

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on June 19, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall

**Council:** Tom Holley, Sandra Wyatt, Eugene Call, David Smith, 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

Councilwoman Wyatt made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 8, 2108 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Surber seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Call made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 23, 2018 meeting that was continued from May 8, 2018. Councilwoman Wyatt seconded, and the motion carried 5-0-1 with Councilman Smith abstaining since he was not present for that meeting.

Councilman Orr made a motion to approve the minutes of May 29, 2018 special-called meeting, and Councilman Surber seconded. All were in favor.

### **Citizens' Time**

**Brenda Totten Blakey** is a local author who has written five books, including *Salt Mountain Girl*, for which she received a certificate from the town proclaiming that as her title in 2006. Shortly thereafter, she was added to the town's Wikipedia page as a notable citizen, but was subsequently removed. In the last month or so, her name was added back to the site twice, but was then stricken each time. Ms. Blakey requested that her name never be added to the town's site again.

**Terry Hunt** was at the meeting representing the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Saltville Historical Society. His group's Home Guard was recently re-chartered and was honored at a banquet in Roanoke with a Camp Achievement Award for their cemetery cleanup and stone dedications and being a role model for all of the Camps in Virginia.

The upcoming Reenactment will be August 17 – 19. The weekend has been named the Battles of Saltville History and Heritage Festival. Spencer Bolerjack from the television series *Hillbilly Blood* will make a return visit to talk about blacksmithing and self-defense. Additionally, Greg Shook and Tiffany Sparks from the television show *Appalachian Outlaws* will make an appearance. Mr. Hunt finished his talk by asking that the brush around the trees on the battlefield and the brush at the Coon Club be cleared out before the event.

**Tabby Henderson** was at May's meeting to talk about the new group of which she is a member, the Saltville Preservation Alliance (S.P.A.). They now have a Facebook page and an email address, [SaltvillePreservationAlliance@yahoo.com](mailto:SaltvillePreservationAlliance@yahoo.com). Her group recently hiked the Helen Barbrow Trail and liked how it looked other than a couple of the benches being vandalized. There are also signs that need refreshing, and they suggested adding a dog station for waste.

She thanked the staff at the Museum of the Middle Appalachians for allowing the S.P.A. to have their next meeting at the Museum on July 8<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. Anyone who wants to attend is welcomed to do so.

The new playground on the Salt Trail is in really good shape, and the town is to be commended for having this area. She also mentioned that there are two signs at each end that highlight the town's ordinance regarding dogs, and she encouraged people to read them and heed their message.

**George Owens** of the United Way spoke on the following:

1) The grant from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth is responsible for much of the equipment, etc. on the new playground. This particular \$58,000 grant expires next week. Today, they commenced with the building of a three-hole disc golf course at the other end of the playground starting near the amphitheater.

2) He mentioned that he was retiring from the United Way since the grant was finished, and thanked various people associated with the town including the Mayor and Council and Councilman Orr and R.B. Henderson in particular, for working with him and the United Way since the inception of the playground several years ago. Mr. Henderson and his staff did whatever was asked of them to help make the playground area what it is today. Chris Owens of DHCD donated \$3000 for the building of the disc golf courses in the county while Steve Sheets actually built them, and Janice Orr had been with the playground project from the start.

**Jeff Woodward** said he was encouraged to hear about the work that is happening with Ms. Henderson's group and the new playground area. The town has great potential, and the Council needs to maintain a commitment to see that good things continue. He first came to a meeting last October and talked to the Town Manager about some concerns he had, but the Town

Manager never got back with him. The next month he gave photos to the Council of things he thought needed to be corrected, but it appears that nobody on the Council is willing to do anything even though they made the ordinance and are responsible for its enforcement.

Mr. Woodward thanked Chief Wilcox for meeting with him. The Chief told him that the town had become numb to things that needed attention, but that his hands were tied since the Council was holding him back as to what he could do to enforce the ordinance. Elections come up every two years, and he said he will show up at every meeting to hold the Council accountable.

