

## REGULAR MEETING

The Town Council of the Town of La Grange, North Carolina met in Regular Session at the Town Hall on March 3, 2008, at 7 p.m. with the following present:

Mayor Woodard H. Gurley; Mayor Pro Tem Bobby Wooten; Council Members Larry Gladney, Elliott Sutton, George Koonce, Gregory Rouse and Clifton Harrison; Town Manager John P. Craft; Town Attorney, George Jenkins, Jr.; Town Clerk Nelda H. Johnson, CMC.

Absent: None

Guest: 22

### ITEMS 1, 2, 3: CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, WELCOME

Mayor Gurley called the meeting to order and asked Council Member Sutton to give the invocation. Mayor Gurley gave a warm welcome to all Council Members and guest.

### ITEM 4: PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

### ITEM 5: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

### ITEM 6: AMENDMENT(S) TO AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Manager Craft requested that one item be added to the agenda: ITEM 8H: SECURITY PROVISIONS AT TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS IN THE FUTURE.

Motion was made by Council Member Gladney, seconded by Council Member Sutton to approve the original agenda with the addition of ITEM 8H as stated above. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

### ITEM 7: CONSENT AGENDA

- a. **Approval of Minutes**
  - i. February 4, 2008, Regular Session Minutes
- b. **Instruct Town Attorney to File Notice of Lien on:**
  - i. 217 East Washington Street; Parcel Number 356606276724; owned by Nan H. Dawson and Peggy Davis
- c. **Approval of Contract with Pittard Perry and Crone, Inc., to audit the Town for FY 2007-2008 and prepare the Town's Annual Financial Statements**

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Harrison to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

### ITEM 8: NEW BUSINESS

#### ITEM 8A: INFORMATIONAL ITEM – EASTER HOLIDAY WORK SCHEDULE

In accordance with the Town's Personnel Policy, the Town offices will be closed on March 21, 2008, in observance of the Easter Holiday (Good Friday).

#### ITEM 8B: CONSIDER ESTABLISHING BOY SCOUT EXPLORER POST

Manager Craft stated that he and Police Chief Sullivan have met with Ms. LaMarr Walker, a representative of the Boy Scouts of America and Ms. Walker has requested that the Town consider establishing an Explorer Post here in La Grange with the Police Department. Manager Craft stated that an Oversight Board would need to be established to manage the program.

The Boy Scouts Explorer Program would enable youths between the ages of 12 to 19 to come to the Police Department and would be able "to shadow" the police officers in a variety of fields approved by the Council. The Explorers would be allowed to meet on a regular basis at the Police Department for presentations related to the operation of the police department and specific job duties. Explorers in some areas are allowed to "ride along," but that determination would be made by the Council, should it be deemed appropriate. The Boy Scouts of America carries a \$1,000,000 insurance policy that would cover the participants in the Explorer Post while participating in the program and have agreed to name the Town of La Grange as an additionally insured if the program is approved.

Sgt. Kenneth Black, with our Police Department, participated in the Explorer Program several years ago as a youth and has volunteered his services to help with the program should it be approved.

Chief Sullivan stated that the Explorer was a great program to inspire young persons in law enforcement.

Manager Craft stated that Scotty Hill with the Kinston Police Department had planned to come and give insight as to the operations of the Explorer Post in Kinston but was not present at the meeting.

After discussion, motion was made by Council Member Gladney, seconded by Council Member Harrison to table this item until the local Scout Masters and Scotty Hill with the Kinston Police Department could be present to give further information. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

#### **ITEM 8C: APPROVAL OF CONVEYANCE OF LAND TO LENOIR COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Manager Craft stated that several months ago when the Council began the negotiations to purchase about 62 acres of land known at the Hunt Property located on NC 903 North, (which is divided by Charles Street) during the survey it was discovered that portions of E. B. Frink School's infrastructure, in the way of roads and utilities, had encroached upon the property the Town was wanting to purchase. In August 2007, in Closed Session, this was discussed and direction was received from the Council to open negotiations with the Lenoir County Board of Education for the sale or to convey the portions of property to the School Board for the sum of money equal to which the Town had expended to purchase the property.

Manager Craft stated that he did discuss this issue with the Lenoir County School Board's Superintendent, Finance Director, Facilities Director and Construction Coordinator. The School Board was advised of the situation and did in fact agree to purchase the segments of the property as proposed by the Town. The agreement was for the Town of convey 0.426 acres of land to the School Board at a cost of \$2,262.70 in addition to \$681.00 in estimated legal and recording fees, and surveying costs; for a total of \$2,943.70.

