

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on April 13, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall. There was a budget session at 6:00 p.m.

Council: **Monica Johnson, Jeff Comer, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, Steve Surber, and Gary Call**

Mayor: **C. Todd Young**

Staff: **Brian Martin, Town Manager
Paul Cassell, Town Attorney
Erik Puckett, Police Chief
Bryan Lynch, Fire Chief
R.B. Henderson, Public Works Director
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer**

During the budget session at 6:00 p.m., Emergency Medical Services Director Kyle Brewster gave the Council two more proposals for his new department's budget per the Council's wishes. The first one showed having one ALS unit with twenty-four hour coverage and a quick-response vehicle with first-year and second-year costs, and the second one showed the same with two ALS units.

Town Manager Brian Martin said he and Mr. Brewster have had initial discussions with the county regarding them providing assistance with the one-time start-up fees, and he said that more Covid-relief funds could possibly be used for that. A formal proposal will be submitted to the county for help.

Citizens' Time

Jody Olinger sent the Council a letter asking for the use of the Commons Area for the fifth annual "CC Rider" Olinger Memorial Poker Run on June 19th. Councilman Gary Call made a motion to authorize this, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. The motion carried 5-1 with Councilman Morris voting no.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilman Morris made a motion to add to the agenda under Old Business, Amanda Livingston, the new Smyth County Tourism Director. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Councilman Morris then made a motion to approve the agenda with that addition, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

Old Business

1. Smyth County Tourism Director

The new Smyth County Tourism Director, Amanda Livingston, spoke on the following:

- 1) She was raised in Atlanta and has been in Southwest Virginia since 2012.
- 2) This position was vacant for about six months, so there's catching up to be done, but this area is in a good position for growth especially with Covid restrictions starting to lessen.
- 3) She's looking for grant funding for a LOVE sign for Saltville like they have in Chilhowie and Marion.

2. Mount Rogers Cigarette Tax Board

Mr. Martin said the resolution for this was in the council packets and has been discussed at prior meetings. There are twenty-six entities in the Mount Rogers region consisting of six counties, two cities, and eighteen towns. So far, Bland County has adopted this resolution, and Wythe and Washington Counties plan to. There will have to be a Public Hearing before the May meeting before an official vote can be taken during the regular meeting. The town stands to get more revenue from cigarette tax proceeds by joining this Board.

Councilman Morris made a motion to have the Mayor sign the resolution and have the Public Hearing in May. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

New Business

1. Salt Trail resolution

Mr. Martin said the packets also contained a joint resolution with Glade Spring for the purpose that both towns would gain from the completion of the Salt Trail to Glade Spring. We're working on a joint application with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation that would do preliminary planning to bring the Salt Trail from the existing trail head to the Town Square. Both Washington and Smyth Counties will partner as well.

Councilman Morris made a motion to have the Mayor sign the resolution, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

2. Project tracking

Councilman Morris said he was concerned that some of the several projects the town is involved in get put on the backburner sometimes, and he stated he would like to see everyone on the same page. He asked Mr. Martin to create a spreadsheet or have a big white board where everything is listed so it would be easier to track all of the projects and keep the Council updated regularly. The Mayor said he preferred a digital option like a spreadsheet that can be emailed to everyone.

Mr. Martin said he would check with other local governing bodies to see how they track their projects.

3. EMS, Inc. report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The DEQ report for March was submitted.
- 2) There were eight overflows last month due to the excess rain.
- 3) The vacuum truck had to clean out the influent pump station. A transducer failed causing the water level in the pumps to rise to dangerous levels. Rick Moore had to wade in and cut the pumps on by hand and discovered the VFDs were under water. This was the fourth time Mr. Moore has had to wade in the water to fix this, and this is very dangerous.
- 4) The VDH monthly report and the VDH Water Treatment Leak Loss report were submitted.
- 5) When the tanks on Highway 107 and in Edgewood are painted, they will be out of service for about three weeks, but there's a plan in place to keep the water flowing. Councilwoman Johnson asked when the painting would occur, and Public Works Director R.B. Henderson stated that the process has to be worked out first from programming the pumps to obtaining generators in case power is lost. Smyth County will allow the use of one of their generators.

4. SIDA appointment and re-appointment

Mr. Martin said Jacky Colston's term is up soon, and he needs to be re-appointed. Also, June Totten has stated that she no longer wants to serve on the SIDA, so someone will have to be

appointed to her position. In the past, the Council has accepted letters-of-interest from those wishing to serve on the SIDA.

Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to re-appoint Mr. Colston and to advertise in the paper for letters-of-interest from those wishing to take Ms. Totten's position. Councilwoman Johnson seconded, and all were in favor.

Committee Reports

Councilwoman Johnson reminded everyone that for Easter, the Northwood Fellowship had a drive-thru event. There were 125 vehicles that participated, and they gave out 250 bags of candy. The spring clean-up will be April 22 - 25 and is sponsored by the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce. This will be social distanced and supplies will be provided.

