

**TOWN OF LONG VIEW
BOARD OF ALDERMEN
SPECIAL MEETING – BUDGET RETREAT
MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2020**

The Town of Long View Board of Aldermen met on Monday, March 23, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. for a Special Meeting at the Long View Recreation Center.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed 2020-2021 Budget.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Marla Thompson, Mayor Pro Tem/Alderman Randall Mays, Alderman Gary Lingerfelt, Alderman Dallas Tester and Alderman Thurman VanHorn.

BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Alderman David Elder.

STAFF PRESENT: Town Administrator David Draughn, Town Clerk Stephanie Watson, Town Attorney Jimmy Summerlin, Jr., Finance Director James Cozart, Public Works Director Chris Eckard, Town Planner Charles Mullis, Police Chief TJ Bates, and Fire Chief James Brinkley.

INVOCATION: Mayor Marla Thompson called the meeting to order and gave the invocation.

OPENING COMMENTS BY THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Town Administrator David Draughn welcomed everyone. He then welcomed Police Chief Bates to his first budget retreat with the Town of Long View.

Mr. Draughn stated:

The current situation is one that no one has ever been through. It is not the first budget I have had to prepare with uncertainties related to expenses and economic conditions. It is, however, the most dynamic I have ever experienced in my 31 years; requiring a dynamic response in my opinion. Department Heads have submitted requests that were reviewed by myself, the Finance Director, and the Department Head individually. Since those initial meetings, the Town's economic situation has changed dramatically. With each passing day, Town employees' jobs are being altered to a crisis management posture in which the Town is learning how to deal with a global pandemic. This is the first in over one hundred years, they say. The Town has to be prepared to operate on its own with little assistance and limited resources as this continues to roll forward. The Town's budgeting goals have been completely altered for the time being as the Town tries to figure the real economic impact to revenues and expenses. With all this in mind, we must adopt priorities for the Town to protect our employees. If employees cannot do their job, they cannot help citizens.

The presentations that will be presented during budget retreat are significantly reduced expense requests from what they originally were due to the revenue impacts that are yet unknown. We are being told that the Town could see its State Shared Revenue drop 20-25% on a month to month basis as this goes on. We are watching and evaluating the situation every day. Currently, the Town looks to be okay financially. However, the Town will be adopting some spending freeze procedures. Until we know what the impacts will be, the Financial Director and myself have had

to reduce requests to just a few minimum new increases while adding increases and expenses that the Town cannot directly control. This includes insurance, retirement, holiday pay and other increasing line items. We intend to hold most of the remaining expenses at current year adopted levels for the time being. As this goes along, things could start clearing up and we can add stuff in or remove stuff before the Board adopts the final budget. We will have to wait and see. Hopefully, the Town will have a better understanding of the situation before the May 8th budget work session.

The goal for today's meeting is to talk about some things in regards to the budget and look for the Board's guidance.

DEPARTMENT HEAD DISCUSSIONS

Police Department

Police Chief Bates stated that he had been a part of many of these budget discussions over his twenty-four years in local government and this situation is one that you just don't know anything about.

He appreciated the opportunity to be the Town of Long View's Chief of Police. He has been so for 114 days now and it has been 144 good days. Even with the times we are in, the worst day has been good. He spoke for all his staff in the Police Department in saying that they appreciate the Board's support.

Alderman Randall Mays stated that he has seen much improvement in the Police Department in the last 114 days. He appreciated that.

Chief Bates stated that they have a lot of things to do moving forward and they were going to do those things as much as possible in spite of the current virus. The department has goals and some goal driven people. It is an agency full of hard-working people. The department will do the best it can moving forward and try to continue to make the Town's citizen's happy by improving its services.

Chief Bates asked for one patrol vehicle for the upcoming fiscal year. Historically the department asks for two and that is wonderful as the Town has a good motor fleet. Instead of the second vehicle this year, he would like to look at getting other technology for the department.

He informed the Board that the Dodge Charger was not available this year to the Town. He spoke briefly about other vehicles that the department looked at before deciding to go with the Ford Explorer as it is the best with performance and maintenance. It will cost \$32,575 with an extra upfitting price of about \$10,000.

