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May 12, 2009

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**MINUTES OF THE
SUMMERFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
SUMMERFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER
MAY 12, 2009
6:30 PM**

NOTE: The official minutes are a CD recording of the meeting. The following is a summary of the events of the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Mark Brown.

The invocation was led by Linda Southard, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Council:

Mark Brown, Mayor
Dena Barnes
Alicia Flowers
Becky Strickland
Bob Williams
John W. Wray Jr.

Staff:

Michael Brandt, Town Manager
Dana Luther, Finance Officer
Blair Carr for William Hill, Town Attorney
Valarie Halvorsen, Town Clerk
George Holub, Parks & Rec Supervisor

CONSENT AGENDA:

Brown recommended moving 10D – Discussion of Public Records Requests to 13A. Flowers asked that Approval of April 14, 2009 Closed Session minutes be removed. Strickland asked that 9A Contract for construction of Bio-Retention Cell be removed because the advertisement, notice to bidders, and specifications as noted in the contract were not included in the package for review. Brandt noted these items have not been included in the past and asked council if they would like him to do so in the future. Strickland also asked that the Proclamation In Memory of William Peterson be read aloud, and Brandt said 9B Continued discussion of Athletic Field Restroom/Concession Building move to the forthcoming Special Call meeting.

Wray made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda *as amended*, including the meeting agenda, minutes of the April 14 and April 23, 2009 meetings, Financial Report, Town Council Budget Amendment #2, NC DOT Road Additions Resolution, and Proclamation In Memory of William Peterson. The motion was seconded by Williams and carried unanimously.

Brown read the proclamation which is hereby incorporated into these minutes:

**PROCLAMATION
IN MEMORY OF MAYOR WILLIAM E PETERSON**

WHEREAS, on behalf of the Town of Summerfield, we wish to extend our sincere condolences over the passing of Mayor William E Peterson; and

WHEREAS, Mayor William E Peterson served this community in various capacities, too numerous to list, but which include Mayor (May 1996 to December 1999) and Councilman (January 2000 to December 2003); and

WHEREAS, Mayor Peterson's death leaves our community with a deep feeling of sorrow for the loss of such an honored and respected citizen; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Peterson earned the respect, admiration and high regard of all with whom he came into contact, and our community has sustained a great loss in his death;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mark E. Brown, on behalf of the Town of Summerfield and the Summerfield Town Council extend its sincerest sympathies upon the passing of Mayor Peterson.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brown announced the following events:

Sock-Hop Fund Raiser for listing Summerfield Gym on *National Register of Historic Places* Friday **May 15th**, Summerfield Gym. 6-9pm Free (Donations accepted). Families welcome. Northwest High School Big Band performance. DJ spinning 50's & 60's music, refreshments available.

Summerfield Founders' Day Festival & Parade

Saturday **May 16th**, Summerfield Elementary School 9am – 3pm
Carnival Rides, Games. Food, Live Music and Entertainment, Car Show and Parade

May 24 – Veterans Appreciation Event 2:00 pm Town Hall
May 25 – Veterans Memorial Groundbreaking 10:00 am SCP
May 27 – Town Council – Budget Presentation – 6:30 pm Community Center
June 1 – 1st Annual Homerun for Homelessness Event – 6:00 pm Newbridge Bank Park
June 6 – “Touch a Truck” Children’s Event – 10:00 am-12:00 pm SCP
June 9 – Town Council meeting – Public Hearing for 2009-2010 FY Budget 6:30 pm
June 13 – 1st Annual Children’s Fishing Event – 10:00 am – 12:00 pm SCP

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR (limited to 5 min. on non-agenda items) and opportunity for citizens to comment regarding Fiscal Year 2010 Town Budget (formal budget presentation will be at Special Town Council Meeting Wednesday May 27, 2009, Community Center 6:30 pm, committee budget requests, revenue projections, available at www.summerfieldgov.com)

Beth Kaplan, 7979 Highfill Rd, thanked council and staff for their hard work on the budget and for continued support of capital projects. She recommended giving Brandt a raise, stating he deserves it for all his hard work.

