

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2013, 7:00 P.M.**

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

Council Members Absent: Peggy Hash

Administration Present: Michael James, Town Manager; Lori Guynn, Clerk/Treasurer; Scott Mitchell, Police Chief

Administration Absent: None

Others Present: Linda DiYorio & Bill Dixon – Joint Industrial Development Authority; Jack Weaver; Millie Rothrock – Wytheville Enterprise

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 Timothy Litz.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilmember Yontz, seconded by Councilmember Viars to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2013 regular meeting. There being no discussion, the motion passed by a vote of three (3) for: Schaack, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; two (2) abstentions: Crigger, Hall – due to their absence; one (1) absent: Hash.

CITIZEN’S TIME

Linda DiYorio, Chair of the Joint Industrial Development Authority (IDA) board addressed the council and explained Executive Director Alan Hawthorne will be retiring and has offered to continue to provide his services. Currently the board has been holding work sessions to develop a 2014 Strategic Plan and job description for the executive director. Bill Dixon, Vice-Chair of the JIDA board distributed copies of the draft strategic plan and job description. Ms. DiYorio stated they would like for the Council to review the draft documents and provide comments or suggestions that the Council feels is important to the town of Rural Retreat. She added the board

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has enjoyed meeting in Rural Retreat and would like to resume holding meetings here from time to time.

Mayor Litz commented if it had not been for the Joint IDA his business would not exist. He added the IDA was a smaller organization at the time but there was more emphasis on small business during Benny Burkett's tenure which he feels has been lost during Mr. Hawthorne's. Rural Retreat feels they are left out because we aren't looking for the larger industries but we would like to see more attention be given to smaller businesses, Mayor Litz stated. He further stated a small business is considered to be 500 employees or less. Vice-Mayor Crigger commented this could be achieved through helping existing businesses also. Mayor Litz commented on the number of employees that Mid-Atlantic Manufacturing, Klöckner and Dalton Enterprises have. Ms. DiYorio commented that Wythe County, Wytheville and Rural Retreat have a lot to offer and it is important for the future of the IDA to make sure their partners are informed.

Mr. Dixon addressed the job description and explained they are looking for someone that is not specifically involved in just industrial development but economic development. They are aware that especially as Progress Park has moved along they have other areas, he added. Mr. Dixon explained they are looking for someone that is more cognate of the needs for the entire county specifically Rural Retreat and the town of Wytheville, not just Progress Park. He added they feel this is reflected in the job description.

Town Manager James added comments on either document can be forwarded to him to be presented at the next meeting. Mr. Dixon stated they would like to ask one member of the Council to represent the town on the interviewing committee.

Mayor Litz commented on the assisted living facility that is interested in coming to Rural Retreat and added the town's people are excited. He stated he had never thought of a facility of this type for economic development but the development can come from areas that no one thinks of because usually everyone thinks of a manufacturing facility. Mr. Dixon added a big box store or distribution center comes to mind also. Mayor Litz stated some employees will be moving to Rural Retreat and will need to buy homes so this will help Rural Retreat as well. Mr. Dixon stated they had considered a name change from Joint Industrial Development Authority to Joint Economic Development Authority but decided to leave the name as is.

Jack Weaver stated he would like to make a few comments about the Joint IDA. He stated based on conversations he has had with Mr. Hawthorne over the years he has wanted home runs off of third base hits when first base hits were needed. He added this goes back to small business but there hasn't been an interest in this. As an example, Mr. Weaver stated, he was trying to build a winery but moved it to Australia. Ms. DiYorio thanked Mr. Weaver for his comments.

Mr. Weaver stated the second thing he came to talk about was the two mile area on Route 11 that lacks public water. He said he talks to Cellect Dalton and he says it's the town and the town says it's the County and Smyth County says neither party wants to talk to them. Mr. Weaver

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explained he would like to host a dinner and have all parties there to see if something can be resolved. He further stated if the two mile stretch from Southwestern Equipment to the Smyth County line could be connected there would be water available from Pulaski to Bristol.

Mayor Litz asked Town Manager James to provide an update on this. Town Manager James began by addressing who is at fault and stated it was basically an issue with debt service that we couldn't take on and had nothing to do with personalities. He added due to other projects the debt service was too much for no more than what the town was going to get out of it. This is ongoing but we are trying to find a final solution. Mr. Weaver asked if meetings are still being held. A meeting hasn't been held since approximately the spring, Town Manager James responded. Mr. Weaver made a second offer to sponsor a meeting for the three governmental bodies. Mayor Litz commented it wouldn't hurt. He then addressed the debt load that would be taken on for 9,000 gallons of water per day. Mayor Litz explained the town owns this asset and the water is transmittable over great distances without degradation because water with organics can't be sent long distances with chlorine due to regulations set by the Commonwealth of Virginia. He further stated the town would like to share this asset without having to pass the debt load onto the citizens of the town. He explained Town Manager James has contacted an engineering firm about obtaining a planning grant. Mayor Litz added this is a matter of business for the town and discussions have been ongoing for over 10 years.

