

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
MINUTES OF JUNE 5, 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 JUNE 5, 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 Mayor Ballengee.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Fiscal Year 2007 – 2008 Proposed Real Estate Tax Rate. Mayor Ballengee reported that the Town has not raised its tax rates in many years, and, due to the County’s recent reassessment, the Town saw the need to lower the tax rate for the fiscal year 2007 – 2008. Councilman Wade clarified that, even with the decreased tax rate, real estate owners will experience a tax increase of 15.5%. Councilman Wade does not see the necessity of a tax increase and proposed a tax rate of 11.26%, which would result in a revenue neutral tax. Councilman Canada said a town resident, Mr. Wrenn, approached him before the meeting and asked him to read a petition he collected in opposition to the proposed real estate tax rate. Councilman Canada submitted to Council the petition on Mr. Wrenn’s behalf.

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 May 15, 2007. There being none the Minutes were approved as presented.

CITIZEN HEARINGS:

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

At Councilman Stipes request, Mayor Ballengee amended the agenda to allow the Huckleberry Trail presentation to be heard next by Council.

PRESENTATION BY COUNCILMAN STIPES REGARDING THE HUCKLEBERRY TRAIL. Councilman Stipes thanked the Mayor for the opportunity to update Council on this positive and vibrant part of the community. Councilman Stipes introduced Mr. Bill Ellenbogen, representative of Friends of the Huckleberry, who gave the presentation. Mr. Ellenbogen thanked the Town for its past and continued support of the Huckleberry Trail through monetary and in-kind contributions. He hopes to work with the Town in extending the trail to the recreation center, and possibly the high school and beyond to the future aquatic center. PREIT, developers of the New River Valley Mall, have donated funds in the amount of \$14,000.00 for an engineering survey, which is being performed by Gay and Neel. PREIT has indicated that there may be additional funding in the future. Mr. Ellenbogen pointed out that the Town has other options for grant funding and private funding for the trail. Councilman Stipes said the goal is to extend the trail with as much grant and private funding as possible. The main obstacles in extending the trail are crossing Route 114 and the existing railroad tracks. The engineering survey will provide direction on how to proceed. Council supports the Huckleberry Trail extension and Mayor Ballengee thanked Mr. Ellenbogen for the presentation and for taking an interest in Christiansburg.

STEPHEN MILLESON TO ADDRESS COUNCIL REGARDING RELAY FOR LIFE. Mr. Bo Newcomb, a long term volunteer for Relay for Life, addressed Council on behalf of Mr. Milleson. Mr. Newcomb asked Council’s permission to hold the annual Relay for Life event at the Christiansburg High School, with loud speaker use, on June 15th and 16th. Relay for Life is a volunteer based organization that raises money for cancer research, education, patient services, and advocacy. Last year, Relay for Life raised over three million dollars worldwide for cancer research. Last year Christiansburg raised one hundred forty-eight thousand dollars; this year’s goal is one hundred sixty-five thousand dollars. Mr. Newcomb invited everyone present to participate in the event. Mayor Ballengee commented that this event has been

held in Christiansburg for many years and is heavily supported by the Community. The organization has always complied with Town Code and Mayor Ballengee suggested the request be approved perpetually. Councilman Wade made a motion to approve the request, in perpetuity, seconded by Councilman Barber. Council voted as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

MR. GUS CAMODUS addressed Council regarding his family-owned store at 49 West Main Street. During the downtown renovation project it was discovered that a storm sewer system runs under his building. Mr. Camodus claims that the aquaduct is faulty and he is concerned that he may be held responsible for repairs under his store. He said that the storm system problems have basically condemned his property and made the store undesirable to renters. Mr. Camodus asked Town Council to officially condemn the property and purchase it at fair market value. If he feels he is left with no other option, he plans to file an injunction to stop the renovation process. Mr. Camodus said he has been in touch with Assistant Town Manager Helms regarding this problem since the beginning of the downtown renovation project. Mayor Ballengee said the Town has been aware for many years that a twenty-foot wide creek runs under the building, and Mr. Camodus should not be expected to maintain a storm sewer system for Christiansburg. Mayor Ballengee said he will review the matter with Town engineers.

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

DISCUSSIONS BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBERS:

COUNCIL ACTION ON THE PUBLIC HEARING REQUEST:

1. Fiscal Year 2007 – 2008 Proposed Real Estate Tax Rate. Per Mayor Ballengee, as a result of Council’s discussion during the first budget reading, three hundred and six thousand dollars has been cut from the budget. Among the cuts are several vehicles from various departments, and several police officer positions. Councilman Wade asked why the budgeted revenue did not decrease, even though expenditures decreased by three hundred and six dollars. Councilman Canada asked if the money collected from the tax increase is included in the reserves fund. Mayor Ballengee said that the money will be put into reserves to help with planning and future expansions. Examples of future needs are a new emergency building on Route 114, and ballpark lighting at the Kiwanis Park. The Town has always tried to set aside a “cushion”, which has allowed the Town to “pay as you go” in the past, with the exception of the aquatic center and the wastewater treatment plant renovation. The reserve fund also allows the Town to be prepared for unforeseen disasters. Mayor Ballengee said that a lower tax rate could impede future plans and growth. Councilman Canada commented that he did not have the opportunity to review the revised budget and asked for clarification of the budget cuts and the effect the cuts have on the budget and the proposed tax rate. Councilman Canada said it is clear to him that the tax increase is not necessary, since it results in even greater revenue after the expenditure cuts. He commented that if three hundred and six thousand dollars has been cut from the budgeted expenditures, the savings should be passed on to the citizens. Councilman Wade and Councilman Stipes both agreed that the savings from the budget cuts should be passed on to citizens by way of a reduced real estate tax rate. Councilman Canada pointed out that there are other ways to collect money without getting it from the landowners in Christiansburg, and offered, along with Councilman Wade, to serve on a committee to find other avenues of revenue for the Town. Councilman Huppert said that Christiansburg must maintain its standards and growth, however, at the same time the Town needs to consider its citizens. Pocketbooks are being hit hard right now, he said, and he agreed the rate needs to be lowered to a rate that will be revenue neutral. Councilman Barber said that the tax rate has not changed in many years and suggested putting an increase off for another year. If an increase is needed next year as a result of a decrease this year, then Council can discuss at that time. Mayor Ballengee said that the reduced tax rate, even though it results in a tax increase, is sound financial management. Christiansburg is the fourth largest town in Virginia, but has the lowest tax rate within a one hundred mile radius. This is the result of the sound financial management the Town has experienced in years past. Councilman Wade pointed out that with Christiansburg’s continued growth there are plenty of opportunities for additional tax revenue in the future. Councilwoman Carter said she has received so many calls from the community asking her to not support a real estate tax increase. Montgomery County taxes have risen so high that people are really feeling the burden of increased taxation. Councilwoman Carter said she must support the community that she serves. Mayor Ballengee stated that he is not advocating a tax increase, but understands that the infrastructure of the Town will deteriorate if the means are not available for upkeep. Councilman Wade made motion to set the real estate tax rate at .1126/\$100, which will create a revenue neutral tax. The motion was seconded by Councilman Canada and, at Mayor Ballengee’s direction, Town Clerk Stipes polled Council as follows: Barber – AYE; Canada – AYE; Carter – AYE; Huppert – AYE; Stipes – AYE; Wade – AYE.

FISCAL YEAR 2007 – 2008 PROPOSED BUDGET– SECOND READING. Councilman Canada made a motion to adopt the fiscal year 2007 – 2008 budget with the three hundred six thousand dollar expenditure cut, a seven thousand dollar increase for website design and maintenance, a real estate tax rate of .1126/\$100, and various minor changes as explained by the Town Manager. Councilman Barber seconded the motion and, at Mayor Ballengee’s direction, Town Clerk Stipes polled Council as follows: Barber – AYE; Canada – AYE; Carter – AYE; Huppert – AYE; Stipes – AYE; Wade – AYE.

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

1. Plat showing subdivision of property for Dorothy L. Hawley; 2 lots; Radford Street, N.W. Councilman Barber explained that this property is the Country Kitchen location off Radford Street. The property, which is zoned B-3 General Business, is narrow and deep, and the owners want to cut off the back portion of the lot. The back portion of the lot is serviced by an existing right-of-way. All is in order with the plat and Councilman Barber made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Councilman Wade. Council voted on the motion as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.
2. New River Village Phase VII, Lots 171-189 and Lot 125A; 20 lots; New Village Drive, N.W. Councilman Barber reported that this development has been ongoing for several years and this is just the next Phase of many. All is in order with the plat and Councilman Barber made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Councilman Canada. Council voted on the motion as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

TOWN MANAGER REPORTS:

MONTHLY BILLS – On motion by Councilman Barber, seconded by Councilman Stipes, Council voted to approve the monthly bills to be paid 10 June, 2007, in the amount of \$1,137,131.29. AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

TAXI CAB LICENSE APPLICATION – Town Manager Terpenny submitted to Council a taxi cab license application for Michael Woolwine to drive for Christiansburg Cab. The Police Department has investigated the applicant and recommends approval. On motion by Councilman Barber, seconded by Councilwoman Carter, Council voted to approve the taxi cab license application for Michael Woolwine as follows: AYES: Barber, Canada, Carter, Huppert, Stipes, and Wade. NAYS: None.

TOWN MANAGER TERPENNY drew Council’s attention to a flier placed at each of their seats regarding green infrastructure in the New River Valley. The “Green Infrastructure Initiative” was created by the New River Valley Planning District Commission to educate communities in the New River Valley on how to maintain a network of green infrastructure for healthy and sustainable community growth. An information meeting for Christiansburg is scheduled for June 21 at the Montgomery County Government Center and is open to anyone interested in learning more about this topic.

TOWN MANAGER TERPENNY informed Council that the VML Policy Committee Meetings are scheduled for July 19, 2007 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

TOWN MANAGER TERPENNY reported that the Parks and Recreation Department received a grant in the amount of two thousand dollars (\$2,000.00) from the local grant program set up in the Tourism Agreement with Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. The funding will be used for promoting tournaments at Harkrader Sports Complex.

AQUATIC CENTER UPDATE – Manager Terpenny reported that he met with the contractor and architect regarding the draft agreement, which has since been sent to the Town Attorney, Jim Guynn. The contractor is set to move on site soon. The Virginia Tech commitment is over a twenty year period and the Town is working to find a way to collect the funds up front, possibly through the bonding company the Town used for the initial aquatic center bond.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Ballengee declared the meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Page ____
June 5, 2007