

The Rural Retreat Town Council held a regular meeting on July 22, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. in the Rural Retreat Town Hall Council Chambers.

PRESENT RURAL RETREAT TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mayor Timothy Litz
Ed Schaack
Scott Mecimore

Jerrell Hall
Kristie Osborne

ABSENT

Vice-Mayor Keith Crigger
Dale Yontz

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT

Raymond Matney, Town Manager
Lori Guynn, Clerk/Treasurer
Scott Mitchell, Police Chief

OTHERS PRESENT

Rev. Jason McNeese – Rural Retreat Baptist Church
Gerald Musser – Town of Rural Retreat Chief Water Operator
Brandon Hall

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Mayor Litz called the meeting to order and determined the presence of a quorum.

INVOCATION

The invocation was given by Rev. Jason McNeese.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Litz.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilmember Scott Mecimore, seconded by Councilmember Jerrell Hall to approve the minutes of the July 8, 2008 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

CITIZEN'S TIME

At this time Mr. Matney recognized Brandon Hall, son of Councilmember Jerrell Hall, for being an active member of the armed forces. Mr. Matney explained that Mr. Hall will be deployed to

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Iraq in the upcoming months. Councilmember Hall stated this will be his son's second tour of duty. Those present showed their appreciation to Mr. Hall by recognizing him with a standing ovation.

CORRESPONDENCE

Councilmember Osborne stated she had received several complaints from the residents on Westfield Avenue, Sunset View Road and Orchard Hills Road concerning the gravel on the street. Mr. Matney stated it is partially due to the overlay that was done on the streets. He further stated he would contact Matthew Cox, Resident Engineer with the Virginia Department of Transportation to express the concerns of the Council.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Mitchell stated there was no report to be given.

Councilmember Mecimore complimented Chief Mitchell on his new uniforms. Chief Mitchell stated he chose the navy blue because the color is easier to purchase from suppliers.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION – Mr. Matney stated extensive research had been completed in house and via telephone with Libby Henley, Town of Wytheville Human Resources and Mark Flynn, Virginia Municipal League concerning the classification of an employee when the employee is out on family medical leave. According to the Department of Labor, when an employee begins unpaid leave such as short-term disability or long-term disability, benefits do not continue to accrue during this time. Upon an employee transferring from short-term disability to long-term disability, the employee must be taken off the insurance after the twelve week short-term disability period.

Mr. Matney stated his interpretation of the employment status, as defined by the Department of Labor, of Donald Widner is that as of June 20, Mr. Widner began unpaid family medical leave therefore he would not be eligible to receive employee benefits including money contributed to the employees health savings account by the town because he is no longer a liability to the Town. The liability now falls on Shenandoah Life.

Mr. Matney suggested the Council consider changing the employee sick leave policy and/or the short-term disability coverage in the future.

NEW BUSINESS

CABOOSE MAINTENANCE - Councilmember Schaack asked Mr. Matney if there were plans in the future to paint the caboose due to the paint fading. Mr. Matney explained that Ms. Virginia Nase had left money in her will to be used for maintenance on the caboose.

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BUSINESS SIGNS – Councilmember Mecimore stated he has been receiving bad feedback concerning signs that are being placed on the former Rural Retreat Drug Store directing people to the Rural Retreat Winery, which he owns. The signs are not allowed based on the current sign ordinance. He further explained that it benefits new businesses and makes people aware that the businesses are open and where they are located. Councilmember Mecimore stated he had asked Mr. Matney if the ordinance could be readdressed by the planning commission for possible changes. Mr. Matney stated he would have the planning commission to review the ordinance at their next meeting.

VISITOR CENTER – Councilmember Schaack explained he had traveled through Jonesville, North Carolina the previous week and had noticed signs directing visitors to a visitor's information center. Upon arrival at the visitor's center, he noticed it was an area at the town hall/police station. Councilmember Schaack suggested the town consider including a visitors center inside the town hall. He further recommended, upon purchasing the former drug store property, the town build a marker or a replica of the drug store to attract more visitors.

