



**TOWN OF THUNDERBOLT
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 2009**

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mayor Anna Maria Thomas, followed by the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance recited in unison.

Present: Mayor Anna Maria Thomas, Council Members: Kimberly Chappell-Stevens, John Cheeks, Sr., David P. Crenshaw, Beth E. Goette, and Bobby J. Hardman. Town Attorney, Charles W. Barrow, Town Administrator, Robert B. Thomson, Chief of Police, Irene Pennington, Fire Chief, Carl Smith, Finance Director, Brooks Adams, Clerk of Council, Rose M. McCombs, and Administrative Clerk, Caroline Nguyen were also present.

Absent: Council Member: T. Gebel Seese

2. **Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings:**

June 10, 2009 minutes were approved as stated by Mayor Thomas upon motion tendered by Councilwoman Goette, seconded by Councilwoman Chappell-Stevens. The motion carried unanimously.

3. **Monthly Finance Report:** *(Document provided and made a part of these Minutes)*

Finance Director Adams discussed the monthly financial report and noted cash balances for the end of June 2009 totaled to \$556,981.22 with a net decrease YTD of \$48,391.78. The cash flow is currently in line. Expenditures exceeded Revenue by approximately \$255,936. The Expenditures for Water and Sewer are currently at 61% of budget due to front loaded expenses. The Water and Sewer budget is on target if the front loaded items that curved the budget are removed. The Capital Project fund expenses are currently at about \$1,735 which included SPLOST items. There will be a budget amendment to the Expenditures portion for the Fire Department and for Gateway Grant with Green Space improvement.

The computer upgrades are in progress as a part of the Disaster Plan. This will include maintenance on the server and network to allow Administration to log in remotely. The Water Report shows a higher percentage of missing water with 28% due to reading period, large one-time adjustments, and by non-metered parks. The Town will continue to strive for the fewer than 10% missing water percentage. Councilman Cheeks questioned the meter reading process and noted the negative impact on higher usage. Councilman Crenshaw questioned the 40 day billing cycle and Mr. Crenshaw is concerned with the reading period as well and noted residents will be penalized by the tiered rate.

Finance Director Adams explained the bills should have less days the following month and my cause a decrease in some bills. Mr. Adams assured the reading period will be back on track and was caused by special events that took place. Councilwoman Chappell-Stevens questioned the Meter Reader and Mr. Adams confirmed there is only one Meter Reader. There are spot checks that are taking place and the system is not full proof however we are working towards a more efficient meter reading process. Councilwoman Goette noted a typo error in the Water Report and Administrative Clerk Nguyen made the correction of July to

June in the chart during the Council meeting. Town Administrator Thomson assured Council the staff is committed in bettering the process and to better prepare the Department in rare cases of planning duties around events. Councilwoman Chappell-Stevens noted a spike in resident bills due to an extra week added to reading period is a hardship.

Councilman Crenshaw referred to Finance Director Adams to present the new Budget Schedule. Mr. Adams discussed the timeline chart of budget process. Mr. Adams hopes to have a first draft for September 2009 Council Meeting to allow Mayor and Council to be able to adopt a proposed budget in the October 2009 Council Meeting. Mr. Adams mentioned some items that will be presented are forecasts of trends of Revenues and Expenses and will give Mayor and Council the opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Adams emphasized this will better the communication for budget process.

4. **Special Committee Report: No Report**

5. **Town Administrator's Report & Council Members Reports:**

• **Robert (Bob) Thomson- Administrator Report**

Interjected at this time Town Administrator noted the Fire Department is requesting for 2 part-time and 2 full-time through FEMA Staffing Grant and called upon Fire Chief Smith to go into detail. Chief Smith explained this grant must be accepted as stated. Chief Smith stated if accepted the following amounts would need to be added to the 2009 budget \$3,300; \$13,000 in 2010; and \$32,000 in 2011. Councilman Crenshaw questioned the timeline of accepting the grant, and Chief Smith replied if Council voted to accept the Grant, their decision will be forwarded tomorrow.

