

TOWN OF GRIFTON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP MEETING
December 3, 2013

Present: Mayor B.R. Jackson; Commissioners E.F. Albritton, Mary Grace Bright, Will Barnes, Richard Hill, Sammy Whitehurst; Manger Joe Albright

Absent: None

Mayor Jackson called the meeting to order.

Mayor Jackson led the Board of Commissioners in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Recognition of Persons to be Heard: None

Public Hearing

The purpose of the Public Hearing is to receive public comment for a rezoning request from Ecoplexus, Inc. to rezone Lenoir County Parcel #111, 4331 Tick Bite Road from RA-20MH to I-Industrial.

Manager Albright informed the Board and the Public that a request has been received from Ecoplexus, Inc. to rezone the above listed parcel from RA-20MH to I-Industrial in order to place a solar farm on the property. He stated that even though the word farm is included this will not be used for agricultural farming. Manager Albright reminded the Board that whenever we are talking about a rezoning request it is appropriate to ask what the use will be for the property if it is rezoned. It is not appropriate to use it as a decision maker because any type of Industrial use would be allowed once the property is rezoned.

Manager Albright introduced Nathan Rogers, who is employed by Ecoplexus, Inc.

Mr. Rogers gave a power point presentation explaining the solar farm, the process, what will be needed, how it will work and the time frame of the construction.

Mayor Jackson asked for public comment.

*Allen Wayne Mitchell of 4733 Tick Bite Road came before the Board to express his concerns about how this would help electrical rates and the Government funds being spent on this project. He also stated that this area is a hunting preserve and that should also be considered. He felt that there should be something in writing stating that in the future the electrical rates would not increase or would be decreased. He stated he is not for or against the rezoning but does not see how it will help the property owners.

Mr. Rogers stated that there will not be an immediate return on this project. It is a 30 year process and no profit will be made until after the first 15 years.

*Madeline Davis stated that she is an adjoining property owner. She asked if her property would be rezoned without her knowledge.

Manager Albright stated that her property could not be re-zoned without a request from her. Ms. Davis also expressed her concerns about how this project would affect the adjoining land, traffic and the soil.

Mr. Rogers stated that there would be no impact to the surrounding property. He also stated that after the initial construction phase there would be little to no traffic. He also reassured Ms. Davis that NCDENR would be involved and the only thing going into the ground would be the poles that hold the panels.

*Mr. Gary Davis (son of Ms. Davis) lives in Kinston, N.C. expressed his concerns with the entrance to his mother's property. He stated that her property is now being farmed and there would need to be an entranceway to her property for the farmers to bring their equipment in. Mr. Rogers stated that he would need to get the Davis' information so this issue could be resolved by the designers. He feels there would not be a problem with Ms. Davis accessing her property.

*J.P. Cauley of 3275 Faulkner Road asked if the panels could be raised so this property could still be used for cattle or sheep and if his cattle got out of his fence would they be able to get onto this property.

Mr. Rogers stated that to raise the panels high enough for cattle the cost would be much higher and there would be a 6ft fence to secure the property. He also stated that there would be nothing on the property that would cause harm to any human or animal.

*Patricia West Harris of 3743 Matthews came before the Board to ask if they are planning on taking her land from her.

Mayor Jackson reassured Ms. Harris that the only land affected will be what is negotiated between Mr. Braxton (owner of the property at 4331 Tick Bite Road) and Ecoplexus, Inc. He stated that no one would take her land from her.

Mayor Jackson closed the public hearing after several questions and comments from the Board. Mayor Jackson also thanked all who attended.

Discussion Items

1. *Streets Bond Referendum Results Certification- Resolution No:2013-16*

Manager Albright explained it is necessary to adopt this resolution certifying the results of the Streets Bond Referendum and then advertise the results in the newspaper.

Manager Albright recommended that this item be put on the consent agenda at the next regular meeting. The Board agreed.

2. *Streets Bond Reimbursement Intent- Resolution No:2013-17*

Manager Albright explained that this resolution simply states that all monies spent by the Town before the bond proceeds are received will be reimbursed to the Town.

Manager Albright recommended that this item be put on the consent agenda at the next regular meeting. The Board agreed.

Manager Albright asked for discussion on a piece of equipment that is needed by the utilities department. He stated that a local contractor has allowed the Town of Grifton to use this equipment free of charge when needed but is now ready to sell. The equipment is an enclosed trailer that is pre-equipped with a generator, tools, street flags, safety cones, rain gear, vests, and any other gear needed on a job site. He stated that when you have a limited staff it is very important to be self sufficient so that there is no time wasted. As it stands now, time is being used running back and forth to the utilities shop to get supplies. If we had this equipment that time would be eliminated. The contractor is intending to sell the trailer and has already been guaranteed a certain price. He provided information from the seller estimating the value of the trailer and equipment is \$12,675. Manager Albright stated that he is not asking that the Board make a decision tonight but to consider this opportunity due to the need.

Commissioner Whitehurst asked if the piece of equipment could be used in emergency situations.

Manager Albright responded that this piece of equipment would be used in all situations.

Commissioner Bright stated that she is no expert but some of the pricing on a few of the items seemed high. She asked if the equipment had been priced elsewhere.

Manager Albright stated that he has priced the equipment new but not used. He feels that looking at the trailer, the compressor, and the generator would take care of the \$12,000 alone. That does not include all the other tools and equipment that would also be included in this price. Manager Albright reiterated that the benefit of buying this equipment is that it is already stocked and ready to go.

Mayor Jackson asked Manager Albright to get prices for new equipment so they would have something to compare.

Commissioner Barnes stated that although he agrees with Commissioner Bright that some of the items are overpriced he agrees that with all the other items included it would be worth the price.

Commissioner Bright stated that she is concerned about public opinion with the local contractor being the father of an employee. She stated that when questioned she wanted to be able to say that the decision was made with due diligence.

The Board agreed that the equipment is needed by the utilities department.

Mayor Jackson stated that the utilities department needs this equipment whether it is new or used.

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Bright asked Manager Albright if Suddenlink gave a time frame of when the work would be completed and when services would be offered.

Manager Albright stated that they did not give any indication of time frames. He also stated that he could ask but they did not have to give the Town an answer. Commissioner Bright asked Manager Albright to see if he could get some information from them.

Commissioner Whitehurst stated that he has had several questions about the street paving and when it will begin. He stated he responds by saying that we are following protocol and it will not begin for several months.

Manager Albright stated that there will not be any paving done until sometime in late 2014. Manager Albright stated that at next month's meeting he will have a schedule of the Streets Paving Project.

Commissioner Hill informed the Board that he will be having brain surgery in 2014. He also stated that next week will be his last meeting and he has enjoyed serving on this Board.

Mayor Jackson thanked Commissioner Hill for his service and support.

Commissioner Whitehurst informed the Board that Santa will be arriving in Grifton at the Town lot Friday at 7:00p.m.

Commissioner Whitehurst also stated that he felt the Grifton Rescue Squad should receive public recognition for their outstanding Veteran's Day event.

Commissioner Barnes told Commissioner Hill it had been a pleasure serving with him on this Board.

Commissioner Barnes also stated that the guys putting the crosswalks down at the school were quick and efficient.

Commissioner Whitehurst made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hill. The motion was carried unanimously.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted
Angel Hudson
Town of Grifton