

**The Inglis Town Commission
held the Regular Commission Meeting
at the Inglis Town Hall Commission Meeting Room
and Remotely via Zoom
on February 2nd, 2021 @ 6:00pm**

Present Were:

**Mayor Merritt (attended Via Zoom), Comm. Brennan (attended Via Zoom), Comm. Morin,
Comm. Schwing, Comm. Webb, Comm. Williams
Attorney Fugate**

Motion to Adopt Agenda

Commissioner Morin made a motion to adopt the agenda. Commissioner Schwing seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Prayer and Pledge to the Flag

Comments, Ordinances, ETC.

- 1. Attorney Comments:**
- 2. Ordinance/Resolutions:**
- 3. Contracts/Agreements:**

Consent Agenda

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Minutes: | Regular Meetings | 01/05/2021 |
| | Budget Workshops | |
| | Budget Hearings | |
| | Workshops | |
| | Public Hearings | |
| | Special | 01/13/2021 |

2. Financial Statements: December 2020

Commissioner Webb stated a correction will need to be made to the minutes from the Special Meeting of January 13th, 2021, referencing the motion made for the and the vote count of 3-1 should reflect a count of 4-1.

Commissioner Morin made the motion to accept the Consent Agenda as amended. Commissioner Brennan seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Regular Agenda

1. Planning:

Commissioner Webb stated there will be a Planning Commission Meeting as schedule for Tuesday, February 9th, 2021 at 6pm.

2. Code Enforcement:

Commissioner Morin gave the floor to the Code Enforcement Officer Dave Banton.

Mr. Banton stated at the Code Enforcement Board Hearing held on January 21st, 2021 6 cases were presented, two of them were brought into compliance, the remainder were given specific dates to clear the properties.

Mr. Banton stated the next Code Enforcement Meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 25th, 2021 @ 6:00pm.

3. Old Business:**4. New Business:****A. Request from Lindsey Royce, 18 Elkins St., to have a streetlight placed on the power pole due to theft at night in the area.**

Commissioner Schwing stated what the Royce's are looking to do is have a streetlight placed on a power pole across from their house and after discussing this with the Public Works Supervisor, Wayne Moore, streetlights are something that the town pays for and theses usually are placed at large intersections and curves.

Commissioner Schwing stated the neighbor had just had a streetlight placed on their property and it lights the surrounding area so her suggestion is to inform the Royce's that for around \$10.00 a month they can have a light placed on the power pole in their yard and if we were to install a light like this it would set precedence for all residents to have a light like this at the Towns expense.

Discussed followed.

5. Dept Report by Commissioners:**A. Budget & Finance.**

Commissioner Brennan gave the revenue report for the month of January 2021.

B. Water Dept.

Commissioner Williams read the Water Department monthly report.

C. Maintenance/R&B.

Commissioner Schwing read the report for the Maintenance and Road & Bridge Departments.

D. Law/Fire.

Commissioner Webb read the report from the Levy County Sheriff's Department and stated she did not get a report for the Inglis Fire Rescue.

E. Land Use/Code Enforcement.

Commissioner Morin stated she had nothing more to add but asked the Code Enforcement Officer Dave Banton if he had anything.

Dave Banton he has sent out 5 notices of violations this month, he has closed 6 notices of violations from last month, he has processed 23 permits, there are three new homes that have moved into Cason Inglis Acres.

F. Planning.

Commissioner Webb stated there will be a Planning Commission Meeting this next Tuesday, February 9th at 6:00pm.

G. Health/Welfare/Rec.

Commissioner Morin stated the next Farm Share Food Give Away will be at the Am-Vets on February 10th, 2021 and as stated at a prior meeting this is a first come first serve basis, they should start around 8am but if the truck is unloaded any earlier they will start giving the food away so that it doesn't spoil.

Commissioner Morin stated the American Legion Post 155 in Crystal River will host a Food Share from a different Food Bank and it will be on the third Wednesday every month.

Commissioner Morin the IRC has nothing planned at this time.

Commissioner Webb asked about the Covid-19 shot information that Commissioner Morin had posted on Facebook.

Commissioner Morin stated Levy, Gilchrist and Dixie Counties had three different phone numbers she had listed for persons to call, the Levy number rings non-stop, the Gilchrist number lets you pre-register and puts you on a waiting list, they were able to get through on the Dixie County number to register for the shot.

Commissioner Schwing stated for anyone that are retired military, Tri-County is starting to roll out Covid-19 vaccines through military installations and through emails.

