

**MOUNT AIRY, NORTH CAROLINA
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
March 4, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Pro Tempore Ron Niland, Commissioners Jon Cawley, Tom Koch, Marie Wood, and Steve Yokeley

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

On motion by Commissioner Yokeley, the agenda was approved unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA: On motion by Commissioner Yokeley and passed unanimously, the following items were approved by way of the consent agenda:

- **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**
 - **January 28, 2021 Recessed Meeting Minutes**
 - **February 4, 2021 Board Meeting**
 - **February 22, 2021 Board Meeting**
- **RESOLUTION 2021-051 SETTING PUBLIC HEARING FOR REQUEST TO REZONE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1515 FANCY GAP ROAD:**

RESOLUTION NUMBER 2021-051

RESOLUTION SETTING A PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING REQUEST TO REZONE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1515 FANCY GAP ROAD

WHEREAS, the City of Mount Airy has received a request from Ibrahim Kaya to rezone a 0.18 acre parcel located at 1515 Fancy Gap Road (Tax ID 5011-12-97-1299) from R-20 (Residential) to B-3 CD (Neighborhood Business - Conditional District); and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board of the City of Mount Airy has recommended approval of the request to the Board of Commissioners:

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF MOUNT AIRY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING IN OPEN SESSION THAT:

- Section 1. That a public hearing be scheduled for Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 6:00 pm to hear public comment on the above mentioned request.
- Section 2. That notice of the public hearing shall be published in the Mount Airy News, a newspaper having general circulation in the City of Mount Airy, at least ten (10) days prior to the date of the public hearing.
- Section 3. This resolution shall become effective upon approval.

Approved and adopted this the 4th day of March, 2021.

(end of consent agenda)

SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

Automated Trash Collection Update

Mitch Williams, Public Works Director, began by introducing Russell Jarrell and Rodney Chappell from the Sanitation Department who were also here for the presentation. Mitch provided an overview of brush collection, specifically that brush is collected on Monday of each week; should be less than 5 feet in length and 3 inches in diameter; should be placed neatly at the curb. Small amounts of grass clipping or trimmings can be placed in regular trash carts, and currently is collected in 4 rear-loader trucks each Monday, with the grapple truck as needed. He noted that the City's ordinance states that the City will not dispose of any trees or brush cut by anyone other than the homeowner. However, since it is difficult to prove or determine who cut it, over the last couple of years the City has been picking it up.

Some challenges include large amounts of shrubbery being removed and placed at the curb, or large trees being cut down and left for them to remove. He explained that their fee schedule allows them to pick up one grapple truck load per month per property at no charge. Anything beyond that, they get to it when they have time, or the property owner agrees to pay \$145 to schedule a timely pick-up of the debris. Not many of these fees are collected.

He gave a review of the disposal fees, which once was \$15 per load, which was added to the water bill. Surry County did not charge for brush disposal. It was often difficult to bill for and collect for these loads, so we stopped this charge. In addition, several annexations added many homes and wooded areas to our property, which increased our tonnage. Around 2010 Ararat Rock Products offered to take our brush which they turned into mulch. This arrangement ended in 2020. From May – September, 2020, brush had to be taken to the Surry County Landfill, where the City is being charged \$47/ton for disposal. Since September, we have been taking the larger brush (at no charge) to a local lumber company who is converting it to mulch. Smaller brush collected in the rear loader trucks are still going to the landfill. We collect around 1,000 tons of brush per year, at a cost of \$47 per ton to dispose in the Surry County Landfill.

He advised that the new automated sanitation trucks should arrive no later than mid May. The reason for the new brush carts is largely for municipal employee safety. The carry can on the front is higher than the existing rear-loading trucks, which will make this a higher and more difficult area for the employees to have to place the debris into this higher can. In addition, the citizens will no longer have to bag their grass clippings or leaves. The debris doesn't have to be left on the curb, and the extra cart can be used as part of their yard equipment.

Option 1 – Automated trucks will be used but the employees will have to exit the vehicle and manually collect the brush depositing it into a higher area that could cause injury or strain to the employees.

Option 2 – Continue on Mondays as we do now, using the rear-loader trucks to collect the brush. However eliminating the four employees with the new automated system will place the City in an employee shortage to handle this manually. This also eliminates the safety benefit of converting to the automated system. Mitch noted that we could attempt to proceed with a limited number of properties having carts, but that would leave us to continue to manually collect the brush for many properties.

Mitch stated that four trucks currently run the brush route each Monday. The new fully automated plan would divide the city into two routes. If no carts are ordered, that would be a difficult route for one truck to get in one day. The delivery time for the carts are 8-10 weeks, so the time to order them is now to align their delivery with the vehicle delivery dates, if the Board chooses to do so. This would be 4,500 carts at a cost of \$60 each, or \$270,000 total.

