

REGULAR MEETING

The Town Council of the Town of La Grange, North Carolina met in Regular Session at the Town Hall on June 2, 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: 18

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

Mayor Gurley called the meeting to order and asked Mayor Pro Tem Wooten to give the invocation. Mayor Gurley welcomed the guest.

ITEM 4: PUBLIC HEARING

- a. A Public Hearing to consider Proposed Amendments to Town Code of Ordinances; Chapter 38, Zoning that would allow the installation of manufactured homes up to ten years old from the date of manufacture.

The request for the change in the Zoning Ordinance was by Cindi Dupuy. The current ordinance would allow the installation of manufactured homes up to five years old from the date of manufacture.

Mayor Gurley opened the public hearing for public comment.

Wilbur Taylor, 412 Lake Pines Drive, La Grange, NC spoke in opposition of the proposed amendment. Mr. Taylor stated that he had been a past member of the Planning Board for about fifteen years and was on the Board and was involved when the zoning ordinance was revised. In 2000, the Town Council by unanimous vote, changed the ordinance concerning the installation of manufactured homes from post 1976 to a five year old limit. Mr. Taylor further stated that he did not want the Town of La Grange to go backward and with the announcement of almost 3,000 jobs coming to Lenoir County, this would be very advantageous and La Grange needs to be up to the challenge.

Cindi Fallin Dupuy, 102 Wooten Point Road, Goldsboro, NC, owner of a mobile home park in La Grange, spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. Ms. Dupuy provided the Council with documents supporting her reasons for wanting the change. Ms. Dupuy referred to the Town Minutes in September 2000 when the ordinance was changed from post 1976 to a manufactured home not being older than 5 years stating that the original discussion was changing the ordinance to ten years and after continued discussion was change to 5 years by the Council. Ms. Dupuy stated that there is a need for property that people can afford and this would allow more opportunity to draw people to the area and there would be more shopping, more revenue and more taxes. Also, the Town still has control over the condition of these properties. Ms. Dupuy stated that she had researched the population of surrounding areas, large town and small towns and the Town of La Grange is the only one that had the required age limit of five years. These towns require only one initial inspection; and, La Grange also has an initial inspection and an inspection each time there is a change in tenants. Ms. Dupuy also referred to several newspaper articles concerning foreclosures, gas prices, increase in utility rates and looking at the future, people need affordable housing. Ms. Dupuy stated that it was zero opportunity to find used five year old or newer mobile homes

Harold Herring, 123 Walnut Creek Drive, Goldsboro, NC, owner of a mobile home park in La Grange, spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. Mr. Herring stated that he

had rebuilt a couple of mobile homes several years ago and the cost was about \$11,000 and when the work was completed he still had old mobile homes; and, the insurance company would not insure the mobile homes for the investment he had in them. Mobile homes from 1993 and up are built with fire retardant materials for safety and are more energy efficient. People that cannot afford a new mobile home need affordable housing in La Grange.

Holton Harrison, 217 West Washington Street, La Grange, NC, spoke in opposition of the proposed amendment. Mr. Harrison stated that he had opportunity to view two mobile home parks near La Grange Elementary School and the mobile home park near Community Baptist Church and he knew that management of mobile home parks mean a lot but these three seem to have turned into "drug apartments somewhat". The Town is putting a lot of heavy responsibility on the inspection department by thinking and assuming that they are going to keep everything perfect with these mobile homes. Mr. Harrison further stated that he did know that the Town of Swansboro and Onslow County have the five year ordinance and if research is done other Towns and Counties will be found as well. Mr. Harrison stated that the mobile home park near the church was noisy, a nuisance and sometimes gunfire can be heard.

Jay Alphin, 401 Madison Ann Drive, La Grange, NC, spoke in opposition of the proposed amendment. Mr. Alphin stated that he had lived in a mobile home years ago and it did not do anything but deteriorate and depreciate in value and if the Town was looking for revenue an old mobile home was not going to bring in revenue. People that take pride in what they own and keep it up will bring revenue to La Grange and will not be an eyesore. The mobile home park behind Community Baptist Church is an eyesore and La Grange will not gain revenue by mobile homes that the value will depreciate every year.

