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**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF ROBESON  
TOWN OF RED SPRINGS  
MONTHLY BOARD MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 6, 2024**

BE IT REMEMBERED that the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Red Springs, Robeson County, North Carolina, met in the Board Room in the Town Hall Council Board Room, located at 217 South Main Street, in said town at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, the 6<sup>th</sup> day of February 2024. Mayor Henderson participated in the meeting and was present in the Town Hall Council Board Room for the entire meeting. Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter and Commissioners: Murray McKeithan, Ronnie Patterson, Chris Edmonds, Neal Lea'Kes, and Duron Burney were present in the Town Hall Council Board Room for the entire board meeting. Town Manager Jane C. O'Neal, Town Clerk Barbara McColl, Town Attorney Antoine Marshall, Finance Director Kasey Douglas, Police Chief Mark Caskey, Athletic Superintendent Tony Burnett, and Electric System Director Aaron Scippio participated in the regularly scheduled board meeting.

Absent: Fire Chief John Ammons and Public Services Director Tim Mauldin.

**INVOCATION**

Mayor Henderson welcomed everyone to the Monthly Board Meeting and our Facebook Livestream Audience and moved forward with the Invocation by Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC INPUT SESSION**

There were two that signed up for the Public Input Session: Pastor Randy Galbreath, Red Springs, NC and Red Springs Middle School Principal Joyce Brown. Pastor Randy Galbreath noted to the mayor and to the board that he and his sister Ms. McBryde would like to officially submit a form of thank you for your efforts and assisting us in our quest to return to our residences on Thurlow Street after the devastation of Hurricane Matthews in 2016. Pastor Randy Galbreath and his sister Ms. McBryde would like to go on record with the deepest sense of gratitude to you, Thank you. Principal Joyce Brown - greetings to the mayor and the board members. First of all, I would like to say thank you to Ms. Sumpter the commissioner for inviting us to come out tonight and we would like to do introductions: I am Joyce Brown at Red Springs Middle School, and I brought my Leadership Instructional Team Assistant Principal Ms. Charlette Imbufe and Assistant Principal Carolyn Fowler. We look forward to working with the Town of Red Springs and thank you for having us.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Henderson asked the board to accept the Consent Agenda which consists of the Releases and Refunds and Minutes from the Regular Scheduled Board meeting on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024.

**Commissioner Ronnie Patterson made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda for Releases and Refunds, and Minutes from our meetings on January 2, 2024, and Commissioner Neal Lea'Kes second the motion, and all voted in favor of the motion.**

Mayor Henderson asked the board if he could add an item to the agenda which would be a small presentation of the Robeson County Church and Community Center Mobile Assistance Unit Agreement for us to decide for Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter.

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**Commissioner Duron Burney made a motion to add the Robeson County Church and Community Center Mobile Assistance Unit Agreement to our agenda and Commissioner Ronnie Patterson seconded the motion, and all voted in favor of the motion.**

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE PROCUREMENT POLICY AND PLAN FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT – INFRASTRUCTURE (CDBG-I) GRANTEEES**

Specifically, Jane O’Neal noted to the board that we are required to adopt this Procurement Policy to ensure that we adhere to all the procurement rules of the State of North Carolina and Federal Government specifically for the CDBG Grant.

**Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter made a motion to adopt the Procurement Policy and Plan for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-I) and Commissioner Chris Edmonds second the motion, and all voted in favor of the motion.**

**PRESENTATION FOR 2022/2023 FINAL AUDIT – LEE GRISSOM/S.PRESTON DOUGLAS & ASSOCIATES, LLP CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT**