Councilman Crenshaw suggested the Fire Department request an extension of 1 week for Council to review and to research the full impact to the budgets. Councilman Cheeks requested the impact of later years due to the Grant being a 5 year period. Chief Smith responded the impact to the year 2012 would be \$75,000, and in 2013 slightly less than \$100,000. Councilman Crenshaw recommended the Council to review the grant and obtain more research on the budget impact. Councilman Crenshaw recommended requesting a time extension for Council to review and be able to vote on the following Council meeting. Councilman Hardman questioned the need of extra Fire Fighters and the benefits.

Chief Smith went into detail on the benefits such as the level of safety and protection of the citizens will improve. Chief Smith believes this is a great opportunity that will have a positive impact on safety. Councilman Cheeks questioned the cost of the first year and Chief Smith answered \$3,000 and it will be paid by the Federal Government. This grant is a 90/70/50/30 grant and will cover all benefits, training, and salary. Councilman Cheeks recommended the Council deny the request. Councilwoman Chappell-Stevens questioned the outcome of previous applications and the Chief responded he had been applying for this grant for the past 5 years.

Town Administrator discussed a Risk Management/Safety Policy presented by Chief Smith. Mr. Thomson explained this is safety and liability policy that would enable the Town to be eligible to earn a matching grant of \$6,000 for fire equipment. Chief Smith noted GMA has new requirements and safety guidelines and this policy will enable the Town to be in compliance.

Councilman Crenshaw made a motion to adopt the Risk Management/Safety Policy, seconded by Councilman Hardman. Discussion made.

Councilman Cheeks questioned the matching grant and Chief Smith noted it was a \$6,000 matching grant that we may be eligible for upon the adoption of this policy.

The motion carried unanimously.

Items of Interest

- 1) *Chief of Police Pennington discussed the proposed recommendation for closing Center Street as a result of reported traffic issues. Chief Pennington noted speed bumps and speeding are not an issue and to leave Center Street open and possibly making it a one way from Third Street to Mechanics Avenue. Councilman Cheeks suggested installing a red flashing light depending on the cost and to move forward with the issue.*

Mr. Cheeks recommended eliminating the unleaded gas tank and suggested obtaining gas from the facility on Sally Mood Drive, and to relocate the diesel tank to Public Works yard, in an effort to maintain a permanent record of who received gas and leave Center Street open Councilman Hardman commented he would like input from Chief Smith and Public Works Director, Gary Johnston. Chief Smith recommended moving the tanks to Public Works rather than driving to Sally Mood. Mayor Thomas commented presently there are no funds available within the budget to move the gas tanks. Councilman Crenshaw agreed with moving the gas tanks and recommends it be added to the Capital Budget for the safety of the Museum and Library and to move towards using a key card system.

Resident Ed Truitt addressed the Council requesting Council to take into consideration the possible danger to those who come behind the Library. Mr. Truitt recommended the Council to be prepared to accommodate about 50% of the Library visitors being re-routed according to the layout recommended and to not park Fire trucks behind the Library. He further commented the area may become congested with parking directly behind the Library. Mr. Truitt expressed his concern with the Fire Department's personnel and the manner in which the equipment is being parked.

- 2) *Town Administrator Thomson continued with his report and thanked Mr. John Mattingly, Chair of Personnel Board, for looking over the present Personnel Handbook and Policy Manual, to which he has made some edits and suggestions. Mr. Thomson mentioned working with Clerk of Council McCombs on delegating work related to the Personnel Handbook and Policy Manual and will have recommendations for Council in the near future.*

- 3) *Town Administrator Thomson reported on the continuing discussions regarding Thunderbolt Marine's willingness to pay for the water line for their water supply. Currently the conversation has been simply a "Gentlemen's Discussion". Mr. Thomson requested Council's approval to proceed with obtaining a written agreement with Thunderbolt Marine.*

Councilman Crenshaw made a motion to grant approval to proceed with obtaining a written agreement, seconded by Councilman Hardman. The motion carried unanimously.

