

**TOWN OF GARLAND  
SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2021  
6:30 PM**

The special meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Garland was held virtually via GoToMeeting on Thursday, March 25, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

The following members of the Board of Commissioners were present:

Austin Brown (Present Virtually)  
Eddie Bronson, Jr. (Present Virtually)  
Carolyn R. Melvin (Present Virtually)  
Barbara A. Peterson (Present Virtually)  
Jo A. Strickland (Present Virtually)

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

Mayor Winifred H. Murphy was present virtually and called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. She welcomed everyone in attendance.

**QUORUM**

Mayor Winifred H. Murphy called the roll and established there was a quorum present. Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson was several minutes late arriving to the meeting.

**GARLAND SOFTBALL LEAGUE REQUEST & PLAN**

Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin reported she and Commissioner Eddie Bronson, Jr. met with members of the Garland Softball Committee to discuss their request to open the park complex this year for playing softball along with their plan to keep participants safe in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin read aloud Covid-19 Guidelines and Initial Screening Questions for Covid-19 issued by Sampson County Parks & Recreation, and the Garland Softball League 2021 Proposed Plan of Action for Softball. (See attached). She stated these would be the rules and guidelines adhered to if the board agreed to allow the league to open this year. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown suggested purchasing touchless soap dispensers and hand towel dispensers for use in the restrooms at the park complex so the restroom facilities can be available for use by participants. These items and others used to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic can be purchased from the CARES Funding. Commissioner Eddie Bronson, Jr. suggested erecting signage noting the Town of Garland is not responsible for injuries or contraction of the Covid-19 virus. Mayor Murphy stated that this should include participants and spectators alike. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve the Garland Softball Committee request to open the league for softball this year with the adoption of the Plan of Action submitted and the Covid-19 Guidelines and Initial Screening for Covid-19 submitted, seconded by Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson and carried with a vote of four to none. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland didn't cast a vote due to technical issues with her virtual connection.

**BUDGET AMENDMENT 2020-2021-05**

Town Clerk/Finance Officer Pamela Cashwell presented and read Budget Amendment 2020-2021-05 for the board's consideration. (See attached). Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve Budget Amendment 2020-2021-05 as stated, seconded by Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson and carried unanimously.

**REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL STREET PAVING**

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he would like the board to consider some additional paving of one block of West Fourth Street from Brown Avenue to Dockey Avenue at a cost of \$19,732.50. (See attached). He stated the Budget Amendment that was just approved was to add the additional allocation received from Powell Bill Funding to help cover the cost of additional paving. Mayor Pro

Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve additional paving on West Fourth Street from Brown Avenue to Dockey Avenue, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland and carried unanimously.

#### POWELL BILL ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated she has attempted to reach out to our current surveyor to make sure he plans to complete the Powell Bill Assessment this year and has been unable to reach him. Clerk Cashwell sent him an email and is awaiting a response from him. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated she has a list of suggestions from last years assessment and stated there is maintenance issues that need to be taken care of such as placing a pipe on West Front Street around the area of White Lake Avenue to make sure the road is a two-way street, making sure signs are readable and that all roads are open and passable. Mayor Murphy requested she and Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown get together after the meeting and begin working on some of the maintenance issues that need to be completed prior to this year's assessment.

#### UNPAID PROPERTY TAXES

Mayor Murphy informed board members she received a report of unpaid taxes for the Town of Garland from the tax office. She noted the report didn't look good as we are currently only at an 84% collection rate for this year's taxes, and we have other prior year unpaid taxes as well. (See attached). She indicated this will affect budget planning for this year and it is critical we get the revenue for these unpaid taxes. *Brooks Brothers* has a large outstanding tax bill and they have filed bankruptcy accounting for why the collection rate is lower at this time. Mayor Murphy stated she and Clerk Cashwell contacted several taxpayers and asked if they could pay their taxes, and several have paid since being contacted.

#### CHAPTER 160D UPDATE

Mayor Murphy and several others participated in a conference call with a consultant regarding assistance with compliance with Chapter 160D and the development of a comprehensive land use plan that will include a major overhaul of town ordinances. Mayor Murphy anticipates a quote from the consultant in a few days for the costs of these required services.

#### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN UPDATE

Mayor Murphy and Commissioner Jo A. Strickland participated in a conference call regarding funding from the American Rescue Plan. The estimated amount the town will receive was \$180,000.00. There are guidelines for the use of these funds however they can be spent on infrastructure type projects that aren't Covid-19 related. Spending plans should involve community involvement and these funds can be used up to the year 2024.

