



MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING
REMOTE MEETING
MAY 11, 2020 – 5:30 PM

ALL PARTICIPANTS MET REMOTELY

PRESENT: Mayor John Higdon; Mayor Pro Tem Renee Garner; Commissioners Dave Bland, Ken McCool, Jeff Miller, John Urban and Larry Whitley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Manager Hazen Blodgett; Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Finance Director Beth Blair; Fire & EMS Chief Rob Kinniburgh; Human Resources Director Tonya McGovern; Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Director Corey King; Planning Director Jay Camp; Police Chief Clark Pennington; Public Works Director CJ O'Neill; Communications Coordinator Maureen Keith; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

The board met with staff to receive the Town Manager's proposed Fiscal Year 2021 budget. Town Manager Hazen Blodgett explained that this will be a general overview with another workshop on May 18 and the public hearing on May 26. The current budget year through June 30th includes a tax rate of 28 cents per hundred dollars of valuation. The fund balance exceeded 34% and there was no fund balance appropriated in this budget. Some of the highlights include four new positions in the Police Department and fully funding the 24-hour Fire & EMS staffing model.

For Fiscal Year 2020-21 (FY21), the proposed budget included no tax rate increase. It does include a one-time General Fund appropriation of \$236,000. We are currently in the middle of a pandemic that is impacting the forecast for vehicle and sales tax revenue, investment earnings and prepared food hotel/motel taxes. The Town absorbed the increased cost and revenue losses while continuing to supply a high level of service. Some of the set cost increases to be aware of is an increase of \$175,000 for state retirement contributions, \$71,000 for state health insurance, an estimated \$80,000 in workers comp and property/liability insurance, \$60,000 in solid waste fees, and \$380,000 to fully fund positions and increase base employee salaries. The proposed FY21 General Fund budget is proposed at \$24,827,883. 59% of revenues come from property taxes, which is very stable. 14% comes from sales tax, 9% from state shared revenues and 18% from other items such as Powell Bill funds and permits. This budget includes a proposed 3% merit pool wage increase for employees, a six-month funding of a position reclassification in the Police Department to support a stratified policing model, an advanced certification program for Fire & EMS employees, and an expanded Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for first responders. Other area organizations are paying more to firefighters and police officers and we don't want to lose employees to other organizations.

Mr. Blodgett reviewed departmental budgets. A proposed change to the Governing Body budget would drop the Technology Allowance and move those funds to the Commissioners' salary. This would be for Commissioners only, not the Mayor. Ms. Garner asked about the tax differences between the two options. Mayor Higdon said it's more favorable tax-wise to have a technology allowance rather than a salary increase. Mr. Blodgett continued, noting ongoing funding to livestream Board of Commissioner meetings, biannual citizen surveys and the monthly digital newsletter. Funding also includes items ranging from cybersecurity and malware training to road resurfacing. He noted the inclusion of the Police Department's stratified policing model, which is an accountability model that is driven by data and focuses on hot spots and seven new police vehicles with upgraded in-car video cameras. Items that were eliminated include a currently-vacant Telecommunicator position along with a Crime Scene Technician position. The Fire & EMS Department's budget includes funding to implement an advanced certification program to incentivize members to seek higher certification. He noted that for the last five years the

Town paid for about half of a fire truck at Idlewild Volunteer Fire Department. The truck was paid off this year but they asked for that \$40,000 to be rolled into their operating budget this year. It made sense to do that when the request was made, but now Mr. Blodgett believes that shouldn't be paid. Mr. Blodgett had also already cut Chief Kinniburgh's request for partial funding for a Deputy Chief position. Matthews uses volunteer firefighters who are paid \$100 per shift, when other organizations pay them \$12-14 per hour. This is an example of something we would like to increase if we could but just don't have the funds right now.

The Public Works Department's budget includes \$800,000 for road resurfacing, an increase of \$100,000 from previous years. This increase is good, but in order to keep maintain the quality the Town should be budgeting \$1.2 million each year. We will need to talk at some point about ways to put more funds into paving, including an increase of another \$5 to the tax fee. Mr. Blodgett noted that a third facilities maintenance position didn't make it into this budget but will come up again in the future. A new storm water vehicle – a 550 flatbed truck - is included in this budget. Solid waste fees are increasing by \$60,000. This is in the contract – it's tied to the consumer price index. The current contract runs through June 2023.

