

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN**  
**Special Meeting – Winter Board Retreat**  
**February 21, 2020**

**THE WAYNESVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN** held its Winter Board Retreat on Friday, February 21, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. in the Training Room of Public Services, 129 Legion Drive, Waynesville, NC.

**A. CALL TO ORDER SPECIAL MEETING**

Mayor Gary Caldwell called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with the following members present:

Mayor Gary Caldwell  
Mayor Pro Tem Julia Freeman – arrived at 8:44 a.m.  
Alderman Jon Feichter  
Alderman Anthony Sutton  
Alderman Chuck Dickson

The following staff members were present:

Rob Hites, Town Manager  
Amie Owens, Assistant Town Manager  
Eddie Ward, Town Clerk  
Ben Turnmire, Finance Director  
Dean Trader, Assistant Finance Officer  
Joey Webb, Fire Chief  
Brittany Angel, H.R. Specialist  
Jeff Stines, Interim Public Works Director  
Preston Gregg, Town Engineer  
Rhett Langston, Parks and Recreation Director  
Brian Beck, Interim Police Chief  
Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director – arrived at 8:48 am  
Jesse Fowler, Planner

The following media representatives were present:

Becky Johnson, The Mountaineer  
Cory Valliancort, Smoky Mountain News

Approval of Minutes from January 28<sup>th</sup> and February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020

***A motion was made by Alderman Anthony Sutton, Seconded by Alderman Jon Feichter to approve the minutes from the January 28<sup>th</sup> regular meeting and continued meeting and special meeting of February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 as presented. The motion carried unanimously.***

Six Month Budget Update

- Ben Turnmire, Finance Director

Finance Director Ben Turnmire provided a mid-year update for the Board. He explained that Revenues and Expenses for the general fund were as they should be for this point in the year. Mr. Turnmire highlighted some of the line items that were not within the mid-year threshold including:

**Governing Board Expenses** – this was due to the cost of the election, payment of all incoming and outgoing board members and the fact that the salaries have not been allocated across all funds at this time.

**Administration Expenses** – the cost of the remediation of the asbestos and the preliminary costs associated with the Municipal Building repairs (ServiceMaster clean up).

From a revenue standpoint, he noted that there are two outliers – Other Taxes and Licenses (Sales Tax) and All Other Revenues. The first is since there is a 3-month lag time between collection and allocation of sales tax to municipalities from the state. The second is from funds received from the insurance company for the Municipal Building repairs.

Mr. Turnmire moved to the Water Fund noting that there is a lag of 1 to 1.5 months with revenues as the collection of water bill monies falls after the bills are sent monthly. The fund is strong and well within budget currently.

The Finance Director explained that the Sewer Fund had seen an increase in the sewer rate in FY 19-20 which was showing steady revenue through six months. He reiterated that the sewer fund much like the water fund has a lag due to collection timing.

Mr. Turnmire discussed the Electric Fund and noted that due to a mild winter thus far, the power purchases were below expected which has helped to keep expenses lower than anticipated. A line item for All Other Revenues reflects funds provided to the Town by the NC Department of Transportation reimbursement for utility movement for upcoming projects.

### **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**

Finance Director Turnmire began discussion of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that had been updated noting that initially there were:

- Over 165 submissions
- \$33 Million over five years
- \$20.5 Million General Fund
- \$5.5 Million Sewer Fund
- \$1.8 Million Water Fund
- \$4.6 Million Electric Fund
- \$0.6 Million Internal Service Funds

The CIP is set up over a five-year period and is a projection of the financial capacity for the Town during this period. It is estimated that \$8.5 to \$10.5 million in new spending is possible. The CIP considers maintenance needs as well as service expansions/improvements and allows for exploration of various types of debt including bonds and short-term borrowing.

Mr. Turnmire noted that the forecast is based on assumptions related to revenue and expenditure growth as well as considering the externalities that the Town has no control over such as the national economic status. He provided explanations for each of the funds.

The General Fund reflects forecasted positive sales tax growth, assuming 7% property tax growth, flat transfers from other funds, debt service gradually decreasing but with increased expenses and projected use of fund balance in FY 20-21.

