

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 14, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.**

Declarations of Emergency have been made at all levels of government including the Town of Christiansburg. During a declared disaster, the Code of Virginia requires and allows governing bodies of localities and other public entities to conduct their meetings in manners which are consistent with providing continuity of government and in a safe and healthy manner, and for the public safety, health and welfare for the governing body and all attendees/interested parties consistent with open government. The COVID-19 virus makes it impractical and unsafe for Christiansburg Town Council to physically assemble in one location. The virus also makes it impractical and unsafe, as well as potentially life threatening, for the public, and the Town staff, to gather in the same location. As a result, the meeting was conducted virtually via Zoom. The Council members and any necessary staff joined the meeting via electronic communications without a quorum of Town Council physically assembled at one location pursuant to, and authorized by, Code of Virginia § 2.2-3708.2(A)(3) and the Continuity of Government Ordinance passed by Christiansburg Town Council on March 24, 2020. Members of the public were invited to call into the meeting using this phone number: +1 646 558 8656 or +1 312 626 6799. Webinar ID: 638 231 187. The meeting was also streamed live on the Town of Christiansburg's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cburgvagov and was uploaded to the Town's YouTube page at the conclusion of the meeting.

A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL, MONTGOMERY COUNTY,
CHRISTIANSBURG, VA. WAS HELD ELECTRONICALLY VIA ZOOM ON APRIL 14, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M.

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

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Clerk of Council Michele Stipes; Town Attorney Reid Broughton; Police Chief Mark Sisson; Fire Chief/Fire Marshal Billy Hanks; Rescue Chief Joe Coyle.

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Moment of Reflection.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGENDA

- A. Councilwoman Hicks made a motion to remove all items from the agenda that did not pertain to the COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with the Declaration of Emergency by Governor Ralph Northam and FOIA guidelines prohibiting electronically held public meetings, and she requested advisement from Town Attorney Reid Broughton on whether the meeting being held was legal. Town Attorney Broughton clarified that the Town ordinance in accordance with

Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-1413, confirming the declaration of local emergency and providing for the continuity of government was recognized by Virginia and superseded FOIA guidelines pertaining to electronically held public meetings. Mayor Barber referred to an email from Town Attorney Reid Broughton to Council that explained the State provision that permitted measures to allow for the continuity of government during emergencies. It was noted that the Town ordinance referred to by Mr. Broughton was unanimously adopted by Council on March 24, 2020. Councilwoman Hicks said she believed she was incorrect to have supported the ordinance, and further said she believed only matters related to protecting the public from COVID-19 should be discussed during meetings of Council. The motion died for lack of a second.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes of March 24, 2020 and April 7, 2020.
- B. Recognition of Proclamation of April 2020 as Child Abuse Prevention Month
- C. Recognition of Proclamation of April 6-12, 2020 National Public Health Week
- D. Recognition of Proclamation of April 12-18, 2020 as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week

Councilman Stipes made motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Councilman Huppert. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

V. INTRODUCTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- A. Major Ronald Mott of the Salvation Army to present on their programs and operations.

Major Mott thanked Council for the opportunity to speak and presented an overview of the Christiansburg-based Salvation Army and its programs that provide emergency assistance, food assistance, and other services, to residents of Montgomery Floyd, Giles, and Pulaski Counties, and Radford City. Major Mott talked about the increase in needs within communities as a result of COVID-19, and noted that sales at the Family Store in Fairlawn helped support the efforts to meet those needs year round. The Salvation Army has a church located on Roanoke Street, with a mission to spread the gospel and serve the needs of others. Councilman Huppert noted the absence of Salvation Army bell ringers this past Christmas. Major Mott explained that the Salvation Army had not received enough volunteer interest and made the decision to suspend the program for 2019. Council discussed various avenues for providing support to organizations and agencies that serve basic needs within the community, and Councilman Showalter suggested adding a charitable contributions page to the Town's website that contained links for donating to specific organizations.

- B. Director Karim Khan of the Montgomery – Floyd Regional Library to present of their programs and operations.

Mr. Khan thanked Council for the opportunity to speak and used PowerPoint to provide an overview of library updates, programs, and activities during 2019, and reported on the library closure in response to COVID-19, with plans for a future phased re-opening. Mr. Khan thanked Council for its continued support of the library.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no comments presented.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Councilman Stipes provided a brief update on the runway expansion project at Virginia Tech Montgomery Executive Airport, and noted the authority was in the process of hiring a new director to replace long-time Executive Director Michael St. Jean, who plans to retire this year.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND ACTION BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL

- A. Recommendation to the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors to reappoint John Overton to serve another three-year term on the Montgomery Regional Economic Development Commission. Mr. Overton's current term expires May 9, 2020 and Montgomery County has requested the recommendation.

Councilman Showalter made a motion to recommend the reappointment of John Overton to the Montgomery Regional Economic Development Commission, seconded by Councilman Huppert. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye. Councilman Showalter requested Mr. Overton attend a meeting for introduction once the “stay-at-home” order was lifted.

- B. Recommendation to the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors to reappoint Matthew Carroll to serve another three-year term on the Fire and Rescue Commission. Mr. Carroll's current term expires May 27, 2020 and Montgomery County has requested the recommendation.

