

Town of Rich Square
Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 7, 2025 – 6:00 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 6:00 pm.

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

Town official in attendance were Town Clerk Christine Bass, Police Chief William Smith, and Public Works Director Jeff Long.

Invocation

Commissioner Charles Eason provided the invocation.

Public Comment

Gwendolyn Futrell – Wanted to know what the water bill process was. She wanted to know how many months do you send out notice that a person has been late on paying their water bill. She asked is there a number of months or an amount before they are disconnected. Ms. Bass stated that she had a copy of the back of the water bill that is sent out each month that advises if payment is not received by the 25th of the month services will be turned off for non-payment with a \$150 re-connect fee. Ms. Futrell asked how can someone get a \$1,000 behind before being disconnected. Ms. Bass said three months ago we notified citizens on their bill that late fees and disconnects of water services would be reinforced and begin effective July 1, 2025. She said the Treasury Department required the town to get back to operating the Water/Sewer Department per policy and procedures. She said the Water/Sewer policy advised that a delinquent fee is to be charged if payment is not received by the 21st of the month and if payment is not received by the 25th of the month services will be disconnected on or around the 26th of the month with a re-connect fee of \$150. She said how accounts got to that point is not for her to explain but however it happened and we are now trying to fix the issues. She said we put the information on Face Book and on the town's website as well, letting citizens know that this process was going to be followed. Ms. Futrell asked if the meters are being read and are they just charging a flat rate to everyone. Ms. Bass replied that every bill is based on the usage for the residence only. She said after the readings are completed, I go through each book and check for high usage and ask for re-reads to be completed. She said if the reading is correct the staff leaves an orange door hanger advising the customer of the high reading and that they may have a possible leak. Citizens wanted to know why the bills were allowed to get so high. Ms. Bass said I have to tread lightly because this then turns into a personnel matter, Mayor Newcombe said this is public comment and this is only a question session and we reserve the right to answer. Ms. Futrell said I want to know the process that is being done to disconnect services for non-payment. Mayor Newcombe said we have gone over the three minutes allotted and we will get everyone the information on the process. End of public comment.

Approval of the Agenda

Mayor Newcombe said we need to add the sale of the old bush hog to the new business portion of the agenda.

Commissioner Williams made a request to add the selling of the old bush hog to the agenda. Commissioner Eason made a motion to amend and approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. All in favor, motion carried.

Consent Agenda

No items to be approved under the Consent Agenda.

Agenda

- a. Board to review and approve the Town of Rich Square Policy for Property Management (ARPA) with any corrections. Mayor Newcombe gave the explanation as to why this policy needs to be approved by the Board of Commissioners. She said we need to get an inventory for any claims made for FEMA or any other emergency that has to deal with the town's property and/or equipment. She said this all falls under the ARPA policy requirements. Ms. Bass advised that this policy has been reviewed by the Town Attorney and he has given his approval of the policy. The Board questioned the attorney's approval of the policy. There was some discussion.
Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve this policy after reading it and understanding that this policy has been put through legal review.
Commissioner Eason requested time to review this policy before approving. Mayor Newcombe said we have an inspection of our ARPA files and policies near the end of this month and we need this policy approved by the Board to have everything ready for inspection of our files. Commissioner White said we can try to have it approved before the next meeting. Commissioner Williams asked if he was the only Commissioner that read the policy before the meeting tonight. Mayor said we are waiting on the agency to reschedule the inspection of our records. She said we may be able to wait to approve this at the next month's meeting depending on when our reschedule date will be. She said If we need a special called meeting I will inform the Board.
Commissioner Williams made a motion to table the matter so the Board could review the policy. He said it is a lot of information and we need to be able to review it better table the matter at this time. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White. All in favor, motion carried.
- b. Board to authorize Christine Bass, Finance Officer permission to utilize the laptop to access the Harris Software and Southern Bank for required duties while not in the office. Commissioner Williams asked for more information. Ms. Bass explained that she did not want to be accused of doing anything unethical or unmorally. She said on days the office is closed and the bank is open I have to check our online banking portal for payment approvals. She said this is a fraud prevention process that is required due to not being in good standing with its financial status with its payees. She said if this is not completed the check in question will not be paid therefore causing me unnecessary work.
Commissioner White said town business needs to be handles at the town. Commissioner Eason said we had a problem with another employee working from home. There was some discussion among the Board.

Commissioner Williams made a motion to table the matter of Ms. Bass using the laptop to perform town business when the office is closed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eason. All in favor, motion carried.