For the Water Fund, the five-year forecast looked at standard rate adjustments, minimal customer expansion, decrease in some debt service, flat capital spending and no interfund transfers.

The Sewer Fund carried the most change over the five-year period due primarily to the necessary renovations to the wastewater treatment facility. This accounts for additional debt service and rate increases required under the terms of the borrowing agreement from the State.

The Electric Fund remains stable and a source of internal transfers based on the health of the account. The forecast is for standard rate adjustments and the roll-off of substantial debt service in FY 23.

Finance Director Turnmire concluded the discussion related to the CIP by informing the Board of several considerations for the future including:

- The General Fund will continue to be pressured by expense growth.
- Impact of mandatory personnel increases (retirement contributions)
- Enterprise Funds must remain stable through constant rate analysis
- The Town must continue to examine the impact of debt to address capital needs
- Prepare reserves for economic retraction, and
- Analyze operational costs for efficiencies

Another topic that Mr. Turnmire was asked to analyze was the impact of a differential rate for memberships at the Waynesville Recreation Center. He highlighted the fact that a 25% increase in rates for those individuals who did not live within the town limits would yield \$110,000. The Parks and Recreation Department is not a revenue generating division and even with this addition of funds, would still require a supplement from the general fund to balance their budget of approximately \$440,000 for the upcoming fiscal year to break even.

#### Storm Water Discharge Fees

- Town Manager Rob Hites

Manager Hites explained that during last year's retreat, the staff presented a program to enhance the Town's storm water program. He said that one of the main attractions in the Waynesville area is the environment, and the Town wants to protect that. He said that as resources continue to get tighter, the pressure to keep Richland Creek free of debris and keep the trash from going into Lake Junaluska. Staff has developed a common utility proposal with a base fee (ERU) of \$2.00 per month for all residential customers and a commercial rate based on an area of impervious surface up to a capped rate. The fee will show on the customer's monthly utility statement. This will provide some help and release the pressure on the Town's General Fund.

In order to assess this fee, the Town must do a compilation of all the property inside the Town of Waynesville that would qualify for the stormwater fee by measuring the impervious service (services that does not allow water to infiltrate to the soil layer) area by square footage.

Manager Hites said there is an estimated 3,747 residential customers with a potential revenue of \$90,000 per year at \$2.00 per month. The commercial customers are estimated at 1,963 and have a potential revenue of \$170,855.28 per year with a \$7.18 per month charge with a cap of \$10.00 per month.

Some of the usage of the funding would include drain maintenance to prevent clogging, trash traps, curb inlet covers, stream relocation, and stream restoration. Also included would be public education, and participation, control of illicit and construction discharge, and pollution prevention.

Assistant Town Manager Amie Owens notified the Board that there are several considerations for the upcoming FY 20-21 budget and wanted them to have ample notice and information so that they were prepared for these increases.

#### Increase in Mandatory Retirement Contribution

- Assistant Town Manager, Amie Owens

Assistant Manager Owens reminded the Board that in January 2019 the NC Local Government Employee Retirement System (LGERS) board had passed an increase in the “base” employer contributions that went into effect on July 1, 2019. In order to reach the threshold established by NC LGERS, the contributions are mandated to be increased by 1.2% annually through FY 2022. The impact to the upcoming budget is \$110,000 or approximately one cent on the tax rate. This is not something that the Town can opt out of and contributions are not offset by any state funding.

Ms. Owens briefly discussed health insurance premium costs and the potential impact on the upcoming budget. The Medical Loss Ratio (MLR) is the amount of premiums paid versus the claims paid out. The insurance industry considers an 85% payout as a good number for little to no increase in premiums; the Town’s MLR at the same time last year was 141% and the increase received was 26.2%. However, in looking at the last 12 months of claims data, the MLR has been reduced dramatically and is back in the mid-90s. This still indicates a potential increase in premiums for the upcoming year, but not as substantial of an increase as in the previous year. Assistant Manager Owens, Finance Director Turnmire, Assistant Finance Director Dean Trader and HR Specialist Brittany Angel met with brokers in early February and while a renewal quote will not be received until mid-April, it is estimated that a 10% increase is possible. This would be an increase to the budget of approximately \$220,000.