Commissioner Cawley asked for clarification on oversize brush. Mitch explained that the larger debris that won't fit in the cart would be noted and collected at a later time, either later that day or later in the week. Commissioner Cawley asked how they handle brush and debris cut by professionals for the property owners, if it is not cut to the right size. Mitch replied that the City gets what they can if our equipment can handle it. If we go with the carts, it will have to be cut to size and fit with the lid closed.

Mayor Pro Tem Niland stated that he doesn't see debris piles in the areas he frequents that would fit in these brush carts. He only sees piles from larger projects that wouldn't fit in the cart. He doesn't see the need for having one of these carts. If putting the grass clippings into the regular trash cart is an option, he thinks that is an alternative to homeowners needing one of these carts. He stated that this \$270,000 expenditure would have zero value to him as a residential property owner, or to anyone living in an apartment complex, and based on his discussion with his neighbors, he doesn't think many people will use this service. He thinks we can use money in other areas.

Commissioner Koch asked if we did not automate the brush collection, how would that affect the proposed four eliminated positions. Mitch responded that with Option 2, relying on the old rear-loading trucks, we possibly would need to retain two of those four positions. Mayor Pro Tem Niland suggested that we reduce the current schedule, such as every two or three weeks. Commissioner Koch noted that he frequently sees small loads of brush in his neighborhood that would fit into these carts, not large loads. He suggested that we could order fewer than the 4,500 that has been discussed. Russell Jarrell noted that he thinks they would need to keep those remaining two positions if not fully automated. Commissioner Koch stated that we need to become more efficient and reduce the risk to our employees. He would like to see the brush carts ordered, but a smaller number. These are four of the most dangerous jobs, which is expensive for workers compensation and a danger to our employees. He would like to order the brush carts, and add a brush fee to the water bill, based on the amount we are having to pay now to the Surry County landfill.

Mayor Pro Tem Niland suggested that homeowners that want the cart should pay for one. He stated that the safety of the truck has nothing to do with the savings or cost. He restated that neither he nor his neighbors put out debris small enough to fit in the cart. Commissioner Wood noted that while she doesn't have a need for one personally, she would like to see a survey of those who would like one, and ask them to pay for it if they want one. If they don't want to purchase a cart, then we won't pick up any debris left at the sidewalk. Commissioner Koch noted that we would need to educate our citizens on a change such as this. He also believes that those who are leaving large loads by the roads are taking advantage of the City. We should no longer pick up this yard waste without a brush cart. He suggested ordering half of the carts estimated. If the load is larger than what would fit in a brush cart, we can use the grapple truck to pick it up, for a fee. Commissioner Cawley asked again about a large pile that exceeds the size of the cart. Mitch replied that anything larger than the brush cart would be picked up later that afternoon or the next day to pick up the larger load. Mitch restated that the new carts provide safety to our employees by allowing pickup with no hands-on required. Mayor Pro Tem Niland noted that if grass clippings and small debris can go into the trash cart with the trash, then there is no need for an additional cart. Rodney Chappell noted that this is subject to Surry County continuing to allow us to put both in the landfill together. Mitch noted that putting both in the same cart would fill the trash trucks faster, causing more trips to the landfill, which would delay finishing the route.

City Manager Barbara Jones stated that there would be an education process necessary as we make this transition. The value of these carts is the safety of the workers. As we evaluated going to automation, these carts were included in that evaluation, both for employee safety and for efficiency. Once the Board makes a decision on the carts, we will look at the routes and how it might work better. We will need to educate people on where to put them, when to put them out during the transition. Mayor Pro Tem Niland suggested that we do not order the carts now. Study it, see how many people want them, and wait until July to implement the carts. Barbara responded that we will need to know now, during our budget process, whether the positions will need to be funded or eliminated for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Commissioner Koch restated that we should charge for anything that a grapple truck would have to pick up, and anything free should fit in a brush cart, which can be purchased for a fee. Commissioner Yokeley asked if brush can be placed in the regular trash can, to which Mitch responded that small grass clippings that won't cause problems with compacting is ok. Commissioner Yokeley suggested that we allow this, and that only large loads that can be picked up with the grapple truck be allowed, and also suggested extending the pick up days to every two weeks or every month, rather than weekly. Mitch replied that on average, most cans are full and if you add brush, it will be too much. He believes that there is a need to pick the brush up weekly, because there is just so much here in Mount Airy. Commissioner Yokeley agrees with separate carts if the brush can be taken somewhere else, but right now if there's no difference, we should just put it in the garbage can. Mitch responded that should we get an offer to take our brush, it would need to be separated, to save on the fees to the Surry County landfill. Barbara noted that we are scheduling a meeting to discuss these fees

with the Surry County Manager and their staff. Mayor Pro Tem Niland suggested that we wait two-three months before making this decision to get more information, and suggested a committee to study it. Commissioner Koch is in favor of publicizing that we will no longer pick up yard waste, and establish a fee to pick up debris by the grapple truck, and noted that the savings to pay for the trucks came partially by eliminating the four positions associated with the rear-loading trucks. Mitch suggested that they could try the routes first when the new trucks come in to see what the impact will be. Commissioner Yokeley suggested ceasing the pickup of brush now with the rear loaders and asking people to use their trash carts for the brush, using the grapple truck for everything else, to see if it could reduce their route schedule. Russell Jarrell noted that the volume of debris would not allow for that. Commissioner Cawley suggested that we can sell one of our extra trash cans to those who may need more than one to accommodate both their garbage and their brush. Those who want to fill with yard debris could leave the cart out on Monday for pick up. The City needs to get away from using the grapple truck, unless there is a fee associated with it. He is concerned with the \$270,000 cost of starting this program.