- c. Board to discuss and approve the authorization of the General Fund loaning \$11,321 to the Water/Sewer Fund to cover the costs to complete the work under the Change Order #4 for the WWTP Improvement Project. Mayor stated the reason for the authorization of the change order. Jeff Long explained the details of the remaining work to be completed. He explained that the state is requiring this work to be completed under the SOC. Ms. Bass explained that the entire amount of the \$1M has been exhausted but there was still some work that needed to be completed while the contractor was on site. She went over the change order with the board. She explained that the W/S department did not have any money in the budget and there was no balance fund at this time. She said this is a loan just in case but once the W/S department starts collecting the monies being billed on a regular basis we may not have to loan this money at all. She said this is a just in case so that this process could be completed without having to wait on Board approval. She explained the total costs for the remainder work would be \$14,475 but there were some finds to help and the balance is what would be needed. She said it would be in the best interest of the Board to allow the remaining work to be completed now or pay double or even triple to have another contractor come in to complete the work. There was some discussion among the Board.

Commissioner Eason made a motion to allow the General Fund loan the \$11,321 to the Water/Sewer Fund if needed at the time the work was completed and that the funds will be paid back by the W/S Fund before June 30, 2026. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Joyner. All in favor, motion carried.

- d. Board to review and approve the new Planning Board Application with any corrections. Mayor Newcombe explained to the Board the Town must establish a Planning Board as part of the Town's Charter, Ordinance, and required for future zoning and code enforcement of ordinances which is expressed by the Land Use Plan. She then explained the need for the application. She explained the Planning Board duties and the Board of Adjustments duties which both require residency of being in town and it would be a volunteer committee and what would be required to help the town. She advised the Board would have to approve the applications received for the Planning Board to be established. There was some discussion.

Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve the Planning Board application. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Eason. All in favor, motion carried.

- e. Board to review and approve the Town of Rich Square Purchasing Policy with any corrections along with discussion about the recent unauthorized purchase and the current balance of the Powell Bill Funds. Ms. Bass went through the Purchasing Policy with the Board. She explained that this policy gives direction for any purchase over \$1,000 and that proper procedures are being followed as written in the policy. She explained the importance of all quotes must go through the Board in an open Board meeting, ethics, conflict-of-interest, and the need for multiple quotes being required. Mayor Newcombe explained that the Board has not done very well with doing the pre-auditing requirements

issued by the LGC and NC Treasury Department. Ms. Bass presented to the Board to over-sight by the Board of Commissioners as to the prior spending of the Powell Bill funds and the status of the account as of today. There was some discussion among the board.

Commissioner Eason made a motion to approve the Town of Rich Square Purchasing Policy with any corrections. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Williams. All in favor, motion carried.

- f. Board to review and approve the contractor that will complete some paving and/or sidewalk work with the remainder of the 25-26 Powell Bill allocation of \$22,000 – estimates from Right Myer and LD Mason. The Board reviewed the quotes received and agreed that there were not enough funds to even complete either Majette or Smallwood Streets. Mayor Newcombe asked if the Board would consider reducing the scope of work and do one half of the street and try to get the other half done the following year. LD Mason said it would not be beneficial to do one half versus the whole street. There was some discussion among the board and asked about safety concerns. Ms. Bass expressed her concern as finance officer of the requirement of two-thirds of the money upfront before work is done and the remainder after work completed. There was more discussion. Commissioner Eason requested to table the matter until some more quotes could be obtained to reduce the scope of the work and/or look at getting some sidewalk work completed for the money that was available. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cary. All in favor, motion carried.
- g. Board to discuss the protocol for passengers in town vehicles. Mayor Newcombe advised that only the employees listed under the Property & Casualty Insurance policy would be properly insured to be riding in the town vehicles. There was some discussion among the Board. It was determined that only, if necessary, would a commissioner ride in a vehicle usually it would be with the Public Works Department (W/S or Streets) that this would be needed.
- h. Board to discuss and approve the sale of the old bush hog from the Street and Powell Bill Departments. Commissioner Williams recommended to the Board that the town try to recoup some money from items that are not being used and taking up space on town properties. He recommended that the 2011 police car have the equipment removed and sold. He recommended that if the old bush hog was reusable that we sell it or get the current scrap rate for the item. He said there is no reason that we have old stuff sitting around that cannot be used when we can use the space for something else. There was discussion wherein there is a forklift that has been moved in years and an air compressor that no longer works. Chief Smith did bring up the fact that some of these items were purchased under a federal agency wherein it cannot be sold unless given permission to do so. Jeff Long said there is a truck sitting at the WWTP that hasn't been used and was dropped here when Chief Roye was here. Chief Smith said it was not state surplus but federal surplus and could only be used for our agency. The Board asked Chief Smith to get the permission so that the Town can be allowed to dispose of such items. Commissioner Williams asked about the Uni-First rug contract. Ms. Bass said that she

was working on getting the information as to if we can close out the contract or if we can reduce the number of times they come out to save on money.

Old Business

Commissioner Eason brought up 200 Judith Street reference to the bushes and limbs needing to be cut back for the safety of the citizens that drive up Judith to Drew Street. He said the bushes and limbs are causing a hazard that citizens cannot see what is coming around the corner. Mayor Newcombe said she was not sure and would check on it.