Commissioner Morin stated she had been told that if you were not retired military and only had VA Benefits/Medical and wanted to get a shot you had to be 75 years of age or older.

H. Animal Control.

Commissioner Webb stated the Animal Control Officer has been educating people and taking care of business.

6. Public Comments:

Mayor Merritt introduced Mayor Trip Lancaster from Fanning Springs.

Mayor Merritt stated she had some questions for Mayor Lancaster.

#1. What was the condition of Fanning Springs that prompted the discussion about developing a Sewer System for your city?

Mayor Lancaster stated, "The original discussion came from the new neighborhood that came in in the late 2000's and then also DEP was on us pretty hard about our water quality when they took over the State Park at Fanning Springs about that they needed to put in a sewer system and start getting these septic's offline."

#2. Had they done the Basin Management Action Plan for you yet at that time?

Mayor Lancaster stated, "Yes, we'd been in it for a little while, we're smack dab in the B-MAP."

#3. Were there environmental drivers like nutrients in the ground water that affected the decision?

Mayor Lancaster stated, "Absolutely, yes Ma'am the biggest part was like I said Fanning Springs was named after a spring, Fanning Springs, and it is was first magnitude spring, now it's a second magnitude spring and the nitrate level had gotten very high coming out of it, the natural eel grass that had been in Fanning Springs our entire life had water quality reports of good quality and the aquifers water quality reports coming out now was one of the large drivers for the project."

#4. How did the financing of the project come together?

Mayor Lancaster stated, "The original financing loan was done through a USDA Loan that by doing a loan at that point in time, it all started in 2010, they basically had to sign an agreement, I wasn't on the council of Fanning at that time, the city council made an agreement with USDA to finance with them and they would set the sewer rate to make sure that their monthly bill was paid."

#5. Were subsequent build outs paid for through other means?

Mayor Lancaster stated, "Everything since the initial startup we've done through grants, the very first one, the very first phase with a little bit of CDBG Grant funding didn't cover 100%, since then we've done five more phases and we've actually been fortunate that we've paid through the DEP Spring Restoration Fund."

Mayor Merritt stated the town has been able to do a lot through DEP on loan/grant and the next loan the town gets will be a 90/10 and they are looking at getting the other 10% leveraged through grants.

Mayor Lancaster stated that DEP has been a very fortunate resource especially for small towns like ours, we wouldn't be able to do this otherwise.

#6. What is the average monthly bill, and that was set by USDA is that correct?

Mayor Lancaster stated, "USDA set the minimum and they set the per gallon rate, so the way you are set up you should have a lot more leeway with the DEP based funding and they usually finance 100%, however even at 10% I would think that would be to your benefit to cover the monthly payment. What USDA did for us the minimum is \$27.50 a month based on for 2000 gallons and then \$9.23 per gallon over the base."

#7. Was there opposition from homeowners or property owners as the proposal for the system were developed and what were the answers given at that time?

Mayor Lancaster stated, "When they originally did it I think there was some in the lower income neighborhoods, now that we have built out, close to 90% of the town has built out now, some of them were not very happy about it but the amount of irrigation that they do, it is a very high end neighborhood, but we made arrangements for them to be able to get a second meter just for the irrigation and if they had a well they could use it for irrigation purposes only."

#8. What type of economic development has taken place since the sewer system went in.

Mayor Lancaster stated, "Honestly our town it hasn't changed that much we're trying to get a hotel but that's been stalled for a little while, other than that basically nothing, the neighborhoods that the simulation that we have are building out more just through the natural progression of people migrating from the cities out to the country but it's not as far as private development is hasn't changed a whole lot our population has maybe changed by 200 people it's not changed the base of our data in any way."

#9. Have there been any unexpected costs associated with the sewer system.

Mayor Lancaster stated, "There has not been any unexpected ones, you just have the regular maintenance that you have to do, water pumps have to be changed depending on how people treat them, the biggest thing he can try to suggest is that everybody understand that flushable wipes are not flushable they do cause issues and that is the biggest issue that they have had."

#10. If the city had to do it all over again would you proceed in the same way.

Mayor Lancaster stated, "Absolutely, that was all to get the ball rolling, we're actually better off now that we've got another way that we can prevent a bad leak and when you run a 1000 gallon tank and back then we were not expecting to build out as quick."

#11. Are you using advanced wastewater treatment?

Mayor Lancaster stated, "For the new plant, Yes, and that's being completed, thankfully, by the DEP Springs Restoration Fund Grant and that is a little over \$15 million."

