

Christiansburg Planning Commission
Minutes of June 16, 2014

Present: Matthew J. Beasley
Ann Carter
Harry Collins
M.H. Dorsett, AICP
David Franusich
Jonathan Hedrick
Steve Huppert
Craig Moore, Chairperson
Joe Powers, Vice-Chairperson
Jennifer D. Sowers
Nichole Hair, Secretary ^{Non-Voting}

Absent: none

Staff/Visitors: Randy Wingfield, Assistant Town Manager
Missy Martin, staff
Sara Morgan, staff
Cindy Wells Disney, Montgomery County Planning Commission

Chairperson Moore called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Christiansburg Town Hall at 100 E. Main Street, Christiansburg, Virginia, following the pledge of allegiance, to discuss the following items:

Public Comment.

Chairperson Moore opened the floor for public comment. No public comments were made. Chairperson Moore closed the public comment period.

Approval of meeting minutes for April 28, 2014.

Chairperson Moore introduced the discussion. Commissioner Beasley made a motion to approve the Planning Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Hedrick seconded the motion, which passed 8-0. Commissioner Dorsett and Commissioner Franusich abstained due to absence from the April 28, 2014 meeting.

Review of the Capital Improvements Plan for the Fiscal Year 2014-2015.

Chairperson Moore turned the discussion over to Randy Wingfield. Mr. Wingfield stated the Capital Improvement Plan for next year is 12.5 million dollars. Mr. Wingfield stated last year he told Planning Commission the Town would do more of a standard plan with a five year focus but it is such an overwhelming job when looking at the capital requests from departments and what is normally budgeted in the Capital Improvement Plan. He stated in a typical year the plan is normally 4.5 to 5 million dollars but with the capital requests it runs between 10 to 12 million dollars.

Review of the Capital Improvements Plan for the Fiscal Year 2014-2015 (continued)

Mr. Wingfield added this budget is a little different due to special projects. He added the Town has a 3 million dollar meter upgrade project to replace all the water meters in town with digital read, which will be a long term cost saver to the town. Chairperson Moore asked for elaboration on this project. Mr. Wingfield replied basically the Town would have relay stations in town and radio read the meters plus the Treasurer's office could read a meter in a seconds notice. He added the radio read can reach up to approximately 95% of the meters in town, but some meters would still need to be read on site due to elevations. Chairperson Moore asked if other localities are using this type of radio read. Mr. Wingfield replied yes numerous large localities, such as Roanoke, are using this system.

Commissioner Huppert stated Town Council approved this type of system due to collection of bills in a timely manner. Mr. Wingfield added this system would help with delinquencies and earlier notice for shut offs. He also added the process would make utility bills smaller and more manageable for the citizens. Commissioner Carter asked if the meter project would be phased in over time. Mr. Wingfield replied installing the radio read would be installed town wide and once installed the process would start immediately for billing. Mr. Wingfield added with the new system the Town could have one meter reader instead of four.

Chairperson Moore added this system should help with track of water loss. Mr. Wingfield added this will help citizens find water leaks faster. Commissioner Dorsett asked if the Town did frequency testing on the meters. Mr. Wingfield replied yes in several areas of town and no problems were detected.

Mr. Wingfield discussed another project in the Capital Improvement Plan of remodeling the upstairs of the Police Department for investigators, which has always been a long-term plan for the Town. Vice-Chairperson Powers asked what the upstairs was used for now and Mr. Wingfield replied it has two offices but is otherwise vacant.

Commissioner Collins asked Mr. Wingfield if the Town does not charge citizens the total amount the Town pays for water. Mr. Wingfield replied the Town does operate on a loss of water and sewer and subsidizes it out of the general fund. He added with this year's budget the Town will basically break even with operations cost and all improvements to the water and sewer capital comes out of the general fund. Commissioner Collins asked if the Town can change what the Water Authority charges. Mr. Wingfield stated the Water Authority does pass on the rates to the Town but does not gain a profit.

Vice-Chairperson Powers asked if the Town is banking for major projects coming up. Mr. Wingfield replied the Town has a reserve fund of approximately 15 million dollars. Mr. Powers stated the citizens are not paying full cost of using water. Mr. Wingfield replied they are not and that has been the case for numerous years but the Town is closer to covering the cost than in the past. Mr. Powers added with all the infrastructure needs, money should be set aside for improvements.

Review of the Capital Improvements Plan for the Fiscal Year 2014-2015 (continued)

Mr. Wingfield added the Town had gradually increased rates, after the rates are increased from the Water Authority to cover operations and capital but Council's desire is not increase rates in one large chunk. Mr. Powers asked if the Town has a plan to increase the rates over a period of time. Mr. Wingfield replied there is not plan but the five year scope of the Capital Improvements Plan should help with the fee loss.

Vice-Chairperson Powers asked if large users pay discounted rates on water. Mr. Wingfield replied yes there is a discount rate for higher volume water users and it is an economic incentive for industrial users. Commissioner Hedrick asked if the Town will have a high increase on water next year. Mr. Wingfield replied the Water Authority increases water every year and the Town increases their rates also.

