

Minutes
Special Called Meeting
Aberdeen Town Board

June 30, 2014
Monday, 6:00 p.m.

Robert N. Page Municipal Building
Aberdeen, North Carolina

The Aberdeen Town Board met Monday, June 30, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. for a Special Called Meeting to discuss the potential acquisition of the Malcolm Blue Farm and receive input from the public. Members present were Mayor Robert A. Farrell, Mayor Pro-tem Jim Thomas, and Commissioners Pat Ann McMurray, Elease Goodwin, and Joe Dannelley. Commissioner Buck Mims was not in attendance for the meeting. Staff members in attendance were Fire Chief Phillip Richardson, Town Manager Bill Zell, and Town Clerk Regina Rosy. Approximately 50 citizens were in attendance for the meeting.

Mayor Farrell called the Special Called Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Farrell welcomed former Mayor Betsy Mofield, former Commissioner Alan Parker, and past presidents of the Malcolm Blue Historical. Mayor Farrell asked everyone to please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Farrell stated the purpose of the meeting is to receive feedback from the public on whether to consider acquisition of the Malcolm Blue Farm. Mayor Farrell stated the membership for the Malcolm Blue Historical Society expired this past December, the bills are mounting up, and there is not enough money to continue the operation of the Malcolm Blue Farm. Mayor Farrell gave a brief history of the Malcolm Blue Farm. Mayor Farrell stated the house at Malcolm Blue Farm was built in 1825 and the house is on the National Registry. Mayor Farrell stated there is a museum full of artifacts from Moore County. Mayor Farrell stated in his opinion the farm needs to be saved, and that is what we are here this evening to discuss is how the farm can be saved.

Commissioner McMurray stated as a former volunteer and participant for the Malcolm Blue Farm, she would really like to see the farm saved. Commissioner McMurray stated there is a wonderful history with the Malcolm Blue Farm. Commissioner McMurray thanked Martha Swaringen for her service to Aberdeen all of these years.

Mr. Ray, who lives down the road from Martha Swaringen in Robbins Walk, gave a brief history of the family that began Malcolm Blue Farm.

Jerry Vaughn, 707 Midmar Street, stated the Malcolm Blue Farm has been an active part of the community for a long, long time and it would be a shame to see it disappear.

Ellen Marcus, stated she works as the director of the Malcolm Blue Farm. Ms. Marcus stated it takes people, time and money to run the farm. Ms. Marcus stated the history span of the farm is important to her. Ms. Marcus stated the mission of the farm was always education - to teach the whole history of the area. Ms. Marcus stated the farm could be a financial asset to the Town if it is run properly. Ms. Marcus stated with Martha now getting much sicker, she thinks now is the time for the Town to consider acquiring the farm.

Mayor Farrell asked how many paying members were a part of the Malcolm Blue Historical Association at the last meeting. Ms. Marcus stated there were 80-100 paid members. Mayor Farrell asked how the response for volunteers has been recently. Ms. Marcus stated everyone that volunteers with the farm is already pulled in so many different directions, that it is very difficult to get the dedicated hours needed from volunteers.

Frankie Butler shared some additional history of the farm. Ms. Butler stated she really feels the farm will be a great resource for the Town. Ms. Butler stated it is a wonderful place for children to grow up and be rooted to Aberdeen.

Pam Dannelley, past president of Malcolm Blue Farm, stated the history of the farm is really important. Mrs. Dannelley stated her children have participated in many events at Malcolm Blue Farm and they all have a very deep love for the farm.

Mayor Pro-tem Thomas stated he would like to hear from the audience, on what would happen if the Town acquires the property and what would be expected of the Town. Mayor Pro-tem Thomas stated surely no one here is in opposition of the Town acquiring the Malcolm Blue property. Mayor Pro-tem Thomas stated he would like to know the role the volunteers might continue to play in the farm if that happens.

John Jarrett stated he agrees that no person in the room wants to see the farm go away. Mr. Jarrett wanted to know who could sign the farm over to the Town. Mayor Farrell stated a quorum of the last standing Malcolm Blue Board could sign over the title to the property. Mr. Jarrett requested that if the Town decides to take over the property, then he would suggest it be done as a joint venture between the Town of Aberdeen and the Malcolm Blue Historical Society, where the Town of Aberdeen would provide services such

as mowing, general upkeep, etc. and the Historical Society would run the festivals, events, fundraisers, etc.

Ellen Marcus stated the Pinecrest ROTC has completed a lot of work at the farm. Ms. Marcus stated she sees the potential for partnerships with local schools. Ms. Marcus stated she also envisions perhaps a "Friends of the Farm" group that could work with the Town. Ms. Marcus stated she would be more than willing to volunteer her services in the future for the Malcolm Blue Farm.

Pam Dannelley asked what types of maintenance would be covered by the Town if the Town takes over the Malcolm Blue property. Mayor Pro-tem Thomas stated that is exactly what he would like to know, is what will the Town be agreeing to do if the Town takes over the property.