Mayor Lancaster asked if there were any questions he could answer from anyone else.

Commissioner Williams asked, "How many residents do you have in Fanning Springs and how many are actually on the system?"

Mayor Lancaster stated, "We have around a thousand people and we've got right at 90% of the homes on sewer at this point."

Commissioner Schwing asked, "Was the freshwater plant that you had adequate to work with the sewer system that you built, or did they have to build a bigger water plant?"

Mayor Lancaster stated, "We did not, it didn't change anything, our wells are literally about a mile away from where the sewer plant is located, it actually brought the water use down."

Commissioner Morin asked, "Can you tell me how long it took for the initial phase to where you're at now at 90% hookup?"

Mayor Lancaster stated, "We initially came online in 2013, that was when the sewer system actually came online, to get the 90%, the last build we just finished, the building itself we finished in August of last year so a little over seven years."

Commissioner Schwing asked, "So what's the amount of the loan you have for your plant?"

Mayor Lancaster stated, "The original loan was right at 7 million, we have about \$110,000.00 a year of debt service and that is a 40-year loan."

Mayor Merritt stated, "But that was to USDA right?"

Mayor Lancaster stated, "That is to USDA, it is not on the new AWT Plant we don't owe any debt service on the new plant at all."

Commissioner Brennan asked, "Is the new plant being funded by an SRF Grant?"

Mayor Lancaster stated, "The new plant is 100% funded by Spring Restoration Funds through DEP."

Scott Levesque stated, "Mr. Tripp, he said that it was 100% financed right, through grants right, as far as the loan, I was going over some information on this wastewater treatment facility and it says that you had other money for that project besides the grants and the loans, for example there was one from the college, Central Florida, for over a half a million dollars, Recreation and Parks gave you \$1,000.00, are you aware of what this is?"

Mayor Lancaster stated, "Central Florida College paid for their line extension to run from the end of our line to hook themselves up and I will have to go back and look at all those numbers from 2010 I don't know every one of them forward and backwards and if you've got 90% that'd more than we got."

Mr. Levesque stated we have 90% of hope, nothing in writing and nothing for sure, and he feels this was a setup since it wasn't on the agenda so the public could be aware of it and attend, do you have anything to say about this Ms. Mayor?"

Mayor Merritt stated this was not a set up the agenda was already posted and it could only be discussed under Public Comments.

James Sparkman made a statement to Mr. Lancaster regarding an issue not pertaining to the sewer.

Commissioner Webb called for a point of order this discussion was not on the topic at hand.

Steve Schwing asked Mr. Lancaster what the cost is to date for the sewer project not including the new loan to expand the project.

Mayor Lancaster stated they most reason extension that was done is in the neighborhood of 170 homes and every lot is stubbed out ready to go for connection and that is 6 million, the extension before that was around 150 homes at a cost of about 3.1 that we did grants on the one before that was a combination of CDBG Grants, DEP, Suwannee River Water Management Grants, right around a million eight, I've not done a running total but he thinks that is a little over 11 million, it's a lot more expensive to do it by piece mail if you're able to get it done to start with you're better off.

Steve Schwing asked of the 90% that you have done what is the household count that you have hooked up.

Mayor Lancaster stated, "Full household count is somewhere around 500 homes."

Mr. Schwing stated, "You said the average rate you have imposed on the public right now for the minimum is \$27 dollars and change, is that the average rate or what is the average rate the people are paying, since you said it's around 9 dollars more for every thousand gallons, so are people exceeding the minimum rate regularly?"

Mayor Lancaster stated, "there is a large part of our population that pays only the minimum or close to it, we are a pretty low income area, we have a few places that people are paying quite a bit more and they are the ones that are doing the more extensive landscaping, newer homes and are more high economic neighborhoods, but the majority are paying between \$38 to \$60."

Steve Schwing asked if that was for water and sewer combined.

Mayor Lancaster stated, "Yes Sir, our water is \$20.50 base and the sewer is just over \$27.00."

Steve Schwing stated, "you said there was growth involved, when was the bulk of the plant hooked up and online, you said 2013."

Mayor Lancaster stated, "The initial startup was 2013 but the bulk of the line extensions have been in the last two years."

Steve Schwing asked, "Do you have a percentage increase in the influx, because you said a lot of people are wanting to move to the county and what type of a percentage increase have you seen from your initial population when you started the project to where you're at right now?"

Mayor Lancaster stated, "Maybe 10% at best."