- 4) *Town Administrator Thomson stated there is no update on the status of the GEFA grant/loan from GEFA, and reported the engineers have everything they need.*
- 5) *Town Administrator Thomson reported the EPD has not responded to the letter requesting an extension and suggested Council may want to consider taking further action.*
- 6) *Town Administrator noted GA Power received the lamp posts and are working with Atlanta Gas Light to find the leader lines. GA Power has suggested placing 3 posts in the area near Thunderbolt Marine.*
- 7) *Town Administrator Thomson introduced the topic of the Town's current retirement program and Councilman Crenshaw believes the current program is unfair. Mr. Crenshaw discussed the current program and stated monies will not be invested to those employees who have been employed for 5 years or less.*

Councilman Crenshaw made a motion to collect data on a retirement eligible program of 6 months employment to be presented in August 2009 Council Meeting, seconded by Councilman Hardman. Discussion made.

Councilwoman Goette questioned the Town's capability of having its own retirement program. Mr. Thomson stated unfortunately no, and that the present program is offered statewide by GMA, and it would require creating an impact study on the effects of changing the current retirement program. Councilman Cheeks questioned if the Town has investigated other Cities' retirement programs, to which Mr. Thomson replied he would look into the issue.

The motion carried unanimously.

- 8) *Councilwoman Goette questioned the Town Administrator Thomson regarding a crew working on a tower on Town property and does their contract state the Town be notified prior to them performing repairs or maintenance on their equipment. Mr. Thomson stated the companies should out of courtesy notify the Town, and expressed his displeasure in not receiving written notification.*

Councilwoman Goette recommended in the contract process it should be stated in the contract requiring the Town receive prior notification before performing any upgrades or maintenance on their equipment. Mayor Thomas commented Chatham County requires prior notification with regards to contractors performing any upgrades or repairs to their equipment installed on the County's towers. Chief of Police Pennington noted the crew in questioned was working on the tower a week earlier and her department had spoken with them.

Councilwoman Goette stated her concern regarding the gates surrounding the tower be locked and addressed Public Works Director Johnston on this matter. Mr. Johnston mentioned if the property is Town property it is kept locked. Audience member Phoung Nguyen addressed the Council and stated he works for GA Power and the gate locks are linked together and each contractor has a key for access and this is a normal practice for all cities where a substation is in place. Clerk of Council McCombs mentioned a company having been approved a permit, however have not picked the building permit up as of yet. This company may or may not pertain to this company in question.

- Mayor Thomas- *No report*
- John Cheeks- *Planning/Zoning Issues*
Councilman Cheeks reported on the success of the Land Use Orientation presented by Tricia Reynolds and Lupita McClenning. Mr. Cheeks announced the first meeting of the Land Use Committee will be held on Monday July 13, 2009 7:00pm at the Town Hall. An invitation to attend the meeting was extended to the Public and questions and/or recommendations are welcomed and will be addressed at the end of the meeting.
- Bobby Hardman- *Police/Fire Matters*
Councilman Hardman called upon Fire Chief Smith to discuss Fire Department matters. Chief Smith addressed the Council and discussed the Fire Department's need for Council's approval to transfer dispatch from Chatham County to MedStar in order to provide better service. Chief Smith stated Town Administrator Thomson is collaborating with other cities for information.

Councilman Hardman made a motion to approve the use of MedStar, seconded by Councilman Crenshaw. Discussion made.

Councilman Cheeks questioned if citizens were paying for the 911 service from Chatham County and Chief of Police Pennington stated the cost was \$1.00 per month per household, and \$1.50 from per mobile. Chief Smith emphasized the importance and noted the change in service will be a one button transfer and no additional fee would apply. Councilman Cheeks was concerned with cost and transferring services. Councilwoman Goette noted the cost does not change and Chief Smith stated the Town will gain the services of a 24/7 Ambulance located in Thunderbolt. Chief Smith further commented the need for a change resulted from the past 3 to 4 years of ongoing issues and complaints about the matter in which Chatham County dispatch is being operated. Town Administrator Thomson has been aware of these issues for at least 2 years.

Planning and Zoning Member Jan Yarborough questioned the 911 process. Chief Smith explained that the Fire Department operates entirely different from the Police Department. Fire Chief Smith would like to have a designated Fire Dispatcher and Chatham County does not have the man power to provide this service. Planning and Zoning Member Linda Buttersworth commented on the matter and questioned the time factor. Chief Smith further stated the importance of the need for better communications from the scene with dispatch, and MedStar will have a one button transfer. Councilman Hardman mentioned the City and other two Fire Departments in the County have the one button transfer as well.

