

**ERWIN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RETREAT MINUTES
SATURDAY JANUARY 12, 2008
ERWIN, NORTH CAROLINA**

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Erwin with Mayor Patsy Carson presiding held its Annual Planning Retreat in the Town of Erwin Staff Training Room adjacent to the Erwin Library and Community Center Hall on , January 12, 2008 at 9:00 A. M. in Erwin, North Carolina.

Board members present were Commissioners Norma Ennis, Randy Baker, Mark Whitman, W. N. Porter, Michael West and William Corbett.

Town Manager Alan Thornton, Town Clerk Pam Addison, Public Works Director Mark Byrd, Police Chief Thomas Chandler, Code Enforcement Officer Brian Lagana, and Recreation Director Calvin Dickenson were present.

Mayor Patsy Carson called the meeting to order at 9:00 A. M.

Commissioner West gave the invocation.

Town Manager Alan Thornton welcomed everyone and said this is an informal session. This is an opportunity for free flowing exchange of ideas, information along with communication to help us build greater team work and work together in our efforts for the coming year. This will be our first meeting in our refurbished training room.

REVIEW OF FY07/08 GOALS & OBJECTIVES/PROJECTS UPDATES

The Public Works Department purchased a new leaf machine and this has been a tremendous aid in our leaf collections.

Progress Energy completed the installation of the decorative lights at the Municipal Buildings.

We have received several good comments on the new Christmas Lights that were purchased last year. We intend to utilize some of the older Christmas decorations this year and extend the decorations further down Denim Drive.

We are very pleased to have retained our Code Officer Brian Lagana and Recreation Director Calvin Dickenson that were hired just prior to our last retreat in 2007.

The Parks and Recreation Department resubmitted the PARTF Grant application and received notice of approval in May. The PARTF Grant bid process will begin soon and we look forward to beginning renovations. Most of the paperwork will be done in-house in order to keep the cost to a minimum. This will enable us to use the money for additional renovations. The Parks and Recreation Department intends to apply for additional grants to assist in expanding the gymnasium, adding a pond around the gazebo with a walking trail. The River Park Trail is on schedule and should be completed by March. The River Park is going to be a really nice asset for this area. We are hoping a dedication ceremony will be held in April.

The Police Department has filled the vacancy of the School Resource Officer's position with an existing employee within the Department. The Police Department is now joined with Dunn and surrounding Towns to receive grant money to help eliminate gang problems in the

MINUTES CONTINUED 1/12/2008

area. The Police Department implemented a policy to use the newly purchased taser guns and they also received new bullet proof vests by the way of a grant from the Governor's Crime Commission.

We continue to deal with Harnett County concerning the Swift assets. We are still awaiting a response from Harnett County on a proposal submitted concerning the assets. The good news is we have received permits from the Division of Water Quality to continue to operate the Swift plant. Two years has passed and Town Manager Thornton said he has been encouraging the County to begin installing the infrastructure along Hwy 421 as they had promised in the agreement when the utilities were sold. The infrastructure is to be in place within five years of the consolidation. Chicora Phase II still has several homes waiting for the sewer pumps to be installed. We are waiting on the County to provide an agreement to complete the Chicora Wastewater collection system. The County said if they do the work they could save the Town around \$120,000. R. E. Mclean Tank Company has agreed to take down the old Swift elevated water tank on West C Street tank once the Business Complex comes off line on April 30th.

The Downtown Lighting and improvement plan project is moving slowly forward. Issues of ownership seem to be one of the delays. Staff will continue to work to finalize the problems and expects progress to begin this year. Mayor Carson added the Attorney is in the process of obtaining title insurance in order to make the switch. Progress Energy is waiting in the wings to install the decorative lighting downtown and Johnson Brothers Paving is on hold to pave the streets downtown. A more comprehensive study will include the entire block if the Town acquires the parking lot behind the buildings on H Street.

The Pay Plan and Salary Study was implemented last year. The insurance benefit for retirees amendment was also approved. The employees really appreciated the changes made for their benefit.

