

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING**  
**JORDAN ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**  
**MARCH 23, 2015 – 6:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Mayor James Taylor; Mayor Pro-Tem Joe Pata; Commissioners John Higdon; Chris Melton, Jeff Miller, Kress Query and John Ross; Town Manager Hazen Blodgett; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

**ALSO PRESENT:** Charlotte Water Deputy Director of Operations Barry Shearin; Public Works Director Ralph Messera; Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Director Corey King; Planning and Development Director Kathi Ingrish

The Board of Commissioners met with Charlotte Water Deputy Director Barry Shearin for a discussion on water tank placement. Mr. Shearin explained the need for a water tank to be placed in the east side pressure zone – the general Highway 51 area of Matthews - to ensure continued good service to that area of Mecklenburg County. The Highway 51 park site is a good location. He explained the need for high ground near major connection lines. There was some discussion of other possible sites and other tank and tower styles, along with buffer options and aesthetic concerns. The Board asked Mr. Shearin to look into possible sites other than on the park property. Mr. Shearin said the agency will explore other site options and come back to the Board in the future with more details on possible sites.

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**  
**HOOD ROOM, MATTHEWS TOWN HALL**  
**MARCH 23, 2015 - 7:00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Mayor James Taylor; Mayor Pro-Tem Joe Pata; Commissioners John Higdon; Chris Melton, Jeff Miller, Kress Query and John Ross; Town Attorney Craig Buie; Town Manager Hazen Blodgett; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

**ALSO PRESENT:** Assistant Town Manager Jamie Justice; Communications Director Jen Thompson; Finance Director Christopher Tucker; Planning Director Kathi Ingrish; Senior Planner Jay Camp

**REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**INVOCATION**

Mayor Taylor rendered an invocation.

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Scouts from Boy Scout Troop 140 led the audience in the pledge.

## **ITEMS TO BE ADDED TO THE AGENDA**

None

## **WELCOME TO KAYE MCHAN, NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MATTHEWS HELP CENTER**

Mayor Taylor welcomed Kaye McHan, the new Executive Director of the Matthews HELP Center. Ms. McHan described the activities of the HELP Center, which provides short-term crisis assistance to the local community and which is funded by the community.

The Board welcomed Ms. McHan and said they're very happy to have her on board. The center's staff is very excited and there's a great energy at the Help Center.

## **PRESENTATION – STATE OF THE UTILITY; CHARLOTTE WATER DEPUTY DIRECTOR BARRY SHEARIN**

Charlotte Water Deputy Director Barry Shearin discussed some changes to the organization formerly known as Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities and now known as Charlotte Water. He explained that the meter billing system has been reorganized and the timing of the water bills will change. The result will be a more efficient meter-reading system.

Mr. Shearin noted that a rate increase is likely this year. The agency needs to grow, reinforce and replace the existing aging water system. The operating budget has changed very little. The agency has a AAA bond rating, which results in better interest rates for revenue bonds. Charlotte Water serves all of Mecklenburg County and the citizens' water and sewer bill payments are what fund the water system. The rates are very competitive for the demographic.

## **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS**

### **REPORTS FROM PLANNING BOARD AND BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**

Planning Director Kathi Ingrish explained that the Planning Board met in special session last week and will meet again the next day. She submitted the Planning Board report for its March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting (Exhibit #1 hereby referenced and made a part of these minutes) and the Board of Adjustment report for its March 18<sup>th</sup> meeting (Exhibit #2 hereby referenced and made a part of these minutes).

### **ZONING APPLICATION 2014-623/MARA: MATTHEWS ATHLETIC AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION (MARA), 1200 BLOCK OF S TRADE STREET, FROM RU AND R-15 TO R/I(CD)**

Senior Planner Jay Camp noted certain notes were revised very recently, which will be added to the final plan if the application is approved:

- Under note #1, strike the date of October 1, 2014.

- What was formerly note #3 now pertains to parking barriers. The applicants had previously agreed to construct parking barriers on the spaces that abut the sidewalk on South Trade Street, so that note is now in the plan.
- Note #5 on variances under landscaping will now read, "A variance to allow existing and future sports fields and parking without the additional streetscape, plantings, interior landscaping and screening."
- Under parking on that note, add the section reference of 155.607.1.C.8.
- Under B - communication facility - the variance that was requested; that note now reads, "On December 4<sup>th</sup> a variance was granted to allow the extension in height of the existing communications facility , with the condition that the property be rezoned to R/I(CD) and the request for site plan amendment be approved by the Town Board.
- Under #8 – permitted uses – they've added park and playground operated on a noncommercial basis for public recreation.
- Under #9, the word "number" has been stricken from "access points" so the note now reads, "...the site access points, driveways, and connections to roads shown on the rezoning plan may be modified." This means that no additional drive access points can be added over what exists today.