The motion carried. Councilman Cheeks opposed.

Chief Smith made an announcement requesting the Town of Thunderbolt keep the families of Mr. Taylor, Mr. Mulligan, Mr. Barrow and Mr. Fields in your prayers for their loss of these life-long residents.

Chief of Police Pennington addressed the Council and stated the Police Department has 3 new vehicles, and 1 of the 3 vehicles of the Town was sold on GovDeals. The 2 remaining vehicles will be placed on GovDeals in a staggered schedule, which is recommended. Chief Pennington noted Sandy Branum will lend out an engraver to the Block Captains of the Neighborhood Watch to be used in connection with tracking personal items resulting from theft. Residents will be able to put GA and their driver's license number on their valuables in the case of theft their items will be easily identified. Chief Pennington recommends residents to not use their social security or telephone numbers. The email system is working well on getting information out and there will be a presentation on Counterfeit Money on July 9, 2009 at the Senior Citizens building.

- *Beth Goette- Senior Citizens/OMI Issues No Report*
- *Kimberly Chappell-Stevens- Museum & Finance Matters No Report*
- *David Crenshaw - Finance Matters*
Councilman Crenshaw discussed reviewing the budget from Water and Sewer next year the Town will have \$200,000 available to support the enterprise funds for next year. Mr. Crenshaw responded on Councilman Cheeks' suggestion on implementing a Thunderbolt Homestead Exemption in place that will benefit those who need the assistance. The process to move forward would be to contact Legislation and apply for Homestead Exemption to pass by GA Legislature for Thunderbolt residents to sign-up and be able to go into effect in 2011.

Town Attorney Barrow will begin to research the subject and the Town may have to adjust the mileage rate at a later date. Councilman Crenshaw commented this is not a motion just a discussion. Councilman Cheeks questioned the Legislature process and Mr. Barrow mentioned from his understanding if all Legislatures are in favor it will be Home Rule. Town Administrator mentioned the City of Tybee has this in place for their citizens and will collect information.

Councilman Crenshaw acknowledged Clerk of Council for doing a good job the on tax collections and report. Mr. Crenshaw called on the Clerk of Council McCombs to explain the report in detail. Mrs. McCombs reported on the delinquent tax collections from 2005-2008; the sum of \$3,458.00 was collected from June 11th - July 7th, and for the 2009 tax collection from the bill out April 28th – July 7th a total of \$220,995 has been collected. The F.I.F.A procedures are still in effect and contributed to the revenue increase.

Mrs. McCombs noted the tax payers did not receive a first notice before 2008 bills were sent to Penn Credit and it is up to Mayor and Council to take further action to correct the error. Mr. Crenshaw mentioned we need to change our operating procedures and send out first notice by mail, hand deliver second notice by hand, and give them 30 days until it will be sent to Penn Credit. Clerk of Council McCombs recommended consulting Penn Credit. Councilwoman Goette questioned if there were penalties and Mrs. McCombs stated there were no penalties to handle this in house.

Councilwoman Chappell-Stevens questioned the amount of notices sent from Penn Credit and Mrs. McCombs noted there were about 155 notices mailed and the Town has received about 20 telephone calls. Town Attorney Barrow recommended consulting Penn Credit to gain manner towards eliminate confusion. Councilman Crenshaw requested staff to fix the error.

Planning and Zoning member Linda Buttersworth noted her concern with non delinquent notices and creditors. Mrs. McCombs assured Mrs. Buttersworth it was not forwarded to the Credit Bureau. Planning and Zoning Member Jan Yarbrough questioned the reason why Thunderbolt is contracting tax collections. Mrs. McCombs noted it was best for the number of back year taxes, and collections are better and the revenues increased as a benefit. Councilman Crenshaw made a comment that the delinquent taxes have been cleaned up from 2001 to 2005. There was no further discussion.