**Carl Lamie** represented the North Fork Sportsmen Club and spoke on the following:

1) Several years ago, AEP moved a big transformer to Broadford. While AEP spent a lot of time bracing the bridge near Buck's Drive-In, he understood that at a recent meeting, one of their engineers said the bed of the bridge still developed bad cracks. Now, VDOT won't let another transformer cross that bridge unless AEP rebuilds it.

2) This time around, AEP wishes to move seven large transformers, and to avoid the bridge, Justin Amos of AEP contacted the Club and brought their moving contractor to the Club's property to discuss using this property for transporting the transformers, thereby, avoiding the use of the bridge and only having to take down and replace one gate. Mr. Amos offered the Club \$1200 or he could go across the bridge at Buck's or AEP could use eminent domain.

3) Club members looked at the cost for AEP to cross the bridge and reinforce it and estimated this cost to be between \$360,000 and \$600,000. They decided that approximately 30% of the low estimate (\$120,000) of the bridge fix was a fair price to let AEP use the Club's property.

4) The members then found out that the town had entered into negotiations against them and entertained an offer of only \$10,000. The Club feels their offer to AEP is justified since it constantly struggles to maintain and develop other activities around AEP's power lines that cross their property. The \$120,000 offer was recently reduced to \$110,000, but the Club feels this a small concession for the loss of development opportunities on their own property.

5) As a business in town, they give the town a \$10,000 yearly payment, \$750 for taxes, and \$80 a month for water and sewer. The Club is a 501-C7 non-profit business. They had fundraisers that raised \$12,000 for Special Olympics and \$2500 for the back packs and the Feed-the Kids program. Regular visitors come from as far away as North Carolina, Tennessee, and the Christiansburg area to local competitions.

6) The Club feels that the town should never have entered negotiations against them. It isn't necessary for AEP to go down the old railroad bed since the moving contractor said it was an easy move to use the Club's property. Mr. Lamie requests that the town withdraw and rescind the motion made to consider the request from AEP to use the old railroad bed. The use of the

bed isn't necessary for this project, and it bypasses the Club's property causing less money to come into the town and one of its businesses.

The Mayor asked Mr. Lamie about the \$110,000, and he replied that number was the latest amount the Club had requested from AEP to use the Club's property. After this offer was made to AEP, the Club was told that they were no longer the choice since the town's request was much lower. Councilwoman Wyatt said that AEP came to the town and talked to the Council during a Closed Session meeting and that she did not know that AEP had even spoken to the Club. Mr. Lamie said he didn't think there was any conversation between the town and the Club about this matter, so the Council probably didn't know any talk between the Club and AEP was transpiring.

The Mayor said it was his opinion that whether it was \$110,000 or \$120,000, this amount was going to ultimately be passed to the consumers. AEP won't pay this without getting it back somehow, so this will be put on the backs of the consumers. Mr. Lamie that the town has already paid a lot due to the damage that was done to the bridge, so the consumers are already paying it. The Mayor then asked where the Club came up with the figures of \$360,000 and \$600,000 for up fitting the bridge. Mr. Lamie said the Club looked into this through the bridge reinforcement people and VDOT. The Mayor asked for confirmation that these prices came from VDOT, and Mr. Lamie said yes. He also said the Club was given false information to begin with when AEP told them that AEP could take the transformers across the bridge. But in a later meeting with the Town Manager and AEP, their engineers stated that in the first move across the bridge several years ago, the bridge still cracked so badly that VDOT told AEP that AEP would have to replace the bridge to go across it again.

The Mayor asked what the Club would do with the \$110,000 if was able to get it, and Mr. Lamie replied that they would use it to make more purchases for the Club and the gun range for the town and its citizens. They are also pursuing having regional 4-H shooting competitions.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

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

## **Old Business**

### **1. AEP**

The Mayor asked if there was any more discussion concerning what Mr. Lamie had brought to the Council's attention. Councilman Surber stated that he wasn't a fan of AEP due to the fact that they cut off people's electricity even when the weather is cold. It probably doesn't matter which route they take with the transformers since everyone's bills will rise with this new upgrade anyway. AEP has a monopoly in this area and they do what they want, so he said he agreed with the Club members.

