

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on December 10, 2019 at 5:00 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
Erik Puckett, Police Chief
Tammy Carter, Front Office Clerk
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

Councilman Call made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2019 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Holley made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2019 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Call seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Orr made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 26, 2019 special-called meeting, and Councilman Holley seconded. All were in favor.

Citizens' Time

Janice Orr spoke about Christmas Eve this year being the 95th anniversary of the Muck Dam disaster. She read a passage from a book written by the late Jerry Catron that detailed the incident and gave some first-person accounts of what happened. One of the girls who survived is now 104 and living in Damascus with her grandson. Ms. Orr concluded her time by reading the names and ages of those who lost their lives.

Neil Johnson thanked the Council for the job they were doing and mentioned the paving of Palmer Avenue was a welcomed change. He said he felt like the Wellness Center would help the town and thanked Chief Puckett, the fire department, and rescue squad for helping when the truck struck the light pole at the Dollar General.

Approval of the Agenda

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

Old Business

1. Wellness Center lease agreement

Town Manager Brian Martin said the Council had the lease agreement in hand between the town and the Wellness Center. Bob Watkins, the Director of the Wellness Center, was on hand to answer any questions and provide an update. There's one issue involving taxes since a clause in the lease says the town would have to pay any taxes (approximately \$9000) if they are not waived by the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Watkins told the Council that the new plans for the building include making it a larger space with more things involved than originally scoped. There will be youth and after-school programs, strength and conditioning programs for high school athletes, a corporate wellness program, and fitness classes. There will also be a veteran's outreach program for those veterans who have been diagnosed with PTSD called *Warriors at Rest*.

Councilman Morris made a motion to table this issue until a special meeting could be called to discuss this possible tax consequence since it would lead to the town losing money each year. Councilman Robinson seconded, and the motion failed 2-4 with Councilmen Morris and Robinson voting yes and Councilmen Holley, Call, Surber, and Orr voting no.

Councilman Call then made a motion to accept the lease as is, and Councilman Surber seconded. Clerk/Treasurer asked for clarification if the vote was 4-2 or 5-1. Councilman Morris voted no, and the Mayor asked Councilman Robinson if he was for the Wellness Center or against it. Councilman Morris responded that the Mayor's question was a farce and that he was for the Wellness Center but was just concerned that if the town ended up having to pay those taxes, then the town would lose between \$7000 and \$8000 a year. The final vote was 5-1 with Councilman Morris dissenting.

2. Sale of Gillenwater property

Mr. Martin said the Gillenwater property has been cleaned off, and her relatives have officially deeded it to the town. The options are putting it out for bid, retaining it, or transfer it to the SIDA for them to sell it without having to go through the bid process.

Councilman Surber made a motion to put it out for bid, and Councilman Call seconded. The motion carried 5-1 with Councilman Morris voting no.

New Business

1. Second Amendment resolution

Councilman Morris said that in 2007 he took an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States and in 2012 and 2016 did the same. In 2018, when he was elected to the Council, he took an oath to uphold the Constitutions of the United States and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Locally, the Northfork Sportsman's Club has people come from several states to shoot and holds many events throughout the year. He said he would hate to support any legislation from Richmond that would prohibit any citizens of the town or anywhere from being able to maximize their full potential. Therefore, he proposed the resolution before the Council in support of the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Councilman Morris said this is a hot-button issue now because it is important. The Constitution is a living document and needs to be upheld as it is since it is what gives everyone the right to be free. He then made a motion to adopt the resolution, and Councilman Robinson seconded. During the discussion, Councilman Orr asked if this made the town a sanctuary city, and Councilman Morris replied that the word sanctuary was removed from the resolution since, in his opinion, it gives false hope that the town would be immune from any laws in the Virginia legislature since it is just a symbolic gesture. If the Council passes this, then Delegate Jeff Campbell and Senator Chafin can take it to Richmond to show that Saltville and its citizens support the Second Amendment.

Town Attorney Trent Crewe said it was wise to leave off the term sanctuary since it removes a risk for the town. Also, in paragraph three, the phrase "introduced in the 2019 session" should be changed to say "to be potentially introduced in the 2020 session". And the eighth paragraph needs to begin with the phrase "to the extent allowed by law" to help avoid the town being sued. Mr. Crewe then stated that if these changes are made, he saw no legal problem with the resolution. Therefore, Councilman Morris withdrew his original motion and then made another to add the phrases Mr. Crewe suggested at the beginning of paragraph eight and in paragraph three and then adopt the amended resolution. Councilman Robinson seconded, and all were in favor.

2. December 23rd holiday

Councilman Morris asked this be stricken from the agenda since it was found out today that the governor may grant December 26th as an extra day off for state employees.

3. Salt Trail

Mr. Martin stated that he had a meeting with the Mayor and Frank Kilgore regarding the Salt Trail. Mr. Kilgore is an attorney from St. Paul and is active in natural resource conservation, local history preservation, higher education, healthcare, and youth development programs in Southwest Virginia. He also helped start the Appalachian School of Law and founded the Appalachian College of Pharmacy. Mr. Kilgore has greatly helped with the Spearhead Trail and the Mendota Trail between Bristol and Mendota.

