

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2015, 7:00 P.M.**

Council Members Present: Mayor Timothy Litz; Vice-Mayor Dale Yontz; Jerrell Hall; Peggy Hash; James P. “Sean” Viars; Geary Jonas

Council Members Absent: James Lloyd

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

Administration Absent: None

Others Present: Jerry Hurt; Billy Anderson; David Manley, Executive Director & John Matthews, Associate Director – Joint Industrial Development Authority

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 Vice-Mayor Yontz, seconded by Councilmember Viars to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2015 regular meeting. Councilmember Hall stated he would like to make a clarification to the minutes for the Public Utilities Committee report. Councilmember Hall read an excerpt from the minutes that stated “a key point for them is buying water from Rural Retreat would be cheaper than them pumping it here” and explained that is not the case and that is to be determined. Mayor Litz stated this is a good point because a price was not negotiated and we don’t want to imply this. Councilmember Hall explained a key point for Wythe County to be interested in dealing with us is that it would have to be as economical as them treating the water and pumping it here. He also pointed out a deal was not made with Wythe County. There being no additional corrections or further discussion, the motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Hall, Hash, Jonas, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; one (1) absent: Lloyd.

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CITIZEN'S TIME

PRESENTATION – JOINT IDA QUARTERLY REPORT – David Manley, Executive Director for the Joint Industrial Development Authority explained he will be out of town at the end of the month and will not be able to attend the Joint Governing Bodies meeting so he is attending the regular meetings for the three bodies to present the quarterly activity report. He noted it has been longer than a quarter since the last report but the handout contains the greatest hits and highlights of their activity. Mr. Manley pointed out there were a few things he wanted to draw attention to in the report including the active projects list which he noted is an unusually large number of projects occurring at the same time. He addressed the major events listing and explained he and some board members had a successful, as he refers to it, trade mission to Richmond where they met with representatives that contribute to the success of our community at large with the Tobacco Commission, Department of Community and Housing Development, Virginia Tourism and the Economic Development Partnership. Mr. Manley introduced John Matthews who was recently hired as the Associate Director. He stated this was one of the most significant things they have done and he added Mr. Matthews has been with them for two months and without reservation Mr. Matthews is doing a fantastic job.

Mr. Manley explained the JIDA is taking on another significant effort to redesign their website. He explained the technology required to update it is no longer supported and the software is old and difficult to maintain. The estimated timeframe for completion is the end of this fiscal year. Mr. Manley stated he feels that significant strides have been made in their reporting, transparency and communication with the governing bodies and those in the community. He encouraged any questions or concerns to be brought to their attention as soon as possible. Mr. Manley stated he has also had the opportunity to work with Jerry Hurt with the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation. He added they are available for Rural Retreat just as much as they are for Wytheville and Wythe County and want Rural Retreat's priorities to be theirs also.

Mayor Litz asked Mr. Manley if there had been any interest in the former Mid-Atlantic Manufacturing and Camrett Logistics buildings. Mr. Manley explained he has received two to three inquiries since the first of the year but they are usually fleeting and only ask a question or two but he has been referring them to the person that is listing the property because they are the experts on the buildings. He further explained of the announcements made in this part of Virginia over the past three to five years 95% have been for existing buildings. Businesses would much rather be in communities where buildings are being used which ours are, generally speaking, than in communities with lots of empty buildings. Mayor Litz commented the Mid-Atlantic and Camrett buildings are more modern. Town Manager James informed Mr. Manley that Steve Willis with Camrett has asked about the building and asked if he had contacted him. Mr. Manley stated there is currently a project occurring with Camrett and Wythe County but the JIDA isn't involved in all the communications right now.

Councilmember Hall referred to the list of current active projects and asked Mr. Manley if the titles were coded to avoid jeopardizing a potential project. Mr. Manley explained all are code names and they don't know what any of businesses are other than a few and that is only because

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they are local or regional projects. He further explained these projects include as few as 30 to as many as 700 jobs and a few million dollars to \$900 million. Mr. Manley noted these are significant projects that the JIDA is competing for and they have made it beyond the first round and are competing with other states and communities.

