December 10, 2013

7:00 P.M.

The Town of Pink Hill held its monthly board meeting on Tuesday, December 10, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in the town hall board room. Present for the meeting were Mayor Carol Sykes, Commissioners Mike Hill, Donald King and Marion Mitchell, Commissioner Elect Debra Evans Grady, Town Attorney George Jenkins, Public Works Director Timmy Kennedy, Chief Joey Thigpen, and Town Clerk Kimberly Mitchell.

Visitors present were Sue Hamilton, Kenneth Hamilton, Allen Brown, H.D. Grady, Meagan Parsons, Bill Turner, Dora Evans, Susan Myers, and County Commissioner J. Mac Daughety.

Mayor Sykes called the meeting to order. Mayor Sykes welcomed everyone to the meeting. Commissioner King then led everyone in the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Hill made a motion to approve the regular board minutes from November 12, 2013. Commissioner Mitchell seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The first item on the agenda was Administration of Oaths of Office for Re-Elected and Newly Elected Board Members by Town Clerk Kimberly Mitchell. The Town Clerk read the oaths separately asking Commissioner Elect Debra Evans Grady and Commissioner Joseph Michael Hill to solemnly swear to uphold the duties of being a Commissioner and each one accepted. Mayor Sykes congratulated and welcomed each of them.

The next item on the agenda was recognition of Commissioner Mitchell’s service by Mayor Sykes. Mayor Sykes presented Marion Mitchell Sr. with a Resolution of Appreciation for his services as a Commissioner. Mayor Sykes thanked Commissioner Mitchell for his service the past 2 years on the town board. She then read a framed Resolution dedicated to Commissioner Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell thanked the board and said he appreciated it and enjoyed working with them.

Approval of agenda and amendments if needed was next on the agenda. Commissioner Hill made a motion to approve the agenda with the amendment as presented. Commissioner King seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Mayor Sykes then asked County Commissioner J. Mac Daughety to give his update on the Pink Hill

Bypass. Mr. Daughety said the purpose of him coming was to give an update on the Hwy 11/Hwy 241 project. He stated they had a second meeting yesterday or actually their fourth meeting on the feasibility study for this project. He said they made a lot of progress and he has a copy of the map. He stated it appears when they first started this it looked like they were going to do an Eastern way but in all their meetings they have eliminated the Eastern option. The Bypass would now be on the Western side. It is in a conceptual stage right now. He stated the major change yesterday is that they have decided to do a costing study for this project that will include a Western Pink Hill Bypass and it will be two lane divided with restricted entrances. He also said they would go ahead and buy the right of way for potential interchanges in case they decide to upgrade it later. It will be connecting to a bypass with Beulaville for Hwy 24. Mr. Daughety said they were going to cost it out. In Lenoir County we are a Division 2 under John Rouse and Division 3 is Duplin County and is under Karen Futrell. He said this is the concept they felt would be the least expensive and would be one that would have the best chance of getting funded. He said they are going to come back in February with a rough draft of what the costing will be and then we will have a full blown costing study about March or April. Then we will start to have some ideas of how this is going to stack up and where it might rank from a ranking standpoint on a statewide level. Mayor Sykes asked what has been the consensus of the general population. Mr. Daughety said the general consensus was that most people wanted it on the Western side anyway. Commissioner Hill asked Mr. Daughety if there would be right-hand turn lanes at all the intersections. Mr. Daughety stated yes. Commissioner King asked Mr. Daughety if this Western bypass was still just a line drawn in the sand, nothing definite. Mr. Daughety stated it is definite it will be on the West side but where it will be is anybody’s clue. He said they will do a feasibility study first, then a costing study, then they will rank the project for funding and see how it fits in between the state, the region, and the division. The next phase will be at some point to get it funded. It may be this year, next year, or five or ten years down the road. As we go to that stage they will start to do right of ways, they will start to define the route, and as they do they will start to design the road. When they start designing it and studying it, they will try to avoid things like churches, cemeteries, and schools. This is how they will chart out the project but we are a good ways away. The Western side is toward Beulaville.