Mr. Lee Grissom/S. Preston Douglas & Associates, LLP Certified Public Accountant gave an overview of the Annual Financial Report and provided Audit Booklets and Graphs for Mayor and the Board of Commissioners to follow along as he discussed the town’s audit for year 2022/2023. Mr. Grissom's noted for this audit started a little late in October 2023 and they were impressed from what they saw from the new manager and Finance Director picking up the pieces and we are confident that they will turn this thing around in the future. So, inclusion for this audit we had four opinions: 1) The Traditional Audit Opinion, 2) The Clean Audit Opinion, saying that you can rely on these financial statements as presented, and it is in accordance with our (GAAP) General Accepted Account Principles. 3) The Yellow Book Audit Opinion we are required to Internal Controls and Test Controls we do have a couple of findings there and discuss it. 4) Federal and State Single Audit – Red Springs has received a lot of Federal and State Grant money, and it has added a lot of complexity over the last four years and some findings due to that. Mr. Grissom stated there have been two software conversions, one in the previous fiscal year, and it will explain some of the findings we are about to go over. The First Finding: 1) Two Budget Overages which totaled \$200,000 this year over the approved budget so it was \$160,000 in the Transportation Department and \$37,000 in the Administration almost \$200,000 that is a little bit new this year but it has a lot to do with the turnover in May 2023 because at the end of June 2023 there needed to be an Amendment that was taken care of by the time the new Manager and Finance Director got into place it was a little late to make a budget amendment. There were no findings last year it was really positive. 2) Debt Ratio Finding – this triggered several comments by the (LGC) Local Government Commissioner when we turned in the Data Income Sheet and it is income requirement a formula required by US Department of Agriculture and the town fell short mainly because of the Water Sewer Performance. Mr. Grissom added to the board the Net position for June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, was \$19.8 million dollars, Total Assets - \$32 million dollars, Total Liabilities - \$10.7 million dollars, Water/Sewer – increase of 1.7 million but most of that was due to a Grant Funding. Mr. Grissom discussed that you want the Water/Sewer Fund to make money from operations and grant money so you cannot really rely on grant money and if you take the grant money away you would be in the negative. So overall in (GAAP) General Accepted Account Principles and take all of the funds together you have an increase of \$1.2 million dollars. Mr. Grissom moved to the Graphs and reported for eight fiscal years of information, the first analysis is the Governmental Funds and goes all the back to 2016 to 2023 and stated the last four years have been the strongest. Last year we were at 43% about 5 months in reserves because of the General Fund decreasing, the Fund Balance by 357 this fiscal year we dipped below three months in reserve and the Local Government Commission wants you to be at 34%. This year the board is going to have to write a letter on what your plan is to get above 34%. Mr. Grissom noted that he is hoping that this year was a nominal year because everything was positive, and I do like what you have in place, but the town has taken a step back this year to a financial standpoint. Mr. Grissom added that he thought there were a lot of

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improvements over the previous years in particular. Long Term Debt (pg.4) – in 2023 the Total Long Term Debt was above \$10 million of this \$10 million \$4.3 million is Pension Liabilities the same numbers for the fund, three fiscal years nothing significant, Electric Fund – is a positive for the fiscal year income loss before contributions (Graph) June 30, 2023 at \$222,000 positive and last year this was a negative \$222,000 this is similar to Water/Sewer you want to break even in this fund and you did a good job on this one. This is the biggest improvement of this presentation Water/Sewer income loss before contribution is transferred. Mr. Grissom mentioned that the Water/Sewer Fund made money when you counted the grant money with this right here it does not include the grant contribution. June 30, 2023, you had a minus \$529,000 and I do want to note that the Appreciation Expense \$429,000 in the graph that is an Expense in Non-Cash that represents your Assets being written out over that time that loss includes that Non-Cash Expense. The Local Government Commission recommends that the Enterprise break even above zero. Even though Red Springs in the last four years have been trending overall positive, this one has been an issue each fiscal year that we have audit. Property Tax Collection Percentage - June 30, 2023, was at 94% and has been consistent for several fiscal years and similar to other Robeson County principality rates. Mr. Grissom mentioned the Data Input Sheet that we have to submit that goes along with the audit, there were several findings related to the Water/Sewer graph that was looked at, so a lot of the findings were related to that performance so if you get that performance out you should be okay. Mr. Grissom reported that the other things that need improving are going over the budget but, from my understanding, from the Town Manager and the Finance Director know that they know exactly what they need to do going forward. The Town's response to those findings is on page 95. Mr. Grissom reminded the board that it was the previous Administrations Audit mainly because they were here all the way through May 2023. The board asked questions concerning the General Fund (See Graph pg. 15).

#### **ROBESON COUNTY CHURCH & COMMUNITY CENTER MOBILE ASSISTANCE UNIT AGREEMENT**

Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter discussed with the board that she has been communicating with the Robeson County Church and Purchasing Community Center Executive Director Brianna Godwin and collaborated with them through Covid, we partnered with them for the food distribution, and the food distributions continued on for a while after the Covid pandemic. Mayor Pro Tempore Sumpter inquired for them to come back to the Town of Red Springs at the Community Center so our residence will not have to drive to Lumberton to be serviced if they are in need of food. It will happen once a month on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month in order to get the food, and Mayor Pro Tempore Sumpter presented the board with an Assistance Unit Agreement Contract to see if it was something that they would like to do for our citizens so that the Manager and the Police Department would volunteer to assist on a Thursday when they come with the Mobile Pantry. It is called the Mobile Pantry, and it will start on Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and will need some volunteer assistance to help. She would post it on social media, then add it on our marquee, and acknowledge that it is coming from the Robeson County Church & Community Center. Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter asked for a motion from the board.

