

Minutes of the Public Hearing of the Saltville Town Council held on October 12, 2021 at 6:45 p.m. in the Town Hall

**Council:**        **Monica Johnson and Steve Surber  
Jeff Comer, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, and Gary Call were not present**

**Mayor:**        **C. Todd Young**

**Staff:**        **Brian Martin, Town Manager  
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer**

The Mayor opened the Public Hearing and said he would take any public input on three proposed changes to the town's ordinances. Town Manager Brian Martin explained that the three changes were 1) modifying the town's charter to accommodate the new election laws recently passed by the state legislature, 2) adding the removal or disposal of trash and clutter and the cutting of grass and weeds, and 3) adding a provision for inoperable motor vehicles in the town limits.

There were no public comments, so the Mayor then closed the Public Hearing.

---

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on October 12, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall

**Council:**        **Monica Johnson, Jeff Comer, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, Steve Surber,  
and Gary Call. Councilmen Eugene Call was not present, and Bryan  
Morris arrived during Citizens' Time**

**Mayor:**        **C. Todd Young**

**Staff:**        **Brian Martin, Town Manager  
Paul Cassell, Town Attorney  
Erik Puckett, Police Chief  
R.B. Henderson, Public Works Director  
Kyle Brewster, E.M.S. Director  
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer**

Councilwoman Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 14, 2021 Public Hearing and regularly scheduled meeting under the provision the word membership be

replaced with employment in the E.M.S. report, and Councilman Comer seconded. All present were in favor.

### **Citizens' Time**

**Lisa Miller** asked about the recent addition of speed bumps on First Avenue. The Mayor replied that they were temporary due to people speeding and would be removed when the roads had to be scraped for snow. She also asked about potholes and water washing out the gravels put in them. The Mayor told her the town was going to acquire a hot box since the town truck was in the shop. This hot box will allow for hot patching the potholes.

**Elroy Delp** spoke as a member of the Northfork Sportsman's Club. He said they had fundraisers such as the backpack program, and donated funds to St. Jude's, Special Olympics, and local sports teams. Their grounds are being used by the Department of Conservation for employee firearms training.

The Club was founded to offer members a safe place to shoot and introducing kids to shooting sports. The Smyth County 4-H shooting team uses the facilities on a regular basis to practice for state competitions, and a couple of students have had success on both the state and country competitions.

**Carl Lamie** said that since opening several years ago, they have acquired over 180 members and continue to draw a lot of traffic on their website. His reason for speaking tonight is to notify the Council that they had recently purchased new property for training purposes, and he proposed a land swap with the town whereas the Club and the town could fence both properties. Currently, the Club's right-of-way passes through the town's property as does their waterlines. Swapping the land would stop the Club and its visitors from going through the area that is used for the town's maintenance equipment. It's his understanding that a swap could be done without much problem, and a bidding process could be avoided.

**Pastor Billy** of the Northwood Fellowship said the upcoming Trunk-or-Treat would be drive-thru like last year and would start at 6:00 p.m. on October 30<sup>th</sup> and last until 9:00 p.m. or until the candy is gone. Hot chocolate will also be served.

On November 11<sup>th</sup>, Veterans Day, his church will give all local veterans a meal. They will set up in the Commons Area and adhere to CDC guidelines. Last year, with help from the town, the church gave out 100 Christmas boxes but plans to do 200 this year. Additionally, they hope to help give out over 2000 backpacks.

**Randall Smith** asked Councilwoman Johnson to read a letter he wrote. His main talking points were utilizing the stage and the Commons Area more to show movies and have dances and concerts and have more revivals. The town needs more people using the town's facilities.

