

REGULAR BOARD MEETING of January 7, 2009, with Mayor Don Mullen and Comms. Amy Patterson, Hank Ross, Dennis DeWolf, and John Dotson present; Comm. Larry Rogers was not present.

Also present were Jim Fatland, Richard Betz, Joe Cooley, Bill Harrell, Selwyn Chalker, Kim & Jim Lewicki, Melody Spurney, Eric NeSmith, Linsey Wisdom, Bill Staley, and others.

I. Call to Order.

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

II. Approval of Agenda.

Copies of the agenda had been distributed by mail. Due to the inclement weather, the Mayor suggested that the agenda be shortened by eliminating most of the reports. In addition, it was noted that approval of the Highlands Fire & Rescue Department's Annual Report needed to be added under New Business. The agenda was approved by consensus.

III. Approval of Minutes.

Copies of the minutes of the December 3 Regular Board Meeting had been distributed by mail. Comm. Patterson noted a typographical error. The minutes were approved by consensus.

IV. Public Comment Period.

The Mayor asked for public comments as required by law; Bill Staley was present and was offered the opportunity to speak later in the meeting.

V. Reports.

1. The Mayor welcomed new Town Manager Jim Fatland.

He also reported that a Board Retreat had been scheduled for 8:00 a.m. on January 29 at the Mountain Retreat and Conference Center. He also reported that the Macon County Board of Commissioners had scheduled a Retreat for the following day, January 30, at the Mill Creek Country Club, and he asked all who could attend to be present.

2. Town Administrator Richard Betz said that the Board needed to appoint Jim Fatland to various offices in order for administrative functions to continue uninterrupted.

MOVED BY COMM. PATTERSON, SECONDED BY COMM. DEWOLF, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPOINT JIM FATLAND TOWN CLERK, TAX COLLECTOR, TREASURER, BUDGET DIRECTOR, FINANCE OFFICER, AND SECRETARY TO THE BOARD.

3. Written reports had also been included in the agenda package from the Town Engineer/Public Services Administrator, Police Chief, Recreation Director, Planning/Zoning Administrator, and Town Manager.

VI. Old Business.

1. At the previous meeting, the Town Administrator had reported that he and the Town Engineer had met with Joel Storrow and J. P. Johns of McGill & Associates concerning an upcoming February 1 deadline for a Clean Water Management Trust Fund grant for stormwater items identified in the Stormwater Master Plan, consisting of improved road crossings on Laurel and Fifth Streets; a proposal from McGill to prepare the grant application at a cost of \$7,000 had been distributed at that meeting. The new Town Manager said that he had spoken to principals in the firm earlier in the day and they had agreed to waive the \$7,000 fee. The Town Engineer had recommended Option 3 in the proposal, which consisted of culvert removal and upgrades with CON/SPAN structures designed for a 100-year storm. The cost was estimated at \$350,000, with \$291,00 being provided by the grant and \$59,000 in match.

MOVED BY COMM. PATTERSON, SECONDED BY COMM. ROSS, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE MOVING FORWARD WITH THE APPLICATION.

VII. New Business.

1. The Town Administrator reminded the Board that the FY 08-09 Budget had included a proposed amendment of the pole attachment fees, from \$10.00 to \$20.00 per pole, increasing annual revenues from \$40,000 to \$80,000; the revenues were intended to help fund pole replacements to correct clearance violations. Since fees were not billed until January, the matter has been deferred until now, and in the meantime a survey had been conducted of other municipalities; the average pole attachment fee was \$6.59 per pole according to the survey. A report from GIS Technician Matt Shuler indicated that an estimated 287 poles remained to be changed out. The Town Manager had prepared spreadsheets showing fund balance and cash-flow in the Electric fund over time for several options.

Bill Staley, Regional Manager with Northland Cable Television, was present and said that if the attachment fees were increased customers rates could increase as much as \$1.50 per month; in the current competitive market, customers could be lost and corresponding franchise fees from the Town reduced. He also pointed out that Northland customers, rather than all residents, were being singled out to correct pole clearance violations.

MOVED BY COMM. PATTERSON, SECONDED BY COMM. DOTSON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO LEAVE THE CURRENT POLE ATTACHMENT FEES OF \$10.00 PER POLE IN PLACE, AND TO FUND POLE CHANGE-OUTS FROM FUND BALANCE IN THE ELECTRIC FUND.

2. Each Board member received a copy of a Stormwater Utility Rate Analysis Report, prepared by McGill Associates, as discussed at previous meetings.

3. The Town Manager briefly reviewed the Treasurer's Report, which included a new two-page summary of funds and comparison with last year's year-to-date revenues and expenditures.

MOVED BY COMM. ROSS, SECONDED BY COMM. PATTERSON, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ACCEPT THE TREASURER'S REPORT.

4. Each Board member had received a copy of the Highlands Fire & Rescue Department's Annual Report.

MOVED BY COMM. ROSS, SECONDED BY COMM. DEWOLF, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPROVE THE REPORT.

VIII. MOVED BY COMM. PATTERSON, SECONDED BY COMM. ROSS, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ADJOURN.

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was declared by the Mayor to be adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Richard Betz, Town Clerk