Mayor Litz asked if there were any other questions for Mr. Manley. He stated this was a good report and the Council appreciates it. Mr. Manley stated everyone will receive a copy of the report this month and he feels they are making every effort to be transparent. He asked that the Council contact him anytime should they have questions and he would be glad to sit down and have a conversation with them. Mr. Manley further stated he has been on the job almost nine months and he would like to thank the Council and staff for being supportive and cooperative with what they are doing at the JIDA.

CORRESPONDENCE

Town Manager James reported a formal letter had been received from Jeff Russell, Wytheville Residency Administrator for the Virginia Department of Transportation regarding the request to reduce the speed limit between the traffic signal at the Crossroads and Food Country. He explained Mr. Russell's letter provides specifics as to why they denied the request to reduce the speed limit. Town Manager James asked for the Council to contact him if they had any questions about the document and he will contact Mr. Russell. He stated he appreciates Mr. Russell sending a response. Mayor Litz stated the answer didn't have to be what we wanted but an answer was received and he appreciates them doing that.

Councilmember Hash stated she had spoken to Ms. Dunn with the Wytheville Department of Museums and Mrs. Emerson is to contact her. She explained what they want from us is to provide a very secure space to put the items in and they will not hand over the items to us to be stored in someone's basement or house. She further explained by state regulations the items must be secured and they want to keep the items until we get a place to put them and prove we can keep them. Town Manager James asked if they were willing to keep the items until we can meet the requirements. Councilmember Hash replied yes. She explained when items are accepted into the museum, documentation must be signed that it will be placed under glass, is fire and theft preventative and being taken care of. Town Manager James asked if the town will need to sign any transfer documents when we receive the items. Councilmember Hash stated she will talk to Mrs. Emerson to work out the details. Councilmember Viars asked if we had a clear idea at this point of what they are looking for from us. Councilmember Hash explained Ms. Dunn had told her that the items must be under glass, in a safe building, in a climate controlled area and the area must be theft and fire preventative, no homes or basements can be used for storage. She further explained documentation from the family will be needed that states the items are to come to us.

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POLICE REPORT

Chief Mitchell explained his monthly activity report for February. He pointed out as he had previously reported February activities were down because of the weather and now that the temperatures are improving he thinks activity will increase. Chief Mitchell stated he did receive a quote back from one company on the radar sign which was a little over \$3,500 but it is a very portable unit compared to the others that were self-contained. He explained he has applied for one grant from the Department of Motor Vehicles through their Highway Safety Grant Program and he will be applying for another grant this week. While patrolling he is looking for places to install poles and may have recommendations later. Chief Mitchell reported he is patrolling of the evenings and conducting a walk through at the schools when he has the opportunity.

Town Manager James asked Chief Mitchell if he had received emails about trying to organize a regional radio system. Chief Mitchell stated he has. Town Manager James explained a meeting is to be held later this month to discuss the possibility of a regional radio upgrade to look into obtaining a grant to pay for the system to eliminate radio issues in some areas with first responders and deputies with the dispatch center. Chief Mitchell commented the estimate to do the upgrade alone here would be over a million dollars.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

MOTOR VEHICLE & TRAILER LICENSE ORDINANCE – Clerk/Treasurer Guynn stated she had distributed a draft ordinance to repeal the current motor vehicle license ordinance and reenact the new ordinance. She explained she included the definitions for each item, the violation terms, information about the license fees and amounts, the timeframe for the license year for the amount to be added to the tax ticket, the requirement to pay personal property taxes which is already required and the collection of personal property tax and license fees. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn stated she compiled this ordinance by using the ordinance for the towns of Tazewell and Gordonsville and Wythe County and pulled out the items that she felt were applicable to Rural Retreat. She stated she searched for town ordinances because it is difficult to turn a County ordinance into a town ordinance. She asked the Councilmember's to review the ordinance and to contact her with questions because a public hearing will be required to adopt the ordinance. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn stated she had some items to address in the exemptions section. She referred to the third item that addresses vehicles owned or leased by any active volunteer fire department or rescue squad member with a limit of one (1) vehicle per person provided the Fire Chief or authorized member of the rescue squad provides a certified list of qualified active members and stated our current ordinance in reference to motor vehicle decals, the volunteer fireman receive one free decal so her question to the Council is does the town want to continue to give the active volunteer firefighter a waiver on the annual license fee for one vehicle and secondly does the Council want to include the volunteer rescue squad member so that they receive the same treatment. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn stated she wasn't sure whether this should be included because our current ordinance only addresses the fire department because they are town owned versus the rescue squad isn't but there are rescue squad members that live within the town. She referred to Wythe County's Ordinance and explained they give the

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firefighter and rescue squad member a waiver of one vehicle license fee. She stated she didn't know if the Council would be interested in following suit on this. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn also addressed the exemption of the license fee for disabled veteran's and prisoners of war and stated this isn't addressed in our current ordinance but these two items are standard language in the other ordinances that this be granted.