Councilman Crenshaw addressed the pay of Council Members and noted it was the lowest of surrounding municipalities in the amount of \$75.00. Mr. Crenshaw noted there is extensive work into being a Council Member and it deters people from running for future elections. Mr. Crenshaw suggested increasing the salary for future Councils to make it in line with similar municipalities and for Town Administrator Thomson to continue a survey on the subject.

Mayor Thomas noted she does not support Mr. Crenshaw's suggestion and emphasized she did not run for Mayor for the pay. Mayor Thomas noted she is content with the pay. Councilwoman Goette questioned if voting for an increase salary has to go before the State. Town Attorney Barrow mentioned it does not have to go before the State however, this will have to have special advertising and two readings.

Planning and Zoning Member Linda Buttersworth mention she does not earn a salary for her position as a committee member and is content due the other reasons for taking on this responsibility. An audience member commented that the Town is currently unable to

afford a sufficient amount of Police Officers and if future members cannot accept the current salary, they should not run. Councilman Hardman questioned if Town Administrator Thomson will research this matter and Mr. Thomson confirmed he will look into this matter.

- T. Gebel Seese- Court *Not Present*

6. **LEGAL REPORT:**

- a. Red Flag Rule Ordinance (Sample Attached), For Review/Discussion
Town Attorney Barrow presented a draft of a federally mandated ordinance concerning data privacy for discussion. Town Administrator Thomson will accept comments Monday-Friday. Councilman Hardman questioned the deadline and Mr. Thomson responded the Georgia Municipal Association recommends adopting the ordinance. Mayor Thomas confirmed the Council will review the ordinance and have it on the agenda for the following Council meeting.

7. **OLD BUSINESS:**

(Public Hearing - Board of Zoning Appeals)

- b. **Petitioner:** Phuong K. Nguyen, Camken Construction, LLC, Agent for Annetta Brown, 4203 Whatley Avenue, Thunderbolt, GA
Requests: (1) Approval to Revised Specific Site Development Plan for Multifamily Development to address Density matter and/or Proposed Additional Efficiency Unit, (2) To Vary a Set back Requirement of 10 feet to 6 feet, (3) Also to Vary Number of Required Parking Spaces. **Property Location:** 000 Fish bait Trail; **Parcel No.** 3-0292-02-008

****NOTE: Action Taken at the Planning/Zoning Level 06/17/2009**
--Fire Safety Concerns Addressed Satisfactorily by Chief Smith
--The Commission Approved Request (a-2), Requests (a-1 & 3) were Denied

Petitioner Nguyen addressed the Mayor Council and discussed plan revisions for Firewall Parking Spaces. Clerk of Council McCombs noted the Planning and Zoning Committee approved to Vary a Set back Requirement of 10 feet to 6 feet. Mr. Nguyen mentioned there will be two parking spaces for each unit totaling 6 and 3 units with Handicap parking. Mr. Nguyen noted their inspector said they should have 4 units however there was a density issue.

Town Attorney Barrow confirmed the petitioner is dropping Item(1) and Item(3) and requesting only Item(2). Mayor Thomas noted we are simply reviewing Item(2).

Councilwoman Chappell-Stevens made a motion to approve a Vary Set back Requirement of 10ft to 6ft as the Planning and Zoning does, seconded by Councilman Cheeks. Discussion made.

Councilman Crenshaw requested Fire Chief Smith's opinions and comments. Chief Smith commented Mr. Nguyen will have 3 units instead of 4 that will include Fire systems and Firewalls. Chief Smith commented on the density issue with having 4 units and mentioned there will be something done with the area and agrees with having 4 units.

Petitioner Nguyen confirmed they are dropping the 4th unit as of today and will only have 3 in place. Councilman Hardman questioned the use of the area and Mr. Nguyen responded having 2 Storage Facilities and vacant area. Mayor Thomas reviewed the initial request of the 4ft variance in order to have the 4ft variance.

The motion carried. Councilman Crenshaw opposed.

