TOWN OF TRYON
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TRYON DEPOT - MEETING ROOM
SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor J. Alan Peoples Mayor Pro Tem Chrelle Booker

Commissioners Present: Bill Crowell

Staff Present:	Jim Fatland, Town Manager	Susan Bell, Town Clerk
	Greg McCool, Public Works Director	Tim Daniels, Planning Director
	William Morgan, Town Attorney	Scott Holt, Police Chief
	Josh Walton, Fire Chief	

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Peoples called the meeting to order and introduced Reverend Eleanor Miller for an invocation.

INVOCATION

Reverend Eleanor Miller began the meeting with a prayer. “Most gracious and all wise God, our heavenly father, the maker and the creator of all things. We want to first of all say thank you for allowing us to gather here in this place at this appointed time. You know the purpose for which we are gathered, and we ask that you be in the midst that things will go according to your will and according to your way. We know that you require things to be done decent and in order, and we thank you God for the swearing in of the new police officer, Brother Thomas. We ask you, God, to keep him covered. Watch over him. We thank you for the education he has received and the training he has received, and we thank you that he has chosen to serve Tryon, the citizens of Tryon. And we not only pray for him, but we pray for all the officers as they serve Tryon and all the public officials, all those who are in leadership position. We ask you to protect them. And dear heavenly father, we are here to discuss the business of Tryon. And again, I say, let it be done decent and in order. And we ask you to bless everyone that's under the sound of my voice. In Jesus name, I do pray. Amen.”

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Pro Tem Chrelle Booker led the Pledge of Allegiance.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: SWEARING IN OF POLICE OFFICER KEYANDRE THOMAS

Manager Jim Fatland begins the swearing in of Keyandre Thomas.

> Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I just want to share with the community that this young man came to the town back in January 23. He applied for a job in the public works department. But on his application, he put on there that his dream was to be a police officer. So, in December of 23, Chief Holt and I approached him because he was interested in being a police officer. He said absolutely. So, we put up the crew as a sponsor to go through the basic law enforcement training program in North Carolina. And he attended the AB Tech. He graduated on July 31st

> of this year. And he's being sworn in this evening as the police officer. And so I think it's time to get him sworn in and make it official, Mr. Mayor.

Town Clerk Susan Bell leads Keyandre Thomas to take his oath as a police officer for the Town of Tryon.

> I, Keyandre Thomas, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution and laws of North Carolina not inconsistent therewith and that I will faithfully perform the duties of the office of police officer on which I am about to enter according to my best skill and ability; so, help me God.

AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Alan Peoples asked for any additions, deletions, and corrections. Hearing none, he entertained a motion to adopt the agenda. Commissioner Bill Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Alan Peoples asked for additions, deletions, and corrections to the Consent Agenda, which included the Board's minutes, Tax reports, financial reports grant status report and for information only, the Tourism and Harmon Field Board minutes. Hearing none, he entertained a motion to adopt. Mayor Pro Tem Chrelle Booker so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

FINANCE AGREEMENT FOR FIRE APPARATUS

Town Manager Jim Fatland reported that the authorized purchase of a fire apparatus went out to bid for bank financing. Town of Tryon's local HomeTrust Bank offered the best rate of 4.99%. The purchase price is $852,000 and will be financed over the course of 15 years. Manager Fatland asked if there were any questions.

Mayor Alan Peoples entertained a motion to accept the finance agreement from HomeTrust Bank for the fire apparatus. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

PURCHASE OF SIDE ARM MOWER FOR STREET DEPARTMENT

Manager Jim Fatland asks for approval of the purchase a side arm mower. The cost is $157,000, and he would like to finance it for 15 years. It's going to take four or five months for it to be delivered, and he will come back to the council with financing at that time. He stresses that the current mower is in bad shape and a new one is way overdue. Manager Fatland asked if anyone has questions.

