

February 6, 2005

MEETING MINUTES

Snow Hill Board of Commissioners

Monday

February 6, 2005 — 7:00 pm

Snow Hill Town Hall

201 North Greene Street

Snow Hill, North Carolina 28580

The first regular scheduled monthly meeting of the Snow Hill Board of Commissioners convened at 7:00 pm on Monday, February 6, 2005 in the Snow Hill Town Hall with the following present: Mayor Don Davis; Commissioners Phyllis Burruss, Percy Edwards, Allison Thomas, and Lynn Lane; Town Clerk/Finance Officer Mauren N. Baker; and Interim Town Planner Bob Clark. Others present included the employees of the Town of Snow Hill.

Town Clerk Mauren Baker greeted the general citizenry with welcome remarks. Bishop Jesse Jones of Rouse Abundant Life Ministries offered prayer. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The Clerk introduced Mayor Donald G. Davis. Mayor Davis delivered the State of the Town Address, which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these meeting minutes.

Upon conclusion of the Address, the meeting was adjourned.

THE STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

February 7, 2005

Mayor Delivers State of the Town Address

The Mayor's State of the Town Address

Snow Hill Town Hall

Snow Hill, North Carolina

7:00 P.M. EST

THE MAYOR: Snow Hill is a thriving community and it is all because of you. Mayor Pro Tem Washington, who had to go on an emergency trip to be with her brother who is ill, Commissioners Edwards, Burruss, Lane and Thomas, we have worked very hard over the course of the last year right here in this chamber and throughout the community in which we love so dearly. We have worked to make our community an even greater place to live, work and play. I thank you.

Town employees, I thank you for what you have done and what you continue doing to make this community what it is. You are the heart of this community. You are the very lifeline that allows us to move forward. You do the work. You do not complain. Thank you for your dedication and commitment.

Residents of Snow Hill you make this community what it is, and if it were not for you, then there would be no need to assemble tonight. I express a heartfelt thanks to each of you for what you have done and the work that is still ahead of us. I thank everyone who is here tonight. I ask the board to please stand and join me in applauding as an expression of our appreciation.

As we have united for the State of the Town Address, we also remember our beloved—Remonia Sutton, Mary Eliza Edwards, Yvonne Tedder, and Francis Norton. They had vested interests in our community, and I would imagine that they are still proud of the work that we are accomplishing knowing that they have been very much a part of it. If Remonia, Mary Eliza, Yvonne, and Francis could hear me, then I say to them, “rest knowing that because of your sons and daughters, this town continues to be in good hands.” We also remember those who were victims of the tsunami and those who have given their lives for our country in Iraq. Let us empathize, give in ways appropriate, and remember the times when we have experienced challenges right here in our community. It is never easy, but I believe that a new dawn is on its way.

Speaking of things that are on the way, I report to you that the town’s population is increasing. I recognize Commissioner Allison Thomas. She is carrying a newly expected town resident. Commissioner Thomas has elected to truly cherish the surprise of finding out whether it’s a boy or girl until delivery. Congratulations! I also recognize our Fire Chief Dana Hill. Chief and his wife Valeria are also expecting. They know it’s a girl. In fact, Chief’s four-year old daughter, Taylor, had the opportunity of naming her sister. Congratulations! I pray for smooth deliveries and most importantly, healthy children. Not only do children tire us out from time to time, but they also provide us with hope for the days ahead. I believe that the days ahead for us can best be described as the rays of a morning sun, which indicates to me that even brighter days are on the way.

So we have come for a status report—“How are we doing, Mr. Mayor?” Snow Hill is strong. There’s lots of energy and excitement in what we have achieved and what we are expecting. Not only are we strong, I am proud to report to you that Snow Hill is stronger than we have been in our recent history. We have continued to be progressive. We have continued to improve. We have continued to bring people to the table. We continue to be a strong force to be reckoned with. We cannot just say that we are strong, but our actions must show that we are strong. However, our strength does not in itself mean that we have arrived to our point of destination. Our strength lies within our ability to keep getting better and better on our journey. Our strength lies within our ability to make enormous strides together. In other words, our strength lies within our resiliency.

I ran for mayor to help move this community forward. Indeed, we are moving forward. Just look at what is happening around our town. What I continue to realize is that our forward movement is not an exclusive result of my efforts or even the Board of Commissioners, but teamwork—everyone working together. We are all a part of team Snow Hill. Together, we have advanced.

And together, we must take extreme pride in our efforts. Our community is healthier. Our community is more confident. We must take pride in our strength. Here is why...

