
**TOWN OF WENTWORTH
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
MINUTES
MARCH 1, 2011
7:00 P.M.**

The Wentworth Town Council held their regular monthly meeting in the Town Hall Council Chambers, on **Tuesday, March 1, 2011, at 7:00 p.m.**

Council members present: Mayor Robert Aswell, Mayor Pro Tem James Belcher, Councilwoman Iris Powell, Councilwoman Evelyn Conner, and Councilman Dennis Paschal

A quorum was present.

Staff Present: Brenda Ward, Town Administrator - Town Clerk
Fred Baggett, Town Attorney, and Yvonne Russell, Finance Officer/Deputy Clerk

Article I. **Mayor Aswell** called the March 1st, 2011, Wentworth Town Council Meeting to order.

Article II. **Mayor Aswell** asked **Councilman Dennis Paschal** to give the invocation.

Article III. **Discussion / Revisions / Adoption of Agenda**

A. Requests and Petitions of Citizens

Mayor Aswell advised that **Captain Billy Parker** and **Deputy Travis Loftis** with the Rockingham County Sheriff's Department signed the Speaker Register, and made a motion, "*that we add them to the Agenda under Article VII. Public Comments.*"

Mayor Pro Tem James Belcher seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article IV. **Approval of Town Council Meeting Minutes**

A. Town Council Meeting – February 1, 2011

Regarding approval of the Minutes, **Mayor Pro Tem Belcher** made a motion, "*That the Minutes be approved as presented.*"

Councilwoman Powell seconded the motion. There was no discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

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Article V. OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Aswell noted. "There is no old business for discussion."

Article VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Consideration of Renewal of Town's Participation in the 2012 Deer Urban Archery Season (NC Wildlife Resources Commission)

Mayor Aswell commented, "I think it has probably been a success this year."

Councilman Paschal added, "I think the people have enjoyed being able to go out and hunt that last little bit. Every deer they take is another one that didn't get run over by a car, so I think it was good for the hunters and the community."

Mayor Aswell made a motion, "*That we renew it for the 2012 season, January 14th through February 18th.*"

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

**B. Consideration of Funding Request (Jason Julian)
- \$ 3,000 for Wentworth Ball Program**

Note: Council will be glad to hear and consider requests for funding, but decisions will be not be made until the Town's upcoming Budget Work Session(s) for FY 2011-2012 are completed.

Mayor Aswell invited **Mr. Jason Julian** to address Council.

Mr. Julian introduced himself as a resident of 236 Carter Drive, and the "coordinator for the Wentworth Ball Program."

Mr. Julian passed out some information for Council as he began an explanation of his request:

"Our organization has been around for a while...you can read about it in the information I passed around. We first started through the Wentworth (School) PTA, and a few years ago, we branched out from the PTA and formed a committee to be self-supporting for a Wentworth ball program, both softball and baseball, for kids ages 4-12."

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“We opened up the program to all kids, not just those who attend Wentworth School. We have kids coming from the Eden area, Reidsville area, Bethany, Lincoln and Monroeton; and, of course, Wentworth School and the Middle School. We have a wide range of activities—T-Ball for smaller kids, ages 4-6, and from (ages) 7-9 we have coach-pitched baseball and coach-pitched softball, and then from 10-12, we have team-pitched baseball and team pitched softball.”

“With this league, as the letter states, we have grown so much that as of two years ago, we had to build a new field. When I say ‘we,’ I am not talking about the school system...they do not supply any funds for the fields at all. The main field at Wentworth (Elementary) School, down by the bus parking lot, was built by the Wentworth PTA not long after the school was built. It’s a nice field with a fence all around it, and we have a new scoreboard that was put up a couple of years ago...and bleachers and covered dugouts...a nice field, really nice.”

Mr. Julian continued, “A couple of years ago, we started to see that we were really experiencing more growth as more and more kids came to play. We had to make a decision and decided to build another field, and we got permission from the school system to do that.”