Manager Craft stated that the conveyance of property had to be approved in open session as required the the North Carolina General Statutes.

Motion was made by Council Member Gladney, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten to approve the conveyance of 0.426 acres of property to Lenoir County Public School as previously authorized by the Town Council and direct the Mayor and Town Clerk to execute the deed on behalf of the Town. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

**ITEM 8D: ESTABLISH DATE FOR THE ANNUAL JOINT MEETING WITH LENOIR COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Manager Craft stated that every March the Town Council and the Lenoir County Board of Commissioners have a joint meeting and the County Commissioners have requested that the meeting be scheduled for Wednesday, March 19, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. The Lenoir County Manager is requesting that the County host the meeting this year and at this time a location had not been set.

Motion was made by Council Member Harrison, seconded by Council Member Koonce that the joint meeting with the Town Council and the Lenoir County Board of Commissioners be set for Wednesday, March 19, 2008, at 6 p.m. Motion carried 5-1 in favor of motion. Mayor Pro Tem Wooten opposed.

**ITEM 8E: DISCUSSION RELATED TO THE READING OF UTILITY METERS**

Manager Craft stated that currently the Town has two handheld reading devices that are used monthly to read the electric and water meters. These devices are no longer going to be supported by the manufacturer Neptune. Manager Craft stated that as the FY 2008-2009 budget is being prepared the Council's thoughts are needed as provisions will need to be considered for future meter reading.

The two current handhelds devices are beginning to age and the meter readers are beginning to have some problems. One of the largest problems is the compatibility with the Town's software. Manager Craft stated that he had mentioned two options in detail in the agenda. The first option is that the Town would use these meter reading devices until they are no longer usable; the second option is to revert back to paper and pen which is not recommended due to extra staff time and the possibility of errors would double.

At the present time the Town utilizes seven staff personnel (nearly the entire Electric and Public Service Crews) to read approximately 2,900 utility meters utilizing two handheld devices and handwritten readings. It takes nearly two full days (112 man hours) to read all the meters on our system. The personnel cost is approximately \$21,600 per year for salary and no benefits. Every month there are about two days completely out of the Town's ability to perform work under our current method. Pen and paper is still used on about one-third of the meters.

Problems with the Town's current method now and in the near future will be that the two handheld devices currently in use will no longer be supported by the current provider. The cost to replace the two handheld devices will range between \$7,500 and \$10,500 for each unit depending on options such as future AMR capabilities. Additional problems are numerous re-reads are generally required and human error in entering readings.

Manager Craft stated that as we move forward there are three options for the Council to consider. If new handheld devices are purchased, three, rather than two, are needed and the cost would be approximately \$21,000. Another option is to implement AMR for electric meters only and read the electric meters every month and estimate the water meter readings every other month and the cost would be approximately \$90,000. The last option is the implementation of AMR for all meters at an approximately cost of \$300,000 and Manager Craft stated that this option was not financially feasible for the Town.

The cost for an AMR residential meter is approximately \$55 and the cost for commercial meters that have demand would be in excess of \$300. The approximate cost to purchase demand meters to the Town's commercial accounts would cost about \$50,000. Manager Craft stated that he did not recommend that the Town replace commercial demand meters because of the expense.

Manager Craft stated that he needed direction as to the Council's desire as it relates to the future method of meter reading. This information is necessary to ensure that the FY

2008-2009 includes funds to purchase equipment required to read meters if the decision is not made to revert to recording meter readings with paper and pen.

Discussion was held between Manager Craft and the Council concerning the meter reading method.

Council Member Gladney was concerned over a possible electric rate increase that may be passed on to the Town's customers if new AMR meters were purchased and Manager Craft stated that the Town did have sufficient funds to cover the cost.

Mayor Gurley asked about the total cost of a project to change out residential meters and Manager Craft stated about \$80,000 to \$90,000. Commercial customers are not included.

After continued discussion, motion was made by Council Member Gladney, seconded by Council Member Rouse to give Manager Craft direction to pursue the purchase of AMR residential meters. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

**ITEM 8F: MANAGER REQUESTS DIRECTION FROM THE TOWN COUNCIL RELATED TO PROJECTS REQUIRING EXPENDITURES DURING FY 2008-2009**

Manager Craft stated that as he was beginning to work on the FY 2008-2009 budget he would like direction from the Council as to any specific projects that they would like to see included. The specific area relates to expenditures that would include, at least in part, Powell Bill Funding.

After discussion it was the general consensus of the Council to continue to put the emphasis on storm drainage system improvements.