Mayor Alan Peoples entertained a motion to accept the purchase of a side arm mower. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

PURCHASE OF TRACTOR FOR HARMON FIELD

Manager Jim Fatland asked for approval of the purchase of a tractor for Harmon Field for $28,000. Mayor Alan Peoples entertained a motion to accept the purchase of the tractor for $28,000. Mayor Pro Tem Chrelle Booker so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

CONTRACT AWARD FOR PACOLET/DEPOT PEDESTRIAN DECK

Manager Jim Fatland reported of making improvements in the downtown area, specifically the corner of Pacolet and Depot Street which is a small parcel of land that the town owns. There were discussions with the council about putting an elevated deck there for outside dining and for the public to enjoy. He said the goal is to get pedestrian traffic to the businesses up Pacolet Street. John Walters did the design for the facility. Three contractors placed bids, the lowest being $67,000 and the highest $119,000.

John Walters met with the lowest bid contractor, Carlson Farmer, and gave a brief update on how that meeting went. He reported that Mr. Farmer is comfortable with his number and sent the schedule of values, which is the breakdown of all the different components of the numbers and everything looks in order.

Manager Jim Fatland shared with the Mayor and Council that the Town has made some prudent investments. “In the old days, we had money in the local bank earning very little interest. We’re investing our money with our state treasurer’s approved investment pool. And so, we’re projected to go from $5,000 two years ago to $140,000 in interest earnings. So, this would be the source of funds to pay for this facility.”

Mayor Alan Peoples entertained a motion to accept the bid from Carlson Farmer. Mayor Pro Tem Chrelle Booker so moved in honor of late Commissioner Crys Armbrust. The motion carried unanimously.

TRYON FIRE DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENT EXCHANGE WITH GREEN CREEK FIRE DEPARTMENT

Manager Jim Fatland shared that he sat down with the Fire Chief and his Assistant Fire Chief to discuss where they want the department to be several years up the road with that equipment. They listed their current equipment to help them get to that end result.

Fire Chief Josh Walton reported the following about their fleet:

> We do have more of an aging fleet. We’re very lucky that we do have a new fire engine. We found out today it’s going to make its journey from Wisconsin down this way towards the end of the week. So, hopefully by the time we put it in service, it will be sometime mid-October. But we have some apparatus that we’ve been dealing with. Green Creek Fire Department has approached us. They were looking at our Engine #3, which is our third engine right now. It predominantly just stays in the base. They have asked if we’d be willing to trade for a smaller brush truck, which we currently don’t have, and $25,000 cash for that engine. It is a fair market trade. They equal out. The ones that have been here a while, the brush truck actually, originated in Tryon. It was Tryon originally. It was sold several years ago, and they want to put it back on at Tryon. We’re asking approval to continue with the process as protocol goes.

Manager Jim Fatland asked the council if they would agree to proceed. He said he would bring it back to council in October for approval. Mayor Alan Peoples entertained a motion to agree to proceed. Mayor Pro Tem Chrelle Booker so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION FOR AUTHORIZED SIGNERS FOR HOMETRUST BANK

Jim Fatland reported that currently he is signing checks for the town. All checks require two signatures—one from elected officials, which is the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem, and the second signature from the Town Manager, the Finance Officer. He recommends that a second person be authorized to sign checks in his absence, Tim Daniels, the Planning Director, to make sure that bills are paid timely. He asked if anyone has questions.

Mayor Alan Peoples entertains a motion to authorize Tim Daniels to sign checks for the town. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

AMENDMENT TO PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL

Manager Jim Fatland reported the following:

> The current personnel policy manual was put together when I was here the first time between 2002 and 2008. It's been amended time to time. One of the things that's come up lately when we've been recruiting vacant positions and retention of our current employees is we have fallen behind on what employees are granted for vacation leave. I had our new employee, Gina Macaluso, do a survey of several towns and counties and found that we were the worst ones all along. My recommendation before you tonight, is to adopt the Polk County schedule for vacation approval.
>
> | **Years of Service** | **Accrued Per Year** |
> |---|---|
> | 0-4 | 12 |
> | 5-9 | 15 |
> | 10-14 | 18 |
> | 15-19 | 20 |
> | 20-25 | 22 |
> | 25+ | 25 |
>
> This would just change the accrual rate that employees would earn as they worked for the town. I want to thank the Town Board when we had difficulty recruiting police officers. We stepped up to the plate and we got a competitive salary. Also, the recommendation is to have the staff be authorized to go through the entire manual and we'll bring it back to the council during the budgetary process next year so you can review it and adopt it and get a current manual that's more consistent with our neighboring towns and counties. Any questions?

