

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

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

Council Members Absent: Vice-Mayor Dale Yontz

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

Administration Absent: None

Others Present: Bob Lewis; Brenda Maxey; Jerry Hurt; Tony Wright

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 Viars, seconded by Councilmember Jonas to approve the minutes of the October 27, 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) absent: Yontz.

CITIZEN’S TIME

Jerry Hurt addressed the council on behalf of the Rural Retreat Depot Foundation. He stated he wants to make sure there is clear communication between the Town Council and Depot Foundation. He explained the exterior painting is almost complete, the additional doors will be in this week and new guttering will be installed. The freight doors located in the freight room will be retained for historical purposes, he added. He stated the doors will be restored and French doors will be installed on the interior side of the freight doors. Mr. Hurt noted this will allow the doors to be opened if an event is being held in the town flat. The goal is to complete all of this work by the end of this year, he added. In 2017, the goal is to complete the interior work which is estimated to cost \$175,000. Mr. Hurt explained the main goal is to have the building complete by the end of 2017 for a potential 60th anniversary celebration of O. Winston

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Link's Christmas Eve 1957 photo. He stated these projects will be based on the amount of funding received because grant money isn't available.

Mr. Hurt explained in an effort to create more parking in the flat area, he had spoken to Town Manager Childers about moving the caboose. He stated once the depot is complete and the museum is opened it is the hope to have a part-time caretaker on premise. He suggested moving the caboose to the west end of the depot and potentially connecting it to the ramp.

The Foundation made the decision a long time ago to not wait until the building is complete before turning it into a community facility, Mr. Hurt explained. He stated the consensus is that it is already part of the Downtown Revitalization Project. He explained over the next several weeks many activities will be taking place including a Christmas Home Tours and the Christmas Bazaar. The bazaar will be held December 4-6 and more vendors than in the past will be attending. The depot has been cleaned out and is now airtight to allow for better heating. Musicians will be performing during the three day event. Tabitha Seymore is also using the depot for family photographs, Mr. Hurt added.

Mr. Hurt stated he hadn't presented this to the Foundation Board yet but he had the idea of hosting a Rural Retreat Depot Day in late September as a fundraising event. He noted this may become an annual event and would include music and activities inside and outside the depot. Mayor Litz inquired about the number of beef giveaway tickets sold on Election Day. Mr. Hurt replied 167 were sold compared to 121 that were sold last year. Mayor Litz stated people were very interested in buying tickets. Mr. Hurt noted the turn out for the election was higher but also he felt the painting of the depot helped as well.

Councilmember Lloyd informed the Town Council and Mr. Hurt that Rebecca Jones, the person that produced the documentaries for both, is now working full-time for Kem Burns.

Mr. Hurt stated the Foundation appreciates the town's support. Mayor Litz stated there was a time this project didn't look good but it has been a pleasant change. Councilmember Lloyd stated he had people from Boone, North Carolina to comment to him how fast the transformation has occurred. Councilmember Jonas stated negative comments are still being made but even those people can see the change. Mr. Hurt added Virginia Tech will be streaming one of their live programs on December 3 from Virginia Tech to the town hall. He noted this is the first time ever for this event.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mayor Litz stated Vice-Mayor Yontz sends his regrets however he is at his first basketball game tonight.

Mayor Litz stated he had an item addressed to him and the Town Council. He then read the letter of resignation submitted by Lori Guynn. Mayor Litz thanked Mrs. Guynn for her letter and

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stated it was well worded. He stated there has been a lot of hard work and the Council appreciates her time as well. Mrs. Guynn stated she is excited about her new position though it will be hard to leave the town. Mayor Litz commented it won't take long to forget but new jobs are always exciting. He thanked Mrs. Guynn for her service. Mrs. Guynn stated if a new person isn't in place in January, if needed, she will gladly come back to help with anything she can especially with the payroll reporting that is due the end of the month. Mayor Litz stated the Council will be working on finding a new person and would appreciate any input that can be offered.

