

Belhaven Town Council
Minutes – March 24, 2008
Regular Session

Call to Order/Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance

The Belhaven Town Council met in regular session on Monday, March 24, 2008 at 7:00 P.M. at the Boyette Civic Center at 257 W. Pungo Street. Mayor Adam W. O'Neal called the meeting to order with the following Council members present: Steve W. Carawan, J. Nelson Guy, Mayor Pro-Tem; McKee (Mac) Pigott and Robert L. Stanley. Councilman Howard D. Moore was not present at the meeting. Interim Town Manager, Dr. Guinn Leverett, Town Attorney Arthur (Bud) Cockrell and Town Clerk Marie J. Adams were also present. Mayor O'Neal recognized and introduced Dennis Davis, Minister with Cornerstone Tabernacle Church who gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes – Regular Session – March 10, 2008

Mayor O'Neal announced that the regular session minutes of the March 10, 2008 meeting were open for review and approval. There being no corrections to the minutes, Councilman Carawan made the motion to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2008 regular session. Councilman Guy seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 4 to 0.

Public Comments

Mayor O'Neal opened the public comments portion of the meeting by stating that according to the General Statutes he can not comment on the recent firings of the Chief of Police, George Hayden and Investigator Josh Hopkins, due to personnel issues. Mayor O'Neal reassured the citizens that they were being protected with assistance from the Beaufort County Sheriff's Department. Mayor O'Neal stated that a consultant from Sanford had been contacted to assist in the hiring of a new Police Chief and the process may take 3 to 4 months. Mayor O'Neal then introduced Col. Harry Meredith, Chief Deputy with Beaufort County Sheriff's Department who is in charge of the police protection in Belhaven at this time.

Mayor O'Neal then recognized the following who spoke during the Public Comment Portion of the meeting:

Mr. Phil Reynolds, resident of 548 East Street, who stated that the Council's microphones were either not working or the Council was not speaking into them.

Mr. Talmadge Hamilton, 1150 W. Pungo Street, stated that the Town had a budget of \$7.2 million which equates to \$3,687 with 1,968 citizens. He stated that the Town had done a lot of cleaning up which made the Town look pretty but were cleaning up private property on Pamlico and Elm Streets, a bridge was built over a ditch and were clearing the Latham Cemetery, now referred to as Black Bottom. He stated that if anyone would like to assist him in getting the present elected officials out of office to contact him at home (252) 943-2797 or cellular telephone at 944-7884 or email him at tal1942@earthlink.net.

Mayor O'Neal stated he would like to respond to Mr. Hamilton's comments. Mayor O'Neal stated that the bridge built at the barber shop on Elm Street was due to thirty

Belhaven Town Council
Minutes – March 24, 2008
Regular Session

years of neglect to the ditch, and that our current Public Works Director Paul Wood took care of the problem. Mayor O’Neal also stated that overgrown lots had been neglected and affected the quality of life for those living beside these properties. Mayor O’Neal explained that the lots being cleared by the Town were heir properties for generation after generation and that no one had the interest to upkeep the property due to their portion of ownership claim being so small. Mayor O’Neal stated that eventually the lots which are being cleared will be foreclosed on because the property taxes were not being paid. Mayor O’Neal stated that he “took offense” with someone disputing the clearing of Black Bottom Cemetery as it was the remains of some 400 people who helped build this town. Mayor O’Neal stated that the graves from burials prior to 1950-1960 were the ones which were unmarked and some were unknown. Mayor O’Neal stated that this administration would take care of the entire town not just a particular area.

Mr. Seth Latham, resident of 365 Tooley Street, stated that his father and his family had taken care of Latham Cemetery until it was deeded to the Church Women United and that the Black Bottom Cemetery was to the left of Latham Cemetery as many people confused the cemeteries.

Mrs. Ruth Price, co-owner of Video I at 902 Belhaven Crossing Shopping Center stated that she felt safer in her business when Mr. Ronnie Blount, a former patrolman, was on duty as he patrolled the area and even stopped in each business to check on them, she stated that the current patrolmen ride by and then park in the corner of the shopping center where large trucks surround them, so that the patrolman can not see the shopping center.

Mayor O’Neal stated that ITM Leverett would take care of Mrs. Price’s concerns.

C-Tom Community Development Corporation, Inc. – Introduction

Mayor O’Neal recognized and introduced Mr. Albert (Lee) Russell, President of the C-Tom a non-profit Community Development Corporation. Mr. Russell stated that the non-profit had 12.5 acres in which they planned housing for low to moderate income for individual homeowner space, employee training and a day care. Mr. Russell stated that volunteers and board members would be needed. Mr. Russell stated that the C-Tom Board meets on every 3rd Wednesday at 3 PM at 160 Pantego Street and extended an invitation to interested parties. Mr. Russell stated that the non-profit could be contacted at PO Box 524, Belhaven, NC 27810 or at (252) 943-3200 and Fax 926-9959.

Mayor O’Neal thanked Mr. Russell for the information and their interest in the Town.