### **Approval of the Agenda**

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

### **Old Business**

#### **1. Softball field fence and disc golf**

Councilman Comer's committee met and said they supported building a nine-hole disc golf course. Jason Kolar, who proposed the idea of a course at September's meeting, said he was willing to help with some fundraising to help with the cost of the baskets that are used. It's also possible that some of the ARPA money could be used in this endeavor. Councilman Morris made a motion to have the Council support the idea of the disc golf course and have Mr. Kolar work with Mr. Martin. Councilman Gary Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Regarding the fence, Councilman Comer said it was brought to their attention that there is very nice temporary fencing on the market that is of a much better quality than what is currently in place. High school softball coach BJ Buchanan is looking for quotes for the Council to consider. Additionally, Smyth County School Board employee Mike Sturgill said the county, as of now, would pay 50% of the cost of this new fencing to which Councilwoman Johnson replied that she thought the School Board should pay more than 50%. Councilman Comer suggested having Mr. Martin meet with Coach Buchanan and the Little League Board to put together a few quotes for this project. Councilman Morris made the motion to do so, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

The committee also thought there should be more oversight of the use of the fields including the town charging an entry fee so it could be overseen by the town. This would make the process more organized. There could be a town employee designated to do this. This means a new position could be created or an existing employee could do it.

Councilwoman Johnson said there was a tournament this past weekend, but the town did not know about it. There were no event signs posted, no waivers signed, and the bathrooms were closed. It should be required that people get permission from the town before the fields are

used, and the Council had previously voted to have a waiver signed when using the fields. The Mayor stated that there is no way to direct people who want to use the fields. There needs to be signs posted at the fields directing people to get in contact with the front office if they want to book the use of the fields. They need to sign waivers and fill out any forms the town sees fit. If someone uses the fields without permission, then the police need to make them leave the field. Councilwoman Johnson then said that other towns charge a light deposit and a cleaning deposit for the bathrooms that they don't give back unless the bathrooms are cleaned.

Councilman Morris said he believes that there should be official policies and procedures for all of the town's recreational sites, including the ballfields, Salt Trail, and the pool. The committee could possibly put these together. Mr. Martin suggested setting a stop date for the use of the ballfields for the year. Councilman Gary Call made a motion to have Councilman Comer, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Martin put this together, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor. Town Attorney Paul Cassell said anyone wishing to use the town's facilities needs to contact the front office first. The signage proposed is a good start to this.

Councilwoman Johnson said it was also discussed at the committee meeting to ask the school board to put in their own softball and baseball fields in Rich Valley behind the middle school. This is already been done in Marion and Chilhowie. Saltville is the only town in the county that does not have school-owned fields. She said she'd like to see the county put a little more "skin into the game" and made the motion for that to happen. The motion died for lack of a second. Councilman Comer stated it was his opinion that this could be phrased differently. If the high school's administration is in favor of looking for a different location for ballfields, then the Council would support them in their desire. But this needs to start with the school itself because they know the protocols they need to follow, and it could then trickle down to the Council.

## **2. Palmer Mill and the Salt Park**

Mr. Martin said that during the last few months, the Council had received proposals to lease long term the Palmer Mill and the Salt Park. The town's attorney recommends that there be a Public Hearing on both of these proposals. The Allison Gap Ruritan Club, who wants to lease the Palmer Mill, has done some work on the building and wishes to continue to do so.

Councilman Morris made a motion to have a Public Hearing at the November meeting and continue to let the Allison Gap Ruritan Club do maintenance on the building. Councilman Gary Call seconded, and all were in favor.

## **3. SIDA appointment and possible appointment**

Mr. Martin said that Johnny Norris, whose term is up, told him to tell the Council that he was willing to serve another term and that his eight years of service speaks for itself, which is why

he did not submit an interest letter. Councilman Morris asked Councilman Gary Call if he wished to continue to serve on the SIDA, and he said he would continue.

Councilman Morris said he had known Betty Maiden since he had moved to Saltville and that she had owned a business in town for decades, so he would recommend appointing her. Councilman Gary Call made the motion to appoint Ms. Maiden to the SIDA, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

#### **4. Bank Street one-way**

Police Chief Puckett said that since the traffic light was removed at the intersection of East Main Street, Allison Gap Road, and First Avenue, it's become even more difficult to enter East Main from Bank Street. He recommends making Bank Street one-way entering from East Main and the Walgreens parking lot meaning drivers will not be able to enter Bank Street from Allison Gap Road.

