

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

DATE: February 3, 2022
TIME: 8:30 AM
PLACE: Historic Train Depot, 115 S. Dickerson Street
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Olivia Dawson
Mayor Pro-tem Wilfred Robbins
Vernon Harrell, James Malloy, Jan Dawson
BOARD MEMBER ABSENT: Bill George
STAFF PRESENT: James Gantt, Town Manager
Kristin J. Wells, Town Clerk
Zachary Rivenbark, Town Attorney
Wendy Pope, Finance Officer
Tiffany Byrd, Deputy Finance Officer
Cody Suggs, Parks & Recreation Director
Jayna Augst, Recreation Coordinator
Andrea Correll, Planning Director
Matt Myslow, Assistant Public Works Director

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Dawson at 8:30 AM.

This special meeting was held in conjunction with the Tourism Development Authority.

Jennifer Hansen, Tourism Development Authority (TDA) Chairperson, said the TDA spoke about short term and long term projects and goals during their January meeting and wanted to discuss them with the town Board of Commissioners. The two boards had discussion on the following topics: sidewalk cleanup, tree removal/replacement, and landscaping.

Ms. Augst gave an overview of some concerns voiced in the past regarding the cluttering of the downtown sidewalks; possibly implementing an ordinance or something similar to limit the amount of items along the sidewalks in the downtown area. There was discussion regarding what types of items should be allowed, providing guidance to the downtown businesses, etc. Ms. Correll said the municipal code requires the matinee rope around outdoor dining furniture. Mr. Suggs said the issue appears to be more of a uniform look in the downtown area, with matching benches, trash receptacles, planters, etc.

Charles Rooks was present at the meeting and spoke about looking at the whole town and not just downtown. He complained on the cardboard boxes and carts outside of Dollar General at the intersection of US Highway 117 and East Wilmington Street. Ms. Correll advised she does code enforcement by complaint and advised she would take Mr. Rooks comments as a complaint and look into the matter.

Commissioner Harrell commented on the past maintenance of the downtown planters. If the town is going to maintain them, we need to make sure they are being maintained. Commissioner Harrell said we need to have a plan if we are going to have planters. He also said he does not have a problem with businesses having their own personality in front of their businesses.

There was discussion on how we move forward with handling these concerns. Mr. Suggs said new benches were voted on by the town board a few months ago. He said we can look at the ordinance as well to see what is and is not allowed on sidewalks in the downtown area.

John Westbrook was present and voiced his concern with the possibility of the board saying he would have to remove his rocking chair in front of his store. He said the town can not over regulate and does not want everything to look the same.

Everette Durham was also present and voiced his concerns. Before he commented on the sidewalks, he said he is hard of hearing and the way the room is set up for the meeting is almost impossible for him to hear everyone. Mr.

Durham said he understands the boards are looking at what businesses can and cannot put on the sidewalks. He said if it is a safety concern, he understands looking at the issue, but when it comes to what something looks like or what the businesses are doing and how they operate, the board better be really careful. If the town dictates Mr. Westbrook cannot have a rocking chair, then he wants to know if the board can dictate the coffee shop having a bowl for a dog to drink water from. He said he would like to know if the town is going to dictate his business having a flagpole in the front. Mr. Durham said the uniqueness of Burgaw is a group of people who love living here. He told the board to be careful with what they do to change it.

Ms. Hansen clarified the TDA's goal is to make the town look nice, with the same planters down the streets, etc. She said the TDA is not trying to tell people they can or cannot do anything. The TDA wants to improve the looks of the town so that when visitors come, they will want to come back.

John Johnson was present and asked for clarification on the scope and goal of this meeting. He said he believes the scope is simply improving the beautification of downtown Burgaw. Mr. Johnson said he does not believe it is the intent to remove the American flag or rocking chair. He suggested to consider guidelines and have a landscape architect do a design.

Ms. Hansen said the thoughts of the TDA is to remove the planters and replace them with something more aesthetically pleasing. She reiterated the goal of this was not to regulate anyone, but to improve the looks around town with fresh landscaping, etc. TDA member Emmaline Kozak commented on the beautification improvements the boards can do to attract people to Burgaw and make it feel welcoming.

Commissioner Malloy commented on change. He said we need to be willing to change some things and maintain the foundation of who we really are. He said downtown Burgaw needs some changes and he believes we can do it without hurting anyone. Commissioner Malloy said we need to come together and discuss what needs to be changed and create a plan.

TDA member Myra McDuffie commented on the banners that were recently hung up around town. She said the TDA wanted to bring a fresh look to town.

Commissioner Robbins said the holly trees are going to need to be addressed. He said the board needs to get serious about the trees in the area and decide whether we should remove them or cut them off and let them grow back. He also commented on the uniformity along the sidewalks with the planters, etc.

There was discussion regarding the trees and planters/hanging baskets on lamp posts. There were also comments regarding public works crews versus professional landscapers.

Mr. Westbrook voiced additional concerns and doesn't want to see the town "piecemeal" the downtown area. He said a plan needs to be in place. Ms. Kozak said the TDA is doing the best they can with what they have and said the point of the meeting is to get support from the town Board of Commissioners so they can move forward with projects. Ms. McDuffie also added the TDA does not have a lot of money for these types of projects.

Mr. Rooks said landscaping efforts were put into place years ago but the problem is not maintaining what we already have. He said he has a problem with spending a lot of money we don't have for projects and not having a plan to maintain the improvements.

There was much discussion on various topics and ideas for attracting visitors to Burgaw. There were also comments regarding the replacement of benches along the sidewalks downtown.

There was discussion on the replacement of benches, trash receptacles and planters. Mr. Suggs said around 10-12 benches would take care of the downtown area. Mr. Myslow will get a number of trash receptacles that we currently have.

Mr. Durham said a plan needs to be put in place for other things such as replacement of sewer lines instead of planters, etc. He asked for the town to involve people that owns property in town.

After some comments, Commissioner Robbins thanked the TDA from coming together with the town to discuss the items spoke about. He said if the TDA wants to buy planters for downtown in the short term, he would go along with it. He said he has no problem with that whatsoever. Commissioner Robbins said some short term things need to be done. The town can afford to buy new trash receptacles and planters.

Mr. Rooks requested the town get more information out to the public so everyone knows what is going on. He said we need more input from the citizens.

Before the meeting adjourned, there were final comments regarding the trash receptacles, planters and benches. Mr. Myslow commented on starting on Wright Street regarding the trees. Ms. Hansen commented on the possibility of alternating hanging baskets and trees down Wright Street and Fremont Street. Commissioner Robbins commented about talking to the county regarding trees on the courthouse square. Mr. Westbrook spoke about a tree plan he has come up with for the courthouse square.

Mr. Gantt talked about a Downtown Merchant Association. He said this association would be key in getting business and property owner support in the downtown area to make the improvements.

Ms. Hansen advised the goal of the TDA is to bring Burgaw together as a whole, not downtown versus Highway 53/Highway 117 area.

Adjournment

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 AM.

Attest: _____
Kristin J. Wells, Town Clerk

G. Olivia Dawson, Mayor