



**LUCAMA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2023
LUCAMA TOWN HALL
BOARD ROOM**

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Mayor, Jeff Johnson, (hereinafter “Mayor Johnson”) called to order the regular meeting of the Town of Lucama Board of Commissioners (hereinafter “Board”) at 6 pm on April 3, 2023.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Johnson conducted roll call – by use of sign-in. The following were present:

Commissioner, Michael Best (hereinafter “Comm. Best”)
Commissioner, David Johnson (hereinafter “Comm. Johnson”)
Commissioner, Peggy Lamm (hereinafter “Comm. Lamm”)
Commissioner, Judy Mason (hereinafter “Comm. Mason”)
Commissioner, Keely Pate (hereinafter “Comm. Pate”) via phone conference
Town Administrator, Darlene Newsome (hereinafter “Admin. Newsome”)
Town Clerk, Dena Owens (hereinafter “Clerk Owens”)
Town Attorney, Gabe DuSablou (hereinafter “Attorney Dusablou”)

3. Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting

Mayor Johnson gave the Board opportunity to review the proposed minutes from the March 6, 2023, meeting and monthly financial report.

MOTION: Comm. Johnson made motion to approve the March 6, 2023, meeting minutes and financial report; seconded by Comm. Lamm. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

4. Welcoming of Guests and Public Comments

Mayor Johnson welcomed guests.

Ted Orrell and Louis Davis of Utility Technology Engineers – Consultants were at the meeting to introduce themselves and the company they work for. Kevin O’Donnell with Nova Energy Consultants will soon be retiring, and he suggested that UTECH be the firm to take over representing the Board as the energy consultant. Mr. Orrell presented brochures giving information about UTECH. The

company, headquartered in Asheboro, North Carolina, is a full range firm providing electrical engineering design, analysis, consulting, and construction services to utilities, corporations, cooperatives municipalities and industries. The areas that the Town would be most interested in are the areas that Nova covered, i.e., reports, cost of service, rate studies, and possible hedging on gas prices.

UTECH also has subsidiary companies, Computer Consulting Group and Facility Consulting Group. Mr. Orrell mentioned these subsidiaries to help the Board understand the range of what is available under UTECH's management.

Louis Davis will be the contact available for the Town. He will be available for the Town for any questions or needs.

Comm. Johnson mentioned that Kevin would give the Town notice a couple of months ahead of time if there was a price change that would be coming. He asked if UTECH would give the same service. Mr. Orrell said that the company would keep the Town apprised of what will be ahead, i.e., changes in gas prices, changes in wholesale rates, etc.

Admin. Newsome questioned when Mr. O'Donnell steps down completely what the next step for the Town to take. UTECH will draw up a contract and will send it to the Board to review. The contract will identify what the billing rates will be, but some of the routine services may be billed monthly. All the areas will be examined. There may be special projects that have special billing costs if needed by the Town.

Comm. Johnson asked if the gentlemen were also talking with the other towns in the area such as Black Creek, Saratoga, Stantonsburg. Currently UTECH has visited Black Creek, Stantonsburg, and Sharpsburg.

Comm. Lamm mentioned that if Kevin trusts UTECH, she feels like the Town could as well.

Mayor Johnson suggested that UTECH return contracts to the Admin. Newsome for the Town Attorney to review. Mr. Orrell concurred.

Joe Dooley with the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Government was at the meeting to report on the Drinking Water grant that is nearing completion. He mentioned that there are two other grants that have been awarded for the Town, one for drinking water and one for clean water. The newer drinking water grant is about to pop with couple of little projects. It encompasses the water line replacement on Spring, Campbell, Little Rock Church Road, and the elevated storage tank. The award made by the State for the Town was \$1,450,000, which was the amount applied for. Due to the way the grant was structured, \$500,000 is a loan with principal forgiveness. The balance of the funds will be a loan. To receive the loan, the Town must be current with audits. At a recent seminar, Mr.

Dooley questioned if the Town could use its own resources to put up the difference between the two. The answer was yes. At a meeting a week or so earlier, Mr. Dooley spoke with the Town CPA, James Overton, explaining the situation as well as talking to the Mayor and Town Administrator. The consensus is that it would be well worth it for the Town to put up between \$600,000 and \$900,000 to get the free \$500,000. Mr. Dooley has spoken with Rich Moore of McDavid and Associates, the Town's engineer. The numbers keep changing daily. Mr. Dooley recommends that the Town consider putting up the difference between the \$1,450,000 and the \$500,000. The loan could be a 20-to-30-year loan. The first payment would not be for nearly a year and a half. Rich feels like the job can be done for \$1,450,000, but Mr. Dooley feels that there is always room for negotiation.

