October 13, 2015

7:00 P.M.

The Town of Pink Hill held its monthly board meeting on Tuesday, October 13, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the town hall board room. Present for the meeting were Mayor Carol Sykes, Commissioners Mike Hill and Debra Grady, Town Attorney George Jenkins, Public Works Director Timmy Kennedy, Police Chief Joey Thigpen, and Town Clerk Kimberly Mitchell. Commissioner King was not present due to being sick.

Visitors present for the meeting were James Quinn, John Sirmons, JoAnn Sirmons, Del Holt, Tracey Price, Johnny Westbrook, Catherine Sheppard, and Barbara Elmore.

Mayor Sykes called the meeting to order. Mayor Sykes welcomed everyone to the meeting. Commissioner Hill then led everyone in the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Hill made a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Grady seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. Commissioner Hill made a motion to approve the consent agenda with September 8, 2015 public hearing minutes and the regular board meeting minutes. Commissioner Grady seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The first item on the agenda to be discussed was the ditch issues in Park Circle. Timmy said he was approached by Commissioner King to take a look at this ditch. Timmy said he has a bid to get it fixed. He stated the ditch he is talking about is on Park Circle and to your left when you turn in. He said it is a short little ditch and it is filled in pretty bad and it is causing a lot of trouble back this way because everything is backing up. Timmy said that is why he went ahead and got a bid to do the work and the board should have a copy of that bid sheet. The ditch in question is across from the old Russo house. Timmy said he would like to see the ditch cleaned out if the board agrees that it needs to be done. Commissioner Hill asked if the monies would come out of the Powell Fund. Kim stated yes because the ditch is on a Powell Fund street. Timmy said he and Kim have been out there and looked at it and she agrees that it can be paid for with Powell Fund money. Mayor Sykes explained to the visitors what the Powell Fund is used for. She said the Powell Fund is a separate entity that is designated just for our town streets but not state streets. Mayor Sykes stated the town gets money from the state each year to put in that fund but it is strictly for maintenance on the town streets. Kim said the state regulates what we can and cannot do with that money. We have a guideline that we have to look at to make sure that the items we are going to do to that ditch falls in with the guidelines of the Powell Fund. Timmy said the ditch that is kind of behind the BP Station, he dug out a little bit with the backhoe because he can reach it, but he cannot reach what he needs to reach with our backhoe on that particular ditch on Park Circle. He said if he could, he would try to do the work himself. Timmy said what he recommended to Chris Taylor is strengthening the ditch and bringing some of the dirt back this way. Chris said that dirt was no good, but he could probably use some of our dirt that is stockpiled at the plant instead of buying some. He will then put rock on top of that so that it will not wash away. Kim said the money would come out of Street Construction in the Powell Fund. Commissioner Hill made a motion to repair the ditch on Park Circle. Commissioner Grady seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Mayor Sykes thanked the residents of Park Circle for attending this meeting. She stated Commissioner King had brought this issue up with Kim. He was unable to attend the meeting tonight due to sickness. James Quinn spoke on behalf of the Park Circle residents concerning their ditch issue. He said he had already talked with Commissioner King and they have walked back there and looked at everything. James stated what they have got is a bottleneck down there and all the flooding that goes down there at the end of Circle Court and Park Circle. The ditches back there behind some of the resident’s houses is just eating away, and where it comes out at the pipes are just too small to haul for the volume of water that is going down there. He said it is like they are getting all the water from Pink Hill coming through there. James said Ms. Del gets flooded out every time we have a good rain. He stated it is just eating up everybody’s property. James said back there behind John and JoAnn Sirmons, Ms. Del, Jr. Westbrook, and his house that the ditch is just eating away. When they pull a line out there for the property right now, what they have basically is the ditch. He said they just wanted to see if they could get some relief on that. James said another erosion problem they have is right there at the front after the water line was put in and it keeps trying to eat up the water line there in the front of his yard. He said if they had like a catch basin or something there that could catch that and keep it from eating it out. James said because he knows that he is going to go in it one day with his lawnmower. Ms. Del Holt said it is a big hole and Timmy has seen it too. James said you can tell it is following the path of where the new water lines were put in. Ms. Del stated that Jr. Westbrook said you could stand in Del’s yard and look up to where Pauline’s Colony House is and there is a hill and it leans. When it rains it comes down that hill right into their yards. She said it is right under her carport and all of her dirt on each side is just washing under her carport so she is losing that. Ms. Del stated that Jr. Westbrook has put down pipes that used to be there that were filled with dirt and he has taken them up, and she has put some new pipes down. She said they have done all they know to do but we have got to do something.

