

Town of Rich Square
Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 1, 2025 – 6:14 pm
Town Annex Building

The Rich Square Board of Commissioners held a regular 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 6:14 pm.

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

Town official in attendance was Town Clerk Christine Bass.

Invocation

Commissioner Charles Eason provided the invocation.

Public Comment

Sandra Mitchell: Property owner of residence located at 1021 Majette Street. Mayor Newcombe stated that Ms. Mitchell had three minutes. Ms. Mitchell acknowledged the Mayor. She said I called the town hall and advised that I had water backed up in the ditch in front of my house. She said I called back a few days later and was informed that there was a broken pipe and that it trumped my concern for the backed up ditch in front of my house. She said I received a call back a few days later advised that the ditch work needed required more than just a shovel and a water hose and that town did not have the equipment to do ditch work. Ms. Mitchell said it was suggested that I attend the town meeting to discuss my concern about the ditches around my property and that is why I am here. She said I called back later and no one would answer the phone. She said I have a list of questions and do you want me to ask them and you answer them. Mayor Newcombe said we do not answer during public comment but anything that you would like to state please go ahead. Ms Mitchell's questions were as follows:

Have the ditches ever been cleaned in the town; by town employees?

Why hasn't the section of town that I live in not been serviced in approximately 20 years according to citizens that I have spoken to in Rich Square?

Does the town dig the ditch between my house and the house to the right of me? She said the ditch use to be deeper and now it is not. She said when it rains off the house next door it flows over to my property.

Why has it taken over 20 years to get a grant if that is the only way for the ditches to be cleared when it is our turn? She said I was told that other areas the ditches have been addressed but certain sections have been continuously over looked and mine is one of them.

Why is it that the back hoe and bucket that was suggested not considered? She said I was told it was said that it would mess up people's yards. She said the NC DOT when they do work, they go back and plant grass seed. She said messing up a person's foundation is more serious than planting grass seeds.

She said the standing water causes more damage such as mold, foundation issues, bacteria, etc. She said this can lead to health issues especially ones with allergies and asthma.

She said I was informed that the NC DOT gives the Town Powell Bill Funds, what is that used for? She said the NC DOT came out to service the area and according to them my address was not coded the right way for them to assist. She said they told her is she had lived across the street they would service that area.

Mayor Newcombe advised Ms. Mitchell that she had 30 seconds left. Ms. Mitchell asked to allow her to finish. She said I came all the way from Richmond.

She said she was advised that when it rains hard it floods the streets in the town area. She said this to me is considered a disaster situation. She asked, has anyone contacted Emergency Management coordinator to ask for advice and or help?

She asked does the town have anyone writing any grants? She said are we just going to do nothing until the entire town is under water.

She asked where is the tax money going?

She said here closing statement is as follows, the citizens have worked hard to maintain and purchase their houses some of are seniors and would like to enjoy our homes and we are suffering. She said we are respectfully asking that the areas that have not been serviced in approximately 20 years be placed at the top of the list for repairs of the ditches. She said 20 years is a very long time that they have patiently waited. She said take a moment and put yourself in their place. She said how would you feel to be totally ignored for this long and they are paying taxes and I will continue to pray for a positive outcome.

CCORS – Gwendolyn Futrell talked about the upcoming Liberation Day event that is being celebrated by Northampton County. She said this is the event that serves the whole Northampton County that the CCORS host the event here in Rich Square. She said we have a flyer and a letter wherein we are asking our churches and our mayors to partner with us in making this event a great success. She said we have had a nice time last year and we are hoping for a better time this year. She said we will have mayors, pastors, officials of all kinds coming from all town surrounding Rich Square. She said I look forward to seeing the Rich Square officials there to represent. She said we are having a parade line-up starting at 9 am at Mile Craft and the parade starts at 10 am where we will parade down to Creecy School where the event will start about 11 am and we are planning to be there until around 4 pm. She said we have food trucks and vendors. She said we have the same speaker we had last year that will be bringing information from Northampton County. She said we have Jay Ward that will be coming here out of Charlotte, NC. She said we are asking that everyone please attend and to please spread the word. She handed Mayor Newcombe some flyers.