**Commissioner Duron Burney made a motion to accept the Robeson County Church and Community Mobile Assistance Unit Agreement and Commissioner Murray McKeithan second the motion, and all voted in favor of the motion.**

#### **DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS**

**Police Department** – Police Chief Mark Caskey reported to the board and reported reduction in the crime stats are down, an increase in traffic citations increase this month, a higher number of warnings on loud truck mufflers, and loud music. Police Chief Caskey asked for the board's consideration to a specific request in an attempt to continue to recruit high caliber people to our agency, experienced people. I have positions open for Sergeant and I would like to create a position for a Detective Sergeant. There is a great need for another Investigator in my agency and so I would like to create a Detective Sergeant position. Now when I

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say create, I am saying not create a whole new slot I am saying create that job description Detective Sergeant. We have one Detective Sergeant slot. Town Manager added to simplify there is already a Detective Tammy Lowery that serves on the same position, so it is not a new position. That was in your spread sheet that you presented to the board. Chief Caskey noted that is correct, which was on the spread sheet that I provided when we talked about the reorganization of the department and that was included. I just want to make sure that going forward that it is the will of the board that we attempt to recruit.

Commissioner Chris Edmonds asked what kind of reports are we getting as far as what is happening with crimes and crimes being solved with the investigations going on now. Chief Caskey responded, I can run a spreadsheet with specific solve rates, if that is the question, solving rates sometimes are very traumatic depending on the nature of the crime. Our detectives right now are working and each of them are carrying a caseload of 150 cases and so our detectives investigate all felonies. What I try to encourage the patrol officers to do if they respond to a situation where it is kind of a very obvious situation to what occurred to encourage them to take on felonies to expand their horizons a little but as far as you solve rates it varies dramatically. Chief Caskey noted to the board that Mount Tabor Road is a speeding issue because of the approach from out of town being so rural that is a point of focus, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, McLeod Road, East 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue out towards Bleeker motors and that area. Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter requested to go back and revisit the Detective Sergeant. Chief Caskey mentioned that he had seven vacancies (SRO) School Resource Officers and Patrol Officers within the department and two Detectives. Chief Caskey added his intent is to recruit experienced people and bring them into a position where they can fill that vacancy. He has a young and inexperienced police department, and he is looking forward to the ability to bring potentially or possibly someone from the outside to recruit because the more experienced people it is easier to recruit experienced people into an investigative position. He would like to add another Detective Sergeant position in addition to the third Detective Sergeant position to help bring some balance back at \$54,500 is the number that he is looking for and it is already on the spread sheet to recruit someone with this number. He does not have anyone inside the agency that is interested in an investigative position and the Detective Sergeant position is definitely his top priority.

#### **Fire Department – N/A**

**Streets, Sanitation, Electric Department, and Powell Bill** – Electric System Director Aaron Scippio reported that he was sorry for being tardy, but they had outages all day today. **Streets and Sanitation Department** is about the same from last months. As for the timing, we have less than eighty days left so we have to fill that position on Sanitation and also for Streets. I have one guy that got hurt, he has to be released by the doctors, and it is putting us in a bind. **Electric Department** – There has been no change still needing more staff, the same since September 2023, and there are only two of us. Ms. Jane brought in a part-time helper, but we are still short-staffed. I do not have anything else except what I gave you in the monthly reports, but if you have any questions, I am here to answer them. Commissioner Edmonds asked if he was going on the calls and Aaron replied, every one of them and on call every day and every week. Commissioner Patterson asked him was he being compensated for it and Aaron replied, no. Town Manager added that she had no idea even though you 're in a management position you are exempt from overtime but if it is excessive then there maybe guidelines within the law that would allow compensation. Town manager said to let her know what the hours have been, and she will be glad to look into that for him. Aaron stated that he has reported the hours but did not have the last three on the report. In regard to the employees that are about to retire, I will get with the Human Resources Jessica Locklear, and we will need to post those positions and advertise them to be filled. Commissioner Patterson asked so we do not have anyone that we could hire from within for the positions. Electric System Director Aaron Scippio noted we have applications applicants but that is out of my hands. Town Manager reported she brought in Mr. Otis Flowers with 35 years of experience as a consultant and he is on a 90-day contract to give us some assistance and provide information so that she can write up a report about the Electric Department. Mr. Flowers work three days a week. Aaron Scippio added it just a three-man crew when he is assisting. Town Manager stated she did not see anyone within those applications that was worthy of being hired because total lack of any certifications and little training and so, Otis and I are working to try to recruit people because of his

