

SPECIAL MEETING

The Town Council of the Town of La Grange, North Carolina met in a Special meeting at the Town Hall on Saturday, March 14, 2009, at 8 a.m. The purpose of the meeting was the Council's annual retreat and the following were 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: Tyrone Morgan, Superintendent of Public Works

Mayor Gurley called the meeting to order and asked Council Member Sutton to give the invocation. Mayor Gurley welcomed everyone.

Manager Craft presented the agenda to the Council.

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

ITEM 1: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion was made by Council Member Gladney, seconded by Council Member Harrison to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2009, Regular Session. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 2: INTERIM SUPPLEMENTAL LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES AGREEMENT

Manager Craft stated that this agreement was needed to supplement our Police Department from now until June 30, 2009 due to our officers finding other employment. A draft copy was provided to each Council Member and Manager Craft reviewed the details of the agreement.

Motion was made by Council Member Harrison, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten to approve the Interim Supplemental Law Enforcement Services Agreement. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion. Copy hereto attached and original filed in Clerk's office.

ITEM 3: PROPOSED LA GRANGE ENERGY EFFICIENCY FOUNDATION (LEEF)

Manager Craft stated that he had been thinking about a way to help some of the Town's customers that did not have the ability or resources to help themselves and presented a proposal to create a non-profit foundation to provide assistance to low income elderly citizens (65+) by improving energy efficiency in owner occupied homes. Assistance would be in the form of a grant to cover at least a portion of the cost to add insulation in homes. Assisting citizens with utility bills would not help reduce future bills as it would only help one month while insulation would help every month. Owner occupied homes would only be considered because the Town would not need to allow the landlords to benefit. A form would be developed for citizens to apply.

Manager Craft recommended that LEEF be funded \$5,000 annually from late penalties, donations from neighbors helping neighbors, seek grant funding, corporate donations, and possibly a Spring Event with the proceeds going to the foundation.

The Council would be involved by appointing members to the non-profit board to oversee the program. The Council would establish parameters to determine who qualifies, and the maximum grant amount. The Town would collect all funds and pay disbursements; and, provide 100% of the funds to the non-profit organization for programs.

Town staff would inspect houses to determine the need, obtain quotes to insulate the houses, and Town forces may be used to blow in insulation.

LEEF could become self supporting with donations from various churches and organizations. In the future, LEEF could expand to repairing storm doors and windows and heating system replacement incentives.

Manager Craft stated that the Town's cost would be \$5,000 annually from utilities penalties plus \$750 in legal and application cost for non-profit 501-3C status and staff time.

Benefits to our elderly citizens would be improving energy efficiency, reduce demand, help meet compliance with Senate Bill 3, long term reduction of electric bills, improves public relations and actually reduces carbon footprints.

After a lengthy discussion, motion was made by Council Member Koonce, seconded by Council Member Gladney to approve the concept and the creation of the foundation (LEEF), approval of expenditure of \$750 for application for 501-3C status, and instruct Town Attorney to make application for non-profit status for the "La Grange Energy Efficiency Foundation" (LEEF). Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 4: NON-PROFIT FUNDING POLICY

Manager Craft stated that he would like for the Council to establish a Non-Profit Funding Policy. The purpose of a policy would establish formal guidelines for funding non-profits and other community organizations to approach the Council for funding. A policy would determine annual funding limits, how and when organizations may apply, would become a part of the official budget process, and documents public purpose.

Currently organizations funded by the Town are the Recreation Association, Arts Council, Boy Scouts, Council of Aging, Library, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Manager Craft recommended that the annual appropriation for these agencies be limited to a maximum of \$0.045 of the existing \$0.50/\$100 tax rate. This would allocate the maximum for 2009-2010 at \$45,000 per year.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Harrison to accept Manager's Craft recommendation and draft a policy for a Non-Profit Funding Policy. After discussion, motion carried 5-1 in favor of motion with Council Member Harrison voting against the motion.

ITEM 5: CEMETERY ORDINANCE

Manager Craft stated that he asked the Superintendent of Public Works, Tyrone Morgan, to research information concerning opening and closing fees of gravesites of surrounding towns and cities. Manager Craft shared with the Council the cost from Pine Lawn in Kinston, City of Kinston, City of Goldsboro, and Mount Olive. The average cost of the opening and closing fees are \$685.50 on Monday – Friday and \$775 on weekends. In the City of Goldsboro, the cost is much higher if the purchaser lives outside the city limits.

Manager Craft reviewed by the year the number of permits for burials purchased for the Town's cemetery, Fairview Cemetery, from 2005 until the present. Only two permits have been purchased to-date in this year and Manager Craft was very concerned that this was not accurate as funeral homes are not purchasing as required. After some research, Manager Craft discovered that one funeral home had 60 burials in the year 2008 and only a total of 47 permits were purchased from all funeral homes of record.

Manager Craft stated that in his opinion the opening and closing of graves should be handled entirely by the Town. The Town could consider hiring an employee to do opening and closing rather than contracting. This would enable the Town to enhance our Public Works Staff without increasing water, sewer, garbage or tax rates. A second option would be to consider hiring a contractor to open and close the graves. The third option is to leave the opening and closing to the funeral homes, like it is now, but Manager Craft stated that he did not feel this was the right option.