#### VACCINATION INCENTIVES

Mayor Murphy stated she received information from the School of Government on tax incentives municipalities could be eligible for if an employee or their family member contracts Covid-19 and has to be out of work for quarantine. She stated she would email everyone the information as well as information from Sampson County officials on vaccination sites and events scheduled for our area. She noted municipalities can require employees to get vaccinated and stated some employees as well as board members have already received at least one vaccination.

#### COVID SECURITY MEASURES-EMPLOYEES, STAFF, BUILDINGS

Mayor Murphy stressed the importance of following all the safety measures put in place by the executive order for our state: wearing a face covering, social distancing and good handwashing. She noted the town offices remain closed and citizens continue to pay bills over the phone or in the drop box and noted it was especially important for board members to not put staff members in danger of contracting Covid-19 by not adhering to the safety measures in place. She noted the staff are in close quarters in town hall and there is poor ventilation in the building. She suggested if they need assistance to call ahead so they can be assisted outside of the building to protect the health and safety of the employees.

### COMMITTEES & COMMUNICATION

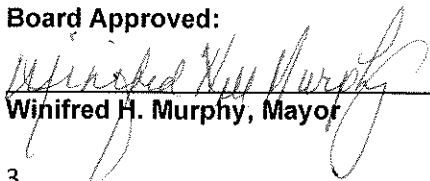
Mayor Murphy thanked everyone for their work on their committees and stated it was important moving forward with budget planning and getting planned projects completed for each committee member to communicate with each other, to answer emails and to know when meetings are scheduled. She stated citizens needed to know who to contact for concerns they may have, and she asked that if someone comes to them individually for them to refer citizens to the appropriate committee member so as not to step on their fellow board members toes. She asked each board member to discuss how they feel about their current committee assignments, whether they wanted to be moved and if they felt like they would be able to complete their committee projects before the end of this fiscal year. Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson stated she is comfortable with her current committee assignments stating she will need additional help with getting all the cemeteries and records up to date especially at the Garland Cemetery because of how large it is. She reported she recently had some phone issues and did miss some emails and calls, these issues have been corrected, and she is receiving information now. Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin stated she is satisfied where she is, but she would like better communication before incidences occur, so she has a better handle on what is occurring. Mayor Murphy noted Commissioner Melvin is on safety and parks and recreation committees. Mayor Murphy noted Commissioners Carolyn R. Melvin and Eddie Bronson Jr. are working with the softball committee and will be the go-to for all questions concerning parks and recreation. Commissioners Carolyn R. Melvin and Eddie Bronson Jr. stated they will attend meetings with the softball committee as long as everyone are wearing masks. Mayor Murphy stated Commissioners Barbara A. Peterson and Eddie Bronson Jr. are on buildings together and have projects for the old ABC Store and the former police department as well as a public works building. She asked them if they were going to be able to complete those projects in this fiscal year and encouraged them to reach out for assistance if needed. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated she was good on the safety and streets committee. Mayor Murphy asked if she would concentrate on these areas and if she is approached by someone regarding a different committee to refer them to the board members on that committee. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated she had tried this and if board members would answer their emails this problem wouldn't exist. Mayor Murphy noted there are other methods for communication than emails and to try and contact board members by phone. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated she didn't have a problem with that. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he is on public works, streets, zoning and finance. He stated he has a lot of projects going on such as street paving, Ralph's Rose Garden, replacing and inventorying equipment and supplies that were stolen and he stated he would like to begin the process of planning for a new public works building during the remaining months in this fiscal year. He stated he had a lot of different things going on and he would like better communication especially issues that Randy, Neil or Brandon is involved with. He stated he understands he works but they can communicate with him by text, calls or emails and calls after hours. He stressed the importance of keeping him in the loop of information sharing. Mayor Murphy stated everyone needed to work together while being respectful of others and noted ultimately, they are all responsible for everything that happens in town. Mayor Murphy thanked everyone for all they do and encouraged everyone to wear a mask when entering town hall and to be respectful of the clerks as they are busy and limit phone calls to the office. She also asked that the clerks not be contacted after five at home and on the weekends as they aren't on duty.

### ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:13 pm.

  
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Pamela Cashwell, Town Clerk/Finance Officer

Board Approved:

  
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Winifred H. Murphy, Mayor