The Mayor asked Town Manager Brian Martin to clarify that the town, via a motion and a vote a few months ago, accepted the \$10,000 from AEP about which Mr. Lamie spoke. Mr. Martin replied it was true that the motion was passed with a vote, but he has yet to sign any documents to that effect. Councilman Orr then said that the motion included a statement that AEP needed to negotiate with the Club for a reasonable settlement, and that's where the situation still stands. The town is not competing with the Club. Councilman Surber then reiterated that it didn't matter what route AEP took since the consumers would ultimately pay for it.

### **2. Palmer Mill**

This topic was tabled until July.

### **3. Blight / junk vehicles**

Mr. Martin reminded the Council that their packets contained the letters that had been sent to people regarding an issue involving their property. These properties were identified by riding around the town or by complaints from people regarding their neighbor's property. The recipients of these letters have a ten-day window to respond, and so far, a few people have already come by to talk to let us know they are working on their problems. The Mayor asked Town Attorney Trent Crewe if the junked vehicles that are towed away to a designated place could have impound fees attached to them. Mr. Crewe found a passage in the ordinance that read that the town can charge the cost of collecting, preserving, and storing, but an impound fee is not mentioned. The Mayor then stated to the audience that he and the Council know that action needs to be taken, and he feels their frustration. However, as a municipality, it's a slower process for the town. There are times when things like this have to go through the court system, but the process is ongoing.

Regarding junked or untagged vehicles, Chief Wilcox mentioned pages 14 - 19 of the ordinance say the town can impound these vehicles but don't mention that the town can charge any type

of fee. He said his department is working closely with Mr. Martin to enforce the ordinance as a whole but parts of it are complicated. He is glad that the Council now has copies of the ordinance since he thinks they will start to get calls once the blight letters are fully received.

Mr. Martin asked the Council for permission to advertise for auto removal services for these junked vehicles since the town does not have the equipment to do it. Councilman Call made the motion to advertise for the auto removal services, and Councilman Smith seconded. All were in favor. The Mayor then asked Mr. Martin to research the junk car ordinances of the other towns in the county and the county itself. Chief Wilcox then told everyone that the storage area for vehicles collected would be at the site of the old town shop, so if that area gets too full, it may become an eyesore. The Mayor expressed confidence in the town's citizens that if they see a lot of impounded vehicles, they will make sure that they move any junked vehicles they may have so those won't get towed too.

Mr. Martin then asked the Council to advertise for contractors to clean up some fire damaged properties in town. Councilman Smith made a motion to do so, and Councilwoman Wyatt seconded. All were in favor.

#### **4. Bids for pedestals on Vendor Row**

There was one bid to install four new pedestals on Vendor Row. Jimmy Frye gave a price of \$5200. Councilman Smith, a member of the Labor Day Committee, said these are needed since there is not enough power at the far end, and it's fairly dark. More vendors could also attend. Regarding the cost, Clerk/Treasurer Steve Johnson said there were some extra funds available due to the engineering fees reimbursement from the state for the sewer project.

Councilman Call made a motion to accept the bid, and Councilman Surber seconded. All were in favor.

#### **5. Bids for sludge cover**

There was one bid for the sludge cover, and it was provided by H.S. Williams for \$21,303. Councilman Orr said the town would save money on sludge removal since the water that seeps into the bin makes the load heavier, thereby, raising the tipping fees. He then made the motion to accept the bid from H.S. Williams, and Councilman Surber seconded. All were in favor.

#### **6. Bids for land bridge**

There were no bids, so this was tabled.

## **New Business**

### **1. Paving bids**

Two contractors bid on the paving, and those were W&L Construction and C.L. Dale Construction Services. Their bids were as follows:

W&L Construction:

Old Quarry Road:	\$138,915
Striping for Old Quarry Road:	\$ 5,700
First Avenue:	\$ 19,500
Striping for First Avenue:	\$ 1,300
Easy Street:	\$ 24,000

C.L. Dale Construction:

Old Quarry Road:	\$159,745
Striping for Old Quarry Road:	\$ 17,160
First Avenue:	\$ 7,125
(By the diagram sent, this price didn't include all of First Avenue that was to be bid upon.)	
Striping for First Avenue:	\$ 1,500
Easy Street:	\$ 30,457

Councilman Orr made a motion to accept the paving bids from W&L Construction for all three roads without the striping included (\$182,415). Councilman Smith seconded, and all were in favor.