Ms. Tracey Price said when the ditch floods at her house it floods her buildings. Mrs. JoAnn Sirmons stated it floods out Tracey’s driveway and it just washes her storage bins and everything right on over into their yard and down the street. Ms. Price said she has had this problem since she moved there but it was very few and far between when they had really bad storms. She stated now it is happening a lot. Ms. Del stated that you can go behind her house where they have dug the ditch out before and put the rocks there and a few more years it is going to be at her back door. James said when he and John walked down where everything is draining out to and there is really nothing there. He stated when it gets down there all of that needs to be cleaned out because it is all growed up and everything. James said you have the water that comes in behind Jr. Westbrook and the rest of us and all that water comes down and then it turns and gets altogether and goes out into that creek. He said that is a load of water going through that neighborhood.

Timmy stated the area that they are talking about where the water goes after it crosses Park Circle Road, he would say that is wetlands but he is not sure. He said he would have to call the Core of Engineers to have them come out and take a look to see if even any equipment could clean it out. Mayor Sykes said she thinks that we will have to call them to find out since it is wetlands back there.

John Sirmons asked if the town had the tools to do the work, would we still have to go through the Core of Engineers. Commissioner Hill said if there is any waterway dealing with the Neuse River, then yes. Mayor Sykes said that the town does not want to go in there and do anything because they can fine us and they will do it. James asked if they were talking about the back side of Park Circle where it ties into the creek and Commissioner Hill said yes. James stated he understood that, but all this behind our property we could do something about that. Mrs. Sirmons said in some of those pictures you can see where the dirt is going down the middle of the street and we are losing it. Commissioner Hill said he has the same problem at his house.

He stated when he worked for the town he had to call the Core because of ditches and they were very strict with us. He said one resident was told if he dug even one teaspoon of dirt out of the creek, he would be locked up. Commissioner Hill said he would rather Timmy call the Core of Engineers and let them come talk and look at it and then we can get back with you. He asked Timmy to go ahead and call the Core tomorrow to get something scheduled. James asked if they could go with some pipe and some kind of culvert or something to go back there, like DOT grade like they put in peoples driveways now. If we just had a big enough piece to go back there. He said what would it take to maybe put a couple of catch basins in back there. Mayor Sykes said she would rather wait and let the Core of Engineers come and look at this first and maybe they can recommend something before we start doing something and then we have to go back and tear it up.

Mrs. Catherine Sheppard stated several years ago when David Cole was Mayor they had a problem with the ditch needing to be cleaned out. She said the Town Board decided what to do was to get a big machine in there to clean out that ditch but what the board did not understand was the sewer line was across the branch from her house. So everybody’s sewer along there had pipes that went under the branch. Mrs. Sheppard said the town got that big machine in there and everybody started having sewer backup and they broke some pipes. She said she thinks the board is absolutely right when they say that we need to get somebody who really understands what to do to come here. Mayor Sykes said she thinks it would just be a good idea to get the Core of Engineers to come out to let the town know what they can do and what the residents need to do. Mrs. Sheppard stated she thinks we jumped in too quick so she thinks it is very wise to get someone to come. Kim said that Commissioner Hill asked her to contact the Extension Office in Lenoir County and she called them this morning to ask if there was anything that the town could do about erosion on private property. She stated she emailed the lady because she was not in to see if she can send us some information because they do classes to help explain how they can work with the erosion problem on private property. Kim said she is waiting for her to email her back and if she gets any information, she will let Commissioner Hill know. Commissioner Hill said the Eastern Council of Government had some stuff and he is trying to find out about it too. Mayor Sykes said once the Core comes and then maybe we can use all the information and come up with something hopefully. Timmy said the town uses the Wooten Company out of Greenville, North Carolina and he called the engineer just to ask if there is any grant monies out there for helping with such needs and the engineer replied no. Commissioner Hill said there may be some grant money with the Eastern Council of Government and he will try to find out.