Chief Bates explained that not buying two vehicles this year would not mess up the two-vehicle rotation. Last year the Board bought two vehicles for the Police Department and the department bought a third from its drug fund.

The plan this year is to use the money, that would have gone to a second vehicle, toward laptops for police department cars. The department has already ordered six laptops from its drug fund. The police laptops are more rugged than the ordinary ones and cost a little more. The department is way behind with technology. With laptops in the cars, officers can do more.

He also requested a mobile hotspot in each of the cars. With the laptops, officers will be able to access the DMV in real time. Currently, they have to rely on the Comm Center. With real time data, officers will be safer and citizens will be safer.

The cost for each hotspot is approximately \$32 per month per vehicle. There would be a one time \$7.00 fee per laptop in order to get VPN in order to get secure in the software as regulated by the FBI and SBI.

Alderman Tester stated that he has ridden with the department in the past and it is embarrassing that they do not yet have that tech. He felt it was absolutely necessary and was glad to see this being discussed.

Chief Bates asked for a budget for 11 computers with hotspots. Currently officers are using their personal phones to gain access into CJLeads for information. That information can be up to 48-72 hours behind. This could be an issue if they are getting ready to stop a newly stolen vehicle for speeding. They need to know things in real time.

The requested laptops will be for the uniformed patrol officers to have in their vehicles.

The laptops will cost approximately \$1,500 each and will come with a three-year warranty. That is the best lowest cost unit for this type of computer on the market.

There was some discussion about other possible vehicles that could be used in the department. Chief Bates stated that some agencies are going to four door trucks. If the department had those trucks, a half cage would be used so there would be room left for storage.

The problem with Chargers is that they are bad with maintenance and there is zero storage.

Alderman Mays asked if the trucks would provide more versatility and utility. Chief Bates stated that they would. The department currently has a truck that can be used to recover stolen property. The Lenoir department has trucks for their SROs or supervisory roles. The Dodge trucks are affordable at \$29,000 but those are not available to the Town this year.

Chief Bates stated that whatever the department does, it will be the last purchase of the ghost cars for a while. He wishes to keep the fleet the same. He wants to go back to the silver and he is in the process of developing a package now.

He currently has sent two officers for radar training too.

Alderman Mays stated that the department wants a Ford Explorer and 11 laptops. Did his department need more training?

Chief Bates briefly went over his plans for the department. This included assigning an officer as a part time school resource officer and a part time community resource officer. As part of the position, he could help with community watch programs, presentations for the seniors, etc. It would also place an officer at Southwest Primary for half a day. The school is very excited about it. The position could be what we want to make it. This position will go to Eddie Marlowe.

Chief Bates spoke about the realignment of the different divisions in the department to include the Patrol Division, Support Services Division (detectives, animal control, school resource officer), etc.

Officer Pitts was promoted and put over the Support Services Division. These changes will go into effect July 1. With these things streamlined, everyone will know who they need to report to.

Chief Bates stated that currently there is a detective position and a road sergeant position open that officers are applying for internally. He briefly explained the process of applying for those positions.

Fire Department

Fire Chief James Brinkley requested the replacement of gas meters on the trucks. The current ones are getting some age on them and he is afraid they will become unreliable. To his knowledge, Long View is the only department in the county that carries these. He briefly explained their use and how they are calibrated. He requested \$7,500 to purchase the expanded model meters. The meters would cost around \$2,300 a piece.

There was further discussion about how the meters are used.

Chief Brinkley briefly went over some of the personnel changes in his department. Garrett Huffman has left the department to work as the Fire Marshall for Alexander County. Tyler Keener has been made the new Deputy Fire Chief and is doing an outstanding job. Coy Knight has been moved in to the Lieutenant position for B shift. There will be further changes in the future with James Strickland retiring on April 1st. Currently the department has 17 members which is two above State recommendations. There is always something going on with personnel.

When asked how the 24-hour shift is working, Chief Brinkley stated that it is doing great. It is something that should have been done a long time ago.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Chris Eckard informed the Board that the Public Works Department has a few utility projects planned for the upcoming year.

