

**TOWN OF GARLAND  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 17, 2021  
6:00 PM**

**The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Garland was held virtually via GoToMeeting on Tuesday, August 17, 2021, at 6:00 pm.**

**The following members of the Board of Commissioners were present:**

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

**Also, present virtually: Mayor Winifred H. Murphy, Attorney Alan Maynard, Town Clerk Pamela Cashwell, Mrs. Emily Williams of the *Sampson Independent* and Mrs. Sylvia Chestnutt of the *Sampson Weekly*. There were approximately nineteen citizens in attendance.**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**Mayor Winifred H. Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and welcomed everyone in attendance. Town Clerk, Pamela Cashwell, was present recording notes for the minutes.**

**QUORUM**

**Mayor Winifred H. Murphy called the roll and established there was a quorum present. Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson asked to be excused from this meeting.**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Mayor Winifred H. Murphy requested board members review the agenda for approval. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown requested to add under New Business, #2. Pre-Buy Heating Oil, under Administration #4. Part-time Clerk, and under Public Works, #3 Leaf & Limb Schedule. Mayor Murphy requested to delete Abandoned Buildings under Buildings. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve the agenda with said changes, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried unanimously. (See attached).**

**RECOGNITIONS**

**Mayor Winifred Murphy presented and read a proclamation recognizing and honoring the accomplishments of Garland Girl Scout Troop 1552 led by Mrs. Lydia Herring Fryar. (See attached). Mayor Murphy also presented certificates of outstanding service to five girl scouts of troop 1552. Mrs. Fryar thanked everyone for the recognitions and will pick up the individual certificates at town hall.**

**Mayor Winifred Murphy presented and read a proclamation recognizing and honoring the accomplishments of the Garland Volunteer Softball League, coaches, players,**

volunteers, sponsors and spectators. (See attached). Mayor Murphy presented certifications of participation for each team that played in the 2021 softball season. Mayor Murphy presented certificates of appreciation to the softball league members for their leadership to Mrs. Wanda Johnson, Mr. Todd Marshall, Mrs. Lori Buchanan, Mr. Sean Melvin and Mr. Randy Robinson.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Mayor Murphy read the public charge regarding public comments then opened the floor for comments from the public.

Mrs. Wanda S. Johnson of 253 W. Seventh St. Garland delivered a letter to town hall and requested it be read during the public comments section and incorporated in the minutes. Mrs. Johnson addressed the issue of false statements made publicly against her and the softball league at the last board meeting by Mayor Murphy and Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown. She stated Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown had publicly and privately apologized to her. She stated she hasn't received an apology from Mayor Murphy. She stated the goals of the softball league and hopes that money allocated in the budgets will be used for improvements to the park instead of being rolled over each year. (See attached).

Mrs. Brooke Taylor of 2498 Greensbridge Rd, Garland addressed the board noting she has supported area businesses for years and to then be called an outsider when it comes to participation in town sports is disgusting. She listed the positive benefits to her child and others by participating in sports activities and stated if the mayor and board doesn't make the necessary safety improvements at the softball complex that she doesn't ever want to hear them say they do what they do for the children. She voiced her disapproval that this meeting and others are being held virtually and stated as elected officials, if they can't face hostile situations, they need to find something else to do. She stated two commissioners haven't done anything for parks and recreations and voiced the need for them to make repairs to the softball fields, bathrooms, concession stand, walking track and soccer nets. She feels the money slated for upgrades and improvements the C.D. Cain Memorial Park would be better utilized at the Garland Softball complex.

Mrs. Wendy Taylor of 2556 Greensbridge Rd, Garland addressed the board and stated as the person who has been the most slandered by Mayor Murphy, a FOIA request is public knowledge, and as someone who speaks of transparency, you should know that. She stated in all her emails and conversations, she has never accused the mayor or her husband of embezzling money and asked if there is proof of this to please provide it to her. She questioned why this meeting couldn't be held at the fire department instead of virtually stating it indicated they don't want to face their critics. She stated 30% of the town's revenue is from sales tax and so-called outsiders help to generate this revenue for the town. She voiced her displeasure that the Parks & Recreation committee hasn't done anything for the softball complex and questioned how a safety assessment and quotes for repair of fencing and lighting

were obtained in one month since the park was closed when they have been like this for over a year, and nothing was done. She voiced her belief that race is a factor in determining how much money would be spent on each park.

