

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL  
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.  
MINUTES OF DECEMBER 4, 2007 AT 7:30 P.M.**

A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA. WAS HELD AT THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN HALL, 100 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA, ON DECEMBER 4, 2007 AT 7:30 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Ballengee, Councilmembers Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None. Also present Town Manager Terpenny, Assistant Town Manager Helms, Town Clerk Stipes, and Town Attorney Memmer.

MAYOR BALLENGEE stated there was a quorum present of Council Members.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE led by Councilman Wade.

**REGULAR MEETING**

MAYOR BALLENGEE called the Regular Meeting of Council to order and asked if there were any additions or corrections to the Minutes of November 20, 2007. There being none, the minutes were approved as presented.

**CITIZEN HEARINGS:**

MAYOR BALLENGEE opened the Citizen Hearings for those desiring to address Council.

MR. DON ALLEN OF THE GOVERNOR'S HIGHWAY SAFETY OFFICE TO PRESENT A SPECIAL AWARD TO CHRISTIANSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT. Mr. Don Allen of the Governor's Highway Safety Office presented the Christiansburg Police Department with the 2006 Virginia Law Enforcement Challenge Award. The award was given in recognition of the Police Department's traffic safety program led by Lieutenant Donnie Cromer. Christiansburg won first place in the 26 – 50 Officers category. Chief Mark Sisson accepted the award on behalf of the Police Department. Chief Sisson thanked Mr. Allen for his dedication to the law enforcement agencies in Virginia, and recognized Lieutenant Donnie Cromer for his outstanding efforts in leading the department's traffic safety programs. Chief Sisson also thanked Mayor Ballengee, Town Council, and the Town Manager for providing the resources necessary for an effective police department. Mayor Ballengee congratulated Chief Sisson and the officers of the Police Department.

MR. SHANE ADAMS TO PRESENT THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TOURISM INITIATIVE. Mr. Shane Adams, Director of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, along with board member Jeremy Allen, presented Council with an update on the tourism initiative that was established two years ago. According to the Town's contract with the Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Adams is to provide updates on the initiative by-annually, in April and September. The September update was delayed due to family obligations according to Mr. Adams. Mr. Adams said he has received much support from the business community for the initiative and submitted letters of support for Council review. Mr. Adams also submitted to Council a packet of information that included an outline of his presentation, a Tourism Initiative progress report for November, 2007, a tax collections year-end comparison for FY 05/06 and FY 06/07, a balance sheet and a P&L sheet, and the June 2007 Travel Barometer, which is a reporting tool used to gauge visitation to Virginia's attractions. Mr. Adams reported that a Tourism Development Council was formed six months ago and has contracted a firm to do a tourism study that will identify target markets. The study is to begin in January and should be completed in April. A temporary tourism website is also planned as a means to gather information from the public. In the meantime, the tourism initiative will continue with its current marketing strategy, which is unification, not separate advertising between Christiansburg, Blacksburg, and Montgomery County. At the close of the study, the TDC will have the information necessary to form an effective marketing plan. Publications currently advertised in are Virginia Is For Lovers travel guide, the Blue Ridge Parkway travel guide, the Wilderness Road brochure, and Virginia Lifestyles magazine. Mr. Adams said advertising in these publications has been successful and the \$14,000.00 full page ad in the Virginia Is For Lover's guide generated over ten thousand inquires at the visitor's center last year. Mr. Jeremy Allen thanked Council for the opportunity to continue with the lodging tax and reported a 6.4% increase in tourism spending in Montgomery County in 2006. Mr. Allen reported that seven thousand dollars was given in local grants, four thousand of which was for Christiansburg based activities. An ad the TDC is particularly excited about is an ad in the Pennsylvania area Ladies Home Journal. Mayor Ballengee commented that Christiansburg has become the commercial center of

Southwest Virginia and mall retailers have inquired about advertising through the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Adams replied that the Chamber's visitor's guide includes retail promotion. Councilwoman Carter asked how those interested might apply for a grant through the Tourism Initiative. Mr. Adams replied that applications can be obtained through the website or at the Chamber of Commerce office and can be emailed or faxed by applicants. There are guidelines for the TDC to use when considering application approvals and amounts. Six or seven grants have been issued totaling approximately seven thousand dollars. Councilman Huppert mentioned the possibility of the Town receiving a grant to help fund the downtown grand re-opening. Mr. Adams explained that grants are available for events that will generate revenue by bringing travelers into the area to spend the night and eat at local restaurants. Councilman Wade asked Mr. Adams to explain the reserve funds. Mr. Adams explained that the reserve funds are kept in an account separate from the Chamber of Commerce account and the Chamber of Commerce receives approximately twenty-percent of the funds for managing the Tourism Initiative, providing research and development, and for capital improvements. The funds are kept in reserves until needed. Mr. Allen encouraged Council to contact the TDC with any questions. Mr. Adams pointed out that Nichole Hair, Christiansburg's representative on the TDC, is sharing monthly tourism financial statements with Manager Terpenny, for further information. Town Council expressed its desire to see the Chamber of Commerce become more readily forthcoming with the financial information concerning the Tourism Initiative. Mr. Adams said he is hoping that eventually there will be an independent tourism initiative without the involvement of the Chamber of Commerce. Mayor Ballengee thanked Mr. Adams and Mr. Allen for their presentation.

