
**TOWN OF WENTWORTH
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES
AUGUST 2, 2011
7:00 P.M.**

The Wentworth Town Council held their regular monthly meeting in the Town Hall Council Chambers, on **Tuesday, August 2, 2011, at 7:00 p.m.**

Council members present: Mayor Robert Aswell, Mayor Pro Tem James Belcher, Councilwoman Iris Powell, Councilman Dennis Paschal, and Councilwoman Evelyn Conner

A quorum was present.

Staff Present: Brenda Ward, Town Administrator - Town Clerk, Fred Baggett, Town Attorney, and Wentworth Deputy, Travis Loftis

Article I. Mayor Aswell called the August 2nd, 2011, Wentworth Town Council Meeting to order.

Article II. Mayor Pro Tem James Belcher gave the **Invocation.**

Article III. **Discussion / Revisions / Adoption of Agenda**

A. Requests and Petitions of Citizens

Mayor Aswell advised that **Tiffany Haworth** (Dan River Basin Association) signed the **Speaker Register** and made a motion, *“That we add Ms. Haworth under Article VI. A, regarding the landfill funding request.”*

Councilman Dennis Paschal seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article IV. **Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes**

A. Town Council Meeting – July 5, 2011

Councilwoman Iris Powell made a motion to *“Accept the Minutes as written.”*

Mayor Aswell seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

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Article V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Update of Tile Repair/Replacement for Lobby Floor

Mayor Aswell advised, “Brenda (Town Clerk) just informed me that the man from Sherwin Williams came today to measure the floor so he could give us an estimate on what it would take to do the repairs. He will get back to the Wright Company and they will talk with the architects (Alley, Williams, Carmen, & King). Is that right, Brenda?”

Ms. Ward replied, “I hope so. At least they are talking now...”

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher commented, “I think it was pretty clear in those emails that we should bear no responsibility, and that between the architect and the builders, they would carry the burden...”

“I tried to make that point,” said **Mrs. Ward**. “The last I heard back from Alley, Williams, Carmen, & King, was their assurance that the Town would not have to bear any costs for repairs.”

“Do they think it has stabilized?” asked **Councilman Paschal**.

“Yes,” **Mrs. Ward** replied. “It has been almost a year since we decided to leave it and see if it moved or cracked any more. The gentleman from Sherwin Williams said he was really shocked that it cracked at all. He said this was a higher grade of tile and that they were really surprised.”

Mrs. Ward continued, “That row of tile will have to be split though, with an expansion joint in between. There will be a seam...with two smaller pieces of tile on each side.”

“Hopefully, it won’t move anymore,” said **Councilman Paschal**, “but that is going to be the problem...since that crack is not in a straight line down through there.”

Article VI. NEW BUSINESS

**A. Consideration of Funding Request from Dan River Basin
Association for Legal Counsel Regarding Landfill Opposition
- \$10,000.00**

Mayor Aswell asked **Ms. Tiffany Haworth**, Director of Dan River Basin Association, to address Council.

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Ms. Haworth noted that the last time she came before Council was to request approval of the Resolution in opposition to the proposed landfill. She thanked Council for adopting the Resolution.

“Now I am here asking you to consider a funding request which you have before you. This is to help pay for legal counsel in our strategy to stop the landfill from happening in our community. As you all know, the landfill has economic ramifications, health ramifications, eco-tourism let alone tourism, new business, old business. It has a lot of ramifications and in order for us to be able to fight it, we are going to need some help, and...the better legal counsel you have, the better chances you have, but that does not come inexpensively.”

Ms. Haworth continued, “We are also receiving *in-kind* help from SELC which is the Southern Environmental Law Association. This is in addition to other help that we are able to secure pro bono, so we have a lot of good people working on this. If you will consider this request, it will help us to provide the financial resources we need in order to continue our strategies to stop this landfill from happening.”

She asked Council if they had any questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher commented, “I see you have the amount needed for project as \$70,000.00. Is that what you think the assumed total cost may be? I am aware that legal battles can go on forever.”