Mrs. Fatema Eddington of 42 Birdy P. Lane, Garland addressed the board concerning a planning and zoning issue she has with fines being assessed to her because her mobile home hasn't been underpinned in the required six-month period. She asked the board for more time to get this accomplished due to financial issues.

Mrs. Emily Spell of 123 W. Second St., Garland addressed the board and stated she was a life-long resident of Garland, and this is where she is raising her daughters as well. She stated they participated in the softball league, and she went on to discuss the many positive physical and mental benefits that children experience while participating in organized sports. She praised the efforts of the Garland Softball Committee members who volunteer their time to run the league and she noted the limited activities available to children in our town. She stated she had read the minutes of meetings and noted league members had reported the repairs needed at the softball complex to the board back as far as 2019. She discussed the crime rate and lack of opportunities as factors in not being able to attract new residents to our town. She read the statement on the town's website and encouraged board members to adhere to what is said in the statement. She discussed the differences in the C.D. Cain Memorial Park and the softball complex and asked why there can't be three sports activities in town that meet the needs of all children.

Mr. Todd Marshall of 4887 Harrells Hwy, Garland addressed the board and thanked them for listening to the citizens in this meeting. He voiced appreciation for the commissioners that have been busy in the last month getting quotes for the repairs needed at the park that were discussed with the board in March or May of 2019. He stated the league wasn't being rude when they asked for money to be spent on park needs instead of being rolled over back into the general fund. He stated all the league was asking for was for the fields to be kept up. He stated there isn't any reason the C.D. Cain Park and the softball complex can't both be great parks for the children to enjoy. He voiced his willingness and the leagues willingness to help in anyway with this effort.

Mrs. Ashley Hummel of 684 Boundary Loop Rd, NW. Calabash addressed the board and spoke how generations of her family have played ball at the softball complex and voiced her heartfelt desire to see this tradition continue. She stated her children played in the league and she is willing to drive several hours one way for this to continue. She spoke of how she; her mother and grandmother have all played softball on those fields and how much participating in the sport helped her deal with a family crisis. She stated she would like to thank all the commissioners who are now working on repairs at the softball park.

**Rev. Andrew D. Brown Sr. of 295 E. Second St., Garland addressed the board and thanked them for allowing him to bring this matter before them. He stated in his forty-seven years of living here, he has never had this issue before. He stated the homeowner of the residence beside his home passed away and the home doesn't have running water or electricity and there are people staying there who urinate and defecate from the porch and it is unsanitary conditions for people living nearby. He asked what policies the town has in place to address these issues. Mayor Murphy stated there are several homes in the area with the same issues and the town has contacted county agencies for assistance and written letters to try and resolve the issues without success. She stated someone will contact him tomorrow to try and work with him to eradicate this issue.**

## **COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

### **ADMINISTRATION**

#### **MAYORAL UPDATE**

**Mayor Murphy thanked the Garland Fire Department and all the other mutual aid from fire departments in the county for their response to the fatal fire recently in the town that claimed the life of citizen, Mr. Eugene Beasley.**

**Mayor Murphy spoke of the reference to Field of Dreams during the public comments section and asked if anyone knew the ties to the Town of Garland from that movie. She asked to be messaged if someone knows the connection. She stated if you build it, they will come. She discussed her history with the softball complex and stated she hopes everyone interested in the softball complex can work together to resolve the safety issues so the park can be revived. She stated the fields were closed, not the softball league and all board members were interested in making the needed improvements as no one wants to see softball shut down.**

**Mayor Murphy discussed the ongoing pandemic especially the delta variant and asked that board members continue to do what they can as role models to prevent the spread of the virus. Attorney Alan Maynard noted law offices in Bladen County have been hit hard with positive cases of Covid-19 and some have had to close their offices.**

