

February 13, 2025

At the Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen/women of the Town of Canton held at the Town Hall at 85 Summer Street, February 13, 2025, at 6:00pm 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 6:01 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Mayor Smathers stated that Manager Stinnett, Assistant Manager Walker, Deputy Clerk Lurvey, and Town Attorney Morgan were present.

C. Pledge/Invocation

Alderwoman Proctor led the pledge of allegiance.

D. Approval of Minutes:

Alderwoman Mull made a motion to approve January 23, 2025, minutes as presented. Alderman Shepard seconded the motion. Motion carried. Alderwoman Mull made a motion to approve the January 20, 2025, minutes as presented, and Alderman Shepard seconded the motion. All were in favor.

E. Mayor Comments

Mayor Smathers spoke of the year 2014, when Pactiv requested the \$12 million dollar grant (JMAC) to convert the mill from coal to gas. One of the stipulations for this grant was that the mill would continue to employ approximately 1,000 workers through December 31, 2024. Pactiv did not keep that promise and closed the Mill in June of 2023.

Mayor Smathers then stated that the State Attorney General Jeff Jackson, Pactiv, Town of Canton and County of Haywood reached an agreement to settle the JMAC. Mayor Smathers stated that he was grateful to Governor Josh Stein, Governor Roy Cooper, Attorney General Jeff Jackson and their staff for settling the legal action. Mayor Smathers stated that hopefully this legal action against Pactiv shows corporate America that there are consequences for actions. Pactiv agreed to withdraw their appeals for taxes for 2023 and 2024. There is no claim on the Town of Canton for treatment of wastewater back to the 1964 agreement.

Mayor Smathers stated better days are ahead for the Town. We will build back our economy without Pactiv.

The Town is thankful for Raleigh backing the Town.

F. Aldermen/women Comments

Alderwoman Mull stated that she is extremely proud of the Town of Canton, and she is pleased that a settlement was reached as well. Alderwoman Mull thanked everyone for coming.

Aldermen Hamlett stated that it shows that David can take on Goliath which is both refreshing and encouraging.

Alderwoman Proctor thanked the Staff, Board and Raleigh for a successful settlement of the JMAC. Alderwoman Proctor stated that by the Town not backing down it reflects the grit of the Town and the community.

Alderman Shepard echoed the sentiments of Alderwoman Proctor and wished to thank everyone for the long hours put into making the settlement possible. Alderman Shepard stated that it is a sense of relief to have this behind us and we can move forward as a Town and Community.

Mayor Smathers wanted to recognize members of the press in the audience and thank them for telling our story with class and character. Mayor Smathers asked for a round of applause to thank the media for their reporting.

G. Public Comments:

N/A

H. Manager's Reports

Assistant Manager Walker gave the Board the cash report.

Manager Stinnett told the Board that one platform to reach our community is by sending out messages on Everbridge. With the advent of a newsletter coming soon, Town Staff will look to register new water consumers with the Town on Everbridge at the time they are opening an account. By mapping certain areas affected by a water outage it will reduce the confusion by only targeting the areas affected.

Mayor Smathers stated that that was a good idea and asked Staff to reach out to businesses as well.

Manager Stinnett reminded the Board that Monday, February 17, 2025, was Presidents' Day and that Town Hall will be closed and will reopen on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 7:30am.

Manager Stinnett stated Private Property Debris Removal will have two (2) additional sign up dates added at no cost to property owners.

Manager Stinnett stated that Turner Stage needs to be demolished and told the Board that FYI the fencing for the park is 12-14 weeks out for replacement of the black vinyl coated fencing.

J. New Business

1. Police Policies

Chief Sluder presented to the Board a policy update of Operational Policies for the Canton Police Department. Chief Sluder explained that these policies are just an update and revision to policies in place at this time. Chief Sluder stated that the only new policy added was for License Plate Readers. Even though the Department does not currently have readers this is in the event the Department should get the license plate readers a policy will already be in place.

Chief Sluder also told the Board that the Easter Egg Hunt this year will be on April 19, 2025, and will be held at the IP Sports Complex at 10am. This year Chief Sluder stated that they will break out into 3 groups to give the little ones an opportunity to hunt for Easter eggs without interference from the older participants.

Alderwoman Mull made a motion to approve the policy updates/new policy for the Operations of the Canton Police Department.

Alderman Hamlett seconded the motion, and the motion carried with all in favor.

2. Co-Sponsorship: Down Hill Dog Enduro Race

Manager Stinnett presented the Board with an application executed by Jessie Metcalf, Executive Director of Sarge's Animal Rescue Foundation, Inc. for a downhill race to be held at Chestnut Mountain on August 8, 2025. According to a spokesman for Sarge's he believes they will get roughly 150 riders to participate which will benefit Sarge's foundation. Alderwoman Mull made a motion to approve the Co-Sponsorship for the Enduro Race. Alderwoman Proctor seconded the motion, and the motion carried with all in favor.

