

# **TOWN OF WILLIAMSTON**

## **Regular Meeting**

**December 7, 2020**

### **Meeting Minutes**

(All newspapers were informed of this meeting in compliance with the guidelines set forth in the Freedom of Information Act)

1. Call to Order

Mayor Durham called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. All members of Council were present.

2. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance

Chief Tony Taylor led the Invocation and Mayor Durham led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Councilman Alexander to accept the November 2, 2020 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Hagood. Everyone voted in favor.

4. Public Comments

Jessica Taijman announced the opening of her new restaurant. It will be located at 711 Anderson Drive. The restaurant will be called Sugar Magnolia Café.

5. Presentations

Gerry Partridge with Goodwill announced the opening of the new store in Pelzer. Sherri Cole gave details of the upcoming Christmas Parade. Debbie Chapman and Lisa Cope announced the winners of the Scarecrow Contest. Jack Ellenburg recognized Mayor Durham and Councilman Harvell for their service over the years.

6. Second Reading on an Ordinance Adopting Amended Flood Prevention Regulations

A motion was made by Mayor Durham to accept the ordinance on second reading. The motion was seconded by Councilman Hagood. Everyone voted in favor.

7. Second Reading on an Ordinance Adopting the Flood Insurance Study, dated December 17, 2017

A motion was made by Councilman Burgess to accept the ordinance on second reading. The motion was seconded by Councilman Alexander. Everyone voted in favor.

8. Second Reading on an Ordinance Authorizing an Intergovernmental Agreement with Anderson

#### County Regarding Flood Prevention

A motion was made by Mayor Durham to accept the ordinance on second reading. The motion was seconded by Councilman Harvell. Everyone voted in favor.

#### 9. PARD Resolution Committing Grant Match

A motion was made by Councilman Hagood to approve the match for the grant. The amount will be \$2500. The motion was seconded by Councilman Alexander. Everyone voted in favor.

#### 10. Approval of Dates for the Rise Against Cancer Event

A motion was made by Mayor Durham to approve the dates of September 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> of 2021. The motion was seconded by Councilman Hagood. Everyone voted in favor.

#### 11. Approval of Fire Department Expansion as a Project to Seek Funding

A motion was made by Mayor Durham to allow the Fire Department to seek funding to expand the fire department. The motion was seconded by Councilman Harvell. Everyone voted in favor.

#### 12. First Reading on an Ordinance to Transfer Property to Melissa Kinman

A motion was made by Mayor Durham to approve the ordinance on first reading. The motion was seconded by Councilman Hagood. There was discussion by Councilman Burgess on the matter. The vote passed with Councilman Burgess opposing.

#### 13. Mayor's Comments

Mayor Durham addressed the citizens with comments from his final council meeting as Stated:

#### Closing Remarks by Mayor Mack Durham to Council 12-07-2020

First, let me say congratulations to our Mayor-elect and that I hope much will be accomplished in the coming term. I also want to say that I am thankful for all God has allowed me to accomplish in my two terms as Mayor and in my service to Williamston. While many public accomplishments have been evident, a much more personal effort has been my long-term focus as your Mayor. With a singular vision to rid our town of the good old boy politics of our past and a constant determination to build a strong foundation for our future, a new town has been born under my leadership. Unbeknownst to many, we have grown past the Mayor as a single decision maker for our town. All of this has been quietly accomplished without increasing any burden on our people of additional bureaucracy or budgetary expense, while preserving the operational administrative effectiveness and efficiency of maintaining one chief executive officer. By doing this we are working smarter and protecting our people and our community from poor political practices. By decentralizing our governance, we are now more resilient against the good ole boy politics that once ravaged our town and robbed us of past opportunities. This has been done by empowering three very important groups for our future growth and development: Our Residents, Our Envision Williamston Organization, and Our Planning Commission. The strength and advantages of the empowerment of these three groups will be realized for years to come and will be essential to growing our town in a way that preserves our truly special community.

