

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

DATE: October 15, 2020
TIME: 12:00 PM
PLACE: Historic Train Depot
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Kenneth Cowan
Mayor Pro-tem Wilfred Robbins
Commissioners Bill George, Vernon Harrell, James Murphy
BOARD MEMBER ABSENT: Commissioner Jan Dawson
STAFF PRESENT IN PERSON: James Gantt, Town Manager
Kristin J. Wells, Town Clerk
Zachary Rivenbark, Town Attorney
Kim Rivenbark, Deputy Town Clerk
Louis Hesse, Building Code Administrator
Cody Suggs, Parks & Recreation Director
Andrea Correll, Planning Director

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Cowan and Planning & Zoning Board Chairperson James Malloy at 5:30 PM. The purpose of this meeting was to hold a joint meeting along with the Town of Burgaw Planning & Zoning Board, per their request.

The invocation was led by Chairperson Malloy and the Planning & Zoning Board approved the meeting agenda for their regular meeting. Commissioner Robbins made a motion to approve the Board of Commissioners Special Meeting agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harrell and carried by unanimous vote.

JOINT DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO BOARDS

Dilapidated Houses: Since Mr. Hesse had to leave the meeting early, he presented first by giving an update on the dilapidated housing issues in town. He advised staff was making good progress with communication with property owners and two hearings have been scheduled. For difficult situations, the next step would be to consult with the Town Attorney. Planning & Zoning Board member Jennifer Hansen asked about the addresses and where these properties are located. Mr. Hesse said he would rather not point out specific addresses in an open meeting, but assured the members of both boards the properties received by complaint and those that are the worse are being taken care of first. Ms. Hansen asked what the process was for someone to file a complaint. Mr. Hesse said these types of situations are complaint driven and staff will act when an actual complaint has been submitted. There was brief discussion regarding contractors buying properties, etc.

Introduction: Mr. Gantt gave a brief overview on the roles and responsibilities of the two boards based on state and local statutes.

Completion of Westside Trail and Parks Plan: Ms. Correll said she was tasked to look into the Westside Trail and Parks Plan that started a few years ago. Based on her research, she advised the following items set out in the plan have not been completed: executive summary, plan and public engagement process, the phasing, and the maintenance, management and operations policy. Ms. Correll said there were over 500 invitations sent out in 2016 for the public meeting regarding the plan, but based on the data Ms. Correll found from the prior Planning Director, there were only about 24 responses. Most responses were something to the effect of “not in my backyard.” Ms. Correll said she really feels like there needs to be more public participation. She hopes more public engagement will occur when this plan begins moving forward again. Commissioner Harrell asked about having a survey sent out to the residents who currently live adjacent to the walking trail to get feedback on how the trail has affected their properties, etc. He believes it would be helpful to get feedback from the residents who already have a trail in their back yard. There was discussion on how the survey would have an impact on what type of plan would be implemented on the west side of town. Ms. Correll said when we move forward with this project again, there are other ways to reach out for feedback, etc. Mr. Suggs commented on the importance of the trail to residents and visitors. There were also comments about the walking trail and the rapid flashing beacons. Ms. Correll continued explaining her findings in the previous data for the plan and said there were several routes discussed. She said her

biggest issue with the routes is using state roads; they require professional engineering and storm water management. Professional engineering is not required for town streets. She asked the board to strongly consider not placing a trail on a state road, as it would take a really long time to be completed. Commissioner Harrell said just because Smith Street is not an easy street for a sidewalk to be installed, doesn't mean we shouldn't continue to try to put a sidewalk on Smith Street. He said he understands this would be a long term plan since it has to go through the state, just as the project currently in progress for placing a sidewalk along Wilmington Street. Commissioner Harrell commented we need to do all we can to budget for sidewalks on the west side of town, but also feels the town should seek state funding for the sidewalks to be installed on state streets. There was brief comments made on pedestrian traffic in marked crosswalks.

Courthouse Avenue Project: Mr. Gantt gave an update on the Courthouse Avenue project and said the town bid out for engineering services to design the improvements along Courthouse Avenue, including parking analysis around the downtown area. Mr. Gantt said the project is currently being reviewed by the engineering firm and they have worked with Ms. Correll to schedule a public meeting, which is planned for October 28, 2020. He advised this project is extremely important to allow for public input and workshops would be scheduled throughout the day. Mr. Gantt advised the town has received a state grant to pay the full amount for the plan, which is approximately \$50k.

Other items

Mayor Cowan asked Mr. Suggs to give an overview of the events happening on the upcoming Saturday. Mr. Suggs advised the Burgaw Tourism Development Authority will be hosting a yard sale at the depot, as well as the town will be hosting a drive-thru trunk-or-treat later in the day at Rotary Park.

Chairperson Malloy spoke about a desire for a basketball court and volleyball court to be placed on the town property located on Smith Street where the Lion's Club building is located. He commented there is nothing in town for the youth and would like this to be placed in the upcoming town budget.

Chairperson Malloy also made comments regarding the Public Works Department. He said he delivered treats to the crews to show his appreciation, but was concerned with the atmosphere of the break room at the garage when he was there. He said it was disturbing and needs to be addressed; the employees work hard and there needs to be a decent place to shower, etc. when necessary. Chairperson Malloy commented Public Works does not have enough people to take care of the facility and the employees are not getting paid enough. He voiced his concern about nothing happening on the west side of town, as well as the drainage problem not being taken care of. There were comments by the board and Mr. Gantt regarding the salary study done in the recent years. Commissioner Harrell said he had not thought about shower and food facilities before, but agrees this is something that should be looked at. Commissioner George said these types of facilities are a necessity during emergency situations.

Mr. Smith commented on the pay for the Planning & Zoning Board members. He said the members have a lot to do and does not think \$30 is sufficient. Mr. Smith said an increase was requested in the past and was told it would be considered at budget time, but was not included in the budget. Mr. Smith asked for this increase to be considered again. Mayor Cowan commented there will be a budget workshop and Mr. Smith is welcome to attend to voice his request.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Robbins made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Murphy and carried by unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 PM.

Attest: _____
Kristin J. Wells, Town Clerk

Kenneth T. Cowan, Mayor