

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on August 10, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall

Council: Monica Johnson, Jeff Comer, Eugene Call, Steve Surber, Gary Call
Bryan Morris was absent

Mayor: C. Todd Young

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

Councilman Eugene Call made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2021 budget meeting, and Councilman Comer seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Eugene Call made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2021 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Eugene Call made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 22, 2021 public hearing, and Councilman Surber seconded. The motion carried 2-0-3 with Councilmen Eugene Call and Gary Call voting yes and Councilmembers Johnson, Comer, and Surber abstaining since they were not present at that meeting.

Councilman Eugene Call made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 29, 2021 special-called meeting, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

Citizens' Time

Jeremy O'Quinn said he represented the Coon Club as their attorney. The issue at hand is the new walking trail that goes by the Club and its proximity to the building. Mr. O'Quinn said he had sent the town's attorney several proposals about this but has not heard back. Without any written agreement, they may gate off the trail. Attorney Paul Cassell said he will get back in touch with Mr. O'Quinn and set up a meeting.

Phil Collins was representing the Allison Gap Community Center and said that during a recent storm, part of the roof blew off. They turned it in to the insurance, and even though it was only \$103, the company cancelled their policy.

He asked about renting the Palmer Mill and doing jobs there such as mowing and fixing the building. The county inspector told them how much it was going to cost to bring that building up to code, so they will help fix it which will enable people to come by and enjoy some music. The Mayor suggested that Mr. Collins and his group put together a lease and let the town's attorney go over it, so Mr. Collins said that is what they will do.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilman Eugene Call made a motion to add a discussion of the demolition of blighted structures in the Government Plant to the agenda, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

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

Old Business

1. AEP franchise

Town Manager Brian Martin reminded the Council that last month they adopted an ordinance soliciting bids for the purchase of an electrical utility in the town. This is done every forty years. An ad had to run for two consecutive weeks, and AEP was the only power company that expressed an interest in having the town's electrical franchise. They also submitted a check for \$1000 as part of the requirement. If the Council wishes, they can now adopt an ordinance making AEP the electrical franchise holder for the town.

Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to accept AEP's proposal, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

2. ARPA committee

Mr. Martin said that as part of the American Rescue Plan Act, the town will receive around \$1.9 million over two years and will have three years in which to use the funds. He suggested a committee be set up involving himself, Clerk/Treasurer Steve Johnson, the Mayor, and a couple of more elected officials to put together options for spending this money. These ideas would then be brought back to the Council to be officially voted upon. Councilman Gary Call volunteered to be the other one involved.

3. Fencing on Palmer Avenue

Councilwoman Johnson said a few citizens have expressed the desire to have that gravel lot beside the Wellfields and across from the golf course on Palmer Avenue become a parking area again. Currently there is a fence there blocking vehicles from parking. She said she agreed that the fence needed to come down and be moved back or just done away with. People don't need to loiter, but just parking there to eat lunch or whatever seems like a good idea.

She made a motion to remove the fence and leave the lot graveled (not paved), and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

4. Cemetery tree cutting bids

Mr. Martin said the town recently ran an ad soliciting bids to cut several trees in the cemetery that are dying or too large. The bids were as follows:

- Elements Landscaping: \$33,000
- Big Tom's Tree Service: \$14,375

Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to accept the bid from Big Tom's Tree Service, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

5. Police Department

Councilman Gary Call had this placed on last month's agenda, and the topic was tabled to be discussed tonight. However, he withdrew this topic.

6. Blighted structures

It was advertised to accept bids for the demolition of two structures located at 514 and 518 Nichols Street respectively. The bids were as follows:

- 514: Willis Crusenberry - \$4000 Tom Buchanan - \$3500
- 518: Willis Crusenberry - \$4000 Tom Buchanan - \$3850

Councilman Comer asked if the owners of these properties would have to reimburse the town, and Mr. Martin replied that the taxes for both of these properties have not been paid in years, so if they go into a tax sale, these demolition costs will part of the lien.

Councilwoman Johnson made a motion to accept Tom Buchanan's bids for both properties, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

New Business

1. Ordinance updates on property maintenance, abandoned vehicles, and election dates

Mr. Cassell put together three draft ordinances that will need to be voted upon after a Public Hearing. The town's current versions of these ordinances need updating, and the election date update must be done to comply with the new state law regarding when elections are held.

Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to have a Public Hearing regarding these three ordinances, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

2. Softball field fence

Councilwoman Johnson said the way the fence is positioned at the field is not conducive to the little league players or the varsity teams. She feels the fence should be brought in closer. Councilman Eugene Call said he recalled the fence being positioned that way was for softball tournaments. Councilwoman Johnson replied that the little league girls recently went to state, so she believes the fence should come in closer to put more focus on them and the high school teams. The mesh fence currently there doesn't really let the outfielders go up and try to make a catch, either.

Councilman Eugene Call said he would to see things stay the way they are since people come into town for tournaments and spend money, and it would be nice if the high school had its own field. Councilwoman Johnson then stated some of those men in those tournaments also relieve themselves in the dugouts and mess up the fields and leave trash everywhere. The fields at the other schools in the county aren't set up that way. The Mayor suggested sending this to the Recreation Committee, so Councilman Gary Call made a motion to do this, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. The motion carried 4-0-1 with Councilman Comer abstaining since he's the Chair of that committee.