Mr. Schwing stated and that's from a 10% growth since 2013.

Mayor Lancaster stated, "The initial date they started doing this was in 2010, the plant just came online in 2013, so I would say 10% from 2010 to now."

Commissioner Morin asked Mayor Lancaster if he can tell her at the inception of this sewer idea was there any ability for the residents to turn it down and if so what was the decision.

Mayor Lancaster stated, "I don't think any referendum was done, I'm not 100% sure, I know it was talked about in front of the city council for several years before it got off the ground but I know there was opposition to it but at the end of the day it pushed through, I didn't live in Fanning before it even started, so I really didn't know anything about it at that point, I moved to Fanning about a year after it started, it took them a little while to find a suitable location."

Judy Blum asked where Fanning Springs was located.

Mayor Lancaster stated Inglis is the southern point of Levy County and Fanning Springs is the northern point of Levy County.

Judy Blum commented that it sounds like most of the Fanning Springs Sewer Project financing was done with springs restoration grants.

Mayor Lancaster stated that is correct but springs restoration grants are statewide.

Commissioner Schwing asked if Fanning Springs has savings set aside for maintenance and if so since this plant started in 2013 to present have they had to use those funds for maintenance of the sewer facility.

Mayor Lancaster stated they do have funds that are set aside for the upkeep and maintenance and they have not had to do anything other than the normal wear and tear that can be expected on the pumps.

Commissioner Schwing asked Mayor Lancaster if he knew the cost of a new pump.

Mayor Lancaster stated the cost is right around \$3,000.00 for an individual pump in a yard but most of their lines are gravity fed and then \$6,000.00 for the stirring pump at the sewer plant.

Judy Blum asked how are they paying the \$110,000.00 payment.

Mayor Lancaster stated the amount comes out of the sewer charges and it is paid monthly.

Steve Schwing asked where do you get the funds to maintain and operate the plant does it come out of the sewer bill as well?

Mayor Lancaster stated that also comes out of the sewer fees.

Commissioner Williams asked if they have had any change in the opposition from the people that were for or against it since the system has been installed and made operational.

Mayor Lancaster stated they have people that were originally opposed to it understand that it takes away the septic tank maintenance and are very happy with that side of it, and now with the new plan that when the state moves to when the septic tanks go out the residents will need to install an aerobics system at a cost to the homeowners.

Mayor Lancaster stated one other thing they have also noticed is that the water quality has gotten so much better in the springs and the eel grass is beginning to grow back and we are seeing a visible tangible benefit on the local environment.

Lisa Levesque asked if there was any cost to the individual residents of Fanning Springs.

Mayor Lancaster stated there was a cost to those residents for the original sewer project he was told, and it ranged between \$1,500.00 to \$2,000.00 and they had to set up payment plans but that was due to it being a USDA loan and a CDBG funding grant.

Mayor Lancaster stated the last line extensions that have been done has been taken care of through grants acquired from the Department of Environmental Protection, all the pump out, the decommission of the septic tanks, restoration of landscaping to the yards, hook up to the system itself all of that have been at no cost to the homeowners but for those that did not sign up originally and then sold their house, it is a state law that the new homeowner will be required to hook up at their own expense.

Commissioner Williams asked for the people that had to pay in the beginning, what were their options and how long were they given to pay.

Mayor Lancaster stated that each homeowner was offered individual payment plans, there was no set rate, there is no one science fits all plan.

Lisa Levesque asked the Commission about the sewer code that is in the Ordinance Book is subject to change once a sewer system is put in place.

Questions were asked from citizens to Mayor Lancaster that did not identify themselves.

Wayne Moore, Public Works Supervisor asked if the Town of Fanning Springs had employed the Wastewater Maintenance crew and how many employees there were.

Town Clerk Darlene Slattery stated that Mayor Lancaster stated there was one employee that ran the Water/Sewer Plant and he was an independent certified contractor.

Attorney Fugate stated if he remembers correctly all of the comments and questions regarding the maintenance and operation of the sewer system are being included in the projected cost of the plant.

7. Workshops & Special Meetings:

8. Town Clerk:

Town Clerk Darlene Slattery informed all that she has received the absentee/mail-out ballots, anyone that wished to apply for one needs to contact her at Town Hall, a form needs to be filled prior to the ballot being issued.

Steve Schwing asked what the last day an absentee/mail-out ballot could be issued.