Discussion of utilization of the Textile Museum Funds once a final decision is made by the Court system. The Town may be able to use some of those funds for economic development. A portion of those funds must still be used for the purpose of a Textile Museum. The History Room could be expanded throughout the Community Building or even acquiring a building downtown for that purpose.

The Board enjoyed a slide show titled The Good, The Bad and The Ugly. The following "good" slides were shown such as Pentair located in the Industrial site by the river which now has a five year lease and continues to add staffing. The River Park construction underway which has 3 overlooks, trails with a picnic area and restrooms. The new DMV office on Hwy 421 set to open in February. The new large Modern Day Care Center under construction on Maynard Lake Rd. A new Doctors office on hwy 421 in operation and we are hoping more will be coming. Aaron's opened last year. Aarons said they are very pleased with the numbers coming in and making purchases. Dr. Bradham's Office Complex that now houses the Sleep Center, Lauren Ashley, and to the left are plans for a new Office Complex by Johnson Tilghman. New homes being built on Denim Dr. . A number of older businesses are being renovated. New construction sites are steadily coming into Erwin. Recently a lot of the unsightly homes in Erwin are being renovated. The old hot Dog Stand was removed and is a cleared, vacant lot. The "Bad" was Good Hope Hospital Closed, IGA has not begun the renovations, but is looking more favorable, Good Hope Medical Plaza will not happen; Erwin's Old Lowe's grocery store is still vacant. Napier's Auto is out of business and Triton Auto Mart looks like a junk yard. One of the Town's priorities for 2008 is to clean up areas

MINUTES CONTINUED 1/12/2008

such as this. CITGO Station vacant and rundown. The building inspector continues to clean up places on Denim Drive and 13th Street. Downtown area lost Charter Communications, but renovations are being made in the Charter Office space and hopefully a new business will soon come. Joseph's Department Store closed. Slides were shown of what Downtown looks like and how Downtown Revitalization can improve our downtown. There is no quick fix; it will take time, money and efforts of the Board and community to make this a reality. The County is interested in creating a Heritage Museum and this could be a joint effort if agreed upon by both parties. A lot of good things have happened over the past few years, but we still have a lot to work on. Everyone agreed on the Ugly "Price of Gas" \$3.12 for a gallon and rising.

The Board agreed to vote at the next meeting on a Contract with the State to allow DOT to make and install "Welcome to Erwin" signs. The signs will be placed at all corridors coming into Erwin. Each sign will have Welcome to Erwin, "Pride in our Past, Hope in our Future", with the Town Seal.

DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES & DISCUSSION W/BOARD**RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

Calvin Dickenson, Recreation Director will be celebrating his 1st year anniversary on February 1st with the Town. Mr. Dickenson gave an update on what is going on at the park since he came into Town.

- Spring registrations for baseball & softball increased from 270 kids to 370.
- Fall registrations for football, soccer, cheerleading increased from 297 to 325.
- Winter registrations for basketball increased from 181 to 230.

There was a 24% overall gain on the sports registrations from last year. Schools are notified and information given to the kids as well as notice in the paper of the time for registration. Registrations will now end on Saturdays. This helped a lot with the winter registrations. Mr. Dickenson welcomed any ideas on getting the information to the kids for registration times. The forms will also be online for registration.

Mr. Dickenson asked for feed back on providing Summer Camps.

Commissioner Whitman wanted to know if the some of the games could be moved back without causing a conflict with other school activities.

Commissioner Baker agreed that Summer Camps would provide more activities and we may be able to utilize Campbell University to help.

Town Manager Alan Thornton said he would like to see multi-function rooms added to the gymnasium with a variety of activities such as adding indoor soccer, aerobics, music lessons and other such activities for all ages.

Commissioner Baker requested the new renovations include handicap accessibility to the fields. It was suggested a road be built and circle the entire fields. A road would help when rescue is needed on the other side of the park.