County Commissioner J. Mac Daughety then updated the board on a project at Pink Hill Elementary that they have been working on. He informed the board that when they built the school they did not put ball fields at the school. Mr. Daughety said he has been working with Bill Ellis and the Recreation Department. He said they have gotten brand new bases put down for their two ball fields at the school and they have ordered for them metal backstops for each field from the Recreation Department. Mr. Daughety said that all should be in place by Christmas with no cost to the town. He stated separate from that he had been working with DOT to bring an additional driveway and pave it but the funding was not approved. Mr. Daughety said he sat down with the Division Engineer and they came up with a solution. The two things that the school needed was a staff parking lot so that they could move parents who were off loading kids could park where the staff does now rather than tying up the drive coming in. Mr. Daughety stated he talked to the school about what properties they owned and on the east side of the drive they own quite a bit of property in the field. He said he brought the District Engineer out along with the head of the schools. He said DOT is going to come in over the next 12 months or so and cut that driveway for them for free. There will be ditches on both sides with the drive down the middle. It will be built so that fire trucks and EMS can get in. He stated if you go in the existing driveway you see where the Boy Scout project built that little bridge at the front. If you look immediately to your right you will see that they have put two flags and stakes there. DOT is going to come in and cut the two driveways there and that will be the staff parking lot. Mr. Daughety said he has talked to some friends of his that are local (farmers, loggers, and such) and once the school board approves it in January, they are going to come in and clean out the trees that are fronting between the driveway and where that parking will be. They are going to come and clean those out for free. Over at the ball field where you come over the little bridge it goes to a very woody secluded area. We are going to get permission to go in and have them voluntarily take out trees on either side so the school will have a good line of sight when those kids go over there to play. It is all going to be voluntary and is not going to cost the town or Lenoir County any money. Mayor Sykes and the town board thanked County Commissioner Daughety for his help and for coming and keeping them informed.

The next item on the agenda was Stop Signs on College Street and Old Beulaville Road. Mayor Sykes stated that there were no issues from the public at the public hearing, so she told the board that it was up to them to approve or disapprove it. Mayor Sykes asked Commissioner Hill to explain exactly what is going on to newly elected Commissioner Debra Grady. Mayor Sykes suggested that we do this with everything so that Commissioner Grady is up to speed with what is going on. Commissioner Hill stated that over by the apartments it is a straight shot on Old Beulaville Rd. He said that Alan and some other people have complained about people flying through there and that they come around the curve off Old Beulaville Rd. on to College St and don’t even slow down. There is no stop sign there and Alan has kids and there is older people in the apartments walking across, so he asked us if there is something we could do. So we discussed putting up stop signs instead of putting speed bumps. Commissioner Hill stated that they are going to put a 4-way stop sign up at Old Beulaville and Macon St. and then they are going to put a stop sign at the end of Old Beulaville where it turns into College St. to stop them from flying around. Commissioner Hill made a motion to put the stop signs up where he just stated. Commissioner King seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was paying for easements and an update on the completed voluntary annexation. Town Attorney George Jenkins stated that he needs to meet with Commissioner Hill and Public Works Director Timmy concerning the easements. Commissioner Hill made a motion to table paying for easements and an update on the completed voluntary annexation until the next meeting. Commissioner King seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was Police Updates. Chief Joey Thigpen stated since the last meeting on November 12, 2013 they have had a total of 2 incidents that was reported, 1 arrest with a total of 5 charges, 2 accidents, issued 12 citations with a total of 14 charges, and issued 10 warning citations.

Agenda Items 11 and 12 were skipped due to awaiting the arrival of Public Works Director Timmy Kennedy, who is at a fire department meeting in Duplin County.

