

Edenton Town Council Minutes
July 26, 2021

The Edenton Town Council met on Monday, July 26, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The following members were present: Mayor Jimmy Stallings, Councilman Elton Bond, Councilman Roger Coleman, Councilman Samuel Dixon, Councilman Hackney High, Councilman Craig Miller and Councilman Roscoe Poole.

Mayor Jimmy Stallings called the meeting to order.

The Public Works Committee was first on the agenda with four items.

Councilman Miller stated that the Town contracted with Stroud Engineering to conduct the water system asset inventory and assessment report. Engineer David Tuten was present via Zoom to give the Town Council a summary of the project.

It was noted that in 2020 the Town received \$150,000 grant from NC DEQ to conduct a comprehensive asset inventory and assessment of our water system. The grant award is based on points for a variety of categories.

Councilman Miller stated that the committee recommended that at the August regular meeting the Town Council go on record to accept the data from the report.

Councilman Miller stated that the second item was a presentation from Public Works Director Corey Gooden on the Phase I automatic meter reading proposal for water meters. He stated that Public Works is proposing to transition to purchasing in phases, the technology and infrastructure to support the collection of consumption of water with diagnostic and real time data. Staff will begin soliciting banks for financing of this project.

Councilman Miller stated that the third item was the Mayor's Task Force on Litter Prevention, Recycling and the Environment. He stated that applications were received for appointment to this newly established Task Force. Seven applications were received. Also, Chowan County Commissioner Larry McLaughlin has also volunteered to serve as the county liaison.

The Committee requested that staff set up a time for the Town Council to meet with and interview applicants for appointment to boards/commissions. It was suggested that invites be sent to Chief King and Sheriff Basnight and a representative from NCDOT to serve as ex-officio members of the Task Force.

Councilman Miller stated that the last item was the review of Animal Control and Protection Services Agreement.

Councilman Miller stated that in the FY 2021/22 Budget it contained funds for the Town to contract with Chowan County for higher level of animal control and protection services. The Town's funding will enable the County to convert a part-time animal control officer to a full-time position. This new full-time position will work with the Chowan County Animal Control Director. County Manager Kevin Howard has shared a copy of an agreement between a town and county that appears to be a good model agreement. The Town would include language in the Town/County Agreement that would call for the County to have authority from the Town to enforce the Town's Animal Control Ordinance. The main difference between the Town and County is the Town's leash law. The County recently updated their

animal control ordinance and included several provisions regarding potentially dangerous dogs. The County requires as part of the registration process for potentially dangerous dogs that owners maintain \$100,000 in liability insurance. The Committee was asked to authorize staff to draft updates to the Town's Ordinance and prepare agreement for animal control and protection services for the Town Council and Commissioners to consider approving. Town Attorney Hood Ellis will be asked to review and approve the amendments to the animal control ordinance and the agreement.

The Administrative Committee as next on the agenda with five items.

Councilman High stated that the first item, Athletic Accomplishment Signs.

Councilman High stated that John A Holmes Athletic Director Wes Mattera was unable to meet with the Committee to finalize the content of the signs. Staff was directed to meet with Mr. Mattera and finalized the details and report back to the Town Council.

Councilman High stated that the second item was the lighting opportunities for Colonial Park.

Councilman High stated that he and Councilman Miller recently met with Downtown Ambassador Tatem regarding his concerns of lighting at Colonial Park. Electric Director Mike Nichols identified several lights that were out of service and those were repaired and put back in service. The Electric Department also reported that the light facing the parking lot (near the harbor) has been replaced with a much brighter one. These repairs and the upgrade should address the concerns regarding lighting around the parking lot and the playground.