Mr. Wingfield discussed storm water utility fees being added because of state requirements and to help fund storm water maintenance, which now comes from the general fund.

Commissioner Huppert stated it was Council's intentions to not raise taxes. Mr. Wingfield stated citizens often see user fees increase as a tax increase.

Mr. Wingfield said the budget is close to \$1,000,000 for enhancing the downtown project and \$1,000,000 for storm water improvements on Brown Street and Church Street. The Town has \$200,000 in reserves for recreational development for the Town Park on Route 114. He also stated new to the budget was emergency services revenue recovery which is approximately \$700,000.00.

Vice-Chairperson Powers asked if funding will be available for sidewalks and trails. Mr. Wingfield replied yes there is funding for the Huckleberry Trail extension and general trail planning. Commissioner Collins asked if the Town can receive additional funds for sidewalks. Mr. Wingfield replied the Town does receive CDBG funding for sidewalks which is approximately \$100,000 per year. Ms. Hair clarified how the CDBG funding worked.

Commissioner Hedrick asked how many grants the Town received. Mr. Wingfield replied approximately 8 grants were received for the Town, which total several million dollars.

Commissioner Collins asked about new trash carts rates being the same for both size of carts. Mr. Wingfield replied the fees are the same because it takes the same amount of time to pick up. He clarified the fees and process of Town trash carts.

Commissioner Huppert asked Mr. Wingfield for the upcoming year what is on the top of the list for the Capital Improvements Plan. Mr. Wingfield replied the Truman-Wilson park development will be pushed and the Master Plan will be completed this year. He also added funds are being put into reserves for an Emergency Services building on Route 114.

Review of the Capital Improvements Plan for the Fiscal Year 2014-2015 (continued)

Commissioner Hedrick asked if the Town has a time frame for opening the new park on Route 114. Mr. Wingfield replies no and it will probably be completed in phases. Commissioner Huppert added the Town is discussing the option to sale a portion of the property for businesses to recoup some of the cost. Mr. Wingfield added several highway projects are included in the five-year capital plan, including the connector route.

Commissioner Dorsett asked if more neighborhood parks are addressed in the Parks and Rec Master Plan. Mr. Wingfield replied there is need for more parks and areas of Town are mentioned, but no specific location has been determined.

Commissioner Huppert verified the Depot Park creek would be cleaned up. Mr. Wingfield replied yes it is in the plan. Mr. Huppert added the intent is to place a bridge over the creek to contact to the skate park.

Commissioner Huppert stated one of Council's top concerns this next year will be the park and ride located at Falling Branch and discussed VDOT's plan to move the park and ride to a new location. Chairperson Moore added VDOT held a Six-Year Plan meeting for the public to come out and speak concerning road needs and the park and ride was discussed.

Chairperson Moore stated with no further questions then move on to work session.

Work Session-Neighborhood Plan of the Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan

Commissioner Carter made a motion to go into work session and Commissioner Dorsett seconded the motion.

Commissioners discussed the Neighborhood Plan and how to reach out to the citizens for comments. A neighborhood meeting is planned to be held at the neighborhood area churches.

The Commissioners made a decision to put up posters and brochures in local businesses in their designated area. Each Commissioner will be participating. A booth was discussed for the Wilderness Day Festival.

Commissioner Collins asked the Planning Commissioners to bring a list of businesses to hand out brochures to in their designated area to the next scheduled meeting.

Chairperson Moore stated with no objections the Commission will come out of work session. No objections were made.

Planning Commissioner Reports.

Commissioner Dorsett had no reports.

Commissioner Franusich stated he has completed the planning commissioner training course. He also added he would like the Commission to look back over the Comprehensive Plan and discuss adding graphics and visuals to show citizens future growth.

Commissioner Huppert stated the Town Council passed the budget.

Commissioner Carter had no reports.

Commissioner Beasley added the Development Subcommittee is working on current regulations for bed and breakfast.

Commissioner Powers stated the next Development Subcommittee meeting will be canceled on June 25, 2014.

Commissioner Sowers had no reports.

Commissioner Collins asked about moving the Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee meeting time to 6 p.m. Ms. Hair replied this would not be feasible because she is unable to attend at that time and the intent of the subcommittee meetings is to meet during business hours.

Commissioner Hedrick stated there has not been a Historic District Subcommittee meeting. He stated he would like to see a special event for the opening of the Peppers Ferry Bridge.

Other business.

Ms. Hair stated six public hearings will be on the agenda for the June 30th meeting.

Ms. Hair introduced the Planning Department part-time staff member, Sara Morgan and described her background in Planning.

Ms. Hair gave out to the Planning Commissioners the Livability Initiative books.

There being no more business Chairperson Moore adjourned the meeting at 8:32 p.m.



Craig Moore, Chairperson



Nichole Hair, Secretary Non-Voting