

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on July 10, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall

Council: Tom Holley, Hiram Robinson, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, Steve Surber, and Ron Orr

Mayor: C. Todd Young

Staff: Brian Martin, Town Manager
Trent Crewe, Town Attorney
Chris Wilcox, Police Chief
R.B. Henderson, Public Works Director
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

The Mayor welcomed the newly elected Councilmembers, Bryan Morris and Hiram Robinson, to their first meeting and said he looked forward to working with each of them.

Councilman Holley made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2018 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Surber seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Orr made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2018 Public Hearing, and Councilman Holley seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Call made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 28, 2018 special-called meeting, and Councilman Orr seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 3, 2018 special-called meeting, and Councilman Surber seconded. All were in favor.

Citizens' Time

Kris Sheets of the Saltville Library spoke on the following:

- 1) The Library just had its first annual Rock-n-Romp program. It consisted of a rock band for kids, bouncy houses, magic tricks, and animals. Free books were given away, and approximately 160 kids were in attendance.
- 2) Robb Farmer, the Director of the Smyth County Public Library system, works at the Saltville branch on Mondays and Fridays.

3) The library has a movie license that allows it to show movies in the building. For an additional cost of \$350, these same movies can be shown in the Commons Area. The Friends of the Library will fund this. In light of the theme *Libraries Rock*, the movie will star the actor The Rock and is called *Rampage*. Ms. Sheets said she would check with the front office to pick a date that stage would be available.

4) The average turnout for all of the library events this summer has been over 100.

Gary Clear expressed interest in the wave pool being open for longer hours than it currently is since it is only opened to eight o'clock on Mondays. He recommended having fewer parties to accomplish this. Additionally, the pool could be marketed better.

The pool always closes during the week when school starts, but he would like to see it open from 4:00 – 8:00 during those weekdays until Labor Day. If the current lifeguards who are high school and college aged don't want to work, he suggested having older lifeguards work the pool.

Beth Little also discussed the pool and said the last few times she had been to the pool, she had asked for pizza and was told that nobody else had asked for it, so it had not been ordered. She was at the pool yesterday until it closed, and not one pizza was brought in. She said that if pizza had not been ordered and would not be, then people should be allowed to bring in coolers themselves. Also, she asked that the town buy fruit cups and apples and bananas to have healthier snacks available.

Larry Ratcliff spoke on the following:

1) Several organizations in the town, including the Museum of the Middle Appalachians, the Saltville golf club, horseshow venues, North Fork Sportsmen's Club, and fire department are prospering and moving forward and bringing people into the town to spend money.

2) The fire department's parade for the Fourth of July combined with the all-day music on the stage and several food vendors was a great idea. Buses and cars are always unloading people at the Museum, and the competitions and programs at the Sportsmen's Club bring in hundreds of people each year from out-of-town.

3) The cost of road maintenance is one of the most expensive items for the town and its citizens. The constant truck traffic from the salt plant and the gas company has made this problem worse. These trucks are needed for those industries, but they are ruining the infrastructure, and not one of these trucks belong to a citizen of the town. The town does not collect taxes on these trucks, and they park on the lots at the ball fields or at Heartwood and one took out the sign at the golf course recently.

4) The Mayor agreed with Mr. Ratcliff about the town's infrastructure and mentioned that when he met with Senator Kaine's staff, this was one of the issues that was discussed. In the coal fields, they have what is called a coal service tax. He stated that in addition to the Senator's staff, he had reached out to Delegate Jeff Campbell about a possible salt service tax to help protect and maintain the town's roads and get an industrial access road across the Clark Boundary from Highway 107 to the entrance to the salt plant and the gas company at Ader Lane. The Mayor then encouraged the town's citizens to contact the Delegate's office and apply pressure to enable the town to put the plan in motion for this salt service tax.