“With the money we had, we built a backstop above the bus parking lot, and a little bit of fencing, maybe 30 feet on each side to protect the players sitting on the bench. We had to bring in...haul in our own rock dust, create the field, and buy the bases.”

“With that said, that’s the reason I’m here tonight. It is a great field and we want to keep on using it. We just need more amenities and we need to extend the fence on out from where it is now. There are several reasons for that—when they are playing, you can imagine what happens if a kid throws a ball over the first baseman’s head...it usually may go 6-8 feet and it may hit the fence, then bounce and be picked up to throw somebody out. If not, it just goes out into the fans, with parents, grandparents, and family members coming in. When you have a group congregated together, first thing you know, you’ll get to talking to them, and take your eyes off the game. All of a sudden, here comes a ball flying in...and you have little brothers and sisters playing in the grass, so the parents have to protect the kids to be sure a ball doesn’t hit them.”

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Mr. Julian continued, “The second request on the form is for bleachers. There are no bleachers there on that field. I went on line to get some idea of pricing for bleachers, and a set for that field would run about \$3,000 total. As it is now, the parents, if they park in the bus parking lot or on the grass, they will bring their lawn chairs...this (bleachers) would just be something to make it more comfortable and give better vision to the fans who come in to watch the games.”

“I want to talk about the fans a minute. What I would suggest and I know this request is for the budget in the upcoming year and you won’t be making a decision tonight, but what I would suggest is, come by the school...April 2nd is the fist game. Just ride by and see how many people are in that parking lot. As a matter of fact, the bus parking lot will be full, the front parking lot will be full and also up on that field and alongside the road—just take a look at it every Saturday from April 2nd on. Look at all the people who are coming into Wentworth to watch their kids play ball.”

“As I said before, we are self-supporting. We don’t have the funds to buy a fence, but we do accept donations and sponsorships. We do have a few sponsorships with the program. We use those funds to buy balls...on the back of the form is an estimate of the expenses we have for the whole year. Some of those are actual expenses we have already had this year, and some are what we propose to spend.”

“There again,” said **Mr. Julian**, “we don’t receive any money from the school system. As a matter of fact, we maintain the ball fields, even though I’m sure the schools use the fields during the day when the students go outside. Every year, we bring rock screens in and fix the fields up, get them ready for the season, using our funds. Recently, we purchased insurance for the league, liability insurance, for \$674.00. We could have used that on something else, but we also needed to have the insurance.”

Mr. Julian said that one point he wanted to make regarding the Saturday games, is the number of people coming into Wentworth to perhaps, purchase gasoline, buy food, spend money, etc. that may help out some of the businesses in town.

Mr. Julian asked if anyone had questions for him.

Councilwoman Powell asked, “Can’t you make the individuals pay for their own insurance...that’s what they make you do in Reidsville.”

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Mr. Julian replied, “This is liability insurance, a million dollar policy that the school makes us get. It is not for health insurance. It is to protect the school system from injury lawsuits...and I got several estimates, but this was the cheapest one I could find. But you are right, Ms. Powell, on our registration form, the parents have to list the health insurance that their child has...they have to supply that information and sign a waiver saying they are aware that the ball program will not be liable for that part of it (health insurance).”

Mayor Aswell remarked, “It looks like you’ve got a good thing going there. We will certainly take it under advisement when we work up our budget, and see what we can do to help you.”

Mr. Julian added, “For all of our sponsors who come on board, we put a 3x6 foot banner up every Saturday. If the Town helps us out to supply funds or any of those items I’ve listed on that page, we have to have them every year, and maybe it would only be \$500.00 worth of rock screens that the Town could supply, we would put a banner up—Town of Wentworth.”

Councilman Paschal commented, “Actually, we tried to pay for that field over there but we couldn’t get a negotiation going with the school system, because we wanted it to also be for public use. It sounds like you’ve got a good program going and bringing in folks from all around. I think it’s a good thing for the community...the kids need a place they can go for recreation.”