Mr. John Sirmons stated years back all of this was looked at and culverts were supposed to have been put in there and the residents were going to pay for the culverts. Timmy said he did not know about that because it was many years ago. Mr. Sirmons said his question is did it require the Core of Engineers when that was going to be done because one resident stopped that. Commissioner Hill said the thing about the Core and these river basins is they are very protected and that is the whole deal with us checking with them. Because if we go in there digging and the Core comes in, it will cost the town more in fines than what it would cost to fix the ditch. Ms. Del Holt said, they know what they are doing so why don’t we get them to tell us what we need to do and what needs to be done. Commissioner Grady made a motion to table the ditch issue until we get the information from the Core of Engineers at the next meeting. Commissioner Hill seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. Mayor Sykes said we will work diligently to get the Core out here and get any information that we can gather to see what can be done if anything. I know that there is something that has got to be done, but I don’t know what and it maybe y’alls or ours, but we have got to wait to see what the core says.

Ms. Barbara Elmore said this is referring to the motion you have just made to the ditch behind their houses. Mrs. Sirmons said the ditches that they are talking about runs behind Ms. Del, James, and her and John’s yard. She said there is also a ditch that runs behind Tracey’s yard. Commissioner Hill said that would be your yard too to Ms. Elmore. Mrs. Sirmons stated it all runs into the Worthington’s and behind there and across the street and that is what we are talking about. Mayor Sykes said we are going to have the Core look at everything back there that we think is causing trouble. Ms. Elmore spoke and said that does not include the ditch out on the highway when you turn onto Park Circle because that is what is causing her problems. She said the water is running in her yard. Commissioner Hill stated that is why they made a motion. Ms. Elmore said so that is two separate issues. Mayor Sykes said that issue is not related to the issue they are talking about. Ms. Elmore asked who referred to the ditch being private property a while ago because that ditch is not private. Timmy spoke up and said they were talking about something totally different. Mayor Sykes stated that it is a different conversation. Ms. Elmore said she was talking about the one on the street and the one behind her house. She stated those did not belong to her but to the town. Mayor Sykes stated she was not going to argue that point because she can’t. Ms. Del said when we run our line and our line comes up to the ditch on the other side and Jr.’s is standing up. She said they must have put a ditch in and the stuff is going down on hers or sinking on hers but Jr.’s is not. JoAnn Sirmons said their side of that ditch, which is now their yard is eroding away so bad that the buildings in their backyard are beginning to lean down towards that ditch. Ms. Del said when she moved there she had a row of shrubbery back there and she could walk behind her shrubbery to trim it and she could just about jump across that ditch on the other side to Jr.’s and she cannot now. Mayor Sykes reemphasized that they will get the Core of Engineers out here to look at it and at the next meeting we will absolutely invite the residents back to try to work something out and try to decide if it is private property or not. James said maybe if not a pipe maybe a bulk head or something to keep us from losing even more sediments out of the basin, then it will be a win win for everybody. Mayor Sykes said the land is probably wetlands and she has a feeling that if it had not been years and years ago they would not have let them build houses there. They were not as strict about that years ago as they are now. Mayor Sykes told the residents to come back next month for the town board meeting on November 10, 2015 to discuss this issue further. Mayor Sykes thanked them for coming.

The next item on the agenda was the WASA Report. Commissioner Hill said they presented the audit at the last meeting and everything was fine.

