

Lamar Town Council Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2021

Lamar Town Council Meeting was called to order by Mayor Darnell Byrd-McPherson at 6:20 pm.

Invocation was given by Deacon Tim Dargan.

Mayor McPherson thanked Tim Dargan for accepting his new role as Administrative Manager for the Town of Lamar.

Roll call was taken by Mayor McPherson. Council members in attendance were Mayor McPherson, Councilman Tyler Cook, and Councilwoman Inez B. Lee. Councilwoman Angele White-Bradley and Councilwoman Mary Ann Mack participated remotely via zoom.

Others in attendance were Tim Dargan, Chief Carl Scott, and Mike Lloyd. Jannie Lathan, Doug Poston, William Hancock, Kelvin Durant, Dr. Scott Allen, Victoria Coleman, and Kristine Neal participated remotely via zoom.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Bradley to accept the agenda. Councilman Cook seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Mack to accept the minutes from the February 8 Lamar Town Council Meeting. Councilwoman Bradley seconded the motion. The motion carried was carried unanimously.

Report from Jannie Lathan of Lathan Consulting:

- 1) Ms. Lathan and Tim Dargan continue to work with David White of SERCAP to pull together the grant application for upgrading the Railroad pump station. The application is due a week from today (March 15).
- 2) Ms. Lathan is still waiting on David & Brown to submit the final request for payment so that the Town may be able to make the final payment to RWF Construction and close out the work that RWF has completed for improvement with the wastewater treatment plant.
- 3) Ms. Lathan receive several RFPs from the engineering firm that is working on improvement on Zion Road. She will be forwarding the RFPs to Mayor McPherson for final review and approval on tomorrow.

Mayor McPherson voiced her concern about the outstanding invoice for Davis & Brown. She said that she would place a call with Davis & Brown on tomorrow to see what she can find out.

Mayor McPherson said that she was excited about the work that Mr. White and SERCAP has been doing for the Town at Railroad, including the visit by several members of the SERCAP Team on last week.

Report from the Department of Public Works:

Councilwoman Inez B. Lee thanked all the agencies that are helping the Town of Lamar address it issues; she deferred to Mike Lloyd and Chief Carl Scott for the discussion about water loss and the Department of Transportation.

Mike Lloyd

- The January water loss is still over one third percent or 37.353 percent gallon a day. The Town was losing an average of 36,865 gallons average per day. The next goal is to compute the dollar amount for the percentage of water loss by next Town Council Meeting.
- The numbers were very high from the February purchase of water from Darlington County Water and Sewer Authority. Mr. Lloyd discovered that one of the two elevated tanks had risen above the normal level of 22 -23

feet; both tanks should be at the same level. He turned the valve off several times a day so that should help the level return to normal in within the next three or four days.

- Mr. Lloyd pinpointed a few more water leaks that will also help with the water loss.

Councilman Cook asked about the faulty water meters and if they had been replaced.

- Mr. Lloyd replied that they have not been replaced to his knowledge. The billing register copy was not clear enough to read the information that was needed, but he has identified 35 – 50 meters that are questionable. Once we get a list compiled, we will check and verify whether the meters have stopped. Mr. Lloyd told Mayor McPherson that there are approximately 20 - 25 water meters in stock inventory.

Chief Carl Scott

- Department of Transportation came to Lamar on February 25 and 26 to clean out some of the storm drains with a rented vacuum truck. DOT located a broken pipe on Pearl Street for which they place a work order to return and fix the pipe later.
- DOT Representative Justin Jackson emailed paperwork to Chief Scott to forward to Councilwoman Lee that will give DOT easement to clean out ditches that have been prone to flooding. The citizens must sign these documents and return them to DOT prior to the ditches being cleaned.

Mayor McPherson stated that the ditches in the problem areas have been a real sore spot and that there have been a lot of complaints about that issue. She is very grateful to DOT for helping the Town.

Report from Chief Carl Scott of the Lamar Police Department:

- The Neighborhood Watch membership has grown and continue to grow every meeting. The Last meeting focused on being prepared and leaning on your neighbor. Chief Scott pointed out that this is a Neighborhood Watch Program and not a Crime Watch Program.
- Jerry Shull presented the signs for the Neighborhood Watch Program; the signs have already sold out. More signs will be ordered and can be purchased for \$20 each; please see Jerry Shull or Kelly to place an order. Chief Scott is meeting with DOT at 11:30 am tomorrow to discuss the criteria for proper placement of the signs.
- The Lamar Police Department has an opening for two fulltime Police Officers. Chief Scott encouraged the citizens to help find officers to help keep our town safe. He stated that Lamar is a nice, quiet town with a lot of history; we need people who care about our town to help keep it safe.