Mayor Litz asked if there were any questions or if it should be tabled. Councilmember Viars stated since there will be a wait time for approval he would like to readdress it at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

NORFOLK SOUTHERN LEASE AGREEMENT – Town Manager James reported he has distributed a letter from Norfolk Southern and explained he has been working with them over the past few months trying to get a lease agreement for a maintenance easement behind the Randy's building and 5' into Jack Weaver's building. We are trying to get that reduced to 25' on both sides of the railroad tracks so that the easement will be reflective of what is on the depot side of the tracks. A lease agreement package was received from Norfolk Southern which was initially \$4,500 per year but has been reduced to \$4,000 per year which is still high considering we maintain the property by mowing it and keeping it up and they haven't done a lot. Town Manager James stated he would like the Council to allow him and the Mayor to draft a letter requesting the fee be reduced further and list the historical reasons for this. He stated it is worth the effort to ask for the fee to be reduced more because they haven't done much to the property. Mayor Litz stated the \$4,000 is a lot of money and if the town doesn't lease the property and we get stubborn and quit mowing it then it will become a jungle. They have no desire to maintain it, he added. Vice-Mayor Yontz asked how it will impede the project. Mayor Litz stated we don't have anything else for it at this point. Vice-Mayor Yontz asked if everything was lined up and this was the one thing hanging in the balance how it impedes the final outcome. Town Manager James stated it will affect the parking behind the building because the right-of-way is 50' and we are asking for it to be reduced to 25' because it will affect the entire flow. Councilmember Jonas commented he felt it was worth the effort to try to reduce the right-of-way. Town Manager James stated he would like to get an agreement like the depot has but Norfolk Southern doesn't do that type of lease agreement anymore. The consensus of the Council was to allow Town Manager James and Mayor Litz to proceed with negotiating an agreement.

REQUEST FOR OUT-OF-TOWN WATER & WASTEWATER SERVICE – Town Manager James reported a request for water service from Malon Stoltzfuss for property located west of Southwestern Equipment on West Lee Highway has been received. Mr. Stoltzfuss is planning to build a house on this property, he added. He further explained if the Council will approve this request he will contact Wythe County and ask for permission to serve this out-of-town customer. A motion was made by Councilmember Hall and seconded by Vice-Mayor Yontz to approve water service only for this property. There being no discussion, the motion as approved by a vote of five (5) for: Hall, Hash, Jonas, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; one (1) absent: Lloyd.

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DR. PEPPER LOT PROJECT – Town Manager James explained when he met with Troy Harris with Dr. Pepper they discussed building a replica drug store and Dr. Pepper seems to be interested in doing. He stated in this year's CIP we will be getting cost estimates to develop plans and building specifications to submit to Dr. Pepper's corporate office and ask them to partner with us to rebuild the site. Town Manager James explained it would largely be a Dr. Pepper Museum and small business space that they can use for their marketing. He stated he wanted to present this to the Council and see if they are interested in this before going through the Finance Committee. Vice-Mayor Yontz stated if they are interested and we can get them to do something permanent to anchor them to the town then proceed because nothing ventured, nothing gained. He further stated it will complement the depot and the depot will complement it. Town Manager James stated it will cost the town a few thousand dollars on the front end but hopefully it will work out. He further stated Mr. Harris is really behind it and he would like to have plans put together that he can take to his boss at the corporate office and present the idea too. Councilmember Viars stated it can also be pointed out that the town has invested \$30,000 in the depot and is getting ready to undertake a Downtown Revitalization Project. Vice-Mayor Yontz stated the Hall of Honor hasn't been developed and it is named after Dr. Pepper which he was the first inductee so it would be nice to have a section inside the rebuilt drug store to display this. Town Manager James explained he is working to get prices from Anderson & Associates, Inc. He stated if Mr. Harris wasn't so excited about this he probably wouldn't be but it is a really neat project and it would be great marketing for them to have a store/museum in town. Councilmember Jonas stated signs on the interstate will pull people into town and they will then see the depot and be buying gas and eating in town.

