

**TOWN OF WEDDINGTON
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, MAY 9, 2011 - 5:00 P.M.
MINUTES**

The Town Council of the Town of Weddington, North Carolina, met in a Special Session at the Weddington Town Hall, 1924 Weddington Road, Weddington, NC 28104 on May 9, 2011, at 5:00 p.m. with Mayor Nancy D. Anderson presiding.

Present: Mayor Nancy D. Anderson, Mayor Pro Tem Daniel Barry, Councilmembers Werner Thomisser, Robert Gilmartin and Jerry McKee, Town Attorney Anthony Fox, Town Planner Jordan Cook, Finance Officer Leslie Gaylord and Town Administrator/Clerk Amy S. McCollum

Absent: None

Visitors: Daryl Matthews, Steve Carow, John Burgess, Brian Pethels, Scott Robinson, Ken Evans and Jack Parks

Item No. 1. Open the Meeting. Mayor Nancy D. Anderson called the May 9, 2011 Special Town Council Meeting to order at 5:38 p.m. There was a quorum.

Item No. 2. Closed Session Pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3) to Consult with the Attorney in order to Preserve the Attorney-Client Privilege and Consideration of Approval of Closed Session Minutes. The Town Council did not hold a Closed Session.

Item No. 3. Joint Work Session with Providence Volunteer Fire Department Board of Directors – Discussion on Fire Service Related to Budget and Facilities. The Council received a copy of the following email from Mr. Jack Parks dated April 28, 2011. Mr. Parks reviewed his meeting with the Fire Marshal.

John Burgess, Ken Evans and I just met with Scott Garner, our architect, Neal Speer the Union County Fire Marshall and Terry Griffin a Commercial Building Inspector for Union County. Our objective for the meeting was to get the appropriate personnel together that could answer questions pertaining to the code issues at PVFD. We addressed the following solutions:

1. Existing Building Alteration
 - The building will require a 1 hour fire rated separation between the apparatus bay and the business and residential use areas of the building. It will also require a 1 hour fire rated separation between the first and second floors.
 - The entire building will need to be sprinkled.
 - Upstairs bathrooms will need to meet ADA requirements due to the need to move walls to accommodate fire separation.
 - Sprinkler system will have to be electronically monitored.
 - Exterior stairwell will have to be installed.
2. Use of Modular Unit
 - If a modular unit is brought in it will have to be designed and constructed for the intended use of residential accommodations in a commercial environment and it will have to have a third party approval stating it meets the requirements.

- The modular unit will have to be sprinkled and possibly monitored.
- The modular unit will have to meet all ADA requirements.
- There must be at least 20' of separation between the modular unit and the existing building. This will take up most of the rear parking lot.
- We will need to get approval from the Union County Public Works Dept. for the water tap and Environmental Health for use of existing septic tank with added waste water load. This will be a problem because the existing septic tank is currently giving trouble. We will probably need more land for septic drain field.

3. Use of Existing Building at Rear of Property

- This building would have to be brought up to code requirements for residential accommodations in a commercial building as listed before.
- This may prove to be the most cost effective solution to the problem.
- We would also probably need more land for the septic system with this solution.

Scott Garner is contacting a modular unit supplier to get an idea of cost for a unit designed for our needs. He is also contacting Union County Public Works and Environmental Health to see if they will approve the addition of a modular structure or the up fitting of the existing building. When he gets this information we will be able to recommend to the Town of Weddington our course of action. In the mean time we need the Town to approve up to \$45,000 for professional services.

Councilmember Werner Thomisser questioned how long Providence VFD has to work on bringing the fire station into compliance before being fined.

