

Dear Friends,

We have been working hard to find a solution for the railroad shutdown and its effect on the businesses it serves. We hosted a meeting this past Thursday which included Carolina Southern Railroad execs along with area Mayors, council members and Columbus County officials to see what can be done to reopen rail service for Columbus County. We also had in attendance members of the NC Legislature, Congressional officials and business execs that were willing to work towards finding a solution. The short term problem seems to be the failure of certain bridges to meet the standards set by the Federal Railroad Administration. We have another meeting scheduled for early August with the intent of meeting with South Carolina officials to determine if a workable solution can be found. I will keep you posted.

We are also working with DOT and other agencies to find and fix more of the drainage issues that many of you are aware of inside Chadbourn. This is not going to be easy or cheap, but we are trying to address the worst places first. This includes Brown St. both downtown and the area near BB&T. As we continue to address the problems associated with I&I (Inflow and infiltration) in the Sanitary Sewer, we will be faced with more flooding in areas that formally were dumping part of the storm water into the sewer system. It's called addressing one problem and creating another.

The budget that was adopted by the Council for fiscal year 2012-13 does not include any increases in the water and sewer rates for inside of town customers. There is also no tax increase. We had to make reductions in the budgets of all departments for this year, but were unable to reach agreement on a budget that did not propose to offset expenses with prior years fund balances. Budgets are merely instruments that project revenues and expenses and as such are not precise. We can only hope and pray that the economy will continue to improve. Maybe our revenue predictions will prove to be understated and the need for fund balance appropriation will be limited.

I have received numerous complaints about the number of stray cats inside the town in the past month. We are trying to gather information about where they are located and find a solution that is both humane and feasible. We do not presently have any way of trapping cats and have been unsuccessful getting help from the county. If you are aware of large numbers of cats that are not yours near your residence or business, please call the Town Hall. We are also open to any help or advice as to how to alleviate this growing problem.

Please continue to remember our troops that are in harm's way. It is easy to forget that conflicts are ongoing in places that we cannot imagine. Remember to say a prayer for a soldier when you cast that vote for the candidate of your choice.