Approval of the Agenda

Mayor Newcombe asked that the agenda be changed to include the changes of signatories for the Cemetery Fund at the top of the meeting because we must send some minutes out and I have given the Board an outline as to the required changes that need to be made for the Cedar Lawn Perpetual Cemetery Bank account at PNC Bank.

Commissioner Williams made a motion to amend the agenda to include the signatories and separate set of minutes that is needed to be supplied to PNC Bank to make the required changes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eason. All in favor, motion carried.

Mayor Newcombe thanked the Board for assisting with the needed house keeping items and to continue with the agenda as it is presented.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Eason made a motion to approve the minutes from the Regular Board Meeting and Closed Session Minutes held on March 6, 2025 with any corrections. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Joyner. All in favor, motion carried.

Agenda

- a. Board to review and select the company that would repair or replace the broken air conditioner at the town hall building. Mayor Newcombe advised the citizens that the office has been working on reduced hours because we do not have any air conditioning and it is getting hotter in there as the temperature continues to rise. She said that Ms. Bass has gathered three bids. The board reviewed the quotes that were received. Ms. Bass said the first quote is from White & Woodley Mechanical which has worked on the building for many years even when it was a bank. She said they advised the age of the unit and that the compressor has stopped working. She said they supplied two quotes to replace the entire unit with one quote being for a Weather King unit and one for a Goodman Unit. She said we received two more quoted from Quality Air Maker with one quote being to just replace the compressor with no guarantee as to how long it would last and the other quote was to replace the entire unit. She did say that we need to find the funds to be able to cover the costs based on the decision that the Board makes tonight. She said the Board does need to decide so that we can find the money to cover the costs of the repairs. Mayor Newcombe asked the Board for there thoughts. It was asked how old the unit was. Mayor Newcombe stated easily over 20 years. The board questioned the tonnage needed for the building. Ms. Bass advised the quote was to replace the current unit with the same unit for like quality. She said this is not to upgrade just replace like for like. Ms. Bass advised that we need to be able to find the money that will cover the costs for this repair or replacement. There was a discussion about repair versus replacement. The Board asked if anyone had any suggestions as to the models listed. Ms. Bass stated that she has a Goodman at her home and it is still going after 18 years. Commissioner Eason made a motion to verify the tonnage, find the funds to cover the costs to replace the unit, and to replace the unit with the Goodman unit that was quoted at \$6,500 by White & Woodley Mechanical Contractors, Inc. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. All in favor, motion carried.

Old Business

No old business to discuss

Staff & Council Reports

- a. Police Chief Report - Chief William Smith said, if you live inside the town limits; you drive a car; you have a firearm; please take the firearm out of the car when you get home. He said do not leave the firearm in your car especially if you are going to leave your

doors unlocked. He said we lost 3 weapons 2:00 am on Wednesday. He said if you are going to leave weapons in your car at least lock the doors. He said do not leave them in the back seat so others can see that they are there. He said do not expect us to be able to find them and you do not even have the serial number for the weapons. He said if you have looked at the paper, the police stopped a car in Gaston last week that had 7 juveniles in it ages 14 to 17 and recovered 7 firearms. He said they had 22 mm rifles, 45 mm pistol, and several magazines. He said these kids are riding around shooting at each other. He said this is happening. He said make every effort to lock your doors and secure your firearms. He said if you are not going to secure your property make sure to get the serial number on all your weapons so that we can at least enter them into the system and if your weapon is used somewhere we can get your weapon back once it is located. He said it is the summertime and if you see something call us. End of report.

