

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN  
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2015, 7:00 P.M.**

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

Council Members Absent: Jerrell Hall; James Lloyd

Administration Present: Jason Childers, Town Manager; Brian Reed, Interim Town Manager; Lori Guynn, Clerk/Treasurer; Scott Mitchell, Police Chief

Administration Absent: None

Others Present: Tony Wright – General Services Director; Kevin English – Band Director, Rural Retreat Schools; Bob Lewis; Jerry Hurt; Cheryl Viars; Zachary Sheckells; Cameron Bear; Trevor Tidwell; Grayson Viars; Josh Crewey; Lily Viars; David Sargent; Terry Poston; Kimberly Poston; Lucas Morris; Dillon Delp; Faye Webb; Katy Belcher; Alisha Belcher; Justin Belcher; Jack Trivitt

**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 Vice-Mayor Yontz, seconded by Councilmember Jonas to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2015 regular meeting. There being no discussion, the motion passed by a vote of four (4) for: Hash, Jonas, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; two (2) absent: Hall, Lloyd.

**CITIZEN’S TIME**

Kevin English, Band Director for the Rural Retreat Schools addressed the Council and stated most of the band students were in attendance. Cheryl Viars distributed a letter to the Councilmembers and administration personnel. Mr. English stated he would like to talk about the band. He explained when he thinks of the high school band he thinks of talent, service to the

## **COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 11, 2015 – PAGE 2**

community and responsibility as well as service to the band. He stated the students have participated in numerous activities including the Virginia Tech Honor Band where they played with over 500 other students, the Radford University Chamber Wind Festival that includes students from all over the state, All-County Band that included students from Wythe and Bland Counties. Mr. English explained most of these events are audition based and the students have put in the time and effort to learn music, play by memory and play music they haven't seen before. He pointed out the talent is there and service to the community is as well. The band has participated in the Heritage Day parade and playing the Star Spangled Banner prior to festivities beginning, Mr. English stated. He further stated they participate in the Christmas Parade and Veteran's Day and Memorial Day Ceremonies. This past year the band had the opportunity to participate in the Wytheville Memorial Day Ceremony, he pointed out. He added less than an hour later the band's saxophone quartet played for their community. Mr. English pointed out he didn't have to pull the players out to do this but they wanted to do it as a service to their community. He explained service to the band and responsibility is also very important to the band. He further explained the students and the band boosters spend countless hours preparing for the events by selling concessions for tournaments, selling 50/50 tickets at the raceway and varsity football games. He noted they aren't sitting around but are trying to be active and do as much as they can. Mr. English stated he hoped the Council will assist them in purchasing hoodies for the band members so that they can show their pride for their school and community. He thanked the Council for their time.

Mayor Litz stated the Council has numbers before them and a motion and a second will be needed before the request can be discussed. Councilmember Hash made a motion to donate \$700 to the Rural Retreat High School Band to purchase hoodies for the members. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Jonas. Councilmember Hash asked Mr. English how many members are in the band. Mr. English responded 32 members. Councilmember Hash stated the town really appreciates the band participating in things when she calls to ask them. Mayor Litz asked if band was being taught in the middle school. Mr. English replied yes, sir. Mayor Litz commented that is what makes the band is the work that begins in the middle school. Councilmember Jonas stated he would like to say he appreciates the way the band has increased because it was pretty low at one time. He explained he and Mayor Litz are alumni of the band and they sold doughnuts and candy and whatever else for new uniforms however the new uniforms were worn the night they graduated. He added he appreciates what the band is doing and the work that is being put in because it takes a lot of work. Councilmember Hash stated she was a member of the George Wythe Marching Band under Dr. Jack White and she too realizes the hard work that has to be put in. Councilmember Viars stated he wanted to point out the band does work very hard and they aren't sitting around waiting for a handout. He noted they have held yard sales, sold pizza kits and done other fundraisers. He also pointed out the school budgets for the arts are less than for other departments. Mayor Litz called for the vote. The motion passed by a vote of three (3) for: Hash, Jonas, Yontz; zero (0) against; one (1) abstained: Viars; two (2) absent: Hall, Lloyd.