Bob Martin, stated he is a resident of 5 years, and has worked with Malcolm Blue Farm for 4 years. Mr. Martin stated the main house is overdue for basic maintenance like paint, etc. The museum has 1 of 2 air conditioning units working - the other needs to be repaired. Mr. Martin stated the alarm system is not operating properly. Mr. Martin stated he has been keeping about 2 acres of the land mowed with a push mower, but he can not do the rest. Mr. Martin stated the museum needs to be chemical washed. The stand with the men's and women's bathroom is a big leaky mess and needs to be repaired. The water supply going to the barns does not work, and water has to be hauled from other locations. Mr. Martin stated a good plumber could do wonders for the property.

Lara Blue, stated she has lived here since 1978 and she loves the farm. Ms. Blue stated she would like to see the farm vibrant again, but she would like to do it with the right group of people.

Martha Swaringen stated she believes promotion is needed for Malcolm Blue Farm and designated days should be established for operation. Ms. Swaringen stated a lot of opportunities are missed because the doors are always locked.

Betsy Mofield suggested taking the Malcolm Blue Farm and include in the budget all expenses associated with the farm. Mrs. Mofield suggested a volunteer association could assist with special events, but the Town would pay for all maintenance costs for the farm. Ms. Mofield suggested the Town Board consider accepting the Malcolm Blue Farm wholly and fully, and include all expenses for the farm in the Recreation Budget.

Connie McCrummen, stated once the financial burden is taken away from the volunteers, the volunteers will come out of the woodwork.

Charlie Needham stated he believes the Town has to take full responsibility for the Malcolm Blue Farm, and then have volunteer groups come in and help with events as needed.

John Jarrett clarified if revenue from special events would go to the Town and the consensus from the group was that it would.

Hal Harkess stated he came to Aberdeen in 2006. Mr. Harkess stated there is approximately a \$10,000 CD that would be given to the Town to go along with the Malcolm Blue Farm property to provide some assistance.

Jennifer Boles stated she lives on E.L. Ives Drive and there is so much that can be done with the Malcolm Blue Farm. Ms. Boles stated she has lists and lists of events that can be done at the Malcolm Blue Farm. Ms. Boles stated once the financial burden is relieved from the Malcolm Blue Farm, then the past volunteers will be more than willing to help where needed to help the farm flourish.

Alan Parker stated he is supportive of the Town taking over the Malcolm Blue Farm and all expenses. Mr. Parker stated the farm has thrived when education was at the forefront. Mr. Parker stated he feels like the Malcolm Blue Farm could mesh really well with the project at Ray's Mill Pond. Mr. Parker stated the Malcolm Blue Farm needs to be a tourist destination with proper marketing.

Commissioner Goodwin stated she would like to give a heartfelt thank you to Martha Swaringen for all of her hard work and she knows how much she cares about the Malcolm Blue Farm.

John Jarrett asked if there might be a mechanism for the County to provide some financial support for the Malcolm Blue Farm if the Town takes over the property. Mayor Farrell stated that would be up to the County to determine.

Commissioner Dannelley stated he wants to make sure the Town makes the best business decision possible. Commissioner Dannelley stated Manager Zell and his staff are fully capable of doing the leg work to determine what is needed to maintain the Malcolm Blue Farm. Commissioner Dannelley stated he would like to propose spending the month of July continuing the conversation to determine what we want the farm to be and how we

are going to move forward if the Town takes control and ownership of the farm. Commissioner Dannelley stated the Board needs to make sure that they have all of the needed information. Commissioner Dannelley stated it sounds like there is no opposition in the room for the Town to take over the Malcolm Blue Farm. Commissioner Dannelley suggested discussing this issue further at the August 4th Work Session once additional information is obtained. Commissioner Dannelley stated the budget was just recently approved and money was not allotted for this project. Commissioner Dannelley stated he is excited about the enthusiasm from the public. Commissioner Dannelley stated he is confident that the farm can be self-sustaining and potentially get to a zero sum gain/loss at the end of the year, if run properly.

Mayor Mofield asked the Board to consider accepting the Malcolm Blue Farm as a gift to the Town of Aberdeen this evening.

Ken Byrd stated it sounds like the Town Board wants to consider all of the data before making a final decision.

Ellen Marcus stated she does not think there is time to put on a Farmskills Festival this year, but there is still time to do possibly do a school children's day.

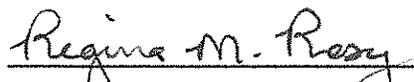
Michael Brough stated there are some legal issues regarding the title work for the property, but he does not believe there is anything that can't be resolved.

Connie McCrummen stated she would like to see a show of hands of who all will support the Town in taking over this property. There were many people that raised their hand in support.

Commissioner McMurray stated she is in full support of this project.

Mayor Farrell stated the acquisition of this property is a long term commitment. Mayor Farrell stated the Town Board needs to determine the annual cost to operate the farm before making a decision.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.


Regina M. Rosy, Town Clerk

Minutes were completed in
Draft form on June 30, 2014


Robert A. Farrell, Mayor

Minutes were approved
on August 18, 2014