The Police Updates were next on the agenda. Chief Thigpen stated since the last meeting on September 9, 2015 they have had 9 total incidences reported, 1 arrest, 2 accidents, and issued 24 citations with a total of 27 charges. He said they have had some break-ins on October 5, 2015 in a few businesses. The IGA had a hole cut in the roof, the hardware store, Quick Sales, and Keith Jarman’s were also broken into on that day. Chief Thigpen said the IGA did not have any cameras going but they didn’t actually make entry, they just cut a hole in the roof. Chief Thigpen stated they did a lot of damage to the roof. Whitfield Hardware had minor damage to their door. He said the only suspects they have got was on a video that was on the street at the Mexican restaurant but they were wearing a mask and black clothing. Chief Thigpen said he does not really have much to go on but he really thinks it is someone that is not from around here. He said he thinks it could be someone from Greenville because they were having a lot of break-ins also and the people doing it were trying to get the businesses safe. Chief Thigpen said the camera only showed two people but he cannot make out their faces. He updated the board on the car and said it has been doing good. He said the engine light came on again and he took it to Woodrow’s and it was the coolant level. Woodrow added some coolant and the light went back off. Chief Thigpen said other than that everything is going pretty good. Mayor Sykes thanked Chief Thigpen.

The next item on the agenda was the Fire Department Report. Timmy said they have had 2 automatic alarms, 2 fire calls, 7 EMS calls, and 7 traffic accidents. He said since the last meeting they have been awarded part of a Federal Grant with six other departments here in the county to upgrade their air packs. Timmy said hopefully they will end up with at least 14 air pack’s with an extra bottle and they are worth $6,200 each. He said the grant money will pay for five of them.

Timmy said they are hoping by their gun raffle that they will be able to eat over there in the old cafeteria. He stated they have got the plumbing done and have working bathrooms as of yesterday. They also got the water running in there yesterday. Mayor Sykes asked if they would have working bathrooms in the two-story building. Timmy replied that they do not have running water in there because there were too many leaks. Mayor Sykes stated that she would suggest as soon as he can to get some bathrooms running back in there because if he has a lot of stuff going on in there, those bathrooms need to be open she would think. Timmy said they have run out of money for this year in the budget. He said hopefully, though, they will be able to eat in the cafeteria and they have bought some more tables and chairs to fill it up. He stated it is looking good and invited everyone to come and see what they have done.

The next item on the agenda was Water/Sewer Report. Timmy stated they had an issue at Moss Hill lift station and after he got prices to get it fixed they looked into to see if insurance would cover it. He found out that we have a large deductible so it is probably going to be better for us to pay for it out of pocket. He said what caused the problem with the transfer switch was either electrical or a lightening kind of issue or something happened to a light not far from there and it burnt the transfer switch up. Timmy said they got that work completed on the transfer switch today.

Timmy said when he cleaned out a ditch on South Central Avenue, they found at 403 South Central Avenue in their ditch what appears to be sink water or washing machine water that runs right straight into the ditch. He stated he sent the resident a certified letter and gave them 30 days to get that repaired or get it routed to the sewer line like it is supposed to be and their 30 days is not up yet. He just wanted to let the board know about the matter. Timmy said the resident has until the 25th of this month to get it fixed.

Timmy said the camera that was put in the budget this year has been received and they have used it and it has already saved them some time. He stated they got a little bit of training on it. He said he thinks it is going to be a good tool to use to find out what problems are in the sewer lines.

