

Minutes of the Public Hearing and regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on May 11, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. respectively in the Town Hall

Council: Jeff Comer, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, Steve Surber, and Gary Call
Monica Johnson was not present

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

At 6:30 p.m. the Mayor called the Public Hearing to order and stated its purpose was to receive public input on the Mount Rogers Regional Cigarette Tax Board. This is a new organization of which the town will join to receive higher cigarette tax funds.

No one gave any comment, so the Mayor closed the Public Hearing.

At 7:00 p.m. the regularly scheduled meeting started. Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2021 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Morris made the motion to approve the minutes of the March 31, 2021 special-called meeting, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Morris made the motion to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2021 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

Citizens' Time

Clerk/Treasurer Steve Johnson said the Lions Club was seeking permission to have their annual carnival July 13-17. Councilman Gary Call made the motion to allow the carnival on those dates, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

Approval of the Agenda

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

Old Business

1. Mount Rogers Regional Cigarette Tax Board

Town Manager Brian Martin told the Council that if they decide to adopt this ordinance, then Saltville will join Smyth County and Marion and Chilhowie in doing so. Additionally, Washington County, Bland County, Wythe County, and the Town of Abingdon have opted to join this Board as well.

The town will no longer have to buy any cigarette stamps and should see an increase in cigarette tax revenue by adopting this ordinance. Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to adopt the ordinance and join the Board, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

2. Palmer Avenue paving

There were two bids to pave (mill and resurface) approximately one hundred feet of Palmer Avenue near the house of Reynolds Frye, and they were as follows:

LLT's Paving: \$6,281.50

C.L. Dale: \$14,400.00

Councilman Morris made the motion to approve the bid from LLT's, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor. The Mayor asked the paving be a little higher on the side of the road at Mr. Frye's house to prevent runoff in his yard.

3. SIDA appointment

There was one letter-of-interest submitted to take over the position now available due to the resignation of June Totten, and it was from Melissa Turner, the owner of the Lily Pad. Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to appoint her, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

New Business

1. Saltville Library update / introduction of new Director

Kris Sheets, the Librarian at the Saltville Library, and Rose Likins, the new Director of the Smyth County Library System spoke on the following:

Ms. Sheets:

- 1) The Smyth County Library System was the first in the area to offer curbside service during the COVID pandemic and continues to do so. People have commented that they really like the setup.
- 2) Wi-Fi use is available on the outside of the building.
- 3) She put together an Amazon wish list for snacks and received over 3600 individual items from people in the community and ended up giving a lot of those away.
- 4) She thanked Mr. Martin, Mr. Johnson, and Public Works Director R.B. Henderson and the members of the town's maintenance crew for all of their help and assistance.
- 5) Councilman Gary Call thanked her working with the schools and the kids and the town's senior citizens during the pandemic.

Ms. Likins:

- 1) She was an American diplomat for thirty-two years and spent most of her time in Latin America. After her service, she went back to school and got her degree in Library Science.
- 2) The Smyth County Library System has three locations, but everyone is part of same team and organization.
- 3) Ms. Sheets came up with the idea for COVID care packages, and this is being done all over the county.
- 4) The county libraries re-opened on April 19th and added new digital services including NewsBank which allows the access of newspapers all over the country.
- 5) Another new service is Hoopla. This digital subscription gives access to over 900,000 items including e-books, television programs, and movies. These can be downloaded for those who don't have internet at home, and there is a Hoopla app.

- 6) The Library will help spread the word on the Emergency Broadband Benefit program which would provide every household \$50 for internet service if they are eligible.
- 7) Funding from the American Rescue Plan will be used to cover the cost of the data plan for Wi-Fi hotspots for those who have cell service.
- 8) Health literacy programs will be established as will job skills classes.
- 9) There is a vision for a bigger building in Saltville since the current one only has three public computers and not a lot of meeting space for different programs.
- 10) Councilman Comer said he noticed that one family came every night and used the Wi-Fi when it was set up. Also, plenty of students would come by and sit on the benches provided to use the Wi-Fi as well. Ms. Sheets said they were very proud of that service.
- 11) The Library Board is meeting in Saltville on June 17th at 5:30 p.m., and everyone is welcome to come.