- b. Police Commissioner Report – Commissioner Williams said that this being his first meeting he just went through his calendar with just being sworn in at the middle of the month. He said I look up and I have been doing a lot. He said he attended the Northampton County budget meeting. He said we had a budget work session that was canceled and we had two emergency meetings wherein we had to do the same house keeping meetings just to change the signatories on the bank accounts. He said he attended a seniors' meeting in Gaston. He said there was about 30 to 40 seniors that actually compete against each other. He said getting a senior center is part of the Town's 10-year plan. He said we had a meeting two days ago wherein we invited all the businesses in Rich Square. He said I hand delivered the invitations and I didn't get as many businesses to show up as I thought I would. He said I thought about it and you are running your own business you are going to be on your grind and most of the people that did not show up were working. He said I was privileged to receive a phone call from Mr. Robinson about Mile Craft and he gave me his concerns as to what he would like to see the Town do as to the future of Rich Square. He said he spoke with Mr. Dexter Riley wherein he owns two buildings right across the street and he has plans for those buildings. He said the administrator assisting the Town with the Land Use Plan indicated putting policies in place to help the business owners. He said Mr. Riley suggested a park to honor our veterans and attract people to Rich Square. He said that the chief is only one man and when we bring in more businesses, we can afford better policing. He said this all works hand in hand and it is essential. He said the people interested in buying in Rich Square are also interested in living here. He said we want the businesses to be able to sustain and if not, they have sustainable income by renting apartments above their business. He said the RSVFD has a 110-foot ladder which would reach four floors up. He said this is all a vision in the 10-year plan for Rich Square. End of report.
- c. Water/Sewer ORC report – Jeffrey Long was not present but Mayor Newcombe filled the citizens in on the recent activity. She said the WWTP Project is about 75% done, we have recently updated contact info for the disbursement of funds, there is money in the contingency fund and the contractor is able to add in additional work that needs to be completed to make the WWTP function better and more efficiently. She said we are on a SOC with NC DEQ because we have over \$85,000 in penalties and they reduced the amount owed at this time in the amount of \$1,526. We sent the check and if we adhere to

the SOC, they will forgive the \$85,000 in penalties. She said the water bills are going out and the water department is working very hard and we appreciate all that they do. End of report.

d. Water/Sewer Commissioner report – No report

- e. Street Commissioner report – Commissioner Eason said here is the list of street lights that are out and passed the report to Ms. Bass. He said there are 3 streets that we are hoping to get some work done on and they are Jacobs, Smallwood, and Majette Streets. He said according to our Powell Bill funds I believe there is \$34,000 in funds. He said I am also looking to get a quote for speed bumps on Creecy Street. He said depending on how far we can make our funds go there is some sidewalks that we need to get repaired from South Main to Creecy Street and also right in front of the Annex building and across the street here on East Jackson Street. He said I am working with 3 companies to have them give the Town quotes for each of the streets and the sidewalk work that needs to be repaired or replaced. He said once I have the quotes the Board will decide on how the funds are to be spent based on the quotes received.

He said the drainage for the house at 1021 Majette Street, I received an email reference to the issues and I went to take pictures. He said that Jeff Long spoke to the renter at this address. He said all of Rich Square needs the ditches cleaned. He said what I saw at this location was if the culvert pipe under the driveway was cleaned of leaves and pine cones the water would be able to flow much better. He said the town is not responsible to clean the culvert under the driveway but the renter advised Jeff Long that he would look into getting someone to look at the issue. He said if it is the ditches that run to the culvert need to be cleaned and if we find the money then we will try to get them cleaned.

Commissioner Eason said it takes experience and knowledge to know what you are doing when you start working on cleaning out the ditches. He said our backhoe is too big and there is a technique that needs to be followed so that one does not end up with a swamp in front of their home and the water is not moving due to the grade of the land and property. Ms. Mitchell asked what was her responsibility to maintain as the property owner. Commissioner Eason advised the driveway pipe that goes under your driveway needs to be kept free and clear of debris for the water to move. Ms. Mitchell said if I clean mine who will clean my neighbors. Commissioner Eason replied the property owner cleans their driveway pipe and if you have a speaking relationship with your neighbor maybe you could ask them to clean their driveway pipe. Mayor Newcombe stated that she has seen where a chain and a tire has been used to clean culvert pipes and move the debris out of them. She suggested that we start a campaign that all property owners have the culverts that run under their driveway cleaned and free of debris all over town so that this will help all citizens. End of report.

