the park. If we tear down the other buildings, we can move pickin in the park. Mayor Smathers wants a recreation power point from Clerk Dunbar when we catch our breath.

Armory

Manager Stinnett stated that the armory is in that weird FEMA limbo. Manager Stinnett said that the armory can be a hub for the community. Manager Stinnett recommended the town moves on with concrete as it will be cheaper to go with concrete rather than top grade wood floor. Manager Stinnett said we can make some tweaks. Mayor Smathers said we want to help the senior citizens but does not see it at the armory.

Swimming pool

Manager Stinnett gave an update on the swimming pool. It is going out to bid soon, we are waiting for the scope of work from McGill, hopefully get the pool open by Memorial Day.

Manager Stinnett stated that the dog park fence is out to bid, we are waiting for three bids to proceed. Manager Stinnett stated that the baseball field at the rec park will be repaired. Manager Stinnett stated that the dugouts will be made of fence, similar to the ones at the IP complex. Manager Stinnett stated that the fence dugouts will be easier to replace if another flood comes. Mayor Smathers stated that he is fine with the fence dugouts, as long as they look good.

Playground

Manager Stinnett stated that Engineers are working with Dunbar, and Carolina Parks and Play to move the project forward. Dunbar stated that he is waiting on the recommendations from McGill and then he will send them to Carolina Parks and Play. Mayor Smathers stated that he wants the playground project rocking and rolling.

Chestnut Mountain

Manager Stinnett stated that the secondary bridge project will start soon, however, Cinderella may need to change things, but the project can start soon. Manager Stinnett said she anticipates that the park will open in the spring or summer. Manager Stinnett stated that we must engineer up stream for flood mitigation at Chestnut Mountain.

Mayor Smathers said there are huge parts of land that is missing from Asheville highway. Mayor Smathers said we spent a lot of money on Chestnut Mountain, and we want it opened, but I am glad that it is not the top priority. Alderman Shepard

stated that it was a year and a half since they could remove debris from the river after Tropical Storm Fred.

Rough Creek

Clerk Dunbar talked about the Rough Creek Water Shed trail system and the damage it took during the storm. Dunbar stated that he has worked with multiple groups cleaning up downed trees and clearing the trails. Mayor Smathers asked about the fire damage in California and fire risk at the Watershed. Dunbar answered that he will talk to the experts about the potential fire risk at Rough Creek.

225 Park Street

Manager Stinnett stated that she applied for additional funding for the A&P building. Manager Stinnett stated that she received \$300,000 in additional funding. Manager Stinnett stated that there is \$699,000 in total for this project. Manager Stinnett and Byron Hickox are working together to make a plan for the A&P building.

Camp Hope

Manager Stinnett stated that Camp Hope is in the process of being repaired. Manager Stinnett stated that there will be a historian on site during the repairs. Mayor Smathers said Camp Hope was not the priority after Tropical Storm Fred, or now, but it is making progress. Manager Stinnett said camp hope was not hit by Hurricane Helene and did not seem to have additional damage.

Mayor Smathers stated that Asheville keeps springtime we will be open. Alderman Shepard asked about Rhoda Street. Manager Stinnett said it should be complete in February as they had to re-engineer from Helene. Alderwoman Proctor said thank you.

Alderman Hamlett asked about the flood debris in Canton. Manager Stinnett stated that flood debris is region wide, and SDR will make three trips dealing with debris. Manager Stinnett stated that SDR will be picking up personal and commercial debris. Manager Stinnett stated that this is the first time FEMA has picked personal and commercial pick-up for free for residents. Manager Stinnett stated that Residents must come to Town Hall to meet with debris tech, to fill out paperwork during the dates of January 27, and 28.

Infrastructure

Manager Stinnett stated that the paving schedule is on our website. Manager Stinnett stated that the roads next on the schedule are North Main and Locust Streets.

Manager Stinnett stated that the filter plant upgrades will

continue in June.

Manager Stinnett stated that the led water lines letters are state mandated. Manager Stinnett stated if residents do not tell us what your lines are, or if we do not check, we must send out this letter. Manager Stinnett stated that this is a lot of extra for the staff. Mayor Smathers stated that as Spiritas and DH Griffin start their work, we must work with them to maintain our infrastructure and to not make it worse.

Special Events

Manager Stinnett listed these events Easter, July 5th, Labor Day and inquired if we continue down the same path or dial it back. Manager Stinnett stated since Helene we have not looked at what Labor Day did financially. Manager Stinnett stated that our goal is to break even though I am not sure if we did that. Mayor Smathers asked if Balsam Range is affected by Buddy leaving? Manager Stinnett did not believe that this would affect the group. Manager Stinnett asked the board if they wanted Balsam Range to preform on Monday or another day? Manager Stinnett said they are good with either day. Mayor Smathers asked Manager Stinnett if FEMA will be burying power lines? Manager Stinnett answered no FEMA will not be burying power lines, we would have to pay for it to be done.

Ice rink

Manager Stinnett said we can revisit ice rink after ice fest.

Other Items

Manager Stinnett wants to do a salary study to make sure our staff are compensated fairly.

Grants

Manager Stinnett gave the board a list of grants that town staff are applying for. Alderman Hamlett said thanks Chief Sluder and the entire staff for writing grants and going after funds.

Sign Design.

Manager Stinnett stated that Brandy combined the two signs from the last board meeting and turned it into one. Manager Stinnett presented The Board with the new sign design. Mayor Smathers asked if town staff would be moving into the new Town Hall this year. Manager Stinnett stated that the town staff are expected to move into new Town Hall in April 2026.

E. Closed Session Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11

(a)(4)(5)(6)

Alderwoman Mull made a motion to enter closed session pursuant to 143-318.11 (a)(4) at 11:26am. Alderman Hamlett

seconded the motion. All were voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried. After a brief discussion and no action taken, Alderwoman Mull made a motion to enter open session at 12:09pm. Alderwoman Proctor seconded the motion. Motion carried. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alderwoman Mull seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:10pm.

F. Adjournment

The next regular Called meeting will be on Thursday, January 23, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall located at 85 Summer Street, Canton, NC 28716. There being no additional business, Mayor Smathers adjourned the Meeting at 12:10 p.m.

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Sam Dunbar, Town Clerk