

**TOWN OF MAXTON, NORTH CAROLINA
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS TOWN MEETING
July 18, 2023, 7:00 p.m.
Minutes**

The Board of Commissioners of Maxton, North Carolina met in formal session in the meeting chambers of the Town of Maxton Town Hall located at 201 McCaskill Avenue Maxton, North Carolina at 7:00 p.m.

Attendees: Mayor Paul Davis, Mayor Pro Tem Virgil Hutchinson, Commissioner Toni Bethea, Commissioner Elizabeth Gilmore, Commissioner Paul McDowell, and Commissioner Victor Womack.

Staff Present: Town Attorney Timothy Snead, Town Clerks Michael Cousar and Cynthia Encinosa, Finance Ursula Goins, Chief William Davis, Public Works Director Preston McKenzie, and Water and Wastewater Director Dennis Freeman.

Call to Order- Mayor Paul G. Davis

Invocation- Commissioner Paul McDowell

Does any member have any known conflict of interest and appearances of conflict with respect to any matter coming before the board today? If so, please identify the conflict and refrain from any participation in the particular matter involved. (No known conflicts)

Approval of Consent Agenda:

- a) Minutes from Board Meeting of June 20, 2023

Mayor Davis requested a motion to approve Consent Agenda. Mayor Pro Tem Hutchinson made the motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Gilmore. The vote was unanimous, and the motion carried.

Adoption of Proposed Agenda:

Mayor Davis requested a motion to approve Proposed Agenda. Commissioner McDowell made the motion, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Womack. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Old Business:

- a) Reschedule Date for Town Fire Works (Discussion)

Commissioner Womack advised that if the Chief was okay with this, he suggested that we do the fireworks at national night out. Womack stated that people will already be out there and it should be a good time.

Commissioner McDowell asked what the recommendation of the Recreation Committee is. Chairperson Jamie Smith recommended Labor Day or the Collard Festival. Stated the Collard Festival was unique, and a lot of people normally attended. The other discussion was doing an event with just fireworks, but the other thing to consider is the heat. This will also give the community the opportunity to enjoy it, but it would also be a little bit cooler and of course it gets darker sooner. The Collard Festival would run really right with the fireworks, something a little bit different, but again change is good. That was our recommendation or Labor Day because we don't really do anything around Labor Day, but it is a time where some of the alumni, there's a lot of homecomings, high school alumni that visit the area. From time to time, I know that the softball and baseball games have a lot of visitors and that is a busy time as well, so that's another opportunity but that's our recommendation.

There was discussion between the board about the recommendation of Labor Day and the Collard Festival from the Recreation Board. Commissioner McDowell stated that either one was fine with him. Attorney Snead asked Mayor Davis if this company would be available to do the fireworks at this time. Commissioner McDowell stated that we are choosing a date to take back to the company. Mayor Davis stated that he was not sure at this time. Commissioner McDowell stated that this was the same company we've always used and that they are a national company. Attorney Snead asked if they were available anytime we need. Chairperson Jamie Smith stated that they were asked by Angela (Town manager) to give dates and that she would go back to the company with the dates. Commissioner Womack stated that the Town Manager stated that they are flexible.

Mayor Paul Davis asked for a motion to approve the Collard Festival for the rescheduled fireworks subject to approval by the company. Commissioner Womack made the motion and Commissioner McDowell seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.

New Business:

a) Learning Academy Fire Panel Replacement

Mayor Davis discussed the replacement of the fire panel in the Learning Academy. The costs will be \$7044.04 with Johnson Controls. Mayor Davis requested a motion to approve the contract. Commissioner McDowell made the motion and Commissioner Womack seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.

b) Resolution for Conveyance to the County of Scotland, North Carolina

Mayor Davis called on Seth Hatchett of the Airport to explain. Mr. Hatchett thanked the Mayor and Town Council for allowing him to speak. Two (2) years ago they were approached by the Scotland County Board of Commissioners to swap some property right outside the Laurinburg/Maxton Airport. Seth stated that they owned a piece of property that's about 1.57 acres. The county was offering to swap 3.22 acres of land and we liked that proposal. We like

that proposal, that's what we would like to do. The purpose of the swap would be to join properties so that they can create a truck driving facility for Richmond Community College. Currently the truck driving school is located at the old Abbott laboratories plant they would move from the old Abbott laboratory to the Industrial Park. This has been approved by the Southeastern Regional Airport, it's gone before the Scotland County board of Commissioners and of course our next step is to go to the Town of Maxton and the City of Laurinburg as co-owners of the airport.

