

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

DATE: June 26, 2024
TIME: 9:00 AM
PLACE: Burgaw Town Center
108 E Wilmington St
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Olivia Dawson
Commissioner Bill George
Commissioner William Rivenbark
Commissioner Michael Pearsall
Mayor Pro-tem James Malloy
Commissioner Jan Dawson

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Dawson at 9:02 AM.

2. Invocation

The invocation was led by Commissioner Malloy.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was said by all.

4. Street Closure Request - 4th of July Parade

Mayor Dawson stated that the Fourth of July Parade route has changed slightly this year. Mr. Gantt presented that the request is for the closure of Dickerson Street between Wilmington Street and Courthouse Avenue. The Police Department will also handle intermittent traffic control for the parade route. The parade route starts and ends at the Train Depot.

Commissioner George made a motion to approve the street closure as requested. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pearsall and carried by unanimous vote.

5. Public Hearing

- A. **Consideration of adoption of the FY 2024-2025 Budget**
Continued from the regular Board of Commissioners Meeting on June 18,

2024

James Gantt, Town Manager

Continuation of the June 18, 2024 meeting.

Mayor Dawson stated that Mr. Gantt was asked to review if there were ways to reduce expenses, Mr. Gantt stated that at the Board's direction, he went back and reviewed expenses and projected revenues. He further stated that the proposed budget does not have a lot of fluff in it. The best option in order to not have a 6 cents tax increase would be to reduce the position that was requested by the Building Inspections Office. Mr. Gantt stated that he has talked with Mr. Hesse regarding building inspections and he believes he can go another year without the addition of this position. The removal of this position and a 4 cents tax increase will allow for all other items in the budget as presented to be funded. Mr. Gantt further explained that while some capital items could be cut out of the budget this year, it will have a negative effect on next year's budget. The Consumer Price Index is up 3.4% in the southeast region. These are costs that have risen over the past year, such as cost of living, prices in the grocery store, fuel, and electricity prices, which also affect town purchases.

Commissioner Pearsall asked if the new Fire Chief, Chief Prevatte, had time to review the requests made by the previous Fire Chief and if he agreed with the requests. Chief Prevatte stated that he did have time to review the proposed budget requests and had the opportunity to provide input and agrees with this year's requests. Commissioner Pearsall stated that he fully supports PPE for both the Police Department and Fire Department.

Commissioner Malloy stated that the tax rate in 2012 was 57 cents and was only cut due to a high general fund balance. Decisions were made in the past to cut the fund balance instead of spending on Capital Projects and taxes were reduced from 57 cents to 44 cents.

Karen Harding, 318 S Walker Street, explained that taxes were decreased due to tax reevaluations.

Eugene Mulligan, 318 S Walker Street, stated that individuals who have recently purchased homes in Burgaw are paying more in taxes than those who have lived here for several years. He further stated that the Town has "needs" and "wants". The Town has been buying "wants" for the last six to seven years, such as the Burgaw Town Center and Christmas lights. Mr. Mulligan also stated that the Town has not had an accurate audit since 2021 and does not feel that the Town should have a Tourism Department to duplicate the efforts of Pender County Tourism.

Mayor Dawson asked about the status of the 2023 Audit. Ms. Pope stated that the 2023 Audit will be finalized and submitted by Friday, June 28, 2024. The Town website will be updated to reflect the audits.

Commissioner Rivenbark stated that the week of the Blueberry Festival, Burgaw was in the news regarding the audit, and he had received phone calls regarding the spending in Burgaw. He also mentioned the difficulties of inflation and rising insurance costs for those on a fixed income. He requested that the Town be frugal with the town's taxpayer money.

Eugene Mulligan, 318 S Walker Street, asked the Board to read the past audits to gather a better idea of the current situation.

Commissioner Malloy stated that he has been in the area since 1985 and the Town looks mostly the same; from the streets to Courthouse Avenue. Work was done on the east side of Town and not on the west side. The walking trail never crossed the railroad tracks and there is further work that needs to be done.

Mr. Gantt stated that there is not a statutory minimum for a Town's fund balance, but the LGC does provide a guideline of 8%. Below 8%, the LGC may look at a town and say they are not fiscally responsible. The Board's policy is 25%. In the fiscal year 2019-2020, the revenue neutral rate was 46 cents and the board voted to go below the revenue neutral rate, dropping taxes to 44 cents.

Mayor Dawson stated that the 2022-2023 Audit will be filed by Friday. Ms. Pope agreed and that the 2023-2024 Audit will need to be filed before December 2024.

Mayor Dawson stated for clarification, that the proposed budget is for no new employees and a 4 cents tax increase. The remainder of the proposed budget remains the same. Commissioner Dawson stated she is not in favor of a 4 cents increase, but would be okay with a 2 cents increase.

Following a short break, from 10:06AM to 10:12AM, the board continued the conversation about the tax increase. Mayor Dawson stated again for clarification that this proposal includes a 4 cents tax increase, no new employees, and a 2 % COLA for employees.

