

REGULAR MEETING

The Town Council of the Town of La Grange, North Carolina met in Regular Session at the Town Hall on March 5, 2007, at 7:00 p.m. with the following present:

Mayor Woodard H. Gurley; Mayor Pro Tem Bobby R. Wooten; Council Members Larry Gladney, Walter Ellis, Jr., George Koonce, Elliott Sutton and Jeff Thomas; Town Manager, John P. Craft; Town Attorney, George Jenkins, Jr.; Town Clerk, Nelda H. Johnson, CMC.

Absent: None

Guest: 13

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

Mayor Gurley called the meeting to order and ask Mayor Pro Tem Wooten to offer a prayer. Mayor Gurley welcomed everyone present.

ITEM 4: PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

ITEM 5: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No one present requested to speak during the public comment period.

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

Manager requested that four items be added to the original agenda:

ITEM 8F: NCEMPA DEBT UPDATE
ITEM 8G: DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY – LAWN MOWER
ITEM 9D: 103 FLORIDA AVENUE PROPERTY
ITEM 9E: UPDATE ON MONROVIA REUSE GRANT PROJECT

Motion was made by Council Member Thomas, seconded by Council Member Ellis to amend the original agenda in reference to the four above listed items. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 7: CONSENT AGENDA

- a. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - i. FEBRUARY 5, 2007, REGULAR SESSION
 - ii. FEBRUARY 17, 2007, SPECIAL SESSION
- b. FORMAL APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING SUBMISSION OF SUBSTITUTE CLEAN WATER MANAGEMENT TRUST FUND GRANT
Copy of Resolution NO. 2007-03-186A hereto attached and filed in Resolution Book III.
- c. APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS REQUESTING THAT THE NC HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FUND A PORTION OF THE WASHINGTON STREET AND CASWELL STREET RESURFACING PROJECT AS REQUESTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER. Copy of Resolution No. 2007-03-187 and Resolution No. 2007-03-188 hereto attached and filed in Resolution Book III.

Motion was made by Council Member Sutton, seconded by Council Member Thomas to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 8: NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 8A: REQUEST TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL – LENOIR COUNTY COUNCIL ON AGING

Manager Craft reported that Mr. Oscar Herring, representing the Lenoir County Council on Aging, was not present at the meeting for the presentation of a resolution. Mr. Herring had presented “A RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION TO LA GRANGE TOWN COUNCIL” earlier in the week to the staff at Town Hall on behalf of the Lenoir County Council on Aging, Inc.

Manager Craft read the resolution on their behalf. Copy of the resolution hereto attached.

ITEM 8B: DISCUSSION PERTAINING TO THE PROPOSED ADDITION TO THE TOWN HALL OF A TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBER

Manager Craft stated that at the February 17, 2007, retreat he was directed to bring this matter back to the Council for formal consideration. Manager Craft again briefly reviewed the proposed addition at an estimated cost of \$124,408.90 utilizing the fixed seating obtained from the auditorium at La Grange Elementary School.

Mayor Gurley called for a motion to open this item for discussion. Motion was made by Council Member Gladney, seconded by Council Member Koonce. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

Council Member Sutton asked if the Town was going to have to borrow the money for the project.

Manager Craft informed the Council that it was up to their discretion, but the Town was probably going to utilize funds on hand, and borrow from itself from Cable Franchise Fees.

Council Member Thomas spoke in opposition of an addition for a Town Council chamber stating that the Town has some facilities that we already own that will allow the Council to do what needs to be done and the Town does not need to spend over \$124,000 when we have one already paid for.

Motion was made by Council Member Gladney, seconded by Council Member Ellis to allow Manager Craft to proceed with the addition to the Town Hall for a Town Council chamber. Motion carried 5-1 in favor of motion. Council Member Thomas opposed.

ITEM 8C: APPROVAL OF CREATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF A WALKING TRACK, COVERED SHELTER, AND BATHROOMS TO THE COMMUNITY PARK

Manager Craft reminded the Council that at the February 17, 2007, retreat the Council discussed future recreational enhancements for the citizens of the Town and he was directed to obtain cost estimates on the construction of a walking track, covered picnic shelter, and bathrooms that would be recreational activities that could be enjoyed by all.

