

**Town Council Minutes  
Morehead City, North Carolina**

**Tuesday, March 9, 2021**

The Honorable Council of the Town of Morehead City held the Regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 9, 2021, in the Municipal Chambers located at 202 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Morehead City, North Carolina.

This meeting was partially conducted utilizing Zoom Video Communication Inc. software due to the COVID-19 crisis and Governor Cooper's Executive Order 141 imposing the requirement to maintain six-foot (6') distancing. Those in attendance were:

COUNCIL PRESENT: Mayor Gerald A. Jones, Jr.; Councilmembers George Ballou, David Horton, Keri V. McCann, William Taylor, and Diane C. Warrender.

STAFF PRESENT: City Attorneys Derek Taylor, City Manager Ryan Eggleston, Fire Chief Jamie Fulk, Finance Director Jewel Lasater, Police Chief Bernette Morris, Communications Director Alize Proisy, Parks and Recreation Director Jerry Riggs, Public Services Director Daniel Williams, and City Clerk Cathy Campbell.

OTHERS PRESENT: Elise Clouser of the Carteret News Times,

STAFF PARTICIPATING VIA ZOOM: City Attorney Mike Thomas, Human Resources Director Susan Nixon,

OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIA ZOOM Lee Hinson and Lisa Rueh of Downtown Morehead City Inc., Joseph Lewis, Dena Maginnes, Lewis, Molly Pendleton, and Tom Saunders

Mayor Jones called the regular meeting of the Morehead City Town Council to order at 5:31 p.m. with a quorum present. He began by giving instructions for how to participate electronically. Councilmember Ballou gave invocation and Mayor Jones led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

Mayor Jones asked if there were any questions concerning the Consent Agenda items. Hearing none, Councilmember McCann made a motion **to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.** Councilmember Warrender seconded and the motion carried unanimously. (5-0)

Included within the Consent Agenda were the following approvals:

- A. Approve the minutes of the February 2, 2021 Town Council Workshop meeting as presented.

- B. Approve the minutes of the February 9, 2021 Regular Town Council meeting as presented.
- C. Approve the minutes of the February 16, 2021 Town Council Budget Retreat meeting as presented.
- D. Accept the Finance Director and Tax Collector reports.
- E. Accept Notice of Ad Valorem Tax Overpayments in the amount of \$1,884.27 for February 2021.
- F. Approve the requests for Refunds of Overpayment of Ad Valorem Taxes in the amount of \$281.41 for February 2021.
- G. Accept the Contingency Emergency Report as presented.
- H. Adopt Budget Ordinance Amendments 2021-05, 2021-06, 2021-07 and 2021-08 as presented.
- I. Adopt Resolution 2021-R-10 endorsing the annual Reelin' for Research Inc. Fishing Tournament and authorizing action necessary for the event to be held April 30 – May 1, 2021 in downtown Morehead City.

*All above noted ordinances are filed in Ordinance Book #8. Resolutions are attached to and made a part of the minutes herein.*

### **NEW BUSINESS ITEMS**

#### **Consider Potential NC Coastal Federation Grant in Support of Sugarloaf Island Stabilization**

City Manager Ryan Eggleston appeared before the Town Council seeking direction regarding an application to the NC Coastal Federation for a \$5,000 grant to support the City's goal of stabilizing Sugarloaf Island. The grant would be utilized to construct a fifty-foot (50') long oyster reef sill at the east end of the island to catch and retain sand. This has been recommended as a quick method for mitigating erosion while a final solution is being decided upon. The cost to the city will be minimal, possibly \$1,200.

Councilmember Taylor made a motion **to approve application to the NC Coastal Federation for a \$5,000 grant in support of Sugarloaf Island stabilization.** Councilmember Horton seconded and the motion carried unanimously. (5-0)

#### **Consider Proposed Dog Park at Rotary Park**

Parks and Recreation Director Jerry Riggs appeared before the Town Council seeking Council's direction for establishing a dog park at Rotary Park. It is proposed that a hundred-foot by hundred-foot (100'x100') area, near the wetlands, be fenced off for this purpose. Separate spaces will be provided for large dogs and small dogs. Of the total area, a sixty-foot by fifty-foot (60'x50') section will be designated for small dogs.

Mr. Riggs stated that the total project is estimated to cost \$10,000. Of that amount, \$6,500 will cover the cost of fencing and \$3,500 will be used for amenities such as bags, trash disposals, benches, and a walkway to the park. Council was reminded that \$6,500 was received through grants to help fund the cost of the dog park. Some minor groundwork will be required to ensure safety.

Mr. Riggs proposed that a second phase of development would provide water lines to the park. Council was in favor of allocating up to an additional \$7,000 up front to cover the cost of laying water lines to the area.

Councilmember Taylor made a motion **to approve the establishment of a dog park at Rotary Park and funding to cover cost of water lines.**

Councilmember Horton recommended setting a dollar amount up to \$7,000.

Councilmember Taylor amended his motion **to approve the establishment of a dog park at Rotary Park and approve funding up to \$7,000, in addition to the grant funds, to cover the cost of water lines and concrete,** Councilmember McCann seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. (5-0)

### **Consider Approval of the City Manager Employment Agreement as Presented**

Mayor Jones shared that the Council met in closed session to discuss the terms and conditions of the manager's employment contract. The terms and conditions will remain the same including the salary and term. Councilmember Ballou made a motion **to approve the City Manager's employment agreement as presented for another 3-year term,** Councilmember Warrender seconded, and the motion carried unanimously. (5-0)

### **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

#### **Project Management List Report:**

City Manager Ryan Eggleston reported on the Project Management List saying that the Fire Apparatus and Staff study will be presented on March 18, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Staff plans to send copies of the study to Council by Friday, March 12, 2021 so that it can be reviewed prior to the meeting. The Stormwater Plan will be presented at a special meeting to be held in April and this study will be shared with Council in advance of the meeting as well. The paving plan and 202 S. 8<sup>th</sup> Street assessment will be presented at the April workshop meeting.

