

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON
TUESDAY, MAY 26, 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; James Lloyd

Council Members Absent: None

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

Administration Absent: None

Others Present: William Bralley; Steve Bralley; Dallas Shumate; Jerry Hurt; Jody Parks

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

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

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by Geary Jonas.

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 Jonas to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2015 regular meeting. There being no discussion, the motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Hall, Hash, Jonas, Lloyd, Viars; zero (0) against; one (1) abstention: Yontz, due to being absent.

CITIZEN’S TIME

Stephen Bralley addressed the Council and explained approximately one year to a year and a half ago he had spoken to Raymond Matney concerning the problems with the Jack Singleton property. He stated on several occasions he had followed up with Mr. Matney and has since then spoken to Mr. James. Mr. Bralley stated since this time the roof is falling in on the house at 243 South Greever Street which he isn’t sure if it is owned by Mr. Singleton but it is located beside of Mr. Singleton’s property. He explained the house that Mr. Singleton stays at on occasion has a wrecked car parked at it and there is a lot of trash in addition to it is growing up. Mr. Bralley stated he is curious about the status of the property being cleaned up or the house being repaired

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – MAY 26, 2015 – PAGE 2

or torn down because the property continues to grow up. He further commented he is aware if Mr. Singleton is given an inch he takes a mile. He also stated there is litigation pending against Mr. Singleton for similar properties he owns in Wytheville.

Mayor Litz asked Town Manager James to address Mr. Bralley's concerns. Town Manager James explained this property was the start of the work that was done on the derelict homes ordinance that didn't get completed. He stated he hasn't spoken to Mr. Singleton for a while nor looked at the property recently but he will attempt to get in touch with Mr. Singleton. He asked Mr. Bralley if the property had been mowed at all. Mr. Bralley responded no. Mayor Litz thanked Mr. Bralley for bringing this to the Council's attention. Chief Mitchell stated the property with the roof issues is owned by Katherine Grubb. Town Manager James asked if this was the house next to Maple Avenue. Chief Mitchell replied yes. Mayor Litz asked for this item to be placed on the agenda as unfinished business.

Jody Parks addressed the Council and stated she wanted to thank the town for assisting her neighbor in cleaning up his property. She stated the property looks so much better without the trash on it and now it isn't as noticeable that the house needs work since the trash is gone. She again thanked the town for their work. Ms. Parks stated had a suggestion that the town may or may not consider. She explained she is aware that a lot of people in town are on a fixed income that can't do major repairs to their homes because of finances. She stated Town Manager James had mentioned Mr. Grubb was asking for assistance to repair his home. Ms. Parks explained she would like for the town to consider offering a grant for \$2,000 - \$3,000 per year that citizens could apply for due to hardship, especially if they pay their taxes. She stated there are people that can't afford urgent repairs and this would help them. Mayor Litz commented this is a very thoughtful suggestion and it is appreciated. Ms. Parks stated she doesn't know the town's finances and she doesn't know exactly what she is asking for. Town Manager James stated larger localities offer a program like this but he isn't sure about smaller localities like us. Mayor Litz added the numbers presented can be budgeted. Ms. Parks added \$2,000 - \$3,000 can go a long way for someone. Councilmember Lloyd stated this would be helpful especially if someone had a fire. Mayor Litz told Ms. Parks she presented a very thoughtful request and the Council appreciates her suggesting this.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

POLICE REPORT

Chief Mitchell reported there has been an increase in traffic stops and infractions to date. He explained this year there has been a major increase in the Incident Based Reporting which is the information he must report to the Virginia State Police by Code. Chief Mitchell is continuing to notify citizens about inoperative motor vehicles which most citizens have complied and he is working with two to three to cover or remove their vehicles. Chief Mitchell noted school is

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – MAY 26, 2015 – PAGE 3

dismissing for the summer this Friday. He is also sending letters to property owners about the town's grass mowing ordinance.

Mayor Litz inquired about dog complaints. Chief Mitchell stated the only complaint he had received recently is the one about the Grubb's dogs on East Railroad Avenue.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DR PEPPER LOT PROJECT – Councilmember Lloyd reported he and Town Manager James met with the Dr. Pepper representative, Troy Harris, for lunch. He stated this was a very good and positive meeting. The presented plans for the project were reviewed. Troy Harris had stated it was a great project, he was on board with it and the next step would be sending the information to Waco. Town Manager James explained more information will be given to Mr. Harris prior to him presenting it to his boss. He noted the entire proposal looks good and the first step was to get Mr. Harris's insight. A figure was presented and Mr. Harris didn't seem to be concerned with the amount, Town Manager James explained. Councilmember Lloyd stated Mr. Harris had stated this would be good for Dr. Pepper and the town and it would be a good partnership for both. Mayor Litz added the depot was also mentioned as a benefactor of the project as well.

