



**LUCAMA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY, DECEMBER 4, 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 December 4, 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 Elect, Kim Joyner (hereinafter “Comm. Joyner”)
Commissioner Elect, Jody Teague (hereinafter “Comm. Teague”)
Mayor Elect, Matthew Creech (hereinafter “Mayor Creech”)
Town Administrator, Darlene Newsome (hereinafter “Admin. Newsome”)
Town Clerk, Dena Owens (hereinafter “Clerk Owens”)
Billing Clerk, Ashleigh Hooks (hereinafter “Clerk Hooks”)
Town Attorney, Gabe DuSablón (hereinafter “Attorney Dusablón”)

3. Amending of Agenda

Attorney DuSablón mentioned a need to amend the agenda. He stated that Comm. Pate had given him a letter indicating that he was resigning from his position as Town Commissioner, dated today’s date and given to the Town Clerk a few hours before the meeting. He suggested that the Board amend the agenda to include acceptance of the resignation, requiring a vote, and discussion of a replacement. Attorney DuSablón mentioned that the approval of the agenda and structure is up to the Board. He suggested if it was put in after the swearing in of the new Board members that it would be the new Board who would be deciding and discussing the resignation and potential replacement of Comm. Pate for the remainder of his term. Additionally, he mentioned that the December meeting is what is called the organizational meeting and there must be a place on the agenda to select a mayor pro tem, which would need to happen after the swearing-in of the new Board. He suggested adding an agenda item to discuss the acceptance of the resignation of Comm. Pate and discussion of potential replacement. Those

are two separate items. There should be room for discussion for the organizational meeting components such as assigning a new mayor pro tem, as well as departmental assignments. As a matter of procedure, there should be a vote on adopting the amended agenda. Admin. Newsome suggested amending the agenda and allowing the new Board members the opportunity to select a replacement for Comm. Pate's term. Attorney DuSablou mentioned that the resignation could be accepted now with the current Board and have the new Board take up the consideration for his replacement.

Agenda Amendment

- Call to Order
- Acceptance of Resignation
- Approval of Minutes and Financial Report
- Welcome Guests
- Public Comments
- Departmental Reports
- Town Administrator Report
- Swearing in of New Board
- Potential Board Replacement for Comm. Pate
- Mayor Pro Tem Assignment
- Departmental Assignments
- Requests for Board Approval
- Adjournment

Attorney DuSablou suggest amending the agenda to include as an agenda item before the approval of the minutes a vote to accept the resignation of Comm. Pate, adding an agenda item after swearing in the new Board members a discussion of potential replacement of Comm. Pate and adding an agenda item of discussion of mayor pro tem and departmental assignments.

MOTION: Comm. Mason moved to amend the agenda as the attorney stated; seconded by Comm. Best. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

4. Acceptance of Comm. Pate's Resignation

Attorney DuSablou read the letter to the Board and Citizens of Comm. Pate's resignation.

Comm. Pate's letter states: "Dear Board. It is with heavy heart that I must resign from my position as Town Commissioner due to personal medical reasons. I have enjoyed my position and have taken it seriously because of my love for our town. Thank you to the Town citizens for entrusting me with this opportunity to serve you. Sincerely, Edward Keely Pate.

MOTION: Comm. Best made motion to accept Comm. Pate's resignation; seconded by Comm. Mason. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

5. Approval of Minutes of Last Meetings

Mayor Johnson gave the Board an opportunity to review the proposed minutes from the Nov. 6, 16, and 20, 2023, meetings and monthly financial report.

MOTION: Comm. Mason made motion to approve the Nov. 6, 16, and 20, 2023, meeting minutes and financial report; seconded by Comm. Johnson. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

6. Welcome Guests

Mayor Johnson welcomed Betsy Kane with Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments.

Ms. Kane is a planner with the UPCOG. Ben Farmer is the head of her department. She mentioned that the COG has been working with the Town on several projects and wanted to take the opportunity, due to the changes in elected leadership, to review the COG's role and work with the Town, as well as give a status report, but mainly to familiarize the Board with the Council and their work with Lucama.

She mentioned that some may know the Council as primarily a grant application and administration partner. Although the Council does a great deal of that type of work, she felt it prudent to give material in her presentation. The department that she works in with the COG is called Planning and Development Services, but they are also the area Agency on Aging. They have a workforce development board and are the designated Economic Development local partner for five counties. They work with the US Department of Commerce in Economic Development administration.

