

The Rural Retreat Town Council held a regular meeting on January 24, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. in the Rural Retreat Town Hall Council Chambers.

PRESENT RURAL RETREAT TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mayor Timothy Litz; Vice-Mayor A. Keith Crigger; Ed Schaack; J. Scott Mecimore; Dale Yontz; Jerrell Hall; Peggy Hash

ABSENT

NONE

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT

Michael James, Town Manager; Lori Guynn, Clerk/Treasurer; Scott Mitchell, Police Chief; Raymond Matney, Consultant

ADMINISTRATION ABSENT

NONE

OTHERS PRESENT

Craig Ellis; Jim Lloyd; Gary Houseman

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Mayor Litz called the meeting to order and determined a quorum was present.

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by Rev. Ed Schaack.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Litz.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilmember Yontz, seconded by Councilmember Hash to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2012 regular meeting. The motion passed by a vote of six (6) for: Crigger, Hall, Hash, Mecimore, Schaack, Yontz; zero (0) against.

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CITIZEN'S TIME

Jim Lloyd, a member of the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation, addressed the Council and stated as they are aware the Foundation is trying to raise money to pay for and restore the depot. He presented ideas for a summer concert series in Rural Retreat that could eventually be profitable. Mr. Lloyd continued by stating the proceeds could potentially be given to the community such as the library, community center, depot, emergency services and others. He added he would like to see the Pepper Stage utilized more than once a year for Heritage Days. Mr. Lloyd explained he is working with the Draper Mercantile on a concert series they host the second Saturday of each month. He proposed pairing up with them by hosting a concert series the second Friday of the month to reduce the cost for both groups. He also proposed the town purchase a sound system to use for these events. Mr. Lloyd stated he had explored the cost for a sound system that would accommodate an outdoor event. The approximate cost to host a concert series would be \$500-\$700 per concert if the town links with the Draper Mercantile. Mr. Lloyd asked the Council if they would be interested in pursuing this proposal. Mayor Litz commented he also would like for the stage to be used more than once per year. Mr. Lloyd also suggested hosting indoor concerts during the winter months possibly at the community center. He added Larry Crigger has a sound system that would be sufficient for both indoor and outdoor concerts. Vice-Mayor Crigger suggested Mr. Lloyd contact Larry Crigger prior to the town considering purchasing a sound system. He also asked Mr. Lloyd if he was planning to sell tickets or arm bands for the outdoor concerts prior to the event and how he was proposing to handle this. Mr. Lloyd explained how other communities handle this and stated it is mostly based on the honor system. Mr. Matney commented during the fall, most of the community is attending the high school football games on Friday nights. Councilmember Yontz asked for a clarification on the sound system by asking if the system would accommodate the main act for Heritage Days. Mr. Lloyd responded he was not sure because he did not know a lot about electric bands. Vice-Mayor Crigger asked Mr. Lloyd how soon he can put a proposal together for the town to consider pursuing a concert series. Mr. Lloyd responded he would get some prices on providing sound before the next meeting. Vice-Mayor Crigger stated this is a big expense for the town to consider and the Council needs to make sure it will be successful prior to incurring a lot of expenses. Discussion ensued on pursuing sponsorships for the events. Mr. Lloyd stated the main goal will be to draw local people for the concerts. Councilmember Mecimore stated the newly formed Wythe County Tourism Committee has discussed developing something similar to the Floyd Country Store where music and dancing would be available. He added he felt this concept would be beneficial to Rural Retreat. Town Manager James commented different genres of music will help to draw people with various music interests. Mr. Matney commented he agreed with the concept and asked Mr. Lloyd to develop a budget for the Council's consideration. Mr. James asked Mr. Lloyd if the Draper Mercantile would want the town to be involved in the advertising and marketing costs for the concerts. Mr. Lloyd responded no but the town could partner with them. Following additional discussion, the consensus of the Council was to look into Mr. Lloyd's proposal.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Councilmember Yontz reported he had been contacted by individuals from Washington, D.C. inquiring about local motel rooms because they are interested in attending the Heritage Days Festival.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Mitchell reported he is working with the Wythe County Sheriff's Office on stolen wire that was found last Wednesday in a home in town. He noted Wythe County will be pursuing charges on this. He added, at the previous meeting, the Council had directed him to contact the owner of the loud trucks passing through town. Chief Mitchell stated he is having difficulty finding a way to contact Kegley Trucking. He noted there is not a phone number in the phone book, on the internet or on the side of the trucks. He also pointed out while on duty he has monitored the trucks and some are louder than others. Chief Mitchell explained he had attended the meeting with VDOT and Norfolk Southern regarding the railroad crossing on Greever Street. Three items were discussed to resolve the issues. VDOT is to work on restricting truck access which would result in citations being issued if drivers fail to obey the restriction. He explained VDOT's opinion is if drivers are cited then word will spread among the drivers to not take this route or they will be charged. Another solution discussed was to widen the crossing. Chief Mitchell explained VDOT would like to begin work on this as soon as possible however, Norfolk Southern said it would be two years before they could get their equipment moved. The last option discussed was to post larger industrial park signs at Gienow Road. Chief Mitchell stated he had explained the town has sign ordinances and pointed out if the drivers are not reading the signs now why would they read a larger one.

