

March 27, 2025

At the Special Called Meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen/women of the Town of Canton held at the Town Hall at 85 Summer Street, March 27, 2025, at 6:30pm with Aldermen/women Mull, Hamlett, Shepard, and Proctor present, Mayor Smathers was absent, the following proceedings were held.

A. Call to Order

Mayor Pro-Tem Mull called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Alderwoman Mull stated that Manager Stinnett, Assistant Manager Walker, Clerk Dunbar, and Town Attorney Morgan were present.

C. Pledge/Invocation

Alderwoman Proctor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

D. Approval of Minutes:

Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to approve March 13, 2025, minutes as presented. Alderman Shepard seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion and the motion carried.

E. Mayor Comments

N/a

F. Aldermen/women Comments

Alderman Hamlett and Alderwoman Mull went to represent ourselves at the funeral for Anita Churm. She was a person who would tell you what she thought. If you did not agree with her, she would say that's ok. She was an outstanding woman, who taught at Pisgah High School for 37 years. Alderman Hamlett stated that her funeral was about her life not her death.

Alderman Hamlett stated that today is important for us, it has been six months since Hurricane Helene. Alderman Hamlett stated that the event was horrible, but that is not what we learned from Hurricane Helene for us is not a celebration of the event, but a celebration of who we are. We have grit. Alderman Hamlett stated that we remember well the grit of the people. Alderman Hamlett stated that before the Hurricane hit, he went back to his old house and said goodbye to it, he did not know the last time he would see it again. Alderman Hamlett praised Town Staff and Law Enforcement for their work during the night of the hurricane. Alderman Hamlett praised the people of Canton and Western North Carolina for helping their neighbors. Alderman Hamlett said that is the celebration. Alderman Hamlett said I know that it is going to be better because of this

grit, determination, and steadfastness. Alderman Hamlett thanked Town staff for their work after the flood. Alderman Hamlett also thanked all forms of local, state, and federal government for their assistance.

Alderwoman Proctor thanked Town Staff for their work 6 months after the storm. Alderwoman Proctor stated that you see who people really are in the face of terror. Alderwoman Proctor pointed at Manager Stinnett and Assistant Manager Walker and stated that you all always show up. Alderwoman Proctor stated that she and The Board could connect with their neighbors during this horrible time. Alderwoman Proctor stated that people can see firsthand what we have gone through, we need to support each other more.

Alderwoman Proctor stated that Buncombe County did a head count for the homeless population. Alderwoman Proctor stated that when Buncombe County did their last head count there were 1,000 people that were classified as homeless. Today the number is 2,000 people in Asheville are unhoused because of the hurricane. Alderwoman Proctor stated that the empty bowls fundraiser for Haywood Pathways is tonight, and that Haywood Pathways is the only homeless shelter on this side of Asheville. Alderwoman Proctor asked Manager Stinnett if she knew a head count for the homeless population in Canton and in Haywood County? Manager Stinnett stated she will ask and find out about head counts for homeless.

Alderman Shepard stated that he would start off with a somber tone like the rest of The Board because it is the sixth month anniversary of the Hurricane. Alderman Shepard stated that a positive sign for Cantons recovery, is seeing Canton Middle School and Bethel Middle School playing baseball tonight at Pisgah's field. Alderman Shepard stated that Pisgah High School had to go on the road for their baseball team, it was three years since they could play a game on their home field since Tropical Storm Fred. Aldermen Shepard stated that six months after the Hurricane sports teams are back on their fields, there is a glimmer of things coming back. Alderman Shepard stated that because of the wildfires, there is red flag warning for Haywood County.

Alderman Shepard stated that he was in Waynesville for a county wide choir competition, that all elementary schools in the entire county preformed together. Alderman Shepard stated that it takes a lot of work to do this type of event, and he does not envy elementary school music teachers. Alderman Shepard stated it was truly amazing; I'd like to brag on the music teachers in Haywood County.

Alderwoman Mull thanked the Town Staff for their work and stated we appreciate you all.

Alderman Shepard asked Manager Stinnett to please extend our thanks to all the fire departments and Chief Wheeler for their work dealing with the forest fires.

G. Public Comments:

Nate Roberto stated that this was his first Board meeting; Mr. Roberto stated he would like to apologize for his actions during Chuck Edwards presentation of the \$41 Million water grant. Mr. Roberto stated that he see's Congressman Edwards as destroying America. Mr. Roberto stated that he did not realize it was a ceremony for workers, I come from a working-class family and should have given them the space to be appreciated. Mr. Roberto thanked Chief Sluder for giving him space to let his anger out. Mr. Roberto stated that my hope in the future is that if there is another ceremony, do it during non-working hours. Mr. Roberto stated I do not condone violence, but I do believe in civil disobedience. I do not question the Mayor's integrity at all, if you are not using your platform to face these issues, things could get worse. Mr. Roberto stated that the first time he met the Mayor was two years ago, after the school shooting in Tennessee. He stopped and asked Mayor Smathers if he talked to the Governor about gun reform. Mr. Roberto stated that he believes that Mayor Smathers is approachable but feels that Mayor Smathers has passed the buck when it came to other issues.