George Foss, 402 Lake Pines Drive, La Grange, NC, spoke in favor of the proposed amendment. Mr. Foss stated that he did not own a mobile home park but his wife did own a park and owned one mobile home within the park. Not changing the ordinance will put a burden on some persons as everyone cannot own an expensive home. The Town of La Grange will have to have some type of affordable public housing or allow ten year old mobile homes to be placed in La Grange. The tax base on a mobile home is not much, but the tenants buy a lot of electricity and a lot of water. Mr. Foss stated that he was against spending tax dollars on public housing. If the owner or owners of mobile home parks and mobile homes do not keep their property up, the Town needs to notify the proper person or persons and address the issues.

Manager Craft spoke stating that Town staff opposes the requested change to the Town's Code of Ordinances. The requirement is, and was, intended to protect the property values of surrounding property. Manufactured homes tend to depreciate in value as opposed to conventionally built dwellings that actually appreciate in value. Manufactured homes also tend to deteriorate at a lot faster pace than conventionally built homes.

Manager Craft commented that Mr. Foss mentioned the Town building public housing. Manager Craft informed the Council that there were opportunities that the Town could investigate that would try to help people with housing and renters moving toward home ownership. The staff wants to help our citizens and future citizens. There is a program through the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency in which they offer municipalities and nonprofit organizations to help build homes for first time homeowners who have low to moderate income. Manager Craft stated that this was information only and was not asking for any decision as this needs to be done in a planned and responsible method.

Cindi Fallin Dupuy asked to speak again concerning the renting of her mobile homes. Ms. Dupuy stated that she required background checks on all her tenants which included eviction, criminal and credit checks. Also, gainful employment is required so they would be able to pay the rent.

After no further comments from the public, motion was made by Council Member Sutton, seconded by Council Member Harrison to close the Public Hearing. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

Council Member Gladney made a statement stating that after listening to both sides, he understood how persons could be torn between both sides. Recently the Town Council discussed changing the Town's slogan and if we want to keep the slogan as "The Garden Spot" the Town has to be cleaned up and maintained like "The Garden Spot." Council Member Gladney stated that he can see both sides of the situation.

Mayor Pro Tem Wooten made a statement that years ago when the zoning ordinance was adopted this was something that the citizens asked for and wanted so their property values could be protected and the Town Council has an obligation to provide this protection.

With no further discussion, motion was made by Council Member Sutton, seconded by Council Member Harrison to make no changes and leave the current requirement of the manufactured home to be no more than 5 years from the manufactured date in place. Motion carried 5-1 in favor of motion. Council Member Rouse opposed. Copy of ordinance hereto attached.

ITEM 5: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

None

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

Manager Craft recommended the approval of the printed agenda with the following additions:

- ITEM 8C: APPROVAL OF OPTIONS
Note: Manager Craft requested the removal of this item.
- ITEM 8D: PERSONNEL ANNOUNCEMENT
Note: Manager Craft requested this item be handled prior to ITEM 8A on the agenda.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Gladney to approve the printed agenda with the removal and addition as listed. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 7: CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of Minutes
 1. May 5, 2008, Regular Session
- b. Approval of Ordinance Amending the FY 2007-2008 Budget Ordinance
Copy hereto attached.
- c. Advisory Board Appointments
 1. Reappointments to the Planning Board
 - a) Jimmy Graham, Jr.
 - b) David S. Holmes
 - c) Dorothy Sutton
 - d) John H. Waters

Copy of Resolution No. 2008-06-208 hereto attached and filed in Ordinance Book III.