In terms of an industrial access road, The Mayor said that he and Councilman Orr had met with representatives from United Salt about three years ago about building this road, but they wanted stipulations that it would be for truck traffic only and no citizens would be allowed to access it and they wanted to mine the salt themselves. He then reiterated that the town's citizens needed to reach out to the Delegate's office to really drive home the point that action needed to be done about this infrastructure issue. Petitions can help, but an actual voice means more. Councilman Orr then stated that if anyone were to call the Delegate's office concerning this topic, they should ask for industrial access road funds to take this road across the Clark Boundary. The town needs helps in this matter, and the citizens could provide that.

Leon Kukeattinun lives on Fifth Avenue and he and others there are concerned about the traffic that bypasses Highway 107 by using their street. Many of these drivers are speeding and creating unsafe conditions. He asked if speed bumps could be installed to curtail this, and said the problem is probably the worst when people are going to and coming home from work. Officers have sat there before with radar guns but can't be there all the time.

The Mayor asked Town Attorney Mr. Crewe if the town could add an additional fine for speeding there. Mr. Crewe replied that the town could set a maximum fine, but the judge could still charge what he wanted. The Mayor asked that officers spend more time on Fifth Avenue and the town look into the cost of installing speed bumps. This will be discussed more at the August meeting.

Jeff Woodward thanked the Council for the changes he has been seeing in the town. Eyesores have been cleaned up. He encouraged the Council to keep working hard since there is still more to do but appreciated the effort so far.

Janice Orr represented the Museum of the Middle Appalachians and spoke on the following:

1) August 1, 2018 will be Saltville Day at the Highlands Festival in Abingdon. It will be preceded on Tuesday by a program at the Higher Education Center on the town's industrial history to include the Salt Works. On Wednesday, there will be a tour on the Barbrow Trail where the plants will be discussed and so will the past industry in the Wellfields area. Additionally, there

will be a group tour at the Museum and the historical sites in town. There will also be so-called side tours of the wave pool, Laurel Bed Lake, Salt Trail, and the Stoney Point Railroad to be followed by a program on the town's paleontological history.

2) The annual Kids Dig will be August 4th. There will be a bus tour group from Staunton on September 12th that will spend the day in town. The annual Reenactment will take place from August 17 - 19.

3) So far this year, the Museum has had visitors from forty states and twelve countries.

4) The word tourism had been used a lot tonight. Many people are trying hard to boost tourism. The town cannot really have a chain restaurant until the numbers improve, and the same goes for a motel. People are wanting to spend money, but not everything is in place. The town used to have both a Tourism Director and an Economic Development Director, but those positions were cut a few years ago due to budget reasons. The Museum's staff cannot do all of this by themselves. The town itself needs to work to bring tourist dollars in, and that will cost money. She asked the Council to think about the revenue needed to get this accomplished.

Monica Johnson echoed the other speakers about the importance of tourism to help benefit the future of the town's children, so Saltville won't just be a retirement community. She congratulated the newly elected members of the Council and said this was a fresh start for the entire governing body. Though their time on the Council may be short, their impact will be everlasting. Show your faces in the community at ball games, carnivals, programs, etc. to show everyone you're proud of the town. The town's citizens cannot carry everything themselves; therefore, the Council must help as well. Make this town something to be proud of.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilman Call made a motion to approve the agenda, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

Old Business

1. Vehicle removal

There were no bids for the removal of the junk and inoperative cars, so Town Manager Brian Martin said he would reach out to neighboring towns to see how they handle this issue. Councilman Orr made a motion to table this, and Councilman Orr seconded. All were in favor.

2. Demolition of burned houses

Mr. Martin said that due to possible issues with asbestos, lead, etc., he met with the head of the Smyth County Building and Zoning Department, Clegg Williams, to see what steps the town needed to follow to properly dispose of the materials. Therefore, there needs to be a pre-bid meeting with prospective contractors to go over these factors. Councilman Morris made a motion to table this topic, and Councilman Orr seconded. All were in favor.

