

**Town of Washington Park
Municipal Building
January 8, 2024
7:00 p.m.**

United Bank	General Fund	\$ 429,561.05
United Bank	Capital Reserve Fund/Truck Account	82,100.00
United Bank	Powell Bill Checking	48,141.96
United Bank	Powell Bill/Saving CD	66,852.10
United Bank	Capital Reserve CD	78,059.50
United Bank	American Rescue Plan Act Account	137,591.93
	Total	\$ 842,306.54

Present: Mayor Thomas Richter, Mayor pro tem Jeff Peacock, Commissioner Lee Bowen, Commissioner Belinda Cowell, and Commissioner Vail Rumley

Absent: Commissioner Wade Dale

Mayor Richter called the meeting to order. Commissioner Bowen made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Rumley. Passed by all.

Presentations

Bryant Buck, Executive Director of the Mid-East Commission (MEC):

Mr. Buck noted the MEC covers five (5) counties, including 40 municipalities. Some of the services provided include Planning and Zoning administrative services, ordinance development or rewrite, or assistance with zoning compliance. The level of services provided are up to the municipality. For example, the MEC is available as a turn-key provider to review current ordinances and recommend/assist with necessary amendments; or the MEC can provide a piecemeal review for a specific ordinance the municipality may be wanting to update. They could enter into a "not to exceed" contract, setting a cap dollar amount to spend, then bill hourly as work is completed. The MEC has three (3) professional planners on staff, and work is typically billed at the rate of \$75 - \$85 an hour. The mayor noted it might be a good time to look over the Town's current ordinances to see how the MEC may be able to assist with updates. Mayor Richter thanked Mr. Buck for his attendance and presentation.

David (DC) Linton, Beaufort County Emergency Manager Coordinator:

Mr. Linton stated Beaufort County Emergency Management intends to apply for a North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) Disaster Relief Mitigation Fund (DRMF) grant and they are asking for a letter of support from the Town of Washington Park; no monies are being requested. The first piece of equipment they hope to purchase with the grant is the Tapco High Water Warning System. This system detects rising water levels and activates warning alerts, providing approaching drivers with advance warning of road flooding and/or alternate routes. The plan is to purchase three (3) systems, one of which will be located on River Road in Washington Park. Additionally, Beaufort County Emergency Management hopes to purchase (2) high water rescue vehicles, assigning one to the Bunyan Fire District, which could help provide assistance to Washington Park. Commissioner Bowen made a motion to provide a letter of support to Beaufort County Emergency Management for the NCEM DRMF grant application. Seconded by Mayor pro tem Peacock. Passed by all.

Public Input

Frances Hogan spoke about the recent trees planted along Isabella Avenue. She provided a signed petition of several Isabella Avenue residents asking that the current trees be removed and replaced with appropriate plantings. Discussion occurred covering many facets: the current number of trees (65); if they are replaced, what should be planted and when; how many need to be planted; initially planted close to help deter driving thru the median; power line issues; iconic perception of Washington Park. Commissioner Cowell spoke with Macon Respass (City of Washington) who indicated anything that is planted under powerlines should have a height less than 15'. While the City of Washington is not able to assist financially, staff is willing to review any plans to ensure compliance with power line concerns. Mayor Richter asked Commissioner Cowell to conduct further research.

Neil and Joanne Kirven inquired about the status of road repairs. Commissioner Bowen noted quotes have been received on repairs, but the contractors took different approaches to the work to be performed, so we are not able to compare "apples to apples". He is working to re-write the request for quotes so they will provide specific, comparable work to be performed. Some areas will require cutting out current material, while other sections can be paved over. For the sections that will have to be cut-out, the question was asked about the impacts on any trees. Commissioner Bowen said most areas seem to be a good distance from trees, but he will coordinate with Commissioner Cowell and Stuart Dudley as needed. Then the Board was asked about any plans to re-do the markings throughout the park. Commissioner Bowen said he had not been asked about that, but he would anticipate re-doing it all at one time.

Neil Blanton then spoke about flooding problems near his home at 101 Edgewater Avenue, as well as speeding on River Road. He felt the flooding was solvable through engineering solutions and suggested consideration of federal grants. He mentioned consideration of a no-thru truck sign, to help improve the noise levels on River Road and to keep big trucks out. Additionally, he would like to see the speed limit on River Road lowered. Discussion followed regarding NCDOT's cooperation with municipalities and speed enforcement on River Road. The question was asked by another resident about sidewalks on River Road; the state did not acquire the property to install sidewalks. Commissioner Bowen indicated he would be willing to speak further with Mr. Blanton about flooding/street drainage. Commissioner Rumley noted she would speak with the BCSO regarding use of speed displays.

Minutes and Financial Report

The December 2, 2023, minutes and the financial report were approved upon motion by Commissioner Cowell. Seconded by Mayor pro tem Peacock. Passed by all.

Old Business

320 Isabella Avenue: Owner MacGregor Bell is making progress on the house. The Board has not received a copy of a current contract.

Drainage North side of Isabella Ave East end: No report.