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knowledge of people in the industry. Commissioner Edmonds inquired about the qualifications of jobs advertised not being met. Town manager added she did not receive any qualified candidates for advertised job applications. Aaron Scippio added that the only jobs that are posted in the Electrical Department are his position and a Lineman's position, and you will not get anyone for \$43,000 a year. Aaron added that he had plenty of contractors asking for positions from the East coast, but he does not have the salary to give them. The first-class linemen meet the qualifications. They are first-class linemen and that is what we are looking for, but they are making \$32.00 an hour with benefits where they are and the only thing that we have posted does not qualify as a first-class lineman. Town Manager added that she believes the job description meets the requirement and I have said for the last several months we could hire two people with \$60,000 a piece within that budget so we can hire two people if we can find them at a much higher rate of pay than what has been in the past. She will double check, and these are jobs that were posted when the prior HR Manager Annette Bryant was here and, we would asked the board to change any salary rate that is too low. Our budget could sustain two individuals at \$60,000 a piece to get the more experienced. Commissioner Edmonds asked, Why have we not advertised for those type of positions. It is the linemen position that is posted, those job positions were sufficient, Aaron, it is just that let me check that salary rate. I understand that it is hard to compete with the other Electrical industries here, but we can pay \$60,000 a piece to two individuals. She will check first thing tomorrow morning and if we have to up that salary then we will do so. Town manager added that she brought in Otis Flowers as a consultant to network certified individuals that he is familiar with in hopes to attract at two candidates in the \$60,000 range, and we will verify what the job description has been advertised and what it says and make alterations. Commissioner Edmonds noted that it needs to be done right away. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> session that we have come in here talking about this same thing and nothing is happening, and I am not going to vote on anything else until something happens in this Electric Department. Town Manager said she totally understands, we just need some employees that have a similar background. The board further discussed the salary issue and Electric System Director Aaron Scippio stated, you asked if I was getting compensated for the hours, and he still ended up with a pay cut as well. So, I took the pay cut and extra work, so. The issue was further discussed by the board. Town Manager added that she would have to look at the budget and she will get back with you Aaron. I think that we could sustain a \$65,000 or \$70,000 as well, and not just the \$60,000 but Jessica and I will get together in the morning and try to post a new job description. Mayor Henderson and Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter added that if the board needed to update the job description that is what we need to do. The board discussed the town's holes in the streets that need to be fixed.

**Water and Sewer, WTP, WWTP, Buildings & Grounds** – Distribution & Collections Supervisor Robert Oxendine spoke on behalf of Tim Mauldin who was absent – he reported that at this time we do not have any issues other than a couple of issues on main street the valves are leaking but no water leaks as far as out in the streets, sewer backups, and a water test was done for Ms. Barbara Melvin/Indian Housing Authority.

**Parks and Recreation** - Athletic Superintendent Tony Burnette reported that He just started off with the Basketball season this past Saturday. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders played at Red Springs High School, a good turnout for that. They will be playing again this Saturday, at Pembroke Middle School at 9:00 am. They have two 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade teams two 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade teams and we able to fill a 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade girls' Basketball team this year, and a 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls' Basketball team and a lot of the girls that played Middle School ball actually came out and played recreation ball. First through Fourth grade Basketball has started back at Red Springs Middle School they have been practicing this week will be our last practice. We will start putting games for the guy's next Saturday and picking up shirts and jersey is tomorrow and be ready to go with them as far as getting them started. Tony passed handouts to the board and added that Mr. Bobby Odom communicated with him two weeks ago and he is getting ready to try and get a Kids Golf Course started and they have been communicating and gaining ideas about it. He wanted to give the board the information ahead of time to look it over. Now for the other side of things, summertime is coming up and summer is never good time for me. Baseball season and grass season and right now is it just me and Mr. Dertwan Pratt/Sport Technician and he is working 19 hours a week 4 days a week. We start cutting grass and we