Conflict of Interest Policies: Town Employees, Elected Officials and Staff

Mayor O’Neal stated that in trying to resolve the issues with the Division of Community Assistance (DCA) concerning the funds for the Wynne’s View, DCA suggested that the Town elected officials adopt Conflict of Interest Policies. Mayor O’Neal stated that the two former council members and the former Town Manager all served on the board overseeing Wynne’s View and this did not need to happen again. Following some discussion, Councilman Carawan made the motion that the Conflict of Interest Policies

**Belhaven Town Council
Minutes – March 24, 2008**

Regular Session

for Town Employees, Elected Officials and Staff be adopted as submitted. Councilman Stanley seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 4 to 0. (insert policies)

Amend Town Personnel Policy – Business Travel

Mayor O’Neal stated that ITM Leverett had suggested that the current personnel policy on travel be amended to include per diem expenses per state recommendations which are current at the time of travel. Following some discussion, Councilman Pigott stated that the personnel policy (travel) be amended to allow expenses for travel as current per Diem expenses and that the policy be amended as follows:

32.136 BUSINESS TRAVEL.

(B) Reimbursement

Section (1) be amended by replacing with the following:

(1) town employees traveling on official business will be reimbursed for expenses as the State of North Carolina’s per diem rate at the time of travel for that employee.

Councilman Carawan seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 4 to 0.

Mayoral Future Planning Committee

Mayor O’Neal stated there was a need for a Mayoral Future Planning Committee to meet with proposed developers on their views, ideas, etc. when needed. Councilman Pigott stated that this committee would work closely with the planning board. Mayor O’Neal asked that the Council endorse the following to serve on the Mayoral Future Planning Committee: Mr. Brantley Tillman, Mr. Dick Ray, Mr. Julian Goff, Mr. Jesse Rogers Mr. Gilbert Radcliffe, Mr. Les Porter and Ms. Mable Satterthwaite. Councilman Carawan made the motion to endorse the Mayoral Future Planning Committee as submitted by Mayor O’Neal. Councilman Stanley seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 4 to 0.

Mayoral Utility Advisory Committee

Mayor O’Neal stated that there was a great need for a Mayor Utility Advisory Committee as utility rates would be reduced by July 2008. Mayor O’Neal suggested that the Council endorse the following to serve on this committee: Mr. Adam O’Neal, Mayor; Mr. Mac Pigott, Councilman; Dr. Guinn Leverett, ITM; Mr. Robert Stanley, Councilman and Mr. Solomon Adams. Councilman Carawan made the motion to endorse the Mayor Utility Advisory Committee as submitted by Mayor O’Neal. Councilman Guy seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 4 to 0.

Planning Board, Board of Adjustment and Recreation Advisory Committee Report on Organization Meetings

ITM Leverett stated that the Planning Board had met with new members and that Mr. Larry Pleasant was the Chairman; Board of Adjustment will meet next week as at there organizational meeting they had two excused absences, therefore, did not choose a chairman; and introduced Mr. Trevin Franks who was elected Chairman of the Recreation Advisory Committee.

**Belhaven Town Council
Minutes – March 24, 2008**

Regular Session

Boy Scout Troop #80 – Proposed Eagle Scout Project

Mayor O’Neal stated that Scout Master (SM) Seth David Latham had requested to be on the agenda for a proposed Eagle Scout Project. Mayor O’Neal recognized SM Latham who introduced Life Scout Trent Midgette who is an applicant for the Eagle Scout designation. MS Latham stated that the proposed project was the fund raising and construction of a restroom facility at the NC Wildlife Facility located on W. Water Street. SM Latham stated that the NC Wildlife had already approved the proposed project but needed endorsement by the Town for the maintenance and upkeep of the restroom facility once the facility is completed. The Council had positive discussion of the project. Councilman Pigott stated that this was an “awesome project” and made the motion of 100% of support from the Town and that the Town would maintain and upkeep the restroom facility after completion. Councilman Stanley seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 4 to 0. Mayor O’Neal thanked Scout Trent Midgette for taking an interest in Belhaven.

Town Manager’s Report

ITM Leverett reported briefly on the following items: Grossly Overgrown Lots (GOLs) – have mowed four taking an estimated 1 ½ to 6 ½ hours on each property; Public Information Hearing concerning the annexation of Battalina Creek and its’ environs will be held on Thursday, March 27, 2008 at 6 P.M. in the Council Chambers at Town Hall; interested parties urged to attend; Day Beacon #9 has had 4 new sales with a total of 14 units sold or “promised as sold”; and BIG – P Grant the matching funds grant which will develop the 15’ easement on Wynne’s Gut of the former Belhaven Fish & Oyster property for boat dockage, stated that the Town’s grant application was one of nineteen awarded this year, ITM Leverett stated that the funding would be coming through the Division of Marine Fisheries out of Morehead and would take approximately one year to begin the project. Councilman Pigott thanked all those involved in assisting with the grant application for this project.

Mayor’s Comments

Mayor O’Neal stated that dogs are still being picked up as eleven were picked up recently and warned those pet owners who turn their dogs out late at night.

Mayor O’Neal recognized Mr. Donnell Clark who was featured in the Down East Magazine but stating that Mr. Clark donates his time and energies at the local Chapter of the Boys and Girls Club on a daily basis even though he is legally blind.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mayor O’Neal declared the meeting adjourned at 7:48 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie J. Adams, CMC
Town Clerk