

Town of Spring Lake  
Board of Aldermen Special Meeting  
Municipal Building  
300 Ruth Street  
Spring Lake, NC 28390

December 12 2017

**MINUTES**

Noon

The Spring Lake Board of Aldermen held a special meeting in the Grady Howard Conference Room of the Municipal Complex with Mayor Larry Dobbins presiding.

**Board Members Present:** Mayor Pro Tem James O'Garra  
Alderman James Christian  
Alderwoman Soña Cooper  
Alderwoman Jackie Jackson  
Alderwoman Fredricka Sutherland

**Others Present:**

Bill Zell, Interim Town Manager  
Janet Smith, Administrative Aide

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

Mayor Dobbins called the meeting to order.

(A copy of the special meeting notice is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes – see attachment one.)

**2. Invocation**

Mayor Dobbins gave the invocation.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra led the meeting in the pledge of allegiance.

**4. Business – Discuss Planning and Goals for 2018**

Mayor Dobbins asked all town employees if they would step out of the room. (Employees attending were Department Heads who were on duty and on Town time.) He stated he wanted to address the Board. He told them that he knows this is public meeting but he only wants to talk to the members of the Board today.

Mr. Zell stated we should continue to find out what is happening for good in the Town and not so good.

Alderwoman Cooper asked if we had picked a town manager and Mr. Zell stated yes and we are waiting on the background check which will take about 15 days to complete. Mr. Zell told her he sent an email last week and Mr. Gerald is ready to start on January 2, 2018. She asked were there were any things that he specifically asked for in his contract and Mr. Zell stated he only asked if the Town could pay him for his licensing certificates that he is bringing along with him and that they will be beneficial to the Town. The total amount the Town would have to pay is \$140.

Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra asked when Mr. Zell will be leaving and if he will still be here once the new manager takes over. Mr. Zell said that he will be here if they need him. Alderwoman Sutherland said no because she said the reason they hired this candidate was because he has town manager experience and they don't want to be paying two people like they did with Andy Wilkerson and Mr. Davis.

The following items were discussed:

1. Economic Development and Grant Writer for the Town of Spring Lake is the Board's #1 priority.  
The Board Members feel that the Spring Lake Chamber does not provide any real services and they want someone with grant writing capabilities. Alderwoman Sutherland and all of the other Board Members agreed that the Hope VI Grant that Fayetteville is involved in is something the Town of Spring Lake needs to find out about and join.
2. Alderwoman Sutherland stated that Thomas Cooney and Paul Hoover were both working in the Inspections Department. The Town agreed to sign a contract keeping Paul Hoover on after his retirement because he has the certification levels that allows him to do inspections. Mr. Cooney apparently does not have any inspections qualifications. She says she voted against this contract for Paul Hoover to come on as inspector for \$50/hr. She says now that Paul has left she is being told that Tom Cooney is doing inspections and he is not qualified to do them and she is afraid that will end up being a liability for the Town.
  - a. The Board members all agreed to make sure they get qualified inspectors to perform work for the Town and Mr. Zell said that Cumberland County can do higher level inspections that Mr. Cooney cannot perform right now. The Board Members agreed they need to make sure whoever is doing any task in Spring Lake is qualified to perform the task. Alderwoman Jackie Jackson asked we should get Mr. Cooney certified so we don't have to keep relying on the County to do work for the Town.
3. Alderman Christian wants to know when the Police Chief will be hired and Mr. Zell said that position will be filled once the new manager takes over.
4. Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra stated that we are paying out more than \$140,000 in salaries for the Recreation Director and Assistant Director and they are never around. The Board Members all agreed that one of them should have been at the Swearing In Ceremony. They all agreed that they are never around and that they are both working "bankers hours." Alderwoman Jackie stated that citizens have expressed concerns to her that the Recreation Center's overall performance is going down. She stated that citizens are saying that Director and Assistant Director are keeping "banking hours" as well. They discussed the following concerns regarding the Recreation Department:
  - a. Salaries for the Recreation Director and Assistant Director are too high
  - b. The hours of operation at Recreation Center
  - c. There is nothing for teenagers to do at Recreation Center
  - d. When kids are out of school why is Recreation Center closed?
  - e. The Budget is going up and services are less with no activities for children here in Spring Lake.
  - f. Why is the Recreation Center not open on Sunday?
  - g. Is there a conflict with the Boys and Girls Club that causes Spring Lake kids not to be able to use the Center when they are there? Alderwoman Sutherland stated they have a contract with the Town and any Spring Lake citizen can use the facility at any time. Alderwoman Cooper stated she has had problems using the gym equipment and they have not allowed her to use the side rooms when other areas were occupied.
  - h. We need to revisit the number of employees who have worked at the front desk because we have lost 5 employees. This position needs to go through Human Resource. (Mr. Zell said that they are hiring a new program coordinator.) Alderwoman Jackson asked about getting a copy of the Recreation Director's job description and the job description for the Assistant Recreation Director. Alderwoman Jackson asked if job

evaluations have been performed in the past for employees.