One of which is the sewer outfall line that runs from Frye Creek. The creek is undermining the pillars that are holding it up. If not repaired this will be an issue in the future. The line is the one that comes out of the flume at the old sewer plant. When the line was originally put in, there were two pillars on the outside and one in the center. The heavy rain and water flow have undermined the two outer pillars. Instead of totally replacing everything, the goal, if possible, is to reconstruct the two outer pillars and reconstruct the outer banks. He would like to do away with the center pillar but they may not be able to do so due to the width. They have also looked at reworking the center pillar to make it better.

The altitude valve still needs to be put in at the water tower. The pricing that came in was way over what they originally thought it would be. They have tried to scale back and are now looking at another option. The problem comes with trying to get equipment under there safely. If possible, the goal now is to put it in the existing vault. If this is possible, it will cut the cost for installation dramatically. The problem is that the concrete pillars for that tank get bigger as you get closer to the ground. Due to the narrow width in between the pillars, getting the tractor in there so that it can move the vault, the lid and other things is a problem.

There is another aerial crossing on the northwest side of the water line at Mimosa Gardens off of 24th Street NW. There is an area on that crossing that is starting to sag. The plan is to pull some flow testing

to see if that area is needed. With all the other crossings we have now, that small 8-inch crossing may not be necessary. It has valves on either side of it, so they plan to test it by cutting one side off to see if there is adequate flow. If it does, it will be cut off. It would not cost much to do it this way; just materials and his department's time. The other option, which is to totally repair it, would cost approximately \$100,000.

The property at Holland Metal and the brick house beside it on Hwy 70 used to be all one property. Both properties fed off of a well at the house. The property owners now want two separate taps for those properties. The department has looked at doing a water line extension for this and it is just not feasible. The plan now is to get a contractor to bore under Hwy 70 so that the Town can get some meters put in for those two properties. Doing it this way will save the Town a lot of money.

Alderman Tester asked if he was correct in thinking that technically the Town does have to provide them with water. Mr. Eckard said yes. If they are in city limits and they want water, water needs to be provided. The extension does not need to be done though. The Town can just run two taps. He added that if he can run a longer tap, he will also try to run an extra one to the third business in that area too.

Mr. Eckard stated that Mr. Draughn, the engineer and himself have researched placing the 12-inch water line down Sweet Bay Lane. It would not be the total length as was originally discussed but would be run from the existing hydrant to the end of Sweet Bay Lane where it meets Old Shelby Road.

Mr. Draughn stated that they felt that at least some of the proposed project should get done. The amount they are suggesting would be approximately 3,500 feet of water line. The Town Planner has been getting calls pretty regularly about the properties in that area. Some of the lack of interest in those properties is due to not having water provided. Running the line to Sweet Bay Lane would cost approximately \$200,000. Taps would be placed. The Town would also take care of the sewer issue across Hickory's right of way too.

Mr. Draughn stated that to do all the projects that Mr. Eckard has talked about; it would cost approximately \$450,000. The Town would borrow that and would then put a \$60,000 loan payment in the budget. It would be a seven year or less pay back.

When Alderman Lingerfelt asked what size line would be run, Mr. Eckard said a 12 inch. They looked at reducing the size but taking future expansion as a consideration, there is a need for a 12-inch line.

Alderman Mays asked about hydrants for that area. Mr. Eckard stated that they would probably put in hydrants every 500 feet.

Alderman Mays stated that enough flow was needed for industrial sprinklers or for residential.

Mr. Eckard stated that Hickory has purchased the property by the soccer fields. The Town needs to get sewer across those fields before Hickory turns them into soccer fields too.

Mr. Draughn stated that it has already been written into law for Catawba County to be a part of the Appalachian Regional Commission. That opens up a whole new world of grants hopefully that will happen and the Town can apply for grants to take care of the rest of that. This will at least get fire protection down there and get water to those properties so that businesses will be more likely to look at them.

Mr. Mullis stated that those properties are the largest properties the Town has that can be used for commercial development. This is where it is most likely going to happen. The Town needs to get the infrastructure out there.

Alderman Mays stated that the Town would just have to phase it in. It has been on the books to be done for 20 years. Now the Town is losing opportunities down there.

Mr. Draughn stated that the Town could afford this payment in the Utility Fund.

Fire Chief Brinkley stated that with the Town's good ISO rating and the addition of having water provided out there, the area will look good to future businesses.