The next item on the agenda was Appointment of Mayor Pro Tempore & Commissioners. Mayor Sykes stated she has thought about this and she has heard every negative, every positive, and everything you can imagine concerning some of the commissions which you know that is people’s choice. Mayor Sykes said first of all she wanted to give her congratulations to newly elected Commissioner Debra Grady. Mayor Sykes stated as you know we are a board. We are not a board for just one person but we are a board for the Town of Pink Hill. We are a board for the water department, police department, streets, or whatever. We are all a board for them. Mayor Sykes said she has elected tonight or is going to recommend this, but stated it is up to you all. I recommend that all three commissioners will be streets, water/sewer, police, fire, beautification and cleanup of town. She stated that every one of them will hold those commissions. She also stated that she wanted to recommend that Commissioner Donald King remain Mayor Pro Tempore. She said everybody is a commissioner and it doesn’t matter what you are commissioner of, you are just as responsible to everybody here as you are to that station. Mayor Sykes stated that was her recommendation. Commissioner Hill said he kind of agreed with Mayor Sykes because anything that we do as commissioners for one certain station like for instance water/sewer which he is over still has to come before the entire board to be approved. Commissioner Hill also said there are other towns that he goes to where the whole town board is over everything jointly and not singled out to just one department. He said if anybody has got a problem with something going on in town, we all should tell them to come to the Town Hall and bring it up in the meeting and talk about here and not talk about it one on one with people. Mayor Sykes stated she also thought it would give Debra a chance to work with everyone and teach Debra some things and teach her some things but she said it was up to the board to decide. Mayor Sykes said it doesn’t matter what your commission is, you are still commissioners and one does not have more power than the other. Mayor Sykes asked for a motion. Commissioner Hill made a motion to keep Commissioner Donald King as Mayor Pro Tempore and the other commissioners all be town commissioners not appointed to any certain section. Commissioner King seconded the motion. Commissioner King stated he agreed with the idea to a certain degree, but when it comes to an individual section of command (Fire Department, Police Department, and Water/Sewer Department), he still thinks they need a focal point for that one department. Commissioner King said he thinks they need to break it down to ultimately who is going to be the focal point for that particular branch of the Pink Hill Government. Mayor Sykes then asked Debra for her opinion on the subject. Mayor Sykes stated that is why she put it out there because she wanted to hear their opinions. Newly elected Commissioner Grady said she appreciated them for showing her and getting her into the ropes of things. She stated that she does want to listen. Commissioner Grady said she did in a way like the idea of a joint commission. She said she has not really thought about it like that but as Mr. King had said it has always been individually done and then it is all voted on by the three of them. Commissioner Grady she is kind of at a tie in a way on it. She said as she has always known it in living here, there has always been a Fire Department Commissioner, Police Commissioner and Water/Sewer Commissioner. Commissioner Grady said so with that in mind you say we will do it joint and of course to Donald’s advice you need a focal point. She said that she is new at it but she does know the history that has gone with it but at this point and time she is debating on which way, whether we do it together or we separate it. She said she is kind of new to the game or this and she does not know how the commissioners actually get elected and appointed to their assignment one to one or all three. Commissioner Hill said that has always been up to the Mayor, but Mayor Sykes stated she wants them to do it. Mayor Sykes stated she just thought it would be good for a new person. Commissioner Hill asked since Commissioner Grady is undecided at this time could they table this until the next board meeting. Town Attorney George Jenkins said they could vote on it and if it was a tie, the Mayor gets to vote to break the tie. George said if someone makes a motion to table it, that motion is not debatable and if it is seconded, then you immediately vote on the motion to table and that supersedes everything else. He stated that if it gets two votes to table it then it is tabled. Commissioner Hill said that would give Commissioner Grady an opportunity to really think about what she wants to do. Mayor Sykes told Debra to say what she wants to do because that is what they want her to do. Commissioner Grady stated she knew she was a new commissioner and has always lived in Pink Hill, loves Pink Hill and raised her son here in a safe town. She said when Mayor Sykes accepted Mayorship she was Police Commissioner and that came across. Mayor Sykes stated that was the wrong name, she was just over the Police Department which the Mayor is over everything. Commissioner Grady said she thought to herself she has been here for a while, she supports the police, and she has always thought the more protection the better safety of our town. She said she really thought that she would be a good Police Commissioner. She also stated that she has gone to school and took Criminal Justice 2 and has a BA degree. She said she is not new to the system but of course it is the Chief of Police who helps Pink Hill and who makes our commission. Commissioner Grady stated again that she would like to be the Police Commissioner and that was her thoughts and feelings coming in and I think I had expressed it. Mayor Sykes said she appreciated it. Mayor Sykes asked for all in favor of the motion to keep Commissioner King as Mayor Pro Tempore and the other commissioners be in joint commission to signify by saying “aye”. Commissioner Hill stated “aye”. Mayor Sykes asked for all opposed to say “nay”. Commissioner King and Commissioner Grady both stated “nay”. Commissioner King made a motion to table this issue until the January meeting. Commissioner Hill seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was the Fire Department Report. Timmy said this report was starting from November 1, 2013. He said that is why these numbers were so big. He stated they have had 6 vehicle accidents, 2 auto alarms, 2 structure fires, 1 brush fire, and 1 explosion. Timmy said they have their upcoming ISO inspection and have a person in their department that can be a fire inspector. He then turned it over to Deputy Chief Kenny Hamilton to speak on this. Kenny said they have a firefighter who is a certified fire inspector. He stated with the ISO inspection they need to get as many points as possible because a half of point can make a big difference in about $300 to $400 in people’s house insurance/business insurance. The more points we have the better off we will be as far as dropping our rating. He said it would probably in March or April before they come to inspect them. Kenny said they are going to do a split rating again. He stated our city area right now is a 5 but they are going to try to drop it down to a 4 and maybe possibly a 3. He said with the county they are going to drop it down to a 7. Kenny said he thinks they can do because they have the personnel and the equipment. He said the state now is giving them points for fire inspectors, fire investigators for arson, and also for public education. Kenny stated for public education they have been to the senior citizens, the school, and several other places in town and talked fire prevention. He said by having a fire inspector on staff in our department, he will not be able to inspect everything. He will just be pretty much assisting the county which will be Justin, Dustin, and Thomas doing inspections. At times during the weekends when he is off and also afternoon and nighttime, he will be doing inspections as well. Kenny stated they need for the town to say it is okay to have him as a department fire inspector, not a county fire inspector. This will help the fire department gain a few points on their ISO rating. Mayor Sykes asked for the man’s name. Kenny said he is Frankie Howard. He stated he would not get paid but be voluntary just like the other guys. Kenny stated that Frankie has been on the fire department for about 15 years. Mayor Sykes said she thought it was a plus for the Town of Pink Hill to help us save money on our fire. She wanted to commend Frankie Howard for doing this and thanked the fire department for encouraging it. Commissioner King made a motion to accept Frankie Howard as the Fire Inspector for the Town of Pink Hill effective immediately. Commissioner Grady seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. Commissioner King said this is what he was talking about having a focal person that they can go to in order to find out about a particular house or building. He asked Kenny if the fire inspector has that authority to decide if a house needs to be condemned or not. Kenny answered yes sir he does. At any point in time when he goes to a building to inspect it if the building is unsafe, he has the authority by the State of North Carolina to condemn that building. Commissioner King stated he rested his case. Mayor Sykes thanked the Fire Department for the job they do and the time they give to the town which takes away from their families.

