

Minutes of the Public Hearing held on February 12, 2019 at 4:45 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  
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

The Mayor opened the Public Hearing by stating that its purpose was to receive comment on the proposed update to the town's Comprehensive Plan. Councilmen Morris and Surber both said they thought it was well written and would serve the town well. No citizen spoke, so the Mayor then closed the Public Hearing.

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on February 12, 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  
R.B. Henderson, Public Works Director  
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

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

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2019 special-called meeting, and Councilman Call seconded. All were in favor.

## **Citizens' Time**

**Matt Halley**, representing Saltville Little League, spoke on the following:

- 1) He asked that the town supply the brick dust and dirt for the fields.
- 2) They would like to use the rooms underneath the press boxes for the concession stands and need to be sure that water is running properly and the electrical is in working condition.
- 3) He requested that some general maintenance be performed on the bleachers, dugouts, and the grounds before the season started.

**Janice Orr**, representing the Museum of the Middle Appalachians, spoke on the following:

- 1) In the last year, a project called the *American Evolution* has been used to educate the public about the fact that the United States grew out of the state of Virginia. It will last throughout the current year.
- 2) Ms. Orr has worked with this organization over the past couple of years to make sure that Saltville and southwestern Virginia are a part of this project.
- 3) There will be events and programs all over the state that will deal with things that have occurred in Virginia that helped the country as it is today.
- 4) The salt production here will be spotlighted as will the Civil War history along with the mining, lead, coal, and iron industries in the region that have helped shaped the country.
- 5) The town has received an official sign recognizing the inclusion of Saltville as a part of the *American Evolution* program. It will be placed somewhere in the downtown area.

## **Approval of the Agenda**

Councilman Morris made a motion to add a discussion of emergency medical services under the heading of New Business and then approve the agenda. Councilman Surber seconded, and all were in favor.

## **New Business**

### **1. Census discussion**

Peggy Hurley, an employee of the U.S. Department of Commerce, spoke on the following:

- 1) The purpose of the Census is to collect information to apportion seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, conduct redistricting at the federal, state and local levels, distribute over \$675 billion federal dollars to state and local governments, provide statistical support for grant applications, and help communities plan for future needs.
- 2) The goals of the 2020 Census are to maximize outreach by using the internet for responses. The fieldworkers will be provided with handheld devices for collecting Census data.
- 3) The timeline is as follows: August, 2019 – October, 2019 for in-field address canvassing; February, 2020 – July, 2020 for counting group quarters such as nursing homes, prisons, etc.; April 1, 2020 for Census Day; March, 2020 – July, 2020 for internet self-response, knocking on people's doors and non-response follow-up.
- 4) The jobs that will become available include an Area Census Office Manager, Census Field Manager, Admin Manager, IT Manager, Recruiting Manager, Recruiting Assistant, Census Field Supervisor, Office Operations Supervisor, Enumerators, and Clerks. These jobs can be applied for at the websites [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov) or [www.2020census.gov/jobs](http://www.2020census.gov/jobs).
- 5) So-called Complete Count Committees encourage residents to respond to the 2020 census. Government and community leaders from business, media, education, healthcare, etc. professions will help lead this process. The Mayor will assign a Chair for the community and proceed from there.
- 6) The Complete Count Committee will come up with a list of tasks to push the Census information out into the general public. These tasks involve education, promotion, and motivation/action as these pertain to the Census.
- 7) Local governments can collaborate with the U.S. Census Bureau by providing operational support in terms of having space that can be used for testing and training, providing lists of residential institutions, shelters, service providers, and transient locations, and promoting temporary job opportunities. Promotional support consists of forming the Complete Count Committees and encouraging local citizen participation with advertisements on various media outlets.
- 8) For any questions, people can call the recruiting hotline at (888) 480-1639 or the Philadelphia Regional Census Center at (844) 507-2020.

## **2. *If I Were Mayor* contest**

This year's winner of the *If I Were Mayor* contest was Delaney Bumgarner. Mayor Young presented Ms. Bumgarner with a plaque, and she sat in the Mayor's chair to see what it is like to lead a Council meeting.

## **3. Comprehensive Plan**

Councilman Surber made a motion to approve the Comprehensive Plan, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

## **4. EMS, Inc. report**

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The weekly meetings continue to be beneficial for both the town and EMS.
- 2) Both the DEQ report and annual Chloride report were submitted.
- 3) There were no overflows in January, but the inflow and infiltration issues are continuing. When the weather breaks, the smoke testing will start so the problem areas can be identified and fixed.
- 4) The monthly water report was sent to VDH.
- 5) Regarding the water accountability, the water meter readings at the county lines are being checked to determine their accuracy. The accountability is still too high.
- 6) Councilman Orr's Water/Sewer Committee is putting together a water/sewer policy.