Our doors have remained open for business. Economic development is and remains a top priority for this administration. While I regret the closings of Parker, IGA, Bacou-Dalloz and Tienda Mexicana, I am proud to report to you that in periods of extreme economic challenge, we have experienced an enormous boom especially, in small business creation and expansion.

I welcome to Snow Hill: Auto Oasis, LaFlama Restaurant, Andy's, Curves, The Body Shop, Realco Drug Store, Jin Jin, Jackson Hewlett, Millenia Properties, Vicks Cleaners, Talk Time II, Park Place Apartments, Dream on Lingerie, Xtreme Photography, Imagine Wireless, Hooker's Creations, Stevens Enterprise, law firms, etc. Over the course of this last year, the following small businesses have expanded, which is indicative of our growth: Adam's Nursery, Warren Manufacturing, State Employees Credit Union, Greenridge Tennis and Racquet Club, La Flama Restaurant, Bojangles, Jeanette's Barbershop and Farm Bureau.

We must acknowledge the efforts resulting in Heritage Crossing and Miller commercial subdivisions, which houses several of these new businesses. We must also acknowledge the Rosenwald Center and contribution from Peggy and Jerry Green resulting in Greene Enterprises.

The town and county, working with many other organizations, were successfully able to address not only expansion, but also retention. I am proud to report the success of the NWL Capacitor expansion and retention project. We are getting stronger. We must take pride in our abilities to work together. I also take pride in the fact that we were selected and actually hosted an Eastern Carolina Council of Government meeting to address regional economic development.

To me, economic development means new tax base—new tax base means sustained or potential reductions in tax and utility rates. New tax base also means more entrepreneurs, jobs and lower unemployment rates. I report to you that our unemployment rate released in January 2005 was 3.9 percent (a decrease from 6.5 percent six months ago).

So what have we done? We have simply established Snow Hill as a place to do business, we have made zoning policies and the navigation of our processes much easier and most importantly, we have simply gotten out of the way to let the best of our residents be revealed. Indeed, we are stronger because of this. I commend those who saw fit to support Amendment One in this last election. This is an economic development tool that could prove beneficial to communities. We should take pride in our ability to stimulate our economy.

I was speaking with a business owner just the other day, and he shared with me that he was told that this administration is very open-minded and business friendly. Yes, this is about an attitude and environment of making good things happen for good people living in a good community. For these reasons, I claim that Snow Hill is one of the most progressive towns of our size in the state. I also claim that we have grown, while maintaining the charm and feel of a small town. We are stronger because of this. Let us take pride in our strength.

I also report to you that the Board has taken action to constitute the Snow Hill Development Commission, and I am hopeful that this commission will be further organized and an economic

developer on a retainer fee will be hired to help us concentrate on recruitment and retention. We are stronger and should take pride in our achievements.

I believe that economic and community development are interrelated. This is why I am proud of the expansion of Liberty Baptist Church and Snow Hill Pentecostal Holiness Church. I report to you that the town is working as a member of the County's taskforce to site a new public safety facility in our downtown area. This effort will further improve our downtown community. In 2001, our concern was the number of vacant buildings in the downtown community. Today, our concern is parking. I am proud to report that we paved the parking area adjacent to the Greene County Health Center, and transferred land to the Greene County Health Center for additional parking. I ask for the board to remain flexible and aggressively work to address parking in the downtown area. Indeed, the need for added parking in downtown Snow Hill is a sign that we are growing. It is a sign that we are stronger. Let us take pride in this.

Clearly, community development is stronger. Last year, I announced at the State of the Town Address that we would become a Tree City USA. Ladies and gentlemen, I proudly announce to you to night that not only will we be recognized this year as a Tree City USA, but also will be the recipient of the Growth Award. We are growing. We are improving. We are stronger.

I commend the Board for supporting a request for a North Carolina Department of Transportation landscape agreement. We are growing. We are stronger.

Last year, I announced that we would be building a \$68K park in the Genesis Hills Subdivision area, using Park and Recreation Trust Funds. Ladies and gentlemen, I announce to you tonight that phase one of the park is completed. We are growing and getting stronger.

Last year, I announced that we would receive \$50K dollars in grant funds under the Urgent Repair program to assist residents of the age of 60 and above in making much needed repairs their homes. Ladies and gentlemen, I announce that we have moved forward at bidding out this work. Not only have we moved forward with the bidding process, but also we have encouraged local contractors to submit proposals. We are growing and getting stronger.