**ITEM 8G: UPDATE REGARDING RECENT MUNICIPAL BOND RATING UPDATE**

Manager Craft stated that he had recently requested that the North Carolina Municipal Council update the Town's Municipal Bond rating. Tony Blalock, President of the Municipal Bond Council, visited the Town, surveyed the Town and reviewed the Town's financial statements since its last rating in 2002.

In 2002 the Municipal Bond rating was 69 and has improved to a 72 in the last rating. Manager Craft reviewed this year's report as well as provided information since the Town's first rating in 1941.

Manager Craft stated that he was pleased that the Town's Bond Rating is higher than it has ever been since the rating of the Town of La Grange has been done by the Municipal Council. Copy of Bond Rating documents on file in the Clerk's office.

**ITEM 8H: UPDATE ON COUNCIL MEETING SECURITY PROVISIONS**

Manager Craft stated that due to the recent tragedy in Missouri he had talked with Police Chief Sullivan about security provisions at our Town Council meetings. Police presence will be increased during the meetings. Unless the Council has any other directions, Chief Sullivan will be in uniform as well as a second uniformed officer will be present and panic hardware will be installed on the two Council chamber doors. It was the general consensus of the Council not to have a metal detector at this time.

At this time Manager Craft introduced the Town's new employee, Gwendolyn W. Kornegay. Gwen was hired January 28, 2008, as billing clerk for utility accounts.

## **ITEM 9: OLD BUSINESS**

### **ITEM 9A: DISCUSSION RELATED TO THE TOWN'S MARKETING CAMPAIGN**

Manager Craft stated that several months ago the Town started with a Marketing Campaign, with assistance from ElectriCities and a company named Market Force, with a meeting at the La Grange-Frink Alumni Center to get input from citizens. It was suggested at this time that a tagline or slogan be developed for the Town. The next step is to make the selection of the future tagline or slogan for the Town of La Grange.

Market Force recommended 24 potential slogans to choose from or the Council can create one of its own. Manager Craft proposed to narrow the list down, include the list in a survey in the Town's utility bills and allow the public to have participation in the selection process for the slogan.

Mayor Gurley stated that since the early 1900's La Grange has been known as "The Garden Spot" and somewhere in our slogan we are going to have to use "The Garden Spot."

Manager Craft recommended that the Town Council reduce the list to not more than 5 choices and allow the public to vote through a survey to determine the final selection.

Several guests in the audience, Margaret Cunningham, Carrie Kornegay, Eugene Shaw and Carolyn Ellis spoke in favor of leaving "The Garden Spot" as part of the new slogan.

After continued discussion, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Sutton to recess the meeting for a brief time to allow the Council Members to review and write down their top three choices among the 24 recommended slogan selections. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Sutton to continue the meeting. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

Manager Craft announced that the top three choices by the Council were:

- (1) NO. 15 "Come Grow With Us in The Garden Spot"
- (2) NO. 16 "Come Grow In The Garden Spot"
- (3) NO. 17 "Grow With Us in The Garden Spot"

Discussion continued and the guest present was allowed to vote on three additional slogans to make a total of six, of which only two additional ones were added. The two following selections were made:

- (4) NO. 21 "Success Grows in The Garden Spot"
- (5) NO. 5 "The Garden Spot, Close to Everything, Close to Perfect"

The surveys would go out to the public at the end of this month in the utility bills and there would be only one vote per survey.

### **ITEM 9B: PRESENTATION RELATED TO THE CURRENT AND FUTURE MUNICIPAL WATER SUPPLY**

Manager Craft stated that with all the media coverage relative to the drought and water supply shortages, he felt that it was appropriate to update the Council on the status of the Town's water supply. Manager Craft discussed the Town's current water supply and future supplies based on the plans that are currently in existence and approved by the Town Council.

The municipal supply will be affected by the Central Coastal Plain Capacity Use Area (CCPUCA) requirements which may reduce the Town's groundwater withdrawal rights from the Black Creek aquifer by as much as 75% by August 2018. The CCPCUA rules stage in the reduction in water withdrawal rights in 25% increments beginning in August

of 2008, an additional 25% in August of 2013, and potentially a final 25% in August of 2018. According to the rules, the actual reduction will be determined by the water levels within the affected aquifer in the area of the affected water provider. The Town has entered into an agreement with the NC Division of Water Resources to allow for the installation of a monitoring station at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, which has been constructed and the State is now monitoring the aquifer in our area. This monitoring station is important to the Town by providing data relative to the actual condition of the aquifer in La Grange rather than basing the required reduction on data obtained from monitoring stations in other areas.