MINUTES CONTINUED 1/12/2008

Park and Recreation Director Calvin Dickenson pointed out various additions and renovations which will be added to the park using the PARTF grant funds. The grant requires the park renovations to meet all the requirement of the Disability Act.

Commissioner Baker agreed a Skate Park is needed, but he was not comfortable spending \$127,000 on a Skate Board Park. Commissioner Baker questioned if there was adequate staff to manage this type of activity. Commissioner Baker was sure more staff will be needed once all the renovations are completed. We will need to ensure safety and keep the grounds groomed.

The Board was concerned about a memorial plaque in memory of Jonathan Priebe positioned on the ground and frequently stepped on. Calvin Dickenson, Recreation Director said the plaque would be moved to another location and placed above ground during the renovations.

The Board agreed there is a need to provide a skate park. The Board suggested the skate park should only be opened during the normal working hours, proper safety equipment will be required by participants and security cameras be used though out the park as a preventive measure against vandalism. The Board requested some type of barrier be placed to block the skate park from the ball field participant's view to help keep distraction between the ball players and skate boarders.

Calvin Dickenson, Recreation Director said he would like to extend the gym hours and allow an employee to operate the concession stand while monitoring the gym. The Board was in agreement to utilize the gym more and offer a variety of other activities besides basketball and soccer.

Mayor Carson suggested adding volleyball.

Calvin Dickenson, Recreation Director said he may request some fertilizing equipment in the next budget year, but will work with what he has for the current year.

Our current fees charged for recreation continues to be less than average.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Thomas Chandler, Police Chief informed the Board he intends to retire on April 30th 2008. Chief Chandler will make an official statement to the media at a later date. Chief Chandler said he plans to start a couple of grants before his departure but will not come into affect until July 2008. The Town of Erwin has joined forces with City of Dunn and other Police Departments in the area to obtain grant monies for gang related activities. We will be able to purchase four computers and one broadband internet card for patrol cars with the monies received from this grant. The officers will be able to do most of their reports and criminal checks from their patrol cars. The cost will be a \$3,437.00 match for the Town. Our goal is to get a computer in every patrol car and eliminate the DCI terminal that is located in the Police Department and cost the Town \$3,600.00 per year. Another Grant with the Governors Crime Commission will provide five more terminals for the vehicles. This grant will cost the Town around \$4,000.00. Chief Chandler stated he would like to provide Southern Software to each Officer's computer. The Southern Software is at an additional cost, but will allow the Officer to carry out his job within the patrol vehicle, print out reports and give to the parties

MINUTES CONTINUED 1/12/2008

involved on the scene. Police Chief Chandler requested the Town purchase five of the internet cards and his Department would share the cards with the other four. There will be a reoccurring cost each year of around \$5,000.

Most all other Police Departments have already begun advancing with the new computers in their patrol cars. It eliminates a lot of paperwork and is transmitted directly to the proper department. You will be able to print criminal history reports from the patrol car and save a trip to the County's Courthouse in Lillington. The time involved will more than offset the annual cost. Chief Chandler suggested applying with the Governors Highway Safety Program to receive new radars and video cameras. It will be a match of about \$3,000 if awarded. The Town is growing and the Department needs to grow along with the Town. Chief Chandler suggested adding 2-3 new officers within next 2-3 years. At this time the department is in good shape with patrol cars. The Drug Task force vehicle has excessive miles and should to be replaced within the next year. Chief Chandler suggested purchasing another used SUV vehicle.

Commissioner Baker thanked the Police Department for participating in the DWI Checkpoint and said he would like to see even more Checkpoints done in Erwin. Mayor Carson said she would like to get more information on the MADD program and have them to come to Erwin and help organize a DWI checkpoint.

