

REGULAR BOARD MEETING of July 16, 1997, with Mayor John Cleaveland and Commissioners H. N. James, Mike McCall, Ron Sanders, Donnie Calloway, and Zeke Sossomon present.

Also present were Richard Betz, Lamar Nix, Eddie Madden, Rosemary Fleming, Virginia Fleming, Curtis Hayes, Bud Potts, Woodrow Wilson, Melinda Wilson, Mattie Calloway, Bobby Creswell, and John Henry.

I. Mayor Cleaveland called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. The minutes of the July 2 Regular Board Meeting had been distributed by mail.

MOVED BY COMM. JAMES, SECONDED BY COMM. CALLOWAY, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS DISTRIBUTED.

III. Reports.

1. It was reported that Public Works Director Lamar Nix would be late due to a power outage. The Board briefly discussed procedures for reporting power outages in Town, Comm. James expressing concerns over the County dispatching system placing a recording on the telephone. The Clerk said that he and the Mayor had discussed this matter with Police Chief Jerry Cook, and the Chief had agreed to discuss it with Macon County Emergency Management Coordinator Warren Cabe.

2. The Mayor reported that he understood the Macon County Health Department would be tripling its fees for septic tank inspections, yet not improving the current eight-week approval process; such a delay was causing many problems. He felt that if the rates were going to be increased to such an extent, service should be improved as well, and suggested that the Town write a letter to that effect to the Health Department. The Board agreed by consensus.

3. The Mayor distributed to each Board member copies of a letter dated July 14 from Dennis F. Wilson of C. A. Wilson Electric Services Inc., expressing an interest in opening 4½ and/or Poplar Streets, and strongly encouraging the Town to proceed with a survey.

4. Town Engineer Lamar Nix distributed copies of a letter he had received earlier in the day from Timothy A. Hemker of W. K. Dickson Co., the Town's consulting engineers, outlining a proposed master plan for water system modifications for the Bowery service area. The plan proposed merging the Bowery and Big Bearpen pressure zones and providing fire protection within the Bowery area, and made several recommendations, including a new 200,000 gallon tank on Big Bearpen Mountain. The Board took the letter under advisement.

5. The Clerk reported that he had had several discussions recently with Cindy Bogorad, attorney with Spiegel & McDiarmid, concerning the new Open Access legislation and the changing electric transmission situation. He recommended that the Board invite Ms. Bogorad to meet with them this Fall to discuss the Town's options; the Board agreed to do so.

6. The Clerk reported that he was still gathering information on health insurance for Town employees, and would be able to provide a full report at the next meeting.

IV. Old Business.

1. The Clerk reported that Town Attorney Bill Coward had been having discussions with Kimila Wooten, Margaret Mitchell O'Donnell's attorney, concerning the sidewalk to the U. S. Post Office at Highlands Plaza; he said Mr. Coward would give a full report at the next meeting.

2. The Clerk reported that, as requested, he had contacted Gwen McMillan concerning a petition received at the June 18 meeting to

change the name of Naiad Terrace to Sequoyah Point. She had told him that the names on the petition represented all of the property owners on the road, and that they preferred the name Sequoyah Point over Naiad Terrace.

MOVED BY COMM. JAMES, SECONDED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, AND CARRIED TO DENY THE REQUEST. Comms. James, Sossomon, and Sanders voted "aye"; Comms. McCall and Calloway voted "nay."

V. New Business.

1. Bud Potts and several members of the Highlands Cemetery Company Board of Directors were present to request that the Town consider taking over maintenance and operation of the Cemetery. Mr. Potts said that the same people had served on the Committee for 25 to 30 years, and they could not find any younger members or any other organization willing to take it over; many of the members were no longer physically able to do the work.

He explained that the Cemetery Company only received revenues from approximately half of the grave sites, since the perpetual care fund was only implemented 25 to 30 years ago; the cost of a grave site was currently \$200, perpetual care was \$100, and corner markers were \$80. An appeal for an additional maintenance fee last year had raised only \$180. Last year's receipts were \$10,800 from grave site/perpetual care sales, plus interest from the \$86,248 currently in the perpetual care fund. Last year's expenses were approximately \$20,000, consisting mostly of a contract with John Shearl for mowing, plus additional work by the hour. There were approximately 240 grave sites remaining, plus an additional 2½ acres of undeveloped land below the cemetery adjoining Three R Lane. All of the land belonged to the Highlands Cemetery Company, which was a non-profit organization governed by a Board of Directors elected by the membership.

The Board discussed the legal requirements for the Town to take over operation of the Cemetery. Mr. Potts was asked to provide a copy of the by-laws and other legal documents to the Clerk so that he could forward them to the Town Attorney for review.

The Mayor said that the Town appreciated the good work the Cemetery Company had done over the years, and hoped the Board would be able to do something to provide some relief.

2. Christy Kelly, Executive Director of the Highlands Chamber of Commerce, outlined for the Board a proposed Highlands Autumn Art Walk to be held from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 13. She said that the event was designed to get people out and celebrate the arts, and also provide an opportunity for businesses during a quiet part of the year. Artists would be located in participating businesses and galleries, and low-key acoustic music would also be provided on Town streets. A banner would be hung across Main Street advertising the Art Walk, and each participating business would be identified with a small banner on the day of the event.

Eddie Madden explained that an event of this nature would be permitted under the Zoning Ordinance provided the Board approved it; sound permits would be issued for the outdoor music.

MOVED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, SECONDED BY COMM. SANDERS, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE THE HIGHLANDS AUTUMN ART WALK.

3. As approved at the May 7 meeting, the Scholarship Committee had recommended awarding \$17,650 in scholarships to graduating seniors. The Clerk reported that the Committee had met on July 15 and recommended awarding an additional \$10,650 in scholarships to 19 students who were already attending college.

MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. MCCALL, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO AWARD THE SCHOLARSHIPS AS RECOMMENDED

4. Comm. James asked about the proposed signs for businesses located off Main Street, and those for non-profit organizations which were to have been erected at the Town Limits, which the Planning Board had recommended not approving. He noted that there were currently some non-profit/church signs at the Town limits, and was concerned that the proliferation of such signs could create an eyesore some day, but felt that it would be good at this point to wait and see if the problem worsened.

5. MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. CALLOWAY, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION TO DISCUSS APPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN THE TRIMMING CREW, PURSUANT TO G. S. § 143-318.11(a)(6)

A. Public Works Director Lamar Nix reported that Mildred Ramey had not yet responded to the offer of employment he had made pursuant to the Board's action at the previous meeting.

B. Mr. Nix discussed with the Board an application for employment he had received from Mitchell James

MOVED BY COMM. CALLOWAY, SECONDED BY COMM. SANDERS, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO GO INTO OPEN SESSION.

VI. MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. MCCALL, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADJOURN.

Meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Richard Betz, Town Clerk