

REGULAR BOARD MEETING of May 14, 1997, with Mayor John Cleaveland and Commissioners H. N. James, Zeke Sossomon, Ron Sanders, and Donnie Calloway present. Commissioner and Fire Chief Mike McCall was not present due to a serious brush fire.

Also present were Richard Betz, Brenda Pierson, Buck Trott, and Curtis Hayes.

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

II. The minutes of the May 7 Regular Board Meeting had been distributed by mail.

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

### III. Reports.

1. The Clerk distributed copies of a letter he had written to the Scholarship Committee, as requested by the Board at the previous meeting. He also informed the Board that he had applied for an Associate Membership in Electricities of North Carolina; joining the organization would have many benefits for the Town, including enabling employees to attend Tree Trimming schools, and annual dues were only \$500. He reported that he had invested \$100,000 from the Recreation Capital Reserve account in a 12-month Certificate of Deposit; interest and revenues from tennis fees would continue to accumulate in the account.

He reported that Lamar Nix had obtained an estimate of \$9180.60 for the project discussed at the previous meeting to improve water service in the Chalet Blue subdivision; the Board agreed by consensus to proceed with the improvements.

He reported that Mr. Nix had also obtained an estimate of \$31,665.48 for placement of a sidewalk at Highlands Plaza, as requested at the previous meeting. The estimate would be forwarded, together with a notice of violation, to Town Attorney Bill Coward as agreed last week.

He also reported that the swimming pool had received its permit for operation today.

### IV. Business.

1. The Clerk informed the Board that Kathy Chambers had informed him that she and Liz View understood that Jamie Keener wished to resign from the Advisory Committee for the Scholarship Endowment Fund, and that Melinda James was willing to fill his unexpired term.

MOVED BY COMM. CALLOWAY, SECONDED BY COMM. SANDERS, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ACCEPT JAMIE KEENER'S RESIGNATION, AND TO APPOINT MELINDA JAMES TO FILL HIS UNEXPIRED TERM. Her term will expire on June 1, 1998.

The Board again considered appointments to the Planning Board, as discussed at the previous meeting.

MOVED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, SECONDED BY COMM. CALLOWAY, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO APPOINT LINDA CLARK TO FILL FRIEDA BENNETT'S UNEXPIRED TERM ON THE PLANNING BOARD, TO EXPIRE JUNE 1998; AND TO RE-APPOINT RON WALLER, DAVE CLARY, AND ROGER TALLEY TO THREE-YEAR TERMS, TO EXPIRE JUNE 2000. The Clerk was asked to request that Mr. Talley attend Planning Board meetings more regularly in the future.

2. The Clerk reported that a proposal for auditing services dated May 12 had been received from Lucas and Wood, PC, for \$11,500. The Clerk recommended accepting the proposal.

MOVED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, SECONDED BY COMM. SANDERS, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED TO ACCEPT THE AUDIT PROPOSAL.

3. The Board agreed to hold a Special Meeting on May 28 to present the FY 97-98 Budget.

4. The Clerk reported that Bud Potts had asked about the Town assisting the Cemetery Company in the funding and operation of the Highlands Memorial Cemetery. The Board agreed to meet with Mr. Potts and discuss the matter in greater detail.

5. The Board again discussed a request for funding from Hudson Library. According to letters dated April 23 and May 6 from Randolph P. Shaffner, Chairman of the Hudson Library Committee, Macon County provided funds for salaries, utilities, supplies, etc., but purchase of books came from local funding. The Mayor felt that the library served a public purpose and deserved support from the Town.

MOVED BY COMM. SANDERS, SECONDED BY COMM. SOSSOMON, AND CARRIED TO MAKE A DONATION OF \$2500 TO THE HUDSON LIBRARY FOR THE PURCHASE OF BOOKS. Comms. Sanders and Sossomon voted "aye;" Comms. Calloway and James voted "nay;" the Mayor voted "aye."

Comm. Calloway said that he understood that the donation last year had been a one-time donation, and he pointed out that other organizations had been turned down. Comm. James agreed; he felt this was a pet project.

6. The Board again discussed a requested donation of \$5000 from Macon County Humane Society Inc. The Clerk reported that the normal donation to this organization was \$1000, but he understood that a new facility was being constructed. The Board asked him to find out what the organization was doing for Highlands, and how much Macon County and the Town of Franklin were contributing this year.

7. The Board again discussed a request for funding for an Environmental Education Position from the Little Tennessee River Basin NPS Team, represented by Buck Trott, as discussed at previous meetings. Mr. Trott reported that Macon County had agreed to donate \$3000 each year for three years, but he had not yet received information on participation from Swain County, Jackson County, or Franklin. Comm. Calloway said that, while he was not opposed to this particular program, he was opposed to the Board's method of picking and choosing programs to support. Comm. James agreed; he felt that the Literacy Council and the D.A.R.E. programs could make as good an argument for funding as any organization, but they had been told no. The Mayor suggested budgeting a maximum of \$10,000 each year for community charitable causes, then agreeing which organizations should receive awards out of that fixed amount. Comm. Calloway agreed with that approach. Comm. James was opposed to the idea; he felt a lot of organizations would make a lot of good arguments, and the Board could not fund them all. The Board deferred action on the request until Comm. McCall could be present.

8. In a wide-ranging discussion, the Clerk discussed with the Board some of the projected departmental expenses reviewed in the Finance Committee meeting of April 30, including the following: walkie-talkies (\$1800), computer and "Police Pak" software (\$8300), and 4 X 4 vehicle per the Capital Improvement Program (\$20,000) in the Police Department; tennis courts (\$17,000, plus P.A.R.T.F. matching grant), picnic shelter (\$20,000), and John Deere tractor w/mower and front blade (\$11,000) in the Recreation Department; automatic transfer switch for the Spring Street Lift Station (\$15,000) in the Sewer Department; line truck per the Capital Improvement Program (\$75,000) in the Electric Department; 4 X 4 backhoe per the Capital Improvement Program (\$60,000) in the Water Department; street sweeper (\$47,000) in the Street Department; and repeater and mobile radio units for all departments.

Also discussed at the Finance Committee meeting had been a new pumper for the Fire Department (\$103,000) and an expansion of the Fire

Department building, but Comm. McCall was not present to provide more detail on these Fire Department expenditures.

9. The Clerk reviewed the two major Capital Projects for FY 97-98 and FY 98-99, also discussed at the Finance Committee meeting of April 30. He reported that the minimum budget figure for the Main Street Utility Improvement Project was \$536,895, the amount used for the ARC grant application; related work, including street lighting, could increase the cost significantly. The project could not be scheduled earlier than the fall of 1998 (FY 98-99), and the ARC funds would not have to be used immediately. He also reported that Lamar Nix had obtained revised estimates on the Bowery Water System Improvements, as discussed by the Finance Committee, from W. K. Dickson, the Town's consulting engineers. Mr. Nix estimated that the cost of completing Sections "B" and "C," as indicated on the plan distributed at the April 9 Board meeting, would be \$99,710. The estimated cost of completing Sections "B," "C," and "D" would be \$182,260.

10. The Board then discussed in some detail with the Clerk amendments of garbage rates, commercial water rates, and electric rates. It was agreed that the Clerk would bring these proposed amendments, together with projected annual revenues, back for approval at the next meeting if possible.

11. Due to the late hour and the absence of Comm. McCall, the Board agreed to defer action on the Pay and Classification Study and individual employee salaries, adjourning the meeting until next week.

V. Meeting was adjourned by consensus at 9:00 p.m., to reconvene at 6:30 p.m. on May 21.

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Richard Betz, Town Clerk