First, we have empowered our citizens through public planning and public engagement. Although this has proven to be a slower process, it has also proven to have greater long term value in producing quality community growth from the ground up. We have taken the time and effort to listen to all citizens who made the effort to be a part of our community planning and we have established an expectation that our citizens should be involved in the planning and growth of our town. This is in stark contrast to the top-down leadership we have had in the past. The intentional engagement by town leadership of our citizens is the most fundamental and essential act that we can continue to make to ensure our people know that Williamston is their town. Their involvement is how they know that they belong and it is essential that we continue their engagement. Our citizens have participated in:

- Retail, Residential, and Light Industry Strategic Plan
- Community Master Plan
- Branding Exercise
- Bike and Pedestrian Plan
- Updated Comprehensive Plan 2021: Current Planning Commission Project

Second, beyond elected or appointed positions we have empowered local leaders and community members to participate in our growth and development through being a part of our Envision Williamston organization. Envision Williamston has provided a place where not only residents of Williamston, but also property owners, business owners and other non-residents who have a personal interest in our town can participate and contribute to our development and growth in a meaningful way. In partnership with the town, Envision Williamston has accomplished much including:

- Adopt-a-rest stop benches to provide a welcoming place to pause and enjoy our town
- Gateway signage to welcome everyone into our town
- Added local murals to beautify our town
- HOWDY Day annual clean up event to help maintain the beauty of our town
- Façade Grants that have improved and beautified our local businesses
- Main Street Challenge grants that have provided local business opportunities
- Retail, Residential and Light Industrial Strategic Plan to suggest some meaningful projects for Williamston that can be accomplished in our very near future

All of these have been very important contributions and all have been accomplished in partnership and collaboration with the town. It is very important for this organization to continue to grow and provide a local voice for residents and non-residents alike who have a personal interest in our growth and development.

Third, we have empowered our Planning Commission to be more involved in our development to provide a non-political voice in both our physical development and our policy development. Our Planning Commission is comprised of local citizens who have taken on the extra qualification of completing continuing education hours associated with their duties. This is essential in keeping the interest of our citizens central to our long term growth and will prove to be an ever-increasingly important asset to the quality growth of our community. Their recommendations come from an

educated and non-political point of view in all issues they consider, and as such, are very important to give both our citizens and our council confidence that, as a town, we are pursuing projects and policies with our residents' best interests at heart and not a political agenda.

I have diligently worked to build a lasting foundation that will provide quality growth, sustainability, and the preservation of our character as a small interconnected community, where as our town grows, we will all feel that it is still our town and our sense of belonging is preserved and nurtured. The empowerment of our residents, our local leaders, and our Planning Commission creates a balanced leadership of our community and provides a strong voice to your council through the collective voice of your recommendations for our future growth and development. The strength and advantages of putting these things in place will be realized for years to come and will be foundational to growing our town and preserving our truly special community.

Much foundational work has been accomplished to provide a strong future for our town and it is now abundantly evident that Williamston is on the right course for a very bright future. Moving forward, all that will be required is the competent management of our continuing progress. Again, this has been made much less expensive and much less complicated by the empowerment of our Residents, our Envision Williamston organization, and our Planning Commission.

We can be confident that we are on the right course because our town is growing. In fact, we are growing faster than any town in Anderson County and you can expect that growth to continue. You can also expect to have quality growth because of the involvement of our Residents, our Envision Williamston organization, and our Planning Commission.

