

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN  
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON  
TUESDAY, JULY 9, 2013, 7:00 P.M.**

Council Members Present: Mayor Timothy Litz; Vice-Mayor A. Keith Crigger; Ed Schaack; Dale Yontz; Jerrell Hall; Peggy Hash; James P. "Sean" Viars

Council Members Absent: None

Administration Present: Michael James, Town Manager; Lori Guynn, Clerk/Treasurer

Administration Absent: Scott Mitchell, Police Chief

Others Present: Amanda Cameron and Chris Pauley

**DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

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

**INVOCATION**

The invocation was given by Dale Yontz.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Litz.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Councilmember Hall, seconded by Councilmember Yontz to approve the minutes of the June 25, 2013 regular meeting. There being no discussion, the motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Hall, Hash, Schaack, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; one (1) abstention: Crigger due to his absence.

**CITIZEN'S TIME**

Mayor Litz asked the citizens present if they would like to address the Council. Chris Pauley inquired about the dog issue. Town Manager James stated he had spoken to Ms. Walden and Mr. Hales the previous day and they now have only six dogs and are actively trying to find them homes either with owners or other rescues to get them off the property. The number of dogs on the property has decreased by over half and the noise has improved. The operation of the business has ceased. Town Manager James stated he is satisfied with the progress and will continue to work with Ms. Walden to make sure the operation doesn't begin again.

Ms. Cameron stated she had spoken to Ms. Walden and they had given each other their point of view. She added the neighborhood is now at peace. Mayor Litz commented that was very

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important and added neighborhood disagreements can't be resolved overnight. He complimented them on working to resolve the issues and thanked Mr. Pauley and Ms. Cameron for their continued interest in the town's workings. The rights of all parties must be considered he added. Mr. Pauley and Ms. Cameron thanked the Council for their efforts and left the meeting. (7:15 p.m.)

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

None

### **POLICE REPORT**

Chief Mitchell's monthly activity report for June was reviewed. Town Manager James reported Chief Mitchell is on vacation. He added Chief Mitchell is reviewing the radar speed equipment and will provide a recommendation to Council at the next meeting. Town Manager James asked if there were any comments the Council had about Chief Mitchell's report. Vice-Mayor Crigger commented he would like for Chief Mitchell to increase his patrolling which may reduce some of the speeding complaints because he would be more visible to the public. Mayor Litz added his presence would be increased if he was seen walking in the downtown area and by visiting the businesses. Town Manager James stated he and Chief Mitchell have discussed these items recently. Mayor Litz explained Chief Mitchell can't be everywhere to suit everyone and when he is patrolling one street people are speeding on the others. Inoperative motor vehicles and unmowed properties were discussed and the enforcement of both. Mayor Litz stated this is positive feedback from Council. Councilmember Hash stated the Committee used to meet with Chief Mitchell once per month to discuss his activities and suggested beginning this again. Councilmember Viars added the responsibility of the Council and committee is to make the employees and the town better.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

RRVES FUNDING REQUEST – Mayor Litz explained the rescue squad is interested in installing a multipurpose door in the back of the building. He added this will help them to get out of the building more easily if power is lost and will allow them to better serve food during town sanctioned events. Councilmember Yontz made a motion to fund the Rural Retreat Volunteer Emergency Services \$3,000 to install a multipurpose door in the back of the building. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Schaack. Councilmember Yontz inquired on the location of the door. Councilmember Hall explained the door will be aligned with the center bay door. Councilmember Hash added the door will be helpful if an incident occurs along the railroad because they will be able to get out of the building. Councilmember Yontz readdressed his concerns in giving \$3,000 and stated it isn't a lot of money but with the restructuring will they come back later and ask for more money to operate. Councilmember Hash explained the call volume is down and a weekend position has been eliminated. Following a meeting they have more volunteers willing to step-up and two new members have joined. Town Manager James asked if the expanded service area had been discussed. Councilmember Hash responded