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have two lawnmowers. We have the smaller John Deer and the bigger lawnmower and normally we start trying to cut the grass around 7:00 in the morning to try to beat the heat, change the spot there Tom Cope and we start at 7:00 in the morning and it maybe 2:00 or 3:00 pm so by the time we get done cutting the grass then we have to mark the field, drag the field before the game that night, and by the time I make it home and take a shower and come back I got a game. I may be out there. The game starts at 6:00 pm and I make it home 10:30 or 11:00 take a shower, go to bed, and 12:00 pm. I am back at work on the lawnmower the next morning at 7:00 am. Commissioner Burney asked if there was a position available to hire Mr. Pratt because he is a good worker and he has heard good thing about him. Tony added that he was a good worker, and it took him awhile to get him. The Former Town Manager David Ashburn talked to him about not hiring anybody and the position stayed open six months before we got anything. Tony added that he received six applications, two came in with no driver's license, one failed the drug test, and the rest of them I could not get any help. Finally, he got Dertwan towards the end of the season at and Tony did it all by himself before they hired Dertwan. Commissioner Burney asked how long has Dertwan been on board and has been doing a good job. Tony added that he has been here a year, and Commissioner Burney noted to the board that we definitely need to bring this guy to the team. Town Manager asked that Tony come see her and we will look at your budget because the reason the limit has been set in the past the 19 hours if you go beyond that then you have to pay the State Retirement System, but I understand the need for it, and you need to retain a really good employee. So come see me, let us look at your budget and see where you are, then look at the job description and pay scale, and see if we can come up with something. Tony noted that he does not think that he can work it all by himself again and added that if he has to go out for an extended amount of time, he will need a person full time and Dertwan knows the job. Commissioner Patterson asked if the town would get some inmates to help our town looking good. Town Manager added yes, and she has certainly considered that and checked into it and its certain classes that they have to take to be trained and supervised. We would have to make sure that we could totally depend on it because I believe in the past something happened because they were not supervised properly that program ended it. We can certainly start that up again and selecting some very responsible employees that could be trained to oversee them.

**Human Resources Technician** – Jessica Locklear reported this month she did some training in E-Verify-a government system every time we hire an employee to make sure that they are eligible to be an employee of the town. She also met with our Colonial Life Agent and did the registration for the (OSHA) Occupational Safety and Health Administration Training for North Carolina Department, and she has three dates that she will be doing training for our employees in February, March & April. Also being some self-training on the North Carolina Government Retirement System, one employee will be retiring this Thursday and the other employee in April 2024, and she worked on Blue Cross Blue Shield Medical Coverage.

### COMMENTS

**Commissioner Duron Burney** – Thanked everyone for coming out and Reverend Galbreath for the comments that he presented to us because we do not hear it that often. I like the way you finished that up with a scripture and one came back. Commissioner Patterson said if the town is not healthy the town is not clean. If I wanted to move to Red Springs and I see trash thrown on every street that you about travel. The summertime is approaching, and we had some citizens to come and talk about how the grass has grown up everywhere. So hopefully, I will say that the town did purchase chemicals to try clear that up at the end of the year. I think that we will be working toward a better year approaching and we certainly want to clean our streets. I will continue to say that Red Springs has a lot of potential, and we got a lot of successful people here and we will be successful with the potential we have here in Red Springs and that is called working together. We do not always agree but we get the job done and we can go on with our differences and come together. I want to thank the Chief always coming and giving a good presentation and always on point and we do need new officers and we are going to have to look at the salary to get new officers in. Taxpayers deserve the best, want the best, and I want to know that my property is protected. Thanked everyone that gave a presentations even the Electrical Department we know what the Electrical Department

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brings to this town so we certainly have look at that and the Police Department those are two things that the town must to have so thank this board.

**Commissioner Neal Lea'Kes** – Thanked everyone for their attendance tonight and I would like to thank Kasey for doing a fantastic job for us in the Finance Department. I would like to thank the supervisors as we look as these reports a lot of ideas come to mind and I had a couple of ideas that I would like to talk the town manager about. I think that we can better serve the citizens in of the problems I have seen on the sewer line. I saw one, I notice, where they use this gadget to verify situation, so I think probably by looking ahead we can come up with a program that will serve the citizens in that area and maybe will cut down on some of the man hours that we have to deal with as for as the staff here in time to run the citizens a relief in profit and I thank the board for all that you do.

**Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter** – Also this is February and known as Black History Month and I have two Black History Facts that I will present tonight and then I will be calling on Red Springs for recognizing those individuals in our town. We have sitting in our mist the Honorable Mayor Edward “Chub” Henderson as I first Black Mayor in the Town of Red Springs and we honor you tonight, Sir. Rotary Valentine’s Dinner tickets for \$75.00, Red Springs Early Voting at our Community Center on February 14<sup>th</sup> -March 5<sup>th</sup>, Litter Sweep April 23 – 25<sup>th</sup>, On-Call number to posted on the marquee, look at some type of procurement as it relates to our town vehicle being serviced and system with checks and balances. Thank you all for your attendance tonight, to all our visitors, and my pastor. Happy Valentine’s Day.

**Commissioner Chris Edmonds** – Thank you all for all that you do.

**Commissioner Murray McKeithan** – Good Evening, Everyone and I would like to thank everyone for coming out. I have couple of announcements coming from the Lumber River Council of Government on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February, we will be having our Advanced Training since Covid we have been having it in Pembroke, but this year we will be going to Bladen County, Elizabethtown starting at 9:30 am to 3:00 pm all managers and clerks are invited to attend., also on May 18<sup>th</sup>, they will be sponsoring a FEMA Public Assistance Training to help all of the towns in case there is a storm to be better prepared to deal whatever tragedy that may occur held at the Lumber River Council of Government, Pembroke, NC. May 7<sup>th</sup> they are having registration day in Raleigh, NC. Thank you.

**Commissioner Ronnie Patterson** - Thanked everyone for coming out and I want to say I lost a very dear friend of mine, Chief Robert Malloy from Laurinburg Police Department. The funeral was today, and he is truly going to be missed in the Law Enforcement Community all over the whole state everybody knows Chief Malloy so please keep his family in prayer during this time. The Commissioners, we all have been talking about doing some things in the community where it some feeding or doing whatever ladies and gentlemen, I would like to see that happen when the springs starts coming. Let us give back to our community, we did a good job the last time we did it and I would like to see that we continue. Thank everyone for coming and God Bless you.

**Town Manager Jane C. O’Neal** – Good afternoon, I would like to thank everyone for attending, all of the employees and all the department heads and all the hard work that they do every day. I could not ask for a better group of people. I cannot remember the Reverend last name and it was a pleasure to meet you and your sister. It is a pleasure to know that there are individuals like you in the community and I really appreciate everything that you said. In regard to something Ms. Sumpter said, I know that the police department has negotiated in terms of their repairs, and I hope that brings down the cost and we definitely need to work on something like across the board. We have a 2-million-dollar grant for Emerging Technology Institute (ETI) a written scope of work and we have compiled all of the documents and submitted that, I am working on 1/2 a million dollar that we have received from the state in grant funds for the refurbishment of the substation., and also 1/2 million dollars for the Splash Pad Project and hope to get all of that submitted within the next two weeks. Thank you.

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**Mayor Edward Henderson** – Good evening to each of you and thank you for coming out and sharing with us. I would like to recognize Pastor a good friend of mine and music friend of mine. We appreciate the interest you take in our town and the support that you give us and the comments you had for us tonight. I know a lot of people do not give it a second thought but the people that you see sitting up here sometimes we get depressed, and we get down on ourselves, on the town, and everybody else and sometimes we feel helpless trying to do the best that we can. We do not feel like anyone supports us or even care what we are trying to do for the citizens of this town, and they also forget that all of us are citizens too. All of us live here, we pay taxes here, and it is just like anybody else that lives here, and a lot of them do not pay taxes live here. We are a part of the paying crew, so people come to us all the time with their expectations, and we try to relay those expectations. Sometimes as you can see tonight, it is a process and sometimes a difficult process, and none of us are happy when we leave these meetings, but we always know that tonight is just a drop in the bucket because it is a lot more to be done than what we were able to accomplish to night. Three of those things are fixing our Police Department, fixing our Electrical Department, Street Department, and fixing our Recreation Department, and not to mention a lot other things we have to do. I felt sorry for myself earlier this week, but I feel great now. It is a temporary thing, and we have to come out of it, but sometimes we ask ourselves, why do we go through this and why do take this abuse from other people. The answer is simple, we love Red Springs, and we want Red Springs to be the best that it can be. As a matter of fact, Commissioner Burney related to that fact in his remarks earlier, and all of us feel the same way. We see things different, we think different, we do not get along the same way, but at the end of the day we all want the same things what is best for our town, for our community, a great place to live and raise their families, and that is the ultimate goal we will keep striving to achieve. Chief, I do not care how you slice it 300 cases is still 10% of our population and I hope we do not have 10% of our population crime committers. Chief Caskey added, its all of those outsiders, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for clearing that up. It is our goal to get this right and that is one thing I want for to do, is to get it right. Happy Valentine's day to everyone and hope that your day is special. We still have more business that we need to discuss in a closed session.

