

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on May 8, 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
Tammy Carter, Front Office Clerk

Councilman Holley made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2018 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilwoman Wyatt seconded. The motion carried 5-0-1 with Councilman Smith abstaining since he was not present for that meeting.

Citizens' Time

Tabby Henderson represented a new organization called the Saltville Preservation Society made up of people who wish to preserve Saltville's beauty. The members plan to attend the monthly meetings to learn more about the town and the happenings involved and bring ideas to the Council that could make Saltville an even better place. Revitalization of the downtown business district, beautification of neighborhoods, and litter control are the main goals of the group.

Jeff Woodward spoke about the 2012 litter ordinance and how Chief Wilcox has said that it is being enforced and that the Police Department's focus is on household waste (which does not include sanitary waste and septic tanks) and abandoned vehicles while the Town Manager's focus is on solid waste. A commitment should come from the Council to make sure this ordinance is enforced since they made the ordinance, not the public. Other than the truck across the street being moved, nothing else has been done. Saltville used to be a beautiful place, but it's been let go.

Mitzi Frye, the principal at Saltville Elementary School, thanked the Council for placing a resource officer at her school. Some of the students presented a banner to the Council expressing their thanks as well.

Sarah Beth Gillespie, the Director of the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce, spoke on the following:

- 1) This past year the Chamber hosted the BBQ competition and the super hero 5K race in Saltville.
- 2) The Chamber was part of the first Conservation Camp. Third graders from all over the county came to Saltville for this.
- 3) The first annual Night at the Museum was held. This was a fundraiser for the Museum of the Middle Appalachians.
- 4) She thanked the town for helping with the Chamber's spring clean-up.
- 5) The Chamber helped with the town's annual Boo Bash, which supports the Saltville library.
- 6) The Chamber continued to give out the Tom Burkett scholarship to a student at Northwood High School.
- 7) She will be helping with the upcoming Fourth of July celebration the fire department is planning as well as the town's annual Labor Day festival.
- 8) There will be a geo-caching event on the Salt Trail. This is basically adult treasure hunting.
- 9) They just finished their fourth class of the Small Business Boot Camp. This one led to over \$325,000 being invested back into Smyth County.
- 10) Looking ahead to 2019, she is working on a possible birding event in the town.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilwoman Wyatt made a motion to approve the agenda, and Councilman Call seconded. The motion carried 5-1 with Councilman Smith voting no.

Old Business

1. Dog Ordinance

Town Attorney Trent Crewe said the Council passed an ordinance that was slightly muddled. The issue is that the Smyth County ordinance can be enforced by any of the towns in the county and the town and county could enforce the state code with respect to the dogs. Mr. Crewe said he needs to research the wording that would be needed and suggested that the county enforce their ordinance in the town limits. The Chief said his department has begun to enforce the county ordinance. Mr. Crewe added that if the town is going to pick up dogs, then it will need to buy special equipment and the officers will have to meet certain requirements if they are going to collect any dogs. If an officer were to take a dog away, there are requirements of how this can be done and where the dogs would be stored. Right now, the town doesn't have the equipment or the training.

Councilman Surber mentioned that when he was the Police Chief, his officers would catch dogs and hold them out back until the county would pick them up or, sometimes, the town would take these directly to the county. Mr. Crewe said it appeared that neither the Sheriff's Department nor the Animal Control officers seemed to be willing to help the town and then reminded the audience that any private citizen could start court action and take out a warrant against a dog that they consider to be a nuisance or dangerous. The Chief then reiterated that his department had begun to enforce the county's dog ordinance based on Mr. Crewe's advice. The Mayor concluded the discussion by stating that the dog owners are the ones ultimately at fault if their dogs are roaming. They need to be more responsible.