Alderman Mays stated that it also allows for potential residential areas on further down. Getting it to Old Shelby Road is a big leap forward for any further development.

Mr. Draughn stated that all four projects Mr. Eckard mentioned will be built into a loan payment that is in the proposed budget.

Mr. Draughn explained that while the Sweet Bay Lane Water Line project has been on the schedule for 20 years, it has been put off in the past due to it being expensive. There have been various other reasons throughout the years as well for it not getting done.

Alderman Mays stated that for potential growth, the Town will have to get started on it.

Mr. Draughn informed the Board, that the Town is also increasing the maintenance budget for the Public Works Department by \$40,000. \$20,000 will be added to the Utility Fund-Garage and \$20,000 to the General Fund - Garage. The cost of mechanics for the Fire Department's and Public Works Department's machinery has increased dramatically.

Planning Department

There were no changes to the Planning Department.

Administration

Finance Director James Cozart spoke briefly about salaries, insurance, and retirement. The last couple of weeks, due to the COVID-19 virus, have changed what the Town can do from an economic standpoint. There is a potential for an economic fallout due to the virus. The Town has been told to expect a 20-25% decrease in State Shared Revenues. The Town's biggest State Shared Revenue is its Sales Tax. If the estimated decrease were to happen, the Town could lose approximately \$30,000 per month just in Sales Tax.

With all this in mind, the Town Administrator and Mr. Cozart suggested to hold off on any cost of living adjustments for the time being. In May, they can relook at things and see how things are going. With this current uncertainty, the Town does not want to get into a situation where it has to send employees home for furlough days.

Mr. Cozart spoke briefly about the 2009-2010 fiscal year and how the Town was able to pay employees when others were not able to. The Town did not have to send employees home either.

Mr. Draughn stated that if the Town could not put in a cost of living adjustment on July 1st, it could always look at making the adjustment during the middle of the year. He did not think it was feasible to do it now. The Town does not know where it will be in the future. The Town may have to cut more things before the Board can adopt the budget. He hoped not but there was no way to know. This budget is being evaluated every day.

Mr. Cozart stated that there are fixed costs that are payroll related. If the bonus for employees is put in the budget, it will cost \$29,800. This will be the Town's first full year of having two retired police officers that will be receiving their separation allowance which will cost \$33,103. The Town is now paying holiday time for police officers and firefighters and that is a fixed cost as far as payroll goes. The Town will be entering year two of the three year increase in the local government retirement system. The Town's match on non-law enforcement officers will be going from 8.95% to 10.15%. For law enforcement officers, the Town's match will be going from 9.7% to 10.9%. This will cost the Town an additional \$31,146 in retirement expenses.

The Town has received some initial quotes for liability and medical insurance. For liability and workers compensation, the Town is looking at an approximate 7% increase in cost. For medical and dental, the Town could be looking at a 17% increase. The Town's medical claims year has been up due to certain medical claims and unfortunately, the Town will be carrying those claims for the next three years.

The current year cost of medical, liability, workers compensation, etc. was just over \$510,000. With the estimated increases, the cost could be \$575,640. The estimated increase of \$65,583 will be split between the General Fund and the Utility Funds. This will mean that \$287,000 will be budgeted in each fund to cover insurance.

Alderman Mays stated that previously he spoke with Mr. Draughn about adding a new Administrative position.

Mr. Draughn stated that there were a few positions that the Town had considered asking for but with the current situation, it would not be feasible to add them now.

Alderman Mays asked that the Mr. Draughn go ahead and give the proposal for the new positions.

Mr. Draughn stated that the Town always gets dinged on the separation of duties issue during the audit. That is not uncommon for small towns. The idea was to get Finance Director James Cozart into more of an accounting role and in less of a work the counter role. The position would also help the Public Works Director with work order management. With the current situation, this is not something the Town can look at now.

The Town was also planning to ask for another position in the Fire Department. When someone is out in that department, it costs the Town.

Fire Chief Brinkley stated that the Town is currently a 17-member department and the State says you have to have at least 15. The extra position was for someone to work 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. shifts normally but in cases where someone is out, to work a 24 hour shift.

Mr. Draughn stated that the time where people volunteered to be on the fire department is passing.