3. Bids for the land bridge

There was one bid for the land bridge, and it was from A-Frame Contracting, Inc. for \$188,625. The Mayor asked Mr. Martin to contact the Army Reserve office to see if this might be a project they would be willing to undertake.

4. Palmer Mill

Mr. Martin stated that he had two people to talk to the Council about ideas for the Palmer Mill. They were Tabby Henderson and Darrell Vaught.

Ms. Henderson spoke first about the following:

Her newly formed group, the Saltville Preservation Alliance (SPA), is working toward the goal of revitalizing Saltville in terms of business opportunities, overall beautification, and similar issues. The group has ideas for Palmer Mill since the interior and outdoor areas are in need of attention to make this attraction a viable spot for business growth and tourism and its members have volunteered to see that changes, both cosmetic and necessary, are undertaken.

Once the entire area has been spruced up and repaired, the Council would decide what to charge for the property's use, whether it be for plays, music events, game night tournaments, or whatever. SPA would receive a portion of these fees in an agreed upon percentage to help make ongoing improvements in the Palmer Mill area and put together ongoing programs, etc. The group would provide oversight, scheduling, and on-site supervision for any events. Since the SPA is local, they understand the needs of the citizens and how to use the venue optimally for reasonable prices.

Mr. Vaught spoke on the following:

Unlike the SPA, he represents the private sector, but he has ties to the community as well since his great grandfather operated the trains under the current shelter and his mother was born and raised in Saltville. He and his partners wants to enter into an arrangement with the town to make the Palmer Mill a profitable entity for the town and wants to use it primarily as a wedding

venue. There is no formal proposal yet, but his group wants to gauge the Council's interest in revitalizing the property. Like has been mentioned, repairs are needed, but they can be done, and this would definitely help the town from a tourism aspect by bringing in revenue.

The Mayor recommended that both groups meet with a couple of Councilmembers to discuss their plans, and this matter will be discussed again at the August meeting. Councilmen Morris and Robinson volunteered to meet both groups.

New Business

1. Appointment of the Clerk/Treasurer, Town Attorney, and the Police Chief and hiring of the Town Manager

Mr. Martin said the Council had appointed multiple officers in years past, but the Town Code says that the only town officer that was required to be reappointed was the Clerk/Treasurer. Any other appointments are optional, however. Chief Wilcox said he had information from the recent version of the Virginia website that the Chief of Police was reappointed. Councilman Morris said that the Council had reappointed the Clerk/Treasurer, Police Chief, and Town Attorney in the past. Councilman Orr agreed and mentioned that they had been reappointed but didn't all have to be.

Councilman Surber made the motion to reappoint the Clerk/Treasurer, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

There was no vote on the Town Attorney.

Before the vote to reappoint the Police Chief, The Mayor asked him if he would prefer to have the agreement discussed that he (Chief Wilcox) drafted that was put in the packets for the Council to review instead of getting reappointed. Chief Wilcox replied that he thought he had to be reappointed first before the agreement was voted upon and was going to discuss the agreement in his report later in the meeting.

Councilman Surber made the motion to reappoint Chief Wilcox, and Councilman Orr seconded. The motion failed 2-4 with Councilmen Surber and Orr voting yes and Councilmen Holley, Robinson, Call, and Morris voting no.

Councilman Surber made the motion to hire Brian Martin as the Town Manager, and Councilman Morris seconded. The motion carried 5-1 with Councilman Holley dissenting.

Councilman Morris then made a motion to appoint Erik Puckett as the Acting Police Chief, and Councilman Call seconded. The motion carried 5-1 with Councilman Orr, who said his vote had nothing to do with Mr. Puckett, dissenting.

