

Minutes of the Public Hearing and regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on December 16, 2020 (moved from December 8, 2020) at 4:45 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. respectively in the Town Hall

Council: **Monica Johnson, Hiram Robinson, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, Steve Surber, and Gary Call**

Mayor: **C. Todd Young**

Staff: **Trent Crewe, Town Attorney
Erik Puckett, Police Chief
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer**

The Mayor opened the Public Hearing at 4:45 p.m. by stating that its purpose was to hear public input on a requested zoning change and a special-use permit sought by the new owners of Edd's Drive-In at 811 East Main Street to be able to serve alcohol.

There were no comments or emails pertaining to the topic, so the Mayor then closed the Public Hearing.

The regular meeting started at 5:00 p.m. Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 10, 2020 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

Only one Council member was present for the November 16, 2020 special-called meeting, so it was not actually held.

Citizens' Time

Nobody had any comments.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilman Morris made a motion to add a discussion of personnel in the police department to the Closed Session portion of the agenda under the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2-3711(A)(1).

Councilman Gary Call seconded, and all were in favor. Councilman Morris then made a motion to approve the agenda after that addition, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

Old Business

1. Zoning change and special-use permit

Clerk/Treasurer Steve Johnson said the Planning Commission voted to approve granting the zoning change and special-use permit to the new owners of Edd's Drive-In located at 811 East Main Street to allow them to serve alcohol.

Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to approve the zoning change and special-use permit, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

2. Surplus equipment

This was tabled until January.

3. Lake Drive trail crossing

This was tabled until January.

4. Bids on surplus truck

Mr. Johnson stated that no bids were received. Councilman Robinson said the truck in question was the four-wheeled drive red Dooley, but it had been vandalized a few days ago by having the glass broken on two sides. This was tabled until January.

New Business

1. Work Orders

The Mayor stated that he had spoken to former Mayor Jeff Campbell and former Clerk Jeff Smith, and they both told him that in the past, the town crew's maintenance orders were signed

off by both the Town Manager and the Mayor. This did not include any emergency work or daily routine matters such as re-checking a meter reading. Current Town Manager Brian Martin, on military leave until January, endorses starting this process again. Councilman Eugene Call said this action would also take off the heat on the Public Works Director in terms of making decisions about what tasks to do. Councilman Morris suggested maybe waiting until Town Manager Brian Martin returns from military leave before implementing this policy since he will be able to use his discretion about what a routine task is as compared to a special one.

The Mayor replied that right now there is no schedule about when tasks are completed. Councilwoman Johnson echoed Councilman Morris' thought about waiting until the Town Manager returned to implement this policy. The Mayor stated that he put in a work order a couple of months ago, but the work was never done until recently. In the absence of the Town Manager, the Clerk can co-sign.

Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to start this work order policy, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. The motion carried 4-0-2 with Councilmembers Eugene Call, Gary Call, Surber, and Morris voting yes and Councilmembers Johnson and Robinson abstaining.

2. Brownsfield resolution

The Mayor stated this a joint resolution with Marion and Chilhowie to be able to receive some funding in the future to clean up blighted properties. Councilman Morris made the motion to have the Mayor sign the resolution, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

3. EMS, Inc. report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The DEQ and VDH reports for November were submitted as was the VDH Water Treatment Leak Loss report.
- 2) The Lane Group is currently conducting smoke testing in a couple of areas of town.
- 3) The pump at the belt press is starting to wear out and could possibly stop working. He's looked at some quotes, and the cheapest he's found is around \$7200.
- 4) The water line at the bridge at Cedar Branch is back in service.
- 5) There's a small list from the engineers to complete regarding the Phase II project.
- 6) Regarding Phase I, there was a water meter demonstration on November 16th conducted by representatives from Core & Main using Census Water Meters. They took some town reps to

Thomas Bridge (where those current meters are in use) to show how they work. Many towns in the area currently use these meters.

4. Personnel Policy

Councilman Morris said that after reviewing the town's current personnel policy regarding nepotism and comparing it to other towns, he feels it should be stricken. The best person should be hired regardless of whether they are related to Council members. He made a motion to strike the following wording: "The employment of a council member or anyone in the immediate family of a council member is prohibited." Additionally, the policy has a line that reads the following: "One member of a family is strictly prohibited from being in a supervisory capacity over another member of the immediate family". His motion includes adding the wording "unless approved by the council" at the end of that previous sentence.

Councilman Gary Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Committee Reports

Councilman Eugene Call said the Ordinance Committee discussed the zoning and special-use permit for Edd's at 811 East Main Street.

Councilwoman Johnson's committee is Library, Historical & Cultural, and Health & Beautification. She gave the council copies of two newspapers showing when the trees were lit in the Commons Area and those who participated. One of the trees highlights those in the community affected by cancer. Decorations were also placed at the Hugh Helton Veterans Park.

The backpack drive-thru was a success with 1376 backpacks given out for the community. The food pantry also served over 30 gallons of hot chocolate for the event.

The Stevensons were named the Smyth County Farm Family of the Year.

The new director of the Smyth County Library system, Rose Lincoln, had written a letter detailing the need for a new facility due to the storage capacity and age of the current one.

Councilman Morris thanked Councilwoman Johnson and Councilman Robinson for the downtown Christmas decorations as well as the decorations at the Veterans Wall. The Mayor concluded the discussion by congratulating Greg Lynch, the proprietor of Greg's Home and Auto, for being crowned the Businessperson of the Year by the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce.

Public Works Director's Report

Mr. Henderson was not present for the meeting.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) David Frye has resigned, and his last day is December 15th. He'll be working for the department in Bristol, Virginia.
- 2) Robbie Cruise has taken a job with the City of Bristol as well. He passed his background check, so he will start in the middle of January.
- 3) The Academy is holding three spots for Saltville starting in January of 2021.
- 4) There was no tree lighting ceremony on December 5th due to the restrictions handed down by the Governor.
- 5) The drive-thru Christmas backpack program was held on December 11th at the same place as the Trunk or Treat.

Fire Department Report

Chief Davidson officially resigned from the Fire Department and thanked everyone involved. He was presented a plaque by the Mayor and Council for serving in the department for twenty-four years.

Councilman Morris made a motion to appoint Bryan Lynch as the new Chief, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

Walter Barrett, a member of the department, also turned in his resignation, and stated that everyone has seen stuff go on that shouldn't have, and that he brought this up at last Sunday's meeting.

Rescue Squad

The Squad had 89 calls last month involving 56 transports, and by next month they should have procured a new truck obtained through Covid funding from the county. The rumor that the Squad is currently short-funded is not true. Regarding the Operations Manager Nathan Gary, he was in court today and was nolle prossed, and there are no impending charges against him regarding an incident from 2013 in North Carolina.

Councilman Morris asked about the plans for Board seats for the town when they become available. He was told that all nominations for their Board are handled by the members themselves, so any Council member could be nominated. A subsequent election would be held.

Closed Session

Councilman Morris made a motion to enter Closed Session in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) for a discussion of police personnel; Section 2.2-3711(A)(7) for consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body; Section 2.2-3711(A)(29) for 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)(3) to discuss the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of 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. Councilwoman Johnson seconded, and all were in favor.

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

Councilman Morris made a motion to hire the two candidates discussed in Closed Session, with Mr. Call being full-time and Mr. Griffith being part-time until Robbie Cruise leaves. Mr. Griffith will then become full-time. Councilman Gary Call seconded, and the motion carried 5-0-1 with Councilman Eugene Call abstaining.

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