Tyrone Morgan spoke stating that he inspects the cemetery about twice a week and he has found numerous problems. A major problem is that some funeral homes are leaving the gravesites piled too high with dirt and it is extremely hard to get the funeral home to come back and fix the site as it should be. Mr. Morgan stated that he had rather have a Town employee doing the work and when that employee was not at the cemetery, he could certainly use him in the water, sewer or street department.

Lengthy discussion was held concerning the Town's equipment that was available to open and close the graves, avoiding mistakes that had been made in the past concerning burying persons on the wrong plot, not burying anyone in the Foss Cemetery, weekend burials, informing funeral homes of changing information, funeral homes not purchasing permits, fines for not purchasing permits, a new employee on staff for the cemetery and an advertisement for the new hire, damages to monuments, and a mausoleum site.

Manager Craft stated that this item would be discussed at the April 6, 2009, Council Meeting and if a new Cemetery Ordinance was approved, the new employee could be in place by June and also a penalty clause would be added.

ITEM 6: CLEAN-UP PROGRAM

Manager Craft stated that ways needed to be discussed to encourage participation during two established clean-up weeks. Manager Craft recommended the week of April 4, 2009 for Spring clean-up and the week of November 4, 2009 for Fall clean-up. This could be done in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and possibly include churches, Civic organizations, and the Boy Scouts.

After discussion, the week beginning March 30, 2009 through April 4, 2009 was designated for Spring Clean-Up. This clean-up is for in-town customers only and the customer must call and schedule the pickup or they will be charged.

ITEM 7: POTENTIAL STREET CLOSURES

Manager Craft stated that the Town had three kinds of streets that he desired the Council to discuss their position on:

- Dedicated, but not accepted for maintenance
- Dedicated, unpaved, and used only for one person
- Dedicated, unpaved, and used for ingress and egress for multiple properties

Streets listed are:

- Woodard Lane
- Windham Street
- Forbes and Ash Streets
- Queen Street

Woodard Lane - Manager Craft discussed Woodard Lane first stating that it was located just off of South Caswell Street and led to an undeveloped subdivision that was created in about 1954 known as the Newman property. Mrs. Pat Newman owns two lots in the subdivision and has her home on one of the lots. Mrs. Newman's mother-in-law owns all the other lots with Mrs. Pat Newman being the sole heir. The issue is that Woodard Lane is a dirt street and is maintained, as well as the right-of way, by the Town. By law, if the street is closed, the property owners on either side will own half of the road right-of-way adds to their lot. Attorney Jenkins is researching what the Town's options are if the street is closed because Mrs. Newman will need access to her home by a public dedicated right-of-way.

Manager Craft showed a map of the property and stated that in his opinion the Town is mowing and maintaining a driveway for an individual even though Woodard Lane is a dedicated street and has been accepted by the Town.

Windham Street – Manager Craft stated that Windham Street was a dedicated street but had not been accepted for maintenance. Two sections of this street could be closed and have no impact on the residents.

Ash and Forbes Streets – Manager Craft stated that the situation was similar to Windham Street. Ash and Forbes Streets are dedicated streets, but closing a portion would have no adverse affect on the property owners.

Queen Street – The portion of Queen Street between North Caswell and North Center Street could be closed as there are no homes to be affected.

After lengthy discussion, motion was made by Council Member Sutton, seconded by Council Member Harrison to maintain the right-of-way on Woodard Lane by bush hog and not by lawnmower and if this is not acceptable, Mrs. Pat Newman will have to be responsible for maintaining the right-of-way. Motion carried 4-2 in favor of motion with Council Members Gladney and Koonce voting against the motion. No action was taken on Windham Street, Ash and Forbes Streets and Queen Street.

ITEM 8: AMR / PREPAY POLICY, METER READING POLICY DISCUSSION

Manager Craft stated that he would like to have Council guidance on how to set up policies for AMR / Pre Pay. AMR will allow the Town to get our meter readings on a regular schedule and not have the number of days on the bill fluctuate from 29 to 33 days. Manager Craft recommend that the Town read the meters the 15th of every month at approximately 8 a.m. and that would enable our customers to easily know when their meter would be read for billing.

AMR prepaid meters will enable our customers to monitor their usage online, with a web interface. Also, customers using prepaid meters will allow them to see their account and make online payments through a web interface with our CIS system. The prepay system will deduct daily recurring charges (i.e. security light, garbage collection fees, flat rates) at a fixed rate.

The Prepay System has options as to when a customer could be notified.

- Low Balance – Manager Craft recommended that this is a needed option.
- Daily Balance
- Recharge (Credits to account)
- Pending Disconnect – Manager Craft recommended that this is a needed option.

Customers will have several options to choose from on how they wish to be notified of their account status:

- Phone
- Email - free service
- SMS Text Message

Phone messages and SMS text messages would cost the Town \$0.05 per call. Manager Craft recommended that the customer be give an option of phone or text message, not both. Email is free to the Town and customer.