Ms. Haworth replied, “Yes, absolutely, but we hope they don’t. This is at least the estimate from the lawyer for the first phase. I can’t say there won’t be more afterwards, but it is for the bulk of it.”

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher asked, “What other avenues are you pursuing for funds...do you intend to have fundraisers...?”

“Absolutely,” replied **Ms. Haworth**. “We have people in the community stepping up to offer their property for a music festival and a fundraising drive. Many groups with lots of members have offered to send our stewardship fund pledge card out to their members. We have it on our website...I don’t know if y’all saw Channel 13 last night, but we were on there talking about the Stewardship Fund, and DARBA, the organization itself, has contributed money already to this fund.”

Councilman Paschal added, “The attorney did cap the amount...that it won’t go over this amount going through to the (County) Commissioners, so anything over that, they would cover in that first phase.”

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“Hopefully, it is the first and *only* phase,” said **Ms. Haworth**.

Councilman Paschal added, “I just have to say that this is the most serious threat to public safety that we have had here in Wentworth since we incorporated...just due to the fact that they are putting this landfill on the side of the river. Everything you read...it’s not a matter of *if* the landfill will leak, but *when*. They say a hundred years, two hundred years. I think the EPA has said the liner will last a thousand (years). How they have managed to go out there and look a thousand years ahead of time, I will never know.”

Councilman Paschal continued, “The landfill is to be right on the side of the river, up river from the intake. A large portion of the Town gets our water from there. There will be an additional 100 trucks or so through the Town everyday. We are just lucky that we have folks like DARBA coming out to help us and we don’t have to shoulder the burden of fighting this ourselves, as a Town. I think, all things considered, we would have had to consider this, if others had not come forward to work together like this, because it is a definite threat to our drinking water here in the Town.”

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher commented, “I think it is pretty obvious that the Town is in favor of fighting this (landfill). The other question I have is that this is a fairly significant amount for us to do at one shot. We are not like other towns, we don’t have any means of changing our revenue stream. We are solely subject to what comes out of the State budget each year...could we start off with a smaller amount and then perhaps see, if the need arises, come back later...”

“No, that won’t work,” replied **Councilwoman Powell**. “You have to start and do the whole thing and get it over with.”

Councilman Paschal said, “I think the problem you have there, is going ahead and getting in there and fighting this and get the money in. They are going to raise money from other sources, but they need money up front, also.”

Councilman Paschal said he spoke with the Finance Officer, who said there is \$95,000 in Other Operating Expenses that we aren’t using this year, so to me, to go ahead and make this investment, if we don’t invest any more in it, we can say we have done our part. If we have passed a Resolution, then we need to step up and help as much as we can. Ten thousand dollars with an extra \$95,000 in Other Operating Expenses this year...we can do that and it will help out.”

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“Personally,” said **Mayor Pro Tem Belcher**, “I would prefer to start with say, half that, and see how the battle goes forward, and then if we need to, we can look at it, because we don’t know what else may come up during the year. We have had situations arise where we have had to spend money that we did not plan on or want to spend. Hopefully, those situations won’t come up again, but I would prefer to be cautious and put in a certain amount now, and then have an opportunity to come back and look at it. I don’t see any good news coming about the economy. I think we are better off being careful...”

Councilwoman Powell said, “But you can’t just sit around and wait for something bad to happen...and save your money for that when it is needed now.”

“No,” said **Mayor Pro Tem Belcher**, “but that is what you’re supposed to do and that is one of the things we are required to do is to use our money wisely.”

“This is using it wisely,” said **Councilwoman Powell**.

Councilman Paschal said, “If it wasn’t a public safety issue, I would agree with you (Mayor Pro Tem Belcher), but it is a public safety issued and I think we need to meet it head on and do everything we can. I volunteered my time...I have gone out and collected donations, and I will continue to do that, but I feel strongly that we need to go ahead with it...we need to get some money in the coffers so we can get the attorney going. He has already made some procedural moves and is working ahead, but I feel strongly about it and I would like to make a motion, *“That we approve the entire \$10,000.00.”*

Councilwoman Conner seconded the motion.