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yes and call volume will increase if the call center issues can be resolved. Vice-Mayor Crigger referred to the financial report submitted at the previous meeting and commented the revenues have decreased \$7,000 from 2011 to 2012 and the expenses are up over \$200,000 for the same time. He added the expenditure increase he assumes is due to the purchase of the new truck. Councilmember Hash stated the rest was due to the cost of workers comp coverage. Vice-Mayor Crigger stated he urges the board to attempt to collect more of the outstanding debts because the last number he had seen only 38% of what was being billed was collected. Councilmember Hash explained the state sets the fees to be charged but Medicare, Medicaid and supplemental insurances will only pay a portion. Bills are then sent to the patient but some pay a little toward the balance and others pay nothing, she stated. Councilmember Hash added the balance is not worth pursuing after incurring the expense of time and postage. Vice-Mayor Crigger asked if the problem is with Medicare and Medicaid. Councilmember Hash replied yes. She also stated they have been providing medical transports because they can make some money on them but they can't afford to turn down calls. Councilmember Viars commented the door will be for emergency use and he will be supportive of it because of this purpose and he also expressed his appreciation to the RRVES personnel for submitting financial information along with the request. Mayor Litz added the rescue squad does more than assist those that are sick and stated they are willing to help during other emergency situations like the snow storm or last year's derecho. There being no additional discussion, the motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Crigger, Hash, Schaack, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; one (1) abstention: Hall due to being the contractor for this project.

**TOWN NEWLETTER** – Town Manager James stated the newsletter will begin this fall with the first issue in August or September. He explained it has been decided to physically print the newsletter and distribute it to various places around town for citizens to pick up and it will be available on the town's website and Facebook page. He added depending on how well the newsletter is received will determine if consideration will be given to mailing it. Councilmember Schaack inquired on the cost to mass mail the newsletter. Town Manager James stated approximately \$300 per quarter. He further explained he would like to receive feedback on the newsletter before investing the money to mass mail it. Councilmember Schaack stated we really need to push the newsletter and if needed it should be mailed. He also suggested asking the area clubs if they would like to include information. Mayor Litz asked that this item remain under unfinished business until the first issue is released.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

**APPROVAL OF PURCHASES** – Town Manager James explained approval to purchase a new froth pump for the Wastewater Treatment Plant was needed but during the past week the sludge return pumps are now in need of repair so the purchase of the froth pump has been put on hold.

**DEPOT FOUNDATION FARMERS' MARKET** – Mayor Litz commented the first market day was a great success though it poured down rain the entire afternoon. He noted the items the various vendors had for sale. Mayor Litz complimented Vice-Mayor Crigger for pressure washing the interior floor and added it was cleaner than it had been. He explained earlier today,

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Frank Kinder, a former telegrapher, was interviewed for a documentary the Foundation is working on. Mr. Kinder brought his telegraphers key, clicker and bug that were used as props during the interview. Mayor Litz added he owns the same items and plans to donate them to the depot upon completing the restoration.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**HERITAGE DAYS** – Chairman Yontz reported the loose ends are being resolved.

**FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS** – Town Manager James reported he and Clerk/Treasurer Guynn discussed investing the reserve funds and chose to invest in the option with the highest return. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn reported preliminary audit work on fixed assets began last week and the remaining work will continue for three additional days in August and the complete audit will take place in September.

**PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES AND LEGAL MATTERS – NOISE ORDINANCE** – Town Manager James stated he had distributed the draft noise ordinance with his weekly update. He asked if there were any comments or questions about the draft. Councilmember Hall commented he had read the ordinance but in his opinion only a few paragraphs should be kept. He stated it looks like a very good ordinance for a large city but we have large agricultural areas and he doesn't see most of it being pertinent or enforceable. He added he will be glad to review the draft with Town Manager James to discuss further. Mayor Litz asked where the ordinance came from. Town Manager James stated it is a basic ordinance that managers are using and he was trying to get away from the audible enforcement and focus on duration based. Councilmember Hall further stated it appeared to him it would give more trouble in the long run than the benefits would be worth. He added there were some good points and he specifically referred to the truck compression brakes. Councilmember Yontz asked if the ordinance should have more in it than it should to avoid later issues. Vice-Mayor Crigger stated the restrictions on the time that a lawn mower or chainsaw can be used should be eliminated. He asked if VML could help with drafting an ordinance. Councilmember Viars commented he would rather have more than to have the content watered down. Vice-Mayor Crigger commented it needs to be enforceable. Town Manager James stated he would redraft the ordinance and bring it back to the Council for review. Councilmember Schaack referred to the section pertaining to animals and stated it is applicable for a rural area. Mayor Litz asked for this item to remain under committee reports.