Councilmember Viars stated he brings this up each year but he would like for it to be a formal request. He expressed his concern about the influx of traffic and pedestrians on Sherwood Avenue on Halloween. He explained he doesn't know what the solution would be but he hopes the Council can be proactive. He added there are approximately 300 trick-or-treaters walking and since there are no sidewalks everyone is walking in the street. He stated it becomes a safety issue due to the number of people walking the street. Town Manager Childers suggested that all residents that want to participate in trick-or-treating meet at the church parking lot to handout candy and eliminate traffic going up the street. Discussion ensued on the number of trick-or-treaters on East Buck and Sherwood Avenues and the trunk-or-treats held. Jerry Hurt suggested making Sherwood Avenue one way from Church Street during trick-or-treating.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Mitchell reviewed his monthly activity report for October. He explained the new police vehicle arrived today and the radio equipment will be installed next week. He stated he is continuing to move the radar speed sign around town and is conducting walks through the school. The Veteran's Day Parade and ceremony was held on Sunday.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DR PEPPER LOT PROJECT – Councilmember Lloyd reported he still hasn't received a response. He explained Dr. Pepper is now sponsoring the Galax Fiddler's Convention and he wanted to talk to him about the Rural Retreat Fair Association's.

STATUS OF SINGLETON PROPERTY – No update.

NEW BUSINESS

TOWN CHRISTMAS DINNER – Clerk/Treasurer Guynn reported the town's Christmas Dinner has been scheduled for Wednesday, December 16th at the Rural Retreat Community Center. Joey's Country Kitchen will be catering the meal again this year. She noted the meal will be served at 6:00 p.m. and fellowship will begin at 5:30 p.m.

CHRISTMAS PARADE – Clerk/Treasurer Guynn reported the annual Christmas Parade will be held on Sunday, December 6th at 2:00 p.m.

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COMMITTEE REPORTS

HERITAGE DAYS – Town Manager Childers reported Chairman Yontz has moved the meeting from November to January.

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – No report.

PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES & LEGAL MATTERS – No report.

PUBLIC UTILITIES – No report.

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

Town Manager Childers reported on the following items:

RANDY’S INC. BUILDING – When the building was vacated the garage door was removed from the building. After contacting Attorney Sobey and Mr. Compton, owner of the building, the door has now been reinstalled, inspected and is working properly. The town is now ready to close on the property. Mr. Compton has asked the town to pay the bookkeeper fees in the amount of \$17,500 and deduct the amount from the amount he will be paid. Councilmember Viars stated the Council allowed another month extension, then a week and then the garage door was removed so he doesn’t agree. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn explained the town has paid his other debts which were agreed upon. She stated if the town pays the bookkeeper directly, Mr. Compton will receive \$22,649.68 but if not and he is responsible to pay the bookkeeper then he will be paid \$40,149.68. Councilmember Viars made a motion to not pay Mr. Compton’s bookkeeper fees and to pay him directly for the amount owed to finalize the purchase of the Randy’s Inc. building. Councilmember Lloyd seconded the motion. There being no discussion, the motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Hall, Hash, Jonas, Lloyd, Viars; zero (0) against; one (1) absent: Yontz.

A structural engineer from Pillar Engineering evaluated the building this week. Mayor Litz stated the engineer wasn’t asked to sign off on any documents but only to evaluate the building. He explained the engineer advised if the mortar joints in the wall weave up and down then the building is not structurally sound but all the joints are level. He added the back wall on the oldest building is falling and will require some work. Mayor Litz stated the roof will need to be patched so the building will dry. He noted this building is structurally sound.