Mayor Taylor asked if the applicant agreed to the changes and applicant representative Susan Irvin confirmed they were acceptable to the applicant.

Motion by Mr. Ross to approve the petition as presented with the stated changes as it is reasonable and consistent with the Land Use Plan and other town plans and policies. It is reasonable because it moves the lot into a conforming zone from its previous non-conformity. The motion was seconded by Mr. Query.

Mr. Higdon said he will support this but he does not think this is the best zoning designation for this property. He would have preferred to see a special sports field or park designation made. It is unfortunate that so much time and effort has been invested in this manner, but he will support it due to his love for MARA.

The motion to approve the application was unanimously approved.

Mayor Taylor commended MARA and staff for working toward a resolution. This was probably one of the most complicated rezoning the Board and staff have had to deal with. A lot of time and effort on both sides was invested in this.

### **SITE PLAN REVIEW FOR INCREASE IN STEALTH TOWER HEIGHT AT MARA; ARTHUR GOODMAN PARK, 1200 SOUTH TRADE STREET**

Mayor Taylor noted that the applicant verbally requested a deferral.

Motion by Mr. Query to defer to the second meeting in April. The motion was seconded by Mr. Melton and unanimously approved.

Applicant representative Susan Irvin explained that the deferral was requested so that information could be shared so that the Board could be completely comfortable in making the decision. Some information was provided at the last meeting but there is more that can be shown.

### **ZONING APPLICATION 2014-624/WOODIES AUTO SERVICE: SQUIRES REALTY/WOODIES, 9601 INDEPENDENCE POINTE PARKWAY, FROM B-1(CD) TO B-H(CD)**

Mayor Taylor asked if there were any different building sprinkler requirements since cars will be stored inside. The applicant explained that there is no building code requirement for sprinklers.

Mr. Pata asked about the outstanding issues from the public hearing. Mr. Camp referred to the staff memo dated March 19:

- The list of uses was revised to prohibit the following; Dormitories for senior high and post-secondary schools, armories, boat and watercraft sales, crematoriums, funeral homes, internet sweepstakes, manufactured home sales, outdoor equipment sales and repair, utility trailer sales and rental, gas pumps with and without convenience stores
- No overnight storage of parts or tires outside the building and dumpster enclosure
- Vehicles to be stored inside building overnight except for afterhours pick up and drop off

He also noted that the signs on the plan are illustrative only and that the monument sign belongs to the site, not the entire development.

Motion by Mr. Miller to approve Zoning Application 2014-624, including the details from Mr. Camp's memo dated March 19, 2015, as it is reasonable and consistent with the Land Use Plan and the use is a good one along the Independence Boulevard corridor. The motion was seconded by Mr. Pata and unanimously approved.

**ZONING APPLICATION 2015-625/CREWS BUSINESS PARK: LPA CREWS LLC, 855 SAM NEWELL RD, CHANGE OF I-1(CD) CONDITIONS TO ADD CHURCHES AS AN ALLOWED USE**

Motion by Mr. Miller to approve Zoning Application 2015-625 as it is reasonable and consistent with the Land Use Plan and that there will be no financial loss in taxation and the use of shared parking is a good idea. The motion was seconded by Mr. Higdon and unanimously approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Eran Weaver of Weaver, Bennett and Bland, PA, 196 South Trade Street, Matthews spoke representing the Matthews Chamber of Commerce. He explained the Business Expo is tomorrow from 4-7 pm at the Carmel Baptist Church, with 100 businesses and food vendors and the public. He invited the Board and staff to attend. The Chamber is also having a seminar series starting on the 31<sup>st</sup> at the Depot Building from 4-5:30. The subject is twelve legal things that all business owners should know.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- Approve Changes to Special Events Team Member Job Description**
- Approve Tax Refunds**
- Approve Abandonment of a Portion of Phillips Road**
- Approve Technology Reimbursement to Commissioner Pata in the Amount of \$834.94**
- Approve Disposal of Surplus Property**

Motion by Mr. Query to approve consent agenda item A through E. Seconded by Mr. Melton and unanimously approved.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**RECEIVE MONTHLY BUDGET REPORT**

Finance Director Christopher Tucker presented the report. Revenues collected through the end of February were 75% while expenditures were approximately 61% of budget. Sales tax distribution is trending 8% above budget.

