

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON
TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2014, 7:00 P.M.**

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

Council Members Absent: Vice-Mayor A. Keith Crigger

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

Administration Absent: None

Others Present: 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 Councilmember 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 May 13, 2014 regular meeting. There being no discussion, the motion passed by a vote of three (3) for: Hash, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; two (2) abstained: Hall, Schaack; one (1) absent: Crigger.

CITIZEN'S TIME

None

CORRESPONDENCE

Councilmember Yontz addressed the letters recently mailed to property owners about delinquent grass mowing. He stated Jack Weaver had received a letter and was not very happy with it. He assured Mr. Weaver that he would bring his concerns to the Council. Councilmember Yontz stated the main question Mr. Weaver had was how enforcement is determined. He stated he explained to Mr. Weaver that we know some lots are used for agricultural purposes. Mr. Weaver

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offered to provide the town with a list of lots that have dwellings that need to be taken care of. Councilmember Yontz stated as discussed before how do you determine when a lot is to be mowed and at what point do you mow and charge the property owner. Town Manager James stated letters were sent out and the town will be enforcing the ordinance more than in the past. This will now be done more consistent and thorough. Several calls were received with citizens stating they would take care of the mowing. Councilmember Yontz commented if citizens are seeing this being enforced then they will take action. He stated Mr. Weaver mentioned the need for the former garment factory property and property owned by Mayor Litz to be mowed. Councilmember Yontz explained to Mr. Weaver that the town is trying to resolve the garment factory property and the other property to be mowed isn't owned by Mayor Litz. Town Manager James stated a town employee mowed the garment factory property today. He added we are trying to avoid the issues that we had last year. Councilmember Viars asked what the height requirement was. Town Manager James replied twelve inches. He stated he had spoken to Mr. Weaver and he felt that he had been singled out.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Mitchell reported he set up the Town of Wytheville's speed trailer around town but didn't get to keep it as long as he would have preferred due to the Memorial Day weekend. The weather also affected the number of times it was set up. He stated he hopes to borrow the trailer again during late June. He noted he had mailed 13 letters to citizens regarding inoperative motor vehicles with over half complying. A follow-up letter will be hand delivered to those that haven't responded. Due to increased traffic because of summer coming and school letting out, Chief Mitchell stated he has spoken to the Wythe County Sheriff's Office and the Virginia State Police to request assistance with traffic enforcement. He explained he has received reports of kids on bicycles around town harassing dogs so when patrolling he is stopping to talk to the kids as he see them.

Mayor Litz addressed the heavy traffic in Rural Retreat and asked Chief Mitchell to monitor the speed on North Main Street. He noted the issues still exist on Parsonage and Chinquapin Avenues.

Councilmember Viars commended asking the Virginia State Police to be involved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

RURAL RETREAT DEPOT FOUNDATION UTILITY CONNECTION – WEST RAILROAD AVENUE BORE – Town Manager James referred to a quote from Advanced Building and Clearing for a bore under the street to provide water service to the depot. He stated the bore under the road would be from Depot Designs to the depot because this will be easier than from the Dr. Pepper lot due to other utility lines being under the street. Town Manager James explained he has forwarded the quote to the Depot Foundation and the Council has previously agreed to waive the connection fees. The bore will be an additional cost and he feels the Foundation will request the town waive this cost as well. Upon receiving the request it will be

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forwarded to the Council, Town Manager James added. Councilmember Viars asked if this is normally waived. Town Manager James stated the cost is passed on to the customer but we don't have to bore very often.

NEW BUSINESS

JOINT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (JIDA) – Mayor Litz asked Town Manager James to update the Council on the JIDA. Town Manager James explained he had received an email from Linda DiYorio, Chair of the JIDA Board informing him that Wythe County had voted to defund the JIDA effective this upcoming fiscal year. She had asked what the town's status was on this. Town Manager James stated we contribute a small percentage to their budget but if Wythe County pulls out he feels the town will have to pull out as well. He noted we will have to make a decision and vote on it.