Ms. Kane stated that one very important aspect of their work with the towns and counties they serve is the provision of information about State and Federal programs that may be of interest to local governments. They can include grant making programs and loan programs as well. They are in constant contact with State and Federal Agencies to stay abreast of what grant and loan opportunities are available to help the local governments with their priorities and projects. They regularly make contacts with local governments to disseminate information about what grants are available to be obtained, what loan programs, and often they will hear from communities that they feel one may be of interest to them. Ms. Kane mentioned that a lot of their work is water and sewer, but they also do many other things such as broadband, economic development and others.

She mentioned that the Towns that get more out of their Council of Governments are the ones that stay in touch with them. They try to cultivate good relationships with all their local governments. Some are more successful than others because they are also pursuing the relationship on their side and expressing interest in working with them. More information was shared with the Board regarding the work of the UPCOG.

Ms. Kane shared with the Board the current projects with the Town and UPCOG. They include:

- American Rescue Plan Act – technical assistance
- CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization grant (awarded 2020) to replace 3 – 4 Low/Moderate Income homes - \$747,500
- NCDEQ Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund - \$500,000 grant, \$905,000 loan – water line repair (up to 3 streets) and new water storage tank
- NCDEQ Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund - \$500,000 grant, \$967,500 loan – line repair on up to 11 streets
- Bank Building re-use – potential to assist, primary provider is NC Commerce / Bruce Naegelen

Ms. Kane mentioned that the UPCOG is pleased with the progress that the Town has made. She mentioned that the Town had worked very hard over the last few years to turn some things around that had not been going well. A great deal of progress has been made and the COG wanted to acknowledge the work and pledge their assistance in helping the elected officials and staff continue to make the good work happen for the Town.

7. Public Comments

Garry Wright declined to comment and stated he sent an email to address some of his concerns.

8. Departmental Reports

Comm. Mason reported that the Fire Department had a total of 12 first responder calls, five auto accidents, a gas leak, and a total of 32 calls. For the year, the department has responded to 356 calls.

For the water and sewer report, Comm. Johnson mentioned that the water tech stated that all the water samples had come back good. The pump at the Cabin Branch station had been replaced. He mentioned that with it having been a dry month, the cost of treatment and capacity should be lower.

Comm. Pate was not in attendance. Admin. Newsome reported for the Sheriff's Department that there were 206 calls total. There were 177 self-initiated calls and 29 calls for service.

Regarding beautification, Admin. Newsome mentioned that the park had been decorated, as well as down Main Street. All work was done in time for the Jingle in the Park event. She mentioned that the Town's Public Works Employees had done a great job of getting the work completed.

Comm. Best mentioned that the park looks very good and thanked all who helped worked to make it look nice. He mentioned that the Jingle in the Park event had taken place the previous Friday night. He felt the event was a great success. He thanked Jody Teague, Kim Flowers Joyner, Marci Smart, Clerk Owens, Mayor Johnson and anyone who helped pull the event together. He also thanked Little Rock Church, Vision Church, and Lucama Global Methodist Church for their help and donations.

Comm. Best asked if the sidewalks were completed. Mayor Johnson mentioned that two more bids had to be sought to rebid the project.

Comm. Lamm reported that the door count for the Library in November was 169, reference questions 55, computer usage was 17, there were 298 materials checked out and three library cards issued. During the program, "Let's Talk Turkey" there were 12 participants. The library will be closed for Christmas from December 25th – 27th. They will reopen at normal hours on December 28th. There are two programs planned for January. On the 18th, In Person Family Storytime will take place at 10:30 am. On the 25th, Winter Walk Program will take place at 3:30 pm.

Comm. Lamm stated that things are going well for the library. She did mention that they are still waiting for a blind to be installed. Admin. Newsome mentioned that one had been purchased, but it was too heavy. It will need to be returned and a lighter weight blind purchased.

Comm. Lamm reported that the Community Building is going very well. It is used often, like with the Jingle in the Park event. She feels the citizens and Board should be proud of both the park and Community Building. She hasn't heard any complaints about the building.

9. Town Administrator Report

Admin. Newsome had nothing to report at the time.

10. Swearing in of New Board Members

Mayor Johnson mentioned during his term it had been very good. Admin. Newsome responded that he had been a very good mayor. Comm. Johnson thanked him very much. Comm. Best thanked the mayor as well. Comm. Mason mentioned that he could not have been better.

Crystal Lea Grimes, a Notary Public for the State of North Carolina, swore both JoAnn Talton Teague and Kim Joyner in as Commissioners for the Town and they took their seats.

Comm. Johnson thanked Comm. Lamm for her work on serving the Board of Commissioners for so many years.

Ms. Grimes continued with the swearing in of Matthew Creech as Mayor of the Town and he took his seat.