Mr. Julian replied, “We had a coaches’ meeting this weekend and I explained to them and expressed my concern that ‘this is for the kids.’ It was mostly all guys, and I told them I know they like that competitive edge, but we’ve got to calm that down and let the parents know, because those parents will get hostile sometimes, that this is for the kids. We’re trying to teach them the fundamentals and they want a good place to come and play and not have to worry about some of the horror stories we hear about in some of the other leagues.”

Mr. Julian said the parents also have to sign a Code of Conduct.

He added, “**Mr. Paschal**, as far as the fields go, there are other people who use the fields during the off-season. There are traveling little-league baseball teams that use it, and the Middle School teams, if their field is being used or something, I’ll see them out there sometimes.”

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Mayor Pro Tem Belcher asked, “Between the bleachers and the fence, what would be your priority, given that budgets across the country are tight.”

Mr. Julian replied, “I would say the fence would be our priority. I have someone who approached me about a business putting up a fence for us, so I have sent them an estimate. I went on and included it on this request, though, because that is not set in stone. If it turns out the fence has been taken care of by the time y’all work on the budget, maybe we can go to item number two, or any of those expenses on that back page.”

Mr. Julian mentioned that they also want to sell T-shirts to the parents in the same color as their child’s team shirts, as a way of raising some additional funds. He said some of the concession stand items that are sold are either donated or the program funds them as part of their on-going budget. He noted that this expenditure is included on the budget sheet he gave to Council, adding, “We raised \$800.00 on our concessions last year.”

Mayor Aswell asked if anyone else had questions for Mr. Julian.

There were no additional questions or discussion.

Article VI. NEW BUSINESS - Continued

**C. Approval of Amended 2011 Town Council Meeting Schedule
(Reference November Meeting)**

- Brenda Ward, Town Administrator

Mayor Aswell moved to the next item of New Business and asked the Town Administrator to comment on the amended 2011 Town Council Meeting Schedule.

Mrs. Ward explained that the Town Council’s policy for meeting in November during an election year, is to meet on the first Thursday after Election Day on Tuesday.

She added, “The law says that election day is the first Tuesday *after the first Monday* in November, and the first Tuesday this year, 2011, is on November 1st, and the first Tuesday after the first Monday happens to be the following week, or November 8th. So I needed to correct the schedule since we can actually meet at our regular time, the *first* Tuesday of the month.”

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Mayor Pro Tem Belcher made a motion to “*approve the Amended 2011 Town Council Meeting Schedule.*”

Councilman Paschal seconded the motion. There no further discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article VI. NEW BUSINESS – Continued

D. Consideration of Resolution Dissolving the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments & Providing for Distribution of Assets and Obligations; and,

Resolution for Formation and Membership in the Piedmont Triad Regional Council

- **Brenda Ward, Town Administrator**

Mayor Aswell asked Mrs. Ward to comment on the Resolutions.

Mrs. Ward explained, “As you know, at all the COG (Piedmont Triad Council of Governments) meetings the last few months, a merger of the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments with the Northwest Piedmont Council of Governments has been the main topic of discussion.”

“Most of you have been to some of the meetings about this. You will remember that Ginger Booker came to the League of Governments meeting hosted by the county and went into detail about the pros and cons of the merger.”

“At the last COG meeting, she noted that they have been in extensive conferences with the Governor’s representative and that they are waiting on a letter from the N.C. Secretary of Administration to confirm the merger process. Even though they (the two COG’s) are working on the Merger and have formulated these resolutions, they are still waiting on confirmation from the State and anticipate receiving that any time now.”

“In the meantime, they have prepared these two resolutions and are asking each unit of government in our region to pass them, as a means of bringing the merger about. You will see that there is a resolution to dissolve the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments and also to distribute their assets and obligations to the new council that would be formed.”

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Mrs. Ward continued, “The second resolution is for formation and membership in the new Piedmont Triad Regional Council. That’s what the new COG would be called. If your population is under 2500, membership dues would be approximately \$550.00. Otherwise, it would be 22 cents per capita. I think for us, with a population of 2985, it would be somewhere around \$656.00. I think that is just a little bit more than what we pay now.”