With no further discussion, Mayor Dawson requested a vote on the new proposal of 4 cents tax increase and no new employees.

The Public Hearing was closed at 10:30 AM.

Commissioner Pearsall made a motion to approve the proposed budget with a 4 cents tax increase and no new employees. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malloy and carried by unanimous vote.

I. Ordinance 2024-16 Adoption of the FY 2024-2025 Budget for the Town of Burgaw

Commissioner Malloy made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-16, Adoption of the FY 2024-2025 Budget for the Town of Burgaw. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pearsall and carried by unanimous vote.

6. Planning Session - Discussion

A. Developing Sewer Capacity Processes & Procedures

Mr. Meredith advised the board that with additional development within the Town's jurisdiction and along the Town owned forcemain, a policy needs to be developed in order to better account for the capacity and allocation of capacity. Mr. Meredith presented a Letter of Intent Application that is similar to what other utility companies would provide as a Flow Letter. This letter is not a promise of capacity, but is stating that at this time there is capacity but with the caveat that there may not be capacity at the time of development. There are no legal agreements attached to the form. Mr. Meredith further explained that later in the process, there would be a Capacity Reservation that would go hand in hand with a permit from the State and would allocate a certain "gallons per day" to the developer that the Town would track to make sure that capacity is monitored through out the system.

Mr. Gantt stated that this process will help protect the forcemain. Pender County has an allocation of 750,000 gallons in the forcemain. There is an approved subdivision to be located near the Pender County line that will use a portion of Pender County's allocation. Creating policies and procedures on how developers and the County utilize the forcemain will protect the Town's infrastructure. The Town has 1.25 million gallons and the County is allowed 750,000 gallons for a total of a 2 million gallon line.

B. Developing Standards for Street Acceptance by Town

Mr. Meredith presented the board with a draft application that would apply to the dedication and acceptance of streets, sidewalks, and storm drainage systems. Implementing this policy will help protect the town and residents, especially within subdivisions. This will be a checklist at TRC level so the developer will not have any surprises when it comes time to dedicate the infrastructure.

Mr. Gantt further explained that this is a checklist that is outside the ordinance to allow for further clarity and to help better protect the Town.

C. Discuss Facade Grant Boundary

Mr. Meredith stated that the Planning Department had an inquiry regarding the facade grant where the property owner was just outside the facade grant boundary by one parcel. The Planning Board made a motion asking the Board of Commissioners to address this situation. The current boundary is the Municipal Service District. Mr. Meredith recommends that the Facade Grant boundary follow the B-1 Zoning District.

Commissioner Malloy made a motion to allow the Facade Grant boundary to align with the B-1 zoning district. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rivenbark and carried by unanimous vote.

D. Table of Permitted Uses - Future Goals and Objectives

Mr. Meredith stated that he has had some discussions with residents and board members regarding limiting the uses in the Downtown Business District. He explained that in his research, he has found that most other municipalities do not limit uses outside of commercial, but do limit residential to be located on upper story and not on the ground floor level.

Mayor Dawson expressed that commercial uses like retail that generate foot traffic over office space that does not would be more desirable.

Mr. Gantt further stated that the Table of Permitted Uses that the Town uses is very use specific and is inconsistent with other municipalities. Discussions have been had on revamping the Table and to have further discussions with the Board regarding what uses they would like to see in the B-1 zoning district. There is an ability of an overlay district.

Mr. Meredith stated that with the development of a Comprehensive Plan, additional zoning districts may be something for the Board to consider.

Commissioner Dawson stated that in her conversations with area business owners, they are concerned with offices and would like to see the downtown area more of a destination with retail stores.

Mr. Gantt stated that there will be more conversations regarding this in future work sessions.

E. Other Items

Commissioner Dawson stated that she had been approached by a citizen who informed her that the American flags placed on light poles throughout town need to be located where a light can shine on them at night and requested that staff look into this. Mayor Dawson further requested that staff look into where flags are touching trees, and trim the trees if needed. She had noticed flags touching trees along Fremont Street.

Mr. Suggs advised the board that the new landscaper will start work next week. Commissioner Malloy asked Mr. Suggs to pass on to the contractor to not leave tire tracks on sidewalks when they mow. Mr. Suggs stated that the new contractor is very pro-active and is asking to know what issues the Town has had with the previous contractor so corrections can be made.

Mayor Dawson asked staff to address the weeds at Wilmington and Hwy 117 in median.

Mayor Dawson requested that the website stay up-to-date as much as possible, as well as post Town business on Facebook and not just post job openings and events. Commissioner Pearsall requested that the live broadcast of board meetings be posted to social media as well.

Commissioner Rivenbark requested that all complete the Pender County Transportation Survey.

7. Adjournment

Commissioner Dawson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:52 AM. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pearsall and carried by unanimous vote.