

Regular Meeting – September 19, 2023

The Fairmont Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the Fairmont-South Robeson Heritage Center with Mayor Charles Kemp presiding. Commissioners present were J.J. McCree, Terry Evans, Heather Seibles (arrived at 6:30 p.m.), Melvin Ellison, and Jan Tedder-Rogers. Commissioner Clarence McNeill, Jr. was out of town and participated by telephone. Staff present included Town Manager Jerome Chestnut, Town Attorney Jessica Scott, Town Clerk Jenny Larson, Deputy Town Clerk Rodney Cain, Public Works Director Ronnie Seals, Fire Chief Brian Jacobs, and Police Chief Jon Edwards. Others in attendance included Rev. Ken Griswald, Timmy Bass, Pat Freeman, Reshelle Johnson, Abbey Gipe, Jean Crews-Klein, Mark Lacy, Bill Lester, Brandon Lovelace, and several citizens.

Call to Order and Invocation

Mayor Charles Kemp called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Reverend Ken Griswald, pastor of Bethesda Methodist Church, gave the invocation, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Presentation

Mayor Kemp presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Timmy Bass for setting up the flag display at the Border Belt Museum. Mayor Kemp also presented him a flag that flew over the U.S. Capitol courtesy of Representative David Rouzer.

Fire Chief Brian Jacobs recognized Pat Freeman and the Woodmen of the World for their \$7,500 donation to the Fairmont City Fire Department.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Ellison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Public Comment Period/Citizens Appearance

Dr. Robert Locklear, with myFutureNC, tracks the postsecondary attainment of North Carolinians ages 25-44, as well as performance from Pre-K to college and career. He stated that 22% of 16–24-year-olds in Robeson County are not working even though 2,500 jobs are available. Dr. Locklear said myFutureNC has a 2030 post-secondary (2-4 year) degree goal of 14,651. Some of the barriers to this goal are low math scores, high schoolers not taking advantage of dual enrollment at RCC and a chronic absenteeism rate of 42%.

Ms. Reshelle Johnson announced she is running for the Fairmont Town Council in November as a write in candidate.

Ms. Abbey Gipe asked where 911 calls placed in Fairmont are answered.

Consent Agenda

Upon motion by Commissioner Evans and seconded by Commissioner Ellison, it was unanimously voted to adopt the following consent agenda items:

- a. Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting, August 15, 2023
- b. Ordinance 23-244 – Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget Amendment #2 in the amount of \$32,752
- c. Resolution 23-06 – First Bank Check Signatures
- d. Resolution 23-07 – Truist Check Signatures

Signed copies of the minutes, resolutions, and budget ordinance are hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Old Business

There was no old business this month.

New Business

Resiliency Project Coordinator position.

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut announced that Nick DiColandrea, Climate Strategies Officer, Conservation Trust for NC was unable to attend tonight’s meeting. Commissioner Evans made a motion to table the Resiliency Project Coordinator position until the October board meeting. Commissioner Ellison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Resolution 23-08 – Accepting and Adopting the Results of the Water System Asset Management Plan.

Ms. Jean Crews-Klein, Funding Specialist with LKC Engineering, presented the Fairmont Water System Asset Management Plan. Highlights from the plan are:

- Drinking water comes from three groundwater wells – Marion Stage, Morro, and Gertrude. The wells were built in 1951 and 1962 and are in very poor condition. Repair and improvement costs are estimated at \$5,272,000.
- 27.7 miles of waterlines, some dating back to 1918. 53% of the lines are Asbestos Concrete. 64% of the water lines are in very poor condition, 13% are in poor condition and the remainder are in fair/adequate condition. There have been 111 water line leaks in the past two years. Estimated cost of Phase 1 water line replacements is \$7,137,500.
- Two elevated water storage tanks – Marion Stage (1978) and Franklin (2001). Both are in adequate condition.
- 310 waterline valves, which is an insufficient number for the system. Many are inoperable and 98% are in poor to very poor condition.
- 190 fire hydrants – 67% are in poor to very poor condition due to age.

- 1,115 individual water meters – majority are ¾ inch residential meters and meter replacements have been kept up to date. Meter reading is manual and time consuming. Recommend switching to radio read meters for accuracy and efficiency. The cost to replace all meters is estimated at \$1,070,500.
- Town producing twice as much water as selling with 51.190 million gallons lost in 2023 alone. Town ranks in the 90th percentile for all systems for water loss and leakage. Revenue loss in FY 2023 was \$22,514.
- Recommend raising rates by Consumer Price Index for inflation every year.
- The 20-year Capital Improvement Plan estimates a total cost of \$43,787,500 for needed repairs/replacement of the town's water system.

