

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on December 11, 2018 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, Acting Police Chief
R. B. Henderson, Public Works Director
Tammy Carter, Front Office Clerk
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2018 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Call seconded. All were in favor.

Citizens' Time

Rita Copenhaver informed the Council of the newest monument at Capital Square in Richmond. It celebrates women who made significant, but often unrecognized, contributions in a variety of fields over Virginia's 400-year history. The initial list consists of 230 women whose names are inscribed on the monument's glass Wall of Honor. Of the 230 total, three are from Smyth County. They are Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver, Eleanor Gladys Copenhaver Anderson, and Annabel Morris Buchanan. A fourth lady from Smyth County, Katherine Killinger Scherer, has been nominated to be included on the Wall.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilman Morris made a motion to add a Rescue Squad report to the agenda, and Councilman Call seconded. All were in favor.

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

New Business

1. EMS, Inc report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The weekly meetings continue with the town staff and the EMS staff with the exception of this week due to the snow.
- 2) The DEQ wastewater report for November was submitted.
- 3) The inflow and infiltration (I&I) issue is ongoing at the wastewater plant. According to the town's VPDES permit, if 95% of the flow capacity is approached, a plan of action has to be submitted to DEQ. Moreover, the town recently received a warning letter from DEQ about this, so it is imperative the town corrects the issue. To help with this problem, a smoke blower was recently procured to help locate problem areas and then fix them.
- 4) The VDH water report for November was submitted.
- 5) Regarding water accountability, Mr. Johnson wants to look into how the numbers the town is using are being obtained since there may be an issue at the Cardwell Town Well. Additionally, it is recommended that the town needs to start reading the Smyth and Washington counties meters each month. Current policy is that each county reads their meters and gives the town the numbers. Councilman Orr, the Chair of the Water/Sewer Committee, agreed by stating that water goes through the Smyth County meter in Allison Gap and then goes through another meter at the Washington County line. If there is a leak somewhere in the middle, the town is paying for that leak and needs to know where it is. Mr. Johnson then replied that he was surprised the counties supplying the readings was ever a policy, anyway.
- 6) Before the water meter replacements begin, the town needs to have the previously discussed formal water policy in place. Councilman Orr said that he would be having a meeting of his committee in the next couple of weeks to discuss this further.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) The town received the Water Fluoridation Quality Award for 2017 from the Health Department in recognition of maintaining top notch fluoridation for at least ten out of the twelve months for that year.
- 2) Trash pickup this week will be a day behind due to the snow.
- 3) He commended the town crew for their efforts during the storm since it was hard to stay ahead of the snow. There have been complaints from some people about the timeliness of getting the roads passable, but this was the biggest snow in over a decade. Interstate 81 was shut down, and three VDOT trucks actually turned over, so the town's staff handled the situation well since snow removal is very tedious and caution is needed when maneuvering on streets on which a lot of cars are parked.
- 4) The Christmas parade was successful, and the festival in the Commons Area is growing.
- 5) The final phase of the Sewer Improvement Project has been completed.
- 6) Several burned out street lights were reported to AEP.
- 7) The town coordinated with DEQ and DCR to update flood plain management information.
- 8) He represented the town at the Legislative Breakfast in Abingdon at the Higher Ed Center.
- 9) The town's police department and maintenance staff assisted with the short-notice rescheduling of the Chilhowie/Galax playoff game on Northwood's field.
- 10) The town was informed by VDOT that it could procure for consulting and design work for both the Salt Trail Project and the Route 91 intersection project.
- 11) New flags were purchased for the Veterans Wall, and repairs will be done on the Wall when the weather breaks.
- 12) Lori Deel has just completed the list of goals for the Comprehensive Plan. It was suggested that the Council review these before the final approval.
- 13) The town will pay the Rescue Squad \$50 per month to store the vacuum truck through the winter.
- 14) The purchase of the new salt shed was finalized.
- 15) The repeater that is used by the emergency responders needs a back-up system. A storm knocked out power, and First Sergeant Bryan Lynch said the department was not getting any calls across the repeater. They were getting text messages but no automatic messages. The gas generator on site had to be started to get the repeater back working. The issue is that the tank

is only 2½ gallons, so it won't run that long. A system is needed that when the power goes out, a battery will kick in that will let first responders know that the repeater is running on back-up power. This will give ample time for someone to go to the tower and find out what the problem is. The equipment needed will cost \$6415.46 to install. Councilman Morris said he thought this would be the county's responsibility due to his understanding that the FCC license is in Shannon Williams' name since he is the 9-1-1 Coordinator.

Joe Arnold, the Captain and Operations Manager of the Rescue Squad, was in attendance and replied that Smyth County did not own the frequencies. He has the licenses in his office and they are in Saltville's name, not Smyth County's. The Rescue Squad has also maintained the site for years. Councilman Morris then stated that if it is, indeed, owned by the Rescue Squad, then they should pay half and the town will pay the other half. The Mayor said the citizens of Saltville need to be safe regardless of who pays for the system. Captain Arnold said that if the fire department goes to the county system, the town won't have adequate coverage and neither will the service area, and this also goes for the squad and the police department. Councilman Morris responded by stating that he understands the public safety aspect since he's a police officer himself. However, if it is the Rescue Squad's tower, he thinks the squad should bear some of the cost. Captain Arnold said he understood that the squad owned the frequencies and maintained the license and repeater, but this is a joint venture between the squad and the fire department for the town's citizens and the general service area as a whole. Councilman Surber said the bottom line was that the town needed this for the safety of the citizens and he felt like the Council needed to see that this equipment was obtained.

Councilman Call made a motion to procure the equipment about which First Sergeant Lynch spoke, and Councilman Surber seconded. The motion carried 5-1 with Councilman Morris dissenting.