Assistant Manager Owens explained that the current longevity program is not competitive within the region. HR Specialist Angel commented that she had participated in a regional study related to longevity programming and that Waynesville was much behind when it came to provision of a longevity incentive. The Board had a copy of the study in the packets for comparison. The recommended change to the longevity program included movement from an incremental dollar amount for those long-serving employees to a flat rate award in later years. The suggested structure is below:

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| • Hired on or after July 1, 2020 | No longevity pay between 0-5 years              |
| • Hired before July 1, 2020      | Base of \$25 and add \$10 per year (\$75 max)   |
| • 6 years to 10 years            | Base of \$100 and add \$25 per year (\$200 max) |
| • 11 to 15 years                 | Base of \$250 and add \$25 per year (\$350 max) |
| • 16 to 20 years                 | \$500 per year                                  |
| • 21 to 25 years                 | \$750 per year                                  |
| • 26 years and beyond            | \$1,000 per year                                |

The budgetary impact of this change would be approximately \$15,000 annually and would be divided among all funds. This would be included as part of the budget development process. Ms. Owens added that this small change can impact the retention of good employees.

### Time and Attendance System

- Assistant Manager Amie Owens

As part of the continued process of upgrading our technology platforms and to find efficiencies in processes, an automated time and attendance system is being considered. As far back as the 1990s, this has been discussed. The current process of recording payroll is inefficient. Employees must manually punch timecards, have them reviewed and signed off by supervisors, sent to Finance, individuals in Finance having to act as data entry clerks and add the information to the MUNIS system for payroll, and then process the payroll. By implementing an automated time and attendance system, with direct upload to MUNIS, there is less room for error, ease in payroll processing and an added layer of audit protections. Ms. Angel added that from a safety perspective, if there was an emergency, it would be easy to know who is currently working and who may be out that day. While a cost has not been determined for this upgrade, information will be brought back to the board during the budget process for approval.

Alderman Anthony Sutton asked if the scanner used for the clocking in and out could be a knuckle scanner as it is more accurate. Ms. Owens will ask about this and other related technologies as part of the due diligence.

### Pay and Classification Study/Career Track

- Assistant Manager Amie Owens

Assistant Manager Owens began by noting that the next two items would be combined to better illustrate some requested changes. The last pay and classification study were completed in 2005/2006 with projected implementation in 2007. However, the economic downturn occurred and the changes to the pay grades did not occur. At that time, the required funding was approximately \$300,000 to reclassify positions and the study cost \$48,000.

As time has passed and various programs including Career Track and Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) have occurred, the compression that was seen over a decade ago has continued to worsen. For example: a new fire fighter hired in at base rate makes only \$0.10 less per hour than a five-year serving fire fighter. An assistant division director who can still receive Career Track adjustments adds to the compression because department directors are ineligible for Career Track.

Ms. Owens noted that Career Track is successful for those departments who already have structured promotional and certification programs (Police, Fire, Water/Sewer in Public Services); but administrative departments and those who are generally service oriented such as streets and sanitation and meter readers do not have the opportunity to complete additional trainings as they cannot modify work schedules and keep up with the service demands. There needs to be a revamp of the Career Track process for these departments to ensure that merit increases can be obtained.

Assistant Manager Owens used information on department director salaries as an example. Currently most department directors are within the recommended salary ranges; however, those that are not are well below market for their positions. The Town needs to include gender and equity review for all positions.

Alderman Sutton stated he felt that the emphasis should be placed on getting the gender inequality fixed before the lower wages.

Alderman Freeman stated that the employees of the Town are our biggest asset, and you must pay quality to get quality. Referring to the market for Towns of the same size and jobs, she felt that this is not right, and we need to do something to get it fixed by pay those for the job the employees are doing and pay a competitive wage.

Manager Hites told everyone that Assistant Manager Owens is not only an Assistant Manager, but she does four different jobs every day including IT director, Risk Manager, PIO and the Human Resource Director. He gave other examples of lack of competitive pay among the Town's Department Heads.