Last year, I said that we were still waiting to hear about a \$700K community development block grant to assist with housing rehabilitation. Ladies and gentlemen, the town was awarded these funds and is in the process of moving forward with this work, and I plan to bring to the board an amendment to the \$105K local option portion of this grant to assist with improvements to the Greene County Community Center, which services many of the residents in this targeted neighborhood. We are growing and getting stronger.

Allow me to be very direct. I believe strongly that the town must move forward with leasing the South Greene baseball field area. Recreation and community improvement has been and continues to be a priority for this administration. Let there be no doubt that the town is in a better position to insure that the mission of recreation and community development is carried out and most importantly, sustained over time. I encourage any willing local nonprofit organization such as the Rosenwald Center for Cultural Enrichment to assist us in this effort. Let's work together. I welcome the opportunity to partner in the management of the operations. With this improvement, improvements to the Hart Street area and the Greene County Community Center, we can breathe

new life into this area. This is about improving our community. This is about leaving no one behind. This is about leaving this community better than we found it. This is about tearing down any negative perceptions about this part of our community. I am truly committed to moving this community forward in all directions. Our downtown has improved, our historic district has improved, and development has occurred at the 258/58-corridor. The Harper and Hart Street areas must continue to be improved. We must take pride trying to make this a reality. We are getting stronger.

In addition to these improvements, I proudly announce to you that the town will be the recipient of approximately \$36K under the Greene County's scatter-site program for additional housing rehabilitation. We are stronger.

We have moved forward in exploring plans to develop along the Contentnea Creek. I commend the work of the Contentnea Paddle Club. The Neuse Riverkeeper is to be commended for sponsoring a river float, which residents were able to go canoeing and kayaking. We are stronger.

I also commend the Board for partnering with North Carolina Central University Department of Public Administration to assist us in conducting a community needs assessment and helping with a community beautification project. We should take pride in the fact that we are stronger.

Our cemetery program is stronger.

I extend my appreciation to Jody Tyson of Tyson-Taylor Funeral Home for his recent appointment by Governor Easley to the North Carolina Board of Funeral Services. From my understanding, this is the first of such appoints of someone from our community. Let us take pride knowing that we are a talented community. We are getting stronger.

I commend the board for agreeing to form a cemetery taskforce. I also commend Mike Sutton, our cemetery superintendent and Commissioner Edwards for their leadership in this area. These initiatives have resulted in the closing of lanes, planting of trees and increasing signage in our cemetery. The Board's action is anticipated to extend the life of the existing cemetery by over 20 years. I highly encourage the board to consider moving forward with paving lanes in the cemetery. We must take pride in the place that will be, for many of us, our eternal resting place.

Technological development is a critical component of our future. I commend Commissioner Thomas, the board and the Greene County Board of Commissioners for agreeing to move forward with a grant, which would allow us to conduct a feasibility study of a technology center. This effort is intended to help supplement the county's initiatives in insuring that we are a technologically sound and capable community. I commend the County for moving forward with the TOPS grant to make us a wireless community, which will increase Internet access. I am proud that our board agreed to allow Snow Hill to be one of several partners in this effort. I am also proud of the work that the Department of Administration has done in upgrading our computers and information management systems. These much-needed upgrades will only help us to be more efficient at service delivery. I report to you that we are very close to the completion of a town website, which will allow you full access to your town 24 hours 7 days a week. We should take pride in the fact that we are stronger.

We can sometimes be sensitive of the manner in which news is reported. Tonight, we must commend our local press for taking the leadership of bringing together various community partners including the Greene County municipalities, the Greene County government, the Chamber of Commerce and the business community in producing and distributing the *Greene Living magazine*. Efforts such as this prove 100 percent that we can work together. Such efforts also show that good things are happening. Let us continue to capture and share our community pride with others. We are stronger for this. Let us take pride.

Greene living is what it is all about—a stronger and healthier Snow Hill. That is why it was important for us to pass a resolution supporting a zero waste plan. That is why it was important for us to pass an ordinance addressing smoking in public places. The federal and state governments regulate smoking in public places. Many local governments have not adequately addressed this issue. It took courage for this Board to support this ordinance. I ask for us to encourage our county and other municipalities to do the same. More people are walking. I am delighted that Greene County Healthy Carolinian hosted a community-based walk in Snow Hill. I commend the work of the Neighborhood Affairs Committee, Recreation Board and Development Commission for joining together to address ways to promote a healthier community. We must all engage in the process of enhancing the quality of life of our community. Let us take pride in our ability to live better, and prayerfully, live longer.