Bob Lewis addressed the Council and stated he would like to welcome the new town manager. Mayor Litz stated he would introduce him now. He introduced Jason Childers and stated he is

### **COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 11, 2015 – PAGE 3**

the new town manager and they would like to welcome him. Mayor Litz stated when he was contacted about the position he asked when he could go to work and he was told tomorrow so he has now been on the job for nine days. He encouraged everyone to share their support with him or if they have a complaint to see him. Mr. Lewis stated he would like to commend the Personnel Committee for finding someone that lives within the town of Rural Retreat, graduated from Rural Retreat and will probably stay within the town. Mr. Lewis then stated he had one question. He stated he has been waiting for five years and would like to know what the status of the sidewalk is. He asked if it was still with VDOT because it has been there for over a year. Brian Reed addressed Mr. Lewis's question and stated their process is long. He explained the 50% and 90% plans for phases 8 & 9 were submitted at the same time to speed up the process. Mayor Litz commented VDOT left the application lying around for eight months before they told us we were receiving funding. Mr. Lewis stated the construction season is almost over plus the utility poles need to be moved. Mr. Reed stated the Rural Retreat projects are moving faster than projects in other localities because Rural Retreat has a history with the projects. Mayor Litz commented the town used to have sidewalks all over town and we are trying to get back to that.

Councilmember Hash asked Jerry Hurt if he was going to give a report on Beach Fest because it isn't on the agenda. Mayor Litz stated the figures haven't been completed but it will be on the next agenda because some more accounting needs to be done. He added it is a good report. Bob Lewis asked if this meant they made money. Mayor Litz replied absolutely. Mr. Lewis asked if the town had been paid back. Mayor Litz replied yes, the town is free and clear and the foundation will receive money. Mr. Lewis stated as long as the town gets their money back. Mayor Litz stated it is in house and as soon as figures are done the Council will need to take action to pay the depot foundation.

Jack Trivitt addressed the Council and asked who was in charge of getting lots and yards mowed and tags on vehicles. He stated no one seems to care. Mr. Trivitt stated if someone was needed to tell which lots and yards haven't been mowed then they have the man in charge. He addressed cars without tags and stated if he has one then, it's a promise. He stated the town is in charge of tags and making sure lots are mowed. Some have been five years and everyone is afraid of the guy but he isn't, he added. Mr. Trivitt stated if he comes face to face with him he will mow it or burn it down. Chief Mitchell asked Mr. Trivitt where the cars are located that he is referring to. Mr. Trivitt told Chief Mitchell he will get a list to him. Mr. Trivitt then explained the house he is referring to has cars covered up but the grass hasn't been mowed in five years. Mayor Litz thanked Mr. Trivitt for his time. Mr. Trivitt addressed brush chipping and stated brush was chipped for Councilmember Hash but wasn't for him. Councilmember Hash stated she called and got on the list, she asked for it to be done. Mr. Trivitt stated he did too but it cost him \$400 to get his brush moved. Mayor Litz thanked Mr. Trivitt for his comments. Mr. Trivitt exited the meeting.

Tony Wright addressed the Council and stated Mr. Trivitt had a viable question. He stated a determination needs to be made about how the town is going to handle brush. Mayor Litz commented Mr. Trivitt has a point.

## **COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 11, 2015 – PAGE 4**

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

Clerk/Treasurer Guynn reported Jeremy Farley, Director of Grants, Tourism and Public Information for Wythe County had previously contacted Mayor Litz and requested the town write a letter of support for Wythe County's grant application to the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission. She explained she had worked with Mr. Farley on a letter for Mayor Litz to sign and it was returned to Wythe County for inclusion in their grant application. A letter was received from Mr. Farley thanking Mayor Litz and the Council for their support, she added.

