

**TOWN OF BURGAW BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**DATE:** February 27-28, 2020  
**TIME:** 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
**PLACE:** Burgaw Municipal Building  
**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Kenneth Cowan  
Mayor Pro-tem Wilfred Robbins  
Commissioners Jan Dawson, Bill George, Vernon Harrell, James Murphy  
**STAFF PRESENT:** James Gantt, Town Manager  
Kristin J. Wells, Town Clerk  
Zachary Rivenbark, Town Attorney  
Alan Moore, Public Works Director  
Jim Hock, Police Chief  
Jim Taylor, Fire Chief  
Wendy Pope, Finance Officer  
Tiffany Byrd, Deputy Finance Officer  
Cody Suggs, Parks & Recreation Director  
Andrea Correll, Planning Director

**DAY 1 – FEBRUARY 27, 2020**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Cowan at 9:00 AM. This meeting was considered to be the “Commissioners’ Strategic Thinking Retreat” to discuss the FY 2020-2021 budget.

The Town Manager and Department Heads presented power point presentations (attached) on budget requests, accomplishments and goals within their departments. Key comments or requests by the board are noted below under each department.

**Manager Comments & Recap of Previous Year – James Gantt, Town Manager**

Mr. Gantt presented the opening power point for the town as a whole, projects that were accomplished, goals, etc. Commissioner Dawson commented on the Christmas decorations towards NC Highway 53/US Highway 117. She wanted to be sure this was included in the upcoming budget. Mayor Cowan asked what guidelines do we follow when adding additional staff. Mr. Gantt advised it was based on several things. It was suggested for Mr. Hesse to get numbers on how many building permits were done in the past year. Ms. Pope will get the numbers of water meters compared to prior years.

**Finance Department – Wendy Pope, Finance Officer**

Ms. Pope presented the Finance Department power point. Commissioner Harrell asked why Bank of America was chosen for the new purchase card system. Ms. Pope advised it is the bank available through the state contract. Commissioner Harrell congratulated finance, along with other departments, on the new town website.

**Administration/Human Resources – Kimberly Rivenbark, Human Resources Technician/Deputy Town Clerk**

Ms. Rivenbark presented the Administration power point. Commissioner Harrell commented the weekly newsletter has been very well received. He also asked about using bank vaults to store town documents since we are out of storage in town facilities. Commissioner Harrell commented the shred event and electronics recycling would be a great idea for the town. He also mentioned town staff consult with local funeral directors regarding the organization of cemetery records.

**Fire Department – Jim Taylor, Fire Chief**

Chief Taylor presented the Fire Department power point. Mayor Cowan asked for clarification on the statement by Chief Taylor that most county services respond to first response EMS calls and Burgaw does not. Chief Taylor

advised that is correct, and for us to respond as first responders to EMS calls, we would have to have consistent staffing in the station to send two people out to the call right away.

**BREAK: 10:32 AM – 10:45 AM**

**Other comments from the Manager**

Mr. Gantt gave an update on the recent situation regarding the ABC Board withholding the municipal funding. He advised there was a meeting held with representatives from other municipalities, the county, and ABC Board. Mr. Gantt commented the ABC Board listened, but advised they were in the same problem as others, and needed to build a larger facility. The ABC Board's attorney advised for municipalities to budget \$1.00 and hope they get more. Mr. Gantt advised the board will continue disbursement of the funding for the current fiscal year. There was brief discussion on this matter.

**Inspections/Building Maintenance – Andrea Correll, Planning Director *(Mr. Hesse was not present due to illness)***

Ms. Correll presented Mr. Hesse's power point. There was brief discussion regarding Mr. Hesse retiring within the next 4-6 years. Commissioner Dawson commented we need to look at hiring someone to learn and take over when the time comes.

**Planning Department – Andrea Correll, Planning Director**

Ms. Correll presented the Planning Department power point. Commissioner Harrell commented on the fiber optic lines and underground lines. Mr. Gantt explained the differences and cost effectiveness. Commissioner Harrell also commented on the ability to retro into water and sewer lines.

**Parks & Recreation Department – Cody Suggs, Parks & Recreation Director**

Mr. Suggs presented his power point. Commissioner Harrell commented he has received positive feedback on the sustainable programs, and also commented he hopes the tennis program will continue. Commissioner Harrell suggested Mr. Suggs look into "Adopt a Park" program for our green space improvements. Mayor Cowan asked Mr. Suggs to expand on his plans for summer camp programming. Mr. Suggs advised there will be two weeks offered during the upcoming summer. Commissioner Robbins commented on a job well done by Mr. Suggs. He asked Mr. Suggs his thoughts on moving into the Old EMS Building once it is renovated and if it would be beneficial for him to move into that facility. Mr. Suggs commented it would be beneficial for overseeing the facility on day-to-day operations.

**Police Department – Jim Hock, Police Chief**

Chief Hock presented the Police Department power point. Commissioner Harrell asked how often do our officers respond to calls in the county. Chief Hock advised it depends and is based on whether the county is fully staffed, etc. He said Burgaw officers do not go very far out. Mayor Cowan asked what the pursuit policy is for the police department. Chief Hock explained. There was also discussion regarding the auto-downloads, servers, liability and protection for the IT side of the police department.