2. Battleground Avenue lot clean-off

Town Manager Brian Martin reminded the Council that the town recently purchased the acreage on Battleground Avenue as a possible site for a new town shop and salt storage facility. The town doesn't have the equipment to properly clear the land for either. Councilman Smith made a motion to put this out for bid, and Councilman Holley seconded. Before the vote, Councilman Orr asked if this bid needed to include the areas across from Heartwood and at the burn site at the old town shop. Councilman Call said that the area at Heartwood was being cleaned out now, so it didn't need to be included.

Councilman Smith modified his motion to include the area at the old town shop as well as the Battleground Avenue property. Councilman Holley still seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Hay bids

There was one bid for hay cutting. Rusty Nutter bid \$100 per cutting. Councilman Smith made a motion to accept Mr. Nutter's bid, and Councilman Call seconded. All were in favor.

4. Flea Market update

Councilman Smith suggested discontinuing the flea market because nobody showed up either time the first two months. He said that if another Council member wanted to try to run it, they were welcome to do it since he was leaving office the end of June.

New Business

1. EMS, Inc. report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) He and Mr. Martin and Mr. Henderson have been having weekly status meetings.
- 2) Much of the maintenance items left over from Veolia have been fixed, especially those that DEQ deem the most important.
- 3) Bids are getting obtained to cover the sludge bin, and that should save the town a little money.
- 4) DEQ had sent the town a notification letter back in February, and that issue is now closed since their concerns had been answered.
- 5) There were five overflows last month that were reported to DEQ that are still technically considered violations. This will get resolved, but the Council still needs to know.
- 6) The Virginia Department of Health inspected the wastewater plant in February and had a list of items that needed to be addressed including having spare pumps.
- 7) In April, over 19,000,000 million gallons of water were pumped at the town's two pumps. The water sold to both counties totaled about 5,000,000 gallons. This amounts to a big loss of water. The town will save a lot of money if this is cut way back. Mr. Martin said the interviews had started for the water system project, so the engineer will have been procured by the end of the week.

2. Palmer Mill pricing

Mr. Martin told the Council that there had been requests to use the Palmer Mill during the summer and fall, and he asked for guidance on a pricing structure for any events held there. The Mayor suggested tabling this for the June meeting.

3. Pool hiring

Front Office Clerk Tammy Carter said the town received twelve applications with ten of those being from people who had worked there before. In the past, all who applied had been hired. Also, the official closing date of the pool needs to be set. The first day of school is August 8th, so Sunday, August 12th would be the suggested closing date.

Councilman Orr made a motion to hire all of the pool applicants, and Councilman Smith seconded. The motion carried 5-0-1 with Councilman Call abstaining. Councilman Smith then made a motion to have the pool close for the summer on August 12th. Councilwoman Wyatt seconded, and all were in favor.

4. Spring clean-up

Ms. Carter asked for a motion to have the Spring Clean-up the week of June 4th – June 8th. Councilman Call made the motion to have the Spring clean-up on those dates, and Councilwoman Wyatt seconded. All were in favor.

5. SIDA update

Councilman Orr, the Chair of the SIDA, gave the following update:

1) The SIDA just entered into a lease/purchase agreement involving the former Cobia Farms property. Starting on May 1, there will be five yearly payments due with a provision allowing the agreement to be paid off early if the tenant could do so. This new tenant has already started renovations on the building and will issue a press release in the near future.

2) The EPOVA property was a court-ordered tax sale that has been finalized. There's a buyer for the building who will take possession of it after an auction to sell the equipment inside has concluded. The proceeds from the building sale will be used to pay the delinquent county and town taxes and any leftover will come to the SIDA to be used against the mortgage. The money received from the auction will also go against the mortgage. The remaining funds will come back to the town to offset other expenses the town incurred supporting that particular business.