### **FINANCE**

**Credit Card Purchases – Clerk Pamela Cashwell reviewed all the credit card purchases for the month. (See attached).**

**A.P. Check Listing- Clerk Cashwell provided board members an AP Check listing report from July 1, 2021, to August 12, 2021. (See attached). No questions were received after review of the report.**

**Reports Completed- Bank Reconciliations have been completed for July 2021 for all three banking accounts, Annual Appointment Report has been completed and submitted, monthly and quarterly internal controls are up to date thanks to assistance from Mayor Pro Tem Brown and Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson. Five of the eight outstanding minutes have been completed and the remaining three sets of closed session minutes are to be completed by Mayor Murphy.**

## **BUILDINGS/CEMETERY**

**Cemetery Updates-** Work continues with getting cemetery records updated for both cemeteries.

**Damaged Sign at Garland Community Cemetery-** Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown reported an accident that occurred at the Garland Community Cemetery that damaged the granite stone with the name of the cemetery on it. Quotes for repairs were sent to the driver's insurance and the town has received a check to cover the replacement costs. Several other signs will need to be replaced once quotes have been obtained and submitted to the insurance company. Mayor Murphy thanked Commissioner Eddie Bronson, Jr. for responding to the early morning call regarding the accident at the cemetery.

### **Building Updates**

**Repair/Replace urinal in bathroom at town hall-** Commissioner Barbara A. Peterson is working on getting quotes for replacement of the damaged urinal.

**Mold & Air Quality Testing at town hall-** Mayor Murphy stated Commissioner Jo A. Strickland had requested this item be placed on the agenda. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated they have all received the safety assessment from the league concerning mold issues at town hall and she feels additional testing needs to be conducted to determine the extent of the problem and how to remove it. She stated she doesn't feel any repairs need to be completed at town hall until questions about the mold problems are addressed. She stated the building committee needs to take the lead on addressing the mold problems. Mayor Murphy asked Commissioner Eddie Bronson, Jr. if he would follow up with Clerk Cashwell as she has the name and contact for a vendor we have used previously for testing. He agreed to follow-up on this issue.

**Town Hall Safety Assessment-** Mayor Murphy and all Commissioners have received the safety assessment of town hall completed by a risk management consultant for the North Carolina League of Municipalities. (See attached).

## **PARKS/RECREATION**

**Updates-** Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin provided a historical review of repairs completed at the ballpark dating back to 2016. She and Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown provided the following quotes verbally. *Seeger's Fencing Company*: large field, replace 959 ft of fencing- removal of old fencing-\$5,939.00. Install new fencing \$19,849.00. Small field fencing repairs \$4,426.30. Install 560 ft of fencing behind concession stand for t-ball field \$9,554.00. They could begin work in early December or January. Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin is awaiting a quote from another *Seeger's Fencing Company* from Burlington. For pole and lighting replacement: Tommy Lawrence provided a quote to replace six poles and lighting on the large field for \$152,500.00 using steel poles. If wood poles are used, the quote can be decreased by \$25,000.00. Commissioner Melvin received a quote from *Kimco* to remove one pole and replace one pole using the current lighting we have at a cost of \$7,622.81. To remove one pole and replace one pole and lighting, the cost would be \$16,326.08 per pole. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland asked Commissioner Melvin if she had requested a quote from *Fortress Fencing* and Commissioner Melvin replied she is waiting on the

current quotes she has requested before she contacts other vendors. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland also suggested contacting a vendor from Coats, N.C. since they would be closer geographically. Clerk Cashwell requested all board members who have received quotes to provide a written copy to be incorporated within the minutes. Commissioner Eddie Bronson, Jr. listed four vendors he had contacted regarding replacing the poles and lighting at the park and none of them were able to complete the job. Mayor Murphy thanked Commissioner Eddie Bronson, Jr. stating she knew he had been working on this all year.