Mr. Roberto thanked The Board and Town Staff for their work during and after the flood. Mr. Roberto shared his frustrations with the current administration, and stated I hope we can get out and make some noise.

Mr. Roberto stated that Haywood County Schools are 7th in the State but we are million and half short of funding. Mr. Roberto stated that he appreciates The Boards time.

Alderman Hamlett asked Mr. Roberto his daughters name and told her that her dad did something brave and courageous, to stand before The Board and say he was sorry, and that speaks very highly of your Dad.

Alderwoman Proctor stated I am so glad that you came, sometimes we do forget that we have people who want to be active. Alderwoman Proctor stated that she apologized for not getting the word out about Congressman Edwards visit, but we did not know about it until a couple of hours before. Alderwoman Proctor stated you should have access to your public officials, we encourage you to talk with us because we are citizens of Canton too.

Alderman Shepard stated that the beauty of local government is trying to take care of all of us, the higher you go up, the more you talk about politics.

H. Manager's Reports

Cash: Assistant Manager Walker gave the cash report.

Manager Stinnett gave the tax report

Manager Updates:

Manager Stinnett stated that the Pigeon River Garden Club asked Manager

Stinnett and Clerk Dunbar for a letter of support for their River Fest event. Manager Stinnett stated that Clerk Dunbar wrote a letter of support for a TDA grant the garden club was applying for.

Manager Stinnett stated that Terrell Evans wanted to host picking in the park. Manager Stinnett stated that she would do it on her own and not need the help of Town Staff. Alderwoman Mull asked where she plans on having it. Manager Stinnett answered that it would be in the American Cleaners parking lot.

Alderman Hamlett stated that he has been concerned about picking in the park because of our resources, if there are no issues for law enforcement or trash pickup, then go ahead. Manager Stinnett stated Mrs. Evans can put on an event, and she does a great job with her events. Alderman Hamlett stated said she can work well with us.

The Board decided on a Consensus revisit after this year. See how it goes this year. Alderman Hamlett asked Manager Stinnett to tell Mrs. Evans that all the board said thank you.

J. New Business

1. Pool Pump House bid

Manager Stinnett stated that Hyatt Pipeline was the only company to bid for the pump house repair. Manager Stinnett stated that we are very hopeful that it will be opened sometime in June, but there is a large lead time for equipment. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to approve Hyatt Pipeline for the bid. Alderman Hamlet seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion and the motion carried.

2. 225 Park Street Design and Build Award

Manager Stinnett stated that we have chosen Harper Construction to build and design the 225 Park Street building, but we do not have the contract, we plan on having that by the next meeting.

3. New Police Firearms

Chief Sluder addressed The Board about replacing their older firearms with new ones and plans to offset the cost by trading in their own firearms for new firearms. Chief Sluder stated that he would have to sell the holsters on Govdeals.com because they would not fit the new firearms. Chief Sluder stated that he has an invoice to sell ammo to Haywood Community College for training new police officers. Chief Sluder stated that since the Community College could not use all of the ammo, so his ammo supplier is giving the Town a \$3,100 trade in credit. Chief Sluder stated that this should offset the cost for firearms.

Alderwoman Proctor asked Assistant Manager Walker if she was ok with this. Assistant Manager Walker stated she was in favor of this. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to approve this transaction. Alderman Hamlett seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried.

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

Alderman Hamlett made a motion to enter closed session pursuant to 143-318.11 (a)(4)(5)(6) at 7:18pm. Alderman Shepard seconded the motion. With all in favor the motion carried. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to enter open session at 8:03pm. Aldermen Shepard seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to enter closed session at 8:03pm. Alderman Hamlett seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion and the motion carried. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to enter open session at 8:24pm. Alderman Hamlett seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to enter closed session at 8:25pm alderman Hamlett seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion and the motion carried. After a brief discussion and no action taken. Alderwoman Proctor made a motion to enter open session at 8:46pm. Alderman Hamlett seconded the motion. All were in favor of the motion and the motion carried.

L. Adjournment

The next regular meeting will be on Thursday, April 10, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall located at 85 Summer Street, Canton, NC 28716. There being no additional business, Alderwoman Mull adjourned the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

Sam Dunbar, Town Clerk