Mayor Aswell asked for discussion, commenting, “I will have to agree with James (Mayor Pro Tem Belcher)...based on the way we cut the budget this year, trimming here and there, and now we have a request for \$10,000. I would agree to half that amount...”

There were other comments, similar to those already expressed.

Mayor Aswell asked for a vote. The motion carried four to one.

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Article VI. NEW BUSINESS

**B. Consideration of Resolution Opposing the Merger of Rockingham Community College with another Community College
- Town Administrator**

Mayor Aswell asked the Town Administrator if she had any information for Council.

Councilwoman Powell said, "I'm against it."

Mrs. Ward explained that this is an issue before the Legislature, in an effort to save the State some money, but advised Council that there is a great deal of opposition to it. She noted that an email from Representative Bert Jones also confirms this.

Councilman Paschal asked, "How many did you say could be merged...didn't you mention as many as fifteen?"

"I think so," said **Mrs. Ward**. "At least they are saying that RCC would be consolidated with a larger institution."

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher asked, "Are they talking about an administrative merger, or actually doing away with certain types of classes..."

Mrs. Ward replied, "In most of the opposition expressed, it seems people are afraid that a merger will affect everything overall. I understand from Representative Bert Jones that this probably will not pass, but others are still doing Resolutions opposing mergers."

She asked the Town Attorney if he knows where this stands in the Legislature.

Mr. Baggett commented, "The Program Evaluation Division, a study group within the General Assembly...this is one thing they are studying as a way for the State to save money—one of several things. But, that's where it is, and that group will make a report back to the General Assembly."

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher said, "I think it would be far more advantageous for the State to acknowledge the community college's ability to increase job skills and training opportunities for local citizens than any amount they would save..."

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Mr. Baggett added, “As Brenda has said, there are a lot of smaller community colleges in the State that feel the same way about their institutions as we feel about Rock Tech (Rockingham Community College).”

Councilman Paschal said, “I believe there was a total savings, statewide, of only five million dollars...and that’s not a whole lot to justify disrupting the community college system.”

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher made a motion, “*That we approve the Resolution Opposing the Merger of Rockingham Community College with another Community College.*”

Councilwoman Powell seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article VI. NEW BUSINESS

**C. Consideration of Policy for Closed Session Minutes
- Town Administrator**

Mayor Aswell acknowledged the Town Administrator.

Mrs. Ward advised, “We have some Closed Session minutes that our attorney will be reviewing and that we will probably be bringing to you for approval. I was thinking that when James Dewey was our attorney, a blanket motion was made to allow for all Closed Session minutes to remain sealed until such time as the Town Attorney and Clerk agreed they could be opened to the public. But when I looked back, manually, through ten years or more of minutes...and that’s because we lost our Minutes Index when we upgraded our computers, I was unable to find that motion. I also had Yvonne to look, in case I missed something, but she did not find anything either.”

Mrs. Ward continued, “I just decided that we should have a formal policy on this, so we will be covered in sealing our Closed Session Minutes and opening them when the attorney is in agreement.”

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher and **Councilman Paschal** both agreed that they also thought this had been addressed in the past.

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Mayor Pro Tem Belcher made a motion, *“That we approve the Policy for Closed Session Minutes.”*

Councilman Paschal seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article VI. D. Consideration of Requesting the U.S. Postal Service to Survey Wentworth Citizens for Address Change: Bottom Line Delivery of Wentworth, NC

- Mayor Aswell

Mayor Aswell commented, “It doesn’t look like we are going to get a new post office, so I was just wondering if we should go ahead and petition the Postal Service to see if we can’t get a Wentworth address.”

Councilman Paschal said, “They allow you to do that once every ten years, and if the folks vote it down, of course, it’s ten years before you can do it again.”

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher said, “There was an article in the paper recently that the Postal Service is looking to close...or reviewing about 3,800, with the hopes of closing something like 2,000. I know this is not requesting a post office, but in the past they indicated there may be an extra cost associated with bottom line delivery, even though they will probably handle it in Reidsville.”

Councilman Paschal said, “They would just be sorting it there (Reidsville), but you have Wentworth on it (the address).”