There being no one else to address Council, MAYOR BALLENGEE closed the Citizen Hearings.

DISCUSSIONS BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBERS:

**APPOINTMENT TO MONTGOMERY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION.** Mayor Ballengee reported that the current representative, Mr. John Overton, is interested in reappointment to this Commission and the Mayor recommends reappointment. Councilmen Wade and Barber questioned Mr. Overton's ability to attend the Commission meetings because of his job location. Councilman Wade said it is important that the Town's representation attend the meetings. Mayor Ballengee said he will let Mr. Overton know that meeting attendance is an expectation. On motion by Councilman Stipes, seconded by Councilman Canada, Council voted to reappoint Mr. John Overton to the Montgomery Regional Economic Development Commission. Council voted as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

**COUNCILMAN STIPES - UPDATE ON PROPOSED NEW TOWN WEBSITE.** Councilman Stipes began by introducing and recognizing the members of the Website Committee: Mayor Ballengee, Adam Carpenetti, Nichole Hair, and Kimberly Weitkamp; he thanked each one for their expertise and enthusiasm. Councilman Stipes reported that the Committee met approximately seven times and as part of their research interviewed Council Members and Department Heads to gain insight on different needs and ideas for the website. The Committee also invited web service providers to submit statements of qualifications for review. Based on the Committee's research, it finds that a professional job is advisable and recommends a website design professional with expertise in government websites. Councilman Stipes explained that the amount of content is not a key factor in the cost of the website, but that cost is based on creativity, utility, and ease of use. It is the Committee's belief that a professionally created and maintained website will lead to a dramatic and sustained increase in website traffic, which will result in an increase in the use and efficiency of present Town services, and in special events and facilities like the aquatic center and the Harkrader Sports Complex. A professional website, according to Councilman Stipes, will enhance the Town and the businesses that are presently located here. Councilman Stipes said he believes that a thorough and up-to-date website is expected from citizens served by local government. An effective website allows citizens to readily access and download information to do business with the Town, and to "visit" the Town without setting foot in it, which is what economic developers and tourism experts say that approximately 90% of people presently do. A new, professional website will reinforce the Town motto, "Progressive Small-Town Living at its Best". With the information gathered during its review, the Website Committee believes that the Town can have a professional website launched by summer 2008, with a cost between thirty-five and forty thousand dollars. Payment for these services can extend over multiple budget cycles. The Town budgeted ten thousand dollars for the website for fiscal year 2007-2008. The Website Committee recommends Town Council allow Town staff to proceed with procurement of professional website design services with the following stipulations: (1) Present fiscal year 2007 – 2008 budget of ten thousand dollars be applied to this contract; (2) Keep up to ten thousand dollars in the next three years' budgets to complete the contract; and (3) Following the website launch, the Town allocate a five hundred dollar per month payment for website hosting, maintenance, and enhancement. Councilman Stipes noted that during the data collection process there was unanimous interest in offering the ability to pay bills, and conduct other financial transactions with the Town, online. A new Town website could support online bill payment at little or no extra cost, provided that the Town accounting software is appropriately established to receive payments. The Town currently owns software that would

allow these transactions, but the software has not yet been implemented, and this software will require the purchase of an upgrade module before it can be used for online bill pay services. Council expressed a concern that the number of bills paid to the Town during the year would not justify the cost of implementing bill pay software. Councilman Barber suggested that credit card payment may be more practical for the Town. The Website Committee recommends that the Town move ahead with a new website as proposed and consider adding an additional online bill pay service at such time as the new software is fully operational and if the Town feels that the necessary financial software upgrades are cost-effective. Councilman Wade made a motion to allow Town staff to proceed with procurement of professional website design services, with the stipulations noted above. The motion was seconded by Councilman Barber and Council voted as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

MR. HUPPERT AND MR. WADE – Central Business District Committee:

1. Resolution of Support for Antiques Corridor. Councilman Huppert read the Resolution and made a motion to adopt the Resolution, seconded by Councilman Barber. Council voted on the motion as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None. A copy of the Resolution is attached herewith and made a part of these minutes. Ms. Dorsey, who requested the Resolution at the November 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, thanked Council for its support.

