

TOWN OF STOKESDALE
PO BOX 465
STOKESDALE, NORTH CAROLINA

A special meeting of the Stokesdale Town Council was held in the Town Hall at 8416 US Highway 158 on May 8, 2007. The meeting was held for the purpose of considering floor plans for a Town Hall building and other issues pertaining to the Town property.

Mayor Jones called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM. The following members of Council were present: Mayor Randle L. Jones, Mayor Pro Tem John W. Flynt, Mickie Halbbrook, Bobby Richardson and Powell Shelton.

Others present included Town Attorney, William B. Trevorrow; Jim Stewart, Stewart – Cooper-Newell Architects; Vicki Lawrence, Northwest Observer and Carolyn Joyner, Town Clerk.

Mayor Jones said that the Long Range Financial Planning Committee has been meeting regularly for some time to deal with issues pertaining to the Town property. The meetings have been public working meetings. As a result, the committee has adopted a proposed floor plan for a future Town Hall and the architects have a concept of the exterior for the building. The next step is the presentation of the plans to Council and for Council to consider moving forward with the project and begin looking into the actual construction phase for the project and the further development of the property.

Mr. Stewart presented the floor plans and the elevation for Town Hall. He pointed out the various rooms shown. He noted that the building is designed so that future expansion can occur when it is needed. (Ms. Halbbrook and Mr. Trevorrow arrived at this point.)

Mayor Jones pointed out that the rooms could be used for purposes other than what is shown on the plans. Mr. Stewart noted that areas of the building can be closed off while other areas remain open. Mayor Jones noted that for security reasons, areas can be closed off. Mr. Stewart pointed out that Council would be able to hold an executive session without having every one leave the room. He also noted that parts of the building are shown at an angle.

Ms. Halbbrook expressed concern over the windows since they look very narrow. Mr. Stewart noted that the elevation is shown when looking at the front entrance so that the windows are shown at an angle. If you look at them straight from the side they would look different. He said that the windows would be about four feet wide.

Mayor Jones indicated that the committee had recommended the floor plan and the elevation and Council would need to approve them in order to move forward. When approved, the Budget Committee will look at the financing of the building. The building is for current use and the future since building cost will be cheaper at today's rates than they will be in the future. The building will not be obsolete when it is constructed and it will meet the needs of the Town for 20 years and there is room for expansion when it is needed. The park area of the property will be a separate project which may be developed through some matching funds.

Mr. Flynt made a motion to adopt the plans as presented.

Mr. Shelton asked for the square footage of the building. Mr. Stewart estimated that it is about 8,000 square feet. Mayor Jones said that there are many uses for Town Hall and the public areas should meet the capacities that are needed for Council needs as well as community groups and emergency needs that will use the facility. It will be used for more than just an office for the Town.

Mr. Shelton noted that it appears that there is seating for about 100 people and through the years there has not been much of a need for more than that number.

Mr. Stewart indicated that there is storage space for the chairs and tables so there is flexibility for the use of the space.

Mayor Jones noted that Mr. Flynt had made a motion to adopt both the plans. Ms. Halbrook seconded the motion. Mayor Jones asked for discussion.

Jim Flynt, 7743 NC 68, said that he was fully in support and appreciate what Council is doing with the purchase of the property and that he felt it was a wise purchase and an excellent location for a park. He said that he appreciates and supports the desire to relocate to a new facility and complimented the concept plan by saying it was well laid out. He noted that about one year ago, Gerald Helfrey and Robert Vickory had planted the arboretum and a lot of people have stopped and talked about their project. Recently he was involved in cleaning up the area along the front of Stokesdale United Methodist Church. A corporation, Stokesdale Beautiful, has been set up and it will be a 501(c) 3 organization when approved by the IRS. They are looking for grant money for the organization. He said that with these projects, he gained a new appreciation of the downtown area, from stoplight to stoplight. He felt that he had talked to 100 to 150 people when he was working on the area at the Church. People were saying that it would be a great place for a post office or a town hall. He asked for Council to take a second look at where they are placing the building. He noted that while there is development occurring on NC 68 and on US 158 near Lowes, he felt that a new Town Hall should be located between the intersections on Main Street or just past the intersections on either end. He felt that such a location would add support to the business community and would give the visibility needed. He and Mr. Shelton had discussions with Howard Coble about a post office which could be a component of the building project. The Angel Pardue property would be the wrong location. There are two to two and one half acres of land across from the Post Office.