Mayor Litz read a letter he received from Nina Blair Bowling on behalf of her and her children thanking the town for inducting her husband Chester C. Bowling into the Hall of Honor.

### **POLICE REPORT**

Chief Mitchell reviewed his monthly activity report of July. He explained he and Town Manager Childers have discussed the trouble property that Mr. Trivitt had referred too. He stated there are several properties that we may need to consider handling the same way Wytheville is and take the owners to court. Chief Mitchell pointed out until the town is willing to go through the court case and take it to court there isn't much that can be done. He stated we can continue to send letters or mow it and charge the owner for mowing it but the owners won't pay the charges nor mow the property themselves. Chief Mitchell explained this is something that will need to be handled by the town attorney because he works on the criminal side of the law. He stated he doesn't know all the civil laws for situations like this so an attorney would need to research it. He suggested having Attorney Sobey to review this upon his return to town.

Councilmember Viars asked if this was because of mowing, the lack of mowing or dilapidated buildings or all of it. He asked if he was right in saying the town doesn't have an ordinance on dilapidated buildings. Chief Mitchell stated the town does but to get the results that the town is looking for he will only be serving notice. Brian Reed explained the legal measurers would have to be pursued after that. He noted the Town of Marion sends out over 400 letters a year for the same thing. Mr. Reed stated beating it in court is not an easy thing and he explained Wytheville has spent years trying to beat this.

Chief Mitchell reported he has sent out 19 motor vehicle letters this year. He noted several letters have gone out about the grass but in some instances property owners don't live here and don't realize we now have a height limit instead of the twice per year requirement. Chief Mitchell addressed the property at the crossroads and explained VDOT mowed the grass that has been mowed when they were mowing along Route 11. He stated it has been discussed about having the bushes trimmed back because they are becoming a hazard.

Chief Mitchell stated with school starting back today he is working with the school resource officer and is patrolling the school zones when school lets out. He reported he has ordered the speed sign that was budgeted. Chief Mitchell pointed out it will take a while for it to come in because the radar unit is on backorder but once it is received one of the first places it will be put

## **COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 11, 2015 – PAGE 5**

is on East Buck Avenue. He explained this system will allow for a traffic study to be done which will require a laptop to download the information too. Chief Mitchell stated he has discussed the purchase of a laptop with Clerk/Treasurer Guynn.

Mayor Litz thanked Chief Mitchell for his report.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

DR PEPPER LOT PROJECT – No report was given in Councilmember Lloyd's absence.

STATUS OF SINGLETON PROPERTY – This item was previously discussed.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

JOINT GOVERNING BODIES MEETING – Clerk/Treasurer Guynn reported on Monday, August 31, a Joint Governing Bodies meeting will be held with Wythe County and the Town of Wytheville at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Litz added this will be held at the meeting center. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn explained the Town of Wytheville has requested agenda items to be submitted. Mayor Litz stated they will introduce the new town manager at the meeting.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

HERITAGE DAYS – Chairman Yontz stated there was nothing to report at this time. Mayor Litz explained the crowd was similar to last years but for those that didn't come they missed a good show. He stated the festival didn't go without a hitch; we had two incidents that required the rescue squad and five injuries. He further stated when there is a hot day and a crowd of people things will happen.

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – Clerk/Treasurer Guynn reported the preliminary audit work by Hicok, Fern and Company began yesterday and will continue through tomorrow. The complete audit will be done in September, she stated. She further stated Mr. Reed was at the office yesterday to answer questions on capital projects and she, Brenda Maxey, Town Manager Childers and Mr. Reed have been busy assisting the auditors and answering question. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn stated the audit work is going well so far.

PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES & LEGAL MATTERS – No report.

PUBLIC UTILITIES – No report.

