

Lamar Town Council Meeting

August 10, 2020

Lamar Town Council Meeting was called to order by Mayor Darnell Byrd-McPherson at 6:15 PM.

Invocation was given by Deacon Tim Dargan.

Roll call was taken by Mayor McPherson. Council Members in attendance were Mayor McPherson, Councilman Lang Howell, Councilwoman Angele White-Bradley, Councilwoman Inez B. Lee, and Councilwoman Mary Ann Mack.

Others in attendance were Chief Carl Scott, Tim Dargan, and O'Marion Dargan. Jannie Lathan participated via conference call.

A motion was made by Councilman Bradley to accept the meeting agenda, Councilwoman Mack Seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Bradley to accept the minutes from the July 13 Lamar Town Council Meeting. Councilman Howell Lee seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Mayor McPherson welcomed newly elected Councilwoman Mary Ann Mack to the Town Council; Councilwoman Mack was sworn in on August 3, 2020 by Judge Craig LaCross. She also welcomed recently hired Timothy Baker to the Department of Public Works.

Mayor McPherson and Councilman Howell stated that the town needs to hire another employee for Public Works. Councilman Howell and Councilwoman Lee will create a job description for this position.

Councilman Lang Howell's Water & Sewer Report:

- Over the past few weeks, there have been a few water leaks and a sewer leak on Railroad Avenue. These leaks have been repaired and there are currently no issues.
- All the aerators at the pond are working except one.
- The doors have been installed on the building at the pond and the painting of the doors should be complete by August 11, 2020.
- Grass at the pond needs to be sprayed at least one more time.

Mayor McPherson read four questions that were submitted by a citizen related to Lamar-Spaulding Elementary School:

Where will the sewer from Lamar-Spaulding Elementary School be disposed?

Are the sewer lines for the school crossing over private land?

Where is the sewer from the Country Club and Country Club Homeowners currently being disposed?

Will the county/state use eminent domain to bypass homeowners?

Councilman Howell stated that the sewer from the new school will run into the pond, just like the old schools. He also stated that he thought the Country Club Homeowners had their own private septic tank system; he will check into this.

Councilwoman Bradley said that the state tapped into lines that were already established by and already being used by citizens who live on Lamar Highway. The State did not, or should not, have crossed over private property.

Mayor McPherson said that we should put the questions and answers to these questions in our September newsletter.

Mayor McPherson said that recently there has been an increase in the number of complaints from the Town of Lamar citizens about their water service and bills. She cited several recent examples from citizens and compared the Town of Lamar's water bill to the Darlington County Water and Sewer Authority's water bill. Mayor McPherson said that the following processes will be reviewed: The process for reading the water meters, reporting the reading to the clerks in the Water Department, notifying customers of a possible leak or discrepancy, determining the length of time to pay water bills, assessing late fees, and disconnecting water service for lack of payment. After Councilman Howell explained how the water meters are currently read, Mayor McPherson asked Councilman Howell, Councilwoman Lee, and Mr. Dargan to review and write policies to address each process.

Councilwoman Bradley wanted to know the outcome of the citizens' complaints. In one case, the person that read the meter notified an occupant in the home that they may have a water leak. The other cases are pending.

Councilman Howell said that if there is a leak, the meter will not run if the leak is on the town's side; however, if the leak is on the customer's side, the meter will continue to run. Councilwoman Lee stated that citizens need to check to make sure that they don't have roots growing around the meter because that will cause problems. Mayor McPherson said that meters located near driveways can also be problematic because of their sensitivity.

A citizen asked the following question during the livestream, "If a citizen gets water from the town, must they pay for trash collection or can they take their trash to the waste facility (trash dump)?" Councilwoman Lee replied, "If the person lives in the city limits, they must pay for trash collection".

Chief Carl Scott's Report:

- Formally welcome clerical assistant Elijha Enoch-Smith to the Police Department.
- Discussed the new hours for the Police Department.
- Gave Neighborhood Watch

Mayor McPherson found a wallet that a citizen lost at the post office and gave it to Mr. Enoch to create an Incident Report. Michael McDonald, Public Works Supervisor, was acquainted with the person who lost the wallet and was able to promptly return it to them.

Jannie Lathan's Report on DHEC Consent Order:

- Town will withhold final and last payment until all aerators are operational (motor may have burned out on one aerator and not enough power being supplied to efficiently operate the other aerators was noted as a concern by the contractor).
- Town will withhold final payment until contractor install doors at the pond (Councilman Howell verified that the doors have been installed and the painting of the door is almost complete).
- Ms. Lathan and Mayor McPherson are working with Attorney Gene Warr to address the concern with the very costly delays that are being imposed on the Town of Lamar.
- Video of sewer line is being rescheduled.

Mayor McPherson reviewed and discussed the financial report that was submitted by Mr. Doug Poston in his absence. She pointed out that the funds that were budgeted and the funds that have been budgeted amounts and the actual amounts are not aligned. Mayor McPherson asked Councilwoman Mack to look at this as well as take the helm on the issuance of business licenses and permits. Councilwoman Bradley made a motion that the report be received as submitted. Councilman Howell seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Mayor McPherson said that a final decision needed to be made concerning letting Darlington County take over building and codes enforcement for the Town of Lamar. She said the first reading was done on January 13, 2020 during the Lamar Town Council Meeting and it was also discussed during the February Town Council Meeting. Councilwoman Lee expressed her concerns about allowing revenue to leave the town without having revenue coming in to replace it.

Councilwoman Bradley performed the second reading of the ordinances that were up for adaption:

- Darlington County Development Codes of Ordinance Chapter 8
- Appendix A-Development Standards Ordinance
- Provision of Enforcement Services
- Darlington County will collect and keep all fees for permits, plan reviews, land development reviews, etc. associated with these ordinances.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Bradley to adapt the Darlington County Code of Ordinances and to allow Darlington County to enforce the ordinances for the Town of Lamar. Councilwoman Mack seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Mayor McPherson gave an overview on several community events that have either taken place or will soon take place. She said that the town was grateful to Genesis Health Care for hosting a "Back-to -School" supplies giveaway and a mask giveaway. Upcoming events include the Harvest Hope Mobile Food Pantry that will take place at Town Hall on Saturday, August 22, 2020. We also have an ongoing voter's registration drive, and census count drive.

Councilwoman Bradley said that Diane Hicks will sponsor a mask give away on August 29, 2020 at Town Hall.

A motion was made Councilwoman Bradley to adjourn the Lamar Town Council Meeting. Councilwoman Lee seconded the motion. The Town Council Meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM.

Timothy Dargan, Administrative Assistant