**Safety Assessment-** Mayor Murphy asked Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin to read the safety assessment completed for the ballpark complex. She replied she couldn't print a copy from her computer, so Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown was asked to read the report. Mayor Pro Tem Brown read the detailed safety risk assessment conducted by a risk management consultant of the NCLM. (See attached). Six safety hazards or concerns were identified, findings and recommendations to decrease the safety hazards for each concern were discussed in detail in the report. Copies of the report were provided to all board members. Mayor Murphy made a recommendation to continue requesting quotes and for all members of the board working on this to work together collaboratively with the softball league to get these safety concerns addressed. She suggested they all meet as a group as it is September and if they want to play ball in the spring, they need to get going with this project. Mr. Todd Marshall suggested board members decide on a meeting time and he will contact members of the league. He requested to know how tall the poles are as he may be able to secure some and get some donated. The poles were listed as 70 ft tall. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland provided the name of an individual to contact for a quote to replace the poles and lighting at the complex that she feels would be a less expensive alternative. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he had spoken with the owner of *Performance Ford* in Clinton, and he stated they would be willing to do a fundraiser selling Boston butts that could raise between \$7,000.00 to \$8,000.00. Board members were supportive of this idea and asked Mayor Pro Tem Brown to follow up on this and report back to the board. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated the softball league asked to use the fields for practice sessions in light on no glaring safety concerns. She asked how this could be addressed. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated that would be up to the board to decide and he didn't read in the safety assessment report that the park needed to remain closed. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to allow the softball league to use the fields for practices, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown and Commissioner Jo A. Strickland voted yes to the motion. Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin stated she still has safety concerns, but she is going to vote yes but to remember safety first always. Commissioner Eddie Bronson, Jr. stated the safety concerns haven't been corrected at the park and if the league was allowed to use the fields, a waiver needed to first be signed by everyone that the town will not be responsible for any injuries that occur. The motion carried with a three to one vote. Mayor Murphy voiced her concern that the safety issues are still present. Mayor Murphy asked, why we close the park for safety issues and now the park will be re-opened again with the same safety concerns. She asked if lights would be used,

bathrooms and the concession stand. She stated there are a lot of questions that need to be answered. She stated the volunteer waiver forms were never turned in for this past season as requested. She stated the clerk noted in the workers compensation report that waiver forms would be signed. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated he thought the Parks and Recreation Committee was responsible for getting the waiver forms signed and turned in to town hall. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated she feels it is the town's responsibility to provide the league with the waiver forms the town wants to have signed. Mayor Murphy stated they had the forms as they have been signed and returned in the past seasons.

### **STREETS**

**Street name sign replacement-** Mayor Pro Tem Brown discussed he had identified approximately eighty street name signs in town that you can't read or are missing. He stated he plans to get a quote for replacement of the signs and will have it for next month's board meeting.

**Ditch Cleaning/Storm Preparation-** Mayor Pro Tem Brown reported the recent ditch cleaning that was completed will help to decrease the likelihood of flooding as we prepare for storm season. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland thanked Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown for getting the storm drains cleaned out and the ditch cleaned at the intersection of W. Third Street and N. Church Avenue. She stated it has made a tremendous difference in the amount of water flowing down the street in front of her home. Mayor Pro Tem Brown stated we continue to get a lot of calls about N. Church Avenue where large trucks have messed up the road exiting the *Handee Hugo's*. He noted he has been in conversations with the N.C. DOT, and they plan to fix this area soon as well as the sink hole in front of *Rock Ministries* on W. Second Street. Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin asked Mayor Pro Tem Brown to keep a watch on the ditch areas behind her home to prevent flooding like they have experienced in the past.

### **PUBLIC WORKS - WATER/SEWER/GARBAGE**

**Purchase Requests-** Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown presented a quote for five check valves needed for public works at a cost of \$468.39. (See attached). Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve the quote, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland and carried unanimously.

Mayor Murphy announced she had an emergency and requested Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown finish the meeting for her. She left the meeting at 7:45 pm.

Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown presented a second invoice of supplies needed to repair a water line at 500 W. Third Street in the amount of \$456.79. (See attached). Commissioner Jo A. Strickland made a motion to approve the invoice as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried unanimously.

**Storm Preparation for W/S-** Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated the staff are making sure all equipment is up to date and they are running the back-up generator at the well and lift stations to make sure they are prepared for any upcoming storms.