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

Town Manager Childers stated first he wanted to tell the Council how much he appreciates being given the opportunity to be the manager in the town that he went to school in and graduated from and where his children will graduate from also. He stated he had said in the interview process

## COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 11, 2015 – PAGE 6

that this is a special place and he believes that in his heart. Town Manager Childers explained he will do his best to do what he thinks is right 100% of the time. He added he knows some of the people but anyone that comes to him will be treated with respect, he will listen to what they have to say, do what he thinks is right and do it in a respectful manner. He stated some have already congratulated him on the position, he knows that the people are behind him, he will do the best he can for the town and he gives 100% of his word on that. Town Manager Childers stated he will have to make some hard decisions along the way that some people aren't going to agree with but that is part of his job. He added he is a big boy and he can handle it but he will do what he thinks is right for the people of Rural Retreat, 100% of the time. Town Manager Childers received applause from those in attendance.

Town Manager Childers stated in relation to what he has been working on, people don't understand what it is like to jump into something because it is hard to be trained to do the job and there are so many aspects that he needs to learn. He stated there are a lot of things that he doesn't know right now but it will take a little while until he knows the things that he has to know too do the job. Town Manager Childers explained he has a great Council and great employees and he will lean on them to make sure during the short term process of getting up to speed he does the things he needs to do.

The individual item's he has worked on include spending some time visiting businesses and introducing him to them, he explained. He stated he wants to make sure he is visible in the community, he doesn't want people passing him on the street and asking who he is, he wants them to know who he is and that his door is always open. Town Manager Childers explained the time that he has with Brian Reed is essential because he has vast knowledge and can teach him a lot of the things he needs to know.

Town Manager Childers and Brian Reed are working on a grant with Dennis Amos with Anderson & Associates for water concerns that need to be addressed such as fencing around the water tanks and other items of concern. He explained he has discussed the crossroads property with Chief Mitchell. He stated the property is the first property seen when entering Rural Retreat and he doesn't like what he has seen so he will be contacting the owner tomorrow to obtain his written permission to remove the bushes because it is an eye sore and it impedes view of the traffic light. He noted the owner contacted a local person to mow the property. He added there are other things that he plans to work on but right now he is trying to get out and introduce himself to people.

Clerk/Treasurer Guynn pointed out that Town Manager Childers was interviewed by the *Wytheville Enterprise* the previous day. Mayor Litz commented in Millie Rothrock's interview he stated he didn't know about some things but the Council doesn't expect him to know everything because it is not easy.

Bob Lewis addressed Mayor Litz and inquired if the bushes on the crossroads property were located on the owner's property or in the state right-of-way. He stated if they are, then the

## **COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 11, 2015 – PAGE 7**

bushes can be removed. He pointed out the traffic light controllers are located there and the posts for the lights. Brian Reed stated if they are then it will help with the town removing them.

Mayor Litz asked Brian Reed to address the next item of business. He addressed the Council and stated for those that don't know him he has been serving as the interim town manager. He explained he has a resolution for a Virginia Department of Health Planning Grant in the amount of \$25,000 to complete a water system hydraulic modeling and leak detection study. He noted these are items the town needs to address and if funded it will develop a plan for the town to use later to request grant money. The deadline is September 1 and Anderson & Associates, Inc. through their term contract brought this to his attention prior to Mr. Childers being hired, he stated. Mr. Reed further stated the resolution needs to be adopted to apply for the planning grant. A motion was made by Councilmember Jonas and seconded by Vice-Mayor Yontz to adopt the resolution for the Virginia Department of Health to apply for a \$25,000 planning grant for the town's water system. Mayor Litz stated the town is known within state agencies to use grant money and to use it correctly. He further stated someone is going to get this money and the Council needs to get as much of it in Rural Retreat as possible. There being no further discussion, the motion passed by a vote of four (4) for: Hash, Jonas, Viars, Yontz; zero (0) against; two (2) absent: Hall, Lloyd.