f. Recreation and Events Commissioner report – No report

- g. Finance Officer report – Ms. Bass advised that all the Board members have received an email from Natalie Rountree of the NC Treasury Department wherein she asked the Board of Commissioners to respond to the questions she asked from her findings on the Budget vs Actual as of March 31, 2025 that was submitted to her by the due date of April

15, 2025. Ms. Bass stated that Ms. Rountree sent an email advising that no one replied to her email. I advised Ms. Rountree of the Board meeting tonight and that we will respond to her tomorrow with the answers to her questions. She read all the questions that needed to be answered to the Board. She explained the reasons for each of these line items being out of line. She said that she will reply to Ms. Rountree and cc all the Board members in the reply.

Ms. Bass said the water bills for the month of May have been completed and have been sent to the post office for mailing. She said out of 450 accounts there are still roughly 150 left to go through and get corrected. She said some payment plans have been set up for those that have a significant amount owed on there account to get it paid to date. End of report.

- h. Town Clerk report – Christine Bass said we are working on everything one item at a time. She said things are getting done and getting fixed as well as getting caught up. End of report.

- i. Administrative Commissioner report – Peggy Cary said thank you to Ms. Bass because of the obstacles that she has been facing for the last month and a half. She said since she has been here things are getting done and submitted to the proper agencies. She said have to compliment Mayor Newcombe for stepping in and helping where she was able. She said they both have worked diligently to respond to different agencies seeking information in a timely manner as well as handling the day to day for the Town. End of report.

- j. Mayor's report – Victoria Newcombe said I would like to send a suggestion out. She said Christmas would be upon us soon and I would like to know if the Town would like to sponsor a Christmas Decorating contest for household, commercial, residential, and businesses. She asked the citizens to think about it and she could be reached at the Town Hall if anyone is interested or had any questions.

Gwen Futrell said there is going to be a ribbon cutting at the end of this month. She said she went to the County meetings asking if there was any way that the Creecy School could be utilized as a shelter. She said that is if anyone in Woodland, Potecasi, and Rich Square needed to have somewhere to go in an event of a hurricane or storm. She said the County approved Creecy as a Storm Shelter and there will be a generator at Creecy School. She said I will get some flyers out but the ribbon cutting will be on the 30th of May. She said the County discussed an Urgent Care on this end of the county in previous meetings and I brought it back to their attention and they are looking at the possibility of an Urgent Care on this end of the County. She said citizens complain that we have nothing on this end of the county and we don't but we have to go ask for it and be persistent. It was suggested to ask our churches to donate items needed for the Storm Shelter. Ms. Futrell said we do need to get our churches more involved.

Commissioner Williams said I am very thankful for two people in the county and they are Ms. Goodwin and Ms. Whitaker they show up and support the Town of rich Square. Mayor Newcombe said the Ms. Whitaker is looking for the MOA for the street and fence at Creecy as to who was going to be responsible for taking care of brush, debris, and clean up around the school. the End of report.

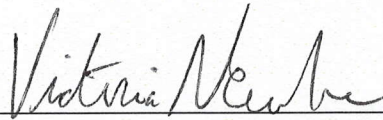
Closed Session

Commissioner Cary made a motion to go into closed session for personnel. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eason. All in favor, motion carried.

Commissioner Eason made a motion to return to open session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. All in favor, motion carried.

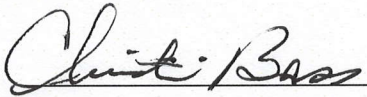
Adjournment

Commissioner Cary moved, and Commissioner Williams seconded the motion to adjourn the May 1, 2025 regular meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:46 pm.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Victoria Newcombe", is written over a horizontal line.

Victoria Newcombe, Mayor

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Christine Bass", is written over a horizontal line.

Christine Bass, Town Clerk