The Town has received 100% of the Powell Bill funds. He noted that privilege licensing is slated to expire July 1, 2015 so this is the last year the Town will send out the bills.

Mayor Taylor asked for more information on property tax refunds going forward. Mr. Query asked about the issue of double refunds and Mr. Tucker explained that was a short-term problem which has already been worked out with the bank. The problem checks can't be double-cashed. Mayor Taylor asked for the net number when the all of the licensing decreases and increases are aggregated. He noted that Raleigh legislators have said that municipalities should see an uptick in franchise taxes, etc. so the removal of privilege licenses should keep municipalities somewhat revenue neutral. He would like to know if those statements are correct.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **APPROVE FINANCING FOR STREET SWEEPER**

Mr. Tucker explained the need for a new street sweeper at a cost of \$236,000. Staff suggests financing \$200,00. Bids were solicited and BB&T offered the most competitive proposal with a debt term of four years at 1.48% interest. Future budgets will require debt payment of appropriations of \$51,864. Staff recommends approval.

Mr. Ross questioned the benefit of financing this over four years and incurring about \$7,000 in interest debt rather than paying it off at once. Town Manager Hazen Blodgett noted the Board's efforts to get the fund balance back to 34%. The Town's debt service drops off a million dollars in three years. Things look good this fiscal year but that is often the case at this point in the fiscal year due to the property tax payments. There was extended discussion of possible budget issues and management philosophy.

Mayor Taylor noted that purchasing this without financing means the fund balance will be dipped into when the Board has been working to build it back up. He thinks it is probably more prudent to retain money in the fund balance. Mr. Query agreed, saying the Board doesn't know what major expenditures might come up. This is a very low interest rate. He said he is concerned about the issue of additional refunds due to the property revaluation.

Mr. Higdon noted the three bids for credit and asked if bids were received for the sweeper. Mr. Blodgett confirmed and said it was this low bid.

Mr. Pata said 1.48% interest was negligible and he agreed with previous comments that financing was a good idea. Mr. Ross said payments of \$51,000 per year for the next four years is a big hit, and noted that spending money on interest means there's less money in the fund balance. Mayor Taylor said he understood Mr. Ross' concerns but he was more concerned with the potential for a significant emergency issue which would require fund balance use.

Mayor Taylor explained to the audience that the fund balance is essentially the emergency fund for the town. The state requires 8% of the budget to be kept in the fund balance but Matthews strives to keep a fund balance of 34%. The Town has dipped below that self-imposed 34% to do certain things. In the last few years, the Town was able to absorb what would have been tax increases by using the fund balance instead. He noted the fund balance was currently at 30% and said the more secure and stable the fund balance is, the more the Town can do. There are two different philosophies on this but there is no wrong way to do things.

Mr. Melton asked if there was any prepayment penalty and Mr. Tucker explained there was a two year clause, although if the Town wished to prepay before the two years were up the penalty would be relatively small.

Motion by Mr. Melton to approve the financing resolution which authorizes the Finance Director to engage BB&T in closing the lease purchase financing agreement for the street sweeper. The motion was seconded by Mr. Pata and unanimously approved.

Mr. Ross asked what \$236,000 would be as a percentage of the fund balance and Mr. Blodgett said it would be about 1%. Mr. Ross explained that he believes that not financing things as often as had been done in the past is the correct philosophy, but he voted for this to honor a commitment already made to the Town when the budget was passed.

## **APPROVE DOWNTOWN STREETScape PROJECT WORK**

Mr. Camp explained that the Town received a grant from the CRTPO for fiscal year 2104-15. This is a \$20,000 reimbursable grant and requires a 50% match of \$10,000, which has already been accommodated in this year's Planning budget. The \$20,000 would be reimbursed in FY 15-16.

Four responses to the RFP for a downtown streetscape plan were received. Staff narrowed the list to two potential firms, both of which are excellent and both which would do a great job. Staff recommends McGill Associates out of Hickory, NC. McGill has done work in towns very similar to Matthews and puts a strong emphasis on realistic plans.