Eastern Washington Park town limit: Commissioner Bowen reported that Sorrell Surveying completed the survey work and a copy of the survey has been sent to Town Attorney, Amanda Sasnett, for review. Next steps will be determined following her review.

Parking vehicles in the Town's rights-of-way: Commissioner Bowen reported more evaluation and discussion will be needed. He noted this may be one area to consider having the MEC review.

Tree cut on College Avenue: Clerk Alligood reported that Mr. Spain stopped by the office last month and indicated he has been trying to find the requested tree to plant but was having difficulty obtaining one. Mr. Dudley was contacted regarding the tree; he indicated he would purchase a 3" live oak and coordinate with Mr. Spain on planting the tree. Mr. Spain will pay Mr. Dudley for the purchase and planting of the tree.

Short-term rentals: The Board has previously noted this is not allowed. The Board indicated this item could be removed from the agenda.

Multi-family occupancies of residences: It was mentioned this is another area to consider having the MEC review. Commissioner Rumley asked why this bill may have stalled in the Senate; a definitive answer was not known.

Resilient Coastal Communities Program: Clerk Alligood reported the public open house was held at the Municipal Building on Thursday, December 14, 2023, from 4:00 pm until 6:30 pm. The on-line survey concluded on December 31, 2023. The next Community Action Team (CAT) meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 17, 2024, at 10:00 am at the Municipal Building.

ARPA fund: total interest earned to date in account is \$1,189.42

New Business

Budget Amendments:

Tennis Court. Mayor pro tem Peacock made a motion to approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$10,335 for the work on the tennis courts; seconded by Commissioner Bowen. Passed by all.

Travel/Training Clerk School. Mayor pro tem Peacock made a motion to approve the budget amendment in the amount of \$2,400 for the Clerk to attend Clerk school at the UNC School of Government; seconded by Commissioner Cowell. Passed by all.

Sanitation Truck - Repairs: Mayor pro tem Peacock said the truck is leaking fuel in the coolant system; we need to have someone diagnose the exact issue. Commissioner Bowen stated he thinks the issue is repairable. Options were discussed for alternate ways to collect trash until the truck is repaired. Clerk Alligood spoke with David's Trash service and they are agreeable to assist on a part-time basis; she will follow-up with them while the Board works to have someone look at the truck for repairs.

Contractor vs. Resident Debris Pick-up:

Mayor pro tem Peacock noted excessive debris is being piled up for the Town to haul away. The Town has been very accommodating but we need to look at our current ordinance to see if updates are needed. Discussion was held regarding recent calls received with questions about yard debris pick-up and confusion over who is responsible for its removal. It was noted this is another area that might be beneficial to have the MEC review. Mayor pro tem Peacock asked that everyone give it some thought and plan to discuss it next month.

Commissioners' Reports

Commissioner Dale – absent

Commissioner Rumley – stated she continues to work with the BCSO but has not made any forward movement in getting records. She met with the Beaufort County Emergency Management team where she obtained information on the NCEM DRMF grant, which led to Mr. DC Linton presenting at tonight's meeting. She also mentioned sharing information with the community about the potential dangers of charging golf carts in enclosed spaces and how it can cause fires.

Mayor pro tem Peacock – currently utilizing temporary help for Todd.

Commissioner Bowen – no additional report.

Commissioner Cowell – attended ECU's presentation for the waterfront tree evaluation project on December 12, 2023. They focused on erosion control more than beautification landscaping. She has a digital version of the presentation which she will share. She also spoke with Evie Whitaker regarding an oak tree that is a safety concern. An arborist and tree service have both looked at the tree and recommended it should come down. Commissioner Cowell will ask Stuart Dudley to look at it when he returns to town. She also spoke with a homeowner on Spruce Street regarding a dead dog wood tree; the homeowner will remove the tree. Additionally, she has not had any interest for the treescape committee.

Clerk's Report

Clerk Alligood reported: deposits received last month totaled \$82,401.47 (ad valorem \$63,032.30; local option sales tax \$13,895.13; NCVTS \$2,512.01; NC Utilities Tax \$2,962.03). Bills paid last month included Dudley Landscaping \$1,200 for Cherry trees and Wright National \$1,122 for flood insurance renewal on municipal building.

The Board asked that an item be added to next month's agenda regarding planting trees along Isabella Avenue. Commissioner Cowell will research the cost to remove, regrade, and replant trees.

Commissioner Bowen asked about the sales tax funds and how they were appropriated. Mayor pro tem Peacock said he thought it was a percentage based on town population.

Mayor Richter asked if a budget amendment needed to be considered with regard to repairs on the truck. Discussion was held to determine a spending limit now and prepare a budget amendment once the specific amount was known. Commissioner Bowen made a motion to authorize spending up to \$15,000 for any needed truck repairs. Mayor pro tem Peacock seconded the motion. Passed by all.

The next regular meeting will be Monday, February 5, 2024, at 7:00 pm at the Municipal Building. There being no further business, Mayor Richter adjourned the meeting.

April S. Alligood, Clerk
Town of Washington Park