Commissioner Koch made a motion to purchase 1,000 brush carts at a cost of \$60,000.

Commissioner Cawley asked if a citizen gets a brush cart, will it go out onto the street on Monday, or on their trash day. Mitch responded that right now either day would work, since it is all going to the same place. The issue will arise when we have to separate the trash from the yard debris.

The motion failed by a three to two vote:

Vote Nay: Commissioners Niland, Wood, Yokeley

Vote Aye: Commissioners Cawley, Koch

PUBLIC FORUM:

Mayor Pro Tem Niland declared the public forum open.

Deputy Clerk Carolyn Hegler read comment(s) on behalf of:

John Pritchard, 128 Ridgecrest Drive: Expressed his displeasure at the possibility of the Board approving the spending of \$2.9 million on the Spencer's development. Believes that this is a bad deal for the taxpayers.

With no one wishing to speak, Mayor Pro Tem Niland declared the public forum closed.

NEW BUSINESS:

BOARD TO DISCUSS AUTOMATIC AID AGREEMENTS:

Fire Chief Zane Poindexter explained his request based on the memorandum including in the agenda packet. He believes this is a progressive initiative that will help the fire service in our community and our surrounding communities. The request is to enter into the Surry County Automatic Aid Agreement, which will change how we receive aid inside the City and how

that aid will be reciprocated back to the county in our neighboring districts. We currently already have a Mutual Aid agreement which allows a department to call on other departments if additional help is needed. Automatic Aid would automatically dispatch these departments to all calls within these districts. This would be two additional stations being dispatched in addition to our personnel to any structure related fire response in the city, based on a four-quadrant map of the city to be created. In turn, City personnel will be automatically dispatched to those neighboring districts for the same purpose. This will increase our call volume, but Chief Poindexter believes they can handle the load. It will also increase our personnel budget slightly, but he stated that it isn't enough to be noticed. He stated that he will not be requesting any additional funds for this service. The benefits will be increased safety and efficiency of the service delivery for Mount Airy and the neighboring departments, and may increase our ISO rating the next time we are graded, due to having paid staff on duty. The departments involved will be the Franklin Fire Department, Four-Way Fire Department, Bannertown Fire Department, and White Plains Fire Department. Chief Poindexter also pointed out that we are not required to respond if our resources are unavailable.

Commissioner Cawley made a motion to adopt the Automatic Aid Agreement. This motion was unanimously approved.

REMARKS BY OFFICIALS:

City Manager Barbara Jones: Thanked Russell Jarrell and Rodney Chappell for their attendance at the meeting and help with this project. Also provided possible dates for a budget worksession. (The Board agreed by consensus to hold this worksession on March 30, at 1:00 p.m.)

Commissioner Koch: No comments.

Commissioner Yokeley: Expressed thanks to staff including Darren Lewis (Vision Committee), Mitch Williams (Rotary program), Russell Jarrell, and Rodney Chappell.

Commissioner Wood: No comments.

Commissioner Cawley: Noted public forum submitted comments and the need to remain respectful. Hopes that the hotel project can be worked out, and this is not a split board on this project. Appreciates those who want to say something negative but do not. We need kindness, wisdom, and discretion. Working for the City to get the best deal we can get on this hotel. We are not interested in spending money just to be spending money. Noted that anger comes from unmet expectations. Stated that he didn't need the compliment expressed in the public forum comments, nor did the others need the criticism. Also thanked Mitch and the sanitation staff for their attendance and for attending to the trash needs of our citizens.

Mayor Pro Tem Niland: Would like to form a committee made up of Commissioner Wood, Commissioner Koch, along with City Manager Barbara Jones and staff to meet and come back with recommendations on going forward, regarding the brush carts, possible changes to service levels, and proposed fees that have been discussed at today's meeting.

CLOSED SESSION:

Commissioner Koch made a motion to enter into closed session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(4) Economic Development and it was approved unanimously.

OPEN SESSION:

On motion by Commissioner Koch and approved unanimously, the board entered back in to open session.

ADJOURN:

On motion by Commissioner Koch and approved unanimously, the meeting was adjourned.

Approved and adopted this the 18th day of March, 2021.

Ronald M. Niland, Mayor Pro Tempore

ATTEST:

Carolyn Hegler, Deputy Clerk