16) Mr. Martin reminded the Council that Section 20-16 of the Town Code states it is the duty of any occupant or owner of any property which has a public sidewalk in front of it to have the snow removed. There were questions about this asked by representatives of some businesses downtown after the big snow.

17) There will be construction at the intersection of Highway 11 and Highway 107 in Chilhowie starting in two years which will affect Saltville since plenty of people here drive that way. A turning lane will be added, and the current building that houses Greever's Drug will be torn down.

Committee Reports

Councilman Robinson mentioned that the Christmas Village will grow next year, and his committee is looking forward to it. Also, the Palmer Mill will host its first play this coming Friday

and have another one next Friday. These will be performed by members of the Lighthouse Baptist Church.

Police Chief's Report

Acting Chief Erik Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) The new police SUV is at the shop in Christiansburg getting its lights and radio installed.
- 2) Officers Bordwine and Keene graduated from the Academy on November 27th.
- 3) The new scanner for RMS evidence has arrived, and First Sergeant Lynch will install it.
- 4) Officer David Frye starts at the Academy in January of 2019. Officer Chris Hogston will then finish out the term as the School Resource Officer for Saltville Elementary.
- 5) There were no issues at the Christmas parade or the Christmas Festival. Officers assisted and participated in the Chilhowie parades and attended the parades in Marion and Glade Spring as well.
- 6) Regarding the tower in Edgewood, it is running fine. Trees in the area were cut back during the warmer weather. Washington County also uses the tower and, in return, gave the town two frequencies.
- 7) Councilman Morris asked if there were any issues during the playoff game at Northwood last week. Acting Chief Puckett replied that six officers were on duty and the county supplied some, too. There were no problems inside the stadium, but minor parking issues arose. The Mayor stated that he was told the traffic was backing up at the traffic light at Highway 107 and was basically stop-and-go, so he wished that could have worked a little better.

Maintenance Report

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

- 1) He commended the town crew for their work during the storm and thanked Councilman Robinson for all he did in the Commons Area regarding the Christmas decorations.
- 2) Two graves were dug last month.

3) Regarding the smoke tester that Gary Johnson spoke about during his report, it has arrived, and when the weather breaks, the testing will commence.

4) A pump at the Route 91 station needs replacing, and the ball park figure for this is \$15,000. He thinks the one there was installed in the 1970s and will discuss this more with the engineers at a meeting on December 18th. Councilman Orr mentioned that the pumps run on a schedule and the flow has nothing to do with this schedule. If the pump stops working and is full, then the overflow problem kicks in.

5) All of the maintenance has been performed on the generators at the lift stations and will be done again next May. Mr. Henderson said he would get the Council a copy of the reports that were prepared.

6) Councilman Morris asked about the equipment trouble that occurred during the snow removal and in past years, too, and asked about acquiring new spreaders or plows. Councilman Surber echoed that and said the complaints are with the equipment and not the staff. The employees are working hard with what they have. The town just needs better equipment. Mr. Henderson agreed and stated that the equipment should be cycled regularly. Councilman Morris replied that the town could purchase a spreader this year and maybe one next year to keep in line with Mr. Henderson's idea of cycling the equipment. Mr. Henderson said he would look into some prices and bring back to the Council.

The Mayor mentioned that VDOT contracts out its scraping services. In addition to the cost of the equipment used, he is also concerned about the safety of the town's workers. They had to be on fifty eight roads during the storm. Chilhowie, by comparison, only scrapes one or two roads. He suggested looking into contracting out the scraping jobs like VDOT does and bringing back estimates. Councilman Morris said he would hate to see the current maintenance staff lose any overtime they may accumulate by scraping the roads since they don't get much overtime to begin with.

7) Councilman Robinson thanked Mr. Henderson for his assistance in getting the trees for the Commons Area for the Christmas decorations.

Fire Department Report

Chief Jimmy Davidson spoke on the following:

1) He thanked the Council for buying the equipment for the repeater.

2) Last month there were ten total calls in the county and one in the town, three rescue squad assists, and five hazards.

3) The estimates for the hydrants will be coming soon.

Rescue Squad Report

Captain Joe Arnold spoke on the following:

- 1) He thanked Jimmy Davidson, Bryan Lynch, and Brian Martin for meeting with him and looks forward to working more with the town's staff in order for everyone to be on the same page.
- 2) During October and November the squad ran 120 calls with 113 of those being in Saltville.
- 3) He thanked the Council for working together to get the repeater issue solved.
- 4) During Christmas, the squad will take in 3 - 5 senior citizens who don't have families and cook them a dinner.
- 5) The squad has adopted a family with three kids and will supply presents and food.

Closed Session

Councilman Morris made a motion to enter Closed Session in accordance with the Code of Virginia, 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; and Section 2.2- 3711(A)(1) to discuss personnel in the police department. Councilman Call 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 Orr seconded, and the roll call vote was 6-0 in the affirmative.

Councilman Morris made a motion for the Town Attorney to respond to the business discussed in Closed Session. Councilman Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Councilman Morris made a motion to have the Town Manager take action on the information discussed in Closed Session. Councilman Orr seconded, and all were in favor.

Councilman Morris made a motion to make Erik Puckett the Chief of Police effective January 1, 2019 at a salary of \$22.00 per hour, and he shall be entitled to all of the benefits of a working Chief of Police. Councilman Surber seconded, and the motion carried 5-1 with Councilman Call dissenting.

Councilman Morris made a motion to make Bryan Lynch the Assistant Chief of Police effective January 1, 2019 at a salary of \$16.35 per hour, and he shall be entitled to all of the benefits of a working Assistant Chief of Police. The motion carried 4-2 with Councilmen Robinson, Morris, Surber, and Orr voting yes and Councilmen Holley and Call voting no.

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