



**TOWN OF AYDEN  
GOVERNING BOARD MEETING  
MINUTES**

**April 11, 2016 – 7:00 pm**  
Ayden Town Hall – Second Floor Boardroom

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

A. Call to Order

Mayor Tripp called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Present:

Mayor Tripp

Commissioners Davenport, Harris, Mewborn, Ross and Skinner

Absent:

None

Also Present:

Leonard Barefoot – Interim Town Manager

Sherri Scharf – Town Clerk

Phillip R. Dixon –Town Attorney

J. Scott Dixon – Associate Town Attorney

C. Approval of the Agenda

Mayor Tripp asked Interim Town Manager Leonard Barefoot if there were any changes in the agenda. Mr. Barefoot responded “no.”

Mayor Tripp called for a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Skinner

Second: Commissioner Davenport

Discussion: None

Approved: 5-0

The motion to approve the agenda passed.

**II. PRESENTATIONS/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

A. Public Comments

Martha Stancil, 4224 Emma Cannon Road, addressed the Board as an Ayden Library Board member stating that she wanted to update them on all the new Library programs and services. She commended Ayden’s new librarian, Rachelle Mondovich, for her leadership

role and stated that there have been many great changes in the past 6 to 8 months at the Library: partnerships with Head Start and local daycare centers; changes in the youth summer reading program; addition of "story time"; getting children acquainted with computers; and engaging senior citizens. Ms. Stancil stated that she feels that Ayden's library offers comparable services to the other Pitt County Libraries, and encouraged everyone to visit. She left marketing collateral materials for distribution.

Pitt County Commissioner Glenn Webb (and President of the NC Association of County Commissioners) gave a brief update on the meetings/visits he has held with various state and federal legislators in Raleigh and Washington DC. Examples include a meeting with Senators Burr and Tillis regarding transportation issues such as the Quad East Interstate development and governor McCrory concerning Pitt County's legislative priorities in the budget as well as the need to return local control to municipalities. He stated his support for having Pitt County contribute funding for the NC Food Commercialization Center in Ayden, adding that he believes it will be good for the entire eastern region. Mayor Tripp thanked him for his energy in supporting the counties and for his trips to Washington DC.

B. Petition from a Time for Science (ATFS)

John Bray and Brian Baker addressed the Board by stating a Time for Science Nature & Learning Center, located two miles west of the Minges Pepsi Bottling Plant, has been a major area attraction for astronomy and night sky observation for education institutions. With consideration investment, ATFS has completed a state-of-the-art planetarium and is starting construction on a telescope observatory. The organization is concerned about the deterioration of dark skies that may occur as a result of development along NC-11 in southern Pitt County (i.e. the Southwest Bypass). They spoke about the impact that "light pollution" has not only on their operations but also the wildlife that is exposed to artificial light. They stated their desire for Ayden (and other communities) to adopt "light ordinance" similar to the one developed by the International Dark Sky Association, and ended by referring the Board and audience members to: [www.darksky.org/public](http://www.darksky.org/public) policy for more information.

C. Mid-East Commission Update

Terry Payne, Ayden's representative for the Mid-East Commission, reminded the Board that Ayden pays dues for the Mid-East Commission's services. After attending a quarterly meeting, he is amazed at all the projects. The most prominent Ayden projects: (1) phase two of an application for Federal funding for the agricultural business incubator project; (2) Fire Department grant; (3) Police Department grant for surveillance cameras. The Mid-East Commission has also partnered with the Ayden Arts & Recreation Foundation to provide assistance with the District Park plans. In addition to grant writing assistance, the Mid-East Commission helps the 18-25 year old population find jobs, among other things.

**III. CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Tripp stated the only item was the Open Session Minutes of March 14, 2016.

Mayor Tripp called for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Motion: Commissioner Skinner

Second: Commissioner Davenport

Discussion: None

Approved: 5-0

The motion to approve the consent agenda passed.

**IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

None.

**V. ACTION ITEMS**

**A. Letter of Commitment for Local Funds (NC Food Commercialization Center)**

Interim Town Manager Leonard Barefoot stated that the US Economic Development Administration has approved the Town of Ayden's pre-application for the NC Food Commercialization Center to be located here in Ayden on a four acre tract off US Highway 11 in the Worthington Industrial Park. The property was made available by Pitt County contingent on the Town being successful in receiving grant funds in the amount of \$1,827,457 which is one-half of the projected cost of constructing the facility, estimated to cost \$3,654,914.

Ongoing conference calls with all stakeholders have focused on meeting the April 15th deadline for submittal of the full application, along with a letter of commitment from the Ayden Governing Board stating that the Town of Ayden will cover its portion of the construction costs.

Mr. Barefoot stated that after the conference call with Hillary Sherman from the EDA today, the meeting with the Pitt County Development Commission, and the conversation with Dr. David Green from NC State University, it was determined that not only would the application be better positioned for final approval and federal funding, but might also get funding allocated by the state if a fully formulated business plan that addressed elements such as food processing equipment were included. Dr. Green said that Governor McCrory recently appointed members to a Food Manufacturing Task Force who will be charged with studying the benefits of food business incubators like the one in Asheville and the one being proposed in Ayden. The Task Force report should be submitted to Governor McCrory by the time Ayden submits the full EDA application, and it is hoped that this timing will align with the state funding request that Senator Pate will be making on Ayden's behalf.

Mr. Barefoot agrees with these conclusions adding that waiting to submit the final full application will minimize cost and further evaluate the project worthiness. He recommended that the Governing Board authorize Mayor Tripp to submit a letter to the EDA to withdraw the application at the time and resubmit the full application with business plan and "cash in hand" from other partners who will surely invest. Hillary Sherman gave reassurances that if the application is withdrawn it will not cause the Town to lose its chance to receive federal funding. A committee will be formed to write the business plan including a determination of food processing equipment needs

Mayor Tripp stated that he was disappointed and saddened by the delay and agrees that the application should be positioned to receive funding. But he believes that work on the planning process must be completed and the full application submitted within 2 to 4 months. He stated that the EDA is not just interested in building a building, but creating jobs for the region, adding that this project will have a 20-year impact. He admitted that Ayden needs

financial support to raise the \$1.9 million but feels it is a worthy investment in education and employment and will leave the Town of Ayden with a valuable asset.

Commissioner Mewborn stated that he sees the project brings a strong proponent of growth for Ayden but he objects to the manner in which this particular project has been “moved along” with the commissioners “being kept in the dark.” He feels that if the elected officials are in the dark, then so are the citizens. He believes he should know about these things before they are published in the newspaper, and added that he has a lot of questions.

Commissioner Ross agreed with Commissioner Mewborn, asking the question: “why are we voting to withdraw the application when we never voted to submit in the first place?” She is frustrated and feels like this is the third time the commissioners have been left out of the discussion. She also asked, “When is this Board going to do something about downtown Ayden?” She, too, has a lot of questions about the EDA project such as: “Who will be employed?” and “at what cost to the citizens?”

Commissioner Mewborn wants the Board to “step back, readjust, and move forward in an inclusive way.”

Town Attorney Dixon stated that all that is needed tonight is authorization for the mayor to withdraw the EDA application.

Mayor Tripp called for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Harris

Second: Commissioner Davenport

Discussion: None

Approved: 5-0

The motion to withdraw the EDA grant application at this time and submit the full application with a business plan and funding commitments from project partners within 2 to 4 months was approved as presented.

#### B. District Park Design Update

Arts & Recreation Director Tommy Duncan gave a presentation that served as an update on Ayden’s District Park.

In the Ayden District Park Master Plan that was submitted to receive the Parks and Recreation Trust Grant (PARTF), the park was designed to be built in three phases.