Councilwoman Powell said, “We need to fight for it (a post office) because Wentworth is the county seat of Rockingham County, and every other county seat has a post office...go at it from that angle.”

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher replied, “I would love to have it, but I am just afraid that this is not the right time. We may want to wait a little bit. I have wanted bottom line delivery ever since we incorporated but I’m just not sure this is the time...”

Councilwoman Powell said, “You might be right...that we shouldn’t bring it to their attention right now.”

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“That is the only caution I have, in light of the recent things that have been going on,” said **Mayor Pro Tem Belcher**, “We may want to make this something that we wait another 6 months or a year to take up.”

The **Town Administrator** said she has spoken with the Wentworth Postmaster’s daughter, who works in the Greensboro office, and advised, “She is in charge of the delivery boundaries. They will do a survey if we ask them to, but at least 51% of the residents have to vote in favor of the address change...from Reidsville to Wentworth.”

Mrs. Ward asked, “So what are we saying then...that we don’t want to pursue a new post office, and we shouldn’t initiate the survey for bottom line delivery, either?”

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher commented, “I think what Robert was saying is that we pretty much see that they aren’t going to provide a new post office, so what about going for the Wentworth address, but I’m just not sure that this is the right time to pursue that.”

“So, you think that if we ask about bottom line delivery, they may just look closer at us and even decide to close our post office, altogether,” **Mrs. Ward** said.

Councilwoman Powell remarked, “But, on the other hand, this may be a good time to ask for it, because the Historical Society wants to clear out the Wright Tavern (site of Wentworth Post Office). Kim (Proctor), the Museum Director, wants to completely restore the tavern like it was and she has suggested moving the post office to the old courthouse where the museum will be.”

Councilman Paschal said, “Well, you know, it wouldn’t hurt to request it (new post office) again. At one time, we talked with legislators, and got letters together, and after going back and forth for years, we got to the point where we were told that we were going to get a new post office, but that didn’t happen, so who knows, maybe the third time will be a charm.”

“Supposedly,” said **Mrs. Ward**, “the reason it didn’t happen is because of Hurricane Katrina and the fact that their funds were reallocated to clean up and repair damaged post offices.”

After additional similar remarks and discussion, **Councilman Paschal** said again, “It wouldn’t hurt to ask one more time.”

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Mrs. Ward said, "If we do this again, we shouldn't have any trouble getting people to write letters because there are always complaints about the mix-up in deliveries when UPS and others are looking for a location in Wentworth, with a Reidsville address."

Mayor Aswell said, "*I would like to make a motion that we have Brenda (Town Administrator) start the ball rolling again to see if we can get a new post office.*"

"You mean a Wentworth address, don't you?" asked **Councilwoman Conner**.

"No," replied **Councilman Paschal**, a new post office...make a request and just see what they say...we can look at bottom line on down the road after we see what comes of this."

Mrs. Ward asked if there was a second to the Mayor's motion.

Councilman Paschal said he would second the motion.

There was no further discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article VI. NEW BUSINESS – Continued

E. Consideration of Application for Appointment to the Town of Wentworth Historic Preservation Committee

- **Harold W. Vaden / 8030 NC 87 / Wentworth NC**

Mayor Aswell made a motion, "*That we accept his application.*"

Councilwoman Powell and **Councilwoman Conner** seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Aswell noted that Ms. Haworth has already addressed Council and that no one else signed the Speaker Register.

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Article VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The **Wentworth Planning Board** will meet on **Tuesday, August 16, 2011**, at **7:00 p.m.** in the **Town Hall Council Chambers**.
- The next regular meeting of the **Wentworth Town Council** will be held on **Tuesday, September 6, 2011**, at **7:00 p.m.** in the **Town Hall Council Chambers**.
- The **Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk** will be out of the office **Thursday and Friday, August 11-12**, to attend the **NCAMC Summer Academy**.

ARTICLE IX. A D J O U R N

Mayor Aswell made a motion, "*That we adjourn.*"

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted By: _____
Brenda Ward, Town Clerk

Approved By: _____
Robert P. Aswell, Mayor