**CLOSED SESSION – § G.S. 143-318-11.**

**Commissioner Ronnie Patterson made a motion to go into Closed Session to confer with Town Attorney Antoine Marshall with some legal issues and personnel matters and Commissioner Neal Lea'kes second the motion, and all voted in favor of the motion.**

**OPEN SESSION – § G.S. 143-318.10.**

**Commissioner Ronnie Patterson made a motion to come back into Open Session and Commissioner Murray McKeithan second the motion, and all voted in favor of the motion.**

Mayor Henderson asked the board to accept a proposal to provide the towns Professional Auditing Service by Thompson, Price, Scott & Adams, CPA.

**Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter made a motion to accept the contract with the proposal with the Professional Auditing Services from Thompson, Price, Scott, & Adams, CPA and Commissioner Chris Edmonds seconded the motion, and all voted in favor of the motion.**

Commissioner Burney said that he would like to bring a motion to the table that we have discussed several times in the past about the Chief Fire position. At the time this position was created, it was supposed to be the Fire Chief as the Inspector of Animal Control. Since then, we have eliminated that position because it



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takes all three to fulfill the position which two of them have been eliminated. Animal Control is done now by the Robeson County Sheriff's Department and Robeson County Inspections Department, and with that being said, he has been given several attempts to get qualified it has not happened. We said if those three entities are no longer available then we will have to go back to the original Volunteer Fire Department. At this time, after given the facts with this issue in closed session, it is only right that we go by what we said that this department will go back to part-time, and I would like to put that in a motion.

**Commissioner Duron Burney made a motion that we will now go back to a Full-time Fire Department to Volunteer that is my motion. (no second motion)**

**Commissioner Duron Burney made a motion that the Fire Chief position go back to a Fire Department Volunteer basis and that would eliminate a Full-time Fire Chief. (motion was amended)**

**Commissioner Duron Burney made a motion to go from Full-time Fire Chief and that this position would be eliminated so by not having a Full-time Fire Chief it would go back to a Volunteer Fire Department status and Commissioner Murray McKeithan seconded the motion. (Rescind this Motion)**

**Commissioner Duron Burney made a motion as previously stated that the Fire Chief position goes from Full-time to a Volunteer position status Effective April 1<sup>st</sup> and Commissioner Murray McKeithan seconded the motion.**

Commissioner Edmonds questioned Commissioner Burney on a statement that was made to agreed that the board would do away with the three positions if the positions were eliminated, then you have to go back to a Volunteer position because the position was created to have inspections, animal control, as well as the Fire Chief. We have eliminated two of those, so the position as full-time Fire Chief is no longer there. Commissioner Edmonds stated that you said that if we agreed, I did not agreed to that. There was discussion as to going back to that, and there was also as to some other things that could be done. Commissioner Burney stated that we could bring it up but that is my motion and I understand. Commissioner Edmonds added he was just clarifying that will be in minutes also. Commissioner Edmonds also stated that the manager said she would like to wait until the next meeting and present something to us and I agree with waiting like the manager said and put this to the minutes.

Commissioner Ronnie Patterson added we have been here before, and we know how Neil Yarborough had to fight to fire range and go to Raleigh and we are going to waste this and have to spend out more money for our lawyer to fight something that we have taken away from our citizens. We know how rescue is they do not respond unless it wrecks. I would hate for something to happen to one of my family members having a heart attack and no one response and we waiting on the county ambulance. You talking about going to news reports. Do not take away from the citizens, do not take away from the citizens.

Commissioner Murray McKeithan added what is going to keep him from going on call involuntarily he has done it before.

Commissioner Patterson what if he does not go as a volunteer, where does that put the town with nobody responding?

Commissioner Murray McKeithan responded that being the Fire Chief on a Full-time basis is not (EMS) Emergency Medical System if he can do it full-time and he is not EMS he can do it volunteer time. He has done it before, that is my thing and that is something he chose to do that.

Commissioner Ronnie Patterson – He has different titles, and I do not think that we need to just snatch this man's job, he has a family to feed just like anybody else.

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Commissioner McKeithan, I understand that, but it is not fair to the other employees that other supervisors out there running a department, supervising all these individuals, and he does not have any. The two jobs that he had is gone and the only one he has is a Full-time Fire Chief and we do not have that here. We do not have a Full-time Fire Department here in Red Springs.