Jeff Long brought up that citizens are cutting their grass and blowing the clipping into the road which is washed into the ditches and blocking the drains from flowing properly. He said this has been done for years and now we are hearing about the ditches backing up. He said citizens need to take some of the responsibility for the town ditches as well. He said the citizens are aware the town cannot properly level and cut out ditches like the county does. He said we do not have the equipment nor the workforce to do so. He said we must look at other ways to help the ditches flow properly. Ms. Bass said this is being reviewed under the ordinances and will be updated once the ordinances are being revised. End of old business.

Staff & Council Reports

- a. Police Chief Report - Chief William Smith gave his report to the Board. He referenced the illegal dumping being done on property in town limits. He said that he has been going through several bags of trash looking for a name or at least an address to identify who did the dumping of the trash on a citizen's property. He said if anyone sees this happening get a tag number, please call central dispatch to advise so that a deputy or myself can try to get on scene as soon as possible.
Chief said we do have deputy presence in town, juveniles being out late at night but are doing well, and for citizens to remember to continue safety and security of homes, property, and vehicles. End of report.
- b. Police Commissioner Report – Commissioner Williams gave his report. He said thank you to the Chief for trying to get the deductible reduced or completely covered through the repairs on the Durango.
Commissioner said that the work has been completed by working with the Rich Square Volunteer Fire Department (RSVFD) and Public Works got it cleaned up.
Commissioner Williams asked if you hear something on the streets and you never scene this person at a meeting asked them to attend so that they can get the correct information instead of second-hand information which was not true.
Commissioner White and myself participated in the back to school give away. He said we need to get involved in our community. End of report.
- c. Water/Sewer ORC report –Jeffrey Long gave his report earlier. Ms. Bass gave the report that explained the notices and cut-offs done as of July 29th and how the whole process went. She explained the process of setting up the payment plans for several citizens. She said we are working with citizens. She said the pay plans have restrictions in that delinquent fee will continue to be applied to the balance they owe on the 21st and if not paid by the 25th the service will be turned off on the 26th. She said the citizen will have to pay the entire passed due amount, any late fees that have accrued, and the re-connect fee

of \$150. She said the citizens that set up payment plans have been advised of all this at the time of setting up their agreement that they sign and dated. The board had a copy of the report to review. End of report.

- d. Water/Sewer Commissioner report – No report.
- e. Street Commissioner report – Commissioner Eason passed the street lights outage report down to Mayor Newcombe. End of report.
- f. Recreation and Events Commissioner report – Commissioner Joyner said the Fun Day event is scheduled for August 16th and the banners have been placed as they were last year. He said he does not know how many vendors that will attend at this time. He said most vendors wait until the last couple of days to determine if they will attend our event. He said we normally have good attendance for the event. He said last year we had vendors wanting to sign up the day of the event. Ms. Bass recommended that he did not allow that because that would make him responsible to take their vendor fee and make sure an application was completed as well as supervise the event. She provided the Board a copy of the email received advising the Board that the Town's Property and Casualty Insurance Company has agreed to cover the Fun Day event at no cost to the town. She said before we get the quote for next year, we need to know all the events that are going to be sponsored by the town so that they are covered before the event happens. End of report.
- g. Finance Officer report – No report.
- h. Town Clerk report – No report.
- i. Administrative Commissioner report – Peggy Cary said she wanted to thank the office staff for their hard work. She said change is good and we are moving in the right direction. End of report.
- j. Mayor's report – Victoria Newcombe said that Commissioners Williams, Ms. Futrell and myself attended the Shelter opening at Creecy School. She said in talking about it it came to our attention for those citizens that have physical impairments that would need more attention and transport to the shelter. We are working on getting a list together for future use. She did advise that someone needs to get registered with the American Red Cross and there will need to be volunteers available to staff the facility in an event of an emergency.
Mayor Newcombe said a Diabetes Education class will be held each Thursday for the next 6 weeks here at the Annex building from 1 pm to 2 pm. She said this class is being offered through the Northampton County Cooperative Extension.
Mayor Newcombe said on the table is literature about Fats, Oil, and Grease (FOGS) and the disposable wipes. She said this is an issue in our sewer system and we need the citizens help in trying to not pour these items down the drain and not to flush them down the toilet.

Ms. Futrell reminded Mayor Newcombe that Red Cross and Chris Collier will be here on August 16, 2025 and anyone interested in volunteering and assisting with transport for citizens, please come. End of report.


Closed Session

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

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

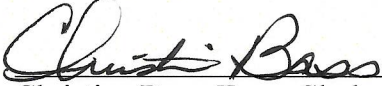
Adjournment

Commissioner Williams moved, and Commissioner Eason seconded the motion to adjourn the August 7, 2025 regular meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:19 pm.



Victoria Newcombe, Mayor

ATTEST:



Christine Bass, Town Clerk