Mayor Davis stated that there's been a lot of time at work, Seth agreed, stating that they are excited about it and been in a really good partnership with Richmond Community College. It's been a very successful program, they've already expanded three times out there so they're really getting antsy about getting a permanent location where they can start building some stuff and the Industrial Park. Mayor Davis asked how many students they have. Seth stated that last year he believes that they graduated 60 in the past calendar year. Of course they were doing a CDL course class A and then this year they extended a Class B course as well. Which he thinks is box trucks and line trucks. So it's expanding and it's had a really good turn out a lot of success out there.

Mayor Davis asked if there were any questions. None

Mayor Davis asked for a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Womack made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Hutchinson seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.

c) Pastor Robert Chavis Tent Revival Beachum Park

Pastor Chavis thanked the board to allow him the opportunity to speak concerning the tent revival. Pastor Chavis corrected his name it is not Robert, but Brent Chavis. He is the pastor at Flames of Fire ministry in Pembroke, North Carolina. Pastor Chavis states that they had been doing tent revivals for a long time. They started doing tent revivals back in 2016. They are seeking to use the property there at Beacham Park. Pastor Chavis states that he puts his speaker on the back of his truck sometimes and just rides around to spread the gospel. One day he was doing that and came through town and ended up at Beacham Park. Pastor Chavis stated that he had never really been back there and it just felt like a good place to have a tent revival. Felt the Lord and spirit deal with us about using that property and we've actually been preaching here at the Lumbee Bank sometimes on Sundays as well. We're here to seek your approval for being able to set up this tent revival.

Mayor Davis stated that it's his understanding that Pastor Chavis has met with the Town Manager. He asked Pastor Chavis has he provided the office with the information and insurance and all the things that would be necessary to move forward. Pastor Chavis stated that the Town Manager didn't ask for insurance, we can do insurance, there is a company in Pembroke Dial's Insurance and they have short term insurance for events like this if that's something that is needed and required we can most definitely have that.

Mayor Davis stated that he has had a conversation with the Council about this matter too and that this is something unusual. We certainly don't want to interfere with something dealing with God, but there are certain things of concern that the Town would have about doing something like this. Mayor Davis asked Attorney Tim Snead to speak with the Council concerning this matter.

Attorney Snead shared with the board a few quick thoughts that he's had about the park. The first thing he points out to Pastor Brent is the first date is August 12th thru the 25th and stated that is a lengthy event that he has planned. Pastor Brent agreed and stated that it is a lot of work putting the tent up, it is a 50x100 tent, a 5,000 square foot tent. Chavis stated to set it up on a Saturday, preach six days, and take it down because it's a lot of work that goes into it. Chavis stated that they normally do a week and half to two weeks, that's the reason we are proposing this.

