

## **REGULAR MEETING**

The Town Council of the Town of La Grange, North Carolina met in Regular Session at the Town Hall on January 9, 2006, at 7:30 p.m. with the following present:

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

Absent: None

Guest: 5

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

Mayor Gurley called the meeting to order. Council Member Sutton gave the invocation.

### **ITEM 4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion was made by Council Member Ellis and seconded by Council Member Thomas to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2005 Regular Meeting, December 5, 2005 Closed Session, and December 27, 2005 Special Meeting. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

### **ITEM 5: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

There was no request by citizens to address the Council.

### **ITEM 6: AMENDMENT(S) TO AGENDA**

Manager Craft recommended that Item F: Approval of the fourth amendment to the Interlocal Agreement for the Neuse Regional Water and Sewer Authority be removed from the agenda at the present time.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten and seconded by Council Member Ellis to amend the agenda by removing the above item. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

### **ITEM 7A: PRESENTATION OF ANNUAL AUDIT; MR. DEAN HORNE OF PITTARD, PERRY AND CRONE, INC.**

Mr. Horne went over different line items in the audit. He explained to Council Members that in the future the water and sewer funds would have to stand on their own and not be supported by the electrical fund. This is a requirement from the Local Government Commission. He said he was pleased to report that the Town was in good financial condition.

After discussion motion was made by Council Member Ellis and seconded by Council Member Sutton to approve the 2004-2005 audit as presented by Pittard, Perry & Crone. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion. Copy of audit on file in Clerk's office.

### **ITEM 7B: APPROVAL OF FIRE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS**

The Fire Department presented the following slate of officers to the Town Council for their approval:

|                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Chief                           | David Holmes    |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Chief | Edward Moore    |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Assistant Chief | Roy Smith       |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Captain         | C. J. Foster    |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Captain         | David Wilkerson |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Lieutenant      | Curt Boone      |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant      | McKeever Smith  |

Manager Craft recommended approval of the officers.

Motion was made by Council Member Thomas and seconded by Council Member Gladney to approve the above listed slate of officers as recommended. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

#### **ITEM 7C: APPROVAL OF MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT FOR FIRE PROTECTION WITH THE CITY OF KINSTON**

Manager Craft explained to Council Members that the Mutual Aid Agreement makes provisions for the Town to assist the City of Kinston in the event of a disaster with assistance in the form of man power or equipment. The same agreement makes it possible for City of Kinston to assist the Town in the same manner. These agreements are required to be in place to receive reimbursements from some federal or state agencies.

Motion was made by Council Member Ellis and seconded by Council Member Thomas to approve the mutual aid agreement between the City of Kinston and the Town of La Grange. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion. Copy hereto attached.

#### **ITEM 7D: APPROVAL OF NEW ELECTRICAL RATE SCHEDULE**

Manager Craft reminded Council Members that in November and December, 2005 he had mentioned to them where the Power Agency rate committee had recommended and the ElectriCiites Board of Directors have approved a rate increase to all its members. This increase equates to a 10% wholesale rate increase to the member agencies which will be passed on to us in the form of an increase to the energy rider. The current rider is \$0.0036 /kwh and this will be increased by \$0.0074/kwh to a total of \$0.011/kwh. This increase will cost the Town approximately \$220,000 more for power purchased annually.

Manager Craft stated that based on an analysis of the increased cost to the Town, and our kwh sales, he was recommending an increase in electric kwh rates to all customer classes in one of the following two ways:

- (1.) Addition of an Energy Rider at the rate of \$0.0089/kwh and an increase in area light charges by 8.5%.
- (2.) An increase of kwh charges by 9.1% and increase area light charges

Manager Craft said that the new rates must be effective with our January billing. Each month that we delay the rate increase will cost the Town an average of \$18,000 per month.

Lengthy discussion was held among Council Members.

Manager Craft recommended to Council Members that option #1 be utilized as it will better illustrate the effects of rising fuel prices to our customers, as that cost will be shown separately.

Motion was made by Council Member Thomas and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten to approve Manager Craft's recommendation. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion. Copy of new rate schedule hereto attached.

**ITEM 7E: BUDGET AMENDMENT; TO FUND PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF SCADA SYSTEM AT THE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT**

Manager Craft explained to Council Members that we had an equipment malfunction at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The malfunction occurred in two different elements of the plant. The first was the failure of a relay that activates a series of pumps that pump untreated wastewater into the oxidation ditches at the plant to begin the actual treatment process. The relay has been replaced and is functioning properly.

The second element that failed was the SCADA system and dialer. This system is designed to detect malfunctions at the plant and to notify an operator that something is wrong to prevent further damage or a spill from occurring at the plant. Manager Craft said although we have not had any malfunctions before, the system has some age on it and he no longer had confidence in it.