Mayor Litz asked how many people had seen the documentary outside of the barbershop patrons. Councilmember Lloyd replied no one yet. Mayor Litz stated the documentary is really nice but one thing that we need to point out is that the people with Dr. Pepper realize Rural Retreat makes no claim to the drink. Councilmember Lloyd commented that was also pointed out during the meeting. He explained to Mr. Harris that in the past it seemed Waco was concerned Rural Retreat was going to horn in. Mr. Harris had responded we know that but we have to sell that to Waco. Councilmember Lloyd stated Mr. Harris knew a lot of the history and he was the person responsible for saving the Dr. Pepper sign in Roanoke. Mayor Litz explained he receives a lot of phone calls from people informing him about Dr. Pepper. He responds by telling them that they aren't telling us anything that we don't already know. We can claim this is the home of the man the drink was named after because his grave site is in Rural Retreat, he added. Mayor Litz stated Rural Retreat's claim only has to do with the name and we feel we have some marketing tools that can be used and it will benefit the downtown. He thanked Councilmember Lloyd and Town Manager James for working on this project.

SURPLUS PROPERTY – Town Manager James explained he had asked Dallas Shumate to attend the meeting. He noted at the previous meeting the proposed sale of 5.46 acres of surplus property near the town dump to Mr. Shumate was discussed. He explained Mr. Shumate has offered a monetary number which he thinks is a fair number to the Council and he will provide to the Council at the end of this week along with procedural information on a land sale. Town Manager James explained the surveyor will have to present the information to the Wythe County Planning Commission. He asked if the Councilmembers had any questions for him or Mr. Shumate.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – MAY 26, 2015 – PAGE 4

Mayor Litz stated he would like for the record to show that the town does know of the presence of household trash on the adjoining property. He explained the buffer zone between the town and Mr. Shumate upon completing this sale will not be enough to amount to anything. He added he wants to make sure the record shows that Mr. Shumate knows he lives beside this. Town Manager James explained there will be a letter drawn up that will acknowledge both parties are aware there is supposedly household trash on the property. Mayor Litz stated there is no information on it but the law requires both parties to understand this. He addressed Mr. Shumate and stated he is fully aware of the property he is buying especially since being a former town employee. Mayor Litz added he didn't think Mr. Shumate will be impacted in a negative manner from it. He further added there wasn't much of a buffer zone before.

Mr. Shumate explained the lay of property he is interested in buying. He stated he is concerned with the debris being placed on the property that is being pushed toward the line near his two son's driveways over the past few years. He asked that the town refrain from continuing to push the debris toward the property line. Mr. Shumate stated he would also like to have an agreement about leachy because of the garbage dumped on the property though he had never seen anything come from it. Mayor Litz commented Mr. Shumate would have as much history as anyone because he has owned the property beside the town's for many years. Mr. Shumate stated he bought the property in 1978. Mayor Litz commented to Mr. Shumate that he had been there long enough that if anything would've changed he would've seen it. Mr. Shumate explained the town bought the property from the Phillippi's in the 1960's and the property line went at an angle from the top of the ridge to the corner of his son's driveway. He added he thinks the dump has come down far enough. Mayor Litz stated there is plenty of room and the town doesn't need to be putting anything else there because there is plenty of room above it. He pointed out the town will not be putting any household trash at the dump property. He also stated the town hasn't been very good stewards of the property by dumping debris and leaving it instead of burying it. Mr. Shumate explained he has no plans for the property. He also addressed the Department of Environmental Quality shutting down the dump. Mayor Litz stated the town is legally bound to not dump household trash on the property.

Mayor Litz asked Town Manager James how the Council needed to proceed. Town Manager James explained he will send the information on Friday and it can be discussed during the next Council meeting. He added he and Attorney Sobey are working to complete the paperwork. Mayor Litz advised Mr. Shumate his request will be considered the second Tuesday in June.

NEW BUSINESS

AGREEMENT WITH MOUNT ROGERS PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION – Mayor Litz stated Councilmember Hash has some questions about this agreement. Councilmember Hash stated she has a question about the person that will be working and asked if he was the same person that had submitted an application. Town Manager James replied no. He explained Brian Reed will be filling in and he is the person the town has been working with on the Downtown Revitalization Project. Mayor Litz stated this is in place for the projects that Tony Wright or Lori Guynn don't have the dealings with and mainly to keep things going. He added