Doug Canavello, 7130 Rabbit Hollow Rd, commended the town on the much needed rail trail parking lot and noted that there would be some tough decisions to make in the next couple of months and years regarding parks and recreation but land and facilities will be our legacy and are important.

Tim Murphy 3502 Windswept Dr, asked for volunteers to work with senior math students at Northern High School, saying the commitment would be for ½ hour per day 4 days per week for a total of 16 hours. The volunteers would be there to offer motivation and support, not to teach.

Sarah McCarthy 1104 Magnolia St, thanked council for support of the proposed children’s theater program and said such programs were good for kids and families, and a wonderful opportunity.

Jeff Johnson 6106 Bascom Dr, said the bad economy affects Summerfield residents also and urged council to pay attention, that the economy is still getting worse, real tax relief is in order, and it shouldn’t be too difficult to do as the town has \$8 million in reserve. He urged council to lower property tax to zero, which he feels can be done without long term negative impact on the town. Johnson stated taxpayers have had to cut back, and the town should too.

Dwayne Crawford 1106 NC Hwy 150 W, read from two documents referencing no taxes for the Town of Summerfield and stated he was reading them for context of tonight’s discussion.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. **Founders' Day:** Brown stated Founders' Day was this Saturday from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and the Sock Hop was Friday night from 6:00 to 9:00 pm.
- B. **Finance:** Ronnie Stafford said they continue to work with other committees and staff on the budget and the next meeting is Monday, May 18.
- C. **Historical:** Linda Southard said there were 18 tables under the History Tent for Founders' Day, the picture being repaired would be picked up Wednesday evening, they created a new History brochure, the temporary curator had been hired, and the Veterans Appreciation event was Sunday May 24 at town hall. She encouraged veterans to come out and share their memories.
- D. **Parks & Rec:** Sue Beeson said the committee has been working on their budget and planning events.
- E. **Public Safety:** Brandt stated the regularly scheduled May 20 meeting was cancelled for lack of business.
- F. **SYC:** No report.
- G. **Comprehensive Plan:** Flowers stated the committee met May 4 with 19 members in attendance, who discussed policy items, common objectives and potential action items.
- H. **Athletic Advisory:** Brandt said the committee met yesterday about SAP and elements and this will be further discussed at next week's Special Call meeting.

BUSINESS FROM TOWN MANAGER:

- A. **Contract for construction of Bio-Retention Cell (Rain Garden) at Summerfield Community Park**

(Moved to Special Call meeting May 21, 2009 6:30 pm)

- B. **Continued discussion of Athletic Field Restroom/Concession Building**

(Moved to Special Call meeting May 21, 2009 6:30 pm)

- C. **Update on Jordan Lake Rules**

Brandt stated a substitute bill had been proposed that is satisfactory to local governments and had been passed by the House Environmental Committee with no opinion. The Judicial I Committee passed it yesterday and next it goes to the full House and State Senate. The coalition has held and there is support for it. If it passes it will be satisfactory, the best rules we can expect, retroactivity may not be required, and it would just apply to new development. Strickland stated what she read indicated that developers would be largely responsible and Brandt agreed stating they would install, maintain and oversee proper functioning of watershed devices as well as be involved in educational programming, which has already been started through Stormwater Smart.

- D. **Request Council to allow transfer of project coordination for Rail/Trail Parking lot purchase/construction to Guilford County Parks and Recreation staff**