Chief Brinkley stated that the average age of a volunteer for the department is in the 50s.

Mr. Draughn stated that both the Administration position and the Fire Department position are needed but it may not happen this year. There is no way in good conscious that he could recommend either one of those now. Neither can he recommend the raises.

BUDGET PROJECTIONS

Mr. Cozart stated that they are trying to hold things steady for budget projections. The idea is not to increase the budget beyond what is being presented this morning.

In Powell Bill, the Town is planning to spend the additional \$90,000 to get that amount down to where the State wants the Town to be. The Town has not yet received the calculation for what it will be receiving in Powell Bill in the coming year. The League of Municipalities has held off on issuing their estimates for State Shared Revenue because of their uncertainty due to the virus. The Public Works Director is on target for what needs to be spent this year so we don't face a reduction next year.

Mr. Eckard stated that the department has received the small tractor already. A drainage job has been contracted out. The plan is to get contractors in to begin the sidewalk project before the virus shuts everything down.

If for some reason the Town cannot get the paving done, the Town can file for an extension from the State. The State gives that option to towns under 5,000 people but there is no guarantee that the extension will be approved.

Alderman Mays stated that even if things continue, the amount of Powell Bill funds allotted to the Town will be reduced.

Mr. Cozart stated that the current year Powell Bill funds are \$138,000. When he first started working for the Town, they were \$160,000.

Alderman Mays stated that as the Town has taken on more roads, the Powell Bill Funds should have increased.

Mr. Draughn stated that paving some of the Town's dirt roads will help stop the fall.

Mr. Cozart explained that a percentage of Powell Bill is based on population and certain percentage on mileage. The portion that is based on mileage is what seems to be decreasing.

Mr. Cozart informed the Board that the Town has received a letter from the City of Hickory about their proposed utility rate increases. They are proposing a 3.75% increase in their rates effective July 1st.

The Town has not heard from Republic Services yet but on average they have been going up approximately 5% every year for the last three or four years.

Mr. Cozart took that 3.75% and the projected 5% increase and estimated the new rate for water customers. Currently inside town limits, customers that have water, sewer, and garbage pay a base fee (usage of 3,000 gallons or less) of \$54.48. Based on the information from the City of Hickory and the projected amounts from Republic Services, the new base fee would be \$56.67 which is a \$2.19 increase. Outside water customers would go from a \$41.29 minimum bill to \$42.84. Customers with outside sewer would go from \$43.24 to \$44.86.

Mr. Draughn stated that the City of Hickory continues to tell the Town that the rate increases are driven by DOT projects in which the City of Hickory has to pay the full cost for utility relocations. This is unlike if this were to occur in Long View because Long View has under 9,000 residents. Because Hickory has over 9,000 residents, they have to pay for all utility relocations.

Mr. Cozart stated that if this increase is approved by the Board, the Town would place a notification on the Town's water bills for June and July like last year. Getting the word out helps because it doesn't catch people off guard. There are far fewer issues that way. In the notice, the Town would explain that the reason for the rate increase was due to Hickory's increase being passed on to the Town.

Mr. Cozart briefly went over the Town's debt schedule for the Town.

Mr. Draughn explained that they were also requesting vehicles for Town Hall. Those have been removed from the budget for now. The festival money that was set aside for projects has been temporarily moved to the contingency fund in the General Fund for the time being. The Town will have to see how things go and if there is room to make any changes. If nothing happens, the budget will probably stay like it is for adoption. Hopefully the Town will not have to reduce any more.

Alderman Mays asked what was the bottom line.

Mr. Draughn stated that contingency has been built into both funds. In the General Fund is \$67,000. In the Utility Fund, is \$210,000 but \$60,000 will be moved into projects for a loan payment. Revenue has also been reduced.

Mr. Cozart stated that the budget for the General Fund is \$3,765,087 and for the Utility Fund is \$2,051,100. The amount for Powell Bill will be whatever the Town is allocated.

Alderman Lingerfelt stated that it is a shame that they have to go at planning the budget like this but with everything as an unknown, how can the Town not do so. The Town has to be safe. It is better to cut it down because it is no telling how long it will last.