## **5. Emergency Medical Services**

Mr. Martin stated that the future of the Saltville Rescue Squad is up in the air since they have had financial challenges over the past year or so. By state code, fire protection falls under the auspices of towns while rescue squad services are the responsibilities of counties. His recommendation is that the town ask the county to put in a Request for Proposal (RFP) for emergency medical services for the Saltville region.

Councilman Morris made a motion to have Smyth County submit an RFP for emergency medical services for the Saltville area, and Councilman Surber seconded. All were in favor.

## **Committee reports**

Councilman Orr's Water/Sewer Committee met and discussed the following:

- 1) The main purpose of the meeting was to make sure the town had the right procedures and policies in place in terms of how to handle hookups, cutoffs, meter placements, the placing of pressure reducing valves, etc.
- 2) The contracts involving the sale of water to each county were discussed.
- 3) Policies need to be set in the wake of the upcoming meter replacement project so the engineers will be in the loop about what needs to be done.
- 4) The policy guidelines the committee came up with were sent to town's attorney for review. Mr. Crewe said the draft looked fine, but he had a question concerning the tampering fines. He felt that needed to be a part of the town's ordinances rather than just a policy. Councilman Orr suggested removing the tampering portion from their proposed guidelines and sending that item to the Ordinance Committee for review.

Councilman Morris agreed that the tampering option needed to be left out of the guidelines since the tampering would be considered a criminal charge and would go through the court system, and the police would have to investigate it. Councilman Orr asked if the town could hold the land lord accountable if a tenant is the one who did the tampering, and Mr. Crewe replied that if the account is in the tenant's name, then the land lord probably cannot be held responsible and vice versa. He suggested having the accounts in both the tenant's name and the land lord's name. Councilman Morris asked if the town could legally do this with rental properties, and Mr. Crewe replied the town could do this with new accounts that are set up but probably couldn't change an existing account.

The Mayor suggested reviewing the proposed guidelines and vote on them at the March meeting, so this topic was tabled.

Councilman Morris discussed the Well Fields, Parks & Recreation, Wave Pool, and Salt Trail Committee meeting. Leon Kukeattinun, representing Jr. Panther football, thanked the Council for giving them the extra funding that was requested. Emily Porter and others represented Jr. Panther basketball and said it has always been up to the high school coaches and players to run this program, but they aren't really interested in doing it any more. Ms. Porter has asked about the town taking over this. If each child was charged \$20 to participate, it would pay for itself.

Regarding Little League baseball, President Preston Frye said it had been about four years since the infield dirt had been replaced. If the town provided the field mix at a cost of around \$1000, Tim Nutter said he would do the labor for free. Councilman Call asked if the high school was

going to contribute since they used the softball field as well. Councilman Morris agreed and said he would reach out to the high school if needed. He then made the motion for the town to purchase the field mix at \$105 per ton for five tons for a total of approximately \$1000, and Mr. Nutter would do the installation. Councilman Call seconded and mentioned that Little League used to run the basketball program as a fundraiser for baseball. All were in favor. Councilman Morris then suggested that the inmates clean out the concession stands.

Councilman Call discussed the Streets & Roads Committee meeting. He said that only one committee member showed up, but some citizens did attend to talk about drainage, paving, trees, and ditch debris on Palmer Avenue as well as signage for stopping buses on Palmer, too. The town crew and inmates could take care of the tree overhangs and ditches, and signs could be ordered for the buses. Councilman Surber mentioned United Salt used to clear part of Palmer Avenue with their own salt which helped the town crew with the road clearing, so maybe they can be contacted again to see why they no longer do.

There are concerns about big trucks still coming the wrong way up Palmer Avenue even though there are now signs posted and tickets are being written. Police Chief Puckett said the department is continuing to write tickets, but they will patrol more along Sycamore Road to hopefully, stop this altogether. The big trucks and other vehicles are also seen speeding coming down Palmer Avenue towards the ball fields, and a big rig was seen parked at the ballfields even though the Council put up signs prohibiting this. Chief Puckett said that happened last week, and the driver was told to move.