Brandt stated this was originally intended to be a joint effort with the Town, Guilford County, and Greensboro but then fell solely to the town as the city and county lacked funds. Due to federal stimulus money, all are back in, and Guilford County has offered to manage the process

of purchasing and constructing the trailhead parking lot. Their staff has experience working with NCDOT and MPO and has managed numerous recreational facility construction projects. Turning the project over to the county will allow town staff to focus on other projects. Other than money already spent on leasing and engineering work we are divested from the project. Strickland asked if this would require a Memorandum of Agreement or other written documentation and Carr replied yes. Flowers asked if this meant the county would buy the property, build and maintain the parking lot and Brandt replied they would be taking it out of our hands and we would not have to do anything above what had already been done. Strickland asked if the budgeted \$75,000 would come off the budget and Brandt replied yes. Flowers asked about the cost of the parking lot and Brandt stated the \$300,000 in stimulus funds is for purchasing property, construction of the parking lot, and possibly purchasing additional property. If the county does not want to move forward on purchasing additional property, the remaining stimulus funds go "back into the pot" and would not be used for another project. Brown asked about a Memorandum of Agreement, noting that the town would have certain expectations. Carr stated there would be such an agreement setting out the town's expectations regarding the use of the property as well as costs. Strickland is in agreement with the transfer, noting that the town would be \$75,000 richer and the property would be preserved.

Flowers made a motion to approve transferring the project coordination for the Rail/Trail Parking lot purchase and construction to Guilford County. The motion was seconded by Williams and carried unanimously.

E. Resolution Opposing Senate Bill 758 Transfer of all State Secondary Roads Within Municipal Boundaries From State Maintenance to Local Government Maintenance

Brandt read the resolution, which is hereby incorporated into these minutes:

RESOLUTION OPPOSING SENATE BILL 758, TRANSFER OF ALL STATE SECONDARY ROADS WITHIN MUNICIPAL BOUNDARIES FROM STATE MAINTENANCE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT MAINTENANCE

WHEREAS, this bill, and other such proposals in Senate Bill 1001:House Bill 881, are an attempt by the North Carolina Department of Transportation to shift the financial responsibility for thousands of miles of state roads from the State of North Carolina to local governments, reversing the policy adopted by the General Assembly in the 1930's under which the State assumed control of the state highway system from local governments and North Carolina became known as the "Good Roads State"; and,

WHEREAS, the current effort to divest the State from its responsibility for large portions of the state's road system represents a shortsighted abdication of responsibility caused by the State's inability or refusal to finance and manage it effectively, and merely shifts the responsibility back to local governments which lack the capacity to maintain the system; and,

WHEREAS, local governments face their own daunting challenges in providing existing essential services with strained revenue sources without this attempted new unfunded mandate; and,

WHEREAS, the state's road system is fundamental and critical to the economic health of the State and the well being of its citizens, and it should not be sacrificed or abandoned for lack of determination by the State to continue to maintain its historical responsibility and stewardship.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the North Carolina General Assembly is respectfully and urgently requested to reject proposals such as those in Senate Bill 1001:House Bill 881, and in Senate Bill 758 which would transfer responsibility for large portions of the state's road system to local governments, and weaken or dismantle municipal Powell Bill street maintenance funding.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **TOWN OF SUMMERFIELD** recognizes and respects the challenges facing the General Assembly in its responsibility for the state's road system, and pledges its support for leadership leading to solutions for the benefit of all the citizens.

Brandt said the state is saying they can no longer afford to maintain the local roads in North Carolina, we have the second largest state maintained road system in the country, and 75 miles of roads in Summerfield fall under this category. Brandt says there has been a funding gap for years, there is less money coming

in from gasoline taxes, and the state has been looking at options for some time. While this may not get passed this year, it will be back next year. While the state would continue to maintain 220 and 150, Summerfield would become responsible for maintaining its 75 miles of secondary roads. Many municipalities do this through Powell Bill funds, but to participate you have to charge at least a 5 cent property tax and there are certain services that must be provided as well. Across the state on average Powell Bill funds only cover about 2/3 of the road maintenance costs, which are portioned out based on population and miles of road. Additionally, the Senate Bill indicated that Powell Bill funds would change from a definitive funding source to a “maybe” funding source. Strickland said the reality is that governments can withhold funds at any time for any reason, and the town should not make decisions based on fear. She further stated this would not get passed this year, so it is not an issue at this time.

Wray made a motion to approve the Resolution Opposing Senate Bill 758 Transfer of all State Secondary Roads Within Municipal Boundaries From State Maintenance to Local Government Maintenance. The motion was seconded by Strickland and carried unanimously.