Phase 1 included items such as: a multi-use paved fitness trail with benches, splash pad and 9 hole disc golf course, among other things.

Phase 2 included items such as: paving the gravel parking lots established in Phase 1, multi-purpose building, outdoor amphitheater, 9 hole disc golf course and a trail connection to Countryaire neighborhood.

Phase 3 mainly included the four baseball/softball fields in a “wagon wheel” configuration along with a two story structure to house a concessions stand, press box, and restrooms

After receiving the PARTF grant, the town representatives reviewed the site plan with the engineering firm Withers and Ravenel. The original site plan had one large athletic field and one small athletic field. After discussion with the Withers and Ravenel team, the small field would serve very little recreation use. Withers and Ravenel redesigned the park to its current design (see attached).

The new design included two large athletic fields and two beach volleyball courts. The new design also allowed for some other changes to take place. There was no need for a detention or retention pond. Storm water could be handled with Grass Swale/BMP. The Splash Pad was originally designed to be a non-recovery system, but after further review it was determined that it is more cost effective and more sustainable to use a recovery system. With this change a mechanical building was built to house the recovery unit. Since plumbing would already be in the mechanical building, it was cost effective to relocate the rest rooms from the picnic shelter to the mechanical building. In the new site plan, the multi-purpose building located adjacent to the playgrounds was eliminated due to the lack of available space.

During construction the contractor, (Tripp Brothers), pointed out that the plan had the entrance road on top of the sewage system. After reviewing the cost of redoing the sewage system, it was decided that it would be more cost effective to buy additional land and shift the park approximately 100 feet south.

In order to reduce the cost of the park, the Town Public Works Crew took on a lot of the smaller projects. This allowed the Town to complete Phase 1 and a great deal of Phase 2.

**The following items were completed in Phase 1:**

- Multi-use paved ¼ mile fitness trail
- Playground and tot lot
- Small picnic shelter
- 18 hole disc golf course w/practice baskets
- Splash pad
- Athletic fields
- Irrigation
- Landscaping
- Amenities (grills, trash cans, benches and water fountain
- Mechanical building with restrooms
- 2 beach volleyball courts
- Shuffleboard
- Bocce ball court
- Horseshoe area
- 2 paved parking lots & paved driveway
- Lighting, scoreboards and bleachers for athletic fields

Since the District Park opened, the following items have been added: a large picnic shelter and a maintenance and equipment building and concession stand, both for football and soccer.

According to the Ayden District Park Master Plan, the following items are needed to complete the park:

- outdoor amphitheater
- two paved parking lots and paved driveway
- maintenance and equipment building (baseball/softball)

- additional picnic shelters
- natural surface trails
- four baseball/softball fields in a “wagon wheel” configuration
- a two story structure to house a concession stand, press box, and restrooms
- various site improvements associated with the baseball/softball complex
- additional landscaping

Mr. Duncan ended his presentation by stating that although the Town has a concept drawing of the completed park, at some point in the future consideration should be given to hiring an engineering firm to get cost estimates and engineering design plans for completing the Park.

Commissioner Mewborn stated that for as much money that has been spent on the District Park, why are there no tennis courts or basketball courts. Mr. Duncan responded that the Town would need to buy additional land since all current “spare” land is needed for the baseball complex. Mr. Duncan added that the Recreation Building has an indoor gym and also one outdoor court. Commissioner Mewborn stated that when the building is closed, kids have no place to play basketball in the evenings.

Mayor Tripp stated that the Midnight Basketball League has utilized the gym on an ongoing basis to “keep kids off the street” and give them a place to play basketball late at night. He remembers when plans for the District Park were being developed, a survey was sent to Ayden citizens seeking their input on the amenities they wanted, and that input was also received by the Ayden Arts & Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Mewborn then expressed concern that children cannot access the District Park without putting their lives at risk, due to the lack of a sidewalk on Jolly Rd. Mr. Duncan responded that he thought that the former town manager and public works director had been speaking to someone about a Safe Routes to School grant, but he does not know the status.

