

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on March 12, 2019 at 7:00 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
Tammy Carter, Front Office Clerk
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

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

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2019 special-called meeting, and Councilman Call seconded. The motion carried 5-0-1 with Councilman Orr abstaining since he was not present for that particular meeting.

Citizens' Time

Kris Sheets, the Branch Supervisor of the Saltville Library, spoke on the following:

- 1) She was made the Branch Supervisor last September, the first time the Saltville Library had had one in over a decade.
- 2) She thanked the Council for the additional funding that helped lead to this position and the town's staff overall always helping out whenever they are asked.
- 3) She gave flyers to the Council showcasing upcoming events including a new one titled *Money Smart Week* which will help people manage their fiscal responsibilities.
- 4) The library's Facebook page is full of information, and she encouraged everyone to peruse it and find out more about what's happening.

Monica Johnson thanked the town's maintenance staff for quickly fixing the fire hydrant near her house. It had been run over by a big rig who had come down Fifth Avenue mistakenly. The police need to be thanked as well since they ticketed the driver.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the agenda after a discussion of the Palmer Mill was added. Councilman Surber seconded, and all were in favor.

Old Business

1. Water/Sewer policy

Councilman Orr reminded the Council that they had a draft copy of the policy from last month's meeting, and he suggested removing the tampering portion and sending that to the Ordinance Committee for their input. Councilman Morris said he didn't think that the town could hold a landlord responsible if the account was not in the landlord's name. Town Attorney Trent Crewe replied that he agreed the town could not hold the landlord responsible unless his or her name was actually on the account, so that line was stricken from the policy like the tampering portion was.

Councilman Call then made the motion to approve the policy with those two portions removed. Councilman Morris seconded, and all were in favor.

Councilman Orr then made the motion to send the tampering option to the Ordinance Committee, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

2. Property transfer

At last month's meeting, Councilman Orr mentioned it was agreed for the town to transfer the front section of the aquaculture property to the Saltville Industrial Development Authority (SIDA) to properly advertise it or lease it. The deed is now ready, so he made the motion to have the Mayor sign it. Councilman Surber seconded, and all were in favor.

3. Pool painting bids

South Star Distributors was the only bidder for \$6984, and the bid included a four-year warranty covering paint peeling and blistering. Councilman Call asked Public Works Director R.B. Henderson if the back flushing issue from last summer had been resolved, and Mr. Henderson said it was a valve or pump problem that would be fixed before the pool opens this year.

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

New Business

1. Cub Scouts recognition

The Mayor stated he had been invited to one of the meetings of Cub Scout Pack 19 and had a great time. He was impressed with how much they did for the community and invited them to the front of the Council room where he presented them with a certificate.

Pack 19 is also involved in a soap box derby event every year. The Mayor presented Lennox Little with a second place plaque for his entry and Wyatt Robinson with a first place plaque for his entry.

2. Hazard Mitigation Plan

Town Manager Brian Martin introduced James Dillon, the GIS Director of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. Mr. Dillon showed the Council the updated Hazard Mitigation Plan and said that this is something that FEMA requires of each locality. It outlines past events that have incurred including bad weather, chemical spills, etc. and uses responses to those to provide instructions and actions in case they occur again in the future.

The main reason for the Council to approve this is that if the town were ever to apply for pre-disaster hazard mitigation funding, it could only qualify if it had this plan in place. Additionally, if the town were to experience an event that would be labeled a federal disaster, it would not get federal funding if this plan has not passed.

Councilman Surber made the motion to approve the Hazard Mitigation Plan, and Councilman Call seconded. All were in favor.

3. EMS, Inc. report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The weekly meetings between EMS and the town continue to benefit both parties.
- 2) The DEQ report for February has been submitted.
- 3) There were seventeen overflows reported to DEQ in February, and the excess rain caused most of those.
- 4) One of the aeration motors required an emergency repair, and Mr. Henderson and Rick Moore were instrumental in fixing it. A member of the staff of Boggs Municipal fell through some rusty steps while helping. He wasn't hurt, and Mr. Henderson has installed new steps.
- 5) The February report to VDH was submitted. The water accountability is still showing the town is losing millions of gallons a month, but the new water meter replacement project should improve this greatly.
- 6) The annual inspection with VDH is happening soon.
- 7) He thanked the Council for approving the new Water/Sewer policy, and stated it should help the town in moving forward.