Mr. Draughn agreed. There is no way to tell how this virus will affect the Town.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC DISCUSSION

Mr. Draughn stated that the Town's employees are its greatest asset. If they are not healthy mentally and physically, the Town doing its job will transition from tough to impossible. The Town's staff continues to talk amongst themselves and talk to their peers at the county. The Town is currently prepared to operate on its own with little assistance. Resources are limited with what we have with Catawba County. His immediate goals are to protect the employees and do what we can to not assist in the overload of the healthcare system.

Both Burke and Catawba County have declared a state of emergency. The Town was asked to join the Catawba County declaration and the Town did. Currently that doesn't do a whole lot beyond positioning the Town with other Towns in Catawba County if drastic action is needed. This has to be in place should money become available. Mainly these declarations state that the Town will follow what the governor of North Carolina says to do to help citizens. The Governor so far has done four executive orders in regards to COVID-19. The most recent order deals with child services.

On Friday, the Town closed Town Hall lobbies including the lobbies in Police and Fire Departments. The Public Works building and the Recreation Center has also been closed to the public. He appreciated the Board's support on that. The catalyst of the closure was the first positive case showing up in Catawba County. Everything will be operating from the phone systems and the drive through window for the foreseeable future. The Recreation Center bathrooms have also been closed. This was due to the recommendations from Health Officials that he spoke with on the phone the other day.

The Mayor and Mr. Draughn decided to temporarily cancel Seniors Day Out for a couple of weeks. This will probably need to be in effect until the governor releases the order about public gatherings.

Travel has been banned to areas outside the county.

Ms. Watson has been updating the Town's website. Mr. Draughn asked the Board to review the site and make suggestions if they feel anything needs to be added. The Town is trying to give as much information as possible. Also included on the website is a list of local restaurants that are open for drive up service.

Fire Department Protocol

Chief Brinkley stated that both the Fire Department and the Police Department generally plan every day for the potential of loss of life and destruction.

The first exposure in the county was within the City of Hickory. The engine company and the EMS group that ran that call were quarantined for 14 days once they found out that they were exposed to COVID-19. The station was shutdown and both trucks were grounded.

Long View is a small department. If you ground two people, it severely effects the department. In order to help towns like ours, the Catawba County Comm Center now asks a series of questions before they send emergency response. If the person calling answers any of the questions in a way that suggests that they might be exposed, only EMS is dispatched.

Currently Burke County was running as usual. It is up to the Town as to whether it responds the same.

Mr. Draughn stated that in order to keep the Town's ability to respond to things that EMS cannot handle, the Town will only be responding to non-EMS type calls for the time being. The reason being that if the department gets the same type of exposure that Hickory Fire Department did, the department is done. He agrees with the call that was made by Catawba County and that is why the Town is making the same call for Burke County too.

Chief Brinkley stated that for Hickory Fire and EMS, employees are not allowed to enter the building until the off going Captain takes their temperature. If their temperature is above 100 degrees, they are going home. If they are sick, they are going home.

As for EMS, if it is a suspected COVID-19 case, only one person is going in first wearing protective equipment.

The procedure is not 100% effective but the department is as prepared as it possibly can be.

Alderman Mays stated that our people have to use their best judgement when a call comes in.

Chief Brinkley stated that they did not see Burke County changing their procedure as they rely heavily on first responders. Firefighters know that when they signed up for the job that there is the potential to be exposed to stuff.

When Alderman Tester asked if there was a procedure in place if there is an exposure on site, Chief Brinkley stated that they would follow Catawba County's guidelines. If they are taking care of a patient, they would continue to do so as normal. Afterwards, the person would be placed on a 14 day quarantine and asked to monitor their temperature.

There was some discussion about testing for the virus, the common age that is getting the virus, what to do if an employee is exposed to the virus, and handling the quarantine period.

Police Department Protocol

Police Chief Bates stated that he has been sending out memos to his staff that changes as the situation changes. Items discussed in the memos include closing the department and lobby to anyone that is not staff. He also detailed how the department will handle day to day duties in order to minimize the exposure to the department. This included how to handle cases and rules on keeping desks, desk phones and their patrol cars sanitized.

He spoke briefly about court closures due to the virus.

He and his command staff got together on the 19th to establish a procedure for the department if the department is down by 25% (four officers) or 50% (8 officers). He gave a synopsis of those procedures.