### **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

The following items were discussed and/or acted upon:

**RURAL RETREAT SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PHASE 7** – Construction work is ongoing. All existing sidewalk has been removed and new sidewalk with curb and guttering are being poured. All grub work has been completed today. We are processing a change order to replace some older existing water and sewer lines that serve only a few homes on the north side of Buck Avenue.

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**UV DISINFECTION – WWTP** – We are still awaiting the arrival of the UV disinfection equipment from Trojan. We anticipate those arriving at the WWTP at least by the end of the month.

**DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION** – The Downtown Management Team will meet on July 24<sup>th</sup>. DHCD representatives from Abingdon will be holding a final facilitated planning session on July 31<sup>st</sup> at 7 PM here at the Town Hall. This will be the final prerequisite to being given the go ahead on final grant monies available and allowing Anderson & Associates, Inc. to begin the creation of the downtown master plan, which we anticipate to be completed in early 2014. We have had great community feedback and after the Downtown Revitalization mailings are received by the citizens we hope they will participate in our online survey to provide documentation to the Council and DHCD as to the level of support we have for the project.

**SANITATION CHARGE** – The new sanitation pickup charges will come into effect in the August utility bills. Brenda and Lori have worked hard preparing the billing system to make the transition as seamless as possible.

**IDA VISIONING SESSION** – With the coming retirement of Dr. Hawthorne, the IDA has requested to hold a long range planning session to discuss the hiring of the new executive director and future goals of the IDA. I will be in attendance and all Council members are encouraged to participate and voice their opinions on the operation of the IDA. The meeting will be held this Thursday, July 11<sup>th</sup> from 3-5 PM at the Wytheville Museum. Please let me know if you will be interested in joining the discussion so the event attendance can be finalized.

**DEPOT FOUNDATION** – The Town has been asked to work closely with the Depot Grants Committee. I have agreed to assist with their efforts as long as Council is in agreement with the extent. There will be funding opportunities that will require the Town to be the administrator of the grant, and provide a “sponsorship”. Council will have final say and approval in all Town involvement. We did provide a letter of support for an upcoming Tobacco Commission grant application, but the Depot Foundation was allowed to be the sole applicant.

**LAWS FOR PAWS RESCUE MISSION** – I met with Ms. Veronica Walden yesterday, as her 30 day notice of violation has expired. She has reduced the amount of dogs in her care to 6 and she is continuing to look for homes for those animals. All adoption fees have been ceased and she is no longer in operation at her residence. I would like to thank Ms. Walden for her cooperation and work in finding a peaceful solution to the issue. She has been very cooperative with the Town and that is to be commended, she was neither expected nor asked to find housing for all the animals within the 30 days but to work towards that outcome, which she has done.

**STALEY SPRING** – The Staley Spring project has been placed on hold for the time being. Town Manager James explained he was not comfortable with the agreement with Wythe and Smyth Counties and seen no reason to move forward. He noted the agreement stated we would operate the plant and give the water to the other entities.

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**TREASURER’S REPORT**

Clerk/Treasurer Guynn informed the Council that a Joint Governing Bodies Meeting should be held on July 29<sup>th</sup> and will be hosted by Wythe County.

The bills for July 9, 2013 were read and approved.

**TALK OF THE TOWN**

Town Manager James 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 to discuss, the meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Councilmember Schaack. The motion was duly seconded and approved.

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Mayor

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Clerk