As we have begun to observe African American Heritage Month, I suggest that this is not a time to celebrate my heritage, but our heritage. This is a time to celebrate our ability to live together and overcome the challenging journeys of our history. We have all been in this together for quite sometime. We must continue writing this new history book. So many have died because of race, but our blood is the same. I suggest that this new history book is filled with hope and promise.

Indeed, February is a time to reflect on just how far we have come, and how much further we can go. Our celebration should not just be in February, but life-long. For this reason, I am proud to announce that the Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to include cultural diversity as a strategic objective for our community. I commend for the Board for their commitment to cultural diversity. I also commend Commissioner Thomas for organizing and facilitating discovery briefings, which were designed to bring members from different cultural backgrounds together. I commend to work of Commissioners Burruss, Thomas and Washington for working with the NAACP in carrying out Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Services. My friends, this was not a one-sided service, but multicultural. I am proud to announce plans to host a cultural enrichment summer camp. I believe that such a camp is imperative in bringing residents from across our community together. We must continue on this path of strength and pride.

Yes, baseball is still considered America's favorite pastime, and I believe a pastime for many of us. We saw this when we partnered with the Kinston Indians for the first Snow Hill Night. Even though we were outside of our jurisdiction, over 500 Greene County and Snow Hill residents fellowshipped with our brothers and sisters in Lenoir County. I hope that we are able to continue this relationship. I commend the leadership of Commissioner Edwards for making this happen. We are getting stronger.

A family that I am extremely honored to stand with, tonight, is that of the town employees. Our town employees, who often refer to themselves as a "town" family, are to be commended for

what they do for the residents of Snow Hill. I would like to ask for Mauren Baker to stand. Please join me in congratulating her on being appointed our town clerk. Ren, is a hard worker and has brought her experience in customer service as a former banker to establish an environment that is resident-centered. Now, I ask for all of our employees to stand. Our employees work hard and sometimes long hours: jumping ditches, fielding constituent concerns, overseeing projects, cutting grass, reading chemical levels, removing debris, turning water on, turning water off, responding to leaks, completing work orders, giving out directions, upgrading computers, working on grant requirements, posting accounts, answering questions, helping each other out, etc. My friends, I am proud that the Board of Commissioners understood this and voted to upgrade the personnel policy, which strengthened their benefits. Yes, I am glad that the Board also supported a \$255 bonus for our employees and agreed to adopt four core competencies. I am also glad that our employees understand these four core competencies of safety first, service that is second to none, effective at all that we do and developing into a better person and community. We can never truly say thank you enough. I am glad that our employees take such enormous pride in our community. And tonight, we are here to let you know that we take enormous pride in you.

I remain committed to improving public safety. The members of the Snow Hill Volunteer Fire Department are true heroes. The department, using just the right equipment, training and a nice truck, was instrumental in providing the necessary support for gaining control and exhausting the Greene Fiber Optics fire. If this fire had spread, then it would have resulted in losing millions of dollars. Also, the Fire Department is looking wonderful in their new dress uniforms. Thank you Chief Hill for your leadership. Our animal control program has resulted in many roaming animals being removed from the streets of Snow Hill. Likewise, we have continued a strong mosquito program. Although we were notified that our COPS grant in the amount of \$450K was not funded, our application was forward into another round for consideration. I report to you that we have secured our water tanks. We are getting stronger.

I commend the board for supporting the formation of a multi-public safety complex taskforce to explore the possibilities of a new fire, EMS and possible, police complex. We desire to get stronger.

I commend the work of the Department of Transportation for completing road improvements in the Third and Harper Street areas. I have listened and believe strongly that we must connect Snow Hill with sidewalks. I have articulated this to the Department of Transportation. I commend the Department of Transportation for helping us to make Snow Hill a walking community by awarding us with over \$45K in pedestrian enhancement funds, and making a commitment to further assistance us. Soon, we should be able to reduce the number of residents who are walking and jogging on the streets. We are getting stronger.

I also commend you for committing to street improvements on Harper Street and in Rollingwood. I report to you that I personally went to Raleigh and met with the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Transportation in regards to drainage in Rollingwood. We must continue encouraging the Department of Transportation to help us with this matter. We desire to get stronger. Let us take pride in this.

Water and sewer remains a priority for us. I commend the board for applying for a Clean Water Bond Supplemental Grant to further assist with an alternative water source and a grant to map out our water system. I am also glad that an \$80K-grant that Snow Hill was awarded was used to guide us through the alternative water source selection process.

