

November 1, 2023

The Washington County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Called Joint Meeting with the Roper Town Council on Wednesday, November 1, 2023, at 6:00 PM in the Roper Annex Building, 114 N. Railroad Street, Roper, NC. Commissioners Ann C. Keyes, Carol V. Phelps, John C. Spruill and Julius Walker, Jr. were present. Also present were County Manager/County Attorney Curtis Potter, and Clerk to the Board Julie J. Bennett. Commissioner Tracey A. Johnson was unable to attend.

Attendees for the Roper Town Council: Mayor Denise Blount; Councilmen: Rona Norman, Charles Sharpe, Melvin Norman, and Roper Town Clerk Stacy Chesson. Councilman Ramona Jackson was unable to attend.

Chair Walker called the Board of Commissioners' meeting to order and welcomed all who were in attendance. He then asked the Commissioners & staff to introduce themselves.

Mayor Blount called the Roper Town Council meeting to order and asked the Town Council Members to introduce themselves.

Item 1 Items for Discussion:

- a) Water: Mayor Blount spoke about interconnections. Mr. Potter said the connections are working but the meters are broken; they are not working the way they were initially designed. The County did get a grant to fix those 3 connections. Mayor Blount said 2 connections have been turned off that are on the County side. She asked why they would be turned back on if they hadn't been using them. Mr. Lee Sasser, Public Utilities Director, addressed the issue. Those connections only allow water out (one way). With the new meters, the County can open those lines if one of the other lines/meters has a problem. Mr. Potter said the grant gives the County more flexibility to fix more issues. We need to fix what is broken. Mr. Potter went on to say there will be a trial by the engineers to tell us what will work best. The Mayor said she doesn't want water bills shooting up for the residents (mostly who are elderly). Mr. Potter said we will be looking out for that, so it doesn't happen.
- b) Garbage: Mayor Blount said they have 203 customers that pay \$22.95 a month for garbage (SWUF). The rates changed after their budget was done and the Town had to pay the difference. Mayor Blount asked if the County can they charge the residents instead of charging the Town. Mr. Potter said the County bills the Town and the Town bills the citizen. Mr. Potter said the County could send the bills to the citizens like we do for Creswell. The County would need a request from the Town Council of Roper to do this. Mr. Potter said that the County can't add it to the Roper citizen's tax bill until July 1. Mayor Blount asked how they can get the broken trash cans picked up. Mr. Mike Gray, Landfill Director, said to call the Landfill and they will make a request to Republic to pick them up. Discussion turned to how citizens are charged for taking items to the landfill. Mr. Gray said the first 2000 lbs. (1 ton) is free then the customer pays \$60 for the next ton.

- c) Zoning: Mayor Blount discussed being contacted by Mr. Richard Livingston, former Sr. Project Manager, regarding zoning in Roper. Town Clerk, Ms. Stacy Chesson, said he led them to believe that Washington County was going to take over zoning for the Town of Roper. Mr. Potter said there was a change in the general statutes regarding Land Use Plans for the towns and the counties. The Mayor said they adopted a Land Use Plan. Mr. Potter said if that is the case then they are in charge of their zoning. The County can issue building permits when needed. Commissioner Keyes said that Mr. Pittman (Planning/ Inspection/ Zoning Director) will be able to give Mayor Blount some resources. Mr. Potter said he would send Mayor Blount some high-level documents to look at – including 160D which is what they should look at first. Then the Town of Roper will need to have a Zoning Ordinance. Discussion ensued regarding getting approvals from the Building Inspector.
- d) Intergovernmental Cooperation Opportunities: Mayor Blount said there needs to be better communication between the Town and County. Mr. Potter said he feels we should have some meetings with the Departments that they deal with the most (such as Planning). Mr. Potter said if the person (Department Head) is busy maybe they can still give the Town the resources they need to help them. Mr. Potter said the Town should contact the Department Heads, then himself, then the Commissioners.

Council Sharpe asked if the school in Roper will still be needed after the new school is built. Mr. Potter said there is an agreement to move the Early College to Roper.

Mr. Sharpe asked if Roper could get a gas station (near Mill Pond). It would be a great economic opportunity.

Commissioner Keyes addressed how the Inspector/Planning Office works—speaking as a retired planner. She also went over how citizens can put their numbers in Hyper-Reach so citizens will get important information.

Chair Walker thanked the Town Council for their concerns and comments and said the Commissioners are not meeting just to be meeting. The Board will take all this feedback from the three (3) towns and see what we can do together.

Mayor Blount thanked the Board for taking the time to meet. She said she learned a lot tonight. Mayor Blount asked Mr. Sasser if there is a problem with something in Roper, that as a courtesy, would he please let the Town know (relating to 811 locate requests). Mr. Potter will work with Mr. Sasser on the best way to do this.

Item 2 Public Forum: no comments.

Commissioner Phelps made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Keyes seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Julius Walker, Jr.
Chair

Julie J. Bennett, MMC, NCMCC
Clerk to the Board