Board of Aldermen Minutes

January 7, 2025 9:00am

Town Hall Conference room, 321 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach

A duly-noticed special called meeting of the Board of Aldermen was called to order at 9:00am by Mayor Mills. The following were present:

Board of Aldermen

F. Darryl Mills, Mayor
Hank Miller, Mayor Pro-tem
Jeff DeGroote, Alderman
Ken Dull, Alderman
Vivian (Zeke) Partin, Alderman

Staff

Haynes Brigman, Town Manager
Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk
Matt Holland, Acting Fire Chief
Sam Proffitt, Ocean Rescue Director

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Brigman stated that the purpose of the meeting was to begin discussions regarding priorities related to the upcoming budget preparation process with the following topics: 1) current projects; 2) upcoming projects; 3) employee satisfaction survey results; 4) strategic planning/budget model; 5) budget priorities; and 6) budget calendar.

Brigman noted the following current projects: 1) park improvements; 2) park and Town Hall parking lot improvements; 3) park equipment update; 4) water tank improvement project; 5) CFPUA consolidation; 6) bulkhead replacement projects at Atlanta and Oxford streets; and 6) NC Wildlife ramp bulkhead replacement. In response to a question from Mills, Brigman stated that one or two positions in the Water/Sewer Department which are slated to be transferred to the CFPUA would be retained due to the positions also functioning in non-water/sewer duties, however, these would need to be funded in the General Fund after consolidation. Therefore, this would be an issue addressed in the upcoming budget. In discussing the parking lot improvements, it was the consensus of the Board that repaving of Bob Sawyer Drive be included in the project in order to provide for the greatest cost benefit.

Future projects listed by Brigman were 1) water/sewer interconnect project (CFPUA); 2) Causeway Drive resurfacing; 3) CFPUA consolidation; and 4) bridge replacement projects (Salisbury St. and Causeway Dr.). It was the consensus of the Board that the Town hire a consultant to assist with the bridge replacement projects.

Brigman reviewed the results of the recently-completed employee satisfaction survey. Strengths listed were: 1) strong core of devoted employees; 2) employees are generally satisfied with the direction of the Town; 3) employees are generally satisfied with communications, training, supervision and culture; 4) recent changes in leadership have led to an optimistic outlook for the future; 5) Wrightsville Beach is a desirable place to work; and 6) recent changes to allow employees/department managers more autonomy to make decisions. Opportunities noted as a result of the survey were listed as 1) pay and benefit improvements; 2) workplace improvements; 3) improved top-down communications; 4) addressing problems when they come up; and 5) having consistent employee performance appraisals. Brigman stated that he planned to share the results of the survey with employees.

Regarding strategic planning and budget models, Brigman stated he planned to 1) create a long-term plan for the Town; 2) utilize the budget and CIP as a road map to accomplish long-term goals; 3) establish a relevant CIP to plan for the capital needs of the Town; and 4) create a budget model that helps guide decisions of the Town.

Brigman outlined issues relating to the FY25-26 budget process as 1) establish priorities for budget planning (short-term, long-term and CIP); 2) begin identifying funding sources and resource allocation; 3) provide direction to management on budget development; and 4) New Hanover County reevaluation year. Brigman noted that in a year in which properties are reassessed, the State requires the Town to develop, as an option, a revenue-neutral budget with regard to property taxes. It was the consensus of the Board that the revenue-neutral budget be a starting point in the budget development process.

The Board then had a discussion relating to the information that had been provided. Mills noted that it was important for the basics to be attended to, noting such items as water/sewer and public safety. Miller stated that the Board had consistently heard issues from citizens relating to the quality of life—such as amenities for residents and improved traffic and parking management. DeGroote stated that compensation issues were important, noting that the Town seemed to always lag behind other local governments. After discussion, it was the consensus of the Board that Brigman proceed with conducting, in conjunction with the HR Officer, a survey of other localities and return with recommendations regarding compensation adjustments. The Board also discussed a recent petition that was circulated regarding a complaint about lighting at a local hotel. It was the consensus of the Board that if the property was in violation of the current ordinance, the Town should proceed with enforcement of that ordinance, particularly now that a complaint had been received.

Brigman listed management priorities as 1) prioritize internal operational improvements; 2) improve communications to the public; 3) investigate opportunities to address results from the employee satisfaction survey; 4) guide the successful consolidation of water/sewer utilities with CFPUA; 5) renovate Town Hall to address office and space needs; 6) quality of life improvements; and 7) community aesthetic improvements. It was the consensus of the Board that Brigman proceed with engaging the architect who had developed plans for Town Hall renovation for an update of the plans.

The Board set the following budget workshop meetings, all beginning at 9:00am: March 10, April 15 and April 29.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:58am.

Respectfully submitted,

Lance G. Heater, Town Clerk