

August 10, 2009

The Middlesex Governing Body met in regular session in the Conference Room of the Town Hall. Mayor Luther H. Lewis, Jr. called the meeting to order at 7:30p.m. and gave the invocation. Members present were Commissioners Harold Meacombs, Fred Hough, Luke Robinson, Derek Bissette, and J.W. McClenny. Sergeant Dennis Murray represented the Police Department in Chief Ferrell's absence. Vennie Brock and Dale Bachmann were the only guests.

Mayor Lewis opened the floor for public comment. There were no comments and Mayor Lewis closed the session.

The July minutes were approved in a motion by Commissioner Hough, seconded by Commissioner Robinson and carried unanimously.

Administrator Bissette requested to add discussion of a police matter to the agenda under New Business. Commissioner Meacombs moved to approve the agenda with the requested change. His motion was seconded by Commissioner McClenny and carried unanimously.

In a motion by Commissioner Robinson, seconded by Commissioner McClenny, and carried unanimously, the July financial statements were accepted as correct. Clerk Lambert advised that the property tax scroll was received from Nash County last week and has been balanced and tax bills should be mailed this week. She added that the scroll increased approximately \$32,000 over last year due to the revaluation.

Commissioner McClenny asked about riders seen in the police vehicles. Sergeant Murray advised we had a ride along policy. Before anyone is allowed to ride along, a criminal background check is completed, they must intend to attend BLET, and sign a liability waiver.

Mayor Lewis presented a request to run a full page ad in honor of Arnold Lee Brown, a former Mayor and Potentate, in a Sudan Shriner's Program Ceremony at a cost of \$150. The ceremony will be held this year in Wilson, where it is held once every ten years, and they will be honoring Brown. The program books will be giveaways. Commissioner McClenny moved to buy the ad in honor of Brown. Commissioner Bissette seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Administrator Bissette advised that Phase 1 the Wellness Park Project is 95% complete. All grant funds have been spent and approximately \$4,500 of loan money remains. The picnic tables and benches are at the park awaiting

permanent placement once the walking track is completed. The Beautification Committee will landscape and place the benches.

Jim Hickman with NC Division of Solid Waste has given the ok to order 400 blue recycle carts with the recycle emblem and the town logo at a cost of \$50 per cart. Smaller blue bins will be furnished for elderly persons not needing the larger cart. All costs will be covered by grant funds, along with a lift arm fitted for the trash truck for emptying the carts. Recycle materials will be taken to Sunoco near Raleigh. Each cart has a serial number embossed and will be assigned to each residence. Recycle carts should arrive in 4-6 weeks after ordering. The Solid Waste Disposal Ban comes into effect on October 1, 2009 and recycling is mandatory. Exact policies will be discussed and the town ordinances amended and citizens notified in the near future.

Administrator Bissette requested quotes for 96 gallon lidded garbage cans from the same vendor. The price would be \$49.02, which would run about \$20,000, and would solve a lot of the town's current garbage problems. Mr. Hickman said a second lift arm could be installed on the trash truck to lift the cans and grant money would cover this as far as the money would go. Commissioner McClenny moved to purchase the recycle bins and the garbage cans. Commissioner Robinson seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Stimulus funds will be available in the near future for energy conservation. Bissette advised we could get windows, doors, heating and cooling systems, and light fixture replacements for town hall buildings, as well as street lights converted to more energy efficient lamps with 100% grant money. Everyone agreed that the town should apply for the funds.

New meters have arrived and are ready for installation. Computer and reader training is scheduled for October 20 and 21, 2009.

Only one bid was submitted for drilling Well #5 in the amount of \$24,750 from Letco, Inc., dba N.W. Poole, Wendell NC. If approved, drilling could begin August 17th, 2009. This cost includes drilling up to 450 feet, casing, and testing so the well is ready for the pump. Engineer Steve Scruggs placed a \$5,000 bid allowance also included in this cost to cover unforeseen problems and will be backed out if not needed. Scruggs also recommended \$1,000 be added for performance bonds, which would protect the town in the event of any unforeseen problem with the contractor. Commissioner Meacombs moved to award the bid to Letco, Inc., dba N.W. Poole, Wendell NC in the amount of \$25,750, which represents the base bid of \$24,750 and a \$1,000 contractor performance bond. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Bissette and carried unanimously.