Town Attorney Paul Cassell said he recommends a Public Hearing about this and that all the property owners in that area need to be notified. Councilwoman Johnson made a motion to have the Public Hearing in November, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

#### **5. Proposed ordinance changes**

The Mayor said that nobody had any comments regarding these changes during the Public Hearing.

Councilman Gary Call made a motion to approve the ordinance involving the cutting of grass and weeds, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Gary Call made a motion to approve the ordinance involving abandoned vehicles, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. The motion carried 4-1 with Councilman Morris voting no.

Councilman Morris made a motion to adopt the ordinance amending the town's charter to comply with recent changes made by the state legislature regarding election dates. Councilman Gary Call seconded. Councilwoman Johnson asked Councilmen Comer and Morris (Councilman Eugene Call is also up for re-election next year) if they were willing to stay on an extra six months. Mr. Cassell said any member of the Council has the option to resign whenever they wish, but this has to be passed because the state law changed. The motion carried 5-0.

## **6. Meetings on YouTube**

Councilwoman Johnson made a motion to start showing the Council meetings on You Tube, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

## **New Business**

### **1. Fall clean-up**

Clerk/Treasurer Steve Johnson asked the Council approve November 8 – 12 for the fall clean-up. Councilman Morris made the motion to do so, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

### **2. EMS, Inc. report**

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The DEQ report for September was submitted.
- 2) Due to a lack of rain, the overall inflow and infiltration problem hasn't been that bad.
- 3) The Lane Group is doing work in the McCreedy area regarding the I&I issues there.
- 4) The VDH monthly report and the VDH Water Treatment Leak Loss report were both submitted for September.
- 5) The tank paintings at 107 and Edgewood are underway.
- 6) A letter was sent to VDH stating the homeowners who had their water sampled for lead and copper were notified of the results.
- 7) In response to a question from Councilwoman Johnson, Mr. Johnson said the fluoride levels were good.

### **3. Vehicle and equipment maintenance**

This was tabled until the November meeting.

#### **4. Halloween**

The Mayor said he had been asked by several people when the town would celebrate Halloween. Councilwoman Johnson said that Abingdon was doing Halloween on Sunday and that the Trunk-or-Treat was going to be held on Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup> on the Salt Trail. Councilman Morris said he did not think it was the Council's place to tell the citizens when they could trick or treat. Halloween is when it is, and it's the citizens' prerogative when they do it. Chief Puckett said it would be easier for his department if it was held on Saturday.

Councilman Gary Call made the motion to have Halloween on Saturday the 30<sup>th</sup>, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. The motion carried 4-0-1 with Councilman Morris abstaining.

#### **Committee Reports**

Councilwoman Johnson said she drove around with one of her committee members to show her where the disc golf course is proposed and look at the town in general. Halloween decorations have been put up in the Commons Area.

Councilman Comer thanked Councilwoman Johnson for helping with the homecoming dance. He mentioned that he had been approached about naming something in town (such as the golf course) after long-time resident Herbert "Chub" Arnold. Mr. Johnson said a request was made a couple of years ago to name the baseball field after Chub, but they're already named after another individual. Councilman Comer then suggested naming the entire recreational area in general after Chub if an individual location could not be used. Councilman Gary Call said that Chub attended every local high school (RB Worthy and later, Northwood) game in every sport up until he passed away and agreed it would be nice if something was named after him. He then made the motion to do so. Councilman Morris seconded, and all were in favor. Councilman Morris did suggest looking in past minutes to make sure action on this wasn't already taken.

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

R.B. Henderson spoke on the following:

- 1) The speed bumps and accompanying signs have been installed.
- 2) The tanks Gary Johnson mentioned are currently being rehabbed.

- 3) The gate was moved at the police gun range per Council's request. Chief Puckett said he would get with Mr. Martin about adding a flagpole to the gun range area per Councilwoman Johnson's request.
- 4) Government Plant Road and Henrytown Road have been paved. The backside of Palmer Avenue will be paved in the next week or so.
- 5) The vandalism done to the signs at the playground area of the Salt Trail has been repaired. Councilwoman Johnson mentioned that Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful and the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable members were putting together some grant opportunities to add more to that area.
- 6) Tomorrow the road salt will be hauled in.
- 7) He asked the Council when they wanted to lock the lights at the ballfields.