Councilman Morris asked Public Works Director R.B. Henderson if the town crew was planning on doing some ditch work when the weather breaks and paving could start. Mr. Henderson replied that it was discussed last fall to put Palmer Avenue on this year's paving schedule starting at the Dinsmore house going up towards the top. As far as the drainage goes, there's a meeting with officials of United Salt in March where the drainage issue will be discussed with them, then. There's a lot of runoff coming down that hill and Ader Lane that is contributing to the ditching issues. The ground is too saturated to absorb the runoff. Councilman Call suggested getting in touch with the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy about this problem since that agency is the one who would regulate this. Mr. Johnson said he would go ahead and order the bus signs.

Councilman Robinson booked a meeting of his Library, Historical & Cultural, and Health & Beautification committee, but the weather caused just one member to show up, so it will be rescheduled.

## **Town Manager's Report**

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) He extended his gratitude to the police and fire departments for their participation in the funeral and procession of State Trooper Lucas Dowell, a Smyth County native who was killed in the line of duty.
- 2) Brad Brown of Suez Water Management Services was introduced, and he spoke about the water tank maintenance his company does for the town. The reports that Suez prepare satisfy the requirements of VDH and also allow the condition of the tanks to be determined. The town's tanks are aging, but they can still be properly maintained which will ultimately save the town money in the long run. Suez also provides water meter replacements, so Mr. Brown said he would get in contact with the engineers at Crossroads who are in charge of the upcoming meter replacement project.
- 3) Jacky Colston and the Crossroads engineers are currently doing a GPS mapping of the town's entire water and sewer system.
- 4) He met with staff members from DHCD to update them on the projected future projects that will be taking place in the town.
- 5) The Virginia Outdoors Foundation completed their annual conservation easement visit of the Battlefield property owned by the town.
- 6) The town's annual bridge inspection reports were submitted to VDOT.
- 7) VDOT notified the town that the initial design phase has begun for the project to complete repairs to the bridge at the end of Government Plant Road. It should be rehabbed in the 2021 funding cycle to be paid directly by VDOT. Councilman Orr mentioned that former Councilman Vince Maiden is working with the Brownfields group to help with the property on the other side of this bridge by making it a viable commercial property.
- 8) He and the Mayor have reached out to Glade Spring Mayor Leann Lloyd to have her visit Saltville and to discuss how the two towns can better work together on improving the Salt Trail.
- 9) Using the inmate crews, the town has cleared out a new walking trail that goes between the Palmer Mill and the trailhead of the Barbrow Trail.
- 10) A new water contract between the town and the county is being drafted for the Council's approval.

## **Police Chief's Report**

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) Officer David Frye continues his training at the Academy.
- 2) Officer Keene is starting his one hundred hours of field training. He completed a four-hour block of instruction and a state test at the Academy in January.
- 3) Officer Hogston is at Saltville Elementary School as the resource officer since the students returned from the holiday break on January 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- 4) The inmate program started back three weeks early after three special projects were added. These projects are the aforementioned new trail in the Wellfields, the clearing of brush at the Battlefield Overlook on Buckeye Street, and the clearing of the area for the new salt shed and town shop. Councilman Morris thanked Chief Puckett for the work he is doing.

## **Public Works Director's Report**

Mr. Henderson spoke on the following:

- 1) DEQ recently inspected the gas tank, and the findings are in his report.
- 2) Mr. Blevins and Mr. Waddle recently obtained their CDLs.
- 3) The fire extinguishers have been inspected and retagged.
- 4) The rotating assembly from pump #2 at the Route 91 lift station was replaced.
- 5) LED lights were installed on each side of the Town Hall.
- 6) The Council was given a quote of \$2500 last month for the water pump replacement on the generator at the head works. Councilman Morris made a motion to purchase this, and Councilman Holley seconded. All were in favor.
- 7) As was mentioned by Chief Puckett, the inmates have cleared the area for the new shop. The salt shed building will be delivered on February 21<sup>st</sup>.
- 8) The GCS building roof developed a leak even though it was just recoated within the last year. The company who did the installation repaired it free of charge.



9) A camera was sent through a sewer pipe on West Main Street, and it was discovered that the pipe needed to be replaced. This will happen when it gets a little warmer.

10) A bid was obtained from South Star Distributors to repaint the pool since it has been several years since it was last painted. The Mayor suggested that this project be officially advertised, so Councilman Robinson made the motion to do so, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

11) Councilman Surber asked why the town still had the gas tank that was just inspected, since it would have to be removed when the proposed campground and surrounding areas are developed and the town now uses the WEX gas cards. Mr. Henderson said the WEX card the town crew uses is to buy diesel for the trucks. Also, the town has to pay a road tax when the card is used but does not when the tank is filled up. Additionally, Chief Puckett said the inmate crews use the tank to fill their gas containers throughout the day multiple times, and it would be hard for them to go to a station to do it.