Currently the Chiefs and the Sheriff in Catawba County are doing a conference call every 72 hours to provide updates.

There has been an increase in calls stating there are suspicious people around other peoples' houses.

He has asked his guys to be a more visible presence in the community.

An updated mutual aid agreement has been signed with all the departments in the region. Catawba, Burke and Caldwell Counties have agreed to offer each other assistance and take assistance when needed.

He is in constant communication with the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief to work to provide citizens with the most protection that is possible.

There was a brief discussion about criminal activity in the Town. With people being home, there has been a slight uptick in domestic issues. He spoke about other issues.

Alderman Tester asked if there were any scenarios that they are preparing for. Chief Bates stated that there are scenarios that have been discussed.

Fire Chief Brinkley stated that the Police and Fire Departments already try to put plans in place for different scenarios.

Chief Bates stated that one of the good things about the Long View Police Department staff is that they will work. They will fill in when needed. They are a very dedicated group of officers. The concern is if we lose too many people due to the virus.

Public Works Department Protocol

Public Works Director Chris Eckard stated that he has closed the Public Works building to the public. He has suspended renting out the box truck to the public. He has instructed his staff to no longer leave red tags at people's houses. They are now to bring the red tags to him so he can call the residents. Every time staff comes into the building, they are to wash their hands. Staff is also asked to sanitize their vehicles regularly. The department is as cautious as can be now for sewer calls but he has stressed extra caution. The only problem he sees at this time is the increase in drainage issues due to residents using too much toilet paper at home. The department is trying to limit contact with residents as much as possible.

Spending Freeze / Emergency Equipment

Mr. Draughn stated that he has put into effect a spending freeze on all non-emergency purchases.

The Town is searching for gloves for Town staff to use.

Town Meetings

Mr. Draughn briefly discussed a memo that was sent out from the School of Government in regards to meetings.

He asked the Board for guidance about holding Board meetings going forward. In his opinion, the Board still needs to meet.

Mr. Mullis had a meeting with his Planning Board the other night and their plan was to meet only when they have something that they need to vote on. Until then, their meetings would be suspended.

Mr. Draughn suggested keeping the Board of Aldermen meetings in place for the time being. The question is can we meet electronically if necessarily.

Alderman Tester asked if the Board could close the meetings to the public.

Ms. Watson stated that the Clerks have been talking about how to handle the meetings non-stop. Technically, if they have a regularly scheduled Board of Aldermen meeting, they have to allow for public comment. If the Board decides to allow the public into the building, they have to limit the amount of persons due to the governor's orders in regards to crowds gathering.

Mr. Draughn stated that the governor's order says 50 or less people allowed. The recommendation is for 10 or less though.

Ms. Watson stated that if the Board were to meet electronically, they could allow emails to be sent in from the community. The idea is to try to still allow as much public interaction as you can.

Town Attorney Summerlin, Jr stated that it looked like the best policy was to cancel the meeting if the Board could. If the Board has stuff that has to be done, the Town could set up ways that people can participate. He stated that he would have to do some research to see if a vote counts from a Board member that is not there.

There was some discussion on whether to still have the April Board of Aldermen Meeting or not. The Board's concern was if the Board were to open up the building to the public, would it increase the

chances of exposure. The Town has already closed the lobby area to the public to limit exposure. Opening the building for the meeting would be counterproductive.

The Board decided that as long as there was not a pressing issue, it would be best to cancel the April Board of Aldermen meeting to limit exposure to the COVID-19 virus. If there is anything that requires special action by the Board, the Board could call a Special Meeting to take care of that item.

The Board would at a later time decide if the May Board of Aldermen Meeting needed to be cancelled too.

Motion was made by Alderman Thurman VanHorn, seconded by Dallas Tester to cancel the April Meeting due regulations regarding COVID-19 and public gatherings. The vote to approve was unanimous.

AYES: Mayor Pro Tempore / Alderman Randall Mays
Alderman Gary Lingerfelt
Alderman Dallas Tester
Alderman Thurman VanHorn

NOES: None

NOT PRESENT: Alderman David Elder

Long View COVID-19 Sick Leave Policy

Mr. Draughn presented to the Board an amendment to deal with emergency paid sick leave. It was written in response to what Congress passed about paying two weeks for people that get put out on leave due to COVID-19. For full time employees that have to go out due to COVID-19, they will be paid at their regular rate and not charged any sick time. If an employee does go out, they will be required to meet certain guidelines before they are allowed to come back to work. If they have to go out longer than two weeks, they will have to use their accrued leave.

