

# MINUTES

## January 21, 2020

### SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

### COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CITY HALL

### 5:45 p.m.

Present: Mayor Barbara G. Volk, Mayor Pro Tem Jerry Smith and Council Members: Jeff Miller, Jennifer Hensley and Lyndsey Simpson

Staff Present: City Manager John F. Connet, City Clerk Tammie Drake, Engineering Director Brent Detwiler, Stormwater Administrator, Michael Huffman, Budget & Management Analyst Adam Murr, Communications Director Allison Nock, Utilities Director Lee Smith. Utility Engineer Adam Steurer

Others Present: Jessica Martin-Lane, Seth Robertson and Steven Miller from Withers Ravenel

**1. Call to Order:** Mayor Volk called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. A quorum was established with five members in attendance.

**2. Purpose:** The purpose of the special meeting is to review, discuss and receive staff presentations on stormwater and wastewater.

**Stormwater Presentation:** Mr. Seth Robertson began the presentation with background information. He stated City staff asked Withers Ravenel to re-evaluate its existing stormwater rate structure, to establish a revised rate structure that addresses short- and long-term operations, maintenance and capital needs. Although the City's current stormwater rate structure generates some revenue, it is not adequate to meet the City's drainage and regulated stormwater program requirements, nor does it reflect the demand that stormwater runoff places on repair/replacing public infrastructure.

Mr. Robertson stated the City is a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Community which is a federal and state mandated (unfunded) program under the Clean Water Act to address non-point source pollution and stormwater runoff. The City has a separate enterprise fund for stormwater. He stated the City's permit consists of six required management areas that reduce stormwater pollution and assures clean water is maintained: 1. public outreach and education, 2. public involvement, 3. illicit discharge detection and elimination, 4. construction site runoff control, 5. post-construction runoff control and 6. pollution prevention and good housekeeping.

Mr. Robertson stated the State administers the Federal program, completes audits, etc. He stated inspections are beginning and fines may be imposed for non-compliance.

Mr. Robertson reviewed the levels of service matrix and where the City is today stating the City is managing well for the limited funding. The City's current levels of service includes partial proactive planning of capital improvement needs, relative repair/replacement of capital assets, proactive permit compliance, responsive only operation and maintenance activities for a \$3/month parcel flat fee for City and extraterritorial jurisdiction residents (on their water bill). Mr. Robertson stated this fee does not generate enough money currently to maintain the minimum level of service.

Mr. Robertson reviewed assumptions, needed revenue and rates for each of the service levels and asked the City Council which level of service they want to provide. Discussion followed on the basins and possible rates.

Mr. Robertson reviewed fee options by tiers or Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) for each level of service. He provided comparative rates for similar sized NC municipalities.

Council Member Miller stated he is only comfortable with the ERU approach. Mayor Pro Tem Smith agreed. There was discussion of existing developments with stormwater structures that may get rebates or credit. Existing facilities will have to be inspected to show it is functioning properly and being maintained.

**The Council agreed by consensus to a beginning level of service of B-/C+ with reasonable rate increases.** Council Member Miller asked staff to provide real life examples for churches, large retail, schools, etc. Discussion followed on rates including the possibility of a five-year rate without increases, and with a cap.

Some of the issues Council must decide is whether to move the drainage into streets or keep it on private property. Council Member Hensley suggested a component of public education with the Board of Realtors, et al, so new property owners know who is responsible for what; "know your responsibilities as a homeowner". Discussion followed on properties and easements. Mr. Connet stated more studies are needed to identify CIP projects. This item will be presented to the Council later for their consideration. **No action was taken by the Council.**

There was a brief recess.

**Wastewater Presentation:** Utility Engineer Adam Steurer gave a presentation to the Council beginning with an overview of the City's sewer system, current and future projects the department is working on and Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSO).

Mr. Steurer stated SSOs can result from blockages in the pipes, pipe breaks, undersized pipes/infrastructure, power failures at a pump station, heavy rain events relating to infiltration and inflow (I/I) from surface water, ground water, leaks in the pipes, etc. He stated SSOs are reported to the State, regardless of the size, within 24 hours of the observation and the public is notified of those over a certain amount. He stated the overflow volumes are estimates because there is no way to capture how much wastewater has spilled. He provided a history of SSOs in our system which appears to be above the average in Western North Carolina which resulted from extreme rain events. He noted a point source of creek water was discovered near Patton Park and was repaired.

Mr. Steurer stated staff also installed a one-way valve to prevent water from backing up at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, as well as replaced and installed additional locking manhole lids on lower lines.

*How to prevent:* Mr. Steurer stated prevention includes: cleaning and maintenance of the system, reducing I/I, planning for future growth, enlarging or upgrading pipes, upgrading treatment plant capacity, wet weather storage facilities or equalization basins, controlling or limiting fats, oil or grease in the lines and public education on proper sewer use. Mr. Lee Smith commented grease traps are in place, but they are not always maintained.

Mr. Steurer stated two projects were identified in the Sewer Master Plan as critical: Mud Creek Interceptor Replacement (line replacement project) and an equalization basin/Wastewater Treatment Plant Capacity Study. He stated capacity issues may be addressed by process applications and new technology as well as an equalization basin which provides additional volume for storage during heavy rain events. Discussion followed on equalization basins and sizing.

Mr. Connet commented on input from a citizen that the EQ basin will eliminate all SSOs which may or may not happen. Mr. Detwiler agreed there is no guarantee that EQ basin will eliminate SSOs. Discussion followed on public education need to keep fats, grease, etc. out of the lines.

Mr. Steurer stated a Wastewater Treatment Plant Master Plan will be accomplished next year to study the capacity, equipment and will identify investments for next 20 years and may include an EQ basin. Mr. Connet comment staff is committed to getting the SSOs down. Mr. Connet will contact the concerned citizen. **No action was taken by the Council.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.