2. Committee Chair assignments

The Mayor assigned the town's committee Chairs as follows:

Councilman Orr:	Water & Sewer
Councilman Surber:	Ordinances and Land Management
Councilman Morris:	Parks & Recreation, Wellfields, Wave Pool, and Salt Trail
Councilman Call:	Streets & Roads
Councilman Robinson:	Health & Beautification, Library, Historical & Cultural, and Special Events (Labor Day, parades, etc.)
Councilman Holley:	Police, Fire, and Rescue

3. Personnel policy

Councilman Morris said that the police department employees have to work 86 hours per pay period before they are eligible for overtime. Federal law allows a municipality to do this, but the municipality does not have to. Currently, the town's maintenance staff receives overtime after 80 hours worked, so the police should too. Councilman Morris then made the motion to have the police officers receive overtime after 80 hours worked in a pay period, effective immediately. Councilman Surber seconded, and all were in favor.

Concerning employee benefits for those newly hired, Councilman Morris said the policy states that employees must work for the town for a year before they receive any leave time. He feels that having to work for a business for a year before receiving leave time is unreasonable, especially if a new employee is sick or there's a family emergency. This requirement was put in the policy as an amendment, and he made a motion to have it stricken. Councilman Call asked him to clarify that this meant when an employee starts working for the town, he or she would have vacation time. Councilman Morris said yes, to which Councilman Call replied that someone could be hired, take a week's vacation, and then quit. Councilman Morris then stated that he would like to see the town go back to accumulating time like it was for years, but put a cap on the amount that can be accumulated. The Mayor suggested tabling this until next month and have Mr. Martin and Mr. Johnson look into what other towns do with leave time.

Councilman Morris withdrew his motion and made another to have Mr. Martin and Mr. Johnson bring back the leave time information from other municipalities for the August meeting. Councilman Call seconded, and all were in favor.

4. EMS, Inc. report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The weekly meetings with Mr. Martin and Mr. Henderson are ongoing and productive.
- 2) All of the required reports have been sent to DEQ, and there were no overflows in June.
- 3) The water accountability report shows the town has gone from 73% in April to 65.5% in June. When the town undertakes its water project next year, this number will improve even more due to the replacement of faulty water meters.
- 4) Bottles will be passed out to citizens for lead and copper analysis of their water.
- 5) He thanked the Council for approving the sludge cover at the wastewater plant. Councilman Morris when this structure will be built, and Mr. Henderson said a couple of months.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) The town's new Facebook page is now live and is being maintained by the Chamber of Commerce.
- 2) The Council has three documents related to the Brownfields grant. Rural Development requires an environmental assessment of the property purchased on Battleground Avenue for the purposes of building a new town shop and salt storage facility. The Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) from Virginia Tech who did the design work for the old town shop site has more grant money available to possibly help with the environmental assessment, design and funding of the new town shop and salt shed.

Councilman Morris made a motion to have Mr. Martin sign the appropriate documents related to this grant, and Councilman Robinson seconded. All were in favor.

- 3) The Fire Department members put on a great show for Independence Day, from the parade to the music and the vendors.
- 4) Les Sutherland of the Lane Group told the Council that the sewer project is winding down. Some fencing is needed at the McCready pump station, and a couple of hatches will be added to some vaults for easier access. Additionally, there is more seeding that needs to be done in a few spots. For the most part, there have not been many complaints.

Councilman Orr mentioned that he and Mr. Henderson and Rick Moore had spent a lot of Saturday and Sunday working on a sewer and water issue at the Lions Club building and asked Mr. Sutherland if there were any funds remaining from the overall project that could be put toward fixing it. Mr. Sutherland replied that there were some funds available, and this could be discussed with the contractors. Mr. Henderson said that C.L. Boggs and Jacky Colston had done some work on this yesterday. The Mayor requested that the contractors look into this, too.