11. Replacement of Comm. Pate's Term

Mayor Creech thanked Comm. Mason, Comm. Lamm, and Mayor Johnson's contribution and service to the Town and Board of Commissioners. He mentioned that it was a very special person who would come into politics, and even though there are times that they may not agree, it does take a special person to do the type of work.

Mayor Creech called for a motion to discuss the replacement for Comm. Pate's term.

MOTION: Comm. Joyner made a motion to discuss replacement; seconded by Comm. Johnson.

Comm. Joyner mentioned that she had someone in mind. She stated that when she ran for her position, she did so because she wanted things to improve for the Town. She felt it would be a great disservice if the Board did not consider her nomination to take the seat because of the person having a lot of knowledge of the projects that are currently going on in Town and the current infrastructure. Comm. Joyner nominated Jeff Johnson to take the Commissioner's seat.

Mayor Creech asked for further discussion. He asked Attorney DuSablón if it was permissible for him to share his opinion. Attorney DuSablón agreed. Mayor Creech said though he had nothing personal against former Mayor Johnson, he believes that even though there is a process and although he feels Comm. Joyner has the best intentions in mind, doing so would usurp the political process. Even though there is a gentleman that has, saying so respectfully, been voted out from his position that he does have then being replaced for another position that is

available. He feels it would be the Board's best intention to nominate someone new for the seat. He feels that it is what the political process is about. He feels that the Board should vote on someone new, and if that can't be decided upon then a motion should be made to table the matter and discuss and come up with a number of options.

Comm. Joyner asked Attorney DuSablou how the process normally works. He mentioned that there are two processes outlining the State Statute and UNC School of Government has put out some guidance on filling a vacancy on the Town Board. He stated that you can choose either a motion and vote, which is traditional; or the Board could choose the ballot method, whereby all commissioners submit a ballot with the name of the person that they would like to fill the vacancy. If there is a person who gains the majority of the nominations, then that person is the nominee. If not, there can be a process whereby the lowest nominees are dropped off and the majority prevails. He stated that someone could make a motion at any time, and it would be permissible. He also mentioned that it could be tabled.

Comm. Joyner asked could she legally make a motion to vote. Attorney DuSablou said that she could. She asked Jeff Johnson if he would be willing to serve on the Board as a Commissioner. He stated that he would be glad to.

Mayor Creech mentioned that in his opinion the Board should go to the third person that the people wanted, which was Ms. Bullock. She is the third person and is present at the meeting. Comm. Joyner questioned the third person by vote? Mayor Creech agreed. Admin. Newsome mentioned that once the votes were certified by the Board of Elections, Judy Mason would have been the next in line. Attorney DuSablou mentioned that would be an option as well. He stated that it could be the next highest votes given in the election, it could be a former Board member, it could be a mayor. Anyone is an option and there are no statutory rules about who, as long as the person is eligible to be on the Board.

MOTION: Comm. Joyner made motion to appoint Jeff Johnson to fill the seat of Comm. Pate; seconded by Comm. Teague. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

12. Selection of Mayor Pro Tem

Mayor Creech asked for a nomination for the Mayor Pro tem position.

Comm. Teague mentioned that she would like to recommend Comm. Jeff Johnson. She stated that he knows the job, just got finished with the job, he knows the Town and she feels he would be the perfect person for the position.

MOTION: Comm. Teague made a motion that Comm. Jeff Johnson be Mayor Pro tem; seconded by Comm. Joyner. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

13. Departmental Assignments

Attorney DuSablón mentioned that it was appropriate for the Mayor to make Departmental Assignments at the meeting. Mayor Creech mentioned that he was not prepared to give the information yet. He requested that the Board give him their email addresses and contact information and the positions would be sent. Attorney DuSablón mentioned that the assignments may need to be given out during a meeting. Mayor Creech concurred.

14. Area Light Price Adjustment

Clerk Hooks mentioned that currently with the area lights there is a \$50 fee for a light to be installed on a pole. There is a \$100 fee for a pole to be installed. Therefore, it is \$150 total to have an area light installed in someone's yard. Prices have been studied of surrounding towns. She feels it prudent to increase the area light to \$125, keeping the pole cost at \$100. The total installation of an area light will then be \$225.00.

Comm. Joyner asked if these were lights that customers have the Town place in their yards. Clerk Hooks confirmed that they would be yard lights. This increase is to cover the cost of the lights. If the project is a new construction the area light would be placed in at no charge, as it would be a part of their installation of the meter.

MOTION: Comm. D. Johnson made a motion to approve the increase cost of installing an area light in the amount of \$125, with the pole installation being \$100; seconded by Comm. Best. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

15. Adjournment

Mayor Creech adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:45 pm, December 4, 2023, upon motion of Board.

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

Respectfully Submitted: Dena Owens, Town Clerk