Other policies that needed to be addressed are the following:

- What is the minimum amount to open an account? Manager Craft recommended the following:
 - ✓ Any outstanding bills owed by the customer
 - ✓ \$100 prepayment
 - ✓ \$10.00 Connection fee
- What is the minimum payment amount when the account is active? Manager Craft recommended the following:
 - ✓ \$20

- What is the minimum payment amount when the account has been disconnected for non payment? Manager Craft recommended the following:
 - ✓ Any negative amount + \$50 additional purchase
- At what dollar level are accounts disconnected? On prepay meters readings will be taken daily. Accounts below a preset level will be indicated for disconnection. Manager Craft recommended the following:
 - ✓ Accounts with a balance less that \$15 be disconnected
- How and when will payments for prepay customers be accepted?
 - ✓ Current capability (limited to business hours) In the office by cash, check, voucher, or credit card
 - ✓ Phone pay by credit or debit card
 - ✓ After hours payments will be available in the future through Online. Also, placing a Kiosk in a high traffic area such as the Trademart or Food Lion is an option to be researched and the cost could be shared with other major merchants.

After lengthy discussion between the Council and Manager Craft there was no opposition to his recommendations concerning the designated date to read all AMR meters and recommendations for Prepay AMR Policies.

Manager Craft reminded the Council that all prepaid electric meters will require an AMR water meter also. Money has been budged in this FY for some of the AMR water meters.

ITEM 9: HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Manager Craft stated that he had a discussion with Habitat for Humanity in Kinston and they are willing to assist the Town in building a house if the Town can provide the lot and approve a qualified owner. One of the lots that the Town would likely acquire on Jones Street or the Town owns a lot on East Washington Street that could be utilized. Manager Craft stated that if the Council was agreeable that he would like for the Town to donate the lot on 101 Jones Street to be used for a habitat house and the first thing that would be done is to place a sign on the lot to ask for volunteers to help build the house. No steps will be taken until the lot is deeded over to the Town, a qualified owner is approved, and volunteers are in place to build the house. Everyone agreed that the project would be great for the Town and community.

ITEM 10: DRAINAGE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Manager Craft stated that Tyrone Morgan and he had identified problem areas to be the 200-300 block of East Boundary Street, 200-300 block of West Boundary Street, and the 100 block of Joyner Street.

Manager Craft stated that he recommended that he receive proposals from engineering firms to evaluate these areas and prepare plans and specifications for bid. The bid date would be in the early part of FY 2009-2010.

After discussion, there was no objection from the Council.

ITEM 11: PAVING / RESURFACING PROJECTS

Manager Craft stated that he had asked Tyrone Morgan to identify Town streets that needed to be resurfaced. The major streets in need are Leisure Estates which contain Leisure Street and Brandy Avenue and Sutton Acres Subdivision which contains numerous streets and cul-de-sacs. Manager Craft stated that both of these subdivisions were paved without a sub base and were done before the Town had a Subdivision Policy requiring the paving of streets to be to Department of Transportation standards. Ann Street and Lincoln Street are unpaved streets and are a consideration also. Powell Bill Funds are used for paving and the allocation for this year is going to be less than in previous years. The USDA loan, which is paid with Powell Bill Funds, was for twenty years and the 7th payment will be made in FY 2009-2010.

The general consensus of the Council was to not seek quotes on paving and concentrate funds on drainage problems.

ITEM 12: RECREATION PROJECT

Manager Craft updated the Council on the recreation project and Part F Grant. The road that splits the Town's property for the proposed recreation facility has not been relocated by the State. This is a major issue and Manager Craft stated that he expects that Steve Molar with the Part F Grant will be notifying the Town that we will not receive a recreation grant. Manager Craft stated that he feels that the DOT will have the road moved before the grants are awarded.

Should the Town not receive a grant, the Council needs to look at potential alternate projects. Manager Craft stated that funds were included in the budget for matching funds, should the Town receive a grant, and those funds could be used for alternate recreation projects.

Manager Craft mentioned a Spray Ground could possibly be built at our local Community Park. This would be an unmanned facility.

ITEM 13: FY 2009-2010 FUNDING PRIORITIES

Manager Craft asked the Council about other funding priorities before he begins to work on the next budget year.

There were no comments or additional priorities.

ITEM 14: APPROVAL OF INTERNSHIP

Manager Craft asked for approval to hire a summer intern from the East Carolina University, Public Administration Program to assist him on grant administration and budget work. One of the requirements for a graduate student is to work 300 hours with a municipality. Manager Craft recommended 300 hours at \$10 per hour for a total cost of \$3,000. There would be no benefits involved.

Motion was made by Council Member Gladney, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten to allow Manager Craft to hire a summer intern as his assistant at the recommended number of hours and cost. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 15: DAY OF CARING

Manager Craft recommended that April 15, 2009, be designated as a Day of Caring. This would be an Electricities and Town sponsored event with energy kits distributed to approximately eight to ten customers with high bills and energy audits performed. There would be no cost to the Town.

ITEM 16: ADJOURNMENT

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

Nelda H. Johnson, CMC, Town Clerk

Woodard H. Gurley, Mayor