He has offered to help the town complete the Salt Trail in terms of working with homeowners and VDOT. The Mayor mentioned that Mr. Kilgore is Senator Chafin's brother-in-law and his wife is on the Supreme Court of Virginia and that he had many ideas for helping the town with the Trail. Mr. Martin said the town could put him on retainer or table the matter now and have further discussion with Mr. Kilgore later. The Mayor suggested tabling this topic for now, so Councilman Call made that motion, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

4. United Way internship program

Mr. Martin said that Megan Hamilton, the Youth Success Coordinator for the local United Way, had reached out to Councilman Robinson. Last summer the town hired two part-time employees who were Northwood students, and Councilman Robinson pretty much ran that program. That success led Ms. Hamilton to contact him regarding an opportunity for this upcoming summer for the United Way where local students would intern with the town and also spent time with the United Way to learn workplace skills and have job-related responsibilities.

Councilman Call made a motion to approve the agreement with the United Way, and Councilman Surber seconded. All were in favor.

5. EMS, Inc. Report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) He thanked everyone for showing up for the weekly meetings between the EMS staff and the town's staff.
- 2) The DEQ report was submitted for November. Due to an excess amount of rain, there were three overflows last month. The water flow went from approximately 300,000 gallons daily to over 1,400,000 gallons.
- 3) The VDH report was submitted for November. The water accountability was still high.

4) He applied for monitoring waivers for SOCs (Synthetic Organic Chemicals). If they are granted, the town won't have to run as many tests and will, therefore, save money.

5) The interconnect with Washington County still needs completing. The Mayor asked what the holdup was, and Mr. Martin said that Washington County had applied for funds through the Mt. Rogers Water/Wastewater Fund to complete the connection, and that particular funding is currently frozen. Mr. Martin has sent an email to Robert Cornett of the Washington County Service Authority requesting a meeting, but has yet to receive a reply. He will reach out again. The town was under the impression that the WCSA was moving forward, but then Mr. Martin received word that the WCSA had contacted Mt. Rogers about their funding program. The Mayor asked about the cost for the connection, and Mr. Martin said WCSA had applied for \$50,000 to do the project, but the town's engineers did not think it would be that expensive.

6) There continue to be water leaks, and on December 1st, there was a leak that lead to a boil-water notice. His employees and the town's employees spent a lot of looking for that leak, but the area had experienced over two inches of rain and water was everywhere complicating the matter. EMS employee Rick Moore echoed Mr. Johnson's statement saying it looked like a river. Also, the guy from Smyth County had checked the meter at that pit in the morning and did not notice the leak there. The Mayor replied that when his house in Edgewood is without water, he knows that the leak is usually there at that pit, especially if everyone else has water. Mr. Moore said that either or both Smyth County and Washington County usually call the town and asks if there is a problem if they don't have water. Since they did not call, it was seen as though they had found the leak, and it was being repaired. The Mayor suggested calling the county administrators the next time and leave a message if necessary.

7) The Lane Group has put out a PER that addresses issues like the aforementioned leak. He suggests the town have a hydrologic profile performed which would also help prioritize projects for the town with the help of the town's engineers.

Committee Reports

No committees met during last month. Councilman Robinson mentioned this year's nighttime Christmas parade was well attended and had many entrants. He thanked everyone who participated.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) The town received a Water Quality Award from the U.S. Department of Health.
- 2) The staff represented the town at the county-wide Complete Census Count Committee meetings on November 21st and December 5th. Saltville's population count needs to be as accurate as possible since future funding opportunities depend on reliable numbers.
- 3) Palmer Avenue's paving has been completed. The stone for the shoulders is scheduled to be laid this week.
- 4) The town's newest business, the Saltville Emporium, had its ribbon cutting ceremony courtesy of the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce.
- 5) Clerk/Treasurer Steve Johnson set up the town's grants.gov account which allows us to apply online for federal grant funding.
- 6) The application for the \$250,000 EPA Cleanup Grant has been completed and submitted. If the application is approved, the money will be used for the old town shop site.
- 7) The trestles on the Salt Trail have been resurfaced.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) There were recalls on the Explorers, and all of the repairs have been completed. Officer Bordwine's vehicle also had a driveshaft problem that was fixed even though that was not part of the recall.
- 2) There were five interviews conducted on December 9th for the open positions in the department. He asked for a special-called meeting so the Council could go ahead and hire since the Academy starts on January 13th. The meeting was set for Monday, December 16th at 5:00 p.m.
- 3) There were no incidents at the Christmas parade.
- 4) Power was off when the truck struck the pole at the Dollar General last week. He thanked the fire department and rescue squad for their help with the situation.

Public Works Director's Report

Mr. Henderson was not present for the meeting, but Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) The altitude pilot valve on the Smokey Row tank was replaced at a cost of \$1900.
- 2) There were photos of the overflows that occurred during that major rain storm referenced by Gary Johnson, the pipe across the river near the headworks, and the leak that lead to the boil notice. Cherokee Construction provided the fitting for the valve that fixed the leak.
- 3) Councilman Orr thanked EMS for their help during that leak and said Mr. Henderson deserved a debt of gratitude for using his own equipment at no cost to the town.

Board of Supervisors Report

Supervisor Roscoe Call was not present for the meeting.

Fire Department Report

Chief Jimmy Davidson said that BINGO continues to do well, and that the department had 16 calls last month with 4 being in town and 12 in the county. The Council also granted him permission to use the town's backhoe to re-dig near the station to help with water drainage.

Rescue Squad Report

They had 75 calls last month, which is up from this time last year. They were slightly in the red last month due to unexpected expenses. The town staff will help write grants to hopefully obtain new monitors and trucks.

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