Attorney Snead asked, "Are you are anticipating a large crowd?" I understand that it might see as many as 300 people. Attorney Snead stated that he was not speaking against him, he is just speaking on some of his thoughts on behalf of the Town. Snead "I don't know enough about Beacham Park, I don't spend enough time there". "I don't know if this would interfere with the use that our citizens would have the park during that almost two week period". "I'm not familiar with the layout or how you would set it up, but I think that's something that the Board would need to consider, does that interfere with our citizen's everyday use out there or are we as a citizenry be out of a park for two weeks? That would be one thought, you mentioned the insurance and I think, I would encourage the Board that we would absolutely want him to have a policy of insurance in place. Certainly you can do the event coverage that you referred to. I would encourage the Town to be named as an insurer. Unfortunately in today's society, if there is an event and there is an accident I would almost go on record to say that the Town would definitely get sued or we can count on a claim being made against the Town and we certainly, whether we are responsible or not we would have that coverage there. That would be a thought, the other thing is I don't know since my tenure as attorney here, I don't recall that we've ever had an event like this or a situation where we had to consider what we're talking about here. So I'm not in any way saying no or yes to it. I think we do need to be aware that whatever we do, whatever precedence we set forth, whatever policies we come up with that this is what we will follow through with if another organization were to come. Certainly as a Town we cannot probably most folks in here are Christians I am, but we cannot favor one religion over another group that might be here. It's going to be difficult from a legal standpoint to allow one group and deny another. So those are some of the things that I would just have the Board think about today. Whatever decision you make again, I'm not here to speak for or against they're serving a lot of other practical type matters as far as a security or as far as that crowd of folks. I would guess there needs to be restroom facilities and some of those things you may be able to address some of those. There are a lot of practicalities that the board may want to consider with whatever you do. If anybody has any questions, I'll happily address them, but the faster you will be able to address them.

Pastor Chavis asked were there any questions that they have, they have been doing this for a long time.

Mayor Davis asked Pastor Chavis if there was anything else that he would like to add.

Commissioner Womack asked about the liabilities and if they were going to have portable bathrooms out there. Pastor Chavis stated yes we always use Rachel's Company for our port a potties.

Pastor Chavis asked if anyone else had any other questions.

Commissioner McDowell asked that some of the questions that were brought be answered.

Pastor Chavis asked what part is the insurance part. Security? He stated that they put this up in Lumberton and he's been in Pembroke and he's never had an issue as far as with security always had a good relationship. Chavis stated that he works with the officers well in the city of Lumberton and Pembroke as well. Basically they offered to help out sometimes they would bring us out tower lights if we asked for it. They would ride through occasionally, but from 2016 until now we have never had an issue. I understand the liability set up, I've left chairs under my tent and tables in both of these locations and nothing has ever happened and we depend on the Lord. I heard you all, but we depend on the Lord for these things. I understand that its government and liability, but up to this point we have never had an issue.

Attorney Snead asked if he secured insurance in the past like we've talked about and Pastor Chavis answered yes.

Sandra McCallum asked Pastor Chavis with that park a lot of people use the track during the morning and would that interfere with your event people walking around the track. Pastor Chavis stated that it would not interfere. He stated that he understands that we have the track grass area and the football area. He stated that they could set up on either one of those areas. Chavis stated that they could set up where the track is at and use the light pole that's there. If that was appropriate with the city, then it would cut down with them setting up generators. If not they could set up in the other place and the track would be free from them and they would be on the other side and they would run the generators for the power.

Sandra McCallum asked about the noise because there is an apartment complex right across the street from the park and people work first and second shift. Have you ever had any complaints about the noise?

Pastor Chavis said not necessarily "I'm not saying that they won't complain, but it's no different than people riding down the road blasting music from their vehicles or the Town having an event.

Sandra McCallum asked what time frame they were talking about doing this event.

Pastor Chavis most times they start around seven (7) o'clock and go until about eleven (11) pm. So you are looking at least (3) hours.

Mayor Davis suggests that the board table the matter until the Manager is back on duty, so Mr. Chavis can meet with the Manager and address some of these things that we don't know about tonight.

Commissioner McDowell stated we can do that, but asked if possible that he could reduce the number of days to about five days. Commissioner McDowell stated that we have concerns, and one big concern is the length of time.

Pastor Chavis asked what would be the concern for that.

Commissioner McDowell stated that we have other events, we have people doing school give-aways that they have scheduled before school, and that it's around the time school will start back. Pastor Chavis stated that he talked to the Town Manager about that and I and she were in agreeance that there was nothing going on during that time. She wrote that down for me and she was holding anything during that two-week time for this meeting. So from my understanding there is nothing on the agenda right now according to the Town Manager that would hinder us.

Commissioner McDowell stated that he did not say anything was on the agenda. They do schedule things like a week out to give out supplies, that's what we've always done in the park.

