

**Town of Rich Square
Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting/Public Hearing Minutes
Thursday, April 4, 2024 – 6:00 pm
Town Annex Building**

The Rich Square Board of Commissioners held their regular meeting in the Town Annex Building at 112 E Jackson St, Rich Square, North Carolina. Mayor Victoria Newcombe called the meeting to order 6:00pm and Commissioner Charles Eason gave the invocation.

Elected officials in attendance were Mayor Victoria Newcombe, Commissioner Peggy Cary, Commissioner Raymond Joyner, Commissioner Larry Godwin, Commissioner Linwood Bryant, and Commissioner Charles Eason.

Town officials in attendance were Finance Officer Chiquita Howard, Clerk Alayna Balmer, and Chief of Police William Smith.

Public Comment

Gwen Futrell had four comments involving having more frequent bulk pickups, the board's plans to control the number of stray cats around the town and receiving reports on funding for revitalization of the town and Fun Day.

Debbie Williams wanted to know if there was a Commissioner assigned to revitalization, if she could get a brief description of each individual Commissioners tasks for 2024, and what activities or plans the Board has organized for the youth of Rich Square between the ages of 8 and 17.

John Parker shared that the Creecy community is holding a fundraising event offering 2,500 pairs of shoes but wanted to know if there was a space large enough available to store and sell the shoes like the tennis court on Pine St, or the old rescue building on Short St.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Godwin moved, and Commissioner Bryant seconded the motion to approve the agenda with modifications to add the purchase of two power blowers for the Lagoon to the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes from March 7, 2024, Regular Meeting
2. Approval of Closed Session Minutes prepared by Cecelia D. M. Jones from April 4, 2024, Regular Meeting
3. Approval of Minutes prepared by Cecelia D. M. Jones from March 27, 2024, Special Meeting
4. Grant Project Ordinance (7/1/22-6/30/23)
5. Grant Project Ordinance (7/1/23-2/29/24)
6. Budget Amendment (2023-2024)

The Board reviewed the items on the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Eason moved, and Commissioner Bryant seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business

Mayor Newcombe opened the Public Hearing for two (2) Zoning Ordinance Amendments. After a general description of the amendments, the Mayor provided an opportunity for the public to ask questions. After discussion, Commissioner Godwin moved and Commissioner Joyner seconded the motion to approve the Zoning Ordinance Amendments. The motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Newcombe introduced two authorizing resolutions concerning the town's grant coordinators and engineers applying for an AIA Asset Management Plan Grant for distressed communities including a complete assessment of the town's water and sewer infrastructural systems, and a plan to assist with the reconstruction of these systems. Commissioner Godwin moved and Commissioner Eason seconded the motion to approve the authorizing resolution for the water system. The motion passed unanimously. Commissioner Bryant made the motion to approve the authorizing resolution for the sewer system, seconded by Commissioner Eason. The motion passed unanimously.

The Mayor reiterated the need for a comprehensive land use plan mandated by the legislature. She explained that the Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments has agreed to assist with the production of a comprehensive land use plan including the digitization of Rich Square's land maps. She added that the planning board will consist of about 3 people, the advisory board will consist of about 10-15 people, and encouraged the public to participate in the makeup of these boards.

Mayor Newcombe sought the approval of the Summer Intern Job Description previously mentioned. The intern will be hired to work part time from June to August with a \$10/hr pay rate working and must be at least 16 years of age. Commissioner Godwin moved, and Commissioner Cary seconded to approve the Summer Intern Job Description. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Godwin introduced Andrew Harris, a financial consultant, who he deems to be a qualified aide for Mrs. Howard in her role as finance officer in view of her need for further training. After Harris described his work history, education history, experience as a financial consultant, and familiarity with the Town, Commissioner Eason pointed out that having Harris apart of our staff would drastically limit the need for CPA Tom Monte's assistance while providing Mrs. Howard with the support she needs.

Mayor Newcombe presented an invoice from USA Bluebook provided by Jeff Long and spoke about the evaluation of the lagoon, mentioning that the equipment is outdated or not operative. She added that the town is planning to do a large reconstruction of this equipment under the grant the town currently has, however under the pressure of the State and Federal EPA, beginning the process ASAP is imperative. Commissioner Godwin asked that the very first things to be purchased are two (2) power blowers at the price of \$1,928 each. This comes to a total of \$4,388.01 which includes a discount on the cost of each power blower and freight, and taxes. Commissioner Godwin made the motion, and Commissioner Eason seconded to approve the purchase of two power blowers for the lagoon. The motion passed unanimously.