4. Northwood High School Wrestlers

The Mayor said this year's team had a great year but went through adversity as well. A wrestler who had gone to state three straight years didn't return this year, a senior got injured in a tournament and decided not to continue, and on senior night, a wrestler decided to give it up. Zach DeBusk had an injury but came back to eventually earn his one hundredth win. Seven wrestlers qualified for state, and six went. Of the six that went to state, Northwood has its first female wrestler participate. The entire team then came to the front of the Council room and received a proclamation from the Mayor.

Two wrestlers were presented plaques for their efforts at the state tournament. Micah Haga finished fourth in the state in the 285-pound division though he actually wrestled at 240 pounds. That weight difference made his feat even more impressive. Micah had finished second in the Hogo, sixth in regionals, fifth in the super regionals before placing fourth at the state.

Jon Young finished second in the state in the 145-pound division after going to state and not placing last year. Prior to the state tournament, Jon finished second in the Hogo, second in the regionals, second in the super regionals, before placing second at the state meet. During his

matches at the state meet, Jon eliminated the wrestler who had beaten him last year and had lost only one match all season.

5. Palmer Mill

Councilman Robinson stated that several people had contacted about using the Palmer Mill for birthdays, weddings, and other gatherings, so he asked the Council for input on setting a price structure for such events. Councilman Call said the prior person who booked events for the Palmer Mill area charged people by the hour, but the town has since taken over the scheduling. An audience member said the Rescue Squad would host birthday parties for a donation of \$25-\$50. Councilman Orr suggested charging more for events on a Saturday.

The Mayor asked about wineries in the area and what they would charge for a wedding and suggested calling them to find out their fee. Councilman Robinson said it was his opinion that before the Mill hosted a wedding, the wheel needed to be operational and the trough needed to be fixed. Councilman Morris suggested having a so-called block price right now for events other than weddings such as \$100 for a four-hour block or maybe even all day.

Councilman Morris made a motion to charge \$100 a day for now, with that number subject to being revised at a later date. Councilman Holley seconded, and all were in favor. Councilman Orr then made a motion to refer this to Councilman Morris' Recreation Committee for further consideration. Councilman Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Committee Reports

There were no committee meetings in February.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) He's working with Craig Barbrow at Rural Development to gather information for the town's senior citizens about the so-called 504 Housing Improvement Program.
- 2) Later this summer, the Hillman Highway / Saltville Transmission Line project will start. There's only one pole in town that will be replaced.