### **Police Chief's Report**

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) Cargo was robbed, but the suspect was identified and charged. The last robbery in the town was in 2003.
- 2) Officer Hogston completed FTO school.
- 3) Two police vehicles and the old inmate jeep were given to the fire department for training exercises, and they will move them from the old town shop site.
- 4) One of the black SUVs has been officially taken over by the EMS department.
- 5) Officer McVey was in pursuit and was struck by the motorcycle he was pursuing, so his vehicle is currently being fixed. Councilwoman Johnson said the government class at the high school got to see some of this happen since the school had been put into lockdown.
- 6) The stats are included, but since the system has not been updated, not all are available. A few traffic charges aren't included.

### **Fire Department Report**

They had twenty calls last month with ten in the town, eight in the county, and one mutual aid call with both Chilhowie and Glade Spring.

### **Emergency Medical Services Report**

Director Kyle Brewster spoke on the following:

- 1) They had 110 calls last month.
- 2) The Explorer Program has been set up, and November 2<sup>nd</sup> will be the first Open House for the kids who are interested.
- 3) He gave the Council four employment applications to consider. If these four are approved, the EMS department will have twenty-four employees which leaves no holes in the schedule.
- 4) Richelle Loman, the EMS Office Manager, gave the Council an overview of the first quarter of operations. Since Mr. Brewster took over, the department has an efficient team that feels empowered to do the work. Their EMS license had to be obtained initially, so on May 1<sup>st</sup> they were given sixty days to complete a ninety-day process and actually obtained the license in fifty-eight days.

With a lot of hard work, the department was fully operational with a billing company within a week of starting the process on July 1<sup>st</sup>. After that, the paperwork for Medicare, Medicaid, and other insurances was started, and the process that usually takes three months, was in place a month later by receiving Medicare approval on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and the Medicaid approval was received on September 10<sup>th</sup>. The first deposits were actually received two weeks later. As a result of the income finally coming in, they will reimburse the town for their payroll.

- 5) The first application to join EMS was from Councilwoman Johnson. Councilman Morris asked Mr. Cassell if, as an elected member of the Council, Ms. Johnson could become an actual employee of the town. Mr. Cassell suggested running this through the Conflict of Interest Act Council to get their opinion, especially with this Council making the hiring decisions.

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve Jade Bordwine, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve Thomas Dickerson, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve Bobby Pruitt, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

### **Town Manager's Report**

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) The meter replacement project's \$600,000 line-of-credit has been obtained from the bank. This project will be advertised in the next week, so it should be going to bid in about a month.
- 2) The town received a \$75,000 grant through the MRPDC to help offset that \$600,000.
- 3) The application for \$250,000 has been re-submitted for the EPA Clean-up Grant for the old town shop area.
- 4) The Smyth County Chamber of Commerce hosted a trash pick-up in the Wellfields on September 25<sup>th</sup>.
- 5) The bridge rehab on Government Plant Road is still scheduled to start in December.
- 6) Applications for bike lanes and the grade connector on the Salt Trail were submitted on October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- 7) Per Councilman Morris' request, VDOT has been notified regarding the bump at the intersection of McKee Street and Highway 107.
- 8) Staff attended the county-wide First Responders Communications meeting.
- 9) One property was demolished and cleaned up this month.
- 10) The ARPA committee had its initial meeting on September 24<sup>th</sup>.
- 11) He's working on procuring fencing for the old town shop property.

### **Closed Session**

Councilman Morris made a motion to enter Closed Session in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) to discuss personnel in the maintenance department; Section

2.2-3711(A)(3) to discuss the disposition of publicly held real property where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the town; and 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. Councilman Gary 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 Comer seconded, and the roll call vote was 5-0 in the affirmative.

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