Commissioner Chris Edmonds – If he did not have to go out now as a Fire Chief, he will not have to go out then so if he does not go out then we do not hold that against him.

Commissioner Murray McKeithan – when he goes out, he gets paid. He gets paid to go out. I have nothing against the Fire Chief, but it is just not fair for us to pay him that kind of money to be a part-time Fire Chief when you have other department heads having more positions and that is my only concern.

Commissioner Ronnie Patterson – Let us bring him in and let us reclassify his job and that is what I would like to see done. Let us bring him in and let us look at what we can give to the citizens to classify and justify the money that he is getting. As the manager said, if she wants to give the 7% back because the employees are leaving, what do you think that it going to do to the Fire Department? We have been here before guys; you want to go there. Go ahead and send the motion through.

Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter – I do have these points to make, I said from day one, we needed to reclassify the role or give him something else to do that job was not supposed to exist. When we first started with this the Fire Chief was a part-time position for 19 years and when we made the change that we created the position, the Public Safety Officer Division, it would go up under Animal Control for the Police Department, then we would put it under inspections to create a job for Public Safety Officer. We pulled funding from Animal Control out of the Police Department their part-time funding went to secure this job along with the Fire Chief part-time funding and we added a few more dollars along with it to make it a round \$45,000 to start his job out. So, if you take away Animal Control, we did not put that back up under the Police Department, but we found a contract with the Sheriff Department that went too, Fire Inspections not qualified that pulled away, so you only have one final job. I said in closed session, this is a board decision, if we did not want to do that create, make up a second officer job to where it going to take Streets and Sanitation all that you are already paying the money to get the work out of them, take the pressure of the Electrical for them to fund the Electrical. I did not see putting it back anywhere else, but to be completely fair somebody could file a (EEOC) Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint on us about we have this man on the job, but we left it full-time with no additional responsibilities. I believe the reason my son was alive today when he passed out and unresponsive is because of the response. If we need to go back and make some changes, then we can do that. It is not a personal thing, but it is also business. You have two people sitting here and I commend them tonight they are hurting for their money as well, but we have taken positions away without giving any additional responsibility and we were wrong in that. We should have managed it then do not give it to the Sheriff Department, make do with the Inspections or do away with it awhile back. So, we can deal with it now or later now if you come back in March 2024 and you want to have a whole other job that is the beauty of the board, we can do that, but it is not the employees' fault that we did not come to a complete decision. Commissioner Edmonds added, it sounds like to me the same thing happened with Tim's position that something was taken away. Yes, and the money was taken away and they were being paid the same. It is not personal business. At the end of the day, the manager needs to be able to do what needs to be done and we will reign things in, but it will not be popular anyway you look at it. It is a part-time volunteer position. It is still a Volunteer Fire Department but when we pulled the Volunteer Fire Department had a part-time Fire Chief and the Fire Chief made a part-time salary that why we combined the part-time salary for Fire Chief and a part-time position for Animal Control in the Police Department. Commissioner Burney added that my motion is Volunteer that is my motion.

**All in Favor of voting to eliminating the position of Public Safety Officer Position a Part-time Fire Chief and return it back to Volunteer status raise your hand: Commissioners Against – Chris**

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**Edmonds, Ronnie Patterson, and Caroline Sumpter. Commissioners For: Duron Burney, Murray McKeithan, Neal Lea'Kes, and (Tie Breaker): Mayor Edward Henderson.**

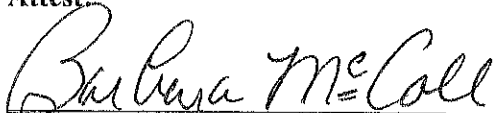
Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter added you still have a position there. Part-time Volunteer Chief we did not say anything about pay but you still have two paid Fire Fighters, one vacant, a Fire fighter that works up to X number of hours a week. Town manager will investigate all and verify. It just needs time to make the transition. There may not be one individual, it could be more firefighters. Board member asked about Mr. Richard McDuffie status, and Town manager added that she found the contract, and I have it on my desk, and he is still working for the town.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**With no further business, Commissioner Duron Burney made a motion to Adjourn the meeting and Mayor Pro Tempore Caroline Sumpter seconded the motion, and all voted in favor of the motion.**

  
Mayor, Edward Henderson

Attest:

  
Barbara McColl, Town Clerk