Mr. Weaver stated Staley Spring is a surplus water source for Rural Retreat but there is no reason why the County shouldn't consider a good source that is available to them. Vice-Mayor Crigger stated they have taken the investment from the eastern end of the county and want to sell water from that investment. We are blessed to have the water sources we have, he added. Mayor Litz commented the town may have to sell the water. Vice-Mayor Crigger addressed expanding the town's water sources and the need to avoid the citizens having to pay for it.

Mr. Weaver addressed his desire to build a cidery which takes a lot of water but he doesn't have the water supply from a private well. He asked if grants are available for development. Vice-Mayor Crigger explained the town's water rates are too low to meet the needs for grants. He added this has been an issue for 10 years because we are being efficient. Town Manager James commented the town needs to figure out how to financially move forward with this which the engineering study should help with. Mayor Litz added there is a lot of politics going on.

Mr. Weaver inquired about the downtown revitalization project. He explained he has a meeting in two weeks with a gentleman from Roanoke that helped refurbish downtown properties to discuss the former hotel in Rural Retreat. He added he doesn't want to get into another contest that occurred with the depot. The estimated cost to refurbish the hotel is close to \$700,000, Mr. Weaver stated and he would like to do it with full cooperation with the town. Mr. Weaver stated he would like to pursue historical tax credits for the project.

Town Manager James explained the downtown project won't be to that phase until at least 2015. The planning grant will be reviewed in 2014. Mayor Litz commented he didn't know of anyone in the town that would get in the way, short of having to buy the property. Vice-Mayor Crigger

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commented the town won't hand out \$100,000 for this but won't stand in the way of the property being improved. Mr. Weaver asked about tax credits. Town Manager James stated the town doesn't have a tax credit system in place though the state does and would have to go through the process to do so.

Councilmember Yontz stated Mr. Weaver had reviewed the map of the historical downtown area and had asked him if there was anyway the map could be redrawn to include the hotel because there are other historic properties in the area. Mr. Weaver stated it would be nice to have because this property is the original building and he doesn't want to get into all the expense if he's going to be spinning wheels. Mayor Litz inquired on the area the map covers. Town Manager James stated it is primarily the downtown business district. Vice-Mayor Crigger stated the first map did include this property. Town Manager James explained the project the town is doing will not hinder Mr. Weaver's progress.

CORRESPONDENCE

RURAL RETREAT DEPOT FOUNDATION REQUEST – Town Manager James explained a request had been received from the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation to place a tent on the Dr. Pepper lot December 6-8 to be used for overflow space for the Christmas Bazaar. A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Crigger to grant the request and seconded by Councilmember Yontz and passed by a vote of four (4) for: Crigger, Hall, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; one (1) absent: Hash; one (1) abstention: Schaack due to being a member of the organization.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Mitchell explained his monthly activity report for October. A summons was issued for a larceny related to shoplifting at Dollar General. The dog complaint was related to dogs on Sherwood Avenue. Chief Mitchell reported he had followed up with the Wythe County Animal Control and no further complaints have been received since animal control spoke to the owners. Additional inoperative motor vehicle letters are being sent and he is continuing to work with some owners. The recent Dr. Pepper run went well due to coordination with the town, sheriff's office and Norfolk Southern. The attendance was low for the Veterans Day Parade but it also went well. Chief Mitchell has been asked to attend an assembly at the elementary school and he is continuing to run radar around the middle/high school area.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

TOWN NEWSLETTER – The item is close to being finalized.

NEW BUSINESS

JIDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Mayor Litz stated this item was discussed previously. Town Manager James asked the Council to appoint a representative to serve on the selection committee and noted Councilmember Yontz had expressed interest. The consensus was for Councilmember

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Yontz to serve on the interview/selection committee for the next Joint IDA executive director position.

