

Edenton Town Council Minutes
February 14, 2023

The Edenton Town Council met in regular session on Tuesday, February 14, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The following members were present: Mayor Jimmy Stallings, Councilman Elton Bond, Councilman Roger Coleman, Councilman Aaron Coston, Councilman Samuel Dixon, Councilman Hackney High and Councilman Craig Miller.

Mayor Jimmy Stallings called the meeting to order.

All present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilman Coleman gave the invocation.

Approval of Minutes

Special Meeting January 23, 2023, Regular Meeting January 10, 2023 and Closed Session January 10, 2023.

Councilman Miller made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Councilman Bond seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Special Presentation

Mayor Jimmy Stallings presented a Proclamation of Appreciation to Lori Ann Curtin thanking her for the years of service as a member of the Board of Adjustment.

Presentation

Mr. Dick Mayer gave a brief presentation on a request for a memorial bench to honor James C. Robinson.

Councilman Miller made a motion to approve the installation of the bench on town property. Councilman Bond seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

The Administrative Committee had five items on the agenda.

Update on the Confederate Monument

Councilman High stated that the Town Council would enter closed session to consult with the Town Attorney on the status of litigation and status of settlement negotiations.

Town of Edenton 2023 Vision Statement

Councilman High stated that the Vision Statement was updated during a recent work session of the Town Council.

Councilman High made a motion to approve the 2023 Vision Statement. Councilman Coleman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Elected Official Stipend

Councilman High stated that staff had completed research with surrounding municipalities on current stipend pay.

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that it has been recommended by Town Council members and staff that this item be tabled until budget review time.

Councilman High made a motion to table this agenda item until budget discussions. Councilman Miller seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Information Officer Job Description

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that the final draft of the job description is presented for approval and that there have been questions regarding the salary range for this newly created position.

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that staff has received information regarding similar positions at other municipalities showing salaries and also provided information from the NC League of Municipalities on a Public Information Director which is different from what the staff is requesting. It has been recommended that this position be classified in pay grade (14) which has a hiring rate of \$37,924 to a maximum of \$56,884.

Councilman Coston expressed concern regarding the hiring rate and recommended that the position be classified in pay grade (18) which has a hiring rate of \$46,097 to a maximum of \$69,145. He was concerned that with the position being a dual role position that a higher pay grade was needed.

Councilman Miller also agreed that pay grade (18) was appropriate for the position.

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that regardless of the pay grade chosen for the position that there is flexibility within the pay grade to start an employee above the hiring rate based on experience.

Councilman Bond also stated that he felt that the pay grade should be lower and that staff has the flexibility to adjust the starting salary based on the qualifications of the candidate.

Councilman Coston made a motion to approve the job description as presented with classification of pay grade (18). Councilman Miller seconded the motion.

Councilman High expressed his concerns regarding the pay grade for the position.

Councilman High asked Councilman Coston why he felt that pay grade (18) was appropriate.

Councilman Coston stated it was based on his research and the responsibilities of the job. He stated that he would share his research for the salary and position he conducted and would send out to the Town Council via email.

Mayor Stallings asked if funds were available for this position or would it have to wait until the new budget.

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that this position was already funded in the current budget.

The following voted affirmative on the motion: Councilman Coleman, Councilman Miller, Councilman Dixon and Councilman Coston.

The following voted negative on the motion: Councilman High and Councilman Bond.

The motion carried.

Old National Guard Armory Termination of Reversion Agreement

Councilman High stated that at a recent meeting the Administrative Committee requested the Town Manager revise the original termination of reversion agreement presented (on behalf of Chowan County) and their request to help with the John A. Holmes High School Project. The Town Council did have initial concerns regarding the loss of the demolition covenants from the original deed.

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that the Town Attorney Hood Ellis drafted the termination of reversion agreement and declaration of protective covenants document that was included in the packet. The document both satisfies the Chowan County and Town of Edenton needs.

Councilman High made a statement that he was the attorney for the Board of Education and did not feel this document benefits the school but only the town and he did not feel he needed to recuse himself from voting.

Councilman High made a motion to give the Mayor and Town Manager the authority to move forward with the document. Councilman Coston seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Finance Committee had two items on the agenda.