F. Approve Memorandum of Agreement between Summerfield, Summerfield PTA, and Summerfield Youth Council for the joint sponsorship and revenue sharing of Founders’ Day Festival

Brandt said changes recommended by the PTA and SYC about control of minors had been made and this was the final document for approval.

Strickland made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement between Summerfield, Summerfield PTA and Summerfield Youth Council for the joint sponsorship and revenue sharing of the Founders’ Day festival. The motion was seconded by Flowers and carried unanimously.

G. Report on meetings and activities (if any)

Brandt attended an Intergovernmental Study Group meeting about the possible merger of inspections and planning services between Greensboro, High Point and Guilford County. He stated this was only in the discussion stage currently.

BUSINESS FROM COUNCIL

A. Appoint Carrie Reeves as Zoning Board alternate

Flowers stated she, Barnes, and Nancy Hess and Ken Dunham of the Zoning Board interviewed the candidate and recommend appointment. Barnes feels she will be a great addition. Flowers asked that alternates be required to attend 75% of meetings and Brandt feels that should be a requirement for all members as a matter of policy.

Flowers made a motion to appoint Carrie Reeves as a Zoning Board alternate. The motion was seconded by Barnes and carried unanimously.

Flowers made a motion to require 75% attendance on an annual basis for all Zoning Board and Board of Adjustment members and alternates. The motion was seconded by Williams and carried unanimously.

B. Reappoint Thomas Mizelle (alternate) to Board of Adjustment

Barnes made a motion to reappoint Thomas Mizelle as a Board of Adjustment alternate. The motion was seconded by Williams and carried unanimously.

C. Discuss proposal from Councilman Flowers “Property Tax Holiday”

Flowers asked Brandt to read the email he sent to her today in response to her proposal. Brandt read the majority of the memo, which is hereby incorporated into these minutes:

At the last Town Council meeting held April 23rd, Mrs. Flowers suggested that the Council consider a "Property Tax Holiday" for the fiscal year 2009-2010. As I understand it, the purpose of this "tax holiday" is to provide fiscal relief (for one year) for the property owners of Summerfield during what is considered one of the worst recessions in the last thirty years. Last week Mrs. Flowers requested that staff further investigate this concept and provide a pro/con list for Tuesday's meeting. I have requested that Bill Hill and Dana Luther be prepared for this discussion item; however, it must be stressed that regardless of the staff responses provided, this is truly an issue of public policy, not management, and is inherently a political action by Town Council. In addition, while staff has provided some of the pros and cons to such a decision this list should not be considered an all-inclusive list and there are many issues that may not be addressed.

PRO TAX HOLIDAY

- Reduction in taxes for one year may provide some relief for property owners that have lost jobs, or may have less income due to losses in the stock market or real estate. For the owner of a \$400,000 property the tax savings would be \$140 for the year or 4% of their property tax bill. (Guilford County = \$2948; SFD = \$348; Summerfield = \$140; Total tax \$3436 *note: figures rounded*)
- Indicates that the Town Council "cares" about its citizens by providing this reduction in taxes.
- For those that feel that Summerfield should not be charging a property tax under any circumstances returns the Town to the status quo of pre-2004.
- Summerfield has a large fund balance (savings) that could absorb the \$445,000 loss in revenue and have little affect, short-term, on the finances of the Town.
- Summerfield would continue to collect sales taxes (\$133,000 est.) from Guilford County for FY 2009-2010 because of the delayed reporting process for allocation of sales tax funds.