Pastor Chavis stated, but from a legal standpoint I have been working with the Town Manager for at least a month and a half and Mr. Michael here and it's been at least a month to a month and a half that I've spoken with her to secure and reserve this time.

Commissioner Gilmore stated that her question is did he discuss with the Town Manager about the precedent or the costs of Beacham Park.

Pastor Chavis stated that the Town Manager did not tell him anything about the costs and we would be willing to pay what we need to pay.

Commissioner Gilmore stated that we do have a precedent about the use of the park. Gilmore asked Michael Cousar, the Clerk did he know anything about the costs of the usage of the park. Michael stated that this was one of the questions that the Town Manager had about what would be the cost and what we would charge them for that amount of time.

Commissioner Gilmore stated that so then she did not discuss that with him. Michael stated that this was right.

Pastor Chavis we need an answer tonight because we've been working on this for the last month and a half at least trying to get this together and of course we are a ministry that is made up of multiple churches. We are not just one church and Pastor Garrett is an associate pastor from Mt. Elam Holiness Church. All of us had to get together on this date. We were working on another date and that didn't work out, so we had to come together with that and also would like to have time for some advertising as well. This is right around the corner, so we were hoping to get an answer tonight.

Commissioner Womack stated that normally there is no charge for the church, but we would accept a love offering.

Pastor Chavis stated that they are here to spread God's word. He said they are not here to make themselves famous and they are not there trying to make a name for themselves. Pastor Chavis stated that he preaches on the street two (2) Sundays out of the month and he doesn't need a pulpit to preach out of, but he has one that he preaches out of every Sunday morning. I know for a fact that our communities, our citizens, and our towns need is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pastor Chavis states that all they want to do is spread the gospel. I know that if Maxton could have revival it will change everything.

Commissioner Womack stated that the insurance needed to be taken care of with the manager before the event.

Commissioner McDowell stated that he is still concerned about the length of time and that he is a gospel preacher and president of the Maxton Ministerial Alliance. He states that the length of time is a problem and that they have the insurance in place. McDowell states that they need to get these things taken care of. If you cut the time, I don't have a problem with it. You get insurance and have some security. McDowell stated you are in the city limits of Maxton and he is a former Police Chief of Maxton and he knows the Town of Maxton.

Mayor Davis entertained a motion. Commissioner McDowell made the motion that as long as he gets the insurance and security and cuts down the time to five days. Commissioner Hutchinson seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

PUBLIC FORUM (2 MINUTES ONLY) NOTE: Please state your full legal name, address, and phone number the board & staff will not respond to individual comments or questions during the public forum. The appropriate staff member will follow up if needed.

Anthony Raynor, 419 Croom Road, Maxton, NC, 631-320-9168. Mr. Raynor addressed the audience and stated that many of you know a man was shot and killed in the town using an ATM machine a couple of weeks ago. I'm curious to know why our council is not providing the necessary resources desperately needed by the police department to improve safety in Maxton. We have a skeleton crew of officers and not enough cars for this skeleton crew. I have personally seen the Chief of Police driving his personal vehicle while on duty to relieve the burdens here. These instances have been brought up in these meetings in the past. For instance two of our council members were supposed to meet with Chad Deese of Robeson 911 emergency services to review the dispatch call center and save our police department money and solve the dispatcher crisis. Needless to say this meeting never happened and this has been quite a few months since then. These meetings are meant to keep citizens of Maxton informed and address our concerns. Why hasn't there been any mention of the upcoming elections? Why hasn't a single inquiry I've brought to the attention of the Council in the last year been responded to by the Council? I am still waiting for the meeting with the council, please be aware that the registration to run for council ends on Friday at noon from my understanding.

Commissioner Bethea stated to Mr. Raynor to make sure that he was there to sign up.

Anthony Raynor stated to please keep James Locklear Jr and his family in prayers cause their family is going through some hard times and can use our support.