Manager Craft stated that he, Public Services Superintendent Tyrone Morgan, and Electrical Superintendent Keith Thornton had evaluated the Community Park and found that we would have no difficulty in obtaining water and sewer services for bathrooms at the park. Also, it was determined it would take at least one more area light and possibly two area lights to make sure it was well lighted. It was further determined that the addition of 1,000 feet of concrete sidewalk would accommodate about a ¼ mile walking track. The construction cost of one covered picnic shelter would cost approximately \$2,500; about \$2,300 for bathroom facilities; and, an additional 1,000 feet of walking track would be about \$11,000.

After further discussion, motion was made by Council Member Gladney, seconded by Council Member Sutton to instruct Manager Craft to proceed with this project. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 8D: REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE – JOHN R. FIELDS, CHAIRMAN OF THE LA GRANGE ELEMENTARY PTA BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Manager Craft stated that a request for assistance is being made by John R. Fields, Chairman, on behalf of the La Grange Elementary School PTA Beautification Committee and Christie Brennan, Principal, of the school.

The Lenoir County Board of Education, through education bonds, will significantly improve La Grange Elementary School beginning this summer. The Beautification Committee will be removing the shrubs and trees from the grounds at the school before the construction project is underway. They plan to move them to a vacant lot off of Ellsworth Street where they will stay for approximately 2 years while the improvements to the school are being made.

The proposed location is currently used by Mr. Fields for a commercial business, Garden Spot Daylilies, has a well on site that is used for watering of his daylilies. The onsite well is not capable of providing an adequate amount of water to maintain the school's plants. The Committee is willing to pay for the water used, but is requesting the \$500 tap be provided by the Town at no cost.

Manager Craft told the Council that if they felt it was appropriate to "donate" the tap for use by the school, he felt that it would be appropriate to remove the tap once the school's plant are moved off the site unless the tap is actually purchased. Manager Craft further recommended that the tap cost, if purchased at a later date, be the tap price in effect at the time it is purchased.

Mr. Fields was present at the meeting and allowed to speak concerning his request. He stated that he agreed that a temporary service would be fine. He has the space that the school can utilize but he doesn't have the capabilities for watering large plants such as crepe myrtles and trees that will be bundled in burlap and sitting on top of the ground on landscaping fabric. He further stated that any help on this project would be very much appreciated. Mr. Fields also stated that he and the PTA they would be responsible for the water bill.

After discussion, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Thomas for the Town to install a temporary water tap on the property on Ellsworth Street for the purpose of use by the PTA Beautification Committee at La Grange Elementary School and removed upon landscaping being related to the school unless purchased at a later date at the current tap cost. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 8E: INFORMATIONAL ITEM – RIBBON CUTTING; LA GRANGE-FRINK ALUMNI & FRIENDS ASSOCIATION'S CULTURE CENTER

Manager Craft informed the Council that the ribbon cutting for La Grange-Frink Alumni and Friends Culture Center has been schedule for 10:00 am on Friday, March 9, 2007.

ITEM 8F: NCEMPA DEBT UPDATE

Manager Craft provided the Council a copy of a presentation from the NCEMPA Board of Commissioners on Debt Update compiled by Al Conyers. Manager Craft had attended an NCEMPA Board Meeting on February 28 and received this information.

Manager Craft briefly reviewed the information with the Council stating that the NCEMPA is in debt for bonds in the amount of \$2,666,315,000 for their part in the construction of the Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant and the Town's portion of that debt service is estimated to be about \$14,000,000. In the year 2026, the debt should be satisfied unless the Town opts to participate in any other purchases/upgrades.

Discussion was held and Manager Craft stated that he hoped to have some updated information concerning this debt available soon.

ITEM 8G: DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY

Manager Craft stated that he had met with the La Grange Recreation Association recently and they requested that the Town could assist them in a lawn mower to help maintain the ball fields. The Community Park is mowed on a weekly basis; however, the ball fields that the Recreation Association utilizes are owned by the Lenoir County Board of Education and they only mow those fields every two weeks. The mower that the Recreation Association purchased a couple of years ago is not useable.

The lawn mower that the Town had placed on the surplus list needs an estimated \$1,200 worth of repairs to put it back in operation. The Recreation Association would like to know if the Council would be receptive to providing them with that lawn mower.

After discussion, motion was made by Council Member Sutton, seconded by Council Member Thomas to give the lawn mower to the Recreation Association and they are responsible for the repairs. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 9: OLD BUSINESS

ITEM 9A: FRINK ALUMNI SEWER LINE EXTENSION PROJECT

Manager Craft informed the Council that the Frink Alumni sewer extension project was completed except for some very limited grading work in a few areas. He had met the contractor on the re-inspection and the sewer line that had to be reinstalled is now installed properly and meets State standards.