The Police Department is waiting on legal advice from the Town's Attorney concerning liability aspects to start a program checking the wellbeing of senior citizens in Erwin. The County is responsible to implement reverse 911. The firing range is grandfathered in and is used by our Department and the building can be used as a training facility but it must have a major clean up before being used. It was the consensus of the Board to allow Chief Chandler to hire a cleaning company to clean the caustic off the floor and begin utilizing the building for other programs of training.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Brian Lagana, Code Enforcement Officer said in the short period he has been with Erwin he permitted or finaled twenty new residential homes. They were worth well over \$3,000,000 in construction cost and \$1,300,000.00 of those homes are located with in the Town limits. Those new homes located in town will generate greater than \$7,000 in tax revenue. There were five new HUD homes permitted. There were eight new commercial properties worth over \$2,000,000.00 which will add over \$11,000 in tax revenue. The Day Care on Maynard Lake Rd was the only commercial property located outside the town limits. Four homes were completely renovated on I Street and they now look like brand new homes and issued four rezoning applications. Mr. Lagana said he has issued thirteen debris citations, five condemnations, over one hundred grass letters and sign citations.

The new Aarons said the grand opening in Erwin was very successful and left them scrambling for inventory because they had sold almost all their merchandise within a week. The Busy Bee will bring in twenty five to thirty jobs. The new DMV will bring in eight to twelve new jobs. Pentair has spent over \$750,000.00 on renovations for a leased building which is a pretty good sign. Erwin is not dying; we are getting new houses, commercial property, and investors. Mr. Lagana informed the Board he is building a new home in Erwin.

MINUTES CONTINUED 1/12/2008

Mr. Lagana said the Town only charges \$15.00 for a re-inspection and he has some contractors call him out just to get a punch list of what they have missed. The lowest charge in other areas is \$35.00. This would be a kind of a deterrent for the contractors to have everything complete before calling for an inspection. Mr. Lagana said the Town's permit fees were less than half of what other Towns are charging.

Mayor Carson said she get calls everyday that the Code Enforcement Officer has taken their signs.

Mr. Lagana said he has only taken signs when the ordinance allows him too. Some of the signs are directional signs and the Town does not allow placement of those type signs in the right-of-way. Mr. Lagana removes the signs and takes them to the owner or calls and lets them know the signs are at Public Works if they would like to them pick up.

Mayor Carson said she feels the sign issue is something that needs some attention to help clarify miss-understandings. The Town looks better with the yard sale signs off the poles, but some of the other signs such as the Auction signs should be treated as temporary signs. The surrounding Towns allow placing temporary signs. Mayor Carson said she was afraid this may cause the Town some bad publicity if we continue pulling up temporary signs but agrees the Town looks much better.

Town Manager Alan Thornton said it all depends how you want your Town to look. We are not going out into people's yards removing signs. We only pull signs in Town's right-of-ways. This is not only a safety issue but maintenance issue as well. Most of the time there is more support to enforce the sign ordinance than not.

The Board agreed the Ordinance should be reviewed and make necessary changes where needed. The Daycare issue is just one example for reasons we need to review the ordinance.

Commissioner Porter wanted to know why Mr. Frank Taylor's question was not answered at the last meeting concerning Mrs. Freeman's treatment and the way a case was handled on Hwy 421 for an extension of time for renovation.

Mayor Carson said she later had talked with Mr. Taylor and he was made aware of the difference of situations involved and he understood.

After discussion, the Board did not come to an agreement concerning the case of Mrs. Freeman. Commissioner Porter wanted to know what can be done now?

The Board continues to have mixed views on interpreting the Ordinance concerning the proposed Daycare owned by Mrs. Freeman at 701 East H Street which is a similar use and is located within 300 feet of the Methodist Children's Home. The Board agreed earlier not to approve the conditional use request for Mrs. Freeman to operate a Daycare. The only option is the Board may change the Ordinance. After the Board makes the ruling the staff cannot change the ruling, only the Board. Mrs. Freeman may seek an appeal from the Court System on the decision made by the Board or the Board may consider willingness to deal with daycares and revise the ordinance. Town Manager Thornton said changing the ordinance for a particular case could be done but is not a good idea and may cause additional problems later with other applicant's requests.

