



MINUTES
WENTWORTH TOWN COUNCIL
December 7, 2021
7:00 pm
Wentworth Town Hall
124 Peach Tree Road, Wentworth NC

The Wentworth Town Council held their regularly scheduled monthly meeting at the Wentworth Town Hall, on Tuesday, December 7, 2021 at 7:00pm.

Council Members Present: Mayor Dennis Paschal Jr., Mayor Pro Tem Evelyn Conner, Cheryl Moore, Dennis Paschal III, Iris Powell

Council Members Absent:
A quorum was met.

Staff Present: George Murphy Sr., Town Administrator
Yvonne Russell, Town Clerk & Finance Officer

Others Present: David Huggins, Pastor

Article I. CALL TO ORDER
Mayor Dennis Paschal Jr. called the meeting to order. Council and guests recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Article II. INVOCATION
David Huggins gave the invocation.

Article III. NEW BUSINESS
A. RECOGNITION OF RETIRING COUNCIL MEMBER IRIS POWELL
Mayor Paschal presented Councilmember Iris Powell with a plaque thanking her for 21 years of service on the Wentworth Town Council.

Mrs. Powell thanked Council and everyone who voted for her in the past. She said she has enjoyed serving on the Town Council very much.

Town Administrator George Murphy read a history of Mrs. Powell's many years of service in the community that he gleaned from conversations with her daughter, Marilyn Reagan.

Mrs. Powell received a standing ovation and tears were shed by many.

(Note: A history of Iris Powell, composed and read by George Murphy, is herein incorporated and made a part of these minutes.)

Iris S. Powell

Born April 22, 1923, in Spray, North Carolina, Town of Wentworth councilmember Iris Smith Venable Powell may very well be the oldest elected official in the State of North Carolina.

The youngest of six children, Iris, the daughter of Martin Luther and Rosa Anna Hill Smith, has served on every elected Wentworth Town Council since taking her oath of office in December of 1999, but her 98 years have not been limited to only municipal service.

Iris claims that when she was young she had “wandering feet.” During the Great Depression she moved with her parents and siblings to a farm at Saura Town, a Rockingham County unincorporated community across the Dan River just south of current day Eden. Consequently, Iris attended and finished school at Wentworth Consolidated School. After her family moved back to Spray, she moved to Washington, D.C. to live with her brother Carl and his wife. When she was joined by Lillian Odell, a friend from Spray, they moved to a boarding house where they shared a room and expenses.

In the boarding house, the women lived on one floor and the men lived on another, but dances and get-togethers were held, so the residents got to know one another. It was here that Iris met Lewis C. Venable from Los Angeles, California.

Needing to travel to DC on business, Lewis had answered a classified ad and taken a job to drive someone from LA to DC in their vehicle. He wound up in the boarding house where he and Iris met.

When Lewis got ready to return to LA, he purchased a used car, and Iris, Lewis, and one of Iris’s friends pooled their money and traveled across country to LA. The car experienced a break down shortly after leaving DC, and Lewis, who had worked as an airplane mechanic in the Navy, had to complete a rather lengthy repair on the side of the road before they could complete the trip.

Iris, who had worked at Hetch’s Department Store in DC, got a job in a Hetch’s in LA. She and Lewis dated for over a year, and, in January 1949, they married. When Lewis died in 1951, Iris, with her daughter Marilyn and a female friend, drove across country and returned to North Carolina. Iris and Marilyn moved into the home of Jo and Bruce Gunn. The home was located in what was then unincorporated Wentworth.

Jo, who was Iris’ sister, and her husband Bruce lived on one side of the house. Miss Maude Reynolds, the art and music teacher at Wentworth Consolidated School, from whom the Gunn’s had purchased the house maintaining life-time rights to reside there, lived on the other side downstairs. Jo and Bruce’s son, Wayne, had his bedroom upstairs, and Iris and Marilyn shared two upstairs rooms. While living there, Iris got her job with the United States Postal Service.

Iris was appointed Postmaster of Wentworth Post Office by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. At that time, Postmasters were United States Senate approved presidential appointments. Iris served in this capacity for 32 years. Her first Post Office was in the small, one-roomed building that currently sits across NC 65 from the old Rockingham County Courthouse, home, today, of the Museum and Archives

of Rockingham County (MARC). The Post Office was later relocated to the Wright Tavern. Her current home is located across NC 65 from the Wright Tavern and next door to the MARC. In 2016 the Wentworth Post Office was relocated to its current location on County Home Road and is in a facility owned by the Town of Wentworth. Iris still maintains a P.O. Box at that site so that the bottom line on her incoming mail retains the Wentworth, North Carolina 27375 designation.

Clyde Powell from Draper drove the mail truck and his brother, Carl, often rode with him. Sometimes Carl Powell would substitute drive when Clyde wasn't available. It was through this connection that Iris met Carl. Sometime later Iris and Carl began dating, and, in 1954, Iris and Carl went to a Justice of the Peace and were married. Shortly after their marriage, they purchased their Wentworth home where Iris still resides.

Marilyn characterizes her mother as a "worker" and a "joiner." Iris and Carl coached Little League ball over an 8 year period. Additionally, Iris was a Girls Scout Leader in Wentworth during the 1950's, a 4-H Leader from the 1960's to the 1980's, a Youth Sunday School Teacher at Wentworth Presbyterian Church and later at Calvary Baptist Church, a member of the Lillian Talley Circle at Calvary, and a member of the Rockingham County Historical Society. Iris received multiple awards as an outstanding 4-H Leader, and the club with which she worked was also recognized as outstanding numerous times.

