

Town of Fowler Emergency Meeting Minutes of February 2, 2026 at 4:00PM

The Emergency Meeting notice was posted at the Town Hall, Town of Fowler website fowlerny.gov, and Rachel Hunter, Editor of the Gouverneur Tribune Press was notified of the emergency meeting via email.

An Emergency Meeting was held on the above date for the Fowler Town Board to discuss the immediate needs of the highway department with the sudden and unexpected passing of Highway Superintendent Randy Durham on February 1, 2026, with all board members present. Also present were Town Clerk Tami Gale, Deputy Highway Superintendent Nelson Bice, Highway Employees Jacob Cunningham and Matt Filiatrault, Michael Cappellino, and with Editor of the Gouverneur Tribune Press Rachel Hunter attending by phone.

Supervisor Newvine called the meeting to order at 4:00PM extending the Town of Fowler's deepest sympathies to the Durham family, Highway Superintendent Randy Durham's wife Lisa, and children.

Supervisor Newvine reported the board needed to decide where to go from here concerning the highway department's operation.

Councilperson Bishop stated the position would normally be filled by the deputy. Supervisor Newvine asked Deputy Highway Superintendent Nelson Bice if he was interested in the position. Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice stated that he had no problem with the appointment.

Supervisor Newvine asked Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice if he was interested in running for the office in November. Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice stated that he would need to think about it.

Councilperson Simmons told Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice that he would need to carry a petition in March, and that she would be picking up petitions from the Board of Elections in February, so he had until February 19th to make up his mind.

Supervisor Newvine asked if anyone else had knowledge on the highway department computer. Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice discussed that he had obtained a new password to get on the system and had experience entering the necessary data. He reported he had completed the highway payroll, comp time, and vacation hours used earlier in the day and is working on getting the CHIPS entries caught up.

Councilperson Bishop asked Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice if he knew how to record the fuel and if he can get a print out of fuel usage every month.

Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice reported that the fuel is entered separately and that he could do a monthly print out.

Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice reported he had ordered 100 tons of salt, has ordered 1500 yards of sand, ordered air filters from BEAM MACK, reported there is a problem with one of the overhead doors, and he had called Kelly Sales to take a look at the doors.

Councilperson Knight asked about the loader. Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice reported he had an appointment for the loader to be looked at, as the screen had gone grey, but it is able to be used.

Councilperson Bishop asked what wage would be paid to an appointed highway superintendent. Supervisor Newvine discussed that is something that the board will have to decide.

Supervisor Newvine discussed, for the good of the Town, he needed to be brutally honest and that there had been some rumblings heard by board members that a couple of the highway employees aren't going to be happy if Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice is appointed as Highway Superintendent and asked if anyone in attendance had any input.

No comments on the matter were made.

Councilperson Knight asked if highway employee Dennis Travis would still be in control on his shift. Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice replied that yes, he would.

Councilperson Bishop stated that if Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice became the boss that would leave 4 drivers. Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice reported that he could still be a driver.

Councilperson Simmons asked Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice if he would still be able to go out and plow with all of the extra paperwork he will need to do. Deputy Highway Superintendent Bice reported that yes, he will do his job.

Supervisor Newvine stated that the board will need to make a decision today as they can't go with no one in charge of the highway department.

Councilperson Knight stated that Nelson had the time.

Councilperson Bishop stated Nelson had filled in when Highway Superintendent Durham had taken vacation.

Supervisor Newvine discussed that if appointed, he assumed that Nelson would not be able to continue as union steward. Nelson reported the guys would have to talk it over to see who would take over as union steward.

Councilperson Simmons asked if Nelson would have to get out of the union if he is appointed as Highway Superintendent. Supervisor Newvine stated he wasn't sure how that would work and it would need to be looked into.

Michael Cappellino asked permission from Supervisor Newvine to speak. Mr. Cappellino addressed Nelson saying that he got the feeling that Nelson would not run in the November election for the office of Highway Superintendent. Nelson replied that this has all just come up, it was very unexpected, and he is not sure and will need to think about what he wants to do. Michael Cappellino asked Nelson if he was close to retirement. Nelson replied he could have retired last year.

Supervisor Newvine asked Jacob Cunningham if he was interested in running for the office of Highway Superintendent. Jake replied that yes, he is planning on running for the office. Supervisor Newvine asked Jake if he had any knowledge of the computer system in the highway department and if Highway Superintendent Durham had shown him how to use the system. Jake replied that he does know how to use the highway computer system.

Councilperson Lynn Bishop reported to the other board members that he too, is thinking about running for the office of Highway Superintendent.

After further discussion Supervisor Newvine asked the board how they would like to proceed. A motion was made by Councilperson Bishop to appoint Nelson Bice as Highway Superintendent seconded by Councilperson Simmons. All in Favor. MOTION CARRIED.

Supervisor Newvine discussed there was an issue not being able to get into the highway computer as no one was aware of the password and wondered if the town should create a policy that anyone with a position of power that uses a computer, should supply their passwords to the Town Clerk so we don't have an issue arise like this again.

Supervisor Newvine reported that he will notify FEMA of Highway Superintendent Randy Durham's unexpected passing.

Supervisor Newvine reported that he has heard from Mike Wainwright and Dave Spilman from the Town of Gouverneur, had heard from Duane Sykes from the Town of Edwards, as well as TJ Simmons from the Village of Gouverneur, who have all offered their support in whatever is needed during this time.

Supervisor Newvine addressed Nelson asking him to let the board know who his new Deputy Highway Superintendent and union steward will be.

Supervisor Newvine stated we will address things as they come and he is at a loss.

Supervisor Newvine reported that he would meet with Bookkeeper Finnie to discuss a wage for Nelson, as he begins the appointed position.

Supervisor Newvine stated that Highway Superintendent Randy Durham's death was a huge loss.

With no further business, on a motion of Councilperson Knight, seconded by Councilperson Bishop, the Emergency Meeting was adjourned at 4:16PM. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Tami Gale; Town Clerk