3. EMS, Inc. report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The weekly meetings with the town's staff continue every Monday at 10:00 a.m.

- 2) The DEQ report for July has been submitted to DEQ.
- 3) The VDH monthly report and the VDH Water Treatment Leak Loss report for July were both submitted.
- 4) The 107 and Edgewood tanks will be painted soon.
- 5) The lead and copper sampling that was discussed at last month's meeting has been done. Ten samples were collected on the same day. The report for this will be sent to the town soon, and individual reports to those ten homeowners will be given to them as well.

Committee Reports

No one had a committee meeting, but Councilwoman Johnson went over the activities that were going to take place during the town's upcoming Labor Day Festival, including a 5-K race sponsored by the Wellness Center, and read aloud the names of the musical acts that will be performing during the four-day event.

Councilwoman Johnson then made a motion to hold the parade on Saturday, September 4th at 11:00 a.m. and have it originate at the medical center on West Main Street. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Public Works Director's Report

Public Works Director R.B. Henderson spoke on the following:

- 1) They have worked on water leaks for six straight days.
- 2) Everyone is starting to get ready for the Labor Day Festival.
- 3) The transfer switch for the generator at the 107 pump station is about 90% complete. The plug for the generator has yet to arrive even though it was ordered months ago.
- 4) The town made several water and sewer taps the past month.
- 5) The Mayor asked when the interviews were to take place regarding the hiring of two Streets & Roads employees, and Mr. Martin said those would occur next week. The Mayor asked for a motion to authorize Mr. Martin to go ahead and hire the two employees after the interviews

take place, so Councilwoman Johnson made that motion. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) Other than a couple of minor issues, the carnival went off without a hitch.
- 2) *Saltville Gives Back* is normally held at the pool, but it got moved to the Friends Church because of rain.
- 3) National Night Out was on August 3rd. He and others went to the programs in Marion and Chilhowie and donated backpacks and a couple of bicycles and lent out the town's big grill to cook food.
- 4) There is an issue with Verizon in terms of bad reception, dropped calls, and missed calls, and it's getting worse. The contact name we have is Melody Hodges, and we've emailed her several times in the past, but it's been to no avail. It's become an issue for the Rescue Squad as well. Clerk/Treasurer Steve Johnson said he would call Ms. Hodges again.
- 5) He has received a couple of applications for employment for the two open positions from local people that look promising, including one that is already certified. He presented the Council the application of the certified officer.

Councilman Gary Call made the motion to hire the certified officer contingent upon him passing the background check, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

- 6) The Mayor thanked the Chief and his department for all the work that they do and said the community was lucky to have such a good police force.

Fire Department Report

They had seventeen calls last month with seven being in the town and ten being in the county.

Emergency Medical Services Report

Emergency Medical Services Director Kyle Brewster spoke on the following:

- 1) Eighty-three calls were run in July with three rolling over to Chilhowie due to back-to-back calls. July's refusal rate was 17%.
- 2) The Squad is leading the county in ALS services having recently reached between 80% and 90%.
- 3) A new training program is currently being developed, and a member is taking the courses to get his coordinator position. This will allow in-house classes and enable the squad to become a training facility. By next month they should offer another CPR class and an EVOC class.
- 4) An explorer program for younger people is being put together.
- 5) In the past they would not transport people to Bristol, but that is going to change.
- 6) All three trucks have been wrapped under the Saltville EMS brand.
- 7) The new modems have arrived, but the monitors are still in transit.
- 8) A local citizen is selling his residence which holds the repeater towers. Therefore, some members are testing a second repeater currently at the Squad. The Mayor suggested talking to the new owners of that property about an easement.
- 9) Councilwoman Johnson commented on the CPR class they offered and said that several teachers had taken the class. She also thanked them for having a presence at the fair and mentioned that they would be starting a mental health program soon.
- 10) The Mayor thanked Mr. Brewster for his job so far. It's great that the town leads the county ALS services when we didn't know what we were getting into just a few months ago.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) Regarding the pool, we anticipate opening the pool this weekend and then just having prescheduled parties through Labor Day weekend. Even though plenty of lifeguards were

hired, it's been a little hard scheduling them since school started, but it was a successful year revenue-wise.

2) The town's main server needs updating, so that will be one of the first uses of the ARPA funds since that is an unbudgeted item.

3) The slide on Government Plant Road has been fixed and is holding well so far.

4) Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day will be on August 14th at the landfill on Highway 107. There's an overall fee of \$25,000 to bring in the contractor, and the town's portion will be \$2000. Councilman Eugene Call made a motion to authorize the \$2000 payment, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

5) The AEP transformer move project has been closed out.

6) The Virginia Tourism Commission has awarded the town \$10,000 for marketing purposes, and this grant will be managed by the Chamber of Commerce.

7) He presented the Council with the new signage for the Barbrow Trail Extension.

8) It's time to put paving out for bid. The recommendations for this year are a portion of Henrytown Road and Government Plant Road. Mr. Henderson suggested also paving Palmer Avenue from United Salt to Sycamore Road. The Council agreed that those three streets will be advertised. Mr. Martin also said that Palmer Avenue up to United Salt will be striped, and the crosswalk will be burned into Lake Drive soon.

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