Mayor Peoples entertains a motion to adopt the amendment that was proposed by Town Manager Fatland. Chrelle Booker so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Historic Preservation

Town Clerk Bell reported that they have three appointments for the Historic Preservation and that all three need to be appointed. The three nominees are Wendy Connington, Lynn Perlmutter, and Julia Calhoun Williams. Mayor Alan Peoples entertains a motion to adopt all three nominees. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

Harmon Field Board of Supervisors

Town Clerk Bell reported that they've had a resignation on the Harmon Field Board. They have Greg Miner as an applicant and would like to appoint him to finish out that term. Mayor Peoples asked if anyone had questions. None were asked. Mayor Peoples entertains a motion to appoint Mr. Miner. Mayor Pro Tem Chrelle Booker so moved. The motion carried unanimously. Town Manager Fatland added that Greg has been a strong advocate on the Parks Committee. He continues to say that Greg's done a wonderful job, and he's done a lot of work on Vaughn Creek Greenway as well as Woodland Park, and he thinks he'll be a great asset for Harmon Field.

DOWNTOWN/TDDA UPDATE

Planning Director Tim Daniels reports the following:

- August Fourth Friday, we were pet-centric. We had animal adoptions. Each organization was able to raise funds and our musicians donated their earnings to Foothills Humane Society and Paws, Prayers, and Promises. So that was a pretty good success.
- September Fourth Friday, Mercury Rising will be on the Plaza playing music. The History Museum will be hosting events from Thursday to Sunday downtown for their 10th anniversary, so go check that out.
- Beer Fest ticket sales began on August 1st and we are approximately 70% sold for VIP tickets already… that's coming right along.
- The Barbeque Beatdown will be this Saturday on McCown St. We'll have some games on the Plaza as well. We'll have music going on. Sample tastings will be from 4 to 6. We'll all be hanging out. We have a bunch of prizes, including a championship wrestling belt that we had engraved and everything. It's very exciting. Stephen here thinks he is going to win everything, but he's not. So, we hope to see you all there. Again, we'll be smoking meats all day on McCown Street, so come out and enjoy. But again, we'll be handing out samples from 4 to 6, but there may be some available before then.
- On October 21st, TDDA is hosting their annual meeting at the Fitzgerald Event Center at 5pm.
- Last night the design committee for downtown met and we've got some exciting things cooking for Halloween decorations and Christmas decorations.

MINIMUM HOUSING/PLANNING UPDATE

Planning Director Tim Daniels reports the following:

- Shepherd Street looks like it's going to be about 45 days until it's done, but they're making big progress on that.
- The 28th of this month the log cabin on Peake will be going for a test burn for the Fire Department and after which we will have about a week or two for the owner to clean up the remains of it. We have a couple fire departments coming out for a test burn and training. They're always willing to do that for us.
    - A citizen asked what the property owner is digging behind that house. Public Works Director McCool answered that the owner is clearing out his property line and everything behind it so he could stay. He didn't say what he was going to do moving forward, but just why he was clearing it.
    - The same citizen asked about the status of a house on East Howard right up the edge of the hill on the right-hand side because she thought it was supposed to come down and burn. Planning Director Daniels reported that the Town gave him a permit to put an addition on the

home. He said the status of that permit is probably getting closer to expiration, but the owner was working to renovate it. Daniels said that he would check the progress on the inside of the home. Also, he previously talked to the owner about cleaning up the front area and some of it was a little burnt up.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager, Jim Fatland, reports the following:

- As you know, we hired Lourdes Guitierrez who came to work for us to help out Tim Daniels to be the Downtown Director, working 20 hours for us and 20 hours for Polk County. She was offered a job for the county, and I asked her to work full-time for us, and she accepted staying with us. She said working for the Town is more fun. One thing I want to share with the community and the council is having Tim and Lourdes working together in these downtown events… they really enjoy doing it; they keep thinking of more events downtown; and there are people who love what they do. I think it's a tremendous opportunity.
- I also want to talk briefly about the Saluda Grade Trail. I know the council now; we've got that committee formed. I think we should start meeting now and start planning for the future. I did go down and meet with the reps from Inman, South Carolina. I think the South Carolina folks are going to raise money to build a Trail Center. I asked Tim the mileage from the state line to The Depot and he said it was 1.3 miles. The challenge I have for the Town of Tryon and our community is that when they cut the ribbon in Inman, I think this trail should go all the way to Tryon; that we work with them and maybe coincide the construction directly with them, and we could raise the money for that one stretch. If the trail gets built to Tryon, but it gets over to Saluda later on, Tryon's going to be the winner. It's attracting a lot of people to the community.
- Mayor Alan Peoples adds, "To me, it's something that I also serve on the committee primarily with the state. Someone came down with an idea about a month ago with ICC and someone, an elected official, thought that we could put a rail and a trail side by side, and they took back what they said. I think sometimes I'm a realist and I said there's no way that's going to work because of what you have to do. Well, this past week I had one of those people talking to everybody, and I saw the numbers they were talking about to do that. It's not buying any engines or anything like that. It was $366 million. So that's a no-go. So, it looks like we're back at the trail. And the people thought they could get some money back and maybe reimburse the taxpayers. And the trail, they probably wouldn't be able to do that for less than $20 million. I thought that was a no-brainer."

COUNCIL/MAYOR REPORT

Commissioner Crowell:

- Thanks everyone for attending the meeting and for the staff
- Expresses his sadness for missing late Commissioner Armbrust
- Invites everyone to attend the Barbeque Showdown because he and Dave Goss are going to win the chicken category (laughter ensues)

Commissioner Booker:

- Thanks everyone for attending the meeting

- Suggests for attendees to give Police Officer Keyandre Thomas a pat on the back and to congratulate him to assist his confidence as a new Tryon Police Officer
- Thanks Commissioner Crowell and the staff for all that they do

Mayor People:

- Says he's still mad at Officer Thomas for not high jumping on his track team (laughter ensues)
- Thanks everyone for attending the meeting
- Expresses that he's always available on the streets of Tryon or at the Council Meetings to answer any questions

CITIZENS COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Anne Day:
Thanks Tim and the town for always including Paws, Prayers, and Promises. Both of the kittens she was housing were adopted a week later.

Joyce Kimpton:
In January 2024, she asked why her water bill was doubling every month. Nobody could answer her, but after 6 months, the Town replaced her meter. She reported that it's a little better, but it's still running hot.

She mentioned a friend who lives outside the city limits who said that her meter hasn't been read by a drive-by reader in over three months. She said her friend got a scrap piece of paper in the mail that said it was a meter misread, and she now owed $41.67.

She thinks that it is totally unacceptable for what's supposed to be a professional office. She says there is so much wrong with the Tryon Water Department and nobody seems to care or wonder what's going on. "It took one month, the sixth of the month, the ninth of the month, and the twelfth of the month, to read three meters on my street. I want to know why it's taking them so long. We used to have meter readers who read by hand. Two-meter readers—they got it all done. Right now, our bills can run from twenty-something days to forty-something days. There's no excuse. I don't know what kind of calendar they're using, but somebody needs to give them a new one. If the meter readers can't do the job with the radio read, then they need to go back to reading by hand. Maybe then they'll appreciate what they've got with the drive-by."

Mayor Peoples responds, "Joyce, I can answer your frustration because I got a bill when I was going for twenty-eight days for $363. I can tell you this, people have transferred to other departments, and there's a new person being factory trained."

Town Manager Fatland adds, "They purchased the radio readers when I was here the first time. I met with the company rep, and he said basically that the meters themselves work fine. When you drive by and one of the meters is getting a zero reading, you need to get out and read it by hand or replace the battery. The Public Works Department and I brought back the company rep who originally trained the meter readers years ago. So, they're here last week, this week, and we're going to get the system up and running how it should be. I'll give you an analogy. Let's say you have a building with 50 smoke alarms and one went dead on you, so it's beeping. Then two days later, another one beeps. The smart thing to do is replace all the batteries and all these smoke alarms at once. When we bought these years ago, they had around a 10-year life. It might have been easier to replace all the batteries at once. That wasn't done, but we're going through and getting them all

current. So, I think, Joyce, give us some time in the next two months—I want to report back to you what improvements we're doing over the next two months."