***A motion was made by Alderman Anthony Sutton, seconded by Alderman Julia Freeman, to proceed with an RFQ for a pay study within the current budget year. The motion carried unanimously.***

#### Street Condition Study

- Town Engineer, Preston Gregg

Alderman Jon Feichter said that last year he had spoken with the Public Works Director David Foster (retired) about PCR (Pavement Condition Rating) which is a study that is done periodically and gives the Town an overall analysis of the condition of the streets. This study was done in 2011 and 2015. He said he would like to see data about the streets now because there has been so many comments about the condition of the streets.

Mr. Gregg explained how the PCR works. He said that every street in Town is evaluated and scored. The scores range from 80-90, which is good, 70 is fair, and 50-60 is poor condition. At the last rating, the Town scored 84 and across the state the average was 80. He said the Town was due for another evaluation in 2020, and this will be a guide for staff to prioritize which streets need repair.

***A motion was made by Alderman Jon Feichter, seconded by Alderman Anthony Sutton, to proceed with sending out an RFQ for the Pavement Condition Rating Study in this budget year. The motion carried unanimously.***

There was much discussion concerning the moving of utilities and repaving Pigeon Street. Mr. Gregg stated that NCDOT was reviewing plans that were completed by Mattern and Craig. The Board had questions about milling and filling the pavement. Mr. Gregg said he would advise against that because of the close location of the utilities to the top of the pavement, which will probably damage the Town's water lines. He said the estimate for correcting the problems along Pigeon Street is about \$2.1 million dollars. Of that amount approximately \$620,000.00 would be for moving the utilities. He said that hopefully the Town could partner with NCDOT and they would pay for the paving of the street and the Town pay for moving the utilities. There is no timeframe for this project.

#### East Street Traffic Issues

- Alderman Jon Feichter & Preston Gregg, Town Engineer

Mr. Gregg explained to the Board that the Town has received many complaints from Ms. Christine Kavanagh, 657 East Street, concerning issues on that street, including speeding, traffic calming devices, and restricting truck traffic. He said he met with Ms. Kavanagh on site to discuss these issues. A speed study was installed for several days to determine the traffic speed on the street. The top speed that was recorded was 27 miles per hour. J.M. Teague was hired to do an independent traffic study to determine

if speed bumps were needed, and they did not recommend due to the topography and curves of the road. He said that East Street is a cut through route, and in order to restrict truck traffic, the Town would need to ban nonlocal truck traffic where East Street intersects at Main and the Old Hospital, and where East Street intersects at Main and Town Hall.

Allens Creek Sidewalk Repair and Extension

- Development Services Director, Elizabeth Teague

Elizabeth Teague, Development Services Director, told the Board that in the Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan for the Town of Waynesville, which was adopted in February of 2010, a sidewalk is proposed to continue south along Allen’s Creek Road toward the County Park at 1725 Allen’s Creek Road. The project has been on the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization (FBRMPO) Transportation Plan and is being recommended for State and Federal Transportation Funding as part of the Strategic Transportation Prioritization Program (or SPOT). The existing sidewalk ends in front of Allen’s Creek Baptist Church.

Ms. Teague stated that this project would provide connectivity for growing residential development in the area and improve the safety of pedestrians and children waiting for the school bus along the roadway. The challenge will be that there is not a lot of right-of-way and easements would need to be obtained from multiple property owners (27) as well as addressing driveway aprons and drainage issues. The Town tried to continue this sidewalk several years ago and was unsuccessful in obtaining easements.

Length estimates:

Allen’s Creek Baptist church (near Piney Mountain Road) to Buchanan Drive and new subdivision	1690’
Buchanan to Lickstone Drive =	630’
Lickstone to Municipal Boundary =	690’
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,010’</b>

*Note: Municipal Boundary to the Park (APAC site) = 2,860’*

The FBRMPO Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) recommends this project be added to the SPOT program.