12) Councilman Call said it had been brought to his attention that the inmates had been used to dig the graves instead of the town crew, even though it had been cold. Also, the inmates had been used to fill in graves that had sunk a little. Mr. Henderson said that the inmates have filled in the graves for several years, and they were used to dig when a particular grave was on the side of a hill and the town's equipment couldn't be used where there had been a lot of rain. Chief Puckett said the use of one of the smaller John Deere tractors was attempted, but even that one slid around, so it had to be dug by hand. Councilman Surber said he thought the town should bid out the grave digging to an outside contractor like it used to do, and Councilman Call said the problem with that was the contractor always got his money for doing the work at the time it was done, but the town didn't always receive payment for the graves all at once since most people paid on installments. Councilman Morris asked if any of the inmates themselves had complained about the work they were doing, and Chief Puckett said he had heard nothing from any of them. If the temperature is below thirty-two degrees, they aren't supposed to be outside doing work. That day it was higher than thirty-two, and they were allowed to get back in the van to warm up during the digging.

### **Rescue Squad Report**

Captain Joe Arnold told the Council he had given Mr. Martin the information that had been requested including finances (Linda Larmer will discuss this topic), employee roster, service area for the rescue squad, and their on-call hours. As of right now, the squad has 2 full-time employees and 12 part-time employees. The salary structure is comparable to other agencies in the surrounding area. The service area, as provided by the county's GIS Coordinator, is 145 square miles serving a population of approximately 6200. The office is staffed twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and there are no billings for patient refusals.

Councilman Morris asked Mr. Arnold if they had asked the county for more operating money, and he replied that Charlie Harrington, Smyth County's Emergency Management Coordinator, told him that no more money was available. The squad receives only \$33,000 from the county, and that barely pays the insurance and fuel bill, so the bottom line is that the squad will operate until it is no longer financially able to. Mr. Arnold then thanked the Council for its support over the years.

Ms. Larmer said she was the squad's treasurer and has been on the Board for over ten years. She told the Council that their financial records are kept on QuickBooks and looked over by the office manager and then reviewed by a firm in Marion. The squad has had no volunteers the last year, so to keep the coverage round the clock, all people who work there are now paid. Over the past five years, all of the money that had been in reserve has been used, and last spring, they sold a crash truck for extra cash. The Smyth County Board of Supervisors is aware of the squad's financial plight since Roscoe Call, a Supervisor, is also on the squad's Board of Directors.

During the last fiscal year, the squad made \$194,000 from billing and sold the crash truck for \$132,000. Other income put the squad's total revenue at \$372,355. The expenses include a big insurance bill, payroll of \$213,000, \$12,000 for vehicle maintenance, \$12,000 for utilities, \$6000 for first aid supplies, \$8000 for fuel, and others. The total expenses came to \$317,000. Being in the black \$54,000 was only due to the sale of the crash truck. The squad had to pay for members to work since there were no volunteers.

Both the Board of Supervisors and the Council have been informed that the squad is going to run out of money. Based on their current financial situation, the squad will only be able to run a couple of more months. The Board of Supervisors meets tonight, so they will probably be talking about it like the Council is. The goal of the squad has always been to transport people who need it, and Ms. Larmer stated that she's sorry it is going to end.

Councilman Orr thanked Ms. Larmer for all she and the other members of the squad had done for the town over the years, and Councilman Morris echoed the same sentiment saying he remembered the night they hit a deer and kept on going to their destination, and Councilman Surber, additionally, thanked Ms. Larmer for her service. The Mayor stated that it was a sad day for the town since the squad had been in place since 1958, and he wished there was a way the funds could be found to stop the closure. Hopefully, the county will find the funding to keep it running, but this is an issue in the greater area, too. Mr. Martin said that most small towns operate in the red with EMS services, and long term, it is not feasible for that to continue. It's inevitable that counties will eventually be responsible for all rescue squads.

## Closed Session

Councilman Morris made a motion to enter Closed Session in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2-3711(A)(3) to discuss the disposition of public property; Section 2.2-3711(A)(8) 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; and Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) to discuss personnel in the maintenance 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 Holley seconded, and the roll call vote was 6-0 in the affirmative.

During the maintenance personnel topic in Closed Session, Councilman Robinson excused himself and did not participate in the discussion.

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the raises for the employees of the maintenance department discussed in Closed Session to be effective the date their CDLs were obtained. Councilman Call seconded, and all were favor.

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