**Leaf & Limb Schedule-** Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown asked if board members wanted to go ahead and schedule a leaf and limb pickup. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland recommended doing the next leaf and limb pickup during the fall clean-up that is typically scheduled in September each year. This will be further discussed at the next board meeting. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland discussed an alternative for fall clean-up whereby the town could investigate the costs of having a large dumpster placed in town for residents to discard their debris and household items. She stated this could save the town money and manpower. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated we could reach out to our current vendor and get specifics on how this would work as well as a cost estimate.

### **SAFETY**

Commissioner Jo A. Strickland reported now that the weather is cooling off, she plans to do a completed inventory of all the inventory turned in by the chief at the former police department and in the vault. She stated if anyone knows of or has in their possession any equipment from the former police department, to turn it in immediately as she plans to have the inventory completed before the September meeting. She stated the board would need to discuss how they plan to handle the surplus equipment on hand. Commissioner Jo. A. Strickland reported they have experienced several incidents involving a resident that has a mental illness and speeding thru town continues to be a major problem. She stated she has reached out to the NCSHP for coverage in town especially considering the upcoming Labor Day holiday.

Attorney Alan Maynard stated he would like to re-visit the motion to re-open the fields for practice sessions. He stated he felt there needs to be clear guidelines on what can and can't be done especially since the determination has been made about safety issues at the park. He stated he is worried about liability for the town if we are not crystal clear on what can happen, when it can happen, what facilities will be used. He stated it just needs to be very clear guidelines. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown stated it would be his recommendation that the Parks and Recreation committee get with the softball league committee and find out what they want to do and iron out any issues. Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin stated she would like to know the length of time they are talking about because school is soon to start. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated when they were in that meeting at the church, Todd and that group stated they were interested in some Saturday and Sunday practices with the kids for skill building. She stated there wasn't any discussion on the use of lights or the concession stand, just the fields for skill building. Commissioner Eddie Bronson, Jr. asked Attorney Alan Maynard if he would make a list of things we need before they use the fields. Attorney Maynard replied he would. Commissioner Jo A. Strickland stated we have the safety assessment that was completed, and I will make sure the softball league has a copy of the assessment before they use the fields for practices. She stated regarding the tripping hazards, she thinks they have already removed a piece of metal fencing that was deemed a safety hazard. She stated common sense would go a long way in using the fields.



**OLD BUSINESS**

**Cares Act Funding- Current Expenditure Report-** Clerk Cashwell presented the current expenditure report. (See attached). She noted there hasn't been any purchases since the last meeting. Discussion followed regarding purchasing touchless hand soap and hand towel dispensers for all park areas.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Use of Warren Street Access: Mr. Danny Rich-** Board members discussed this request and stated they would need to speak with Mr. Rich as they have concerns of a loaded log truck causing damage to the roadways.

**Pre-Buy Heating Oil Quote-** Commissioner Jo A. Strickland made a motion to approve the pre-buy offer as presented for heating fuel, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried unanimously. (See attached).

**MINUTES APPROVAL**

Regular Meeting 5/18/2021, Regular Meeting 6/15/2021, Reconvened Meeting 6/22/2021 and Regular Meeting 7/20/2021. Mayor Pro Tem Austin Brown made a motion to approve the four sets of minutes as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Jo A. Strickland and carried unanimously. (See attached).


**CALENDAR OF EVENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CONDOLENCES**

**Condolences:** The Town of Garland sends our sincerest condolences to all of those who have recently lost loved ones.

Town offices will be closed Monday, September 6<sup>th</sup> in observance of Labor Day

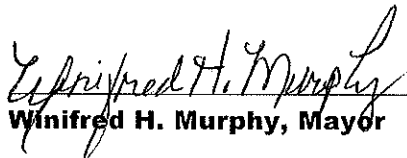
**ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Jo A. Strickland made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Carolyn R. Melvin and carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

  
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Pamela Cashwell, Town Clerk/Finance Officer

Board Approved:

  
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Winifred H. Murphy, Mayor