Mayor Jones said that to build the building, have adequate parking, and area for future expansion and with everything at one place, more than two acres of land would be needed. If property is available, then Council could look at it. It would limit what could be done on the property.

Jim Flynt asked for the site requirement for the building component of the master plan. Mr. Stewart indicated that the Town Hall was designed as a component of the master plan for the entire site and he would have to do some calculations. Parking was designed to serve for multiple uses.

Jim Flynt said that he knew most of the business owners located between the stoplights and he felt that they wanted to see the Town Hall in the downtown section. He had talked with the developer of the McDonald property which is now being developed. Mayor Jones said that the Town had looked at that property but the owner would not return phone calls. The Town, after searching and looking at other properties, purchased and paid for the parcel on Angel Pardue Road. Mayor Jones noted that the property is in the Town Core area and it is near the school and development is occurring in the area.

Ms. Halbrook said that she wanted land in the downtown area but all that she could find was not any closer than the Angel Pardue property. Mayor Jones said that a minimum of 10 acres would be needed for the Town Hall area and future expansion.

Mr. Shelton said that he had met with Jim Flynt and owner of the property located across from the Post Office and she had indicated that property was not for sale. Mr. Shelton said that he had met with her for the sole purpose of locating the property lines. Mr. Richardson noted that McDonald tract contains 12 acres. Jim Flynt said that there is an option to purchase adjoining property.

John Flynt said that a number of people have been looking for commercial property between the stoplights. Fidelity Bank has searched and recently paid \$400,000 per acre for the property. He said that he did not know how community leaders could justify paying such a price and it would be impossible to pay those prices without some kind of tax structure. Mr. Flynt also felt that citizens would rather have it located

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near the School and at a reasonable cost rather than pay an extraordinary price for land downtown when it comes with a tax burden. He pointed out problems with watershed issues along US Hwy 158 and other limitations that do not exist at the Angel Pardue location. In terms of traffic, there is certainly a problem at the current Town Hall when you cannot hear at the meetings. He noted there building a Town Hall or any other building at the location across from the Post Office might meet with opposition from the Church. The intersection of Clintwood with US Hwy 158 would also be an issue with traffic problems at that site.

Jim Flynt said that he felt that the park was planned for the correct location but he felt another location for the building would be a better location.

Mayor Jones said that it was his goal was to build a building that is not obsolete when built so that it needs immediate expansion which costs twice as much. He said that if a tract of land becomes available at a reasonable price and it meets the Town's requirements, then Council would probably be willing to look at a proposal. Council looked for land near the downtown for about 6 to 8 years or longer but he said that there is time for other options to be presented and Council will have an open mind.

John Flynt said that sewer is not available in Stokesdale so there must be adequate land to accommodate septic field. He also said that he did not feel that the Town Hall should be located in a shopping center and located beside buildings which would be a significant contrast in style and beauty. He noted that Norman Westmoreland has a tract of land that is 2.6 acres of land on US Hwy 158 and there are no other larger tracts of land.

Jim Flynt said that the only vista the Town has to offer is Main Street, US 158 and NC 68 and that is what we have to sell. The Town should be almost like a chamber of commerce and they should be supporting and boosting the other businesses in the community.

Mayor Jones said that Council has to make decisions based on what they need to do for the taxpayers and as custodians and stewards of these funds. Government funds cannot do things that enhance other peoples' property at the expense of the taxpayer. This issue comes up frequently. Council has to provide the services that people have requested and citizens have said they a building with a meeting facility that is available and can be used over and over as well as parks.