The Mayor told the Council that the Tourism Board met and decided that the Bonham House will no longer be the home of the Smyth County Tourism Department. Ms. Livingston will be traveling to each community and be stationed at the Smyth County Administrative building.

Public Works Director's Report

Mr. Henderson spoke on the following:

- 1) Four graves were open and closed the past month.
- 2) A manhole was uncovered in a yard in Henrytown.
- 3) The heavy rains contributes to eight overflows this month.
- 4) A month's supply of chemicals are stored at any one time since if they are older, they tend to become less effective.
- 5) A forced main was repaired in Henrytown, and twenty feet of line was replaced.
- 6) Regarding the VFDs that Mr. Johnson mentioned, they tell the pumps how fast or slow to run. He showed the Council pictures of where the flooding occurred and gave them a quote of \$19,869.00 from Boggs to move the existing VFDs from inside the walls of the main lift station to the outside. Councilman Morris made a motion to accept that quote from Boggs and another one for \$9192.00 to install a manual transfer switch at the 107 pump station so when

the water tanks are painted, the generators will kick in to prevent a loss of power if something occurs to cause a power loss during the three weeks the tanks are being serviced. This will also insure that part of town has fire protection.

The Mayor asked that more than one price be obtained for this work since this does not match what the town's procurement policies are. More than one quote should always be obtained when the work will cost as much as those quotes are regardless of the urgency. Mr. Moore replied that everything in those stations has been programmed by Boggs' computers, and to his knowledge, no other contractor can do it. The Mayor then asked if the town bought these directly from Boggs or from the manufacturer, and Mr. Henderson stated that Boggs bought these from the manufacturers. The Mayor replied that was the problem. There are other manufacturers that could be contacted to supply this equipment. Councilman Morris' motion died for the lack of a second.

The Mayor asked Mr. Cassell about this procedure, and Mr. Cassell told the Council they could act on this now without other quotes if the town's employees believe there is a safety issue at stake. Councilwoman Johnson then asked Councilman Morris if he wanted to make that same motion again, and he told her to go ahead and do it. She did and he seconded it. All were in favor.

7) Councilman Comer asked about paving that area on the down side section of Palmer Avenue. Mr. Henderson replied this was discussed at a meeting a couple of months ago and was tabled. Councilman Morris said it was his opinion to do this when the normal paving bids are obtained in a couple of months since it would be cheaper than having a paving company come over here for just one hundred yards of paving. The Mayor suggested going ahead and patching since VDOT has a lot of projects going on right now, and the paving companies are going to be busy. Councilman Morris made a motion to put that section of Palmer out for bid, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

Regarding the runoff on Palmer that makes that paving area worse, Councilman Comer asked if anything could be done to help stop it. Mr. Henderson said the town's engineers put something together several years ago, but it never happened. Mr. Martin said he would check with the engineers to see if they still had these plans.

8) Councilwoman Johnson asked about the big trucks that go to United Salt and why they were using side streets other than Palmer. She asked if stencils could be drawn on Palmer to help show the drivers the way to go since many drivers seem to be confused about where to go. Police Chief Puckett said they recently discovered that many of these delivery trucks actually use a car GPS instead of a commercial GPS since they are cheaper, and those aren't as accurate and can send these big trucks down side streets which is what is apparently happening. The department has written several tickets the past months to the drivers of these trucks that go the wrong way, especially on Sycamore Road. The town could possibly put arrow signs on Palmer to help with this problem. Chief Puckett said he will also contact Mr. Frye at United Salt to express the town's frustrations with the use of the regular GPS as opposed to the

commercial one. Councilman Morris stated that Mr. Frye has told him that invoices the salt company sends to the drivers have specific instructions on the routes to take.

Chief Puckett said he would like to see a sign on 107 and 91 (VDOT roads) that stated all commercial truck traffic must use the business district (Palmer) to get to United Salt. He said he would mention that to Mr. Frye as well.

9) Councilwoman Johnson asked about painting the crosswalk across Lake Drive at the end of the Barbrow Trail where it connects to the new extension. This was discussed at a meeting several months ago, so she asked it be done now since it is warm enough for the paint to adhere properly. The Mayor also mentioned that there was a golf cart on the Barbrow Trail, and motorized vehicles aren't allowed there unless it is a town vehicle. Mr. Martin said that issue had been addressed. Mr. Henderson then said that the bollards would be installed soon at each end of the trail.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) Officers Bordwine and Hogston attended the Crisis Intervention Training program in Bristol.
- 2) Officer Pickle flew to Alaska to take the final two tests to be hired by the Petersburg Police Department. He'll owe six or seven months on his contract when he leaves which means he'll owe \$600.00 or \$700.00. The \$100.00 per month is the lowest rate in the area.