MINUTES CONTINUED 1/12/2008

Commissioner Baker said according to the ordinance, the Daycare cannot be considered.

Commissioner Ennis explained that the staff at Town Hall cannot find proof the Methodist Church was ever permitted.

Town Manager Thornton said he believed the Ordinance concerning Daycare Centers; but excluding In-home Daycares should be strengthened and amended to prohibit Daycare Centers from going into residential zoned areas such as R-10 & R-15. Mrs. Freeman is considered as an In-home Daycare. Town Manager Thornton said he will begin researching and gather information for the Board and help modernize, prepare the Capital Improvement Plan for future growth and update the Town's Ordinances.

Commissioner Porter said he is still disturbed concerning Mrs. Freeman's Daycare because he feels this may be a racial issue and Commissioner Ennis agreed.

Commissioner Baker said his actions were not motivated by race. Commissioner Baker said he feels in his heart the Ordinance does not allow the Daycare. Commissioner Baker said the reason for such a large turnout at the meeting was because it was required by the Ordinance. The adjoining property owners must be notified by mail and allowed to speak at the Public Hearing.

PUBLIC WORKS

Mark Byrd requested a new bucket truck and street sweeper for his Department. Mr. Byrd said his staff will build stands to store the new Christmas lights purchased this last year. Public Works staff has been busy renovating the Community Center and the Staff Meeting Room. Plans are to begin renovating the Library soon. Public Works has a full time staff for the last three months.

Commissioner Porter said the Public Works Director does a fine job.

LEGAL ISSUES

Most of the legal issues have already been discussed. The Town's Attorney was unable to attend today. The Textile Museum is still ongoing and the Swift Draft Agreement is with the County.

FY 08/09 BUDGET OBJECTIVES & CIP

Budget Prep Packets will be given to Department Heads this coming week to help with the Planning for next year. A draft budget is prepared and then Board comes involved again and works through the process. The staff would like guidance from the Board, in helping prepare the budget for 2008/2009.

- Purchase a new bucket truck in 2009
- The construction is in year one at the Park, make preparations for the PARTF grant match for year 2010, 2011.

MINUTES CONTINUED 1/12/2008

- Talk with County concerning contracting the work for completing Chicora Phase II.
- Management Program for East Erwin Storm Water with assistance from W K Dickens Engineers.
- After settlement of the textile money suit, the Town may use a portion of the money to purchase a building downtown for a cultural resource center and other economic development projects.
- Commissioner Corbett made a motion to add to the February's Agenda "Discussion of Liquor by the Drink" and was seconded by Commissioner Ennis. The Board voted unanimously.
- The Board instructed Town Manager to go forward with The Rural Center Economic Innovation Grant Application and provide the completed application at the February Meeting for approval.
- Motivate the merchants to become involved and help improve the downtown area. The Town would like to replace the old trash receptacles, add planters, resurface sidewalks, and add benches. There are several programs to consider such as matching grants with merchants, round up dollars on billings, etc..
- Prepare a draft RFP for Town's Attorney for Board's review.
- Prepare a draft RFP for Town's Auditor for Board's review.
- Review the Solid Waste Contract that will be renewed this year. The 3 year contract expires this year. Harnett County landfill added a \$2.00 tipping fee and this will most likely increase the rates as well rising gas prices.
- Police Chief will be retiring soon. Town Manager was instructed to begin preparing a job description and seeking applicants for replacement.
- The Board may want to consider hiring a Finance Director within a couple of years in order to stay in compliance with LGC rules and regulations and prepare additional financial reporting that will be required in year 2010.

ADJOURNMENT

After much discussion Commissioner Ennis made a motion to adjourn at 4:45 P.M. and was seconded by Commissioner Corbett. The Board voted unanimously.

MINUTES RECORDED AND TYPED BY PAMELA S. ADDISON, TOWN CLERK.

Town Clerk, Pamela S. Addison

Mayor Patsy M. Carson