#### C. Design Recommendations for Veterans’ Park Playground

Arts & Recreation Director Tommy Duncan stated that after receiving the \$275,000 grant to build an inclusive playground at Veterans’ Park, the Arts & Recreation Commission reviewed several playground designs and voted to approve the proposal submitted by Carolina Parks & Play. He noted that Carolina Parks & Play also agreed to move one of the swing sets from Veterans’ Park to the District Park.

He then introduced Dan McSweeney, from Carolina Parks & Play, who gave a brief slide show presentation on the features of the design. The Board very much liked the red, white and blue color scheme as it fits the theme of Veterans’ Park. Mr. Duncan stated that he recommends the Board approve the proposed playground proposal which will establish a co-op for the purpose of constructing the inclusive playground.

Mayor Tripp called for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Mewborn

Second: Commissioner Harris

Discussion: None

Approved: 5-0

The motion to approve the playground proposal submitted by Carolina Parks & Play and authorize Finance Director Alicia Simpson to create a cooperative to for buying materials to construct the playground was approved as presented.

D. College Internship Program for Arts & Recreation Department

Arts & Recreation Director Tommy Duncan stated that the Ayden Recreation Department programs have gone from 200 to 1,200 participants with only 3 staff members providing support. For many years he has tried to get ECU Students under internships to serve as program assistants, only to see them serve other communities.

He presented the Board with a formal agreement between the Town of Ayden Arts & Recreation Department and East Carolina University as well as an internship program manual for consideration. Mr. Duncan hopes to hire an intern to fulfill the Arts & Recreation Commission's request to operate the District Park Splash Pad on Sundays (from Memorial Day to Labor Day each year). In addition to staffing the Splash Pad/District Park on the weekends, the intern would assist with programs during the week which would provide him/her with valuable "real life" experience in the recreation field.

Mr. Duncan proposes paying \$10/hour for a 30-hour week in order to fulfill ECU's internship requirements. He hopes that support from ECU will lead to developing other college internship relationships that will benefit future program development.

Manager Barefoot stated that if approved, the Town would allow for the internship expense in the FY 2016-17 budget that is currently being developed for a budget workshop.

Mayor Tripp called for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Davenport

Second: Commissioner Ross

Discussion: None

Approved: 5-0

The motion to approve the internship agreement between the Town of Ayden and East Carolina University and the internship program manual was approved as presented.

Commissioner Skinner suggested that the District Park be open during Collard Festival weekend, and Mr. Duncan replied that the Town had done it one year and only 2 people came.

E. Allocation of Funds to Arts & Recreation Foundation of Ayden

Interim Manager Leonard Barefoot stated that at the Governing Board's February 1, 2016 meeting the Arts & Recreation Foundation of Ayden made a presentation to announce that members were ready to begin marketing efforts to solicit donors/sponsors. Linda Creech ended the presentation by asking the Governing Board to partner with the Foundation and consider financial support to help launch the marketing/fundraising drive.

At the March 14, 2016 Governing Board meeting, after a brief discussion amongst Board members, it was decided by consensus that Commissioners Harris and Skinner would act as

ex-officio Board representatives for the purpose of meeting with the Foundation to discuss its funding needs.

Commissioners Harris and Skinner met with Foundation members on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Based on discussions at that meeting, Commissioners Harris and Skinner recommend that the Governing Board approve a \$15,000 budget allocation to the Arts & Recreation Foundation of Ayden to assist it in qualifying for grants. An amount equal to \$5,000 of this appropriation will be made available immediately to the Foundation for use at its discretion. The remaining \$10,000 appropriation will be set aside to be used as matching funds for grants. Should the Foundation draw from this \$10,000 appropriation, it is with the understanding that it will be repaid with the grant funds received.

Manager Barefoot stated that it would be appropriate to consider a budget amendment and make a motion to approve the allocation.