Joyce responds, "It's already been 21 months since I brought it up, and things have steadily gotten worse, not better."

Town Manager Fatland responds, "I'm retired; I work part-time. I can't work full-time, but if the council wants to move to a full-time management, go faster than that, I'll be more likely to step down. But I think I made some great strides in the last year and a half. Fortunately, there's a lot of things that we've made improvements on—Harmon Field, you can see the drastic improvements there. We've got four projects in the sewer under construction. There'll be a lot more forthcoming. And I've been devoting my time to trying to get as much grant money to this town as possible. I realize I can't fix everything as quickly as I'd like to, but I did meet yesterday with all the candidates that are running and shared with them what we're working on. We're going to have three new commissioners after this election. I'm looking forward to working with them to continue moving this town as fast as we can to get caught up. You're right, I didn't like the state, the condition, of the water readings. It's going to get much better, but if you could just give me a couple more months, and I think you'll be pleased."

Joyce replies, "I think you actually need somebody for quality control to go through that water department and figure out what's wrong. We know there are meters that are not being read, and they either aren't working or they can't find them. And it's a significant number of readers. It's not two or three."

Manager Jim Fatland replies, "I think you'll be pleased with the new employees we hired as well as the training he's getting from the corporate manufacturers that produce these meters. I was thinking the same as you… Should we just start with brand new meters? But the company manufacturing guys said the meters are in great shape, Jim. It's just that the batteries are dying each month and they need to be replaced as soon as possible. That's what we're doing now."

Joyce responds, "I've talked to a lot of other municipalities who have radio meter readers. They don't have the problems we're having."

Warren Parsons:
"In regards to the entrance to Ziegler Field, the utilities company that's redoing all the poles and wires and what have you, have left that place an absolute mess. And I assume it was some arrangement with the Town trying to use that parcel that's right at the corner of East Howard and Vaughn Street. I understand the need for a place to put their materials and what have you, but I'd also like some assurance on behalf of the community that that's going to be cleaned up and at least returned to something that is at least presentable. As it is now, it's a complete eyesore, just what we need another one of in Tryon and on the East Side."

"With regard to those power poles, they have to cut the old poles so that they can string up the new poles, but they never come back and take down the old poles. They are a complete mess. They are leaning. They are broken, particularly on Cleveland Road. They are rotted, particularly on Peek Street. This has been reported to Duke Energy, I don't know how many times. But it seems to me, and it's not just on the East Side these broken poles. I see it in Town, and I'm surprised that it's allowed to happen. I presume that when they finish restringing the poles, then they will come back and take down those others, but that has not happened in the last three or four years. And they've been talked to at least every time they show up in the community. It seems

to me that the Town will take it upon themselves to advocate on the part of the Town of Tryon to have these poles taken down, remitted within a reasonable amount of time. If you mention it to Duke, they will tell you that other utilities have to come through and take their wires down, but that never happens. There's no coordination, there's no follow-up, there's no follow-through, and we're left holding the bag as it were."

"Item three, the speeding is constant on East Howard Street. I mention this every time I've been to a town council meeting and it's overlooked. I've spoken to the police. They don't seem to be able to do anything about it. It's dangerous. There's no place to walk there. Kids play there. Older folks walk there. And a lot of the culprits, honestly, are the Tryon trucks that come sailing through there wide open all hours of the day. To his credit, whoever was driving the trash truck today was going at a really slow rate down East Howard, and I almost stopped and got out and took a picture of him. It's a wonderful thing to see."

"With regard to the house on East Howard Street from Commissioner Booker, that's a constant question but there's a different answer every time, but the house is still not finished, and we need to get on with it. We just cannot allow those kinds of things to happen. That's exactly the reason why the Peachtree property is in the condition that it is, because people do not stay on the ball with it. It's been a repetition of that sort of thing throughout. I understand everybody's busy, but that's why they [inaudible] to fix it up."