Mr. Parks - They are not going to fine us as long as we are working on a solution. They did not give us a timetable. Mr. Garner did say that he talked with the Union County Water Department and they said they would provide a water tap for a modular unit. The environmental people would have to come out and inspect the septic tank if we did anything. That could be a source of problems because we have had some septic problems in the past. The modular unit is not going to be as cheap as we had hoped that it could be because it is going to have to be built and designed for that purpose. We use that back parking lot not only for parking but it is also a training area for the fire department. With any modular unit, we would have to get at least 20 feet from the existing building. By the time we pushed it out 20 feet, the back parking lot would be gone. Mr. Garner also talked to the Town and they said that some type of exception would have to be made for a modular unit and it would be temporary. We have a situation that must be rectified. We do not have the money to make the improvements whether we do it with a modular unit or we fix the existing building. By summer of next year, we are looking at the funds we have will probably be depleted for operating. We have a lot of uncertainties. We do not know if we are going to get any money from Mecklenburg County. We are supposed to get an increase in the fire fee from \$82.75 to \$100 which may give us an additional \$20,000. We did find out that the County does plan to continue with the subsidy of \$21,600. The Town has told us you were going to supply us with \$233,000 and not knowing what we will get from Mecklenburg and from the fire fee and the subsidy, we are still going to be at a shortfall. We are going to be using what monies we have currently in savings to operate on. We can possibly use some of our money to pay for architectural and engineering services that will be needed to go forward with either the renovation of the building or possibly putting in the modular unit but we do not have the money to make anything else happen. A possibility is to use the metal building that is in the very back as sleeping quarters. One of the problems is that it is 120 feet from the main building so we would have to find a way to get our firefighters out of bed across 120 feet of a gravel parking lot possibly with snow and ice on it to get them in the apparatus building in order to get a truck and go out. That is

the reason that it is third on the list. It may be the most cost efficient but from a practical standpoint it is the least practical.

Mr. Daryl Matthews – If we get wet going from the building to the fire station and you get your clothes soaking wet and you put your gear on and go into a working fire, you will get a steam burn. I think the best solution would be to get the existing building fixed.

Mayor Pro Tem Daniel Barry – Any way that you go, it is a bad decision financially because of the exposure to the Town. We do not have a solution – we could spend \$500,000 on a building and we still have the subsidy issue to deal with. If we do not make any progress on the financial side, you are going to be out of money. We are going to spend a half million dollars from our fund balance.

Mr. Parks – As a citizen, I am very thankful for the money we have received that did not come from my tax base. Most of the money that paid for that building and the trucks came from the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. When they would annex, they would pay us. We are working hard on the merger and hopefully that will work out. If that works out there will probably be a fire tax that would be put in place that would support us going forward. We are worried about what we have to do in the next 16 months.

Councilmember Thomisser discussed the following information:

2010 Averages for the Providence VFD

Response Time	=	4 minutes, 25 seconds
# calls per month	=	37
# fire calls per month	=	28
# EMS calls per month	=	9
6a – 6pm calls	=	56%
6pm – 6am calls	=	44%

PVFD Needs for 2011-2012

I	6am – 6pm		
	1 @ \$14/hr.	=	\$168
	2 @ \$12/hr.	=	\$288
	Total	=	\$456
	\$456.00 x 365 days	=	\$166,440
II	6pm - 6am		
	1 @ 14/hr.	=	\$168
	2 @ 30/night	=	\$60
	Total	=	\$228
	\$228 x 365 days	=	\$83,220
III	FICA plus workers compensation	=	\$27,463

IV Total of above = \$277,123

Medical Statistics

- AHA (American Heart Association) studies show that for every minute after cardiac arrest chances of survival decrease 7% - 10%.
- After 10 minutes few attempts at resuscitation are successful.
- Brain death and permanent death occurs 4 - 6 minutes after someone experiences cardiac arrest.
- In areas where defibrillation occurs within 5 – 7 minutes of a sudden cardiac arrest survival rate increases to 30% - 45%.

Need for Night Staffing

- Analysis of the past six months shows the following data
 - From 6 p.m. – 6 a.m. approximately holds 40% of our call volume
 - 6 p.m. – 12 a.m. being the second busiest time of the day averaging 30% of the total volume

Fire Department Structure Fire Runs by Alarm Time (percent of runs, 2004)

Scheduling Night Staffing

We will need to have at least: A qualified Engineer, One Interior (1403) Firefighter, One EMT

Every attempt will be made to have an officer riding every night

Members who meet multiple requirements will be utilized more

Members who do not meet the minimum requirements will only be scheduled as a third crew member

Mr. Parks – When we have people spending the night at the station, they are going to be there faster than any other volunteer fire department in the County.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – I do not think we are prepared to remove night service. If we want overnight service, they are going to have to renovate the building or buy a modular and they do not have the money to do that.