2. Appalachian Electric Power

Mary Begley of AEP spoke on the following:

- 1) It's time for the AEP franchise renewal, which occurs every forty years. This is the maximum time allowed by the Code of Virginia.
- 2) The town has a right under the state constitution to work in AEP's right-of-way if needed, and AEP can work in the town's right-of-way. And AEP will perform any work as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- 3) This agreement has nothing to do with any rates that AEP charges.
- 4) A Public Hearing has to be advertised for two consecutive weeks before officially voting on adopting this.

Councilman Morris made a motion to start the process by advertising the Public Hearing, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

3. EMS, Inc. report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The DEQ Report for April has been submitted.

- 2) The Lane Group is still performing smoke testing to replace and repair lines due to inflow and infiltration.
- 3) There is a disconnect switch at the pump station regarding the VFD relocation, and when the disconnect mechanism is activated, a generator turns on. It's important to still relocate the VFD, though, since the town has had to replace it six times since 2008 at a total cost of approximately \$30,000.
- 4) The Mayor asked if it was an OSHA violation to go inside the pump station in the deep water while the power was on, and if it was, was it reported. Mr. Johnson said he did not know if it was a violation or not. The Mayor then said this was voted on at the last meeting like it was an emergency, but it seems it really was not. Moving this VFD is in the RD funding the town will get to help with water and wastewater problems.
- 5) The belt press has arrived and will be installed in-house.
- 6) The VDH report and the VDH Water Treatment Leak Loss report were submitted for April.
- 7) The logistics still need to be worked out for the tank painting. It won't be inspected by a third party, but it takes three days of testing before it can be put back in service. Each of the tanks will be down about ten days.
- 8) VDH says the town has to update its lead and copper sample sites, and these sites have to be approved by VDH. This has to be done every three years.

Committee Reports

The Mayor said he had spoken to Councilwoman Johnson, who was not in attendance for the meeting, and she let him know that twenty-one people participated in the recent clean-up. She asked that Mr. Henderson be thanked for his assistance.

Public Works Director's Report

R.B. Henderson spoke on the following:

- 1) Two graves were dug last month and another will be opened tomorrow.

- 2) They helped set up the backstop at the high school baseball field. Councilman Comer said he spoke with Northwood Principal Jerad Ward who bragged on Mr. Henderson and his staff for helping with the backstop and helping with the school in general.
- 3) The pool will start getting filled up tomorrow. A couple of the gates had to be re-welded.
- 4) A ditch was cleaned out on Sheep Hill.
- 5) Rick Moore said he had spoken to Eric Herold at VDH about fluoride. The town has enough currently to last another couple of months, and new shipments come from China.
- 6) Councilman Morris said the town has exhausted every option it can regarding the impeller for the pool. The town paid for it two years ago but it is, as of yet, to be installed. We've tried to contact the contractor multiple times since then to no avail. Mr. Cassell said to make a report to the state police for contractor fraud as a first step.
- 7) Regarding the fluoride, the Mayor asked if the town even needed to use fluoride anymore. Mr. Johnson of EMS, Inc. said that the town would first have to go through VDH, but there is a channel that would have to be followed. It's an expense to the town, and it needs to be weighed with the benefit it brings. The fluoride doesn't really help adults but does kids. Actually, VDH lowered the amount of fluoride they recommend to be added to the water several years ago since fluoride is found in some food and drink and, of course, toothpaste. Mr. Henderson said if it wasn't required, it could be phased out, and Mr. Johnson said several towns don't use it anymore.