Councilman Cook asked when the next Neighborhood Watch Meeting will be held. He added that he attended the last meeting, and that the information was useful for everyone. He encouraged his fellow council members to attend some of the future meetings. Chief Scott answered that the next meeting would be held on the first Thursday in April (8th).

- Chief Scott said that the Police Department is grateful to have received the Palmetto Pride Grant and have begun looking at the equipment that was outlined in the grant such as digital cameras and crime scene equipment. He wants to stay within the guidelines of the grant.
- Trash Clean Up Day for the Town will be March 27 but will run through April 2. Chief Scott is asking all resident that live in town to clean from their front door to the streets. He is asking all other volunteers to meet at Town Hall at 9:00 am on Saturday, March 27 to receive supplies and instructions for which street they will be assigned to clean. They will be drinks and lunch provided at the end of the clean-up.
- Amnesty Week will be from March 15 through March 19. This is a time when you can contact the SCDMV to see if you are eligible to have your license reinstated. More information is available on the Town's website.

- On March 31, The Darlington County Sherriff Department will be giving hams to Senior Citizens aged 60 and above. You can pick up the ham from the Sherriff Department between the hours of 11:00 am – 1:00 pm, and 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm; they will also be delivering hams to seniors who do not come by the Sherriff's Department.

Mayor McPherson reiterated that citizens visit the Town's website for information about the Town's events. She thinks that the Amnesty Program is good for the citizens.

Financial Report from Doug Poston of Douglas R. Poston Jr. CPA:

- General Fund Cash Receipts (\$10,707.65) – Expenditures ((\$41,934.79) - Decrease in Cash (\$31, 227.14) [Transferred \$9,514.83 to the Utility Fund]
- Utility Fund Cash Receipts (\$34,719.29) – Expenditures (\$48,120.28) – Decrease in Cash (\$13, 400.99) [Received a Transfer of \$9,514.83 from the General Fund]
- Vast majority of the balance in the Utility Fund is allocated to designated funds and grants.
- Mr. Poston told Mayor McPherson that apart from a few items, he has uploaded all the information that he could to Mr. Hancock (The Brittingham Group, LLP) for the 2018-2019 Audit.

Audit Report from William Hancock of The Brittingham Group, LLP:

- Gave a list of some of the documents that the Town will have to provide for Fiscal Year 2018-2019 (including Police tickets, water & sewer customers, retirement quarterly report, state fees and fines, debt and lease agreements, minutes of meetings, etc.).
- Previous auditor needs to submit several more documents.
- Will begin pulling documents the end of March- early April, should have a report ready by the end of April 2021.
- Will begin working on the audit for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 in June 2021.
- Will begin working on the audit for Fiscal Year 2020-2021 between July through the end of 2021. Should be ready by Christmas of 2021. Going forward the Town of Lamar will be on the fall calendar with the Brittingham Group and the audits will be delivered by Christmas of every year.

Standard Business License – Councilwoman Angele White-Bradley

Councilwoman Bradley listed the seven steps for Business License Standardization. Must be complete by January 2022:

1. Be sure your license year runs from May 1 to April 30.
2. Review your business license data for accuracy.
3. Rebalance and adjust rates to prevent a windfall or loss.
4. Adopt the standardized class schedule provided by the Association.
5. Repeal your business license ordinance and replace it with the Association's model ordinance.
6. Set up an online portal account to accept business license payments.
7. Notify stakeholders about the changes.

Mayor McPherson asked if the portal would be handled by the state and if the amount of the license was listed.

Councilwoman Bradley stated that the State will receive the payment and notify the Town that someone wants to start a business. The amount of the license has not been listed.is not listed.

Egg Scramble Jamboree – Councilwoman Angele White-Bradley:

- The Egg Scramble Jamboree Committee has decided to postpone the 2021 Egg Scramble Jamboree until the fall: possibly the month of September.
- A link for the Egg Scramble Jamboree will be added to the Town’s website.

A New You Counseling Center – Kelvin Durant, LPC, LAC, NCC

- Kelvin Durant plans to open another branch of “A New You Counseling Center” in Lamar, SC in June 2021; he currently has an office located in Florence, SC.
- Mr. Durant has been counseling for over 10 years and has been operating his own practice for over two years.