Iris enjoys games. She would organize games at home, Bible School, 4-H clubs, and her Circle Christmas Parties. She was even invited by Wentworth teacher Deborah Crumpton to visit her classroom and teach her elementary students games, an invitation Iris gladly accepted.

After her retirement, Iris continued collecting stamps and post cards. To this day she continues her avid scrapbooking, which includes articles gleaned from newspapers over the years. Marilyn estimates that Iris has between 75 and 100 scrapbooks chronicling events of interest and historical significance throughout her life.

Iris took art classes after her retirement and discovered that she liked to paint. She started with Tole Painting through a senior program at Rockingham Community College (RCC) and progressed to regular classes with Loel Draper that were held at the Presbyterian Church Community Building. One of her art pieces, the Wentworth Town Seal, currently hangs in the Wentworth Town Hall.

Wentworth's charter was re-activated by the legislature in 1998, and, after the interim Town Council defined in the new charter completed its tenure, Iris was one of the top five vote recipients in the 1999 municipal election. She was sworn to serve on the first elected Town Council in December 1999. After each successive term until 2021, she was re-elected. At age 98, Iris Powell decided not to run for re-election, and now, for the first time in its history, there will be an elected Town Council without Iris S. Powell.

Her leadership, wit, and wisdom will be sorely missed at Town Council meetings, and Iris has admitted that she will miss attending meetings and interacting with the public and councilmembers.

Mayor Paschal reminisced the days he was a student of Mrs. Powell's in 4-H and Bible school. He thanked Mrs. Powell for her many years of service in the community.

Article III.

NEW BUSINESS

B. ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION

1. Oath of Office Administered to Elected Council

Mayor Paschal announced that during the 2021 Wentworth Town Council elections, **Cheryl Moore** was re-elected to her third term, and **Daryl Crowder** was elected to his first term.

Mayor Paschal turned the Organizational Session over to Town Administrator George Murphy.

Mr. Murphy asked Rockingham County Clerk of Court Mark Pegram to administer the Oath of Office to the elected officials starting with **Daryl Crowder**.

The Honorable Mark Pegram administered the Oath of Office to **Daryl Crowder**.

Mr. Crowder's wife held the Bible while he, with his right hand raised and his left hand placed upon the Bible, recited the Oath.

The Honorable Mark Pegram administered the Oath of Office to **Cheryl Moore**.

Mrs. Moore's husband and sister held the Bible while she, with her right hand raised and left hand placed upon the Bible, recited the Oath.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION

2. Election of Mayor

Mr. Murphy asked Council for nominations for Mayor of the Town of Wentworth.

Councilmember Evelyn Conner nominated **Dennis Paschal Jr.** There were no other nominations.

Councilmember Dennis Paschal, III made a **MOTION**, *the nominations be closed*. All voted in favor and **Dennis Paschal Jr.** was elected **Mayor** of the Town of Wentworth.

Mr. Murphy turned the Organizational Session over to **Mayor Paschal**.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION

3. Election of Mayor Pro Tem

Mayor Paschal asked Council for nominations for Mayor Pro Tem of the Town of Wentworth.

Councilmember Cheryl Moore nominated **Evelyn Conner**.

Mayor Paschal seconded the nomination. There were no further nominations.

Councilmember Paschal III made a **MOTION**, *the nominations be closed*.

Mayor Paschal seconded the motion. All voted in favor and **Evelyn Conner** was elected **Mayor Pro Tem** of the Town of Wentworth.

Article III. NEW BUSINESS

B. ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION

4. Oath of Office Administered to Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem

The Honorable Mark Pegram administered the Oath of Office to **Mayor Pro Tem Evelyn Conner**.

David Huggins held the Bible while **Mayor Pro Tem Conner**, with her right hand raised and her left hand placed upon the Bible, recited the Oath.

The Honorable Mark Pegram administered the Oath of Office to **Mayor Dennis Paschal Jr.**

Mayor Paschal's wife held the Bible while he, with his right hand raised and his left hand placed upon the Bible, recited the Oath.

C. ADOPTION OF HOLIDAY CLOSING SCHEDULE FOR YEAR 2022

Mayor Paschal made a **MOTION**, "*We adopt the Holiday Closing Schedule for 2022*".

Mayor Pro Tem Conner seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments.

Article V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Paschal made the following announcements:

- The next regular meeting of the **Wentworth Planning Board** is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 21, 2021**, at 7:00 pm at the Wentworth Town Hall.
- The next regular meeting of the **Wentworth Town Council** is scheduled for **Tuesday, January 4, 2022**, at 7:00 pm at the Wentworth Town Hall.
- Year 2022 Meeting Schedules for the Wentworth Town Council and the Wentworth Planning Board are available in the Town Clerk's Office and at www.townofwentworth.com.
- Applications are available for volunteers interested in serving on Town Committees – Appearance, Recreation, Historic Preservation, and the Wentworth Planning Board.

Mayor Pro Tem Conner thanked Yvonne Russell and George Murphy for putting together the Town's first Christmas in the Park event.

Article IX. ADJOURN

Mayor Paschal made a **MOTION**, “*We adjourn*”.

Mayor Pro Tem Conner seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Approved By:

Yvonne Russell, NCCMC
Town Clerk

Dennis Paschal, Jr.
Mayor