

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 16, 2019 – 5:30 P.M.**

A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA. WAS HELD AT CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN HALL, 100 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA, ON APRIL 16, 2019 AT 5:30 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor D. Michael Barber; Vice-Mayor Steve Huppert; Samuel M. Bishop; Harry Collins; Merissa Sachs; Henry Showalter; Bradford J. Stipes. ABSENT: None.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren; Clerk of Council Michele Stipes; Assistant to the Town Manager Adam Carpenetti; Finance Director/Treasurer Val Tweedie; Public Relations Director Melissa Demmitt; Director of Public Works Jim Lancianese; Director of Engineering Wayne Nelson; Planning Director Will Drake; Human Relations Director Dave Brahmstadt; Building Official Jerry Heinline; Street Superintendent Travis Moles; General Services Superintendent Dave Sutphin.

WORK SESSION

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. DISCUSSION BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL
 - A. Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

Town Manager Wingfield provided Council with a revised employee compensation plan, and offered an overview of the revisions and supporting materials. Council questioned the inclusion of the 2% COLA increase, which was to be eliminated in lieu of salary adjustments and merit increases as prioritized by Town Manager Wingfield.

Town Manager Wingfield provided a general overview of the FY 2019-2020 proposed budget that included an outline of the proposed fee increases as follows: Water rate increase - \$1/1000 gallons (Mr. Wingfield noted increased fees from the Water Authority); minimum building permit fee increased by \$10, which would bring the fee in line with surrounding localities and would help offset the costs of the proposed Code Enforcement Program; add a plan resubmittal fee of \$100 and increased \$.06/square foot for residential and increased by \$1/1000 square foot for commercial.

Building Official Jerry Heinline called attention to the Code Enforcement Program included in the budget and reported on the goals of the program and anticipated benefits to the Town. The program would require one new employee with an annual salary between \$35k - \$45k, and a new vehicle, and Mr. Heinline provided an overview of the position requirements and functions. Under the program, the new employee would work with the public to facilitate compliance with Town Code. Building Department renovations are included in the budget to accommodate growth within the department, according to Mr. Heinline.

Assistant to the Town Manager Adam Carpenetti reported on the budget requests for the IT Department that call for a Network Systems Administrator. Mr. Carpenetti detailed current positions and functions within IT, and explained the need for workload relief that would be provided through the new employee. Currently, the department is short-staffed to the extent that basic maintenance is behind schedule, along with other important matters such as the development and implementation of a town department-wide disaster plan. Mr. Carpenetti talked about current and ongoing IT projects, and noted that the first order of business for the new position would be maintenance and security related projects. At Councilwoman Sachs request, Mr. Carpenetti explained why the request was for a high tech employee (\$70,000+ annual salary) instead of a lower tech individual, by noting that current staff was efficient in handling the many requests that come through Helpdesk, and that a high level employee would allow the department to address basic maintenance and security matters as a high priority with immediate attention. Noting the \$200,000 budget increase request from the IT Department, Councilwoman Sachs asked how that money would be spent. Mr. Carpenetti explained that the funding would be used primarily for salary, capital improvements related to security projects, and a new department vehicle. Mr. Carpenetti stated that the department has been in need of additional employees for years, and he expected to request an employee position in FY 20-21, in addition to the current request. The requested funding to expand the IT Department would accommodate office space for two new positions. Included in the IT Department budget is a request for a Radio Technician position, and Town Manager Wingfield explained the purpose of this neutral salaried position at the request of, and in partnership with, Montgomery County and likely Blacksburg and Virginia Tech. There is currently no contract for the terms of the position. Council discussed requests for new vehicles for the IT Department and Building Department, with Council stressing the importance of the two departments working together to purchase vehicles at a discount, and that the vehicles not leave Town limits, if approved by Council. Council discussed Adam Carpenetti's position with the town, which he noted was primarily IT, not administrative, and Councilman Showalter questioned if the Town had considered the use of subcontractors to assist with IT needs. Human Resource Director Dave Brahmstadt responded he was unfamiliar with the use of subcontractors for IT purposes, and Councilman Showalter requested he look into the feasibility of hiring subcontractors under a one-year contract as a solution to the needs expressed by Mr. Carpenetti. At Councilwoman Sachs request, Ms. Tweedie and Mr. Carpenetti explained the budget request for assessments related to evaluating the Town's software and IT systems, as important in understanding the deficiencies and specific software needs of the Town, further noting assessments would provide valuable recommendations as to the specific software needed by the Town.

