



Town of Walkertown, North Carolina
FRIDAY 7:00 P.M. SEPTEMBER 18, 2007
WALKERTOWN TOWN HALL

SPECIAL CALLED TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES

Mayor Doc Davis called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Present were Mayor Davis, Wayne Hester, Ralph Landreth, Sarah Welch, and Lynn McKinnie. Also present were the Walkertown Fire Department's President of the Board of Directors Roy Southern, and election-candidate Marilyn Martin. (Wesley Hutchins arrived at about 6:55 p.m.) Absent was Brenda Mabe.

1. DISCUSS LONG-RANGE FIRE DEPARTMENT PLANS

Mr. Southern gave a brief overview of what the Walkertown Volunteer Fire Department would be facing in the forthcoming years. He said Walkertown is no longer a bedroom community – Walkertown is growing. The Town dictates how the Fire Department works – when the town brings in new business and new home developments, it increases the fire department's work load. In doing so, the Fire Department is working with limited resources and equipment that must continually be updated.

Walkertown has buildings already in town – and more to come – that make fire fighting difficult due to their height in the event of a major fire. The fire department is in the process of looking at a ladder truck, and if they go for a loan – it could be years and years down the road before getting the equipment. They recently purchased a new rescue truck, for which they have several years to pay. The fire department building is \$105,000 per year – with many years to go before getting it paid off. The only way the fire department can get a ladder truck is with the Town's help. He said they were a year behind on getting one --- in other words, if they needed it ***now*** – it would still take a couple years to actually get one. A platform 75-foot truck would cost in the neighborhood, depending on how it is equipped, would run anywhere from \$550,000 to \$750,000. Of course, a year from now, the cost would be even higher. Mr. Southern said they have put in for many grants, but, as yet, have not been successful in obtaining any monies. With the upcoming growth Walkertown is experiencing, it is straining the fire department just to keep up. If the fire department could get a ladder truck, it would encourage more industry to come to town and also change the fire rating for the town. Right now, we are Class 5, Winston-Salem is a 3, and Kernersville is a 4 - Greensboro is a 1. With a ladder truck, Walkertown could go up to a "4" – we only missed that rating by 4 points last year.

The fire department has nothing saved towards a truck at this point. It is common knowledge that last year they spent \$60,000 to purchase a truck and the business they were dealing with went into bankruptcy so that money was lost. With the amount of tax money they receive from the town, and the "stand-by" they get from the county, they are just getting by. They are trying to put a little back on truck purchase – but their pumper is soon going to need replacing. If they get the ladder truck, they can keep the pumper

as a back-up – it can go in reserve – there’s nothing wrong with it. If they don’t get the ladder truck, then they will have to replace the pumper in order to keep their rating. Suggestions were made as to how the fire department could earn money – have more fish fries – ask for donations (council could write a letter to all businesses) – do a paper drive – impact-type fee for new businesses –

Town funds that could possibly be used include the Hotel Occupancy fund – half of which is designated for economic development and half for recreation. Mr. Waggoner’s unrestricted donation of \$100,000 could also be used. With all the new businesses coming in, the tax base will increase property taxes for use.

Mayor Davis said that every fire truck like this is custom-made – he felt the fire department was looking for some type of commitment before going forward. Specs would need to be done and a lot of time is involved with drawing specs – probably about a year - in order to get the right piece of equipment for the town. After doing the specs, it will likely take another year to get the truck so we’re talking two years from start to finish. This truck will be a major factor in multiple-story buildings more so than residential.

Mr. Southern also mentioned that the fire department was looking at putting a satellite station in a few years over around Belews Creek Road. Discussion on this subject involved traffic and other concerns with multiple fire stations and personnel.

(Fire Chief Wesley Hutchins arrived at 6:55 p.m.)

Walkertown Fire Dept. is eventually going to have to hire staff for covering the department.

Mr. Hutchins explained the insurance rating – and said with the town’s growth, the insurance rate of 4 would be a drawing card for businesses. (Not so much for homeowners.) He said we have a 1987 pumper – that will soon need to be replaced. In replacing that, the Board has agreed that we should look for an elevated stream in order to reach an elevation for the larger, multi-story buildings. We have a 35-foot ground ladder; two 24-foot ground ladders; and we do have the ability to call for a ladder truck from Kernersville – but they are outside the 5-mile radius so Dept. of Insurance does not recognize them as a resource. Mutual aid is not a given – we can call on them all day but it is a shot in the dark as to when they’ll get here.

Another problem is the aging of the volunteers. Fighting fires is a “young man’s” game. Training for the fire department is something that volunteers would have to accomplish in their spare time, too, whereas with other activities such as sports, jobs, scouting, etc., no one would have to take extra time to participate.

Town homes, large shopping areas and even larger single-family dwellings along with the churches tax the abilities of the fire department.

Having a sprinkle ordinance – which the town does not currently have - would certainly help the fire department out.

Mr. Hutchins reiterated that the Town of Walkertown drives the way the Walkertown Fire Department does business.

Mayor Davis felt that the council would back the Walkertown Fire Department and come up with some of the money in some way. The fire department would need to come up with about half a million dollars – or up to \$750,000 - to purchase a fire truck.

Mayor Davis asked the members of the council if they would want Mr. Hutchins and Mr. Southern to bring some numbers and time frame so the council can discuss this and see if the council is willing to make a commitment. Mr. Hester, Ms. Welch, and Mr. Landreth all responded favorably to this suggestion. Mayor Davis said that this is what this is all about and that if we’re not willing to make a commitment, then they may have

some other proposals for the council. But he felt that we'd be willing to make some type of commitment and his idea was that we would need to find around half a million dollars in the way of a commitment.

Mr. Southern and Mr. Hutchins left the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

2. MISCELLANEOUS TOWN HALL ISSUES

The council discussed speaking with candidate(s) about the town manager position. They agreed that the position should be considered part-time – at least at first – and would not offer benefits as a part-time arrangement. Should the position go full-time, this would change. The position, currently, would be two and possibly three days a week – and the salary would be approximately \$16.35 per hour (\$34,000 / 2,080). The successful candidate would start out on projects – most likely (1) code enforcement and (2) grant searches. It would evolve into learning the town clerk's job along with all other aspects of working at town hall.

On the Civil Summons – this would need to go on the agenda at the next council meeting for informing citizens of the lawsuit.

At 8:00 p.m., the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Wayne Hester and seconded by Ralph Landreth.

Submitted by:

Lynn McKinnie
Town Clerk