Mr. Johnson said he would contact VDH to see what they say.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) On April 29th, the department had its DMV Grant audit. Everything was fine, and the project manager bragged on Officer Hogston for his productivity while working speed enforcement.
- 2) Lakin Henderson started on May 1st, and her first shift was May 3rd.
- 3) The department will work crowd control for Northwood's graduation.
- 4) Per the Mayor's request, a year's worth of stats are included.

- 5) The inmate workers are due back on June 1st. Councilman Morris said he would like to keep taking applications for inmate supervisors indefinitely and made the motion to do so. Councilman Eugene Call said he would like to see another officer hired to take care of the inmates since the inmates would respect an actual officer more than they would a supervisor. Councilman Morris agreed about using an officer but expressed concern that would limit the number of inmates the town could actually use. The council agreed to discuss this more at the next budget meeting on May 18th at 7:00 p.m., so Councilman Morris withdrew his motion.
- 6) Skylar Call graduates from the Academy on May 20th.

Fire Department Report

Chief Lynch was not present for the meeting but sent the Mayor a message stating that department had nine calls last month with seven being in the county and two being in the town.

Rescue Squad Report

Emergency Medical Services Director Kyle Brewster spoke on the following:

- 1) Nathan Gary was voted out of the Squad on April 23rd. Travis Loman took his place, and his wife Richelle does the books.
- 2) All of the other members are dedicated to the community and are wanting to remain on the Squad.
- 3) They were given a 60-day extension until June 30th for their license to be renewed.
- 4) The county is voting tonight to release the new vehicle to the Squad.
- 5) The Mayor asked about applications, and Mr. Brewster said most had been filled out, but there are still a couple to go.
- 6) Councilman Morris said he was asked if the town could reinstate its funding to the Squad to aid in the process of the changeover. He then made the motion to do so retroactively to when the funding was stopped, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) He asked for a motion to advertise for hay bids then select the highest bidder. Councilman Morris made that motion, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.
- 2) The new Smyth County tourism website is visitsmythcountyva.com. The Mayor said there were seven campground spots available at the Lions Club for \$25 per night. The Tourism Board has decided not to continue using the Bonham House due to the fact that it was not getting the foot traffic to justify the cost to run it. The new director will be spending time here in the Town Hall as well as the ones in Marion and Chilhowie.
- 3) There are speeding issues in town, so the town will install some removable speed bumps in various spots in town that can be taken up in bad weather. Councilman Morris asked that proper signage be installed as well to mitigate the liability to the town.
- 4) Northwood graduation is set for May 20th with May 22nd being the rain date. The police officers will provide crowd support.
- 5) Last month's Smyth 12 meeting was held in Saltville for the first time at the Mayor's urging so people could tour the new Wellness Center.
- 6) No major changes are in the 2020 Census data for Virginia.
- 7) The AEP movement of the 6th transformer was completed on May 1st and 2nd.
- 8) The water contracts for bulk sales to both counties will change when the new rates are set as part of the budget.
- 9) He asked for a motion to have the spring clean-up from June 14 - 18. Councilman Eugene Call made that motion and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.
- 10) We'll have a meeting with the staff at Chilhowie regarding both towns' contract with Republic Services. Chilhowie was notified last week that their rate will go up almost \$76,000. The town's contract expires next year and may be subject to the same increase.
- 11) Even though the slide on Government Plant Road is not on town property, we have worked diligently with the School Board and Northfork Manor's management company, AAMCI, so those two entities can work out easement issues. AAMCI is the hold up since the bidder for the work has been awarded. They have yet to sign some documents.

12) The Town of Chilhowie has extended an invitation to attend the dedication of the Chilhowie Farmers Market and Park on May 18th.

13) We have received interest from two firms to provide IT services to the town. Councilman Comer volunteered to help Mr. Martin and Mr. Johnson in the vetting process.

14) To more closely adhere to the town's procurement policy, one of our engineering firms, Crossroads Engineering, has expressed willingness to serve as the town's de facto purchasing agent mainly for quotes on infrastructure items. They can also spec everything.

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

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