While providing business incentives as the primary means to grow our town was promoted by some, I took a different course. Because of our advantage of good schools and a central location within our regional market, I decided to grow our town by increasing residential development. This has proven to be very successful. We have brought many depressed properties back up to code that are now occupied, we have added 60 new homes to Williamston in the past three years, and we have 67 more new homes in the planning process right now. This has increased support for existing businesses and provided opportunities for new business growth and investment by positioning Williamston as the growth center in our regional market. We have had many economic development announcements and they have continued even tonight. Some announcements included:

- Armory Fitness: 24/7 Fitness Center
- Bee Clean: Pressure Washing
- Roots Hair Salon expansion
- Design Depot: Printing and Awards
- Home with a Heart: Home Goods Retail
- Raines Restaurant
- Scout Development, LLC: First Street Residential Project
- Craft Brewery: Restaurant-Brewery-Tap Room Project
- Sugar Magnolias Restaurant

- Cherokee Road Extension to Main Street

Along with the success of our residential growth and business investment, we must continue our vigilance in maintaining and improving our existing infrastructure and administrative operations. We have continually replaced and improved both water lines and sewer lines with some being as old as 85 years old. State and local roadways have been put on a continuing schedule of maintenance and repair as funds are made available. Local culverts and bridges have been repaired or replaced. Much of our street signs have been replaced or are scheduled to be replaced. Our Fire Department has the best equipment it has ever had including the addition of a Ladder Truck and a planned expansion of their building to house a back-up pumper. Our Police have become ambassadors to our town by adopting a Community Policing philosophy in their public service and we have increased police accountability with the addition of body cameras for all patrol officers. Our work crews complete practically all service calls within 24 hours and most are completed with same-day service. We have improved service efficiency and worker safety with the addition of tipper garbage cans and radio read water meters along with new garbage trucks, a new debris truck, and a new water service truck. We have achieved parity in our workforce giving equal pay for equal work whether you are male or female and we have broken racial barriers by naming the first African-American Chief in the history of Anderson County.

We have also improved walkways and added walking trails in our parks, improved sidewalks and added sidewalks in our town, renovated our Municipal Auditorium and upgraded our public meeting rooms, outdoor public spaces have been improved in Mineral Spring Park, Brookdale Park, and Gray Drive Walking Track and we have added the new Chris Coleman pocket park. We also added a wheelchair swing to Mineral Spring Park.

Finally, my comments would not be complete without recognizing the stellar performance of my Administrative Department Heads and Senior Staff members. Michelle Starnes, David Rogers, Chief Tony Taylor, Chief Steve Ellison, B. J. Thompkins, Debbie Chapman, and Lisa Cope have all provided excellent leadership and management of their departments and positions. Their competent performance has given me the freedom to express my vision and build our town as your Mayor. The administration of our town is not about one person, it is about the dedicated staff and personnel that serve our citizens every day, and in my opinion, we have the very best here in Williamston.

In closing, and in further assurance that Williamston's future undeniably stands on a firm foundation that has been built during my administration, I want to announce that Williamston is being considered for a very exciting new economic development project. Earlier this year, in October, I was made aware of Williamston being considered for a major economic development project and I have signed a confidentiality agreement associated with this project. Although I can only give limited details at this time, I can say that this project will be a total game changer for our town and I am very excited to share as much as I can. The project, code named "Project Fastback", is being considered for development within the town limits of Williamston. The project being considered would be an investment of up to \$15 million dollars and create up to 400 new local jobs. As this project becomes public knowledge, I want you to know that Williamston is being considered for this investment in economic development because we are now recognized as the growth center of southeastern Anderson County. This is a direct

result of the foundational work that has been accomplished during my time as Mayor and while many may claim to build upon this foundation, I, and all who have served with me, will have the distinct satisfaction of knowing that the foundation for our future was built during my time as Mayor.

I have never been prideful about my title as Mayor Of Williamston, but it is with great pride and satisfaction that I look back at my contributions to our town. Being Mayor has never defined me as a person, but I hope that the person I am has helped define our town and provided a better future for us all. I wish Williamston all the best moving forward. Thanks!

14. Adjourn

Mayor Durham made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilman Alexander. Everyone voted in favor.

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ROCKEY BURGESS, MAYOR

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MICHELLE STARNES, CLERK / TREASURER