ITEM 9B: UPDATE ON NEW UTILITY BILL FORMAT

Manager Craft stated that the new billing format has allowed us to provide a more detailed description of the charges on the bill, combine bills of those who were receiving more than one bill for one service location because they had extra water taps or multiple electrical meters; and a return envelope for our customer's convenience.

The first bills went out on February 28 and we learned that the fuel adjustment charge and the demand charges were not on the bills that had electric services. This made all the calculations wrong on the bills. The computer billing is correct but the export file contained errors. This has caused confusion but staff is working with customers.

ITEM 9C: UPDATE REGARDING THE UPGRADE ON UTILITY BILLING AND CASH COLLECTIONS SOFTWARE

Manager Craft reported that, for the most part, the conversion update on the utility billing and cash collections software went smoothly. With the new software, there will also be a cemetery module which will enable us to computerize our cemetery inventory and eventually document who is buried in each plot. The new software will also include a privilege license module that will computerize the issuance of our privileged license.

Also, the new software has additional capabilities which include the ability to draft payments of utility bills (direct draft) and reoccurring credit card payments. The barcode scanner devices will help expedite payments and reduce errors.

ITEM 9D: FLORIDA AVENUE PROPERTY

Manager Craft stated that the Florida Avenue property that was formerly owned by Mr. Frank Dawson and foreclosed on by the Town due to a state of disrepair had been advertised. The Council had authorized the sale of the property by the upset bid process and the first bid opening was today, March 5, 2007 at 10:00 am. One bid was received in the amount of \$2,500 from Samuel Batts. This property will be advertised again and that bid received will lay open for 10 days. If no upset bids are received the matter will come back to the Council for consideration of approval for sale of the property to Mr. Batts.

ITEM 9E: UPDATE ON MONROVIA REUSE GRANT PROJECT

Manager Craft stated that he had been authorized earlier in the filing of a subsequent grant application to the Clean Water Management Trust Fund in the event that our original grant application is pulled that was submitted about two years ago in the amount of \$1,075,000 to run a reuse project that would pump our treated wastewater (reclaimed water) to Monrovia Grower to irrigate their some two million plants and shrubs. The Town has been in negotiations and discussion with Monrovia Growers to further that project to the point that the Town was going to fund the grant to provide the necessary infrastructure to provide the water and also give the water that they were going to need to use in order to offset our discharge in the tributary of Moseley Creek. Manager Craft stated that he felt that this was a win/win situation for all involved. For the Town, we could reuse that water and not redeposit the nitrogen into Moseley Creek. The Town is allocated an annual amount of nitrogen that we can discharge into the creek and by discharging it at Monrovia Growers we would have been able to reduce that amount. In the long run it would save the Town money, benefit the environment and it would save Monrovia from buying water and it would reduce their consumption from water out of the aquifer.

Monrovia Growers decided that they did not want to participate in that grant.

Manager Craft told the Council that he immediately submitted, on behalf of the Town, to Clean Water Management Trust Fund a modification of the request for that \$1,075,000. We proposed to the Trust Fund that we put some spray irrigation equipment on the Town's land that is adjacent to the Wastewater Treatment Plant and we would be able to spray about 100,000 to 120,000 gallons per day on our property to grow what ever we want. Also, there is some adjacent farm land that the Town may seek agreements with owners to utilize additional amounts of that water should the need arise to irrigate that property. The installation of pipe or an irrigation retention pond would not be necessary. We have proposed that we would install additional clarifiers at our Wastewater Treatment Plant which improves the body of water that is discharged. We would also be looking to make some modifications to our grit chamber and to our raw sewage pump at the plant.

Manager Craft stated that he hopes to hear from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund concerning the submitted modification grant request in the next couple of weeks. In the event that the modification grant is not approved, a second Clean Water Management Trust Fund Grant has been submitted with the help of The Wooten Company. The second grant is the exact same proposal under the modification but it is a new application form.

ITEM 10: CLOSED SESSION

Motion was made by Council Member Thomas, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten to go into closed session pursuant to N.C.G.S. §143-318.11(a)(4)(5)(6) to discuss matter(s) related to contract negotiations, personnel related issues and the approval of the Closed Session minutes from February 5, 2007, and February 17, 2007. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Thomas to return to regular session. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

Prior to adjournment, a thank you note was read by the Clerk from Council Member Sutton's wife, Mitchell Sutton, thanking everyone for the flowers sent during her recent recuperation from surgery.

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

Nelda H. Johnson, CMC, Town Clerk

Woodard H. Gurley, Mayor