In the economic development budget, funds for façade grants were retained, but funding for the Economic Development Advisory Committee and Red Brick Partnership were cut. In the Park & Recreation budget, revenues and expenditures are based on the expectation of programming resuming by July 1, 2020. It includes funds for additional playground equipment at Rice Road Park. BeachFest will be held twice in the fiscal year – once in October 2020, postponed from May, and the usual event in May 2021. No new events are planned for FY21. Mr. Miller asked if a line item for public art and murals exists. Mr. Blodgett said no but one could be added. Those items are not very expensive and are funded by Tourism funds.

Normally the Levine Senior Center gets \$5,000 per year, but in FY21 he's proposing giving only \$1,500. The other \$3,500 was advanced when they moved forward on the LED lighting project. Tourism grant funding is proposed at \$77,000, down from last year's \$83,000, due to the reduction in hotel/motel tax which is used as a basis for the grant funding calculation. \$50,000 has been budgeted for facilities maintenance and repairs, \$60,000 for Matthews Alive, \$40,000 for the Matthews Historical Foundation, and \$15,000 for the tourism agreement with the Matthews Chamber. Mayor Higdon noted that Matthews Alive asked for more funding and Mr. Blodgett clarified that they'd asked for them to be responsible for a smaller amount of the Executive Director's salary. He is recommending it continue at 40%.

Mr. Blodgett reviewed the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan). Some of these items include \$106,000 for public safety enhancements for town facilities, \$112,000 for improvements to Ames Street, for which the Community Development Block Grant program will reimburse the Town \$100,000, \$80,000 for the downtown camera project, and \$330,000 for the Crestdale Road multiuse path, with \$250,000 coming from the state and \$80,000 coming from recreation fees in lieu. Tourism funds will be used for downtown street light replacement, paving of the Matthews Station Street area and the Matthews-Mint Hill Road segment of the Matthews Downtown Loop.

Mr. Miller asked about the status of the library cost sharing. Mr. Blodgett explained that he is working with a library system representative on these negotiations. He proposed a flat rate of \$3 per square foot as industry standard along with reimbursement for projects already completed. The Town calculated that the library system owes \$188,000 for improvements already made. The negotiations will continue.

Mr. Urban asked about the cost of the 3% merit pool cost and Mr. Blodgett explained it would be about \$381,000. 3% is on the low ended compared to the other Mecklenburg County towns, except for Davidson, which is considering a six-month delay. Mr. Urban said he doesn't have a problem relooking at it six months down the road, but that right now it's a foolish optic. He also disagreed with the plan for Commissioners to receive an increase. Mr. Blodgett discussed the other area organizations' plans and the issue of merit versus COLA (cost of living) raises. Mr. Whitley said 3% for employees is fair, and the Commissioners have been underpaid for a long time. \$1,800 is not a lot of money, and they all have been working a lot more than usual. He is in favor of the 3% employee raise and the increase for Commissioners as well. Mayor Higdon said he had concerns similar to Mr. Urban until he saw what other Mecklenburg County communities were suggesting, and then realized 3% is on the

low end. He understands the optics but doesn't want to fall below the surrounding towns and potentially lose employees. Mr. Miller requested a graph and data on funding for the Police and Fire/EMS Departments over the last six years.

Mr. Blodgett noted that this is not a good long term budget. Staff has reduced the amount of money coming from the general fund to the CIP to make this work. Next year he expects the economy to be in a better place. He noted again that a 28 cent tax rate for a full service community is artificially low - if it was ten cents more, there would be an additional \$3 million in the budget year in and year out. That would mean more paving, more police and fire fighters...it's something for the Board to think about for the future.

**MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
REMOTE MEETING
MAY 11, 2020 – 7:00 PM**

PRESENT: Mayor John Higdon; Mayor Pro Tem Renee Garner; Commissioners Dave Bland, Ken McCool, Jeff Miller, John Urban and Larry Whitley

ALSO PRESENT: Town Attorney Charles Buckley; Town Manager Hazen Blodgett; Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke; Fire & EMS Chief Rob Kinniburgh; Police Chief Clark Pennington; Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Director Corey King; Cultural Recreation Coordinator Melissa Johnson; Senior Planner Mary Jo Gollnitz; Communications Coordinator Maureen Keith; Town Clerk Lori Canapinno

REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Higdon called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and noted that the meeting is being held remotely due to the social distancing requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Mecklenburg County Stay at Home Order.

The Mayor and Board, Town Attorney, Town Manager, staff and zoning applicant representatives participated in the meeting using the Zoom remote meeting platform, which allows participants to connect via audio and video for live, simultaneous communication. The public can view the meeting live via an audio/video or audio-only Zoom connection or the simultaneous YouTube live stream. A recording will be available on the Town's website shortly after the meeting.