Calvary/Craven Park Completion/Funding

- Alderman Jon Feichter

Alderman Feichter said he would like to see funding allocated to the completion of the Calvary/Craven Park. Ms. Teague said that with the \$60,000.00 that has already been allocated, park furnishings, pavilion, slab, and basic on street parking improvements could be completed. She told the Board that staff is applying for a Medford Fund Grant for playground equipment. Once that grant is received, she said it could be determined how much the gap would be, and possibly put together another budget request. She said that staff tried, with the existing money, to see if the basketball court could be built. Because of the steepness of the site, everything that everybody wanted could not be build on the site. She said the committee had agreed that the pavilion was the most important piece of the park.

Rescind Vehicle Fee

- Alderman Jon Feichter

Alderman Feichter said that he has heard a lot of vocal concerns about the \$15.00 vehicle fee that was implemented last year. He said that he had posted a poll on his Facebook page asking how many people supported the vehicle tax, and how many people would be in favor of rescinding the fee if it meant the pace of street repair would be slowed down. He said that of the 41 people who responded, 22% of the people said the fee should be rescinded, and 74% of the people said to keep the fee. Most people were concerned about the condition of some of the streets and wanted to keep the fee. He also received comments from people who are on fixed incomes, and it is hard to pay this fee. Alderman Feichter said he would be in favor of rescinding the fee and increase the amount of funding for the street maintenance.

Alderman Chuck Dickson stated the third option would be a bond referendum to get our streets up to the level they need to be.

The Board discussed the possibility of designating the \$10.00 portion from the fee to be set aside and used for specific projects. This would be a way that the public could see how the Vehicle Fee is being used. Alderman Dickson suggested this information could be distributed in a proposed newsletter. Alderman Feichter agreed that we need to be better at keeping the public informed as to where their tax dollars are being used.

Assistant Town Manager Amie Owens interjected that a budget amendment had been signed recently for a tool that can be used to show the information that is being requested. She said that staff was working on implementing that software now.

#### CAPRA Announcement

- Parks and Recreation Director, Rhett Langston

Parks and Recreation Director, Rhett Langston stated that his staff has been working on CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation) for several years. He said that for or five weeks ago staff had submitted to go before a review committee. He said he had just heard that it had passed the review committee and the next step would be a visitation to the Recreation Center.

#### Cost of Reducing Commercial Fire Rating

- Fire Chief, Joey Webb

Fire Chief Webb gave a brief summary of what ISO (Insurance Service Office) is and how the Fire Department can improve their rating. He said this is a rating system for fire departments and their surrounding communities. In the ISO scale, a lower number is better. He said there are many variables that connected with the grade. Inspections are done approximately every 5 years and the last inspection for Waynesville was done in 2016. Currently the Fire Department is rated as a 4-9-E which means that this is an extended area because of one property that is just out of the 5-mile range.

Chief Webb referred to the Summary of Public Protection Classification Review for Waynesville. He reviewed with the Board members the 2016 rating which shows the earned credit and he explained several ways that the fire Department can receive a better rating. He said that lack of available staffing who can drive the ladder truck, hampers receiving a higher rating. He said there is a problem nation wide finding volunteers. The lowest rating the Town received was in the Credit for Company Personnel, where ISO always wants twelve firefighters on a structure fire. Another area lacking is the training credit. ISO requires 240 training hours for new recruits. He said it is sometimes difficult to get all the training in.



Chief Webb discussed the two men in – two men out when at a structure fire, and said they rely on trained volunteers, and mutual aid from other fire departments.

#### Affordable Housing Debt Issuance

- Alderman Chuck Dickson

Alderman Dickson stated he had talked with the Waynesville Housing Authority concerning affordable workforce housing and trying to find a way for the Town to assist in helping provide housing that people could buy and become part of the Town's tax base and provide a revolving fund. With a bond referendum in the future, we could possibly have funds for affordable housing. The Town could raise money for a leverage with the Waynesville Housing Authority.

#### Plans to Reduce Flooding in Hazelwood Basin

- Alderman Chuck Dickson

Alderman Dickson said there are numerous problems with flooding around the Finance Department, and in Hazelwood. He asked Manager Hites and Interim Public Services Director Jeff Stines to go over any plans and costs for remedying the flooding problem.