Gary Houseman, member of the Wythe County Board of Supervisors, stated Wythe County has decided to reactivate the Wythe IDA but as members it has never been active. He explained they plan to turn it into more of an economic industrial development authority. He stated their reasoning behind this was in part because of the money but the other was because they have been trying to find out things that were going on but received no response. Councilmember Viars asked Mr. Houseman how the Wythe IDA was going to be different structure wise than the JIDA. Mr. Houseman explained the Joint IDA stands as a Board unto itself with three members being Wythe County and the towns of Wytheville and Rural Retreat. The JIDA is supposed to operate in conjunction with the county and towns. The Wythe IDA will be under the control of the County. Councilmember Viars asked if that will specifically be the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Houseman stated there will be a director for the Wythe IDA. He further stated he has been personally disappointed with the JIDA. He explained he has asked and tried to get information from them about anybody that has looked at Progress Park specifically lot 24 and what is being done to market that lot. The only response he gets is it is being marketed through the state and the state says it is a premier industrial site in Virginia, he stated. At a recent work session, during discussion of the JIDA he tried to find the lot online but couldn't. He explained he tried different keywords but each search went to other areas. It seems that lot 24 isn't being actively marketed especially with the lot being a big ticket item, Mr. Houseman added. He stated with the state marketing program the lot is listed and until someone contacts them about the lot they don't try to push it. Mr. Houseman addressed the Cross Roads Industrial Fund Authority (CRIFA) that began almost 15 years ago that consists of Wythe and Bland Counties and the town of Wytheville. CRIFA was organized for the purpose of offering incentives to an industry or business that wanted to locate in the area thought the group hadn't met since around 2004, Mr. Houseman explained. The industries included Pepsi, Brewer Automotive and Atsumi. The Board has been paying the JIDA \$50,000 per year for a management fee on the properties. He noted this was cut out at the last CRIFA meeting.

Councilmember Yontz stated he had some questions that he would like to have answered. He stated things with the JIDA have been going on for years and the Board of Supervisor has always seemed to be inactive to it. He stated he was removed from the JIDA Board for asking questions

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and was told to keep quiet and not ask. He added codes were always being used so no one would know what was being discussed. Councilmember Yontz asked Mr. Houseman why this was allowed to go on for as long as it did and why didn't the Board step in when the JIDA announced they were going to advertise for a director then when a person is hired the Board decides to pull the funding. He asked at what point in time is Wythe County going to continue to take over things and force he and Mr. Houseman to refer to each other as comrade. Mr. Houseman explained there has been discontent with the Board since he has been on the Board of Supervisors. He pointed out there is one company in Progress Park that the director had tried to keep out of the park. He then referred to the hiring of a director and explained the Board had told the JIDA that they didn't like any of the candidates. He stated the Board of Supervisors found out a director was being hired while at a Fire and Rescue Meeting from a member of the news media that stated she was leaving that meeting to go to the JIDA office because they were announcing a director. Mr. Houseman stated after the meeting he checked his email and had a press release announcing the new director. Councilmember Yontz asked why this wasn't reined in under the previous director instead of waiting until now. Mr. Houseman stated it was hard to get the JIDA Board to do anything. He further stated about two years ago he had asked the Board who the director worked for and was told that the director's contract would have to be looked at. Mayor Litz added this causes hurt feelings especially if you're the funding agency. He added they haven't done anything for the town of Rural Retreat. Mr. Houseman added at this point it was a natural break with the old director leaving and the hiring of a new one.

Mr. Houseman stated the main goal of the Wythe IDA is to make it an economic development authority. Mayor Litz commented small industry is what is needed in Rural Retreat not businesses with 1,000 employees. Councilmember Yontz then explained he had an individual that was interested in the former Alco Controls building but when he spoke to Alan Hawthorne he was told that the Small Business Incubator was going to be located there.

Clerk/Treasurer Guynn asked Mr. Houseman how much funding Wythe County provides to the JIDA each year. Mr. Houseman responded \$150,000 annually which doesn't count the contributions made by both towns. Councilmember Viars asked if the new group will be funded at the same level. Mr. Houseman responded no, the new group will not be funded on a separate basis. Councilmember Yontz asked if the Wythe IDA will be overseen by the Board of Supervisors or will there be representatives from the towns. Mr. Houseman stated representatives will be the same as on the JIDA but will not stand alone. Town Manager James commented it will be a committee. Mr. Houseman stated it will be a step above a committee and will be controlled by the County and will be accountable to them.

Councilmember Schaack asked if the new committee will have a paid director. Mr. Houseman replied not at this time because they are in the process of reactivating. Councilmember Yontz inquired if there was a possibility of having equal representation for the county and towns. He pointed out on the JIDA Board Rural Retreat only has one member so there is no way to get the votes for anything. Mr. Houseman stated he will present that to the new group. He stated they want to concentrate on economic development and what existing businesses need. He also noted

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that Jeremy Farley the Public Information Officer is looking into trying to move lot 24 up the search list on the internet.

