Town Board Meeting
Atkinson, NC

October 1, 2020

Board Members Present: Mayor, Wendell Newkirk, Commissioners: Denise Lewis, Bryan Stewart
 Gary Alsup and Dee Turner, Robert Kenan, Town Attorney.

Meeting Called to Order by Mr. Newkirk

Prayer was led by Gary Alsup
Pledge of Allegiance led by Denise Lewis

Motion to Approve Minutes from September 3, 2020
Motion to Approve minutes as written was made by Dee Turner, Motion was seconded by Bryan Stewart
Motion carried.

Motion to Approve Minutes from September 3, 2020 Closed Session
Motion to Approve minutes as written was made by Dee Turner, Motion was seconded by Bryan Stewart
Motion carried

Motion to Approve Minutes from September 10, 2020 Special Called Meeting
Motion to Approve minutes as written was made by Dee Turner, Motion was seconded by Bryan Stewart Motion carried

Mr. Newkirk opened Public Comment stating that each person would be limited to 3 minutes each. He stated “we don’t need to have a circus tonight.”

Denise asked Chris Barnes if he wanted to speak since he had signed up for Public Comment prior to the meeting. He declined to speak at this time.

Elaine Stealer asked the reason why the clerk’s position has not been posted. She said she was told that it was not posted. Denise informed her that the position has been posted on the town’s website as well as social media outlets.

Chris stated “I will go ahead and speak”. He asked “where is the town with the internet (ATMC) being installed?” Denise informed him that the internet situation is now in the county’s hand. Gary mentioned that the grant has been approved for ATMC to install the internet. Chris then asked who ATMC would be working with for internet service. Dee stated that according to what she has been told ATMC will probably be working with Four County.
Chris then wanted to know if the town has had any contact with Woody Sullivan about bringing the internet to town. Mr. Newkirk stated that he had spoken with Mr. Sullivan and Four County.

Dee clarified that ATMC internet and the “black internet” that Mr. Sullivan is involved in is two entirely different internet services. “Black internet” will not serve residential customers.

Chris mentioned that Mr. Sullivan has plans to build an EMS in the town. Dee stated that EMS needs to present their plans, etc. to the town’s Planning & Zoning committee for approval to build. At this time approval has not been given by the town.

Mr. Kenan advised the board that ATMC and Four county “actors” need to be asked to attend the next town board meeting to present information to the board and town members regarding their services.

Denise stated that the cost of the “black internet” would cost the library approximately $300.00 per month. Dee stated that she has recently been told $350 per month.

Gary will contact Chris Ward (ATMC) and ask him to attend November’s meeting.
Dee will contact Doug Kornegay (Four county) and ask him to attend November’s meeting.

Dee stated that ATMC is for residential internet only. Small businesses will decide if they want to have the Four County “black internet”. According to the information given to Dee, the up-speed and the down-speed are about the same with “black internet”.

Chris stated “I think there is a problem with the town and Woody wanting to put an EMS building in town”.

Mr. Newkirk commented “Our fire department is doing great”.

Penny Stith questioned if the EMS would be equipped with/for fire trucks.

Chris stated once again that the AVFD promised him certification and it hasn’t happened yet.

Motion to Approve Agenda Dee made a motion to accept the agenda as written, Gary seconded the motion
Motion carried.

Penny asked to speak. “I want to reiterate what I said at the last meeting. There have been some horrible comments on the Fan of Atkinson FaceBook page. I think this is partly because folks are misinformed and don’t attend the town meetings. I think it would be a good idea for the town to put information on the town’s website. I think this needs to include the budget. And it would be a good thing if copies were offered to the public from the town hall.”

Chris asked “Where are the financial records now?”
Elaine commented “That’s a good question.”
Denise replied that the records are in the Town Hall.
Chris replied “Are you sure the records are over there?”
Denise replied “I can take you over there and show you the records we have.”

Mr. Kenan stated that the auditor’s report needs to be posted on the website once it is completed. Dee and Denise are in the process of getting the documents together for the audit later this month.

Penny questioned if the town was able to post that information on the website.
Denise replied that the auditor’s report could be posted on the website because it is public knowledge.