Mr. Dooley did mention to Mark Hubbard, who handles the finances of the grant, that the Town would be very inclined to put up the difference between the \$600,000 and \$900,000 to get a free \$500,000.

Mr. Dooley was uncertain of what would be done with the Clean Water Grant. Mr. Hubbard suggested possibly doing both grants simultaneously, however, Mr. Dooley felt it would be better to do one grant at a time.

Mark Hawley was at the meeting to speak with the Board to consider lighting the streetlights back in the Gabriel's Way subdivision. The streetlights were recently disconnected. His concern was for the children walking and waiting for the school bus, but also for residents and first responders who may be called to the area.

Admin. Newsome mentioned that she had spoken with the linemen and because the lines are underground, the men cannot do the lighting in the area. She suggested that the neighborhood form an HOA.

Stephanie Creech of the Gabriel's Way neighborhood said that she felt the residents would agree to pay the money. Much discussion was rendered regarding the streetlights.

It was mentioned that the previous minutes from the previous meeting stated that it was adopted that the Town create an urban lighting rate of \$2.41 per resident.

Mayor Johnson told the residents attending that the Board and Attorney would visit the discussion again, would come up with a solution and would send a letter to the residents.

5. Departmental Reports

Comm. Mason reported that the Fire Department had 11 first responder calls and five automotive accident calls. There was assistance given to other departments. It was a good month for Crossroads. There were 40 calls total.

Comm. Mason reported the electric department had been cutting trees and branches away from the lines, preparing for hurricane season.

For the water and sewer report, Comm. Johnson mentioned that Lamar, with Crocker Contractors, continues to do work on manholes to find inflow and infiltration issues. He will redo the manhole near the truck stop. Comm. Johnson mentioned that there had been a death of one of the Crocker Contractors employees.

Comm. Pate reiterated the need for the town ordinances being followed regarding the cleaning up of junk cars, trailers, properties, etc.

Comm. Pate gave information that the Sheriff's Department reported calls for the month. There were 268 total calls, 234 were self-initiated and 34 calls for service. The report also showed 22 traffic stops.

Comm. Best mentioned that work has begun preparing the park for the upcoming Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 8th. The event will be from 11 am – 3 pm, weather permitting. He mentioned that two new grills had been ordered as well as two toddler swings. The portable toilets and handwashing stations had been delivered. Mulch is planned to be delivered next week on Wednesday.

Comm. Lamm reported that the door count for the Library in February was 280, reference questions 70, computer usage was 24, there were 419 materials checked out and nine library cards issued. There were 23 patrons served in the Leg Up Leprechaun themed program. During the month of April there will be a program entitled "Spring Is in the Air." A story time is planned for the 20th at 10:30 am and then an activity later that day at 3:30 regarding Earth Day.

Comm. Lamm mentioned that everything is going well at the Community Building and did have any issues to report. She mentioned that all concerns are handled as soon as they are reported.

6. Updates

Admin. Newsome reported that work is slated to begin on the sidewalks on Monday of the following week. A letter will be given to residents regarding no driving over the newly poured cement.

Admin. Newsome mentioned that the Town is currently working on a grant for the new community park. The initial cost per for a three-year period is \$61,974 per year as is required to match 50 percent. There will need to be a meeting on the 13th at 5:15 for Board approval.

MOTION: Comm. Best made motion to schedule a PARTF meeting for approval on April 13th at 5:15 pm; seconded by Comm. Mason. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

7. Closed Session

Mayor Johnson requested that the Board go into closed session pursuant to NCGS §143-318.11 regarding personnel matters.

MOTION: Comm. Best made motion to move into closed session; seconded by Comm. Mason. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

MOTION: Comm. Johnson made motion to increase pay for the following employees by 5% - Thom Goff, Eddie Evans, Spencer Floars, and Tim Howell provided there be a change in the Employment policy to put a cap on salaries as should be; seconded by Comm. Johnson. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

8. Re-opening of Open Session

MOTION: Comm. Best made motion to adjourn the closed session and move back to open session; seconded by Comm. Pate. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

The residents of Gabriel's Way once again questioned turning the streetlights back on in the neighborhood for safety reasons, especially since it was voted upon at the previous meeting to charge each resident a fee for the lights. The Board agreed to turn the streetlight back on, but mentioned that the Town Attorney would need to study the concerns around the Town's linemen not being able to work on the underground lines, possibly including a charge for the possibility to maintenance, etc.

9. Adjournment

Mayor Johnson adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:33 pm, April 3, 2023, upon motion of Board.

MOTION: Motion was made to adjourn by Comm. Best; seconded by Comm. Mason. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Respectfully Submitted: Dena Owens, Town Clerk