3) The aquaculture facility on West Main Street was leased by Virginia Tech for many years, but they chose not to renew their lease. That area has been cleaned up and is now available to use. The property was surveyed and once the appraisal comes back, the SIDA will decide whether to sell the property based on the appraisal. One bid has been received, and it is being held until the appraisal comes in. At that time, other bids would be considered as well if any are received.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) He said he understood that there were things that the town needed to work on. To do this, the town needs a full-time Town Manager, full-time Project Manager, full-time Animal Control Officer, full-time blight/zoning official, and full-time Recreation director. The town has a good staff that works their tails off, and the public needs to know this. The town's citizens have a good spirit pertaining to volunteerism, and he would like to see even more people get involved. The town is going in the right direction.
- 2) Les Sutherland of the Lane Group updated the Council on the ongoing sewer project and told the Council that all the line work has been completed as have the pump upgrades with the exception of the one at the end of Henrytown Road. Councilman Holley thanked Mr. Sutherland and the contractors for the work they've done.
- 3) Public Works is preparing the paving schedule, which this year include Easy Street and Old Quarry Road.
- 4) The loan from Mount Rogers has been approved and will close this week.
- 5) The clean-up at the playground was a success, and he thanked the volunteers who helped including Sarah Beth and the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce.
- 6) He agreed with the Mayor and suggested to the Council to go ahead and bid out the construction of the land bridge on the Salt Trail to gauge the cost. Councilman Call made a motion to advertise for bids for the land bridge, and Councilwoman Wyatt seconded. All were in favor.
- 7) The clean-up has begun on some of the blighted properties in town thanks to the inmate crews.

8) The town will advertise once again in the Hungry Mother Park map and has renewed its membership in the Virginia Civil War Trails organization.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Wilcox spoke on the following:

- 1) Thirty three hours were spent on Sycamore Road this month monitoring for trucks after receiving some complaints. The Mayor asked how many tickets were written, and the Chief told him one. The department will be out there more this coming month.
- 2) He thanked the Citizens' Time speakers for their concerns over the litter issue and invited them to his office to go over it more.
- 3) Councilman Smith asked if so-called jake brakes were allowed in town. The Chief said they could not be prohibited after looking into this issue last year. The prohibition of the straight pipes on the exhaust could be forced, however.

Maintenance Report

Mr. Henderson spoke on the following:

- 1) He thanked the members of the town crew for all the work they've done since the town took back the operations of the water and sewer systems.
- 2) Some patch paving work has been done on spots that needed attention when Veolia left.
- 3) He has found a sewer vacuum truck the town could use on the wet wells at the lift stations, but the town will have to go to Florida to get it.
- 4) He's looking into getting grants to buy generators at the well sites.
- 5) The pool should open on schedule.
- 6) Maintenance needs to be done on the generators at the lift stations in case the former contractor did not keep up with that on a regular basis. The Mayor suggested contacting a couple of contractors to get bids on this work, so Mr. Henderson said he would.

7) There is currently one bid on a cover for the sludge bin that Gary Johnson spoke about in his update. The Mayor opened it, and it was for \$21,303.00. The Mayor expressed concern in that the bid referenced twenty pounds per square feet which is kind of a grey area since it should probably be about thirty pounds per square feet. Mr. Henderson said he could ask for more bids, so Councilman Orr made a motion to advertise for this. Councilman Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Closed Session

Before entering Closed Session, Mr. Crewe recommended changing (A)(8) to (A)(7). 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; Section 2.2-3711(A)(29) for the discussion of the award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contract, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body; and Section 2.2-3711(A)(7) for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. 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 Call made a motion to offer employment to Bryan Lynch at the salary agreed upon in Closed Session and give him the rank of Sergeant. Councilwoman Wyatt seconded, and all were in favor.

The Mayor mentioned that some contractors will come in and tear down old houses for the materials contained inside. He asked the Council to authorize the Town Manager to advertise in both regional and local newspapers to see if the town could get bids on doing this for some of the blighted properties in town. Councilwoman Wyatt made a motion for this, and Councilman Smith seconded. All were in favor. Councilman Surber asked about the status of the Wellness Center, and Mr. Martin said the town was waiting on their representatives to go through the building. The meeting was then recessed until Wednesday, May 23rd.