VIRGINIA LOCAL DISABILITY PROGRAM – Town Manager James explained after reviewing the requirements for the Virginia Local Disability Program (VLDP) it is recommended that we opt out of the Virginia Retirement System's (VRS) program which requires the adoption of a resolution. A comparison of Principal Insurance and the program being offered by a vendor through Virginia Municipal League (VML) was compiled which resulted in a cost savings. Due to state mandates the required coverage for short and long term disability programs has increased and the VML affiliated program will allow us to incorporate all employees, not only new hires, in one plan and will allow for long-term employees to have the same benefits instead of lesser benefits. Vice-Mayor Crigger asked if this was being presented as a recommendation. Town Manager James replied yes. A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Crigger to participate in the program being offered by the VML affiliate for short and long term disability coverage and to opt out of the VRS program. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Yontz and passed by a vote of five (5) for: Crigger, Hall, Schaack, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; one (1) absent: Hash.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

HERITAGE DAYS – Chairman Yontz reported the Friday night events are being finalized with James King and The Churchmen and the Hall of Honor inductions will be presented prior to the entertainment beginning. Mayor Litz is reviewing the contracts for the main acts on Saturday and some items are being deleted because the town shouldn't need to pay for them including alcohol due to this being a family event. Shentel is satisfied with the entertainment choices and to date two verbal sponsorships have been received. Mayor Litz commented a citizen had reviewed a previous rider for an entertainment act and alcohol was requested and added he wants everyone to know up front the town doesn't provide alcohol because it is a family event. Councilmember Yontz explained he has Mayor Litz signing the riders because if issues arise such as they did at this year's festival then it will stop with the mayor.

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – Treasurer Guynn reported the draft audit hasn't been reviewed due to dedicating time to getting the 2013 tax tickets issued. She stated upon reviewing it and other documents being finalized the final report will be issued.

PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES AND LEGAL MATTERS – TOWN CHARTER – Councilmember Schaack reported the revised noise ordinance and town charter has been out for review for almost a month. He asked that any comments or suggestions be sent to him so that a meeting can be scheduled to discuss those items. Town Manager James explained no changes have been made to the draft charter. Vice-Mayor Crigger stated according to the new draft of noise ordinance there is no enforcement time set other than between 11 p.m. and 8 a.m. Town Manager James stated that was correct.

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TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

The following items were discussed and/or acted upon:

RURAL RETREAT SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PHASE 7 – The project is near completion; we hope to be at substantial the week of Thanksgiving. Some cleanup work will need to be done in addition to planting trees on the Lester property.

UV DISINFECTION – WWTP – The testing requirements are being put into place now. Our first E-coli lab results were well within DEQ regulations; we will be finalizing the paperwork to close out this project.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING – RR DOWNTOWN PROJECT – The proposals for the economic restructuring portion of our master plan are being reviewed now by the Town and the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. We will meet with Brian Reed of Mount Rogers this week to discuss some finalists before presenting these firms to the management team. We hope to begin work on the master plan at the beginning of 2014.

SANITATION COLLECTION RFP’S – We have received one proposal from Waste Industries, LLC. We have extended the deadline on this RFP and contacted contractors directly for proposals. The finance committee will meet as soon as those are in and have been reviewed by staff.

NANCY BARROW REZONING REQUEST – The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on Ms. Barrow’s request to rezone her property from CN to AG on November 25th. Council will be asked to make a final decision on the request the following day the 26th. If any Councilmembers need additional information on the request please let staff know, and we will provide that to you.

Councilmember Schaack stated he had provided information to Ms. Barrow on a location close by as an option to board the horses. He stated the owners of the location would be more than happy to help Ms. Barrow.

Mayor Litz asked how this would not be considered spot zoning. Town Manager James stated that will be a consideration by the Planning Commission.

SMITH-PACKETT SKILLED NURSING FACILITY – Town staff, representatives from the Rural Retreat Rescue Squad and Dr. Hawthorne of the JIDA attended a public hearing with a staff member of the Virginia Department of Health on the proposed relocation of nursing beds from the Bristol area to the Wythe County area. The VDH staff member will make his recommendation to the state board and then final notice will be given. We are now working on preliminary engineering and design with Smith-Packett and their affiliates.

Mayor Litz asked how newsworthy this item is. Town Manager James stated until the state approves the change, there isn’t much to report.

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JIDA – This item was previously discussed with the following included in the written report. The Town Council has been asked to nominate a Councilmember to join myself and Foy Patton as representative of Rural Retreat during the Executive Director interviewing process. If we could make a nomination tonight, I will let the JIDA know who will be in attendance.

TREASURER’S REPORT

2013 TAX BILLS – Treasurer Guynn reported the 2013 bills have been mailed.

The bills for November 12, 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.

Mayor

Clerk