He asked the Board if they have any questions.

Motion was made by Alderman Randall Mays, seconded by Alderman Thurman VanHorn to adopt the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Policy in regards to COVID-19. The vote to adopt was unanimous.

AYES: Mayor Pro Tempore / Alderman Randall Mays
Alderman Gary Lingerfelt
Alderman Dallas Tester
Alderman Thurman VanHorn

NOES: None

NOT PRESENT: Alderman David Elder

Utility Service – Waiving Fees

There was some discussion about waiving utility fees and disconnections due to the effect of COVID-19 on residents. Mr. Draughn stated that most Town's have started to do this and have waived fees for March and April.

After some discussion, the Board decided to waive the cutoff for March, waive the late fees and cutoff for April, and allow residents to setup a payment plan with Finance Director James Cozart if they don't

pay their bills during that time. The Board asked the Town Attorney to draft a letter to send to customers that have not paid their bills during that time period that informs them that the bill has not been paid and that a payment plan is available.

Motion was made by Alderman Thurman VanHorn, seconded by Alderman Gary Lingerfelt to waive the cutoff fees for March, waive the late fee and cutoff fees for April, and to give authority to Finance Director James Cozart to set up a payment plan for residents that did not pay their bills during that time period. The vote to approve was unanimous.

AYES: Mayor Pro Tempore / Alderman Randall Mays
Alderman Gary Lingerfelt
Alderman Dallas Tester
Alderman Thurman VanHorn
NOES: None
NOT PRESENT: Alderman David Elder

Recreation Center

Mr. Draughn stated that they have closed the bathrooms at the Recreation Center. He asked if the rest of the outside facility (walking track) should be closed too.

It was the consensus of the Board that the rest of the outside facility should stay open to the public to allow people to come and walk.

Mr. Draughn asked if the Town should keep the playground, the basketball court and the gazebo open at the Recreation Center.

The Board asked the Town to put caution tape around the playground equipment and gazebo. The basketball court should be closed and locked. A sign should be placed at these areas explaining why they are closed.

The walking track should be left open. The Town could put a message on the electric sign saying walking track open only.

Code Enforcement

Mr. Mullis stated that Code Enforcement will continue. This is especially true for high grass violations. He does plan to suspend home inspections for the foreseeable future. All other work will be done over the phone or through the drive-up window.

Work Orders/Applications for Service

Mr. Cozart and Mr. Eckard informed the Board that all services are being done through the drive-up window at Town Hall.

Mr. Cozart stated that if someone comes by to request service, the Town will make sure the resident is actually at the home before sending a Public Works worker.

Mr. Eckard stated that his guys will not hang red tags at houses for the time being. They will be brought back to Public Works or Town Hall and a call will be made to notify residents of the issue.

FINAL COMMENTS

Mr. Draughn stated that he would continue to keep the Board apprised of the situation. If a Special Meeting or even an Emergency Meeting needs to be called before the May Board of Aldermen Meeting, he will be in contact with the Board.

ADJOURNMENT

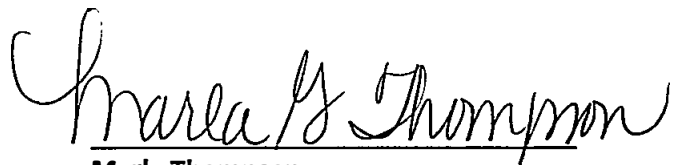
Motion was made by Alderman Thurman VanHorn, seconded by Alderman Dallas Tester to adjourn the meeting at 1:05 p.m. The vote to approve was unanimous.

AYES: Mayor Pro Tempore / Alderman Randall Mays
Alderman Gary Lingerfelt
Alderman Dallas Tester
Alderman Thurman VanHorn

NOES: None

NOT PRESENT: Alderman David Elder

Stephanie C. Watson
Town Clerk, CMC, NCCMC



Marla Thompson
Mayor