- 5) There will be a fire study performed by the Virginia Department of Fire Services in conjunction with the Saltville Volunteer Fire Department. This is free of charge, and offers the opportunity for more grant funding for the SVFD.
- 6) Clean-up day on the playground was a success with a good turnout.
- 7) The town is pursuing a \$2000 litter grant from DEQ. If successful, the town will use the funds to purchase trash cans for the Barbrow Trail. Tabby Henderson volunteered to help with this particular grant.
- 8) Crossroads Engineering was selected as the firm to oversee the upcoming water project. There will be at least public meeting for this once it gets closer to fruition.
- 9) The second annual 5-K Family Fun Water Gun Race will be on Saturday, August 18th starting at 9:00 a.m.
- 10) Over twenty letters have been sent out to the owners of blighted properties. Six who have not complied to any extent will get a second letter.
- 11) The shed structure at the Palmer Mill was torn down and the one in the Wellfields will be torn down in the next day or so.
- 12) Councilman Orr and the SIDA sent a letter to the owner of the property on Allison Gap Road where the metal and trailers were eyesores. The owner of the property above this said he would do some cleanup at his rock yard and install a sign advertising his business.

Councilman Surber asked Mr. Martin about the grant that might be available for the demolition and cleanup of blighted properties that was mentioned at the last meeting. Mr. Martin said he would report on this for the August meeting.

Councilman Surber also asked the possibility of Mr. Martin and Mr. Henderson looking into having some kind of barrier on West Main Street at the playground area that would stop a vehicle from going over the bank and injuring people who are on the playground. VDOT has told the town there is no money for guardrails in the state's budget. The Mayor said if a concrete barrier is used, it would have to have an impact attenuator on each end for safety reasons since these help absorb the shock of a collision.

Councilman Surber made a motion to have Mr. Martin look into the installation of some type of barrier on West Main Street where the playground is. Councilman Morris seconded, and all were in favor.

Mr. Martin asked Mr. Crewe about the liability of the town installing some type of guardrail or other barrier on a VDOT road. Mr. Crewe replied that VDOT would have to give the town permission to do this since it is a VDOT road and not a town road, so Mr. Martin needed to start there.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Wilcox spoke on the following:

- 1) He asked the Council to clarify his employment status before he started his report. The Mayor stated that the Council did not reappoint him and after the Chief asked if he was therefore, terminated, the Mayor said yes.
- 2) The overtime for June is as follows: Erik Puckett – 75 hours; Chris Hogston – 31 hours; and Jake Frye – 10 hours.
- 3) The packets contained the blight letters that were sent out.
- 4) The Fire Department did a great job with their bash, and he hopes the event grows every year.
- 5) Two officers started at the Academy yesterday, and their anticipated graduation date is November 28, 2018.
- 6) He thanked the Council and the Mayor for working with him the last few years. All of his officers have vests due to federal funding. The department got a VML grant for enhanced safety. The department was the first in the state to adopt the Lexipol knowledge management system, so the framework is in place for the department to continue its success. The evidence room was overhauled, and a school resource officer is in place, and he hopes the town stays on the path to prosperity. Councilman Surber commended him on his service and said he hoped his good police work would continue elsewhere. Chief Wilcox then endorsed Erik Puckett for the permanent job going forward.

Maintenance Report

Mr. Henderson spoke on the following:

- 1) He thanked the town's workers for their work this past month reading meters, fixing leaks, and patching pavement.
- 2) The UV bulbs were replaced at the sewer plant, and so were the O-rings. Repairs were made to the sludge press.
- 3) No graves were dug last month.
- 4) The switch at the Farm Road pump station got moved from automatic to manual. After some parts were replaced, everything should work fine now.

Fire Department Report

Chief Jimmy Davidson said the department answered five calls in the town and five in the county last month. He thanked Chief Wilcox for working with his department over the years. Councilman Morris commended Chief Davidson on the success of the Fourth of July bash, and said it showed the members cared about the town, and he hoped it continued to grow.

Closed Session

Councilman Morris made a motion to enter Closed Session in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2-3711(A)(3) to discuss 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 Call seconded, and all were in favor.

After exiting Closed Session, Councilman Morris made the 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 Call seconded, and the roll call vote was 6-0 in favor.

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