### **2. Lions Club carnival**

Councilman Smith made a motion to approve the annual Lions Club Carnival from July 10 - 14. Councilman Call seconded, and all were in favor.

## Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

1) Gary Johnson of EMS, Inc. told the Council that the weekly meetings with him, Mr. Martin, and Public Works Director R.B. Henderson were going well since they put everyone on the same page. The #4 digester is now operational, there are spare chemical metering pumps at both wells, and the new vacuum truck should be helpful with a blockage at the #1 digester.

The water accountability report that goes to VDH each month showed a 3% decrease in unaccounted water from April to May. Also, VDH has recently passed a rule that every town's water system needs to have a Class V operator. This was an unknown fact during the negotiations to hire EMS. Mr. Martin talked to Eric Herold from VDH, and Mr. Herold had agreed to let EMS do this. The current proposed budget has a contingency included that would be able to adequately handle the \$9000 that it will cost EMS to do this service for the next year. Councilwoman Wyatt made a motion to authorize this \$9000, and Councilman Smith seconded. All were in favor.

2) Sarah Beth Gillespie of the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce, told the Council that the Chamber had started managing a Facebook page for the town. The Chamber also does this for the Town of Chilhowie. Additionally, the town's website is somewhat out-of-date, and the Chamber can take over this, too. Based on what the town is currently paying, the Chamber could probably do this cheaper. The Mayor asked what that price that may be, and Ms. Gillespie said the town would just pay for the hosting since the town is a top-level Chamber member.

June 28, 2018 will be a so-called mulch day on the Salt Trail at the playground in time for the upcoming July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration the Fire Department is planning. The event starts at 1:00 p.m. Ms. Gillespie then encouraged two audience members who spoke at Citizens' Time, Tabby Henderson and Jeff Woodward, to help with this. Councilman Orr challenged the other Council members and town staff and other town volunteers to attend.

Councilman Surber mentioned that guardrails are needed where the playground runs parallel to West Main Street due to the threat of cars running off the road down the bank and striking people at the playground. The Mayor replied that a VDOT representative was going to be with Mr. Henderson tomorrow, and he could be asked about this.

3) Robert Hilt from Rural Development will be in town next week to close on the \$30,000 grant for the town-wide preliminary study to determine the real health of the town's water and wastewater systems and prioritize capital improvement projects.

4) Concerning the town's need for a salt storage facility, Mr. Martin has had Mr. Henderson look at the one built in Chilhowie in a pole barn style. This seems to be the cheapest option. The



Mayor recommended contacting the Town of Abingdon. They have a pre-fab option that could be explored, too.

5) The two incoming Councilmen, Bryan Morris and Hiram Robinson, are scheduled to go to training in July for newly elected officials sponsored by the Virginia Municipal League.

6) Crossroads Engineering was chosen as the engineers for the upcoming water project after the proper interviews were conducted.

7) Last week, Senator Tim Kaine's staff held a meeting with constituents in the Town Hall, and on June 27<sup>th</sup>, Congressional Candidate Anthony Flaccavento has scheduled a meeting for the Town Hall. The same invitation has been extended to Congressman Morgan Griffith's office and the Corey Stewart campaign.

8) The town's Comprehensive Plan update is underway and is being done by the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission.

### **Police Chief's Report**

Chief Wilcox spoke on the following:

1) Seventy-two overtime hours were used to fill shifts when the department was down one officer.

2) The Fourth of July parade will be held on June 30<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 p.m. with the lineup starting at 10:00 a.m.

3) Officer Chris Call left Saltville and took a job with the Smyth County Sheriff's Department.

4) Bryan Lynch has been hired as a Sergeant.

5) He thanked the Council for their support involving the litter ordinance.