Ken Dahlstrom
"This question may be for Tim, but I'm not quite sure. A couple of years ago, somebody, maybe it was a developer, bought that Tryon Motel, and he had it rezoned. I was at the meeting. Has anything happened on that? What's going on with it because it's just sitting there? I'm just being nosey and curious."

Planning Director Daniels replies, "I've heard talk that it changed hands, but I don't know. I haven't gotten any permit applications. The rezoning was the last I heard of anything happening. But like I said, I did hear that maybe it changed hands, so I'll keep an eye on GIS and see if that updates."

Town Manager Fatland responds to Dr. Parsons comments, "Mr. Mayor, what I suggest is your next month's agenda we could have Duke come out and give a status report of what they're doing, how far along they are. Also, what I've learned to do with Duke is to confront them. For example, in Brevard, they put poles in and left a pile of dirt to walk around. I took pictures of it and sent it to the manager of Duke. He had crews out to clean it all up. So, I think they operate more like, if they get complaints, the address it. If they don't, they don't."

A citizen adds, "But also, they have an accountability to the Public Service Commission. File a complaint with the director of the PSC. They are required to answer all complaints within 15 days, so there's another option."

Manager Fatland responds about Duke Energy's Regional Director, "The Regional Director is Craig DeBrew. He's the government representative of all the counties and cities in this area. I think we should bring him in to give an update on all the work they're doing, and also, we can share with him before the meeting that we've received several complaints and to know what his response is going to be."

Commissioner Crowell adds, "I mean, they actually get rent for all other cables hanging on their poles, so they probably can rattle the right cages."

Manager Fatland continues, “Sometimes they’ll take their stuff off their old pole, but they’re still telephone company lines on them. They’re waiting for them to get the lines on too, but then they forget about the poles there and you’ve got to remind them. So, I’ll tell them what we’re expecting, and then they’ll have a month to come here for a presentation and respond to the community’s concerns.”

Mayor Pro Tem Booker adds, “I think this needs to go out [inaudible] because I have constant calls from different citizens about that very thing. So, I will try to turn it in as fast as I can. [inaudible] I’m going to talk to Craig about some other things in the past. Craig’s going to have to give us some answers. I think that he needs to meet with the citizens not just the Town of Tryon because they are the ones that want answers, not just Dr. Parsons, but there are other citizens.”

Town Manager Fatland suggests putting a meeting with them on the agenda. Mayor Peoples adds that if you invite some Duke representatives to Town Hall and fill the room with complainers, it tends to be an effective strategy for getting something done. Manager Fatland says he will talk to Craig DeBrew tomorrow and look at a format for getting something set up.

Joyce Kimpton
“I have one more thing, I’m sorry. I know the Barbeque Brawl/Beatdown, whatever it is, is on Saturday night. But not in downtown Tryon, but at Harmon Field from 5 to 7 is the Walk for Remembrance for Suicide Prevention. This is their 10th year. So, if you have a chance to come out and walk one lap with us, it would be appreciated.”

Craig Meyer
“Are we going to have an opportunity at any time to question candidates that are running for Town Council?” Mayor Peoples responds, “That’s a question that I asked today. They’re going to answer questions. They’ll be in the newspaper. Dr. Parson, y’all want to have a poll this year?” Dr. Parson responds, “I don’t know.”

A citizen says, “I’d like to familiarize myself with some of their beliefs and their positions.” Anne Day adds, “There’s someone who is a private citizen in Tryon who’s willing to pay the rental fee for Sunnydale, for a forum for the candidates, if someone would arrange it and find an operator.”

Manager Fatland asks, “Would the Chamber of Commerce do something like that?” Mayor Peoples answers, “The Chamber could do something like that. Perhaps the League of Women Voters. That’s usually a good way to approach that and get totally non-partisan.”

ADJOURN

Mayor Peoples made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Crowell so moved. The motion carried unanimously.

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J. Alan Peoples, Mayor

Attest:

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Susan B. Bell, Town Clerk