The Town's current groundwater withdrawal rights allow the Town to withdraw 141,355,000 gallons per year from the Black Creek aquifer. In August 2008 our permitted withdrawal is reduced to 106,016,250; in August 2013 it is further reduced to 70,677,500; and if the third and final 25% reduction is required would be reduced to 36,500,365. These reductions have forced the Town to seek alternate water sources to meet the Town's water supply needs.

The Council determined that it would first meet the water supply needs by purchasing water withdrawal right from the Town of Farmville which had entered into a water purchase agreement with Greenville Utilities Commission to purchase treated surface water from the Tar River, and could utilize surface water to meet their needs. Farmville having the ability to utilize the surface water enabled the Town of purchase withdrawal rights from Farmville. The agreement was negotiated and approved by the Town Council, the Farmville Board of Commissioners, the Board of Directors of Greenville Utilities Commission and the NC Division of Water Resources. This Water Rights Purchase Agreement would transfer 182,500,000 gallons per year (500,000 per day) from Farmville to La Grange for a ten year period allowing La Grange to "bank" sufficient water rights to meet La Grange's supply needs for at least 23 years beyond the initial reductions in 2008.

Manager Craft continued stating that after having received a \$350,000 grant from The Rural Center, the Council approved the installation of 2 additional wells that would draw water from an alternate aquifer (either the Pee Dee or the surficial aquifer). The actual yield of these wells cannot be determined until they are installed, but the engineer's estimate is that the wells will yield approximately 100 gallons per minute of 72,000 gallons per day (based on 12 hour yield). The two wells (assuming that they pump 100 gallons per minute) would provide 45% of the Town's need. The addition of one additional "shallow" well would likely meet the Town's needs for the foreseeable future. If the CCPCUA reductions reach the 75% level, a fourth shallow well would be required sometime within the next 75 years, but it would be advisable to install the fourth well as soon as practical to maintain the maximum amounts of banked water rights for future needs.

Manager Craft prepared the Town Council a chart and graphs and reviewed with them relative to the Town of La Grange's future water supplies and possible pumping rates for the Pee Dee Well installation; La Grange water supply (3 Shallow Wells); La Grange Water Supply (Total of 5 Shallow Wells); La Grange Water Supply (3 Shallow Wells with 50% CCPCUA Reduction); La Grange Water Supply (5 Shallow Wells with 50% CCPCUA Reduction). Copies hereto attached.

**ITEM 9C: CONSIDERATION RELATED TO THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS  
TO HIGHWAY 70 FOR PRESENTATION TO THE HIGHWAY 70  
CORRIDOR COMMISSION**

Manager Craft stated that in the beginning there were great concerns over the Little Baltimore intersection concerning the traffic light especially if the Highway 70 Corridor Commission eliminated the light and restricted access to Highway 70 from the Town of La Grange. Manager Craft stated that a compromise has been presented on the Highway 70 Corridor Commission's proposal for improvements to Highway 70 in the area of Wynn Odom Ford and Little Baltimore.

Manager Craft explained their proposal stating that East Washington Street would be rerouted to give ability for continued access from East Washington Street to Highway 70 via Willie Measley Road and Jim Sutton Road. The Highway Corridor Commission wants to install an overpass and to utilize a square loop orientation and this would give traffic the ability to go in either direction. This would ultimately eliminate the traffic light.

Manager Craft continued to discuss with the Council the intersection and the solution best suited for La Grange.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Harrison to formally endorse the Highway 70 Corridor Commission's proposal for improvements that would include the rerouting of East Washington Street and an overpass that would create the square loop.. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

#### **ITEM 9D: RECONSIDERATION OF DEMOLITION OF SUMMER HOUSE**

Manager Craft stated that at the last Council meeting he had been given clear direction to demolish the "Summer House" within the cemetery. Manager Craft stated that he had received numerous complaints relative to this decision and had been provided additional information that may affect the decision. There has been a great deal of interest from the public to save this structure.

Manager Craft and the Council discussed the "Summer House" and the cost of repairs. After continued discussion, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Sutton not to demolish the "Summer House" at the cemetery and to proceed with repairs at a reasonable cost and the funds be taken from cemetery reserve. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

#### **ITEM 10: CLOSED SESSION**

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Sutton to go into Closed Session pursuant to N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (4) (5) (6) (7) for discussions related to the approval of Closed Session Minutes, and for the discussions related to Economic Development, Contract Negotiations, and Personnel. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

#### **ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Gladney to adjourn. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

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Nelda H. Johnson, CMC, Town Clerk

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Woodard H. Gurley, Mayor