- 3) Appalachian Sustainable Development held a local agriculture workshop recently at the Madam Russell Church. Saltville and Galax had the only local meetings.
- 4) The first of seven transformer moves was held last weekend without a hitch.
- 5) The staff completed the annual Census Bureau Boundary Adjustment Survey.
- 6) The old town shop site is being surveyed for the property transfer.
- 7) He, Councilman Orr, the Chair of the Water/Sewer Committee, and Mr. Henderson met with the Washington County Service Authority to discuss ongoing projects and future water purchase rates.
- 8) Price quotes are being obtained for new carpeting and tile in the Town Hall's public areas to include the Council room.
- 9) The annual dinner meeting for the MRPDC is upcoming, and the deadline to RSVP will be on April 4th.
- 10) On July 21st the Upward Bound program will be in town. There will be as many as thirty high school students here performing various jobs and tasks.
- 11) We are looking into getting lapel pins for the Council at Councilman Morris' request. Please stop by with any suggestions.
- 12) Last month the Council authorized purchasing approximately \$1000 for field mix for the ball fields at the request of Little League. The actual price that the town received was \$1438.50, so guidance is needed on how to proceed. Councilman Morris said the total included 100 bags of turf mix and 50 bags of something else. He recommended the town cut that by 20% which would leave the town with a bill of around \$930.00 and the high school's portion would be around \$310.00. That should take care of everything. He then made the motion to purchase the field mix, and Councilman Call seconded. All were in favor.
- 13) The huge Sycamore tree behind the Palmer Mill needs to be cut down because if it falls, it will destroy the building. Additionally, at last month's meeting, Councilman Call had brought up the fact that trees need to be cut along the Pike, and the town does not have the machinery to do it. The Mayor suggested putting this tree cutting and trimming out for bids to see what kind of prices the town could get, and the town could do the flagging for this job to save money. Councilman Orr suggested bidding this as two separate jobs (Palmer Mill Sycamore tree and Pike tree trimming) and made the motion to advertise this as such with the town doing the flagging. Councilman Holley seconded, and all were in favor.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) Five tickets have been issued on Palmer Avenue after the discussion last month regarding speeders in that area and trucks parking illegally.
- 2) He and Officer Jake Frye attended the First Responder's Appreciation Dinner at the Madam Russell Church.
- 3) Assistant Chief Bryan Lynch and Chief Puckett attended the Mid-Winter Chief's Conference in Roanoke. The department attends this every few years.
- 4) The department received two new scholarships for the Chief / Assistant Chief School in Richmond. This normally costs \$700 per person for a total of \$1400, but after requesting a reduced cost and submitting the paperwork for that, the town only had to pay \$100 per person or \$200 total. This represents a savings of 86%.
- 5) He and Assistant Chief Lynch attended a meeting in Wytheville to help set up a Board for the new Southwest Virginia Chief's Association. The President is Chief Rick Arnold from Wytheville, and the Vice President is Chief James Lane from Norton.
- 6) Officer Jake Frye will be attending the FTO (Field Training Officer) School at the Academy in April.
- 7) The annual Bill Whitely Memorial Fish-a-Ree will be held on Saturday, April 20th.
- 8) The Marion VFW is getting a program together where they recognize First Responders and their contributions to the communities they serve. Officer Jake Frye is a finalist for Officer-of-the-Year. This award will be presented at a ceremony to be held on April 4th.

Public Works Director's Report

Mr. Henderson spoke on the following:

- 1) The town crew has been working hard on water leaks at the clinic on West Main Street.
- 2) The inmates have done a good job cutting brush and clearing out debris from around the town's water tanks. The chipper the town purchased is more than paying for itself.

3) Referencing what EMS, Inc. Director Gary Johnson said, he thanked Rick Moore and Homer Blevins for their help with the motor at the sewer plant that had to be repaired. And those steps will be replaced this week. There will also be aluminum grating installed since that will improve the safety of the area.

4) All of the generators are now checked weekly since the town took back over the water and sewer systems.

5) The head works was recently cleaned out with the sewer vacuum truck with the help of Mr. Blevins.

6) The town recently purchased a leaf vacuum.

7) Darian Musick from Crossroads Engineering told the Council about the two Rural Development projects the town is undertaking. The Phase II portion is all grant funding if the money is spent quickly. Its scope is to restore the pump stations at Buckeye, Well #10, and Cardwell Town since there were no redundant pumps and the spare ones were not being maintained. Additionally, the replacement plumbing would be focused on efficiency and simplicity.

The Phase I portion was originally to replace all meters and service laterals, but now it is mainly for meter replacement only, so VDH modified the scope of the project. The town will incur pretty big debt for this project and won't really be getting extra revenue in terms of new customers to help offset this debt. The meters are just getting replaced. The loan will ultimately be paid through the meter readings being more efficient.

The Mayor asked for the timetable for the projects, and Mr. Musick replied that the Phase II design will go to VDH this month. Crossroads will probably advertise for the job in May, open the bids in June and close by July 1st. The Phase I job will start later in the summer or early fall. Regarding the meters, the Mayor asked where they would be placed in terms of the town's right-of-way. Mr. Musick said it depended upon where the main lines are located, but they would try to keep the meters on the right-of-way when they are affected by the main line replacements. The ones not associated with those main line replacements would be looked at on a case-by-case basis. The Mayor then asked if the meter manufacturer had been chosen as of yet and recommended choosing one that is fairly close to Saltville, and Mr. Musick replied that a few had contacted them about performing demonstrations, but one hasn't been chosen.

8) Councilman Surber asked Mr. Henderson to look at some of the trees on Lowe Hollow Road to see if they could be trimmed back a little since they interfered with the school buses.