**Public Works Department – Alan Moore, Director**

Mr. Moore presented the Public Works Department power point. Commissioner Harrell asked how many people in the department are trained to operate the grapple truck. Mr. Moore advised there are six employees that can operate the equipment. Commissioner Harrell commented about the replacement of the water and sewer system and thinks this is something that we need to have listed as an on-going project. He believes this project should be coordinated with street paving. Commissioner Harrell asked about the landscape contractor and if the planters in the downtown area would be looked at. Mr. Moore advised he believes this is something we can look at doing since the contractor will be handling the maintenance of the holly trees.

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

Commissioner Robbins asked Attorney Rivenbark if he had any town issues or concerns. Attorney Rivenbark commented on a recent issue where a citizen fell on one of our sidewalks in town. He commented it appears to be an ADA issue and that we will be working towards fixing these types of issues in the upcoming ADA plans as presented by Ms. Rivenbark. Mr. Rivenbark also commented about the town recently being sued by the solar farm applicant and will discuss this matter in detail during a closed session at the March Board of Commissioners Meeting.

Commissioner Harrell commented about the drainage issues and wants to ensure the town is doing what we can to help with the issue towards Stag Park Road and the industrial plants. Mr. Gantt commented this project will have to be a joint effort between multiple jurisdictions and funding sources. Commissioner George commented this is his top concern for the town. Mr. Gantt advised he will be meeting with EDA representatives to discuss grant funding. He is also working with WK Dickson in reviewing the storm water master plan they did years ago. Commissioner Harrell commented on temporary impoundments of water. There was discussion regarding a possible retention pond on the old golf course property.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Dawson made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harrell and carried by unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:39 PM.

## **DAY 2 – FEBRUARY 28, 2020**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Cowan at 9:00 AM and the following staff was present along with all board members: James Gantt, Town Manager, Kristin Wells, Town Clerk, Wendy Pope, Finance Officer, and Zach Rivenbark, Attorney.

There was discussion regarding the upcoming census and growth in the area in result of the guest speaker at the Cape Fear Council of Governments' annual meeting the night before this meeting.

Mr. Gantt asked the board for discussion on the challenges and opportunities in Burgaw. Commissioner Robbins said he wants us to continue the same level of services. He commented we need to move forward with projects we have talked about that will prosper the town and take the next step that will enhance our town. Commissioner Harrell wants to see us take care of old infrastructure. We need a long term plan in place for our water and sewer system. Commissioner Dawson commented we have "growing pains" in general with each department.

In response to the inquiry the day before from Mayor Cowan, Ms. Pope advised there were 1,265 active water accounts in February 2019 and in February 2020, there are 1,439 active water accounts.

Commissioner Robbins commented on the future of the road maintenance in Creekside. Mayor Cowan commented they are supposed to bring the streets up to DOT specifications when they are completed. There was discussion regarding the HOA and the future of the streets. It was the consensus of the board to be proactive with the situation and approach the developer/HOA now so issues don't come once the subdivision is completed. Attorney Rivenbark will look into their covenants, etc. Mr. Gantt will look to see if a performance bond was done on the subdivision.

Commissioner Dawson commented on streets and sidewalks as a challenge. Commissioner Harrell commented storm drainage is one of his concerns.

There was discussion regarding revenues, etc.

Mr. Gantt gave the board members the priority list and asked them to rate the priorities and if it should be a short or long term goal. After the board members completed the lists, Mr. Gantt entered them into the computer to get a final priority score. The results are attached and the following discussion was made in response to the scoring.

There was discussion on employee education and training that is on-going. Attorney Rivenbark reminded the board the ADA plan and parts of the UDO re-write are required for us to do.

Mr. Gantt explained the process on improving the failing infrastructure. There was discussion about slip lining pipes and options on how the town would proceed with this type of project. It was suggested to have Tony Boahn come and explain the process to the board.

There was discussion about the dilapidated houses and Mr. Gantt briefly explained the process. Commissioner Harrell commented on the idea of an incentive as spoken about in prior board meetings. Mr. Gantt advised Ms. Correll has been working on this and has been in contact with the School of Government. He advised these types of programs are for distressed areas and not necessarily anywhere in town. Commissioner Robbins requested staff to research what the City of Detroit did in response of their dilapidated homes. There was much discussion on this topic.

Mayor Cowan commented on underground utilities. Mr. Gantt advised Mr. Hesse has been working on getting numbers for this project. He also commented Duke Energy will be looking at moving lines/poles in preparation of the DOT project that will eventually result in the installation of new stop lights at Walker and Wilmington Streets intersection and stop lights at the Wright and Wilmington Streets intersection.

There was discussion about changes to the town debris policy regarding the amount of debris that can be picked up. Commissioner Dawson commented she agrees there needs to be changes made. Commissioner Robbins asked Mr. Gantt to bring back proposed changes at the next regular board meeting.

Commissioner Robbins made comments about open burning issues in town. After brief discussion, Mr. Gantt will speak with Chief Taylor in regards to this matter.