The next item on the agenda was Water/Sewer Updates. Timmy stated the construction is going well. He said they lost their Supervisor, Trey who moved. Derrick is in place now and he was the person in charge over Trey before he left. Timmy said they have not started paving yet. He said all the pipe being laid down should be done in about another month if the weather holds out. Then all the small jobs will start. He said they hope to be completed by April or May 2014. Mayor Sykes asked Timmy if he had talked to them about putting some more gravel on the cuts in the road. Timmy said he talked with Derrick about it immediately the same day after Mayor Sykes had told him about it. Timmy said Derrick did go to a couple of places where there were issues and fixed them. Commissioner King asked about them putting some more rock in the cuts across the driveways and streets. He asked Timmy if there were going to pave these places. Timmy stated yes all the patching will be done when they finish. Mayor Sykes asked about the water meters. Timmy said they did opening bids on November 19, 2013 but it actually has not been awarded. Timmy stated he was waiting on Slade to get back with him on this. He said ER Lewis in their project is putting in 250 new services and the only thing that they are not doing is putting the new meter in the box. There is a discrepancy there and that has not been finalized yet but it is being worked on. Mayor Sykes explained the current situation with the water project and the water meters being installed to Commissioner Grady. Timmy said these new meters will hold up to 45 days of information on them. Mayor Sykes thanked Timmy and his department for all they do.

Next on the agenda was Budget Amendments if needed. Kim stated there were no budget amendments at this time. Kim said there were only budget transfers and each commissioner has a copy of those. Kim explained to Commissioner Grady what a budget amendment is and what a budget transfer is and the process for both. Mayor Sykes thanked Kim for what she does.

The next item on the agenda was Remarks by Town Attorney. George stated he appreciated the opportunity to be here again. He said he looks forward to working with the new commissioner.

The next item on the agenda was Comments by the Board. Commissioner Hill said he wanted to thank everybody for being so nice and kind. Commissioner King said he was glad for the past two years with the board that they had and the mayor that we have got. He stated they have worked real, real good together and a lot better than the first time he was on the board. Commissioner King said he commended Mayor Sykes for doing a good job the last two years and not having too many budget amendments. Commissioner King talked about them disagreeing about the commissioners and their jobs but at least we are friends right on and he made his statement the way that he felt it. He said they need a focal point on it. He stated he is not for any particular person or group, he is for the Town of Pink Hill and that is why we agree to disagree. Commissioner King said he had to admit that he has really enjoyed working with Mayor Sykes for the past two years and he thinks they have all done a good job, but let’s hope there is room for improvement and we all get along as good as we have in the past. Mayor Sykes stated she thinks the whole board has done well and you can look at the budget and tell that. She also said she knows Commissioner Grady is going to bond right in. Commissioner Grady said she wanted to thank everyone for welcoming her tonight and making her feel like she is already part of the board, which I am. She thanked everyone who supported her and for making her feel like she is part of the team. Mayor Sykes stated you are and don’t you forget it. Mayor Sykes said she appreciated all the support that she has gotten over the last two years. She said that she and Commissioner King still have two years on the board and Commissioner Grady and Commissioner Hill have four years.

The next item on the agenda was Public Comment Period. Susan Myers informed everyone that the Rose Festival is scheduled for May 17, 2014. She said they have got postcards and magnets for the Rose Festival. She also wanted to talk about the luminaries. She said they are going to have it Saturday night, December 21, 2013 in honor of baby Gideon.

The next item on the agenda was Closed Session. There was no need for a closed session at this time.

With there being no further business to be discussed the meeting was adjourned.