“If the merger is approved, there would be 73 members in the new council, with one delegate, one vote per jurisdiction. If you look in your information, you will see they have listed some of the benefits of the merger, and I guess we can look at what it says here...”

“The designation of one Lead Regional Organization for the Triad region; a larger and more unified voice for Triad local governments at the state and national levels; broader scope of services to member governments, based on the strengths of each existing COG; efficiency of shared overhead leading to reduced fees for contract services to members (‘That would be a good thing,’ **Mrs. Ward** commented); and alignment of the region’s two local government organizations to reflect common economic, land, water, transportation, and air quality conditions.”

“Basically,” said **Mrs. Ward**, “I think most everyone is in favor of it.”

She asked the town attorney if a two-thirds vote of the membership is required for the merger to take place.

Mr. Baggett replied, “Yes, thirty-one I think, is the number...two-thirds of the cities and counties to dissolve.”

Councilman Paschal asked, “And they still maintain that there won’t be any less service to the members?”

“They maintain that it should be better service,” replied **Mrs. Ward**, “and Robert (Mayor Aswell) was there and can confirm that I asked some of these same questions before the whole group.”

“And they won’t streamline to the point of doing away with some of the folks...trying to cut costs?” asked **Councilman Paschal**.

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“Well, when I asked that question,” **Mrs. Ward** replied, “they say that the Piedmont Triad COG does a lot of things that the Northwest Piedmont does not do...”

“And vice-versa,” **Mr. Baggett** added.

“Right now, the Northwest COG administers the senior citizens programs in Rockingham County, so they feel that the merger will create better services for the entire area,” said **Mrs. Ward**. “The only thing they didn’t seem to be sure about was in the finance departments, as to whether or not they might lose some employees there. But, otherwise, they say that the two units will complement each other.”

Mayor Aswell added, “They say that with that many more members, we would be more likely to secure grants.”

“Yes,” said **Mrs. Ward**, “that was another strong point they emphasized.”

Councilman Paschal said, “I just know that we have always been able to get good service from our COG whenever we needed them...”

Mrs. Ward replied, “When I made that same comment to Ginger (Booker), her reply was, ‘Think about that...about how much we have helped y’all and tried to give good service. We don’t intend for that to change.’”

“They’re actually hoping to provide a broader range of services,” said **Mayor Pro Tem Belcher**.

“A greater variety of services at a cheaper rate...and also, like Robert said, to be able to qualify for the Federal grants,” **Mrs. Ward** replied.

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher said he would be surprised if the rates are any cheaper, “given you are still going to have a larger customer base, more or less, but having a broader range of services might benefit us in the long run, as far as having access to more things when, hopefully, we get to the point of seeking grants...”

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Mrs. Ward concluded, “We have listed both resolutions together, so we can have one vote. In other words, if you’re voting to dissolve the (Piedmont) COG, you’re also voting to form the Northwest Regional Council.”

Mrs. Ward noted that if council had any more questions, the Town Attorney may have answers for them.

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher asked **Mr. Baggett**, “Do you look favorably on this (merger)?”

“Well, I’m like the mayor and Brenda,” **Mr. Baggett** replied. “I’ve been to some meetings where this has been discussed in other jurisdictions. Reception is generally positive. Nobody knows exactly how it will work or whether it will be better, but no one seems to see anything obviously negative about it...the grant aspect, the overall regional planning, and the Northwest COG has done some things our COG has not done. They administer a big workforce development grant, I believe, and have several employees devoted to that.”

Mayor Aswell commented, “And they are working with that in Rockingham County at the present time, too.”

“It seems to be well received as an idea,” **Mr. Baggett** added, “and I think a lot of people trust Ginger Booker and the Board, and think it should be done.”

Mayor Aswell said that everyone he has spoken with about the merger seems to be in favor of it.