Kim informed the board that Larry Kornegay from Kornegay Insurance called and he wants to know is there any way the driveway or curbing can be made bigger. They are having issues with people turning in and running over the top of the curbing on the corner of Broadway and Pine Street’s. Larry is saying that it is worse on Broadway with people turning in because of it being so narrow. Kim stated she brought up the issue right now because they needed to know if there were any water or sewer lines there. Timmy said they did not have any water/sewer lines there. Kim asked if it would be the town’s responsibility to fix this issue. Mayor Sykes said she did not think so. Timmy said it is a state owned street and it is a private driveway. Kim asked about the Pine Street driveway. Mayor Sykes said she is thinking it would be the owner and not the town. George asked if there was any danger to the town in leaving it as it is and if so, he thinks it would be well advised for the town to strengthen it so it doesn’t get damaged. Commissioner Hill stated if we are responsible for cutting the curb back, then it is his responsibility as a private driveway to fix the cement back. George stated he would like to put that in writing so that he doesn’t come up six weeks later and say when are you going to pave my driveway. Timmy said that used to be a residence and when it was a residence it was not a problem. He said he thinks it is his problem because he is the business owner. George stated he agreed with him 100 percent but from a practicality position if it is getting all damaged by trucks going over it over and over again, and the town is going to have to replace it, then strengthen it. Mayor Sykes said that driveway has been there for years and years and it has been an insurance place for years and years and it has not been damaged yet. George said then problem is that he needs to get a wider cut. He said the thinks it might be in the town’s best interest to authorize Larry to widen the driveway cut. Commissioner Hill said he can do that on Pine Street but not on Broadway Street. Commissioner Grady asked if it was still that no 18-wheelers were allowed on that Broadway Street. Mayor Sykes stated yes. Timmy said he doesn’t think the sign is still there. Timmy stated that he would get the telephone number to the state for Larry to contact. Kim was told that Larry can widen the driveway on Pine Street but would have to contact the state about Broadway Street and it is his responsibility to pay for whatever is done. Commissioner Hill made a motion to give property owner permission to widen the driveway on Pine Street up to 3 feet on each side at property owners expense, and he would have to contact the state about driveway on Broadway Street, and also if/when cutting the curbing he must cement back into the driveway to curbing, and it has to look like it did before starting. Commissioner Grady seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was trash at ball court. Mayor Sykes stated she has been by that ball court several times since we had this discussion three or four months ago. She said at first it got better but it isn’t better now. Alex, one of our employees, goes by there many times during the week and cleans up the trash and he asked Mayor Sykes the other day was anything that the town could do about it. Mayor Sykes told him that we could close the ball court because there is no sense in it. She suggested taking down the ball goal to let them know that we mean business. Commissioner Hill made a motion to take backboards down at ball court. Commissioner Grady seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. Timmy stated that he would make sure that it got done. Commissioner Hill made a motion to put up a sign closed until further notice and no parking allowed at any time. Commissioner Grady seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was Update on H.J. Building. Mayor Sykes stated that the H.J. Building is supposed to be torn down in 30 days which will be by November 5, 2015.

The next item on the agenda was Budget Amendments if needed. Kim said there is a budget amendment for the Fire Department grant that Timmy was explaining earlier. Commissioner Grady made a motion to accept the 2015-2016 line item budget amendment request for the General Fund/Fire Department. Commissioner Hill seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Remarks by Town Attorney was next on the agenda. George did not have any remarks at this time.

The next item on the agenda was Comments by the Board. Kim handed out printed fliers informing the board that the annual Christmas Party will be on Friday, December 18th at 7:00 p.m. at the Baron & the Beef. She stated we would have our own private room. Commissioner Hill stated he was proud to work with a board and a Mayor that has got some common sense. Mayor Sykes said she really appreciated the support of everyone through the past four years. She said it makes her feel good that they trusted her. Commissioner Grady stated she knows that she has not been here long and she doesn’t know about the ditches and other stuff, but she knows that the other board members know, so she is going to take their advice and believe it because they have been here. Mayor Sykes told Commissioner Grady that she has done well and that she is really impressed with her. Mayor Sykes said you have come in and learned and you are patient with us and she appreciates it.

The next item on the agenda was Public Comments. There were no public comments at this time.

The next item on the agenda was Closed Session. There was no need for a closed session at this time.

With there being no further business to be discussed the meeting was adjourned.