PAVING AT THE RURAL RETREAT FIREHOUSE – Three quotes were received to pave the firehouse parking lot with \$41,500 being the lowest quote which includes 6" stone and 4" cap and was submitted by Medley’s Sugar Grove Asphalt. This project will be paid from the General Fund, undesignated account. Councilmember Hash asked if this quote was to pave the entire parking lot. Town Manager Childers stated the front parking area only. Councilmember Jonas stated if the base isn’t put down like it should be then in a couple of years the parking lot will be in the same condition again. Councilmember Viars stated he had spoken to Roger

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Hedrick on Election Day and his opinion was the last truck purchased has caused the damage due to the weight of it. Bob Lewis commented he had also spoken to Mr. Hedrick and he had stated when the parking lot was originally paved there was no stone put down. Mr. Hedrick was instrumental in getting the Army Corps of Engineers to perform the grading work at the time and no stone was used.

Town Manager Childers stated we have saved close to \$50,000 in two recent purchases that were made. Councilmember Viars made a motion to accept the quote by Medley's Sugar Grove Asphalt for \$41,500 to pave the front parking lot at the Rural Retreat Firehouse. Councilmember Jonas seconded the motion. Town Manager Childers explained arrangements will be made to move the fire trucks to accessible locations during the paving. There being no further discussion, the motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Hall, Hash, Jonas, Lloyd, Viars; zero (0) against; one (1) absent: Yontz.

CLERK/TREASURER POSITION – The Clerk/Treasurer position needs to be advertised. Town Manager Childers asked the Council if they wanted the Personnel Committee involved in the hiring process. The consensus was the committee would need to be involved. Town Manager Childers asked if the committee would like to meet. Personnel Committee Chair Hash stated the committee would need to know the qualifications for the position and other information. She is to contact Town Manager Childers to establish a meeting time.

SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT – During a meeting held with Anderson & Associates, Inc. earlier today, Town Manager Childers was asked if the Council had given him signature authority for all future sidewalk projects. Councilmember Hash made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Jonas to authorize Town Manager Childers to sign all related documentation for the town's sidewalk projects. There being no discussion, the motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Hall, Hash, Jonas, Lloyd, Viars; zero (0) against; one (1) absent: Yontz.

Town Manager Childers explained the documents for phase 11 of the sidewalk project were sent to the town with Clerk/Treasurer Guynn's name as the lead person and him as the sponsor. He asked the representative from Anderson & Associates, Inc. why the names were listed this way and was told it was because Clerk/Treasurer Guynn has experience with the projects and has been with the town through all the phases but when she leaves he will become the lead person. He added it was primarily due to experience and could help with getting the phases funded.

SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT – PHASES 9 & 10 – The desire is to bury the utility lines on Main Street in this project area and AEP will be contacted to discuss whether or not the town will qualify. This is not included in the reimbursement of project expenses but will count toward the town's 20% matching funds.

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TREASURER’S REPORT

REMOVAL OF 2009 PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXES – Only five years of personal property taxes must be kept on the tax books including the current year. The auditors are now requiring that permission be granted by the Town Council to remove delinquent taxes from the town’s tax books. The 2009 year needs to be removed totaling \$1,630.17 of which approximately \$643 is accumulated penalty and interest. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn stated the majority of the accounts are for former citizens that have moved or are now deceased. Mayor Litz commented the tax is unrecoverable. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn concurred. She then requested the Town Council, by motion, approve the removal of the taxes from the town tax books. A motion was made by Councilmember Lloyd and seconded by Councilmember Jonas to remove the 2009 personal property taxes from the town’s tax books. There being no discussion, the motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Hall, Hash, Jonas, Lloyd, Viars; zero (0) against; one (1) absent: Yontz.

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

Town Manager Childers asked Clerk/Treasurer Guynn to explain the office accreditation program to the Town Council. Clerk/Treasurer Guynn stated in February she applied for the town to receive office accreditation through the Treasurer’s Association of Virginia. This requires the treasurer to be certified, one deputy to be enrolled in the certification program which Brenda is, two consecutive years of audit reports without any significant deficiencies and personnel, investment and collection policies. Unknowingly, the town received this accreditation and will receive a certificate and a plaque that will be valid for one year.

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.

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