Shante Quick, 1208 S. Austin Street, Maxton, NC, 910 514-5414. Mrs. Quick said as we all know it is summer and the kids are out of school. Personally I have witnessed stray dogs that were in the backyard fighting. I called Animal Control three (3) times in 3 hours and they never showed up. These dogs were aggressive and again kids were outside playing. These dogs could have easily attacked or killed someone's kids. What is the protocol on Animal Control following up with a call? Do they get to decide who they respond to? I would just like to know that. What process is used and how we are going to prevent this from happening.

Shawn Spencer, 504 S. Florence Street, Maxton, NC, 910 920-3171. Mr. Spencer said no calls after 9 pm. please. I am retired from the military with a background in public relations, mass communication, and social media and I'm familiar with government contracts and budgeting. A few things I want to cover is Maxton is approaching a new season. Its election season, so if you know anyone who is interested in putting their name on the ballot, you have until noon this Friday. I'd do it for the right reason not for a title and not for a resume bullet, but to lead and serve your community. Communication since I've been in Maxton has been a topic of concern. Unfortunately we operate about twenty years behind anyone else or the rest of the world when it comes to communication. There's a lot of good information that flows through here and for whatever reason it just seems to stop. Like this gentleman tonight, the community college and the education that goes on there, significant information that should be active constantly. The other thing I really want to pick on is perception is reality, so any business that is done. If the perception is that it violates legality and it violates ethics then the reality of the community is just that. So any of these things that we conduct business on, we just need to make sure that they are not going in the opposite direction of our opening prayers. We really need to look at what future we want for Maxton five, ten, fifteen years, twenty years from now. Our children and grandchildren so what's our way ahead going to be, so I think my time has passed and I appreciate you not holding that against me, and I look forward to the future of Maxton.

Rita McEachin 403 S. Austin Street, Maxton, NC, 513-375-8216. Mrs. McEachin said I just wanted to know what are the qualifications that you need to have to serve on the Board of Commissioners or Mayor, anything like that? Is there a sheet or something that tells you the qualifications?

Mayor Davis closed the Public Forum.

Reports:

Recreation Report

Chairperson Jamie Smith just wanted to remind everybody that they are volunteers, do not get paid, and whatever they do is done from the heart. Ms. Smith said that what the recreation committee gets is a lot of feedback from people about things that are out of our control. One is communication and I would like to touch on this. We do try six (6) or seven (7) ways to reach

the community. They understand that everybody does not have Facebook. The committee has sent e-mails, letters, social media, and word of mouth. The committee does the very best that they can. When the money permits, the budget permits we also do banners. What I would ask is the same thing that I always say. One thing about, well Mr. Lou said it best it's not criticism its critiquing and if you can't help don't hurt so my thing is this definitely don't bash us, because we have our own families, we have our own lives, and our personal stuff. It takes a lot of time, however, also don't sit back watch us fall or sink, because as a community when we have banners and stuff out and it doesn't look right don't go around talking about it because maybe we didn't do it maybe the rain came maybe when we left it looked okay. But also what can you do I just want to challenge everybody on that. Also, you don't have to be a member of our team to just show up and help, it costs nothing to come out and help put up tents, tables whatever it is. While it's hot out there it's a lot that goes on with these events. These events can feel like there full-time jobs, and we work a lot of overtime. So again please help, with that being said we have some upcoming events. We just came from a meeting tonight. We actually did not have time to finish planning so we're going to table our calendar because there's a few events that are conflicts right now there's so many people in the community doing stuff. So, we're trying not to step on anyone, but at the same time we also want to make that we can do our event. So August 1, 2023, will be the date the calendar will be available, I will do my best to make sure we either have a digital copy or at least send an e-mail out so if you wish to have get an e-mail leave me your e-mail. Again we are working on social media. Our Facebook page was actually hacked. We found out someone was answering our vendors so we're a little nervous on that because we want to make sure that if responses are given it's genuinely us, and not someone else. The other part of that is we always leave some at the town and mail some out. So if you don't receive communication by August 1 let me know. The second part of that with these events it always comes a dollar sign. I don't care what it is, please remember some of the upcoming events will have of course our back to school, we always ask for a lot of school supplies this year we are doing a little different and the reason why we have a big community partner that will handle all of our school supplies. We are going to have an extra event after. So we need lots of water, beverages, some hydrates (Intelligible). We also need a lot of odds and ends for the children in the community. We the recreation team will have popcorn, cotton candy and slushies but it's going to be a water theme. So no heavy food again the group before us will have all of that we don't need that, but we need help with the drinks. The last part for our seniors this year we have some big events for them so if there is anyone that wishes to donate to them. Make sure you get Ms. Mary some good prizes for bingo, there senior dinner is actually going to be a dance this year, and then you also have a senior prom that's coming. So lots of great stuff coming on the forefront and be visible if you can't be there tell somebody, share get involved be supportive.