Administrator Bissette advised the Board that Sergeant Murray is no longer driving a police car home as instructed by the Board, but he is getting called back in quite frequently on his days off and is not getting compensated. After a brief discussion, the Board realized Murray had not been punching his card when he came back, and therefore was not getting the two hour callback pay as stated in the personnel policy. Commissioner Bissette stated that when Steve Glover was Sergeant he never drove the car home and Chief Ferrell never brought up the issue, so he doesn't believe we should start allowing the practice now. Commissioner Hough agreed, stating everyone should be treated the same and did not think we should start a precedent for the future because we could have police officers living a substantial distance from town. Administrator Bissette added that one advantage for the town would be faster and safer response to an emergency. Murray suggested that both he and Glover drive cars home because they had vehicles assigned to them and one to the part time officers. Commissioner Hough stated he had rather pay for time. Murray advised the Board that it did not matter to him whether he got to drive a car home or received the two hour call back pay. The Commissioners instructed Murray to punch each and every time he came in on his day off and he would be compensated and the two hour callback applies each time. Commissioner Bissette moved to adhere to the two hour call back policy as it applies to all employees, including the police department. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Robinson and it carried unanimously.

A rate study comparing Middlesex water and sewer rates to Zebulon, Spring Hope, Bailey and Kenly rates was presented as requested by the Board at the July meeting. Also presented as requested was the final revenue versus expenditure analysis for fiscal year ending June 30, 2009. The water fund lost \$17,607.72, the sewer fund lost \$139,622.22, of which \$100,000 dollars was paid on the principal of sewer debt service. Administrator Bissette pointed out that this was money transferred from the General Fund and should be paid back.

There was a lengthy discussion on how changing the rate structure would effect various users. Commissioner Bissette's had presented several scenarios at previous meetings, and his proposal is to charge an accessibility fee to all users of \$8.10 for water and \$20.00 for sewer, leaving the water rate at \$4.00 per 1,000 gallons and lowering the sewer rate to \$10.00 per 1,000 gallons paying only for what you use (no minimums).

Administrator Bissette stated that Eaton Corporation would pay about \$500 to \$600 less with these rates, totaling over \$6,000 per year, that would have to come from the smaller, residential consumers shifting the burden to the little man.

Commissioner Meacombs stated that these new rates would definitely hurt the two, three, four, five and six thousand gallon customers and the larger users would pay less. He added that he was in favor of leaving the per gallon rate at the current rate, adding a flat accessibility fee, and pay for only what you use.

Commissioner Hough questioned the reasoning of the larger user paying less and Commissioner Bisette replied that was the way it should be-the more you use, the less you pay.

Mayor Lewis also presented several different proposals, each including a flat fee and pay as you use scenarios with no minimums, showing how much revenue would be generated by each for comparison. His figures were based on the average usage for January 2009 through July 2009. He added we should get what we need with this increase, stating that the reason we are at this point now is because we didn't go up a minimal amount each year.

Commissioner Bisette stated that we could not keep passing it all on to the customers, that we must cut costs, if that means cutting employees. Administrator Bisette stated that operations and budget were bare bones already. Commissioner Bisette disagreed stating he believes one person could be cut from the Utility budget and the Board had just voted to spend \$20,000 on trash cans, so we couldn't be operating bare bones. Administrator Bisette stated that she felt we could not get by if we cut one full time person.

Another discussion involved charging a flat fee for houses not connected to the system, charging the flat fee to empty rental houses, or when someone's water is turned off due to nonpayment. The majority was in agreement that a house not rented should not pay a flat fee. Customers not connected to the system should pay a flat fee, and accounts cut off for nonpayment must pay a flat fee each month. This is the same policy we currently use for minimum bills.

Commissioner Meacombs moved to increase the water rate to \$8.00 flat accessibility fee per month, \$4.00 per 1,000 gallons for only the quantity used with no minimum; sewer \$15.00 flat accessibility fee per month, \$13.00 per 1,000 gallons for only the quantity used, no minimum; and sanitation \$12.75 per month. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Robinson and carried unanimously. In summary, this increases sanitation \$1.00 per month, leaves the per gallon rates the same, adds the flat accessibility fees, and deletes the 2,000 gallon minimum.

Commissioner Robinson moved to go into Closed Session under G.S.143-318.11(a)(6) to review and discuss applications for the Town Administrator position.

Back in Open Session, Commissioner Bissette moved to reword the advertisement for the Town Administrator deleting the requirement for the Zoning Certification and adding the wording, "willing to obtain Zoning Certification", and advertise for thirty days online with ***The News and Observer***. Commissioner McClenny seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Being no further business, Commissioner Bissette moved to adjourn.

Jennifer Lambert
Clerk

Mayor Luther H. Lewis, Jr.
Commissioners
Harold Meacombs
Fred Hough
Luke Robinson
Derek Bissette
J.W. McClenny