Mayor Litz commented the County gets tired of hearing this but Rural Retreat is a part of Wythe County. He added he had told Linda DiYorio that the JIDA did nothing for the town. Mr. Houseman stated this decision isn't official until the budget is passed. Councilmember Viars asked if this will affect the Enterprise Zone. Town Manager James replied no.

Mayor Litz thanked Mr. Houseman for the update.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

HERITAGE DAYS – Chairman Yontz reported he didn't have any new information. Town Manager James reported the contracts have been signed for the radio ads.

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – Clerk/Treasurer Guynn reported Town Manager James had received the employee's insurance information which will require some budget line items to change. A public hearing for the budget will be set for the June 10 meeting with the adoption scheduled for the June 24 meeting. Town Manager James explained insurance costs increased 20% from last year. He noted a new draft will be distributed after making the needed adjustments.

PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES AND LEGAL MATTERS – Chairman Schaack referred to the Town Manager's handout that includes the recommendations from the Personnel Committee to the Finance Committee for cost of living and merit raises.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

The following items were discussed and/or acted upon:

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING JUNE 9TH – Commission members will be meeting during their regular meeting in June to discuss the Family Dollar site proposal. A reduction in the number of parking spaces was requested. Town Manager James stated due to the nature of the business he didn't have an issue with it. Council will be presented with this action item on June 10th. The Planning Commission will also be considering rezoning requests from Larry Crigger and Keith Crigger and a conditional use permit request from Kenny Peeples. Public hearings will be scheduled for the three requests after the planning commission meets.

Councilmember Schaack asked when the Council considers rezoning Keith Crigger's property and since he is a member will it be a conflict of interest. Town Manager James stated Mr. Crigger can't vote and participate in the discussion. He noted previously when Mr. Crigger had requested a conditional use permit he came as a representative of the business. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn stated that to meet advertising requirements, Mr. Crigger will possibly no longer be a member of the Council when the request is scheduled for a public hearing.

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RURAL RETREAT RECREATIONAL FACILITY – Staff will be meeting with the Recreation Facility Committee next week. We will be discussing facility location options. Town Manager James invited the Council to attend the meeting.

DERELICT HOMES ORDINANCE – The Personnel, Ordinances and Legal Matters Committee will be meeting before our next scheduled council meeting on June 10th at 6:30 p.m. New drafts of the Derelict Homes Ordinance will be provided to committee members the week prior.

TRASH TRUCK – Mid-State Equipment has picked up the purchase order from the town office. The truck has been ordered and Freightliner has begun constructing the truck. We do not have a timeline for delivery at this point; once we have an anticipated date of delivery, council will be informed. At this time we are still waiting to hear from Rural Development about the funding.

RURAL RETREAT SUMMER CONCERT SERIES – Wayne Henderson will be performing at the Pepper Stage on June 6th at 7:00 p.m. The Rural Retreat Rescue Squad will be selling concessions. Advertising materials will be placed around the community this week as well as with our local radio stations. Town Manager James stated he is still working on the second summer concert in August and putting together a movie in the park night.

WATER ACCOUNTABILITY – The report for the month of April is available.

STREET SIGN REPLACEMENT - Councilmember Viars asked what the anticipated date of having the signs replaced and put back up is. Town Manager James stated he would contact Dustin Meredith to follow up.

TREASURER’S REPORT

The bills for May 27, 2014 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

Prior to adjourning, Mr. Houseman informed the Council that the Board of Supervisors had voted 4-3 at their meeting earlier in the day to amend the Solid Waste Disposal Ordinance. He explained this pulls solid waste out and will charge each household \$100 per year. Town Manager James asked if there was any discussion about those that live in the towns. Mr. Houseman stated it will be charged to all residents of Wythe County. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn asked Mr. Houseman if the fee was per real estate parcel or per household. He responded it is per parcel with a household. He pointed out he voted against it. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn questioned how apartment complexes will be charged. Mr. Houseman stated his understanding

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is it will be charged per residential unit. Councilmember Viars stated he felt it was unfair because some facilities don't receive as much trash as others. Mr. Houseman reported the public hearing has been set for June 17th.

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