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

Ms. Garner reflected on the recent killing of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and noted local historian Tom Hanchette's statement that today's decisions, consciously or unconsciously, rest on the platform of the past.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Higdon led participants in the Pledge.

RECEIVE UPDATE ON COVID-19 – EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER COMMANDER ROB KINNIBURGH

Emergency Operations Center Commander/Fire & EMS Chief Rob Kinniburgh gave an update on the current conditions. As of 8:00 am the county had 2,129 cases and 63 deaths. Matthews had 25 residents in isolation in ten locations throughout the town. The Mecklenburg County Stay in Place order expired on Friday and the county is now following the Governor's order as the state moves through phase 1. This phase limits mass gatherings to 10 or fewer people, eliminates the sometimes difficult distinctions between essential and nonessential businesses, and allows some businesses to operate at 50% capacity with certain precautions. People can gather outdoors if they follow precautions, and child care has been opened up for children of essential workers. Masks are recommended, but not required. The county's call center closed on Friday and calls are being redirected to 211, and the county's Emergency Operations Center moved today to a virtual format. The state's goals are to improve COVID-19 surveillance and see decreases in lab-confirmed cases and hospitalizations. Matthews continues to be involved on a daily basis with police and fire representation in the Emergency Operations Center and communication with congregate care facilities. In addition, the Town Manager is a member of the County Manager's business round table group.

RECOGNIZE NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Police Chief Clark Pennington spoke about the history of Peace Officer Memorial Day and explained that 64 officers have been lost in the line of duty in the United States in 2020. Mayor Higdon read the proclamation into the record (Exhibit #1 hereby referenced and made a part of these minutes).

ITEMS TO BE ADDED TO THE AGENDA

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS

PLANNING AND ZONING RELATED ACTIONS:

CERTIFY REVISED APPRAISAL AND ASSOCIATED FEE-IN-LIEU CALCULATION FOR VILLAGES AT IDLEWILD SUBDIVISION

Senior Planner Mary Jo Gollnitz reviewed this item, noting that the Board heard a request from Todd Akers of KW Commercial Real Estate on March 9 regarding the development of the Villages at Idlewild for a reduction in the fee in lieu calculation. At that time, the estimated fee in lieu calculation of approximately \$328,000 was based on the current property assessment of \$1,690,890. Mr. Akers supplied an appraisal calculating the value at \$774,000, with an associated approximate fee in lieu calculation of \$150,000. The Board and Mr. Akers agreed to commission an independent appraisal for a final review. That appraisal values the property at \$1,161,000. That appraised value leads to an approximate fee in lieu amount of \$225,000.

Motion by Mr. Whitley to certify the appraisal and approve the associated fee in lieu for Villages at Idlewild as outlined in Matthews UDO section 155.706E. The motion was seconded by Mr. Miller and unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approve Minutes of the April 27, 2020 Board of Commissioners Meeting
- B. Accept Zoning Application 2020-713: Home Depot, 1837 Matthews Township Parkway; B-1SCD Change of Conditions; and Set Public Hearing for June 8, 2020
- C. Accept Motion 2020-01: Text Amendment to Revise Standards for Outdoor Illumination; and Set Public Hearing for June 8, 2020
- D. Call for Public Hearing on Fiscal Year 2020/2021 Budget on May 26, 2020

Motion by Mr. Miller to approve consent agenda items A through D. The motion was seconded by Mr. McCool and unanimously approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

MATTHEWS STATION STREET REPAVING PROJECT

- 1) **CONSIDER AWARDING FINANCING FOR \$650,000 FOR PAVING CONTRACT AND FULLWOOD THEATER SOUND SYSTEM**
- 2) **CONSIDER REIMBURSEMENT RESOLUTION**

Assistant Town Manager Becky Hawke reviewed this request for financing for the previously-approved paving contract. She explained that in order to make that financing process legal, state law requires the Town to have some sort of collateral on which to take out the loan. Because Tourism dollars will be used to pay for the project, staff has identified another Tourism-related item to serve as collateral – an improvement to the sound system in the Fullwood Theater. These two projects are being presented together with a not-to-exceed total of \$650,000. Truist Bank offered a 2.7% interest rate. This would equate to annual payments of \$138,138 over the next five years, with repayment coming from Tourism funds. One motion is needed to approve the Truist proposal and another to approve the associated reimbursement resolution.

Motion by Mr. Whitley to approve the attached Truist Bank proposal for financing up to \$650,000 for the paving contract and Fullwood Theater sound system over 59 months at a 2.07% interest rate. The motion was seconded by Mr. Miller and unanimously approved.