Councilmember Mecimore stated a non-profit organization should be formed to raise funds and oversee this project if it is done in the future.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FINANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS – Mr. Matney asked if the Finance Committee would consider meeting on Tuesday, August 12 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the request received from the Rural Retreat Volunteer Emergency Services Board.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

The Town Manager's report is attached and is hereby made a part of these minutes. The following items were discussed and/or acted upon:

PLANNED HOUSING UNITS – Mr. Matney explained that there is a development on North Greever Street that will be considered as a planned housing unit which is a high density development that deviates from the traditional zoning requirements. This allows people to purchase a home and the land that is directly underneath the home then homeowners association maintains the remaining property. He further explained that Steve Moore, Assistant Town Manager and Planning Director for the Town of Wytheville, explained planned housing units to the planning commission at their July meeting. Mr. Moore was involved in writing a zoning ordinance for the Town of Wytheville that regulates planned housing units.

Currently the contractor's plans for the development are being reviewed and while doing so an ordinance is being drafted. The planning commission will need to review the ordinance and upon the commission's satisfaction a joint public hearing will be scheduled with the council in order to consider its possible adoption.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS – This item was previously addressed.

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TOWN ATTORNEY – A bill was received from Charles Lacy for an annual retainer fee of \$2,000. Mr. Matney stated he contacted Mr. Lacy and was told it was an annual fee that the town had been paying. Mr. Matney explained to Mr. Lacy the town had not paid this fee in the past. Mr. Lacy responded the town should have been paying this fee. Upon Mr. Lacy's review he called Mr. Matney and stated it had been an oversight and the fee would now have to be paid annually. Currently Mr. Lacy's hourly rate is \$195.00 per hour.

Councilmember Mecimore asked Mr. Matney if he had spoken to Michael Sobey in reference to serving as the town's attorney. Mr. Matney stated he had and Mr. Sobey assured him if the town gave him their business he would not charge an annual retainer fee and would be responsive to the town's needs. Mr. Matney added that he had asked Mr. Sobey if he would negotiate an hourly rate for the town. Mr. Sobey said his rate would be \$100 - \$125 per hour. Mr. Matney informed the councilmember's he was not recommending changing the town attorney at this time but would like authorization to negotiate with those involved.

Councilmember Schaack made a motion to hire Michael Sobey as the town's attorney. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mecimore and passed unanimously. Mr. Matney stated he was only looking for authorization to negotiate with Mr. Sobey but he would still negotiate an hourly rate.

MONTHLY STATUS REPORT – The monthly status report from Anderson and Associates has been received.

REQUESTS FOR WATER SERVICES – A request for water service was received from Edith Manders on Ridge Crest Drive. There is a residence on the property that is being renovated but the owner is interested in also placing a mobile home on the property. Mr. Matney stated the main line on Murphyville Road has ample supply to serve the new connection. He then recommended the Council approve the request. Councilmember Hall made a motion to approve the water service request on Ridge Crest Drive. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mecimore and passed unanimously.

The second request for water service was received from Cecil and Renea Cregger on Rural Retreat Lake Road. The Cregger's are currently on the end of the water system which is serving their current residence which they plan to sell. They are in the process of constructing a new home on their property. Mr. Matney stated the line on Rural Retreat Lake Road is sufficient to accommodate another connection and is scheduled to be replaced during the upcoming water project. He added that he was not making a recommendation to Council for this connection due to the personal relationship with Mrs. Cregger who is his daughter. Councilmember Hall made a motion to approve the water service request on Rural Retreat Lake Road. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Mecimore and passed unanimously.

WATER PROJECTS – Rural Development is reviewing and writing the loan/grant conditions for the out-of-town water distribution project.

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TREASURER’S REPORT

Mrs. Guynn asked the councilmember’s to pre-approve paying the entertainers participating in Heritage Days. In the past, the individuals have been paid upon completion of their performance. Councilmember Mecimore made the motion to authorize Mrs. Guynn to write the checks to pay the Heritage Days performers. Councilmember Hall second the motion and it passed unanimously.

The bills were read and approved for July 22, 2008.

TALK OF THE TOWN

Mr. Matney is to attend the Talk of the Town radio program at WYVE/WXBX radio station on Wednesday morning.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no additional business, the meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Councilmember Schaack.

Mayor

Clerk