- i. Alderwoman Cooper addressed concerns about individuals taking showers at Recreation Center who are not supposed to be doing so because they are not members and they should not be allowed to be around kids. Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra stated that Mr. Jones knows about this incident and was supposed to be correcting it. The Board Members all agreed that supervisors need to be present to stop these types of things from happening.
5. The next concern discussed was water bills.
    - a. The bills are being delivered late to customers
    - b. Late fees are extravagant
    - c. We need to push bank drafts to pay your water bill to eliminate customers from paying late fees.
  6. Hours of Operation were discussed. The Board Members expressed concern about employees only working 4 days a week and those working 4 and one-half days a week. They said it needs to be changed.
  7. Picking up leaves needs to be addressed and John Kleinert needs to be told that his employees are not doing it correctly. The Board Members want a follow up time from Mr. Zell on when this will be fixed.
  8. The Board Members would like the Chamber to be relocated out of the Town hall. They could possibly move to the professional building on Main Street. They also want to hire an Economic Development person. They want someone who is qualified for this position and has grant writing skills. They expressed concern that the Spring Lake Chamber does not provide any real services and has not for the past few years. The Board Members feel that since the Town pays \$35,000 for economic development services, which is what the contract states, and they are not performing this function, then the contract can be terminated.
  9. We need updated Town Ordinances
    - a. Board Members want to know, based on Town Ordinance, how often debris is to be picked up. Alderwoman Sutherland stated that John Kleinert said we are violating our own Ordinance because we pick up debris 4 times a month and we are supposed to only be picking it up once a month. Alderwoman Sutherland said that Rhonda is supposed to be pulling the Ordinance for trash pickup.
    - b. Concern was expressed about the trailers on Odell Road that needs to be upgraded. Board Members inquired about what the Ordinances say about how old trailers can be for people to reside in.
  10. Streets, roads, and parking lots all has cracks in them that needs to be fixed and the streets need to be repaved.
    - a. Holland Street needs to be fixed.
    - b. The South Fifth Street patch needs to be fixed. It has been messed up since July before Mr. Davis left.
    - c. At 819 McNeill Street the water and pipes are not on the Town's sewer but they are paying Town taxes. The roads and streets are bad here. This is over by True Vine Ministries Church. Mr. Zell will turn this over to Tom Cooney and Tim Garner to fix.
  11. Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra said the Mayor Pro Tem selection process needs to be changed. He stated we need to be able to float this position around to other members. He said it should not automatically go to person with the highest votes but the Board should give everyone an opportunity to do this position. Alderwoman Jackson stated she would have liked it if they could have discussed it before doing it in the public because the way it happened at meeting made them look unprepared and unprofessional to the public. She also stated she does not agree with newcomers being selected as Mayor Pro Tem, the Town needs someone who is more experienced to handle that job. The Board Members all agreed that citizens are saying that this meeting was not performed very well. The

Board Members expressed concern that there was no second to the motion for the Mayor Pro Tem nomination vote and Mr. Zell said there should have been one but they did vote 3-2 for Mr. O'Garra to be Mayor Pro Tem.

12. Professional Town Hall

- a. Mayor Dobbins said he expects professionalism among the Board Members at all times. He expects professionalism among the Town employees at all times and he wants team building among all of us. We need to be united as a Board and as a Town.

13. NC DOT/FAMPO Update

- a. Mayor Pro Tem O'Garra said they showed the Board Members a map of where the route starts on Hwy 87 and ends at Odell Road. He also said the route breaks off around the trailer court and makes 4 lanes and one of them is a turning lane.

14. Compare Foods does not have any updates at this time but the Board needs to know what the status is so they will all be reporting the same information to citizens.

The Board Members requested to continue the discussion at another meeting. Ms. Janet Smith will coordinate with everyone and set the meeting date and time. They all requested for it to be scheduled before Christmas if possible.

**5. Adjournment**

**Action:** There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 2:17 p.m.

**Motion:** Alderwoman Cooper

**Second by:** Alderman Christian

**Vote:** Unanimous

The Town Clerk created these minutes from the notes taken by Ms. Smith.



*Rhonda D. Webb*  
Rhonda D. Webb, MMC, NCCMC  
Town Clerk

ATTEST:

*Larry G. Dobbins*  
Larry G. Dobbins  
Mayor