

Town of Oriental
Town Board Meeting
April 7, 2015

The Town Board of Oriental held its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at 7:00 pm. The Mayor determined a quorum to be present, and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Mayor Sage, Commissioners Overcash, White, Venturi, Summers and Winfrey, Town Manager Miller, Police Chief Moore, Administrative Assistant Dimond, and public.

The Agenda and Consent Agenda were presented for Board approval.

Motion: Commissioner White motioned to approve the agenda, Commissioner Overcash seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Mayor Sage expressed that he would like corrections made to the previous month's open and closed session minutes.

Motion: Commissioner Summers motioned to approve the consent agenda, Commissioner Overcash seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Motion: Commissioner White motioned to approve the 04.07.15 open session minutes, with the correction that on the vote to approve the 01.29.15 agenda workshop minutes, Commissioner Venturi abstained, but the vote was 5-0. Commissioner Winfrey seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

In the public comment period, Creekkeeper Bill Hines reminded the room that the annual Neuse River Cleanup would be taking place on Saturday, April 25, 2015 – clean-up bags will be available at Town Hall. In a separate matter, Mr. Hines commented that a local horse farm will be making manure available to gardeners. Additionally, Mr. Hines asked the Board when the groundbreaking for the restrooms and pump out station at the Town's South Avenue property would be - expressing his concern that the Town's grant for the project might timeout. The Town Manager commented that the Town hopes to have the project executed by September.

Motion: Commissioner Summers motioned to approve the 03.03.15 closed minutes, with corrections as suggested, Commissioner Venturi seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

The Board was presented with a budget amendment that would move money from the water tank budget line to general water plant maintenance for roof replacement.

Motion: Commissioner Summers motioned to approve the proposed budget amendment, Commissioner Overcash seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Next, the Board was presented with a fee schedule amendment that would add consistency to

current water rate policy, by raising the water deposit fee to \$50 for new accounts, under miscellaneous fees changing the terminology of 'reconnect fee' to 'non-payment' fee, and by removing the reconnect fee from the vacation water fee.

Motion: Commissioner White motioned to approve the proposed fee schedule amendment, Commissioner Overcash seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Summers commented that he would like to see a form outlining all of the water related amendments that have been approved so far this year.

The next item on the agenda was the proposed resolution to establish the Town of Oriental as a "Dragon Sanctuary."

Motion: Commissioner Venturi motioned to adopt the resolution, Commissioner Overcash seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Commissioner Venturi pointed out that in the past, the Town had considered making a dragon the Town mascot, but did not due to worries over the town being perceived as 'worshipping dragons' – the purpose of this resolution is to recognize that dragons have become important to the iconography of Oriental. The Town wants to live in peace with our dragons versus making dragons the Town mascot.

In the Manager's Report, it was reported that;

Nine Cross Connection and Backflow walkthroughs have been completed with local businesses, so far only very small issues have been found – easy, cheap things to be done. More walkthroughs have been scheduled and, hopefully, local businesses will continue to sign-up. Notices will shortly be sent out to residents to check well connections on residential property. The CAMA application for the Town's South Avenue restroom and pump out station has been sent and the Town has received approval. CAMA will be taking comments on the project until April 20, the Town can break ground on the project as of April 21. The pump out station for the property is coming – half the cost has already been paid, the other half will be paid after it arrives. Commissioner Winfrey has acquired construction materials for the project, such as concrete blocks, sand, and fiberglass interior drywall. The only cost associated was in moving the materials, \$75 to have it trucked in.

The water violation notice that was addressed last month has been paid, the Town paid \$800. Pamlico Community College Tai Chi classes are continuing to take place in Town Hall twice a week. The Town Hall is playing a central role in the community with groups and organizations holding meetings in the building almost every day.

Public Works Director Andrew Cox completed B-Well school, his test will be next month.

Budgeting numbers for the Water Fund are still being computed. The Town Board will be holding its first budget meeting tomorrow - there will be some changes to the spreadsheets for the meeting.

The Town Hall generator is now in great shape. In making repairs, Gregory Bohmert went as far as to remanufacture no longer available replacement parts.

The Board should expect increased police expenditures for video surveillance equipment.