Dee asked Mr. Kenan what the procedure would be for someone to request a copy of the financial report from the town. Mr. Kenan replied that the individual and the town would need to coordinate a time for that information to be provided to the individual. He also stated that the report should be uploaded in PDF format and folks could easily access/print the information from the website.

Chris questioned if the board was sure that the records were in the Town Hall.
Denise replied, “I can tell you that the records that were left over there are still there.”

Jason explained that the application for Rate Reduction (5 mile fire district) is completed. It will take one year for the fire department to see the request filled. The fire department will go through a full blown inspection. Currently the fire department is at a score of 9. The fire department has no control over the 911 grades or the fire marshal grades. However, these scores will have an impact on our score. The city limits could potentially get a better grade because of having the water system.
A score < 5 will help commercial property only but a score less than what we have now will help residential property

Chris asked how much the fire department has paid so far to get ready for the inspection. Jason did not have a total amount at this time.

Chris stated “Don’t get me wrong. I know the fire department/town has older people and people that are working. I’m just stating my opinion.”

Denise asked Chris “Do you want to join the fire department?”
Chris “No I don’t want to join. Do you have any more questions for me?”
Denise “Not yet”

Chris suggested that the fire department sell its trucks and put that money into the town. He said “Let Woody put 2-3 trucks at his new building in town. That’s my point of view. I understand y’all’s point. I’m just stating my point.”

Penny Stith commented “I don’t want to see the fire department go away.”

Jason stated that the Atkinson fire district is the 2nd largest district in the county. We just have a lower tax rate. Currently Long Creek has a tax rate of 11 cents, Shiloh has a tax rate of 10 cents and Atkinson has a tax rate of 7 cents.

Jason asked for permission to submit a letter to the fire marshal in reference to the ISO Rate Reduction.

Motion was made by Dee for the fire department to submit such letter in reference to the ISO Rate Reduction. Gary seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Jason stated that at this time the fire department has 7 people on the payroll. There are 2 people at the station Monday-Friday from 8am to 5pm. Each shift is given a daily list of tasks that need to be completed. The water tower is being checked every morning by staff at the fire department.

It was mentioned that Leslie Murphy called requesting the abandoned house on Stringfield St stating that it is an eyesore.

Penny asked “How does the house get condemned?”
Dee replied “The building inspector has to condemn it.”

Jason informed the board members that Group AmeriCore did complete the work at the fire department on September 11, 2020.

Denise stated that the job description for the town clerk’s position needs to be reviewed.

Robert stated that the heading needs to be changed to read “Town Clerk/Finance Officer”.

Wendell asked “Did we just come up with this?”
Denise stated that she could not find one in the Town Hall so she put this one together.

Robert suggested that the last comment of the job description be removed stating “It is too vague”.
He also stated that the job description mainly deals with a finance officer. He doesn’t think that the 4th bullet needs to be in the description due to HR not being involved. According to Robert the job description needs to define the duties for a clerk and town CFO.

The question was asked “Wasn’t the town clerk doing a good job?”
Denise replied “There is no job description on file for the position.”

Margie (previous town clerk) stated that there is a book in the office with a job description as well as other information that she obtained when she went to a class.
Margie quoted a website where a job description can be found also.

Gary presented the Library report for September 2020. 2 cards were issued, 62 visitors and 22 books were checked out for the month. There has been 5-6 school aged children coming regularly on Tuesday morning since the hours have been changed.

Gary will ask Carolyn if she can switch another afternoon to morning to help accommodate more students since they are required to login into virtual studies during morning hours.

Elaine suggested that maybe Heather could volunteer with the library since she is only working 2 days in the Town Hall. Dee stated that was a good idea and something that could be looked at if needed.

Bryan presented the Maintenance report for September 2020. Mr. Cary provided Bryan with a list of duties that he had fulfilled during the month.

Elaine “The town looks good.”

The EnviroLink report was given by Bryan.
Bryan stated that the well pumps need to be approved for purchase. This will be discussed during New Business portion of the meeting.

The call box at the well house is not working. The box has never been hooked up.

Bryan checked the price for a new call box unit including labor and a one year covered cellular service was estimated at $6000.00. After the one year the cellular data would cost the town at least $35 per month.

The school system has call boxes at all the lift stations. These boxes do not have all of the bells and whistles but it will call in an emergency situation (which is what is needed). The estimated cost for this type of box is $327.00 and the cellular service is estimated at $15 per month. An electrician can hook up this type of box. Bryan will move forward with getting a more accurate estimate for a box like the school system has installed.