Chief Mitchell also reported due to ongoing health issues he has now been scheduled for surgery and will be out of work for eight to ten days. He stated he will notify the Wythe County Sheriff's Office and coordinate coverage with them.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

WYTHE COUNTY TOURISM COMMITTEE – Councilmember Mecimore reported he had been appointed as the Black Lick District representative to the Wythe County Tourism Committee by Gary Cody, Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director. He noted he distributed a copy of the draft tourism report that had been established at the first meeting held. He asked the Councilmember's to review the report and make suggestions of places and events in the Black Lick District that were missed and not included on the report. Councilmember Mecimore explained the purpose of this committee is to aid in promoting tourism in Wythe County. He continued by stating the Committee had discussed the need for signage in Wythe County to

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direct tourist to businesses and attractions. Councilmember Mecimore pointed out the town does have nice signs that direct people off of Main Street to our local businesses. The next meeting will be held in February with the date and time to be determined, he pointed out. Mr. Lloyd commented on the Richmond Times Dispatch reporters that had been in Rural Retreat to write an article about the depot. Councilmember Mecimore pointed out they had spent a lot of time with Jim Lloyd to get information for the article. Mr. James explained he had received an email from the reporters in which they pointed out they had had a great time in Rural Retreat while spending time with Mr. Lloyd and Councilmember Mecimore. Mr. Matney stated he had found a 1983 *Enterprise* that featured a story about an article in the *London Times* about the depot. Gary Houseman, Supervisor for the Black Lick District of Wythe County, commented public meetings will be held and they encourage people to attend. He also pointed out the Tourism Committee has been reorganized with representatives from each district. Councilmember Schaack stated he felt a replica of Dr. Pepper's drug store should be built in Rural Retreat because it would help in attracting tourist to this area.

GRACEVIEW PROPERTIES, LLC – Mr. James explained Town Attorney Sobey had contacted him about a settlement Wythe County had reached with Graceview Properties, LLC regarding a reduction in their tax assessment. In this agreement, Wythe County agreed to reduce the tax assessment to \$900,000. He noted Town Treasurer Guynn has prepared a spreadsheet outlining the tax assessed to the property since 2007 when the new property assessments were released and the difference in the tax amount paid and the refund due. Mr. James stated the total refund due to Graceview Properties, LLC is \$2,388.28 and would require the Council to approve the tax settlement. Councilmember Yontz made a motion to accept the proposed agreement to reduce the tax assessment for Graceview Properties, LLC. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Schaack. Councilmember Mecimore questioned the reasoning for the agreement. Mrs. Guynn explained when the tax reassessments were issued in 2007 the property value had been increased to approximately \$1.5 million. The current owner of the property had questioned her about the assessment when coming to the office to pay the 2007 taxes in which she directed him to the Wythe County Commissioner's office. The process of the appeal had been extended over several years with all taxes being paid to date in March 2011. She further explained the refund consists of the difference in the original and agreed assessments for 2007 - 2010 plus interest minus the amount due for 2011. There being no additional discussion, Mayor Litz asked for a vote on the motion. The motion passed by a vote of six (6) for: Crigger, Hall, Hash, Mecimore, Schaack, Yontz; zero (0) against.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

HERITAGE DAYS – Chairman Yontz reported next committee meeting has been moved to February 28th at 6:00 p.m. He noted the committee is still working to obtain a main act for the Sunday festivities and the sponsorship for this act is in place. Chairman Yontz stated Mr. James, Mrs. Guynn and he will be meeting with the new owners of the kid's inflatable rides this Friday at 9:00 a.m.

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FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – Chairman Crigger asked the Councilmember's to review the year end fiscal reports and bring questions to the next meeting. Councilmember Mecimore asked when budget work will begin. Chairman Crigger responded early March.

Councilmember Mecimore updated the Council on the status of the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation. He explained the depot has passed the preliminary phase to be included on the National Historic Registry for Virginia which is the first step for inclusion. He further explained he had been contacted by the IRS and was notified he would need to rework the setup for the Foundation and upon completion the Foundation will receive their non-profit status quickly.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

The following items were discussed and/or acted upon:

OUT-OF-TOWN WATER PROJECT DIVISION IV (WATER PLANT ELECTRICAL IMPROVEMENTS) – A pre-construction conference was held last week. The notice to proceed has been sent to the contractor for disbursal. We anticipate a start date of February 8th.

OUT-OF-TOWN WATER PROJECT DIVISION V (CHINQUAPIN AVENUE & WEST LEE HIGHWAY) – The change order has been approved by Rural Development. We are working with Wells Construction and Anderson & Associates to begin construction as soon as possible. The citizens affected by this project will be contacted and informed of when the work will begin.

IN-TOWN WATER PROJECT – We anticipate the change order being approved very soon. Citizens will be contacted regarding the start of project also.

BLEVINS DUPLEX DRAINAGE ISSUE – The town attorney recorded the agreement between the property owner and the town of Rural Retreat last week. We will contact VDOT and Anderson & Associates to inquire when the project will be moving forward.

TEA-21 PHASE VII SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT - Anderson & Associates is still working with VDOT to receive their final approval on this project.

WYTHE COUNTY/RURAL RETREAT WATER SYSTEM INTERCONNECTION – We are working with the county to allow this interconnection to happen. We anticipate more future conversations with county administration as to the parameters within which this interconnection will exist and to alleviate our concerns.

JOINT GOVERNING BODIES MEETING – The next Joint Governing Bodies Meeting will be held Monday, January 30th at 7:00 p.m. at the Wytheville Meeting Center.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Prior to reading the bills for the meeting, Mrs. Guynn stated she would like to apologize to the Mayor and Councilmember's for her actions and comments at the December 13th meeting.

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The bills for January 24, 2012 were read and approved.

TALK OF THE TOWN

Jim Lloyd is to attend the *Talk of the Town* radio program at the WYVE/WXBX radio station on Wednesday morning.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no additional business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Councilmember Hash. The motion as duly seconded and approved unanimously.

Mayor

Clerk