## **Maintenance Report**

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

- 1) Pool maintenance started in May with the town having to replace a couple of motors and fixing another one.
- 2) The chipper is now operational and came in handy during the spring clean-up.
- 3) Councilman Surber asked about a three-foot deep hole that formed behind Wayne Austin's mother's house on Henrytown Road several months ago. Mr. Henderson said he would look into it.
- 4) Councilman Smith asked if the new pump truck had been put into use yet, and Mr. Henderson replied that they wanted to coat the inside of the tank before using it. When that's done, its first job will be unstopping the #1 digester at the wastewater plant.

## **Fire Department Report**

Fire Department member Gerald Arnold spoke on the following:

- 1) There were three calls in the town last month and twelve in the county.
- 2) He reminded everyone of the event happening on June 30<sup>th</sup> including a parade at 11:00 a.m. to be followed by live music on the stage the rest of the day. There will be twelve food vendors as well, with plenty of activities for the kids.

## **Rescue Squad Report**

A member of the Rescue Squad asked for confirmation about the plans for the Squad. Several months ago, the Smyth County Director of Emergency Management, Charlie Harrington, was asked to do an analysis of the Squad going back five years and found no fault with the Squad. He had three recommendations and they are as follows: Allow the ambulance service to run calls for the area for the year; hire two medics at \$30,000 per year; and join with the town to see if an agreement could be reached. The members of the Squad got the impression that the best option was to hire the two medics.

The Squad has been around for over sixty years, and until the day the Squad is done, they will continue to run calls. If only one crew is hired and is paid without any overtime, the payroll, not including taxes, would be over \$314,500. The quarterly cost for unemployment insurance is \$10,000. A stocked ambulance is anywhere between \$150,000 and \$185,000, and the typical Squad goes through a couple of ambulances a year.

Charlie Harrington sent the Squad a letter a couple of weeks ago about getting together with the town. The letter stated that he would assist the Council in setting up this meeting. If the Squad ceases to become a non-volunteer organization, the State Corporation Commission will see that the Squad's assets are transferred to another EMS agency. If Mr. Harrington tries to make the town an EMS agency, he will circumvent the rules. Councilman Orr said the town has not started any negotiations regarding this matter and wants to make sure the squad remains a viable entity.

There is only one member of the Squad that is actually from Saltville. The other volunteers come from as far as fifty miles away and are running calls for the money. They work for other ambulance services and do this as a second or third job. The parties involved need to be careful about what they do, because if the town becomes responsible for running the Squad, they will assume a \$26,000 monthly payroll. The people won't work if they don't get paid.

The Mayor said that he nor the Council has ever discussed any of the things that Mr. Coulthard discussed. He recommended that Mr. Coulthard talked to Saltville's representative on the Smyth County Board of Supervisors, Roscoe Call, since the Council has nothing to do with this and asked Mr. Coulthard if he had an actual report to give. Mr. Coulthard replied that the Squad ran 70 calls last month and rolled over four, and this month so far have had 40 calls and rolled over none.

Regarding the earlier discussion involving derelict structures, audience member Jeff Johnson stated to the Council that the state had a program where it paid for half the cost of tearing down a house and the town paid the other half. The Mayor asked Mr. Martin to look into this.

### **Closed Session**

Councilman Smith made a motion to enter Closed Session in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) to discuss personnel in the Police Department. Councilman Holley seconded, and all were in favor.

After exiting Closed Session, Councilman Smith 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 Orr seconded, and the roll call vote was 6-0 in favor.

Councilman Smith made the following motion: Hire David Frye as the resource officer at the elementary school for the first semester and he will go to the Academy in January. Also hired are Dane Keene and Adam Boardwine, and they will go the Academy too. If an officer leaves, another candidate discussed will be hired. The official start date for the three hired will be July 6, 2018. If any candidate does not pass the Academy standards, they will be terminated. Also, Chief Wilcox will have contracts for the three to sign. Councilwoman Wyatt seconded, and all were in favor.

Lastly, Councilwoman Wyatt made the motion to adjourn, and Councilman Smith seconded. All were in favor.