Mr. Reed explained the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission began reviewing the water and wastewater applications with a total of nine applications received requesting up to \$827,000. He stated they have \$559,000 to distribute and Rural Retreat will hopefully score and rank well to receive money. He explained there is money left over from 2015 that he hopes will roll over into 2016 and if it does all of the projects will be funded. Mr. Reed added money has been allocated for Rural Retreat for the grinder pump. Mayor Litz stated the town appreciates that and thanked him for his work.

Councilmember Viars asked Mr. Reed if he was looking into a grant to purchase a new police vehicle. Mr. Reed responded yes, the paperwork has been signed and submitted. Councilmember Viars asked when the town would find out if the grant was received. Mr. Reed explained the grant is with USDA Rural Development and it will probably be fall before we receive a response because their fiscal year is October to September. He stated other localities have purchased the vehicle then used the grant to be reimbursed which covers 55% of the vehicle cost. Mr. Reed pointed out the town has already included the money in the budget for the purchase.

Bob Lewis stated he would like to ask another question. He stated in the last meetings minutes the Council discussed the Randy's building and asked if the project would be delayed by granting the extension. Mr. Reed responded to Mr. Lewis and explained it shouldn't especially because the purchase of the property is to take place on September 1. He explained the Governor is to announce the awards for the Community Development Block Grant application on August 18 and if he does so then there will be at least 120 days before the town will execute a contract with the state. Mayor Litz stated they asked that question also before considering the request. Mr. Lewis stated it was explained in the minutes but he was just wondering why an extension

## **COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 11, 2015 – PAGE 8**

was granted. Mayor Litz stated there are people that are willing to clean it out for the stuff in it. Mr. Lewis stated that was the same thing that occurred on Greever Street because the guy was going to clean it out because he wanted the wood. Mayor Litz stated the request was seriously considered prior to the meeting because they knew he was going to come in. Mr. Reed commented the owner mentioned selling the stuff for scrap but the town could advertise it as surplus property and sell it. He noted the situation would be different if the town had already received the funding for the project. There was discussion about the value of the items remaining in the building.

### **GENERAL SERVICES DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director Wright reported he had contacted The Lane Group about the UV Disinfection System and a meeting with Bobby Lane has been scheduled for Tuesday, August 18 at 2:00 p.m. at the wastewater plant. Mayor Litz added Councilmember Hall has asked to be in attendance also. Director Wright stated he would like for Mayor Litz, Councilmember Hall, Town Manager Childers and he to meet prior to the 2:00 p.m. meeting. Mayor Litz agreed.

The variable frequency drive and flow meter have been purchased and should be delivered within the next week, Director Wright reported. He thanked Brian Reed for his assistance.

Director Wright stated the fence between the town dump property and the property sold to Dallas Shumate has been completed and includes a gate. He noted all parties are satisfied.

Director Wright reported he and Clerk/Treasurer Guynn conducted interviews for the open maintenance position and have decided to hire Kevin Smelser. He will begin his employment on Monday.

He stated the other item he had was about Delp Avenue and the request for the signage. Mayor Litz reported he had received a call from VDOT notifying him that it had been turned into the engineering office for review.

Director Wright stated he wanted to welcome Town Manager Childers and added he is a very nice young gentleman and he feels the Council made a good decision. He also thanked the Council for the past two months and stated he has gained a lot of knowledge and experience.

Mayor Litz and the Councilmember's thanked Director Wright for his comments.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

The invoices for August 11, 2015 were read and approved.

**COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 11, 2015 – PAGE 9**

**TALK OF THE TOWN**

No one was available to attend the *Talk of the Town* radio program at the WYVE/WXBX radio station on Wednesday morning.

Jerry Hurt will be talking with Danny Gordon tomorrow morning about the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation.

Mayor Litz thanked everyone for their time and attendance.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no additional business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Vice-Mayor Yontz. The motion was duly seconded and approved.

---

Mayor

---

Clerk