8. **NEW BUSINESS:**

- a) **Petitioner:** Jan Yarbrough, 24 Bonaventure Road
Requests: (1) Approval to Vary a Lot Front Width Requirement from 60 Ft to 50Ft,
Parcel No. 3-0002-05-003 (Lot 22), Proposed to Front Fennell Street
(2) Approval to Vary a Driveway Width Requirement from 12 Ft to 11 Ft,
Parcel No. 3-0002-05-003A (Lot 12 & 13), 24 Bonaventure Road

***NOTE: Action Taken at the Planning/Zoning Level 06/17/2009**

--The Commission Approved Requests (a-1 &2)

Councilman Cheeks made a motion to approve variance of Lot Front Width and Driveway Width, seconded by Councilwoman Goette. The motion carried unanimously.

9. **AGENDA AMMENDMENTS**

a) **Updated Zoning Map**

Councilwoman Chappell-Stevens made a motion to approve updated Zoning Map which included no changes, seconded by Councilman Hardman. The motion carried unanimously.

b) **Executive Session** for the Purpose of Legal and/or Personnel Matters

Councilman Crenshaw tendered motion to adjourn regular meeting to enter into an Executive Session for the purpose of legal and/or personnel matters, seconded by Councilwoman Goette. The motion carried unanimously.

Open meeting reconvened upon a motion tendered by Councilman Hardman, seconded by Councilman Crenshaw. All were in favor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. *Mayor Thomas congratulated and announced Councilwoman Kimberly Chappell-Stevens on receiving a certificate from Georgia Municipal Association.*

2. *Mayor Thomas announced Thunderbolt will have a version of National Night Out to be held on October 6, 2009. The weather in August is not conducive to the elderly and children. It may be too hot and therefore it will be held in October. The Mayor noted it will be advertised in the Town Newsletter.*

SIGN-IN SHEET

1. **Debbie Guymon**

Purpose: Variance to Well Depth on Permit

Resident Guymon addressed the Mayor and Council requesting a variance to dig beyond 100ft in order to obtain a well for irrigation. Councilman Crenshaw noted he believes the max is 100ft; however, he does not see an issue with going up to the max if the Environment

Protection Division and State will allow. Public Works Director Johnston stated he does not believe the max of 100ft is not for the aquifer. Councilwoman Goette expressed a concern with the max, and Mr. Johnston will obtain information on the max depth for a shallow well. Resident Guymon may need to go beyond 100ft to acquire water supply for irrigation purposes. Mayor Thomas requested the Council to vote on a motion.

***Councilman Cheeks made a motion to drill for a well up to the max depth the State will allow and not beyond, seconded by Councilwoman Goette.
Discussion made.***

Mayor Thomas instructed Resident Guymon to collect and complete the proper the application from Clerk of Council McCombs.

The motion carried unanimously.

Prepared by: Caroline R. Nguyen
Administrative Clerk

Reviewed by: Rose M. McCombs
Clerk of Council

Reviewed by: Beth E. Goette
Council Member

Administrator's report

July 2009

Nothing requires council action this month.

Items of Interest

1. Chief Pennington and Capt. Pierce have made a recommendation on Center Street. The diagram is attached.
2. In order to qualify for a grant for fire equipment, the town will adopt the attached risk management /safety policy.
3. We have been in communication with GEFA on supporting documentation for the GEFA grant/loan, but as of this date we've heard nothing re: approval.
4. No word from EPD re: the letter sent in late May asking for an extension and stating our continued objection to the new withdrawal limit.
5. We haven't used City water for some time. OMNI system is working and has alerted us twice on overloads to pump stations.
6. We are soliciting bids for safety railings at the Sr. Citizen's center.
7. GATEWAY \$50,000 landscaping grant project is underway. Surveys have been completed, and detailed drawings for bidding are being prepared.
8. Staff was to have begun work on Personnel Handbook. However, Mr. John Mattingly, the Chair of the Personnel Board, asked for an opportunity for input. We will wait on his comments and suggested revisions/additions before staff begins work.
9. Waterproofing has been purchased for Thomson Park structures. It will be applied next week.
10. GA Power has hit some sort of snag on getting the required parts to begin the lamp replacement project. I am in continual communication with the rep on this.
11. Extra copies of keys to Town Hall are in administrator office.
12. The current retirement program requires a 5year vesting period before an employee is eligible for benefits. We will be asking GMA to determine what costs would be associated with having the vesting after 6 months. The proposal with estimate will be on the August council agenda.