Budget Amendment-American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Phase II

Councilman Dixon made a motion to approve the budget amendment. Councilman Coston seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Budget Amendment-Elected Official Salary and Travel Increase

Councilman Dixon made a motion to approve the travel expenses for the National Main Street Conference budget amendment. Councilman Miller seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The Public Works Committee had one item on the agenda.

No Parking Designation 106 South Oakum Street

Councilman Miller made a motion to approve the no parking designation. Councilman Coleman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

Budget Amendment-Department of Commerce Building Reuse Grant-Regulator Marine

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that this amendment is to accept the proceeds from the NC Department of Commerce grant for the Regulator Marine building reuse resolution Council approved in February. These funds will be disbursed directly to Regulator Marine and no matching funds were required from recipient or town. Regulator Marine has recently completed their hull storage addition and exceeded the job requirements for the DOC grant.

Mayor did not call for a motion.

Wastewater Treatment Plan Upgrades Phase I Update-Corey Gooden

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that the Town of Edenton, The Wooten Company, and the USDA hosted the bid opening for the 2018 Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) phase I project. The primary goals of the WWTP Improvements – Contract 1 are to replace failing mechanical equipment at the WWTP, add a SCADA system to increase operational efficiency, and remove overgrown trees. There were three bids submitted. The official bid tab was included in the agenda packet and the low bidder was Peters and White Construction with a total bid of \$13,300,606. The low bid was in exceedance of previously procured funding and project cost of \$3,639,100.

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that the Town is currently negotiating with the contractor and USDA to bring the scope of the project in line with available funding. Alternatively, the Town of Edenton and USDA are reviewing the possibility of requesting additional grant/loan funding for the project. He stated that at this time he did not know the final options with USDA for the grant/loan mix or their potential to increase. The initial recommendation of the Town Manager & The Wooten Company Engineer (David Bennett) is to continue negotiations with both Peters & White and USDA to adjust the scope of work to allow the project to be funded by USDA.

Items Considered Timely and Important

Councilman Coleman gave an update from the Mayor Task Force on Litter Prevention, Recycling and the Environment. He thanked the Town Council for appropriating \$40,000 for the purchase of a recycling trailer so that the Town can collect recycling items soon.

Councilman Coleman asked if the Town could consider hiring two part time employees that would be dedicated to litter collection. He stated that a litter clean up day was scheduled for March 4 from 8:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Councilman High asked for the items that Councilman Coleman recommended be placed on an upcoming agenda for discussion amongst the Town Council.

Councilman High requested that Town Manager Corey Gooden give an update on the Hotel Hinton/SAGA.

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that he met recently with SAGA and expressed concerns from the public on the security and safety of the Hotel Hinton. Lighting opportunities were identified and the group entered the property to address electrical concerns for more lighting that is needed on the King Street side of the building. The property owners are working with local contractors to address the electrical issues inside of the building to provide electricity in additional locations for lighting. The property owner has requested an additional 120 days for the project.

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that he had also met with SAGA earlier in the afternoon along with Preservation North Carolina and Mr. Henderson who is assisting with the project. Concerns and updates were discussed with the group and the Town expressed to the property owner that the building needs to be cleaned up. He stated that the Town Attorney will be providing information to the Town Council on what they can do to enforce ordinances in regards to this project.

Councilman Coston inquired about light installation at Griffith Park.

Town Manager Corey Gooden stated that he would check with the Utilities Director for an update on installation.

Mayor Stallings read a statement regarding the recent town meeting that was held and address comments that were made regarding Police Chief Henry King.

Public Comment

Jessie Rivers: spoke about the Marcus Jackson project and that they are conducting a community survey until April. She also spoke about the "Move the Monument" group that meets on Saturday and that the violence that is being shown to individuals during the demonstration.

Lori Dablow: spoke about SAGA and the Hotel Hinton building and in Edenton a building is just not a building.

Andrean Heath: spoke about Edenton being named as one of the prettiest town in the south and that the monument should be relocated from being in the center of town. She also talked about the state of disrepair of the old shopping center. She also asked about addressing trash and debris in yards located in north Edenton.

John Mitchener: spoke about the recent town meeting that was held and expressed his concerns about lighting in Edenton that will address safety concerns.

John Grant: inquired about the recent meeting held at the Hotel Hinton and if the inside of the building was accessed by the group and was there any tagging noted inside. He asked if the town gave the 120 days notice or if that was requested by property owner.

There being no further items on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned.