Jim Flynt said there are other properties around Stokesdale where he is planning to make some improvements and to clean up some areas on a charitable basis. His hope is that other property owners will be encouraged to clean up their property. He hoped to generate energy and interest purely as a 501(c) 3 and trying to make Stokesdale more beautiful. He said that he would come back to Council within 30 days with other properties that are for sale and are suitable for a Town Hall.

Mayor Jones said that he has heard compliments on the beautification and has received blistering emails about how the trees were ruined in front of the Church from some who thought the Town was doing it.

Mr. Jim Stewart noted that there have been public meetings about the project and there has never been any discussion of this sort at any of the public meetings. The plans and the master plans have been open to the public. Mayor Jones said that no one has come to him and said that it should be located downtown. They like the fact that it is near the school since it provides a security element for the school. Law enforcement will be there if the municipal building is there. There is a connection between the school property and this property. The property was made available to the Federal Government for a post office and they were told that land could be dedicated for that purpose but they turned down the offer. Mayor Jones said that he felt that any alternative site would need to be at least 10 acres in size.

Mr. John said that Mr. Norman Cooks' property is on the market at 1.8M and there are 20 acres on one side of NC 68 and 35 acres on the other side. There are two or 3 creeks in the area and their may be percolation problems. The property is also further away from downtown than the property the Town now owns. He noted that in Oak Ridge, the Town Hall, the fire department, and the post office are now considered Town

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Core. The tract directly across from the school was available and if they wanted a high traffic area, they would have put it on the NC 68.

Mayor Jones said that Council had not looked for property for a Town Hall and a park. Council looked for a town hall property for years in the downtown area but they were unable to find any. At a later time, the land that was offered was more than Council was actually looking for and the issue of the need for additional parks area came up. The Town had purchased the land and looked at using part of the land for a park. He noted that some property owners did not return phone calls.

John Flynt said that while he was mayor, the Town worked with the Northwest Observer and asked for anyone who had property that would be interested in selling it to the Town, to make contact with the Town. Barbara Martin came forward at that time.

Mayor Jones said there was a motion and a second and called for a vote on the motion. All Council members present voted aye and the motion to adopt both the plans was approved.

Mayor Jones noted that Council now has plans and the elevation drawings. The next step would be looking at working plans and obtaining approval from the State for loans for financing for the project. He suggested that budget committee should look at the budget and determine what funds are available and to consider funding sources by making preliminary contact with federal agencies and lenders that may be available for loans. The Budget Committee would report back to Council. Mayor Jones said if Council agreed, this would be his motion. Mr. Flynt seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Mayor Jones noted that part of the property will be developed as a park and it will be a separate project from the Town Hall issue. The Clerk noted that Mr. Fieler and she had met with a representative of the NC Parks and Recreation last week and there is an application process which is a point system. A number of things must occur before the application is filed. The first item is to hold two public meetings for the discussion of the plans for the park area of the property. Mayor Jones asked the Clerk to select some possible meeting dates when Town Hall is available and when advertising can be done and Council will set the dates when they have this information. Mayor Jones made a motion that the Budget Committee would also consider the funding issues relating to the grant process. Mr. Richardson seconded the motion. All Council members voted aye and the motion carried.

Mayor Jones summarized the meeting by saying that Council has approved the floor plans. There is tentative approval of the exterior. The Budget Committee will look at the financial and budgeting issues and will report back to Council. The park issue is a separate issue and staff has met with a representative of the NC Parks who looked favorably on the property. Financial issues on the park will be reviewed by the Budget Committee and dates for public meetings on the park portion of the property will be set on a separate dates from the Council meeting. Mayor Jones asked Mr. Stewart for separate drawings for the park area to be used at the public meetings.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Jones made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Flynt seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Carolyn L. Joyner, Town Clerk

Approved:

Randle L. Jones, Mayor

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