

Town of Rich Square
Board of Commissioners Special Called Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 27, 2025 – 1:00 pm
Town Annex Building

The Rich Square Board of Commissioners held a special called meeting in the Town's Commissioners Meeting Room at 112 East Jackson St, Rich Square, North Carolina. Mayor Victoria Newcombe called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm.

Elected officials in attendance were Mayor Victoria Newcombe, Commissioner Charles Eason, Commissioner Reggie White, Commissioner Raymond Joyner, and Commissioner Peggy Cary.

Commissioner Linwood Bryant was absent and Finance Officer Chiquita Monroe-Howard was not present.

Town officials in attendance were Clerk Christine Bass, Police Chief Smith, and Attorney Jarrette Pittman.

Invocation

Commissioner Charles Eason gave the invocation.

Agenda

- a. Board to review and approve the proposed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Roanoke-Chowan Community College (RCCC) and the Town of Rich Square. Mayor Newcombe stated that the previous MOA expired in July 2024. She said that she mentioned to the Board to see if rent was a possibility wherein the Town could receive rent for the facility. She stated that she had a meeting with Steve Matthews, the head of the Work Force Development for the Joe White Education Center and the point of contact for RCCC. She said they had a very good conversation and the concern was expressed about the building being vacant for a long time and no classes have been scheduled or offered. She said RCCC seems to be ready to get things going. She stated that the MOA before the Board needed to be approved so that scheduling of classes and courses can be implemented as soon as possible by RCCC. Commissioner Eason verified that RCCC has been operating the Joe White Center for free. Commissioner White referenced the previous discussion to request rent to be paid by the RCCC. Mayor Newcombe did advise that Mr. Matthews expressed that there was no money budgeted for rent of the facility and that the previous MOA did not request rent to be paid. Commissioner Cary asked that the town have access to the building so that other groups could use the facilities. Chief Smith stated that once the classes begin the college will have all their supplies and equipment in the individual rooms and no one else should have access or use of the rooms. He stated that no rent was to be charged to RCCC as long as they did the maintenance to the building to keep it in good working order and as long as the building was being used. Motion was made by Commissioner Eason to approve the Memorandum of Agreement between Roanoke-Chowan Community College and the Town of Rich Square. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White. All were in favor, motion carried.

- b. Board to review and discuss the proposed contract for Town Fire and Emergency Services through the Rich Square Volunteer Fire Department (RSVFD). Mayor Newcombe stated that this discussion has been brought before the Board in the past. She stated that any donation to the RSVFD has to be completed by the way of a contract between the Town of Rich Square and the RSVFD. She stated the donation in the amount of \$3,000 was not paid last year fiscal year end of June 30, 2024 and the Board discussed approving to increase the amount of the donation for this year to \$5,000 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year budget. She explained that she had to key in the information that a donation was not made to the Rich Square Volunteer Fire Department (RSVFD) because the RSVFD was currently applying for a grant that needed to know if a payment was sent from the Town to RSVFD for their services rendered during the last fiscal year. Jeff Long asked if the RSVFD was in the position to assist them Street Department in putting up the Christmas Lights in December and remove them in January. Mayor Newcombe said that will be something that we need to ask them. Attorney Pittman stated that he has been in contact with the RSVFD attorney and wants to discuss this further with them and to verify what surrounding town are paying for these services through other volunteer fire departments. Motion was made by Commissioner Eason to table this matter until Attorney Pittman could complete his research and reach back out to the RSVFD attorney and get back with us as to his finding and discussion. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White. All were in favor, motion carried.
- c. Board to discuss the status of the Water and Sewer permits, licenses, and renewals. Mayor Newcombe stated that we have received copies of invoices that were not paid for the renewals of the water and sewer operating permits. Ms. Bass provided the Board the invoices for the renewal of the water permit was due November 2024 and has not been paid and Mr. Long has submitted it three times. She said Mr. Long is currently operating on an expired water permit. She said the second invoice is the North Carolina Department of Water Quality which is the invoice for the wastewater permit which is coming due by March 17, 2025. She said this must be paid so that Mr. Long can continue to operate the wastewater treatment plant that has the SOC on. Jeffrey Long advised that he should not have to worry about how he is going to get chemicals required to be able to produce clean water and chemicals required to clean the wastewater before it is disbursed. He said that he has been notified by several vendors that invoices have not been paid. He said that he personally brought the original invoices into Mrs. Howard to have them paid and now he is bringing them to Ms. Bass so that she is documenting them being received and making copies before giving them to Mrs. Howard.
- d. Board to discuss all the outstanding and past dues invoices that were to be paid as far back as June 2024. Mayor expressed the importance of getting the invoices current and up to date. She said the town is being charged interest on accounts that we should not be paying for if the invoices were paid when received. Jeff Long expressed his concern because this affects him when he has to order supplies, order chemicals, and when he needs to get much needed repairs completed. He stated that on several of the invoices his name is listed as the authorized person or contact person and they would not be calling him or sending invoices multiple times if they have been paid. He said this does not look good that our invoices are not getting paid in a timely manner. Ms. Bass went through all the other invoices that have not been paid for the water/sewer department. Mayor Newcombe stated that she has received phone calls from Sanford Electrical of several invoices that have not been paid and they have been told several times that the check was on the way. Ms. Bass provided the Board a copy of several invoices that have not been paid.