Opening of Town Hall for Public Meeting – Councilman Tyler Cook

Councilman Tyler Cook broached the subject of re-opening Town Hall for citizens to attend in-person Town Council Meetings. He stated that he has been approached by several citizens who have concerns about accessing Town Council Meetings; either they do not use Facebook, or they do not have internet access. Councilman Cook said that some citizens just prefer to attend the meetings in person and that as a Republic, we [Town] should give the citizens access that is most convenient to them. He referenced the technical glitches that occurred in these meeting and previous meetings.

Councilman Cook mentioned that in addition to following safety protocols; the vaccine rollout and the decline of new cases in our area should be considered in deciding if we should open the council meeting to the public. He then made a motion to re-open the Town Council Meetings to the public beginning with the April meeting. Councilman Cook asked council what they thought about this proposal.

Mayor McPherson asked Mr. Dargan if he had information on any nearby municipalities that were opening their council meeting to the public. Mr. Dargan replied that of the municipalities he checked with all of them were still having virtual Town Council Meetings. He also said that the safety of our citizens should be of paramount concern.

Councilwoman Mack agreed that the Town should do all it can to keep the citizens informed and encourage their participation; however, on a personal note she has been stricken by covid and think that we should ere on the side of caution. She interjected that local citizens have lost their lives to the covid-19 virus.

Mayor McPherson spoke on the seriousness of the covid-19 virus and mentioned several staff members who contacted the virus and are still suffering the side effects. She stated that although there have been improvements in Town Hall operations, there are things that must be improved upon including the telephone system. Mayor McPherson said that we should move towards opening Town Hall as soon as possible and that the Town is taking every step to be totally transparent. No formal vote was taken by the council on opening Town Hall.

Rescinding the Mask Ordinance – Councilman Tyler Cook

Councilman Tyler Cook revisited the Town of Lamar’s Mask Ordinance. He relayed that several citizens have questioned the need to have a formal mask ordinance considering that most establishments have their own regulations regarding mask wearing; his opinion is that the ordinance should, “Go sweetly into the night”. Councilman Cook thinks that the Lamar Police Department is doing a commendable job enforcing the ordinance without being too forceful. Most citizens have been conditioned and will wear masks regardless of the ordinance; he feels that as adults, citizens are responsible enough to decide about their own health. Councilman Cook offered, “Government that governs best, governs least”.

Councilwoman Mary Ann Mack said that her opinion is that as responsible members of the community, we should follow the recommendation of health officials like the CDC and DHEC instead of layman. The mask ordinance should remain in place.

Councilwoman Angele White- Bradley feels like we are on the upside of covid, but we have not made it to the top of the mountain yet. She said that more than anything, the town should show a concerted effort for the safety of our constituents. We should continue the mask ordinance until the CDC, or another Government body of science says otherwise.

Councilwoman Inez Lee stated that the mask ordinance is not just for us, but it is to protect others as well.

Councilman Cook added that if the ordinance remained in place, he would hope that the fine for not wearing a mask would be eliminated.

Councilwoman Mack responded by saying that the fines would serve as an incentive to encourage citizens to continue to wear masks.

Councilwoman Mack made a motion that the Town of Lamar Mask ordinance be extended for 60 days and kept in its current form. Councilwoman Bradley seconded the motion. The motion carried by a vote of 4 to 1.

Upcoming Events - Tim Dargan

Mr. Dargan gave an update on the following: Covid-19 testing and Vaccinations, Harvest Hope Food Pantry, Honor for Nobel Peace Prize Winner David Beasley, Text My Gov, and Zoom.

Mayor McPherson stated that the Town will encourage citizens to apply for assistance with the Darlington County Community Action Agency to help pay their delinquent water bills. She said that the Town will start pulling the water meters of citizens who are not paying their delinquent water bills.

Donate Life Proclamation – Mayor McPherson & Kristine Neal (Sharing Hope SC)

Kristine Neal, Director of communication for Sharing Hope SC, spoke about her organization and their role in organ and tissue donations from organ donors. She shared that April is “Donate Life” month and that they were honored that Lamar proclaimed April as Donate Life month in the Town of Lamar.

Mayor McPherson officially signed the “Donate Life” Proclamation.

Councilwoman Mack made a motion that the Lamar Town Council Meeting be adjourned. Councilwoman Bradley seconded the motion. Mayor McPherson adjourned the meeting at 7:57 pm.

Executive Session.

Timothy L Dargan, Administrative Manager