Manager Craft said he had received a quote from Nix, Purser and Associates to replace the system at the plant. The quote was in the amount of \$31,500. He requested that a budget amendment be approved in order to purchase this equipment.

Motion was made by Council Member Gladney and seconded by Council Member Sutton to approve said budget amendment. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion. Copy of amendment to budget ordinance hereto attached.

**7G: ESTABLISH DATE FOR ANNUAL RETREAT**

Manager Craft stated that there is a consensus among Council Members that we should conduct a retreat to allow for more detailed discussion pertaining to items of the most significance to the Town in order to develop a priority list. Manager Craft suggested that this retreat be held in the month of February at the Town Hall where all materials are readily available. He said having it in February would also allow him time to include some of the items in the 2006-2007 budget.

After discussion it was decided by Council Members to have the retreat starting at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 25, 2006 at the Town Hall. Manager Craft requested that all topics for discussion be turned into him by February 6, 2006.

**ITEM 7H: RE-APPOINTMENT OF PLANNING BOARD AND BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MEMBERS**

After discussion concerning this item, motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten and seconded by Council Member Ellis to table this item at the present time. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

**ITEM 7I: DISCUSSION REGARDING A CONSENT AGENDA**

Manager Craft explained to Council Members that a consent agenda is a grouped listing of items that you would vote to approve with a single vote, rather than discussing them individually. Items included would be minutes, advisory board appointments, budget amendments or similar type items. With the consent agenda only one council member or the Mayor would need to request that an item be moved from the consent agenda for additional discussion and that item would be moved to the end of the list of items for discussion

Motion was made by Council Member Thomas and seconded by Council Member Gladney to approve the use of the consent agenda at future meetings. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

**ITEM 7J: REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF LEAVE OF ABSENCE: BENNIE SMITH**

Manager Craft informed Council Members that due to several different medical problems Bennie Smith has requested an extension on his leave of absence. Manager Craft said he did not have a problem with this since it was not grass cutting season and we could use the money saved from his salary to meet our needs in the fuel and equipment maintenance line items which are higher than anticipated this year.

Motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten and seconded by Council Member Ellis to approve a leave of absence extension for Bennie Smith until March 31, 2006. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

**ITEM 7K: DISCUSSION REGARDING REVISED BID FOR THE RENOVATION OF THE PROPOSED NEW TOWN HALL BUILDING**

Manager Craft presented Council Members with a copy of a letter from Damon Jones, project manager with Daniels & Daniels Construction Co. who submitted a revised bid for renovations of the proposed new town hall. The new price is \$362,624 which is approximately \$200,000 less than first submitted.

After discussion among Council Members it was decided to leave this item open for discussion at our next meeting.

**ITEM 7L: HIRING OF A FULL TIME CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER**

Manager Craft informed Council Members that Mr. Walter's health is not what it used to be. He has been a truly dedicated employee who has contributed significantly to the Town over his fifty seven (57) years of employment. He said unfortunately there comes a time that we have to plan for the future of the Town and its continued operations.

Manager Craft said Council Members and citizens have expressed concern over the cleanliness of the Town, the conditions of many of the downtown buildings and run down houses within the Town.

Manager Craft said that we need to hire a full time person who could do building inspections, clean up weeded grown up lots, take care of junk/nuisance vehicles, inspection of run down houses and also be a safety officer. He said in other words a full time code enforcement/safety officer. He said he would like to keep Mr. Walters on staff to allow a new person an opportunity to work with him for a short period of time. Manager Craft said the starting salary would be \$28,350 with automatic increases for obtaining level 1 certificate in four fields. After becoming fully certified the salary could increase to \$32,818.

After discussion motion was made by Council Member Ellis and seconded by Council Member Gladney to hire a full time code enforcement/ safety officer. Motion carried 5-1 in favor of motion. Council Member Thomas opposed.

**ITEM 8A: WASTEWATER COLLECTION SYSTEM REHABILITATION**

Manager Craft reported that we were nearing completion on this project.

**ITEM 8B: UPDATE ON THE STATUS OF THE PROPOSED RAILROAD CROSSING CLOSING**

Manager Craft said he had not heard anything else concerning this item.

**ITEM 8C: WATER RE-USE PROJECT – MONROVIA GROWERS**

Manager Craft reported that we have received the grant paper work from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

With no further business to come before the Council motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Wooten and seconded by Council Member Ellis to recess until Friday, January 13, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. Motion carried 6-0 in favor of motion.

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Phyllis T. Harrison,CMC, Town Clerk

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Woodard H. Gurley, Mayor