CON TAX HOLIDAY

- Assumes that Town Council will cut budget to reduce expenses by \$445,000.
- Due to the delays in reporting and payments The Town would not be eligible for revenue sharing of sales taxes for FY 2010-2011 (regardless of property tax charged).
- Revenues from other sources may be impacted by the economy reducing income from all sources- in addition to no tax revenue.
- Expenditures for Summerfield Athletic Park (SAP) are already proposed to be paid for through use of fund balance. Based on final decisions of Council regarding the SAP fund balance will be reduced significantly next fiscal year. (Staff is requesting a Special Town Council meeting to specifically address SAP construction)
- If Council drops tax to "zero" then what happens next year if the economy does not recover? What does Council do next year?
- Creates a yo-yo effect for property owners- and for Town revenue projections.
- The actual savings to an individual property owner is minimal to actual dollars saved. A property valued at \$400,000 would save \$140 a year or \$11.66 a month. In addition, local property tax is federal income tax deductible, so any savings by not having a property tax may be lost by the inability to claim it as a tax deduction by the property owner.
- Guilford County is charging for Animal Control/Animal Shelter expenses this year. Estimated cost is \$50,000 for FY 09-10.
- The development of the Comprehensive Plan has identified a number of tasks that must be undertaken to implement the Plan. The Plan and tasks will be approved by Council, but ideas that have been discussed include the development of a Town-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a Ground Water Study, re-writing the Development Ordinance, etc. All of these tasks, and others yet to be identified, will require funding later this year and in future years to implement the adopted plan.
- Jordan Lake Watershed rules are in the process of being implemented. The rules have been modified to better address concerns from local governments, but there will still be requirements for implementation that will necessitate funding.
- The State Legislature and NCDOT are proposing that funding for secondary roads be transferred to local governments. While the merits of these changes are highly debatable, if implemented the changes will require Summerfield begin the process of maintaining a local road system. This will have a significant impact on the Town's budget in future years.
- Based on the changes that have occurred regarding County services and State actions there are sure to be other actions that directly impact Summerfield's current fund balance in future years.
- Fund balance provides a cushion for the unexpected emergencies that can arise and to provide for a method of paying for capital projects without negatively impacting operating budget expenditures (and tax rates). A

large fund balance has provided an investment return equivalent to more than 3 cents of property taxes for the past four years. Significant erosion of the fund balance to pay for yearly operating expenses will impact these investment returns. This will not happen in the first year of a "tax holiday" but if kept in place for a couple of years will impact this safety net and funding source.

As stated earlier, the decision to charge a property tax is one of policy- which is rightly decided by Town Council- not staff. If Council chooses to remove or significantly reduce the property tax rate then it must also adjust its plans for future projects and goals. Staff will develop a budget according to the direction provided by Town Council.

Luther added that no property tax may cause the Town to have to dip into the 5 year CD earning 4.64%.

Flowers said this idea came about after watching people she knows losing jobs and houses being foreclosed on, as well as a much higher demand at her church's food pantry. Flowers noted that the economic downturn affects everyone. The town is fortunate in having \$8,600,000 in the bank and Flowers feels the citizens should be able to keep some of that money, that the town will operate just fine without the \$445,000 in property tax it would collect from the citizens. Strickland said she is totally in favor of it and responded to each con statement as follows:

- Does not consider cutting the budget to be a con.
- The ineligibility for revenue sharing of 2010-2011 sales tax is only \$130,000, which is a drop in the bucket compared to what is in the town's reserves, which very few towns have.
- Reduced income from other sources is an unknown and unknowns cannot be used as fear when making decisions.
- SAP will significantly reduce the fund balance next fiscal year – Strickland asked Luther what we are required to have in reserve and what we have. Brandt replied that there is an 8% requirement for large municipalities and smaller governments have larger percentage requirements. He stated the local government commission puts Summerfield in the 30% range. Strickland says fund balance reduction via the SAP is not an issue.
- As to what council will do next year if the economy does not recover, Strickland stated that is for council to decide next year.
- As to actual savings being minimal (\$11.66/month), that money could be used to pay a garbage bill; and if citizens are worried about not being able to write it off federal tax, Strickland recommends making a charitable donation instead.
- The \$50,000 estimated cost to Guilford County for animal control services is a gross estimate and not an actual cost.
- The Comprehensive Plan tasks can be implemented in stages.
- Developers will bear the costs of the Jordan Lake Watershed rules.
- Secondary road transference will not be implemented this year, so it will not affect this year's budget.
- Changes regarding county services and state actions are unknowns and fear and intimidation cannot be used when formulating a budget.
- As to fund balance erosion – this will not happen in the first year. If it happens in subsequent years that is an issue for future council members.
- As to Luther's statement about having to dip into CDs, Strickland stated we can either dip into the CDs or cut the budget.