Commissioner Evans made a motion to adopt Resolution 23-08 – Accepting and Adopting the Results of the Water System Asset Management Plan. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. A signed copy of this resolution is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Application and Resolution 23-09 for drinking water improvements for the Town of Fairmont

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut presented a resolution in support of a Drinking Water Improvements Application through NCDEQ that will be submitted in the upcoming Fall 2023 funding cycle for the Town of Fairmont. Commissioner Evans made a motion to adopt Resolution 23-09 for drinking water improvements for the Town of Fairmont. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. A signed copy of this resolution is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Application and Resolution 23-10 for drinking water improvements for the Regional Wastewater Treatment System

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut presented a resolution in support of a Drinking Water Improvements Application through NCDEQ that will be submitted in the upcoming Fall 2023 funding cycle for the Town of Fairmont's Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant. Commissioner Evans made a motion to adopt Resolution 23-10 for drinking water improvements for the Regional Wastewater Treatment System. Commissioner Ellison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. A signed copy of this resolution is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Stormwater Grant – Resolution 23-11 and Offer & Acceptance.

Recently, the Town of Fairmont was awarded a \$350,000 Stormwater Grant through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The ARPA grant funding will cover one hundred percent (100%) of eligible, stormwater study, design, or plan costs from the North Carolina S.L. 2021-180 appropriation. Commissioner Ellison made a motion to adopt Resolution 23-11 Accepting \$350,000 Stormwater Grant. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. A signed copy of this resolution is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

Library Bid Contractor selection.

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut reported that bids for the Library Renovation Contract were received until 2:00 p.m. on September 6, 2023. The five bids for the contract were competitive and ranged from \$262,451 - \$412,055. The contractors were vetted by grant administrator, The Adams Company, and Driven Contractors of Maxton, NC came in with the lowest responsible bid at \$262,451. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the contract of Driven Contractors of Maxton, NC for the Library Renovation Contract with the lowest responsible bid of \$262,451. Commissioner Ellison seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approval of Comprehensive Plan.

The Lumber River Council of Governments has been working with the town staff, citizens, and planning board over the past year in creating a Comprehensive Plan. The planning board unanimously recommended adopting this living document which should be reviewed annually and amended and adopted as necessary. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the 2023 Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Tedder-Rogers seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approval of LKC Engineers as Grant Administrator for CDBG-I FY 17 funds.

The Town of Fairmont recently requested additional FY 17 CDBG-I funds for the completion of the previously funded FY20 CDBG-I Brown Street Project. Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Grant Administration of the additional \$500,000 in funds were sent out and two bids were received. One by LKC Engineers in the amount of \$17,000 and one by The Adams Company in the amount of \$50,000. After evaluation of the RFPs, LKC Engineers was chosen. Commissioner Ellison made a motion to award the grant administrative contract for the new FY17 CDBG grant to LKC Engineers in the amount of \$17,000, contingent upon receiving an executed Grant Contract from NCDEQ. Commissioner Evans seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approval of Contractor for CDBG-I 20-I-3608 Influent Pumping System Improvements to Frank Horne Construction, Inc. for \$1,862,754.

Bids were received for the Influent Pumping System Improvement project on Tuesday, May 16 at 2:00 p.m. A total of three bids were received with base bid amounts ranging from a high of \$2,836,951 to a low of \$1,862,754. Based on favorable experience with the low bidder, LKC Engineers recommends the Board of Commissioners approve Frank Horne Construction, Inc of Fair Bluff, NC, as the Contractor for the CDBG-I 20-I-3608 Influent Pumping System Improvements in the amount of \$1,862,754 contingent upon receiving an executed grant contract from NCDEQ. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the contract of Frank Horne Construction, Inc. for the CDBG-I 20-I-3608 Influent Pumping System Improvements in the amount of \$1,862,754, contingent upon receiving an executed Grant Contract from NCDEQ. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Commissioner Input

The commissioners thanked the citizens for coming to the meeting. They thanked LKC Engineers for their enlightening presentation on the status of the town’s drinking water system.

Mayor Input

Mayor Kemp reminded the board of the quarterly town employee appreciation luncheon to be held on Wednesday, September 27 at 12:30 p.m. in the Fire Hall.

Manager Input

Town Manager Jerome Chestnut emphasized the town’s drinking water is good despite the old system and the town employees care about the maintenance of it. He reminded the board Fairmont is not alone in dealing with outdated lines and equipment, adding that as the town grows it will help make the system better.

Announcements

Wednesday, September 27 – Town Employee Appreciation Lunch, Fire Hall, 12:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 7 – Senior Bingo and Cookout, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Luther Britt Park.

Saturday, October 14 – Fairmont Farmers Festival Pageant, E.R. Gause Auditorium at Rosenwald Elementary School, 2:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 21 – Fairmont Farmers Festival, Downtown, 10:00 a.m.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Commissioner Evans made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m. Commissioner Seibles seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Jennifer H. Larson
Town Clerk