Council briefly discussed the 2% COLA included in the budget, and it was noted that the increase had not been approved by the Finance Committee in lieu of the merit increases and salary adjustments, which totaled a 3-4% increase across the board for employees.

Noting the budget request to cover the increase in employee health insurance premiums, which clarified by Ms. Tweedie to cost an estimated \$12, \$13, or \$27 increase to employees monthly, depending on the plan, Councilwoman Sachs said she was unable to support tax dollars funding the increase due to the salary base/benefits received by employees as compared to the private sector. Councilman Showalter recalled Mr. Brahmstadt explaining that it was the Town's intent to begin educating employees on responsible health insurance usage, and he stressed that responsible-use education should be an ongoing program within the Town.

Councilman Huppert asked Council to consider his proposal to increase the meals tax by 1.5 cents to directly support development of the former Truman Wilson property into a town park, effective July 1, 2019. Mr. Huppert talked about the importance of having funding prior to incurring debt, and explained how the park would boost the economy by bringing people into town for various usage and events. Councilwoman Sachs talked about the difference between funding needs and funding wants, and stated she could not support a meals tax increase to fund development of the park. Councilman Stipes commented that he understood Mr. Huppert's approach, but suggested that, as an alternative to increasing revenue through a tax increase, the Town would see an increase in revenue through the redevelopment of Market Place, and development of the Town park, which will draw more people to the area.

Councilwoman Sachs and Councilman Showalter both noted that expenditures in the proposed FY 2019-2020 budget were more than the proposed revenue, which was not sustainable or fiscally responsible. An area of concern discussed was the vehicle costs and new vehicle request for the Police Department, and Councilman Showalter requested Council be provided with details on costs for vehicles leaving town limits, the two requested support vehicles, and a proposal on whether or not the life of the current police vehicles could be extended. Other areas of concern discussed were the expenses included in the cemetery and aquatic center budgets. Public Works Director Jim Larianese explained the request for the HVAC system consultation for the aquatic center, which would result in a recommendation appropriate for the Town's facility. Ms. Tweedie noted that aquatic center reserve funding would cover some of the costs related to the HVAC system, which was in need of repair or replacement. Councilwoman Sachs recommended placing ad space on the proposed digital sign at the aquatic center. Mayor Barber noted that the sign, although placed near the aquatic center, would be a sign for Town matters, not just for aquatics use. Councilman Stipes and Councilman Huppert expressed that they did not support ad space on the Town's proposed digital sign. Councilman Showalter recommended that each Town department head find areas of expense to cut in their respective department to assist in developing a budget that was acceptable. Councilwoman Sachs and Councilman Collins agreed with Mr. Showalter's recommendation, with Mr. Collins stressing that expenditures must be less than revenue, and Councilman Stipes noting that the budget process should be priority-based that supports the Town's Destination 2022. In addition, Councilwoman Sachs requested Council be provided with complete cost details to the Town with regards to the increase in travel and school expenses.

Councilwoman Sachs questioned the increased costs to community contributions and expressed that taxpayers should have a say in those tax supported contributions. Ms. Sachs suggested either disbanding community contributions or only increasing contributions in relation to an overall budget increase. Councilman Showalter talked about the process used by Council in determining community contributions, and recommended only voting on the amount requested by applicants, with no consideration by Council for a variable contribution amount. Councilman Huppert proposed community contributions remain the same as in FY-18-19. Councilman Stipes expressed support for including community contributions as determined by the Council survey. Council agreed that there were several community obligations that the Town must support for the benefit of the community, and Councilman Bishop requested Council review the community contributions to determine realized benefits to the Town. Council agreed to further discuss this matter during its upcoming Council Retreat.

Council was reminded of the following meeting dates:

- April 30, 5:30 P.M. – Special Meeting with the PPEA Committee
- May 7, 5:30 P.M. – Special Meeting, budget work session
- June 28 & 29, time tbd – Council Retreat

XII. ADJOURN

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the work session at 8:27 P.M.

Michele Stipes, Clerk of Council

D. Michael Barber, Mayor