3. Co-Sponsorship: Trail Race 10k & 20k

Manager Stinnett presented the Board with a Co-Sponsorship executed by Greg Duff, Organizer for the event for October 4, 2025, to be held at Chestnut Mountain. The 20k race will commence at 9:00am and the 10k will begin at 9:30am. The event coordinator hopes that they will have between 125-150 racers at this event. Alderwoman Mull made a motion to approve the Co-Sponsorship. Alderman Tim Shepard seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

4. TDA Presentation

Corrina Ruffieux, Executive Director for the Tourist Development Authority, presented the Board with a handout which reflects the new Visit Haywood County and the Western North Carolina Mountains campaign as a year-round attraction. Ms. Ruffieux stated that the 3 grant program dates are the following: February 27 Grant cycle opens and a grant workshop at 3:00pm at the Welcome

Center, March 27, Deadline for submitting grant applications and May 30, Grant decision letters to be sent. The Board thanked Ms. Ruffieux for the update.

5. Sponsorship: Mill Town Market

Aimee Sylvester of the Mill Town Farmers Market, presented to the Board a plan for this year's market at Sorrells Street Park. Ms. Sylvester stated that they would like to expand the market by providing bounce houses, use of the Town's train and supplies that were lost in the flood. Ms. Sylvester also stated that this year they would be able to accept SNAP benefits at the market. Also Ms. Sylvester asked if the old A&P building would be available for use. Mayor Smathers stated that the building will not be available for use this year because of damage to the building. Mayor Smathers then stated that Ms. Sylvester contact Town Manager Stinnett about assistance with road closures for the market. No further discussion or action was taken at this meeting.

6. Bear Waters Brewery

Kevin Sandefur, owner of Bear Waters, wanted to tell the Board that they will be rebuilding but under different circumstances. Bear Waters has entered into an agreement with Green Man Brewery in Asheville to permit Bear Waters to brew their beer at there location and transport the finished product to Canton. Bear Waters will no longer be brewing beer in Canton after the last flood. Bear Waters will continue to expand their outdoor activities and recreation on the river. While the brewery will go away Bear Waters will not.

Mayor Smathers stated that their story needs to be told. Mayor Smathers agreed with Bear Waters that they have been let down by the lack of small business grants. Not loans but grants. Mayor Smathers thanked Bear Waters for staying with the Town of Canton.

Alderman Hamlett shares his frustration with regards to insurance companies stating pay me every month but don't use me. Alderman Hamlett stated that he is still waiting for a payout from two homes that were lost in Tropical Storm Fred in 2021.

Alderman Shepard thanked Bear Waters for their determination and tenacity 2 losses in three years is extreme and they are making a comeback.

Alderwoman Proctor stated that she felt the town grew up together with Bear Waters. She thanked Bear Waters for staying and knowing what you can and cannot do.

7. Pigeon River Garden Club

Ms. Marty Yates with the Pigeon River Garden Club thanked Manager Stinnett for the cleanup help. Ms. Yates stated that their hope is to plant sustainable pollinators, flowers and sun flowers this year. They will not be planting edibles because of the flood and condition of the soil. Ms. Yates presented a list of their recovery requests. (See Attached). At this time Alderman Hamlett made a motion to open discussion on the recovery request, this was seconded by Alderwoman Mull. Manager Stinnett provided the Board with a compromise list of what the Town would be able to do for the PRGC. Alderman Hamlett stated that the Board needed to be good stewards of the budget. Alderman Hamlett further stated that the JMAC funds is not a jack pot. Mayor Smathers stated that he would be for the compromise in services. Alderman Hamlett made a motion to offer the compromise list of town services. Alderwoman Mull seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the compromise and the motion passed.

8. Dog Park Bid Awarded: Asheville Fence Company

Asheville Fence Company was awarded the bid in the amount of \$21,488.39. Alderwoman Mull made a motion to accept the awarded bid for the Dog Park to Asheville Fence Company. Alderman Hamlett seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

9. Resolution for applying for North Carolina State Cashflow Loans for Disaster Response Activities

Manager Stinnett presented the Board with a Resolution authorizing the Town Manager to apply for funding. Manager Stinnett stated that these were zero percent loans and were front money until FEMA funds are dispersed to the Town. Once FEMA funds are received the loan(s) are to be repaid. Alderwoman Mull made a motion to approve the Resolution and Alderman Shepard seconded the motion with all in favor the motion passed.

K. 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 7:49pm. Alderwoman Proctor seconded the motion. With all in favor the motion carried. Alderman Shepard made a motion to enter open session at 9:14pm. Alderwoman Mull seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Assistant Manager/Finance Officer Natalie Walker requested the Board approve a Budget Amendment in the amount of \$234,000.00 from Operating Expense to Capital Expense. Alderwoman Mull made a motion to approve the Budget Amendment request. Alderman Tim Shepard seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion passed.

L. Adjournment

The next regular called meeting will be on Thursday, February 27, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall located at 85 Summer Street, Canton, NC 28716. There being no additional business, Mayor Smathers adjourned the Meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Wanda M. Lurvey, Deputy Town Clerk