

MINUTES OF THE WHITSETT PLANNING BOARD

February 7, 2023

Whitsett Town Hall

The meeting of the Whitsett Planning Board was held at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 7, 2023 at the Whitsett Town Hall. Those in attendance were Planning Board Chair Person Karen Horne, Board members Lane Williamson, Charles Sedoris, Milton Covington, Tyler Harris, Planning Board Alternate, Chip Bell as well as, Council Member Liaisons Jerry Rice and Craig York, Town Administrator Elaine Garner and Town Clerk Barbara York.

Planning Board Chair Person Karen Horne called the meeting to order at 6:00, noted that a quorum was present and asked for a volunteer to do the invocation. Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice gave the invocation.

REGULAR MEETING

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

There were no speakers from the floor.

OLD BUSINESS

- Chair Person Karen Horne asked if there was a motion to approve the January 3, 2023 minutes. The motion to accept the minutes was made by Planning Board Member Lane Williamson and seconded by Planning Board Member Tyler Harris and the minutes were approved unanimously.
- Planning Board Chair Karen Horne started the meeting by discussing utility billing, including the development fees, tap fees, etc. In order to decided upon those sorts of fees, the Town must first have a study created and done. In discussing this with a few engineering companies, it would be best for us to use a company that is already familiar with our system in Whitsett. Mrs. Horne then contacted Davis, Martin and Powell in High Point, which designed our water system and has thorough knowledge of our system. The only thing they do know have any knowledge about is the financial side of the water system. The goal for a water system is to be self-sustaining where we accrue the money for the system to run itself. Whitsett has a very small water system and we don't have many users to create a significant reserve to share all of the expenses that are incurred. This becomes significant when we add a development into our community and we didn't have their water plan upfront, we have lost some opportunity to help build that capitol reserve because now they are connecting to our system. This causes problems when we are trying to decide on fees that will sustain this water system. Mrs. Horne and Council Member Craig York have been researching to see if there is something in our old files that show that there was a study on our water system that is already documented. We need to know if there is a projection of potential expenses for maintaining a waterline in the future. We have to have the study done in order to know how to charge our customers fairly and the study needs to back up those charges. The smaller the community, the more it costs. The study has to prove why the costs are necessary and why they are important to our infrastructure. Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Rice stated he felt the fair way to bill customers would be charge them the cost of the setup plus a certain amount for administration fees instead of a specific charge for the setup, because that number is constantly changing. This topic is still a work in process; Mrs. Horne has asked Davis, Martin and Powell to give us an estimate on creating the study.
- Town Clerk Barbara York will be looking into different water system billing software to see what is the most appropriate for her to use when doing water billing. We need one that is compatible with a meter system that uses either drive-by or cellular systems, which ever system the Council opts for.
- Town Administrator Elaine Garner stated that she has been studying Swepsonville in relation to 160-D to get a better understanding.

NEW BUSINESS

- Chairman Karen Horne brought up the discussion of the water user agreement with the current agreement being outdated. Mrs. Horne referred the Board members to a new policy to take place of the outdated one. She asked if there were any questions or comments about the policy portion of the packet. Town Clerk Barbara York noted there were a few corrections to the agreement that more accurately reflect on the process she uses for water billing such as how many days in the billing cycle a client is late for their payment and the agreement also says the customer can now pay their bill using credit cards and we do not currently take credit cards at the Town Hall. Council Member Tyler Harris made a motion to adopt the new policy with the following changes. Water bill payments will be deemed late and a late charge added to the bill after 30 days once the bills are mailed to the customer. The Town Clerk will call any customer who has not paid by the 35th day and the water will be cut off on the 40th day of no payment (or on the next business days). After 60 days on no payment, the account will be terminated and their deposit will be forfeited. If the customer wishes to reapply for water, they will have to pay a new deposit fee. Council Member Milton Covington seconded that motion and it carried unanimously. If fees need to change in the future, only the Fee Schedule will need to be changed, not the water agreement.
- Next, Chair Person Karen Horne referred to the Rate Fee Schedule document and explained how the fees work. The total of the fees will currently remain the same (\$43.50). At the budget hearing, new rates can be discussed. Board member Charles Sedoris made a motion to accept this new fee schedule and Board Member Milton Covington seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.
- Chair Person Karen Horne next referred to the Water Utility Application form in the packets. It was suggested by Board Member Chip Bell that if the customer checks they are a tenant on the property, that there be a place designated for the owner of the property's name and contact information. After much discussion, Board Member Charles Sedoris made a motion that the Water Utility Application be accepted as it is with no changes. Board Member Milton Covington and the motion passed unanimously.
- There were no Speakers from the Floor who came to speak on this topic.
- Council Member Craig York addressed the Board saying that he and Karen Horne are in the process of reviewing the Book of Ordinances for the Town of Whitsett and he is asking that each Board member take three sections of the book to review and make any comments. We are hoping to have the finished update to the Ordinances ready for Council to approve in March. This book will be 160-D compliant. He will get these to the Board members this week.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Planning Board member Milton Covington made a motion to adjourn. Charles Sedoris seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Whitsett Planning Board is scheduled for Tuesday, March 7, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at the Whitsett Town Hall Building.

Chair Person Karen Horne

Vice Chair Person Charles Sedoris