Manager Hites said that because of the increase in the amounts of rain we have been receiving, this problem has gotten much worse. Personnel have spent a lot of time cleaning culverts and drains. Prior Public Services Director David Foster had advised that there was a need for an additional large culvert underneath the railroad track because the current culvert serves as the dam which pulls the stormwater off Brown and Hazelwood Avenues into the creek.

NC DENR advised the Town that in order to borrow money for the Wastewater Treatment Plant, unless a significant component to remove the infiltration and inflow of creek water into the plant is established. He said that the push got diverted from just stormwater to finding leaks in the sewer system. In doing smoke testing of the sewer system, there are connections between stormwater sewer and sanitary sewer. As a result, in dealing with the Hazelwood Basin, it has been diverted to the sewer inflow,

Mr. Stines stated that the first thing was to figure out where the inflow and infiltration was getting into the sewer, and that was being done with cameras. They discovered failing pipes, root intrusion, and undersized catch basins. He said that moving forward, these areas need to be addressed for both situations. He has reached out to Haywood Waterways for some stream restoration, to get the water out quicker and with better velocity for drainage and staff is identifying points of concern, and size of pipes for the stormwater.

Manager Hites said that repairing the inflow and infiltration in Hazelwood is still in the assessment stage.

#### Garbage Collection/Recycling

- Town Manager, Rob Hites and Alderman Chuck Dickson

Manager Hites explained that the issue of converting our sanitation collection system to one with either 65 or 95 gallon roll out cans has been an item of discussion for several years.

While we have an attractive Town in general our method of sanitation pickup creates an "unkept" look in many parts of Town. Citizens leave their 30-gallon cans and even bags of trash on the street right of way

all week causing messy conditions in neighborhoods. They use any manner of 30-gallon cans including wooden bins that hold cans and bags. On recycling day bags of recyclables remain on the right of way a good portion of the day. The effect of this is to give many parts of our town a messy, unsanitary look.

He said that on a staffing level, the most dangerous job in municipal government is that of "Sanitation Collector". Picking up 30-gallon cans of varying weights causes frequent lower back injuries and riding the back of the truck is extremely dangerous. Most municipalities including those in Western NC have converted to a 95 gallon "rollout" container that is picked up by a hydraulic lift rather than a staff member. The recycling industry is collapsing due to the rejection of US recyclables by China. There is increased criticism of the "single stream" process because people are leaving food waste in their plastic containers. I recommend the Town hold off purchase of blue containers until the industry settles down. If recyclables end up in the landfill our purchase of \$450,000 in blue cans may be in vain.

Should the Town wish to convert it would develop a set of specifications and bid the cans out. Cans purchased in excess of 5,000 usually can get them for approximately \$75. In Waynesville that would amount to approximately \$450,000. The Town would purchase the hydraulic lifts for the existing trucks (\$3,000 each) and the vendor would be responsible to putting them out. Hopefully the Town could apply for the same grant that other Western NC Towns have received to purchase the recycling rollouts.

The Town would provide one can to each household and one to each business that currently uses cans to dispose of their waste. Old cans would be picked up by the loose trash and furniture crews.

For people that have handicapped stickers and cannot rollout their cans the staff would rollout their cans before the truck comes by and return it afterwards.

Manager Hites told the Board that the town has purchased two rear loaders that can be retrofitted with the hydraulic lifts to handle 95-gallon cans. One has been delivered and we expect the second in early summer. We would have to borrow the funds to purchase the cans. A \$450,000 loan at 3.5% interest over a ten-year period would cost approximately \$54,109 annually.

He said that as we approach the subject the Board would need to determine if 65- or 95-gallon cans would be best. They would also need to determine if cans will be permitted to stay on the curbs or must be removed beside the buildings.

#### Fund Grant Writer

- Alderman Chuck Dickson

Alderman Dickson said that currently Department Heads for the Town write grants and that is not what they are paid to do. Grant writing requires a skill set, and a lot of time. He said he would like to look at creating a position for a grant writer. That person could also serve as a fund raiser, and to focus on areas. He said this would be a great help to staff and bring in more money for different projects.

Alderman Julia Freeman stated that she felt that there were so many other projects that the Town is facing right now at great costs, that it is not feasible to add a new position and the grant writing could be outsourced.