Mr. Parks – I even asked Wesley Chapel VFD if we do not allow our people to sleep there at night how much could they help us out. They advised that they could possibly help but the response times are not going to be any where close to what it is now. Their volunteers do not necessarily live near our station and they do not staff their stations overnight.

Councilmember Thomisser - Sometime down the road I believe that Wesley Chapel would want a station like they have on New Town Road to be put on Hemby Road.

Mayor Anderson – The stations that Wesley Chapel replaced were like the old tin shed. We do not bulldoze brick buildings that are in good shape to house the apparatus. Mr. Parks has had conversations with adjoining property owners to see if he could acquire more property at some time down the road.

Mr. Parks – Our architect has said our building structurally and from a use standpoint is a good building. We are having these problems because of the era it was built in and we do have some space limitations and he said we would probably need more space to handle the next 25 years of service. He did not indicate that we need to abandon that building. Mr. Steve Cloutier has had an independent contractor look at the plans and they came back with \$400,000. I believe that \$450,000 is a realistic number.

Mr. Scott Robinson – If you want to be more proactive in recruiting volunteers and also getting in part time paid staff, the more desirable the environment is the more we can have interest. We want to be more active in getting more volunteers.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – We do not know what we will find until the walls are opened. No matter that they are telling us if we want overnight coverage coming out of that facility they have to fix that problem. If they go in there and find mold in the walls, we have a real problem. Then we would have a demolition or rebuild.

Mr. Parks – They will not actually be opening any walls. The walls that will be addressed will be interior walls. We have the roof leakage under control.

Mr. Robinson – There is always the possibility of finding something but hopefully you find that early in the process. Then you would have a decision to make and you make it, but I do not think that is a reason not to move forward. We as a Board are faced with a safety issue for the people staying there.

Councilmember Thomisser questioned what was wrong with the septic system.

Mr. Parks – The problem with the septic system is that there have been some wet areas. Any time they see wet areas above the drain field they want you to address that and they sometimes want you to add more drain fields to remedy that. We are potentially out of land. Overnight usage has contributed to the problem.

Councilmember Jerry McKee – In looking at your financial statements, you are \$100,000 short. Are there projections on what that will be at the end of the fiscal year?

Mr. Carow – When looking at the numbers it looks like we are going to be in better shape than what we thought we were for a number of reasons. We implemented a spending freeze in July of last year. We cut back on purchases other than what was mandatory. With that and an increase in the fire fee which brought in about \$45,000 more than what we had budgeted, I am hopeful that we will end up around \$20,000 in the hole instead of \$100,000.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – Because you paid off the truck you have reduced your expenses but you lowered your fund balance as well.

Mr. Carow – No, the truck got paid off because of the annexation money we got from Charlotte. We made a \$150,000 lump sum payment on the truck three years ago. When we did that, the accountant did not get a new amortization schedule so we had in the budget for an entire year about \$40,000 in payments for that truck. Well halfway through the year the truck got paid off. That was roughly \$20,000 of expenses that we did not have because the truck was paid off.

Finance Officer Gaylord – Was your Balance Sheet wrong too because you still had the loan on your Balance Sheet? You carried a balance up until February on both and then it went away. How did it get paid off? So the balance sheet was wrong because you did not owe that much on the truck?

Mr. Carow – That is correct. When we made that lump sum payment it actually saved us about \$30,000 in interest fees.

Councilmember Thomisser – We have two issues here; one is the \$450,000 for the fire station renovations and the other is the operating expense. What I heard you say is that you will be getting the \$21,600 from the County and you are unsure of the funding from Mecklenburg County. The Town Council is currently

working on the 2011-2012 Budget. Does anybody on this Board know what you submitted to the Town Council on what your needs are going forward?

Mayor Anderson – They told us at the board meeting that they needed \$296,000 and \$300,000 in round numbers.

Councilmember Thomisser discussed the numbers that he had come up with for daytime and nighttime coverage.