Fire Department Report

Chief Jimmy Davidson spoke on the following:

1) The department had several calls last month. Of those, four involved fire. One of the fires was in town, and three were in the county. They provided rescue squad assistance for one call in the town and two in the county. There were also 21 hazard calls with ten of those being in the town and eleven in the county. The Mayor asked Chief Davidson if he could produce everything the department has done for the county so far this year, and Chief Davidson replied he would.

2) Councilman Morris asked about the hydrant replacement, and Chief Davidson told him that parts were ordered for replacing the hydrant on Easy Street that was mentioned during Citizens' Time. This will give them some prices to go by for the broader replacement.

3) He asked for the use of the inmates for the second annual Bash that will be held on Saturday, June 29th to mow the area on Friday and then pick up trash on Sunday. Police Chief Puckett said he would arrange this.

Rescue Squad Report

The Mayor stated that he just received word that the Smyth County Board of Supervisors voted to not continue with the Saltville Rescue Squad. Saltville will have to use Chilhowie or some other operation to have rescue squad services. The Saltville Rescue Squad currently has about two weeks of operation left with respect to their finances. He and Mr. Martin met with Squad member Linda Larmer this morning, and all were under the impression that the county was going to put forth \$20,000 and the town would find some funds as well to keep the Squad operational until July. By July, the RFP the county put out for rescue squad services should have produced the winning bidder.

The Mayor continued and said it was a shame that the county was not looking out for the citizens of the Saltville and those in the immediate surrounding area. By code, it's the county who is required to provide rescue squad services, and it is the town's responsibility to provide a fire department, which the town does. He said it was hard for him to believe that the county could not come up with the \$20,000 for the citizens on this side of the mountain. The town is even paying for a SRO for the elementary school and charges the lowest water rates to the county. It's just a shame for the town's citizens that they won't have a rescue squad here and will have to rely on Chilhowie. Mr. Martin said he has been speaking with Chilhowie's EMS

director, and frankly, using Chilhowie's rescue squad is just a short-term solution. They don't have the resources to run calls to Saltville permanently.

Councilman Morris asked if this was effective immediately, and the Mayor replied that Ms. Larmer had said that they had the finances to operate two more weeks. Mr. Martin said that since the Board of Supervisors' meeting just ended, all of the details are not yet known. The Mayor then suggested not adjourning the meeting but recessing instead so Mr. Martin will have a chance to speak with Smyth County to find out their intentions. The meeting could then be resumed on Wednesday or Thursday.

Ms. Larmer, who was present for tonight's meeting, said that Captain Joe Arnold went to the Board of Supervisors meeting to ask for additional funding. They felt good about the town helping out and the county helping as well, but the Board of Supervisors voted no. Once the squad is gone, it can't come back. Since October 1st of 2018, the squad has had 321 calls and answered all but 10. That's what the squad puts its money into. She said she appreciated the confidence the Council and the Mayor has shown in the squad, and the town's citizens have shown them the same support. But as of right now, the squad has enough money left for approximately two weeks.

The Mayor mentioned that the unknown right now is when the RFP will come back. Councilman Morris asked if the RFP had even been advertised yet, and Mr. Martin said he was unsure but had not seen it if it had. Councilman Orr stated that he thought the squad could be funded as it currently stands and this should be discussed more when the meeting resumes in the next day or two. Mr. Martin said if the town is going to put money into the squad, then a member of the Council needs to have a voice on the committee. Councilman Robinson has said he would serve in that capacity. Councilman Orr reiterated that when the meeting continues, the town needs to have an official position to submit to the county that deals with dollar numbers specifically.

An audience member asked if Ms. Larmer had requested \$14,000 from the Council tonight to keep the squad afloat. The Mayor replied she did not. The town was ready to give some money tonight, but that would not be enough to keep it open. The county had to supply its portion, too, but they refused to do it. The Mayor suggested that people call their representative on the Board and have it explained to them. He then repeated what he said earlier in the meeting that the town is responsible for fire services and the county is responsible for rescue squad services.

The Mayor then recessed the meeting until Thursday at 6:00 p.m.