Manager Hites said that each department had its own lingo that they use. It would be difficult for a grant writer to do the different language for each department. He said he would need to get the department heads together and see if they would like to hire a grant writer or continue writing their own grants.

Alderman Dickson added that Western Carolina University is creating a new master's program in Experiential and Outdoor Education. That program will create more interns that could possibly be utilized in the Town.

#### Newsletter

- Alderman Chuck Dickson

Alderman Dickson said that Assistant Manager Owens had a proposal to do a bi-annual newsletter and to put it on the website. He said he would like to have the Town start doing the newsletter, and place items like the Pigeon Street project in it. He said to look at the cost of sending it to all utility accounts. Another suggestion is that a guide like what the Recreation Department does by placing it in the Mountaineer newspaper. He said that later maybe it could be done by email and done quarterly.

#### Change Public Comment to Start of Meeting

- Alderman Chuck Dickson

Alderman Dickson expressed a concern that currently if the Pubic wishes to make a comment about a subject, they are having to wait until the end of the meeting to do so in the Public Comment Period. He suggested changing the Public Comment period to the first of the meeting so that the person wishing to comment does not have to sit through the whole meeting to speak. He also indicated that there should be a sign-up sheet given to the Town Clerk before the meeting starts, with their name and the subject they wish to address, so the Mayor can recognize them.

Mayor Caldwell said he would rather have the comment period at the end instead of the beginning, but he is willing to try it for a period.

***A motion was made by Alderman Chuck Dickson, seconded by Alderman Joh Feichter, to move the Public Comment section to the beginning of the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.***

#### Amendment of Town Charter for Staggered Terms

- Alderman Chuck Dickson

Alderman Dickson stated that the subject of staggered terms had been discussed for the last two retreats and he wished to bring it up again. There was much discussion concerning a memo from Town Attorney Bill Cannon stating that in his opinion that the amendment can be adopted by Ordinance in accordance with N. C. General Statutes 160A-101 and 102.

Mayor Caldwell said he was not in favor of staggered terms for several different reasons, one of which is the cost of the election to the Town which would increase with staggered terms.

Alderman Dickson said the reason he felt it would be better for the Town is to promote continuity, because there could be complete turn over of the Board. He said staggered terms could be implemented at the next election four years from now. The top two candidates would be elected for 4 years, and the low vote getters would have 2-year terms. At that point there would be elections every two years.

Alderman Feichter stated he would be in favor of staggered terms, and he reminded the Board that other municipalities in Haywood County have staggered terms.

The consensus of the Board was that there needed to be more research on the subject.

#### Comments from the Board

Mayor Caldwell asked for comments from the staff and Board, and there was discussion about the new donut shop in Hazelwood, staff changes in the Recreation Department, and Captain Brian Beck's retirement reception on March 10, 2020.

Manager Hites said that he had met with Bolton Heating and Air concerning negotiating a contract to place two 40 thousand BTU's condensers to handle the humidity in the pool area of the Recreation Department at a cost of approximately \$700,000.00. The pool will have to be closed for two weeks for the removal of the old system and the installation of two new condensers.

Manager Hites and Assistant Manager Owens have met with contractor and went over prices for the renovation of the Municipal Building. They discussed places where some costs can be cut. They wish to bring a menu back to the Board and ask what items they would like to have inserted into the contract. He said that the bid was \$200,000.00.

Assistant Manager Owens reminded the Board that they needed to complete the Ethics Training for Elected Officials and return it to the Town Clerk. As of now, there has only been one Board member that has completed the training. She asked that the training be completed by the end of March.

Alderman Feichter stated that he thanked the staff for the work that has been put into the Retreat and said this has been the most informative in the five years he has been involved.

#### Adjourn

***With no further business, a motion was made by Alderman Jon Feichter, seconded by Alderman Anthony Sutton, to adjourn the meeting at 2:48 pm. The motion carried unanimously.***

ATTEST:

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Gary Caldwell, Mayor

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Robert W. Hites, Jr. Town Manager

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Eddie Ward, Town Clerk