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

ITEM 8: NEW BUSINESS

ITEM 8D: PERSONNEL ANNOUNCEMENT

Manager Craft stated that this announcement was with regret, but this afternoon Police Chief John L. Sullivan, Jr. submitted a letter announcing his desire to retire effective July 30, 2008 at 5 p.m. Manager Craft stated that Chief Sullivan had served the Town honorably for fourteen and one-half years and thanked him for his services to the Town and to himself, as Town Manager, as a friend and colleague. Manager Craft recognized Chief Sullivan's family that was present.

Chief Sullivan stated that it was a tough decision and he hoped that the future for the Town and the Police Department would be as bright as he always hoped it would be.

Mayor Pro Tem Wooten stated that he wished to make a statement concerning Chief Sullivan. Mayor Pro Tem Wooten stated that he was on the Town Council when Chief Sullivan was hired and Chief Sullivan has met every expectation that the Council had when he was hired. One of the first things Chief Sullivan tried to do was start a Boys and Girls Club in La Grange and other than the Council there was no support. Mayor Pro Tem Wooten stated that he would like to commend Chief Sullivan and thank him for a job well done.

Manager Craft stated that the Town needed to plan for the future and stated that Assistant Chief Jerry Davis has accepted and would be appointed as interim Police Chief upon Chief Sullivan's retirement date. A process will begin later in the year to formally replace Chief Sullivan.

ITEM 8A: CONSIDER FILING SMALL TOWN MAIN STREET APPLICATION

Manager Craft stated that Heith Harrison and he had attended a workshop sponsored by the NC Division of Community Assistance that discussed the Small Town Main Street Grant Application that would enable the division to provide assistance to the Town in developing a strategy to revitalize downtown. About twelve Towns were represented in the workshop seeking help in filing an application for community assistance. There will be no money from The Rural Center and their assistance will be personnel involvement, guidance, and establishing guidelines for a committee that will work to set forth a course of action from which to hopefully revitalize the downtown. Limited funding will be required from the Town but at this time the amount is not known and depending our needs. The program will plan around the Town's strengths and determine what the Town can do to improve our opportunities and hopefully revitalize our Town. Two towns in the east will be selected to participate and the application is due by June 30.

After continued discussion, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Gladney to adopt the RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF AN APPLICATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NORTH CAROLINA SMALL TOWN MAIN STREET PROGRAM 2008-2009 and authorize staff to execute necessary grant documents. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion. Copy of Resolution NO. 2008-06-209 hereto attached and filed in Resolution Book III.

ITEM 8B: DISCUSSION RELATED TO UTILITY BILL PAYMENT OPTIONS

Manager Craft stated that the Town has been working to offer our customers multiple payment options relative to the payment of utility bills. Other than cash, check and money order the Town began accepting credit card and debit card payments in person or by phone since we have moved here to the new Town Hall. The Town has now established an ability to accept utility bill direct drafts and is working on the process for recurring credit card payments.

ITEM 8C: APPROVAL OF OPTIONS FOR WELL SITES

This item was removed from the agenda.

ITEM 9: OLD BUSINESS

ITEM 9A: INFORMATIONAL ITEM – REMINDER OF SPECIAL MEETINGS AND PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER PROPOSED FY 2008-2009 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Manager Craft reminded the Council that Special Meetings have been scheduled for June 9 and June 10 at 6 p.m. for the purpose of budget work sessions and a Public Hearing scheduled for June 11, 2008, at 7 p.m. to formally adopt the budget.

ITEM 9B: INFORMATIONAL ITEM – REMINDER OF TOWN HALL DAY ACTIVITIES

Manager Craft reminded the Council that Town Hall Day is scheduled for June 4, 2008, in Raleigh and a tentative lunch date with Senator Charlie Albertson and Representative Van Braxton is planned.

ITEM 10: CLOSED SESSION

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Sutton to go into Closed Session as authorized by N.C.G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (4) (5) (6) (7). Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten, seconded by Council Member Koonce to return to Regular Session. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

ITEM 11: ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Mayor Pro 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