Town Clerk Darlene Slattery stated in order for the absentee/mail-out ballot to reach the requester and then to get it returned in time it needs to be requested no later than the Friday before the election on Tuesday if the request is to a local address if it is not a local address there is a specific deadline of eight (8) days before the election.

9. Comments:**A. Mayor:****B. Commission.**

Commissioner Brennan stated at this time he would like to thank Commissioner James Williams for the help he gave the Town and the Fire Department. He donated the site work, the form work and poured the slab, all the labor was paid for by Commissioner Williams at his own expense, the Fire Chief wrote a letter of thank you to Commissioner Williams, but he wanted to bring this up and thank him personally.

Commissioner Brennan stated he did this so that people would know what Commissioner Williams does for the Town.

Commissioner Williams stated he appreciated what Commissioner Brennan had to say and everything he does for the Town is done from the bottom of his heart, he cares about this Town, he has nothing to gain by it.

Commissioner Williams stated there has been accusations made that his property will be bought for the Sewer Plant, he informed everyone that the Town doesn't have enough money to buy his property he loves where he lives at, so it is not for sale, that was never brought up or ever even discussed, talked about in no way shape or form.

Commissioner Williams stated, "The only other thing I have to say is, you know we sit up here and get ridiculed by people saying that we're going to shove this down the Town's throat, well let me explain something, if, and maybe I'm wrong, and I can't talk to the Commissioners about it when we're not together so, but as far as I know, and correct me if I am wrong, there's not been one vote here to put the sewer system in, everything that we have voted on and all the monies that have been used has been through grants, everything that we have voted on is only to do what I feel is our job and that is to search for things that will benefit the town in the short run, the long run whatever, and then bring it to the people to see if they want it, now facts cost money, lies are cheap so the only way that we can get the facts is to go through this process, now I will tell you that this whole sewer system got started eight or nine, seven or eight years ago however long it was, I was originally for it to go, and we were going to send it to Citrus County because of the RV Parks that were requesting sewer systems, so that's kind of where this whole thing got started if I remember correctly, so I'm not sure what my feelings are about it right now and until we know exactly what the cost and stuff are going to be, and also on top of that I do believe that every sitting Commissioner here has said that if it was not 100% free to the Town we would not even pursue it anymore, so if you are going to ridicule us for doing our job by trying to come up with the correct information and put numbers out there that are factual once it's over and done with, then I guess you don't need anybody up here, that's my feeling, I'm not pointing my finger at anybody, I just want everybody to know that we are, I am, honestly looking for a way to improve our Town, now we all know not 100% of the people are going to be for it, or for anything, we are going to have our opposition from everyone at different times on different things that come up but if we don't at least do our part by trying to get this at a zero cost then when it is mandated at some point maybe not in our lifetime, maybe in our kids, then the government will shove it down our throat so you know why ridicule us for trying to get it for free I would think that if somebody came up to you said they would build your house for free most of you would probably take it, I'm going to leave it at that."

Commissioner Schwing stated she guesses she could add something on the sewer, “I think knowledge is power and I want to thank all of you for coming here and being engaged and staying engaged, because the more we learn together the better we’re going to make a very very good decision. I am going to meet with WAR on Friday morning and get some information from them and anything that you can study and research and get information on and we can share is just going to just make us that much better in our decision, so I just want thank all of you for your time tonight for being here.”

Commissioner Morin stated, “ I would like to reiterate that, for some reason I am seeing people here for the first time in years here tonight and it’s refreshing and now you can actually be engaged in the process knowing that we’re doing everything that you want maybe doing it a different way than you want, but the end result is going to be what you want, you want it for free, it will not get passed unless it’s for free, end of story, if the other people come up with a different idea then I’d like to here plan B that would help the people instead of this, I still haven’t heard a plan B, so if somebody has a plan B I’d be more than happy to, all of us would be more than happy to listen to it and that’s all I have to say, we are doing our job.”

Commissioner Webb stated, “I agree with both of you, and I also agree with you Commissioner Williams.”

Commissioner Webb stated, “On a sad note we lost a local individual I don’t know how publicly it’s been know but Sally Price who is a former Commissioner, a realtor, she lived here forever, she was a historian, she had all kinds of information about Inglis and Yankeetown, she spent her last years in Lauderdale with her daughter and grandkids.”

Commissioner Schwing stated she had checked into if there were going to be any funeral services and there is not going to be.

Commissioner Morin made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams seconded. Motion carried 5-0,

Attested By: Town Clerk

Approved By: Mayor

Transcribed By: Darlene M. Slattery