Mr. Gantt listed the top three major projects for the upcoming budget year: renovation of the Old EMS Building, Courthouse Avenue project, and storm water mitigation. Mr. Gantt asked for the board's thoughts about other items on the priority list.

Commissioner Robbins asked how much the body cameras for the Police Department will cost. Mr. Gantt commented he doesn't know at this time. He said the department has cameras that they are aging out and need replacements. Mr. Gantt advised he plans to include the replacement cameras in the budget, if not all new ones at one time. Ms. Pope advised Chief Hock included \$25k on his CIP submittal. Commissioner Harrell commented the phase approach makes better sense so they won't all fail at one time. Commissioner Robbins and Commissioner George commented this is very important and if we need to buy them, then we need to do it. Mr. Gantt commented he and Chief Hock have discussed grant funding for a portion of the cameras. Commissioner Robbins said he is all in favor of saving dollars, but he's also all about keeping our town and officers safe. He said with the fund balance the town has, we can order them for \$25k. It was the consensus of the board to go ahead and order them, phase them in, or however Mr. Gantt and Chief Hock believe it needs to be done.

Commissioner Robbins asked about the extrication equipment for the Fire Department. There was discussion about additional training or any costs that may be associated with the purchase of the equipment. Mayor Cowan commented all the full time fire fighters should be able to operate it. Commissioner Robbins said he would like to see the board go ahead and purchase this equipment with half of the money from fund balance and budget for the rest. There was discussion about other departments with this type of equipment and how important it is for the town to have it. It was requested for Mr. Gantt to bring back information at the next regular board meeting.

Commissioner Robbins asked the status of the renovation at the Old EMS Building. Mr. Gantt advised the architect has done the floor plans that meet ADA compliance. He said the next stage they are working on is construction drawings. Mayor Cowan commented on the use of the building and believes the building should be renovated for the Police Department. He said this makes more sense than to take up the board room at Town Hall to provide needed space for the Fire Department. Commissioner Robbins said we had looked at making the building suited for the Police Department several years ago but were told it wouldn't work. He said he thought it was the initial intent of the board to make it an EOC during disasters, as well as a multi-purpose building. Mayor Cowan commented he believes the building could be used by the Police Department and also serve as a multi-purpose building.

Commissioner Harrell commented the building would not work as both because of the security issues with the Police Department. There were brief comments about the discussion a few years ago of moving the Police Department to the old Bank of America building. Mayor Cowan stated for the record that he did not like the idea of the renovation plans for the Old EMS Building and renovating the board room to accommodate the spacing needs.

Mr. Gantt advised we have been working on the Courthouse Avenue project and gave a brief update to the board, including the current status of waiting for the proposal from WithersRavenel on the design plan. Commissioner Robbins commented he would like to see this project expedited and move forward with a meeting with the board and the community. Mayor Cowan asked Mr. Gantt to see what the company would charge to do a master plan of the entire downtown area.

Mr. Gantt commented on storm water mitigation. He said we are taking a comprehensive approach to the situation. The board agreed this was a very important project.

Mr. Gantt asked the board if there were any other top priorities they wish to work on at this time. The following comments were made:

There was some discussion regarding the cemetery records. Mr. Gantt advised Ms. Wells and Ms. Rivenbark will be working on the organization of the records in the future, but there is also software that staff will look into to see if it would be cost effective to have an outside organization handle the task, as there are issues with locations of the deceased and accuracy of records.

Commissioner Robbins commented on the idea of a pocket park at the property of the torn down laundry mat. He would like to look at placing some trees, a couple of benches, and a fence along the ditch.

Commissioner Dawson commented on the Fire Department's request to increase the height of the bay door for the ladder truck. She and Commissioner George said if the removal of some bricks and the replacement of the door can be done fairly inexpensively, they would like to see this done. After brief discussion, Mr. Gantt advised he would have an engineer come in and see what can be done, along with a cost estimate.

Mayor Cowan commented on the liability of the town owning a lot of alley ways in town. Attorney Rivenbark commented he would assume all of the town alleys are used under the consent of our permission. He advised the town should make sure they are all safe.

Commissioner Robbins spoke about the possibility of narrowing Wilmington Street. He said this would help with the fast speeders. He commented on placing a walking designation on each side of the street to "narrow" the street, as like other towns have done. Commissioner George, Harrell and Robbins voiced they are in favor of this idea. Mr. Gantt advised this is a NC DOT owned street, but will look into making contact with them about the possibility of moving forward with this project.

Commissioner Robbins also commented on the many canopy trees that have been lost over the years. He suggested we look into purchasing 10-20 trees a year that would cost approximately \$100 each. He said a variety of oak trees would be the ideal type to plant around town. Mayor Cowan commented the holly trees in the downtown area need attention as well. There was discussion about revisiting this issue to see if there is a different type of tree to plant that would survive better.

There was discussion on underground utilities. Mr. Gantt advised Mr. Hesse has been working on getting cost estimates for this project along Wright Street.

There being no further discussion, Commissioner Harrell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner George and carried by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:13 AM.

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Kenneth T. Cowan, Mayor

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kristin J. Wells, Town Clerk