Mr. Eggleston advised that representatives of the Webb Foundation contacted him regarding the library and proposed meeting dates are forthcoming. It is expected that the appointed ad-hoc Committee consisting of Mayor Jones, Councilmember Warrender and Mr. Eggleston will attend the meeting. Council was further advised that there is a vacancy on the committee created by Councilmember Walker's term expiration.

Notification was received from the National Guard advising that the State has approved the deed transfer for the armory property. It is expected that it will be several months before the paperwork is finalized.

### **Update on Friendly Road Sidewalk Project:**

As a follow-up to earlier questions about the Friendly Road sidewalk project, Mr. Eggleston provided a packet of historical information on the project stating that it was initiated in 2011 as part of the overall Pedestrian Plan and was listed as a short-term project to complete within five (5) years. In 2015 and 2016 ordinances were adopted for *The Preserve* development which included a requirement for the developers to contribute \$20,000 towards the sidewalk project. Under the FY2019/2020 Budget, Council allocated \$35,000 towards sidewalks in addition to the developer's contribution. Then, an additional \$40,000 was allocated to overall sidewalk projects under the FY2020-2021 Budget for which this project was included. This provided a total of \$95,000 for sidewalk projects, and it is currently the only sidewalk project identified. Based on current project bids plus engineering and surveying costs of \$153,800, an additional \$69,000 was transferred to cover the cost.

Further questions were raised about the manager having the authority to transfer such large amounts without Council approval. Mr. Eggleston explained that such is permissible under North Carolina General Statutes and City Code of Ordinances. He provided copies of Ordinance 2019-35 Section X, which authorizes the Budget Officer (manager) or Deputy Budget Manager (finance director) to transfer project appropriations within a fund, without limitation to amounts and without report being made. However, Mr. Eggleston did inform Council of this transfer by disclosing it on the Multi-Year Budgeted Capital Project Funds report that was provided in February 2021.

Councilmember Horton asked why sidewalks are listed under Powell Bill in the financial reports. Mr. Eggleston explained that they are Powell Bill eligible projects and funds were identified in case Council should choose to use Powell Bill funds for such projects. To date, Powell Bill funds have not been utilized.

Councilmember Horton expressed concern that the project was not included on the Project Management List and although the project may have been specifically authorized by the Council, he said the amount was not. He asked for Council agreement that a policy be established whereby the Council must approve discretionary projects going forward.

Councilmember McCann pointed out that sidewalks fall under the paving budget, and since this project was originally approved by Council, it is not unreasonable that funds were

transferred to complete the project. Mr. Eggleston restated that it is the only planned sidewalk project for the year and staff desired to complete the long-standing project.

Councilmember Taylor recommended setting a policy whereby Council approval will be required if a project exceeds the estimate by 10% and there is more than a \$50,000 variance. A discussion followed about Council's role. It was stated that it is the manager's job to manage projects and the budget set forth by the Council and if he and the department heads are not supported in their jobs it could result in a morale problem. At this time, no policy was set.

#### **Update on City Hall Brick Pavers:**

Mr. Eggleston stated that the original City Hall plan called for using bricks from the Charles Wallace Building for the arched walkway in front of the building; however, these bricks were not designed as pavers and it was discovered that they would not hold up to the weather and walking traffic. Therefore, it was decided that they would be used around the property as retaining walls and landscaping features. A design rendering was presented to Council. Councilmember Ballou thanked Mr. Eggleston for the report and asked him to keep Council advised of such changes going forward so that they will be informed when citizens call with questions.

#### **Pelletier Creek Dredging Project:**

Following last year's dredging of Pelletier Creek, Moffitt & Nichols secured, from the North Carolina Core of Engineers, a permit to maintain the full length and width of the channel going forward. The original permit only allowed for the dredging of a nine hundred (900) foot by thirty (30) foot area. As the conduit for State funding, the City hired the engineering firm, Moffitt & Nichols, utilizing the grant funds. They, in turn, administered the contractor selection process and managed the project to ensure the work was completed correctly.

#### **CITIZEN REQUESTS/COMMENTS (2 Minute Time Limit)**

Instructions were given again on how to indicate a desire to speak for those participating by telephone or Zoom. No one indicated a desire to speak.

#### **COUNCIL REQUESTS/COMMENTS**

Councilmember Warrender spoke to correct the misconception that City funds were used to purchase the birthday sign placed in front of the Municipal Building. Mrs. Eggleston purchased the sign and had it placed on the lawn in recognition of Mr. Eggleston's birthday.

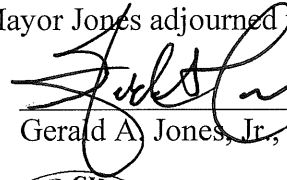
Councilmember Taylor shared that he received two expressions of thanks for the City purchasing the street sweeper, which is working very well, and he asked if staff would check to see if something could be done right at the entrance of the beach bridge to make it look better.


Councilmember McCann congratulated the manager on another three (3) years. She commended him and the staff on attaining such a long list of accomplishments during his tenure amid two (2) hurricanes and the COVID pandemic.

Mayor Jones thanked staff and citizens for all they do to benefit Morehead City.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no other business to discuss, Mayor Jones adjourned the meeting 6:59 p.m.

  
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Gerald A. Jones, Jr., Mayor

Attest:   
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Cathy Campbell, City Clerk