Commissioner McDowell asked what the age of the seniors is. Mary McNeill stated 55 years old and up.

Public Works Director Preston McKenzie informed the board and community that our public works is down to five employees due to finding people to work and low wages. Asked the board to find a way to raise the wages in effort to find employees and be able to keep them.

Commissioner Bethea stated “There goes one right there sitting in the middle of the floor”. Anthony Raynor, he needs a job, he already works for the town go get him and put him on public works” “I’m just telling you; you got an employee.

Police Department Report

Chief Davis stated that he would keep it simple. “1208 S. Austin, I can’t speak to you about the complaint in a public forum when it’s over I’ll speak to you about the K-9 problem. The Chief stated that PAL’s has been awarded the juvenile crime prevention council grant, it’s geared towards prevention and sanctions to achieve an alternative. Also Maxton is the only city in Robeson County that actually does juvenile community service. I wish they could be here tonight, but they are at a game. The Chief stated that right now he is working on an equipment grant with humanoid playground and Commissioner Hutchinson is helping him with this. Also, the chief wanted everyone to keep in mind that this heat surge, he does not want anybody to take this heat for granted. If anybody has need of an AC unit or help paying their bills they need to call the police department and he will point them in the right direction. Also, Chief stated he would help as much as he can. Chief announced National Night Out on August 1, 2023, from 6pm to 9pm. The Chief stated that if anybody wanted to do a last-minute volunteer just walk in the police department and let him know you want to volunteer.


Chief McDowell

Announced the Maxton Ministerial Alliance does have funds to help people. Also, reminding individuals about the road closures on 5th Street July 24, 2023, and McNair and Patterson Street on July 25, 2023, and Airport Road crossing on July 27, 2023. All crossing are scheduled to be closed for (3) days. There was discussion on the temporary railroad crossings. Mayor Davis suggested that we ask management to contact CSX to see if they could leave one of the roads open because we don’t need these roads closed at the same time.

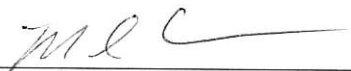
Commissioner Gilmore addressed the audience and stated that we have a public forum for the citizens during the town meeting to express their concerns. There are issues that person is standing up there for many citizens. Then we tell the individual the board and staff will not respond to individual comments or questions during the public forum. We tell the appropriate staff members will follow up if needed. Well I think we need to go a little further this is a public forum everyone here’s what is said, but yet we don’t hear what the staffer tells that individual or if that person has received a follow-up many people come back and say I have not been contacted I think that the council needs to have a follow-up at the next town meeting. Detailing how the staffer addressed the concern. We are not giving our citizens the necessary support too many people are coming back and saying that no one called me nothing has happened. This is my concern to the council that we maybe get an appropriate response to our citizens at the next town meeting. Commissioner McDowell agreed with Commissioner Gilmore however he explained the reason that we do not respond during the meeting is because then there will be a back and forth. Commissioner Womack also agreed and stated that the website needed to be updated as well. Commissioner Hutchinson stated that the technology that is being brought in Maxton is used in Atlanta, GA and other areas and will help a great deal.

ADJOURN

Mayor Davis requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner McDowell made the motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Gilmore. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.



Paul Davis, Mayor



Michael D. Cousar, MBA