Councilman Morris asked about this contract being changed with new rates. Chief Puckett replied that he would discuss that directly.

3) He would like to hire an officer to fill the current vacant position. Regarding the contract that new hires sign, he said he like to see that go to three years and \$10,800 total. This would cover salary and uniform costs. Councilman Morris made a motion to make this the new contract for any uncertified officer hired going forward. Councilwoman Johnson seconded, and all were in favor.

He asked the Council to hire Laken Henderson tonight. She's been a Dispatcher for three years for the Smyth County Sheriff's Department. Councilman Morris made that motion, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. The motion carried 5-0-1 with Councilman Eugene Call abstaining since his son is currently an officer.

4) The department's stats are included.

5) Councilwoman Johnson said there had been a situation in her neighborhood, and Officer Hogston was a big help due to the training he and Officer Bordwine received. The police also helped with another situation near her house that she was grateful for.

6) The Mayor asked for an entire year of stats for the next meeting in May, and Chief Puckett said they would be included in the packets.

Fire Department Report

Chief Bryan Lynch spoke on the following:

1) Current membership is up. Councilman Gary Call asked what that number was, and Chief Lynch replied seventeen.

2) There were thirty calls for the month with twelve being in the town and eighteen in the county.

Rescue Squad Report

Emergency Medical Services Director Kyle Brewster told the Council that OMES accepted his application for the agency, and the time frame for the application may be pushed through within ninety days once the ordinance for the county for the DURA is obtained. It will then take another sixty days to get compliant with Medicare and Medicaid.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

1) The Council needs to make a decision whether or not the wave pool will be open this summer due to the mandatory restrictions imposed by the state, but from a legal perspective, the pool can open. Councilman Gary Call said he would like to see it open. Councilman Morris asked if the town would have to adhere to these rules if the pool just opened for private parties, and Mr. Cassell said yes, because it's still a public pool. Councilman Morris then said that if it is going to be open, then the job openings need to be advertised, but if it isn't going to open, then it still needs to be filled and ran some so it won't have to sit for another year.

Councilman Eugene Call said he'd like to see it open, but it will be difficult for teenagers to enforce the restrictions. Councilwoman Johnson asked if the pool can run without the waves always and was told yes since the waves don't have to be turned on. She preferred that way since if the waves run, it will be hard to keep people ten feet apart as the new restrictions say. People could just swim laps. Councilman Comer asked about the capacity, and Mr. Martin said he would check on it. He also suggested that maybe the pool could be used by just certain groups at any given time.

Councilman Morris wondered if it could just open for parties since it would be easier to keep people apart, and the town always books a lot of parties throughout the summer. Mr. Cassell said the restrictions could always be lessened at some point during the summer, but there's no way to know for sure. The Mayor then stated that even if does open, the concession stand will stay closed because of the proximity involved with the food.

Councilwoman Johnson then made the motion to advertise for pool positions to see how many applications the town gets, and Councilman Surber seconded. All were in favor.

There was an impeller ordered in May of 2019 that has yet to installed, so Mr. Martin said he would contact the contractor.

2) The town shop property was transferred to the Smyth County EDA so they could re-apply for the grant the town was awarded but was taken away. The deed has a reversionary clause where the property will transfer back to the town when the process is over.

3) VDOT did some striping in the area where the lights will be removed and made everything ADA compliant. The lights are currently flashing and will be removed in a couple of weeks.

4) He asked the Council to let him know if they would like to see any blighted properties or abandoned vehicles addressed.

5) There will be asbestos testing and abatement performed on three abandoned and blighted properties in the town.

6) Regarding the sliding bank from the elementary school, this is not a town project. The properties in question belong to the Smyth County School Board and Northfork Manor. The town has received from AEP a right-of-way easement to move the power pole that is most affected by the slide. The town has signed a temporary construction easement with the School Board whose engineers have done cost estimates for the project.

He said he knows people are frustrated, but they are under the wrong impression in thinking the town can just go and start cleaning this up. The town cannot touch it from a legal standpoint because it involves School Board property.

7) Councilman Morris asked about easing up restrictions on Council meetings. Mr. Cassell said he would look into it and get with Mr. Martin. The Mayor asked Mr. Martin to look into Marion's policy with abandoned vehicles. Councilwoman Johnson asked Mr. Cassell to look into the restrictions for outside events as well.

Closed Session

Councilman Morris made a motion to enter Closed Session in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2-3711(A)(3) for the discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

After exiting Closed Session, Councilman Morris made a motion to certify that the Closed Session was conducted in conformity with Virginia law regarding those matters that are exempted from open meeting requirements and nothing was discussed other than what was mentioned in the motion to convene Closed Session. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and the roll call vote was 6-0 in the affirmative.

Lastly, Councilman Gary Call made the motion to adjourn, and Councilman Comer seconded. All were in favor.