Wendell is still working on the street signs.

New Business:

Denise stated that Code Enforcement letters need to be sent out to people in town. Several residences/areas were listed while Dee and Denise were manually reading water meters.

According to Wendell GFI will bring a big truck and set it up in town for residents to discard of large items. Wendell wishes to schedule this so that the town can “have a clean up day”.

Per Robert these letters must include the ordinance that is not being complied with and complete addresses. He will need to review this information to determine if only a letter needs to be sent or if an inspection needs to be done by the county.

Michael suggested that the town inform residents who will be getting letters at least 2 weeks before the dumpster will be in town.

Robert stated that the town can get a court order to force clean up. It is costly. However, sometimes it is necessary to pay the cost in order to show people that the town is serious about violations.

Dee will call Vince about some of the residences that need to be inspected by the county.

Denise stated that the library bank account should have been closed as this was approved by the board months ago but action was never taken. The town is paying a $10 monthly service fee and there has been no activity with the account. No checks for the account have been found in the Town Hall. The money from this account will be allotted in the General Fund as Cultural/Recreation for the library.

Elaine stated that the commissioner of the library should report finances for the library.
Denise tried to explain again that there has not been any financial activity on the library account. All money spent was the library has been coming out of the General Fund.

Also according to Elaine, the check book for the library is in a cubby hole behind Margie’s (the previous clerk) desk in the town hall.

Bryan explained that each well house has 2 pumps to mix chemicals. Only one pump works at the time. The second pump is for a back-up in case the working pump goes out. If that happens a switch can be flipped to start the back-up pump. The pumps need to be purchased as quickly as possible. Issues being overlooked in the past with the pumps have now caused problems.

Prices for new pumps: WaterGuard $540 each x 4
 Delivery time – 2 weeks

 Grainger $300 (range) x 4
 Delivery time – 2 days

Motion to purchase well pumps from Grainger was made by Dee. Motion was seconded by Gary. Motion carried.

Motion to close the library banking account was made by Bryan. Gary seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Denise brought up the point that there needs to be a threshold for emergency purchases.

Denise informed everyone that the town is paying $5.00 each month for each account to receive bank statements in the mail. She said there is no reason to be paying this money when the statements can be viewed on the computer and printed as well.

Motion to go paperless on all bank accounts with this option was made by Bryan. Gary seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Dee stated that she has been to the bank to access town accounts (to see how many accounts the town has) and the bank needs an Existence Confirmation paper. Robert suggested that Dee contact the branch manager at the bank to find out exactly what is needed. Denise will call Austin (the auditor) to see if he can provide any information on what is needed for Dee and her to be able to get access to bank accounts.

Motion was made by Bryan that Dee and Denise be able to gain access to all town bank accounts as well as any information pertaining to these accounts. Gary seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Denise – the Christmas Jubilee account needs to be closed. It has Zero money in the account.

Motion was made by Bryan that the Christmas Jubilee account be closed. Denise seconded the motion. Motion carried.

There will be a Community Watch meeting with Deputy Lewis and Deputy Merritt from the PCSO on Friday, October 2, 2020 at 6pm in the gym.

Wendell informed everyone that the Health Department will be at the gym or library on Thursday, October 22, 2020 to give flu shots free of charge to anyone who is interested.

Dee stated that the town did not get the park grant that was applied for. She will get a masterplan ready for next year’s grant application.

Dee asked Robert when the town should receive the money from the ABC board. Robert said it should be any time now. Dee will call someone at the ABC board to see if the check has been issued yet.
Robert told her that she could call Charles or Susan at (910) 259-2672 and either of them can let her know when the last check was mailed. Robert also informed the board that by the 3rd quarter the amount issued to municipalities will decrease.

Denise questioned in interviews could be scheduled from the applications that have been received for the clerk’s position. Robert responded that there needs to be a set of questions that each candidate will have to answer. Denise will draft a set of questions and Robert will review/approve interview questions.

The town will host a Trunk or Treat on October 31, 2020 from 6pm – 8pm on the railroad bed.

Motion to Adjourn was made by Dee. Motion was seconded by Gary. Motion carried.