Fire Department Representatives advised that his numbers were low. Mr. Carow advised that when they did their calculations they average \$500 a day. He said that the \$12.00 per day was low. The pay rate for the person depends on the seniority and qualifications.

Mr. Robinson – We use \$13.00 for the planning number – instead of \$456 it would be \$500.

Finance Officer Gaylord – Why is your salary expense so much more next year than it is currently? If you are currently paying \$20,525 a month if you multiply that by 12 it is \$250,000. I do not know how you are coming up with \$300,000.

Mayor Anderson discussed that it also included taxes.

Councilmember Thomisser – The last time we had a work session Council decided upon \$233,000. It looks like we need to increase that number.

The Council advised that the Fire Department came up with \$293,000 but they are asking for \$300,000.

Mayor Anderson – The fire fee money that you collect cannot be used for salaries.

Mr. Carow – We use it for insurance, maintenance costs, fuel. We cannot use it for salaries.

Mr. Ken Evans – If these issues are not resolved financially; we would have to turn in the keys. We do not have a choice.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – Then what incentive does the Weddington Town Council have to spend \$500,000 if that problem is not solved?

Mr. Evans – An insurance policy. You pray you do not have to use it.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – We could flush \$450,000 down the toilet and not really fix the revenue side of the problem.

Mr. Robinson – We are underutilized. The benefit of the merger does not solve the financial problem. What it does is creates one entity.

Mayor Pro Tem Barry – It will solve your revenue problem because everybody in Western Union County would be paying.

Mr. Robinson – It allows for the lines to be redrawn relatively painlessly so you have the best service model. Then the tax question has to be addressed.

Mr. Evans – After our meeting next week, we hope by the first of August to have some kind of answer on that.

Mayor Anderson – That station is going to be open and viable to provide service to the Town of Weddington. I think the building needs to be upgraded no matter what. Our volunteers do not live here. I do not see that station being closed and spending \$450,000 is not wasteful.

Councilmember McKee – The question is what is down the road. What are the issues that are dragging with the merger discussions?

Mr. Parks – There are different staffing models between the stations. It has to be addressed. People that are served by Providence are experiencing a staffing modeling at night and can get someone there in four minutes.

Councilmember McKee – I would like to see more of where we are going to get to – the two options are merger or redrawing of the lines. If one of those two things is not done – I do not believe you can survive.

Mr. Parks – Wesley Chapel does not have an incentive to merge.

Councilmember McKee – What if we say we are not going to renew our contract?

Mr. Parks – Another sticking point for Wesley Chapel is how they are going to explain how their fire tax is going from 2.2 cents to 3.5 cents after merging with Providence. It takes time to work through all the issues.

Mayor Anderson – What I told Butch Plyler is that we need to know no later than Labor Day regarding the merger. Wesley Chapel has a huge volunteer base.

Mr. Matthews – The merger is going to be the best solution. I work for both departments. It is going to take a little bit of time. I think they are in agreement with a merger but it has to be slow and not shoved down their throats. They do not have to do it. Wesley Chapel has the best volunteer response just about of any station in Union County. When we show up at night at 2 in the morning for a fire alarm, they will have eight volunteers there. Most would fall back to sleep if there is a paid guy going to get the truck and a paid firefighter and EMT on staff. They have good volunteers responding every night, and for every call they have four or five volunteers going. They have not come to the point of putting people at the stations because they can get the trucks out the door. Volunteers are running it. We cannot have night staff at just one station and not all three.

Mr. Parks – They are satisfied with their model right now. Even if we merge and we have access to those volunteers, if those volunteers are not close enough they cannot get their fast enough. We have money but we just do not have money to do it all. We could pay the architect bill but there is no need doing that and developing a bid document when there are no funds there to go forward on a bid.

Item No. 4. Adjournment. Councilmember Thomisser moved to adjourn the May 9, 2011 Special Town Council Meeting. All were in favor, with votes recorded as follows:

AYES:	Councilmembers Thomisser, Gilmartin, McKee and Mayor Pro Tem Barry
NAYS:	None

The meeting ended at 6:51 p.m.

Nancy D. Anderson, Mayor

Amy S. McCollum, Town Clerk