This plan would be the guidance for new construction. It would create a streetscape, determine parking layout, design materials and more. It would create the standard through incremental projects. The downtown area is about 340 acres with A+ streets like the 100 block of Trade Street and then small streets like Ames. There's not a very defined street grid, there is inconsistent lane striping, parking space width and other things of that nature, and there is currently no vision for what these areas should look like. This project would fix all that, and would offer input on the John Street widening project as well.

Mr. Miller said even if there was a plan the Town wouldn't have the money to follow through on it, and asked why the Town should pay \$30,000 for someone else to tell Matthews there should be stripes. He said Matthews has a beautiful downtown already and he doesn't see the need for this. Mr. Blodgett noted this is a long-term planning item and that downtown is comprised of more than just the historic core. Projections show a population of 45,000 in the next twenty years and the Town needs to plan for that future. This is part of creating a long-term vision for the community, and it would cost the Town only \$10,000 of its own money. Mayor Taylor said it is important around the entire region. The CRTPO is sponsoring the grant and realizes that these types of long-range vision documents are important to the viability of the community decades down the road.

Mr. Pata said he would feel a little more comfortable if the Board could set some objectives and see clearly what would be received for the \$10,000. He would also like to see a tie-in with the Sportsplex and Family Entertainment district (ENT) as well as public transportation into the ENT. Mr. Blodgett clarified that this would be a streetscape plan, not a transportation plan.

Mr. Melton asked when the Downtown Master Plan is up for renewal. Mr. Camp explained that it was just approved in January 2013 without a specified date range. The streetscape plan would dovetail in with the Downtown Master Plan and design guidelines. Among other things, this plan would offer that graphic element that is difficult to do in-house.

Mr. Ross asked how likely it would be to proceed with the plan and then disregard it, similar to the Highway 51 park plan. Mr. Camp said he doesn't believe that would if the Board approves the plan. The Board can manage the process and be very specific with the desires of elected officials and the public. The intent is to focus on something that is realistic.

Mr. Higdon said he is not in favor of pursuing this, since it is study that will cost \$10,000.

Motion by Mr. Query to approve. He said it is worth the \$10,000 investment on the part of the Town. The motion was seconded by Mayor Taylor, who said it is in the best interest in the long-term interest of this community. This town would not be what it is today if prior boards had not supported proper planning and studies.

M. Melton said he'd like to support this but not yet, and Mayor Taylor noted the Town would be at risk of losing the grant funding.

Discussion ensued about various planning and development issues.

Mr. Higdon said he feels like this is a waste of money and that the work should be able to be done in-house. Mr. Blodgett pointed out that the Town have 140 full time employees and runs a lean operation and in such situations in-house expertise is sacrificed. The options are to add people to the payroll or contract some kinds of work out. This is a document for tomorrow and will indicate the future vision on the community. Mr. Higdon said it should be the town's vision, not that of a third party.

Mr. Ross asked about the grant deadline and Mr. Camp said it expires on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Ingrish noted that the Board agreed to allow staff to submit for this grant. The plan was always intended to be a piece of the Downtown Master Plan documentation. What exists now is too generic.

Mr. Ross made a substitute motion to defer this decision until the April 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, and requested a special meeting so the Board can fully discuss details of any proposed plan with staff. The motion was seconded by Mr. Melton.

There was some discussion of the timing of the discussion and potential decision along with the grant deadline. Mr. Ross revised his substitute motion to defer this until the April 13<sup>th</sup> meeting and Mr. Melton seconded. The motion passed 6-1 with Mr. Higdon in opposition.

#### **APPROVE NC51 MOWING BIDS FOR 2015**

Motion by Mr. Query to approve the Brickman Group for mowing bids for 2015 since they did a good job in the past and they're almost the low bidder. The motion was seconded by Mr. Miller and unanimously approved.

#### **MAYOR'S REPORT**

Mayor Taylor noted that the Red Brick Partnership – the downtown Matthews group – is up and running. He reminded the audience of the Business Expo starting the next day at 4:00 pm and that the Sister City events will take place in early April. The French delegation will be in town for a few days and the reception and signing of documents will take place on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

#### **ATTORNEY'S REPORT**

None

#### **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Mr. Melton to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ross and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno  
Town Clerk