BUSINESS RELOCATION & DOWNTOWN PARKING – Town Manager James explained this is mainly for informational purposes and this project is pretty fluid. He explained he is working with Theresa Dix at WCCH to move Your Bodyworks to another location in Rural Retreat. Currently they are located within Dr. Lacy's office and they are looking for a larger space. Town Manager James stated he has spoken to Jeanne Stosser who owns the former Dr. Martin building on Main Street and she is interested in renting the building and is willing to do the improvements needed. He stated once the hospital responds as to whether they are willing to go into that space and Ms. Stosser is in agreement then a downtown parking lot can be addressed on the lot below the building. He explained in order to get a business into downtown they are going to want to see some parking because there is no access to the building. Town Manager James further stated he had previously spoken to Ms. Stosser about putting in a shared cost parking lot that would cater to her business and will allow for public parking. He stated he contacted Pillar Engineering to put together a cost proposal for this project which is \$2,500 and this gives us full design. The rough estimation for the parking lot cost is a little over \$30,000 and may be more or less. This could be a valuable incentive to attract businesses to downtown and to also have downtown parking, Town Manager James stated. Councilmember Hash asked if this will include handicapped parking. Town Manager James stated the addition of handicapped ramps on the side of the building has been discussed and once Ms. Stosser is involved if she is in agreement then it can proceed. Councilmember Viars asked where specifically the parking would be located. Town Manager James referred to the property map and stated it would be on lot 2. Mayor Litz added Ms. Stosser owns the building and the lot

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below it that contains the asphalt driveway to the apartments. Town Manager James explained this would allow for 12-14 spaces that could be split with half for private and half for public parking with the cost being split with Ms. Stosser. He further explained if Your Bodyworks decides to locate there then this will be pushed forward and we will try to find the money. He stated he is going to wait until a decision is made before expending money.

CONSIDERATION OF MOWING CONTRACT – Town Manager James stated he had spoken to Rhea Preston with Preston’s Lawn Care about renewing the mowing contract to mow all town sites. He explained the price will remain at \$3,500 for 23 mowing’s and Mr. Preston has done some additional work for us and has done a good job. Town Manager James recommended renewing the contract. Councilmember Hash made a motion to renew the contract from Preston’s Lawn Care for \$3,500 for 23 mowing’s at the town’s seven sites. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hall and was approved by a vote of five (5) for: Hall, Hash, Jonas, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; one (1) absent: Lloyd.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

HERITAGE DAYS – No report.

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – No report.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE – No report.

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

The following items were discussed and/or acted upon:

SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PHASE 8 & 9 – Town Staff is continuing to work on the lengthy delay with our sidewalk projects. We have received word that the funding from Richmond has been available to the Town, but for whatever reason the project has not moved forward with the Bristol VDOT office. We will continue to work towards a solution and gather an answer as to why our project was placed on hold. Construction documents have been received for Phase 9.

SCADA TELEMETRY SYSTEM – We anticipate ClearWater, Inc. staff coming to town to begin installation within the next week or two.

GATEWAY SIGNAGE – Staff is working on providing options to improve “Welcome” signs as people enter into our corporate limits from Cedar Springs and at the Crossroads. We will have some proposals to Council within the next few months. This project will be duly used as a commemoration of the RRHS state champion wrestling teams.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION – Staff is finalizing a few budgetary items for our Downtown Project. The Council resolution was pushed back to March 24th.

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TREASURER’S REPORT

The invoices for March 10, 2015 were read and approved.

Mayor Litz asked Jerry Hurt and Billy Anderson if they wished to address the Council and apologized for skipping over them after David Manley completed his presentation. Neither guest wished to address the Council. Mayor Litz invited them to attend again.

Town Manager James asked the Council if they had agenda items for the Joint Governing Bodies meeting on Monday, March 30. He asked that agenda items be given to him within the next week. Mayor Litz asked who would be hosting this meeting. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn stated the Town of Wytheville is hosting at the Wytheville Meeting Center.

TALK OF THE TOWN

Vice-Mayor Yontz 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 Hash. The motion was duly seconded and approved.

Mayor

Clerk