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – MAY 26, 2015 – PAGE 5

the Downtown Project is a big deal and we don't want to keep it hanging. Town Manager James addressed the agreement and asked the Council if they were in agreement for Brian Reed to be in the office one day per week and added it can be amended. A motion was made by Councilmember Jonas and seconded by Councilmember Hash to accept the Memorandum of Understanding as presented by the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC) to provide interim town manager and project manager services not to exceed \$1,200 per month. Councilmember Viars asked if part of the agreement included the interim town manager would report to the Town Council. Town Manager James replied yes, Mr. Reed will be working with the Town Council directly and will attend Council meetings and other meetings as requested. Town Manager James asked the Council if they wanted the contract to begin June 8. The consensus was to begin the contract June 8. Councilmember Jonas then amended his motion to include the contract with MRPDC to begin June 8. There being no further discussion, the motion passed by a vote of six (6) for: Hall, Hash, Jonas, Lloyd, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against.

RURAL RETREAT WINERY – Councilmember Lloyd stated he had an item from Scott Mecimore who is concerned about the farmer's market disrupting his business because the flat area is being closed. He explained Mr. Mecimore is also concerned about other events the depot may have that blocks the road such as the car show that was held last year. Councilmember Lloyd further explained Mr. Mecimore would like a detour sign put up so people can get to his business. Councilmember Hash stated she can understand because she was working at the winery last year during the car show and there was a class reunion at the winery and people were calling because they couldn't get to it. Town Manager James stated he would look at the signage at the town shop and if needed one could be made. Councilmember Hash suggested putting a detour sign at the end of Chinquapin Avenue for the winery.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

HERITAGE DAYS – Chairman Yontz reported Town Manager James will be turning the contract over to him and Mayor Litz so they can make the final contacts to the bands and make sure Gary Wolfe is onboard. The lineup and times are being finalized as well as the small details and the riders. Chairman Yontz has finalized the contract on the inflatables. Town Manager James asked if both clogging groups were performing this year. Chairman Yontz stated both are invited. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn explained she had seen representatives from both groups over the weekend and both inquired if they were on the schedule. She informed both she wasn't sure but she would find out and respond to them. Town Manager James asked about the Wall of Honor inductees. Chairman Yontz stated he had spoken to Cleta Roberts and it should be finalized soon.

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – Town Manager James reported the public hearing for the 2015/2016 Fiscal Budget will be held during the next Council meeting.

PUBLIC UTILITIES – No report.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – MAY 26, 2015 – PAGE 6

PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES & LEGAL MATTERS – Chairman Hash reported applications are being received for the town manager position. Mayor Litz asked for the deadline. Town Manager James explained a deadline wasn't set, it was advertised as open until filled. He added most applications are received within the first month. The committee will be meeting tomorrow.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

The following items were discussed and/or acted upon:

SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT PHASE 8 – We are still waiting on two final easement agreements to be signed by the property owners. We have attempted to schedule meetings and will continue to work to get these finished and forwarded to VDOT.

GRANT APPLICATIONS – The funding applications in the total amount of \$275,000 will be submitted to the Wythe Bland Foundation and Rural Development this week. We have met with each agency representative and reviewed the proposed project. We anticipate some level of support from each agency.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING – MOUNT ROGERS PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION – I will be meeting with Brian Reed this Friday to go over the town's project and what his roll will be in the interim period as was relayed to me by Council. The cost to the Town will be \$1,200 per month and will include management of our downtown project and all associated aspects, as well as overseeing the MAP-21 project in terms of representing the town during the bidding process and overall management. Brian will be in the office one day per week and remotely at all times. He is prepared to attend Council meetings as requested to provide updates. This item was previously discussed and acted upon.

RANDY'S PURCHASE CLOSING – Attorney Sobey is working on finalizing the details needed to close the purchase of the downtown property and transfer final ownership to the Town. This will most likely not be completed prior to my leaving and he will be working with the Council and Brian Reed on finishing this project.

MEETING WITH STAFF – I have met with Lori and will meet with Tony and Scott this week to again go over the interim period and how we will operate. Projects and responsibilities that will be reassigned to each staff member will also be discussed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The invoices for May 26, 2015 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.

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – MAY 26, 2015 – PAGE 7

Mayor Litz commented he had received a telephone call from a citizen about the American flags not being put up in town this past Friday and asking why weren't the flags put up. He explained he had no idea why the flags weren't up so he contacted Town Manager James and his response was what flags, we don't have any flags. Mayor Litz commented for everyone's information the American Legion puts the flags out and they hadn't finished but had planned to finish them on Saturday morning. He added just because things go on in town it doesn't mean that the town does it.

Councilmember Hash stated at the entrance and exit to Carrington Place the signs that are out for the Family Dollar construction are blocking the ability to see to pull out onto the street. She stated they need to be moved further back off the street.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no additional business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Councilmember Jonas. The motion was duly seconded and approved.

Mayor

Clerk