Motion by Mr. Whitley to approve the attached Reimbursement Resolution allowing the Town to reimburse the General Fund with the loan proceeds from Truist Bank. The motion was seconded by Ms. Garner and unanimously approved.

NEW BUSINESS

CONSIDER REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION FROM NCGS 143-64.31 FOR PURSER HULSEY DOG PARK DESIGN

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resource Director Corey King reviewed this request for exemption to a statute that requires designs services be procured only through a qualifications-based process, without consideration of cost. The Town plans to install a dog park in Purser-Hulsey Park, and the cost for design services for the dog park is estimated at \$11,000. The statute allows for an exemption from the qualifications-based process if the cost is less than \$50,000. If the Board approves that exemption, then costs for the design work for the dog park will be one of the criteria in choosing the firm to design the plan. Staff would be able to ask for costs up front and then move forward with an RFP (Request for Proposals) for the design work.

Motion by Ms. Garner to exempt the procurement of design services associated with the dog park project within Purser-Hulseby Park from GS 143-64.31, with the cost not to exceed \$50,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bland and unanimously approved.

CONSIDER PUBLIC ART INSTALLATION

Cultural Recreation Coordinator Melissa Johnson reviewed the proposed new public art – a mural with flowers and bold striping - to be installed on the road hump between the McDowell Arts Center and the Community Center. This area is heavily travelled in cars and on foot, especially during Matthews Alive. Last year the Town installed something temporary during Matthews Alive and it was pretty well received, so staff wanted to put something permanent down. Six artists responded to the open call to artists. One artist was chosen and option one, which includes dogwood flowers, was preferred by the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resource Advisory Committee. The Board is being asked to approve that option or provide feedback on alternatives.

Motion by Mr. Miller to approve option #1 for installation on the road hump on McDowell Street between the Matthews Community Center and McDowell Arts Center. The motion was seconded by Mr. McCool and unanimously approved.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Higdon spoke of the Governor's reopening of the economy and noted that it is a phased approach. People still need to be mindful of social distancing and masks. He urged people to be careful of themselves and others, and to look out for other folks who may need help. He expressed appreciation for everything everyone is doing in the community.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT

None

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Blodgett noted the American Legion's request to use Stumptown Park for Memorial Day events. Phase 2 of the Governor's order allows entertainment venues to be used in a reduced capacity, so if North Carolina moves into Phase 2 before Memorial Day, staff plans on allowing the ceremony to proceed, with proper distancing.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. McCool to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Miller and unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Canapinno
Town Clerk



*POLICE WEEK AND
PEACE OFFICERS MEMORIAL DAY*

WHEREAS, Congress and the President of the United States have designated May 15 as *Peace Officers Memorial Day*, and the week in which May 15 falls as *National Police Week*; and

WHEREAS, the members of the law enforcement agencies serving the Town of Matthews including the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department, Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office, Mecklenburg County Alcohol Beverage Control, North Carolina Alcohol Law Enforcement, North Carolina Highway Patrol and the Town of Matthews Police Department play an essential role in safeguarding the rights and freedoms of the Town of Matthews; and

WHEREAS, it is important that all citizens know and understand the duties, responsibilities, hazards, and sacrifices of their law enforcement agencies, and that members of our law enforcement agencies recognize their duty to serve the people by safeguarding life and property, by protecting them against violence and disorder, and by protecting the innocent against deception and the weak against oppression; and

WHEREAS, the men and women of the law enforcement agencies of Mecklenburg County unceasingly provide a vital public service; and

NOW, THEREFORE, therefore, the Matthews Board of Commissioners calls upon all citizens of the Town of Matthews and upon all patriotic, civic, and educational organizations to observe the week of May 10 - 16, 2020, as Police Week with appropriate ceremonies and observances in which all of our people may join in commemorating law enforcement officers, past and present, who, by their faithful and loyal devotion to their responsibilities, have rendered a dedicated service to their communities and, in so doing, have established for themselves an enviable and enduring reputation for preserving the rights and security of all citizens.

THEREFORE, we do hereby proclaim the week of May 10 – 16, 2020 as Police Week and call upon all citizens of Matthews to observe the 15th of May, 2020 as Peace Officers' Memorial Day in honor of those law enforcement officers who, through their courageous deeds, have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their community or have become disabled in the performance of duty, and let us recognize and pay respect to the survivors of our fallen heroes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the Town of Matthews to be affixed this 11th day of May 2020.

Mayor John F. Higdon