Over the past three years, I have fought to keep rates down. Rates have not increased in the last three years. Allow me to say it again, “rates have not increased in the last three years.” I regret to inform you that with un-funded state mandates, it is becoming harder and harder to keep our rates down. I have spoken to our state legislators in regards to direct appropriations to assist us. I encourage you to do the same. Currently, we are undergoing a rate study. I promise you that I will work to keep rates down especially, for the elderly and large families. I strongly believe that our elderly and families should not be forced to subsidize businesses. I hope that this board remains committed to our elderly and large families. I also hope that this board remains committed to the residents of Snow Hill and not those who gain by living on the town’s borders—receiving the benefits of our services without having to pay taxes. This is why I have promoted a water rate structure that will charge higher rates for those who are out of the town limits.

Let’s talk about property taxes and the reevaluation. Many have expressed concerns to me with the reevaluation. Some are planning to attend a meeting this Friday in regards to the reevaluation. I will ask for you to help me do a simple task. If you hear or know of anyone who has concerns with the reevaluation, encourage him or her to go to the Greene County Tax Office and review their property record card.

When I received my notification of the new value of my house, initially I put it aside. Upon review my property record card, I discovered that I had a fireplace added to my home that is simply not there. Immediately, I went the Greene County Tax Office. It took approximately four minutes to review my property record card and resolve this matter. We absolutely must encourage all residents to review their property record cards. Meanwhile, I promise that I will work to decrease taxes at a rate that is near a net zero increase.

Thank you for standing up with me, and taking some tough stances on some tough issues. I commend this board for approving a resolution calling for a water authority and resolutions encouraging accountability of our alternative water selection process. As a result, we are stronger. The inter-local agreement, which I am holding, is a stronger agreement. I commend the board and public works director for remaining patient. We still have areas to improve, but I ask for the board to support making our contribution to the alternative water fund.

Ladies and gentlemen, last year, I asked this Board to support a resolution putting the question regarding the distribution of mixed beverages into your hands. They unanimously approved it. I did not debate the issue. Whether it was right or wrong. The only thing that I debated was your right to decide the faith of our community. If you do not like it, voted it down. If you do not mind, vote it up. Deep in my heart, I feel that the right for community residents to vote on such issues is democratic. We see Americans and Iraqis fighting and dying for this process. Every since I took office, I have fought for your voices to be heard. I tell you tonight that I will continue fighting any day and hour for your right to be heard.

My great-grandmother, who lived and died in Snow Hill, taught me a lot about community pride. I watched and listened to her. You could tell that she was a person who took great pride in this community by the manner that she walked, talked and carried herself. I challenge us to think long and hard about what this community means to us. We must love Snow Hill in a way that it shows in our walk, talk and the manner in which we carry ourselves. We should love everything about this place that we call our home. I traveled around the country, but this was always home. When asked, “where are you from?” I always replied, “Snow Hill, North Carolina.”

I take pride in the fact that I was born just one block away from this Town Hall. I take pride in the fact that the people of this community have been instrumental in shaping and modeling me. This is why I wanted to come and give back. But regardless of our homes of origin, if we claim that we live here, then we should take pride in the place we call home.

I must admit that I take enormous pride in my efforts to be defined as a mayor who is about education, development and people. Most importantly, I take the most pride in being a citizen of Snow Hill. It is more important to me to be defined as a mayor who loves his community than anything else.

No matter where we go, Snow Hill will always be a part of us.

Let us take pride in Snow Hill.

Pride is about a personal commitment and a way of life. Pride is about trying and not giving up. Pride is about helping and not condemning. Pride is an on-going journey and not a point in the road. Pride is about love and not prejudice. Pride is about, together, overcoming challenges and not claiming perfection.

Pride is for the first time that I am aware all the mayors in Greene County meeting and discussing issues. Pride is for the first time that I am aware of municipalities meeting with the Greene County Board of Commissioners to discuss working together and progress. Pride is that we have made significant progress in Snow Hill.

I believe that community pride means working through our differences. Together. I believe that community pride means being a part of the solutions. Working together. I believe that community pride means that we value all. United. I believe that community pride means doing our parts to make this a better place. Nothing great has ever been achieved without pride.

Jon Katzenbach said, “Where motivation is concerned, the journey is more important than the destination. It’s more important for people to be proud of what they are doing every day than it is for them to be proud of reaching a major goal. That’s why it is crucial to celebrate the ‘steps’ as much as the ‘landings.’”

Indeed, we celebrate our “steps” and “landings” tonight because pride separates great communities from average communities. I believe strongly that Snow Hill is a great community.

Let us take pride in what we have and share.

May God bless you and our great community.