

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN  
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON  
TUESDAY, September 13, 2016 - 7:00 P.M.**

Council Members Present: Mayor Timothy Litz; Geary Jonas; James Lloyd; James P. “Sean” Viars; Brian Vaught; Mike Duncan

Council Members Absent: Vice-Mayor Dale Yontz

Administration Present: Monica Patton, Clerk/Treasurer; Scott Mitchell, Police Chief

Administration Absent: Jason Childers, Town Manager

Others Present: Maeve Gould, John Provo, Donnie Buck, Jerry Hurt, Evelyn Lahman, Gail Vipperman, Ken Little, Millie Rothrock, Ed Schaack, Ellen Schaack, Jeanne Stosser, Linda Vaught, Susan Spraker, Michael Spraker, C.B. Miller, Michael Sobey.

**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 and seconded by Councilmember Vaught to approve the minutes of the August 23, 2016 regular meeting. There being no discussion, the motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Jonas, Lloyd, Viars, Vaught, Duncan; zero (0) against.

**CITIZEN’S TIME**

Jerry Hurt addressed Council to introduce representatives from Virginia Tech’s office of Economic Development, Dr. John Provo and Maeve Gould. Dr. Provo explained to Council their purpose was to assist in the visioning of the historic train depot. Dr. Provo introduced Maeve Gould a graduate student from Virginia Tech. Ms. Gould presented the recommendations of the group to Council. The three anchor uses are a museum, event rentals, and Farmers Market. The fourth use scenario options are Rural Retreat Center for Community Education, Rural Retreat Center for Community Arts, Rural Retreat Center for Local Foods and Health, and Rural Retreat Cultural Engine and Visitor Center. Ms. Gould explained the next steps for the Depot Foundation will be to select one optional use scenario and determine champions, which

are individuals that come together and work to achieve certain goals. Next conduct a Feasibility Study for the selected use scenario to determine whether the use is sustainable and can withstand the risks it will encounter. The Depot Foundation will then determine funding options such as grants, private donations, and fundraising events. Ms. Gould also recommends that the Foundation create a museum Business Plan to consider who the potential visitors will be, staffing, identify specific square footage necessary and room suitable for museum use, visitor capacity and accessibility, display themes, create a funding model, management team, and finally promote the museum. Councilmember Duncan asked Ms. Gould if their results indicated any negative issues such as the location of the railroad or other safety related issues. Dr. Provo replied there may be issues in this area, but those types of issues are operational and not addressed in this study. Councilmember Vaught asked how far outside the town limits would the team recommend when conducting the feasibility study in order to predict how far the town can expect to draw visitors to the depot. Ms. Gould stated this depends on the choices the foundation makes for uses. Some uses are more locally focused while others regionally. Mayor Litz stated the value of the depot lies within the people of Rural Retreat. It is wonderful to have a focus for all citizens to come together and have something to be proud of. Councilmember Lloyd stated a second tour bus is scheduled to visit the downtown area. Councilmember Lloyd commended the group from Virginia Tech for their work on this project. Jeanne Stosser suggested the foundation and the town go a step further with Virginia Tech's office of Economic Development by allowing the group to conduct the Feasibility study. Mayor Litz stated the town is willing to be open minded and listen to any ideas. Jerry Hurt added that now the block grant is approved and the town is ready to move forward with downtown revitalization the depot committee and the downtown revitalization committee could merge and work together. Michael Sobey asked Dr. Provo if any of the depots in the study were not successful. If so, what would Rural Retreat need to avoid that might cause the project to fail? Dr. Provo stated the biggest thing would be for the town not to take a direction. He stated the town would need to do more than just cleanup the depot.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

Councilmember Viars reported he had a citizen complain about the crosswalk located at BB&T Bank on North Main Street. She stated her child was almost hit by a car crossing the street in the crosswalk. Chief Mitchell said he can patrol the area in the mornings and afternoons when students are going to and from school. Councilmember Vaught added maybe the town could look into getting the crosswalk signs installed in the center of the street at the crosswalks. Councilmember Duncan requested a mirror installed so motorists can see when crossing from West Buck Avenue and a button for pedestrians to press for a light to stop traffic when crossing at the intersection. Councilmember Viars stated he would like to see VDOT place additional signage in the area warning motorist of pedestrians crossing the street.