Volunteer Fire Chief Mark Vick began with the monthly reports and announcements from the Fire Department. Vick shared that The Fire Department submitted a letter for the Terry Farrell Firefighters Scholarship Fund and were granted to collect a 105-foot platform ladder truck located in Long Island, NY which is being donated from the Greenport Fire Department. Vick mentioned that the Department goes through an ISO (International Organization for Standardization) Inspection every 5 years and the result of this inspection directly affects the homeowner's insurance rate. With the addition of this platform ladder truck in service, the ISO Inspection rating is expected to drop by 1 point which would keep Rich Square's

rating the lowest in the county by 2 digits (a 4) and means that the homeowner's insurance rate for citizens could potentially drop.

Vick added that due to the extra costs in inflation, he would like to ask that the Board consider an increase in the Fire Protection Contract Fee which has been \$3,000 for the last 30 years. He noted that while the truck is a positive addition to the Department, there would also be new expenses to consider like getting it serviced, having yearly Nondestructive Testing done, and paying insurance fees. He also added that the county has raised the Rural Fire Protection Contract Fee by 149% to attempt to offset some of those extra costs and encouraged the Board to consider discussing doing the same.

Lastly, Vick made an announcement of the upcoming 17th Annual Turkey Hunting Tournament – April 12th & April 13th, and a Boot Drive the coming Saturday morning.

Mayor Newcombe brought forth a copy of an email she received from Darryl Jacobs, a sports broadcaster for ESPN & CBS Sports Television Networks, who spent his former years in Northampton County High School from 1979 to 1983. This email was sent in continuation of discussions initiated by former Mayor Reginald White regarding a day of honor for him, and community projects and initiatives including funding for the renovation of the Creecy School into a community center. The Mayor informed everyone that she brought it to the boards and public's awareness for input or suggestions in hopes that the town and county could collaborate, potentially in the form of a committee. Chief Smith informed the board that during the time of original discussion, the County Commissioners were considering giving the property to the town but ultimately decided to keep the property due to the county being in better financial condition. Mayor Newcombe went on to say that though the town doesn't own the school, creating a community center was still a productive attempt towards creating opportunity for the youth to connect even if the center was built from an abandoned house or another building. It was agreed that the Mayor would receive more information to be presented at the next meeting.

Staff & Council Reports

Chief Smith reported two (2) breaking and entering incidents that juveniles were responsible for. He mentioned that he recovered 3 guns that were stolen within the past 2 1/2 weeks but those who owned the guns wouldn't testify. He added that the guns from the Lincoln Park shooting last year were recovered but every victim that was shot refused to testify so the suspects would be released from jail. He went on to say that there was nothing that could be done about the complaints about people riding four-wheelers around town because chasing them poses the threat of a car accident resulting in a lawsuit.

Commissioner Eason reported that as of the night before the meeting, all the streetlights in town are burning.

Commissioner Godwin passed along a message from the Concerned Citizens of Rich Square asking for more participation from the Board in their monthly meetings. He reported that all the aerators in the lagoon were operational but one has disconnected from the cable that was keeping it stationary and shared plans of getting someone equipped to fix it. He added that the power blowers approved for purchase were critical because it's the last point of contact before the water is discharged, and the more oxygenated the water is the better. Lastly, he reported that the man hired to add chlorine to the water has been prompted to come twice a month instead of once a month, which will be an added expense. He noted that this may or may not affect the water bill sewage rates but decided that it would be helpful to mention.

Commissioner Joyner reported that he's in the process of ordering new banners for the Fun Day event. The Mayor mentioned that she would like to ask the public works crew to build a frame for the

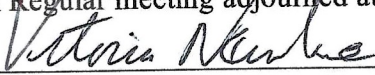
banner and asked that Joyner provide measurements for this frame. Commissioner Joyner also suggested a metal post to keep the banner from being blown down by the wind.

Commissioner Cary mentioned an interest voiced to her by the clerk to purchase a video camera to record the town hall meetings to be uploaded to YouTube and Facebook for the purpose of increasing community engagement. The Mayor commented that it would be a good idea for those who can't come to the meeting, choose not to come, or would like to view it later and is valuable for keeping people up to date about the zoning projects in progress.

Mayor Newcombe added that the code of ordinances are currently being updated to be restructured, applied, and properly enforced. This includes ordinances regarding fines, lawn maintenance, abandoned houses, and more. She also mentioned that she may be seeking to fill a seat on the NCDOT Board of the Transportation Committee, as well as looking to receive updates on the Drainage Project.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Eason moved, and Commissioner Cary seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the April Regular meeting adjourned at 7:14 pm.



Victoria Newcombe, Mayor

ATTEST:



Alayna Balmer, Clerk