MR. STIPES AND MR. CANADA – Street Committee Recommendations on:

1. Plat Showing Division and Right Of Way Dedication of the Property of Industrial Authority of Montgomery County; 3 lots; Corporate Drive, S.E. Councilman Stipes reported that this request, for property located in the Falling Branch Industrial Park, is to create three lots and a right-of-way for a proposed substation for American Electric Power Company. All is in order with the plat and Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the request seconded by Councilman Barber. Council voted as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.
2. Subdivision Plat for Silver Springs Inc., Lot 5 of Peyton Place; 2 lots; Hillcrest Drive, N.W. and Depot Street, N.W. Councilman Stipes reported that there is a duplex currently existing on this R-2 Two-Family residential property. The request does conform to the land use guidelines and Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the request seconded by Councilman Canada. Council voted as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

CLOSED MEETING:

MAYOR BALLENGEE requested a Closed Meeting under Section 2.2-3711A(5), *Code of Virginia*, for the discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business' or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community. On motion by Councilman Barber, seconded by Councilman Huppert, Council voted to enter into a Closed Meeting. Town Clerk Stipes polled Council as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

MAYOR BALLENGEE declared Council out of Closed Meeting and into Regular Session on motion by Councilman Canada, seconded by Councilman Huppert. Town Clerk Stipes polled Council on the motion as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

CERTIFICATION – Councilwoman Carter moved to certify that the Town Council of the Town of Christiansburg, meeting in Closed Meeting, to the best of each member's knowledge, discussed only the matters lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law and only such matters as are identified in the Resolution to enter into Closed Meeting. Councilman Stipes seconded the certification and Council voted as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

COUNCILMAN WADE reported that he received a call from a long-term Christiansburg resident regarding a late fee assessed on the gentleman's most recent water bill. According to the customer he did not receive a water bill from the Town in November and therefore overlooked making the payment. This is the first time he missed making a water payment. Councilman Wade suggested the Town establish a policy allowing leniency for cases such as this. Mayor Ballengee said he has also heard from a few folks who said they did not receive their most recent water bill and were assessed a late fee. According to the Treasurer's office, there was a problem within the post office during the mailing of the bills and several of the bills were not mailed properly. Mayor Ballengee further commented that several months ago Town Council discussed waiving the late fee for first time "offenders", but decided against changing the policy at that

time. Councilman Wade said he would like to reconsider the matter for folks with a good payment history who are first time "offenders". Town Manager Terpenny said that years ago former Town Attorney McGhee advised against waiving fees of any kind because he could find no authorization for such a policy in the Code of Virginia. Mayor Ballengee turned this matter over to Town Attorney Memmer for review and recommendation.

TOWN MANAGER REPORTS:

MONTHLY BILLS – On motion by Councilman Wade, seconded by Councilman Barber, Council voted to approve the monthly bills to be paid 10 December, 2007, in the amount of \$1,460,395.19. AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

TOWN MANAGER TERPENNY reported that there are currently thirteen site plans under review by Town staff.

TOWN MANAGER TERPENNY reported that he plans to give a contract extension on the downtown paving now that the temperature is colder. Paving will be finalized in the spring.

TOWN MANAGER TERPENNY reported two changes to Public Hearings previously set by Council. The changes are as follows:

1. Cancel the Public Hearing for the street vacation request for Patrick's Way. The Public Hearing was set for December 4, 2007.
2. Move the Public Hearing for the rezoning request for Stafford Drive, from A-Agriculture and R-1A Rural Residential to R-1 Single Family Residential, from December 4, 2007 to December 18, 2007.

On motion by Councilman Barber, seconded by Councilman Huppert, Council voted to make the Public Hearing changes listed above. Council voted on the motion as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

TOWN MANAGER TERPENNY updated Council on the local license fee exemption requested for police personnel at the last Council meeting. This request was also brought before Montgomery County and the Town of Blacksburg, but neither locality has voted on the matter. There are approximately thirty-five police personnel residing in Christiansburg, of which, nineteen are Christiansburg personnel. The exemption would cost approximately three thousand dollars per year. Council's continued concern with this request is singling out one particular department over another for favors. The Mayor remarked that the Town appreciates the police personnel and noted that there are several "perks" offered only to police personnel in the way of early and supplemental retirement. Councilman Canada made a motion to leave the current local license fees as is, which exempts only volunteer fire and rescue personnel. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wade and voted upon as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

MAYOR BALLENGEE invited those present to attend the Christmas Parade to be held downtown on Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Ballengee declared the meeting adjourned at 10:03 P.M.

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Michele M. Stipes, Clerk of Council

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Richard G. Ballengee, Mayor