Councilman High stated that regarding decorative lighting in the live oak trees at the foot of S. Broad Street, there are several points for consideration. First point of consideration, the Tree Committee and Staff have been monitoring the health of these live oaks. After Tropical Storm Julia & Hurricane Matthew in 2016, the staff noticed decline. The Town contracted with certified Arborist who opined that the repeated flooding and the age of the trees, was impacting the health of the trees. He recommended soils testing, which was conducted, and the results were concerning so fertilizer treatments were recommended and implemented. Slowly over the last few years the trees continued to show signs decline. The April 2021 hail storm caused even more damage. Staff reached out to Horticultural Agent Katy Shook and she explained the damage the hail storm did to so many of our community's trees. Most will recover, but those that were in decline prior to the storm are at risk for suffering even more decline. Second point of consideration, Electric Director Mike Nichols has previous experience with decorative lights in trees when he was a supervisor with the City of Cleveland's Electric Department. The initial investment to purchase and install/attach the lights is certainly something the Town could manage however the on-going maintenance will require commitment of additional resources. One idea Town Council may want to consider is to work with a landscape architect or lighting expert to install decorative lights around the borders of the parking areas at the foot of S. Broad Street. A few years ago the Town worked with a landscape architect to provide up-lighting (lights from the ground up) around the Council Chambers building and the in the area where the live oaks are located.

Staff is recommending that Council receive a professional assessment of the health of the live oak trees and technical assistance from a landscape architect for plan for additional lighting that improves vibrancy and safety of the waterfront area during evening hours.

Councilman High stated that the next item was the Young Folks Committee.

Chairman High discussed steps to kick start the establishment of the committee. The Committee was established with intention of creating space for young people (under forty) to gather and discuss ways in which the Town of Edenton can enhance the quality of life for our younger residents and present initiatives to the Town Council that will make those discussions actionable. The Town advertised and received 14 applications (one applicant has moved away so you have 13 active applications).

The committee recommended that an introduction meeting be set up with the applicants.

Councilman High stated that a staff person was also needed to help facilitate meetings of the committee. He stated that he would discuss with the Town Manager on a staff person to assist.

Councilman High stated that the fourth item was the approval of classifications of positions.

Councilman High stated that funds were included in the 2021/22 Budget to create an Assistant Finance Officer position. This position will address two needs – one, to help improve and strengthen internal control per the continued finding of in annual audits pertaining to lack of segregation of duties within the Town’s finance office and two, to provide additional grant management support to for the new Town Manager – funds were included in the 2021/22 Budget.

Councilman High stated that there is currently one employee that holds a position that is responsible for two critical functions – accounts payable and utility customer service agent. Staff is recommending creating a new Assistant Finance Officer position and a new customer service /accounting technician position. The Assistant Finance Officer position would become responsible for many of the tasks the Finance Officer performs now. Separating such tasks as preparation of the daily bank deposit, processing accounts payable checks and preparing various financial reports gives the organization more “checks and balances”. Freeing up the Finance Officer from preparation of required special reports required for state reimbursement of sales tax, gas and excise taxes along with other responsibilities (balancing monthly 401-K reports, child support deductions, renewal and review of property/general liability/workers compensation insurance will allow the Finance Officer to play a more active role in administration of grants.

Staff is requesting the creation of two new positions Customer Service /Accounting Technician Position (Grade 13). The Assistant Finance Officer Position is recommended to be a Grade 18.

Two new job descriptions were created and presented to the Town Council for their review and approval. This will allow staff the opportunity to do a much better job cross-training critical functions or tasks as well. Having an additional full-time customer service position will alleviate a lot of stress when one person is out sick or on vacation.

The committee recommended this item be placed on the next regular meeting agenda for approval.

Councilman High stated that the last item was the extension of the COVID-19 paid sick leave policy.

Councilman High stated that staff has requested Town Council consider extending the COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave Policy. The Federal Government did not extend the policy when it expired December 31, 2020. The Town Council previously extended the policy for six months beginning January 1, 2021. Due to the on-going and active COVID-19 cases within the community staff recommends extension of the policy until December 31, 2021.

The committee recommended this item be placed on the next regular meeting agenda for approval.

The Finance Committee had one item on the agenda.

Councilman Dixon stated that the item for review was the Finance Proposals for the installment financing agreement for the purchase of a new Fire Truck.

Councilman Dixon state that the Finance Officer solicited proposals for bank financing for the purchase of the new fire truck. Proposals were needed in order to submit the application to the NC Local Government Commission for approval of the financing. This is required because the cost of the acquisition exceeds \$500,000. Financing of equipment purchases less than \$500,000 do not require NC LGC approval. Staff is asking the Chowan County Commissioners to adopt a resolution agreeing to reimburse the Town the County's share of the debt service payment (47%). Staff is working to get the application on the September NC LGC Meeting for approval. Once approved, Council can approve the purchase. Fire Chief Bass reports it will take 12 months for the truck to be manufactured and delivered.

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