The Board took a minute to look through all the past dues invoices. Several Commissioners asked why the invoices were behind however Mrs. Howard was not present to give a response. Commissioner White asked if Mrs. Monroe-Howard was contacted about the meeting that was being held today. Ms. Bass replied that Mrs. Monroe-Howard was included on the email that went out to everyone advising about the meeting scheduled for today. She said that Mrs. Monroe-Howard reminded Ms. Bass of the meeting that was to take place today but Mrs. Monroe-Howard is out sick. Chief Smith asked if anyone saw the email from Mrs. Howard stating that she was available via zoom. The Board responded with no they didn't. Ms. Bass stated that zoom meetings are no longer allowed since we are no longer under a state of emergency such as Covid. Attorney Pittman asked if there was enough money to cover the invoices that are currently due. Ms. Bass stated that is another issue.

- e. Board advised that the Town's water and sewer billing will be resuming for the month of March. Ms. Bass stated that she learned yesterday once she got access to the software that the last time that water bills had been processed for the town was November 18, 2024, which would have been the December bill. She said no bills went out for January and February. She said the town is currently three months behind. She said that she will need to key in and process the bills for December, January, and February to get the bill for March 2025. She said that some citizens have been paying their bill all along but there are several customers that have not been paying and there is a hand full of customers that owe over \$500 in past dues bills plus the three months that need to be processed. She said that is lost revenue for the Water/Sewer Department. Mr. Long stated that we have cleaned up all the overdue accounts just recently and we are now back in the same situation. Ms. Bass stated that she has completed the first book for the December billing cycle. She said citizens will not be getting individual bills for January, February, and March to help save of the cost of the bills and postage but will get one bill due March 20th. Commissioner Eason asked about the meeting we had with Mrs. Monroe-Howard here we questioned invoices that were not paid such as Water Guard and Sharp Energy for the heating fuel, but all of these not being paid is a problem. He asked how long has this been going on. Mayor Newcombe stated that this has been going on for as year and I have been advising the Board of all the late fees and the late bills that have not been paid. She said that is the reason that I was checking the mail. Ms. Bass stated that there are several invoices with past due amounts on them. Attorney Pittman said so Mayor Newcombe you have been checking the mail for the last quarter and giving Mrs. Monroe-Howard the mail. Mayor Newcombe stated she would circle and mark termination, past due, and/or discontinuance. Attorney Pittman said that he recalls that Mrs. Monroe-Howard would say that she did not get the notice and that some of the mail was lost. Mayor Newcombe stated that Mrs. Monroe-Howard received all the mail. Attorney Pittman asked if Mayor Newcombe if she remembers receiving these same notices that are presented today in the last quarter for last year. Commissioner Cary interrupted Attorney Pittman to say that Mrs. Monroe-Howard just called her to ask that she be allowed to call in to the meeting. She advised Mrs. Monroe-Howard that she could not make that call and the Board would have to allow her to be able to be included via phone since she could not be present for the meeting. Ms. Bass stated that the water bills will resume going out once the prior months have been keyed and processed. She said then we will then have to set up payment plans for those that have not paid. She said that Mayor Newcombe is assisting by taking calls and messages. She said we are working together to get this done. Mr. Long advised that this all is affecting his ability to do his job effectively. Attorney Pittman stated that Mrs. Monroe-Howard is in a fragile state and is not able to come today. He said that Mrs. Monroe-Howard reminded him of the regular board meeting scheduled