Mayor Tripp called for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Harris

Second: Commissioner Skinner

Discussion: None

Approved: 5-0

The motion to approve a one-time \$15,000 allocation from the Town's General Fund Balance for support of the Arts & Recreation Foundation of Ayden, with an immediate disbursement of \$5,000 and \$10,000 set aside as matching funds for grants was approved as presented.

## **VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

None

## **VII. INFORMATION**

Staff reports

### Manager's Report

Interim Manager Barefoot, who previously distributed a written report to the Board, stated that Pitt County called a special meeting for Friday, April 15<sup>th</sup>. He will not attend but Police Chief Stanley will represent the Town on the issue of animal control polices. Referring to a 3-question survey that Pitt County had distributed to all municipalities, he mentioned that although the County is proposing a "level playing field" for all, Chief Stanley is concerned that the proposed service won't be as good. Chief Stanley stated that the County's animal control services won't be as timely and will not include removing dead animals, and that if we offer our citizens a lesser service, there will be a backlash against the Town. He feels Ayden should "leave it alone" and keep the service it has.

Mr. Barefoot asked if the Board had a formal stance, and members agreed by consensus that they support Chief Stanley's stance.

## VIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

All Board members thanked the citizens for coming to the meeting and welcomed new Public Works and Utilities Director James Proctor to the Town of Ayden. Commissioners Mewborn and Ross commended Finance Director Alicia Simpson on finding a financial error that even the Town's auditors did not catch.

Commissioner Skinner asked if it might be less expensive for the Town to combine loans for a cheaper interest rate and, likely, to see if we could save money on our credit card processing fees. He also asked if the Town could have additional parking, especially for handicapped people, at Veterans' Park and also suggested that the Town budget for a bathroom facility for that park. He asked who was responsible for mowing grass and weeding flower beds at the Town's parks, adding that it needed to be done more often, and wondering why the Town wasn't using community service workers for this task.

Interim Manager Barefoot responded to Commissioner Skinner by stating that he learning when meeting with James Proctor about the public works and utilities budget that the Town had not budgeted for adequate funds to maintain its parks. He acknowledged the problem and stated that it will be addressed in the FY 16-17 budget draft being prepared.

Mayor Tripp stated that when he recently campaigned for reelection, he went door to door and listened to Ayden citizens, and that he speaks to them in a respectful way. Mayor Tripp also stated that he did not "hide" the EDA/food processing project as it was featured in paid newspaper advertising when he was campaigning, adding that he had already answered questions citizens had asked about the project. Citizens are welcome to call him at home anytime. He feels the EDA grant project is "fluid" and "changes over time." He urged the Board to move forward and not dwell on the past.

## IX. CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Tripp asked Town Attorney Phil Dixon to cite the reason for entering Closed Session, to which Mr. Dixon responded: "pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3) – to consult with an attorney employed or retained by the public body in order to preserve the attorney-client privilege between the attorney and the public body, which privilege is hereby acknowledged; and NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (6) – to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; or to hear or investigate a complaint, charge, or grievance by or against an individual public officer or employee."

Mayor Tripp asked the Board for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Harris

Second: Commissioner Skinner

Discussion: None

Approved: 5:0

The motion to enter closed session at 9:05 p.m. passed.

**X. RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

Mayor Tripp asked the Board for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Skinner

Second: Commissioner Mewborn

Discussion: None

Approved: 5:0

The motion to return to open session at 10:25 p.m. passed.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Having completed the business before them, Mayor Tripp announced that without objection the Governing Board would stand adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

**CERTIFICATION**

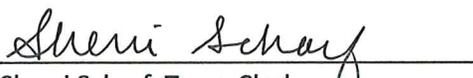
Minutes from April 11, 2016 meeting were adopted and certified this 9th day of May 2016 in Ayden, North Carolina.



AYDEN, NORTH CAROLINA

  
Stephen W. Tripp, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Sherri Scharf, Town Clerk