Wray suggested an alternative to charging no taxes. He recommended charging a tax so we would receive sales tax funds, but having some sort of rebate system which would allow citizens to apply for a reimbursement on the town taxes paid. This would give people a break but would still get the town its \$123,000 of sales tax. Carr feels that this plan would not be legal. Brandt discussed a provision in state law that allows for a discount for early payment of taxes; however it is too late to do that this year, as the resolution would have to have been reviewed by the local government commission by May 1. He noted

that there is no stated cap on the percentage that can be discounted, and it is something to consider for next year.

Flowers asked Wray if he was willing to consider a zero tax rate as his suggestion is not legal per Carr. Wray feels that there are too many unknowns and obstacles for that and would not feel comfortable with no money coming in. Barnes feels it is a great idea, but she has reservations and wants to be sure it will not cause problems in the future. Williams feels there are too many things out there such as the road transfer. Flowers says the road transfer will not happen this year and probably not next year, so it should not be a concern now. She further asked why we are spending \$1.5 million on ball fields if we are so concerned about these future unknown expenses. Barnes said that going from charging no tax to charging a tax is very unpopular and council would not be doing its due diligence if it did not consider how this will affect the future and the fund balance. Flowers stated her concern is with the citizens having a few more dollars in their pockets this year and the town is in a financial position to do so. Wray feels that doing this will necessitate charging a higher tax in the future, which he is against. Brown feels the rate should be left intact as this small rate leverages our sales tax income, and there are too many unknowns on the horizon.

Strickland made a motion to approve the Property Tax Holiday. The motion was seconded by Flowers. Following a brief discussion, Brown called for a vote. Flowers and Strickland voted for approval and Barnes, Wray, and Williams voted against, so the motion *FAILED*.

E. Discussion of Public Records Requests *(Moved to after the Closed Session)*

BUSINESS FROM THE MAYOR

A. Report on meetings and activities (if any)

Brown listed numerous meetings he attended this month.

Brown read the reasons for going into Closed Session as follows:

CLOSED SESSION:

- A) 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 as provided under NCGS 143-318.11(a) (6); and**

- C) 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.**

Wray made a motion to enter into closed session at 8:32 pm. The motion was seconded by Williams and carried unanimously.

Barnes made a motion to return to open session at 9:46 pm. The motion was seconded by Williams and carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION OF PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS

Carr stated the General Statutes address this issue particularly in regards to charging fees for staff time and time for other technologies when the request is extraordinary and that perhaps council should consider a policy. She further noted that as part of their duties, staff is supposed to spend some time, perhaps 2 hours per month, responding to such requests, but when it will take more time that what is deemed ordinary, a fee may be charged for staff time or hiring an outside person. Brandt feels 8 hours per month is more appropriate or 2 hours per staff person each month. There was discussion about number of

hours per month, if the hours would be applied to each request or requests in total for the month, other issues relating to hours, and what amounted to extraordinary. Strickland recommended charging for staff time above 2 hours. Carr stated someone with an extraordinary request should be given an estimate of the time and cost, and if they wished to proceed should pay up front which is a proviso in the General Statutes. Strickland asked Carr to survey other towns about this issue and see what their policies include. Carr suggested investigating the issue further and she and Brandt will discuss it and bring back several options for council to review. It was agreed by consensus to revisit this issue at the May 21st Special Call meeting.

COMMENTS FROM THE COUNCIL:

Wray stated his desire to come up with some legal way to reimburse taxpayers for the Summerfield tax. Carr stated the initial proposal he made earlier in the evening would not be legal.

With no further business before the Town Council, a motion was made at 10:05 pm by Williams to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Wray and carried unanimously.



Mark E. Brown, Mayor



Valarie Halvorsen, Town Clerk