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher added, “...we have had such excellent service out of them, that the potential to have even more service is appealing, and if they can maintain their staff levels close to what they have, I would hope we wouldn’t see any reduction in services...”

Councilman Paschal commented, “It would be hard to get much better service than we have had.”

“But if we have access to more diversity of experience,” **Mayor Pro Tem Belcher** said, “...we have talked about grants and we really don’t have the resources to devote to that, so this might open up opportunities for us to pursue some of them...”

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Councilman Paschal remarked, “Some of those grants are tied into whether or not you levy a tax...we wouldn’t get those grants...but not all of them are like that.”

Mayor Aswell said he would like to make a motion, *“To approve the Resolution Dissolving the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments and Providing for Distribution of Assets and Obligations; and, the Resolution for Formation and Membership in the Piedmont Triad Regional Council.”*

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All voted in favor and the motion carried.

Article VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Aswell asked **Captain Billy Parker** with the Rockingham County Sheriff’s Department to address Council.

Captain Parker said he would like to introduce Travis Loftis, the new Wentworth Deputy.

He continued, “Just to tell you a little bit about him, he has 13 years in law enforcement and 2 years with the Marine Corps. During the 13 years, he has worked in Detectives, he has been a narcotics officer, and he has worked with Patrol and been a member of the Special Response Team, so he has a lot of experience to bring to Wentworth. If you have any problems or questions, be sure to call me at the Sheriff’s office. He reports directly to me, so feel free to call.”

Captain Parker asked **Deputy Loftis** to come to the podium to make any comments he would like to make.

Deputy Loftis said Captain Parker, “...pretty much covered everything about me. I was born and raised in Rockingham County, moved around the county some, lived in Reidsville and graduated from Morehead in Eden. I have been in law enforcement for 13 years, two years in the Marine Corps, and would have been there longer but I was injured in a training exercise.”

Deputy Loftis said he went right into law enforcement when he came out of the Marines, working in Person County (Roxboro) and wanted to come back home to Rockingham County.

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Deputy Loftis added, "I think most of you know what happened to me about six years ago, but I'm back at work, so I guess that shows my dedication to the job. I have been with the Rockingham County Sheriff's office going on my seventh year, in July."

He said he would be glad to answer any questions.

Council members welcomed Deputy Loftis and said they were glad to have him.

Mayor Aswell commented, "We want to welcome you aboard and say that we appreciate your work with the Sheriff's Department...I've known you before, and I appreciate you and look forward to a good working relationship...anything we can do to help you, we'll be glad to."

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher added, "Travis, I would also like to welcome you and thank you for your service to the country and the community and hope you will enjoy being in Wentworth. We like having a Wentworth deputy and we're sure you will be an asset to the area."

Deputy Loftis thanked Council for their comments.

Article VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Aswell made the following announcements:

- The next regular meeting of the **Town of Wentworth Planning Board** will be held on **Tuesday, March 15, 2011**, at **7:00 p.m.** in the Town Hall Council Chambers.
- The next regular meeting of the **Wentworth Town Council** will be held in the Town Hall Council Chambers on **Tuesday, April 5, 2011**, at **7:00 p.m.**
- **Five Minute Recess**

Mayor Aswell made a motion, "*That we take a five-minute recess before we go into our Budget Work Session.*"

Councilman Paschal seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mayor Aswell advised that everyone was welcome to stay for the Budget Work Session.

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Article IX. BUDGET WORK SESSION

Council reconvened in the Town Hall Conference Room and **Finance Officer, Yvonne Russell**, began the discussion to gain input from Council, reviewing specific budget line items.

(Note: See ATTACHMENT "A"—Summary of the Budget Work Session for the 2011-2012 Fiscal Year Budget.)

Article X. A D J O U R N

Mayor Pro Tem Belcher made a motion, *"To adjourn the meeting."*

The motion was seconded by Mayor Aswell. All voted in favor and the March 4th, 2011 Wentworth Town Council Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted By: _____
Brenda Ward, Town Clerk

Approved By: _____
Robert P. Aswell, Mayor