There were several items not included in the original agenda packet, including; a letter of thanks from the Sailing Club of Oriental for the use of Town Hall for their winter seminars, and a comment that in addition to the annual river and beach clean-up, PAWS will be holding its annual Pet Parade on April 25, 2015.

An executive summary put out by the League of Municipalities states that sales tax should be up by 4% and Powell down by 1%. The Town lost nearly \$1 million in taxable property, probably the relocation/removal of a large boat, resulting in a \$2,000 loss in tax revenue.

The Town's current expenses relating to South Avenue litigation are \$76,589.88 - the Town has not yet received the final bill.

In response to the Manager's Report, Commissioner Summers requested a breakdown on the Powell lighting budget. Further, Commissioner Summers questioned why the Town hasn't shut down the Lou Mac Park electric boards to save on cost. Mayor Sage directed the Town Manager to disconnect and reconnect electric boards as needed.

In the Police Report, Police Chief Moore reported that things were picking up over the past month. There was one drug related arrest and a larceny at Village Hardware. Warrants are currently out for several individuals. Chief Moore stated to the public that as it gets warmer, this is the time of year to be on the lookout for one another and to please report suspicious activity. The Boat Show will be this weekend and Chief Moore cautioned residents to be careful of foot traffic and congested traffic in that area.

The next agenda topic was staggered term options for Town Commissioners. To stagger elections, it would take amending the town charter and changing Commissioner terms from 2 years to 4 years. This has been discussed with previous Boards. Mayor Sage stated that he was open to discussing the topic.

Commissioner Overcash voiced his favor for the current 2 year term. He stated that a 4 year term may limit residents for running, it could potentially leave the Town stuck with ineffective Commissioners, and that a 4 year term may leave serving officials tired.

Commissioner Summers supported this by pointing out that in a retirement community, getting people to commit to 4 years might be a bit much – limiting potential good candidates. He pointed out that with current 2 year terms, in the case of an entire Board turning over in one year, there were enough individuals with knowledge to offer advice if needed to an entirely new Board. Commissioner White further agreed with these points, pointing out that his local church tried to instate 3 year terms and no one wanted to commit for that long. He further stated that he would rather have more people signing up to run than less. Therefore, staying with shorter terms makes the most sense.

Commissioner Venturi stated that she was in favor of staggered, 4 year terms. She pointed out that it was better to only spend money on running for office once every 4 years, that it further guaranteed Board continuity in developing Town projects, and that it would be a mistake to risk throwing out an entire Board all at once. She further stated that the Board has taken on many complex issues over the past few years and that it would be a risk to have all new members trying to correspond with committees and boards, while not having the same connections and

knowledge.

Mayor Sage commented that the Town is blessed in that lots of people have run for positions, often double what was needed. He added that the Board should ask for input from Town residents. Mayor Sage agreed with Commissioner Venturi that losing all of a mature board's knowledge was an area of concern. According to state statute, if the Board decides to change Commissioner terms, the Board would need to announce their intent to adopt a resolution to change the Town Charter, followed by a public hearing.

In the Committee/ Board reports, Commissioner Overcash questioned where the 'Oriental Lagoon' was located – the answer being behind the Town's recreation fields. There were no other questions.

In the Commissioner comment period, Mayor Sage informed the public that there had been a closed session at the previous agenda workshop meeting, in which the Board had a productive meeting going through the Town Manager's performance evaluations. As a result of a positive review, the Board has decided to award the manager with a \$3,000 per year salary increase, beginning from the first pay period in May.

Commissioner White commented that the Planning Board needed to schedule a public hearing on a Special Use Permit for the Board's May meeting. The SUP is for 402 Academy Street, to change the use from residential to residential/short-term vacation rental.

Commissioner Summers commented on the Town's Powell fund, expressing concern that the Town will have a very limited amount of funds to maintain the Town's roads. Town Manager Miller addressed the shortcomings in the budget and outlined a plan for the coming fiscal year to leave more funds available for roadwork.

Commissioner Venturi commented again on changing to longer, staggered Commissioner terms, stating that she hopes the Board will consider staggered 4 year terms to ensure that there is continuity throughout all of the Town's projects. Additionally, Commissioner Venturi commented that she has a form available for residents to apply for any losses still not claimed from Hurricane Irene.

Motion: Commissioner Summers motioned to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Winfrey seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.

Bill Sage, Mayor

Diane H. Miller, Town Manager