for March is next Thursday and would like this to be an agenda line item that she will be able to be present for. Commissioner White expressed that these invoices need to be paid as soon as possible. Attorney Pittman verified those authorized to sign checks and who are the signatures that are recorded with the bank and allowed to sign checks. Ms. Bass stated that she is not authorized to sign checks but Mayor Newcombe and Commissioner Cary are authorized. Mayor Newcombe said an elected official and the finance officer has to be listed as dual signatures for all checks and Commissioner Cary was authorized as the deputy finance officer in the event that the mayor or the finance officer were not available to sign. Mayor Newcombe had to verify with the bank that if a check needed to be written while Mrs. Monroe-Howard was out it could be done and that the check would be honored by the bank. She said her concern was with the SOC that was signed by her the 28th of last month that the 10% that was owed on the SOC program needed to be paid in order to stay in compliance would be taken care of. She said that we found out that the check did not need to be paid as of this time because the final draft of the SOC has not been completely signed by NC DEQ. Attorney Pittman said that if we can verify the invoices that were received last quarter and verify what was paid and what still needs to be paid. He said that way we can get an idea as to where the invoices stand at this point. He said that Mrs. Monroe-Howard stated that she did not receive the invoices. Mayor Newcombe said that everything that came into the post office was opened and given to Mrs. Monroe-Howard for processing. She said there would be no reason for me not to give them to her. Mr. Long said that he has received several emails about invoices not being paid. Commissioner Cary asked Mr. Long if he has a copy of the invoices that were sent to him. Ms. Bass stated he has the original emails that were sent to him. Mr. Long replied that he has the emails and has given Mrs. Monroe-Howard the invoices multiple times. Commissioner White said this has been a problem for several months because you now have two people getting the mail which is causing the problem. Mayor Newcombe stated that it is Mrs. Monroe-Howard's job to process the invoices that need to be paid. Commissioner White said he is not denying that it is Mrs. Monroe-Howard's job to get the invoices paid. Mr. Long stated that he personally has given her the invoices in question and she did not pay them or he would not be getting 2nd and 3rd notices of invoices not being paid. He said things need to be taken care of and handled correctly. He said this is affecting my department and I am sure other departments are being taken care of. He said a change needs to happen so that this all can be taken care of immediately. Commissioner Eason asked if we can pay these invoices. Mayor Newcombe said we need to take care of the water and sewer permits and get them paid. She said that emails are now coming in for the past dues invoices and we are getting phone calls reference to the past due accounts and being told that services are going to be cut off. She said the emails are third and final notices such as the Waypoint Analytical wherein the lab certification was expired. Commissioner Eason said Mrs. Monroe-Howard is getting the emails, not responding to them, and not telling someone that I need help with all the bills and emails. Mayor Newcombe said that she would bring to Mrs. Howard's attention of invoices that were cut off notices or final notices and Mrs. Monroe-Howard would reply I have paid that. She said I have no access to the software and if she said she paid it I had to take her word that it was paid. She said then invoices from June 2024 and September 2024 is a long time to not have been paid. Mr. Long said big businesses and corporation are not going to keep sending you the same email or invoices if they were paid. Attorney Pittman asked when can the town get another signatory ready since it seems that Mrs. Monroe-Howard may be out for some time. He said as to Commissioner Eason's request how do we take care of these invoices immediately. Ms. Bass replied the immediate fix is that you already have Peggy Cary as the Deputy Finance Officer and Mayor Newcombe as the Town Official to sign the necessary checks. Attorney Pittman verified the legitimacy of

Commissioner Cary signing checks. Mayor Newcombe said that Natalie advised the board that a Deputy Finance Officer was needed and during a regular Board meeting it was discussed and the Board sworn Commissioner Peggy Cary as the Deputy Finance Officer. She said it was noted and documented. Ms. Bass said the town has the needed signatories and it is a matter of being able to get into the Finance Office since there is not a spare key. Chief Smith stated he has a key to the finance office. Mayor Newcombe stated we asked Mrs. Monroe-Howard to open the office and Chief Smith was out sick during the same time that Mrs. Monroe Howard has been out sick. Mayor Newcombe stated that there may be other invoices that we are not aware of and citizens checks have not cleared the bank since December 2024. Mayor said that Mrs. Monroe-Howard said that she would come unlock the office several times and we need access to the office. She said this is not a shock that invoices are not being paid, we have discussions multiple times about the invoices not being paid in a timely manner. Commissioner Eason said this is a shock because we have discussed that invoices were not being paid but we did not know that this many invoices have gone unpaid. He said we called a meeting about some invoices that need to be paid and Mrs. Monroe-Howard stated that the bills were paid and when we left, I thought we were up to date and current. He said to see all those invoices is shocking.

- f. Mayor Newcombe stated we need to go into closed session so that we can discuss this matter further. Commissioner Eason Made a motion to go into closed session for personnel matters. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cary. Motion carried.
- g. Motion made by Commissioner Eason and seconded by Commissioner Cary to resume with open session. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Commissioner Eason moved, and Commissioner Cary seconded the motion to adjourn the February 27, 2025 Special Called meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 2:47 pm.



Victoria Newcombe, Mayor

ATTEST:



Christine Bass, Town Clerk