## **POLICE REPORT**

Chief Mitchell provided a report summarizing all activities for July. Chief Mitchell stated he has been running radar on Parsonage. Additionally, he was asked by the high school to be present at the home football games. He reported he attended the 9-11 ceremony in Wytheville on Saturday. Councilmember Duncan asked Chief Mitchell if the larceny/theft calls he answered resulted in arrest and if the items were recovered. Chief Mitchell stated charges were filed.

***UNFINISHED BUSINESS***

DR. PEPPER LOT PROJECT – Councilmember Lloyd reported he sent a flash drive to Troy Harris of the Dr. Pepper Corporation which contained the plans for the Dr. Pepper Lot. Mr. Harris stated he would like to announce in October the intentions of the corporation.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Mayor Litz reported the town was awarded the block grant for downtown revitalization. Treasurer Patton added the town has not officially been notified of the funding.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

HERITAGE DAYS - Mayor Litz reported the committee is working on the big act for next year's festival.

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS -None

PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES & LEGAL MATTERS - Councilmember Jonas stated the personnel committee met at 6:00pm before the regular council meeting regarding the dismissal of General Services Director, Tony Wright. The committee recommends the dismissal stands and the grievance filed by Mr. Wright is unfounded. Mayor Litz commended the committee on their work. Mayor Litz added that Town Manager Childers did what was needed considering the daily operations of the town. Councilmember Vaught stated the town does not have a grievance policy to go along with the grievance procedure. Councilmember Vaught added that due to the population of the town the town may not need a grievance policy at all. The town's personnel policy states all employees are "at will" therefore we do not need a grievance policy. Councilmember Vaught stated he would speak to Wytheville Mayor Trent Crewe regarding Wytheville's policy.

PUBLIC UTILITIES –Mayor Litz reported the Town of Marion and Smyth County have made an agreement and signed a seven year contract. The Town of Marion dropped their water charge to Smyth County by \$2.00. The committee will no longer need to report on the Smyth County water project.

**TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

Mayor Litz read Town Manager Childers' report as follows...

INFLOW AND INFILTRATION GRANT FUNDING – The town has officially received \$50,000 from Mount Rogers for the lining of our problematic manholes to keep groundwater from entering our sewer plant, which will make our Waste Water Treatment Plant more efficient and will give truer readings.

BLOCK GRANT- We have been awarded the grant for our Downtown Revitalization Project. I spoke to Brian Reed and he will be available on September 20<sup>th</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> to meet with the Downtown committee in the evening hours to get into in depth discussions.

PHASE 8- King Contractors are supposed to be here on Monday, September 19<sup>th</sup> to start the sidewalk project.

CROSSWALKS – I emailed Jeff Russell about getting our crosswalks repainted and have not heard anything back at this point. I will also meet with Kevin Copenhaver about extra signage around our crosswalks and speed limit signs on Buck Street and at McDonalds.

SINGLETON PROPERTY – I am working with Mike Sobey on ideas about the Singleton property. Some council members have visited the site with me, and I think all agree that the issue with this property is not the mowing ordinance. Mr. Sobey has some ideas to execute in the near future.

WEAVER PROPERTY – The sale of Jack Weaver’s has been finalized and is now the property of the Town of Rural Retreat.

MAINTENANCE – Our backhoe has a busted cylinder and will be out of commission for a few days. We have back up plans in case of emergency. We have been two men down in the maintenance division and have water leaks and emergency situations. We have a lot of brush that needs to be picked up, but we are behind. I assure you that our guys are doing their best to catch up.

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

The invoices for September 13, 2016 were read and approved.

**TALK OF THE TOWN**

No one is available to attend the *Talk of the Town* radio program at the WYVE/WXBX radio station.

**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.

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Mayor

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Clerk