Councilwoman Sachs made a motion to recommend the reappointment of Matthew Carroll to serve on the Fire and Rescue Commission, seconded by Councilman Showalter. Mayor Barber noted that Mr. Carroll was a life member of the Christiansburg Rescue Squad. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye. Councilman Showalter requested Mr. Carroll attend a meeting for introduction once the “stay-at-home” order was lifted.

- C. Resolution in Support of the Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation to designate the Christiansburg Signature Park as a public recreational area and to recommend to the Commonwealth Transportation Board that recreational access funds be allocated for an adequate access road to serve the park area.

Councilwoman Hicks proposed removing this item from the agenda since funds for the park would not be included in the FY 20-21 annual budget. Councilman Stipes commented that the requests in the resolution were prudent for the planning phase of the park, and noted that if the park was not built, recreational access funds would not be allocated. Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilman Huppert. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Nay; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

D. Consideration of request by Montgomery County Economic Development for the Town of Christiansburg to assume site review fees for Falling Branch Corporate Park Phase II.

Mr. Brian Hamilton, Director of Economic Development, provided background on the county's purchase of 125-acres in the Falling Branch Corporate Park to be developed for marketing purposes. The property will be brought into the Town of Christiansburg and will contribute to the Town's revenue once operating industrially. Mr. Hamilton explained modifications to the site plan to increase lot sizes and the County's grant application for design, grading, water and sewer to make the lot ready to market in twelve months. Once the property is developed and brought into the Town, the Town can apply for GO Virginia funding for utility extension to the building site, as agreed upon by Council on September 25, 2018. Mr. Hamilton has requested the Town assume site review fees in the amount of \$11,092 to facilitate timely development of the property. Councilman Bishop asked for clarification on how waiving the site fees would benefit Christiansburg, and Councilwoman Hicks commented that the Town had never waived fees for her business, or any other business that she was aware of, and expressed that the Town needed to think of every business. Councilman Stipes and Councilman Huppert elaborated on how the site would eventually benefit the Town through employment and tax revenue. Councilman Huppert further added that industrial development was highly competitive and it was not unusual for localities to offer incentives to attract businesses to industrial parks. Councilman Stipes added that incentives were crucial to remaining competitive in attracting industry, and he made a motion to waive the site review fees for Falling Branch Corporate Park Phase II as requested by Montgomery County Economic Development. Councilman Showalter seconded the motion. Councilwoman Hicks requested postponing the request since it was not related to COVID-19. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Nay; Hicks – Nay; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

E. Consideration of Resolution for Landlords to Voluntary Take Measures to Assist Tenants.

Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilman Showalter. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

F. Consideration of Resolution regarding Merchant Service Fees.

Councilwoman Sachs made a motion to authorize Town Manager Wingfield to draft a resolution taking a formal position regarding Merchant Service Fees charged by credit card companies, to provide a discount to businesses for timely payments, seconded by Councilman Stipes. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye. Councilman Stipes thanked Councilwoman Sachs for her efforts in this matter over the past two years.

G. Consideration of Lease Agreement with Fiber Technologies Solutions, LLC for 415 Cambria Street, N.W.

Town Manager Wingfield explained that Fiber Technologies Solutions, LLC was interested in leasing 10,000 square feet of the former Rowe Furniture building at \$3/sq. ft., along with use of the office space. The Town has offered the office space at no additional charge providing Fiber Technologies paid the monthly electric bill. The property has been advertised for lease for a number of years. Mr. Wingfield noted that concerns previously discussed regarding the potential to spring leaks in the roof of the building were not a concern for the company, since they intended to use the building for fiber cable storage. Fiber Technologies Solutions, LLC will maintain insurance during its lease of the building. Councilman Showalter made a motion to enter into a lease agreement with the company as described by Town Manager Wingfield, seconded by Councilwoman Hicks. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

IX. STAFF REPORTS

A. Town Manager:

Town Manager Wingfield noted he had mentioned the possibility of a Community Tilling Program at the prior Budget Work Session and stated that he planned on pursuing this by tilling the Town's two designated Community Gardens, as well as the future emergency services lot, and planned on opening the program up to non-profit properties, but did not plan to offer the service to the private sector due to the potential demand with tens of thousands of private properties. Mr. Wingfield reminded Council of the Budget Work Session on April 21, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. and said that several Council members had asked to revisit community support funding. Mr. Wingfield asked to continue presentations related to requests and Council was in agreement with a limit of two per meeting. Mr. Wingfield stated that he had asked that all three Chiefs be available and asked that they provide an update to Council on the COVID-19 response.

Fire Chief Billy Hanks, Rescue Chief Joe Coyle and Police Chief Mark Sisson updated Council on meetings of the New River Valley Health Task Force and daily efforts to address the COVID-9 pandemic through testing, training, medical responses, and ensuring adequate supplies. Council was updated on the number of tests administered, and the number and status of positive cases. Mr. Sisson reported he was confident that measures being taken to minimize community spread were working, and noted the task force was preparing for the community recovery phase. Town Manager Wingfield noted that a private donation of testing kits was made by a local citizen who used their private jet to pick up the kits from Atlanta. Town Manager Wingfield offered to take interested members of Council to observe the testing site.

B. Town Attorney:

C. Other Staff:

X. COUNCIL REPORTS

- a. Councilman Showalter expressed appreciation for the first responders and healthcare providers who were on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, and for grocery store employees, truck drivers, and the many others who continue to put themselves in harm's way each day to help meet the needs of the community.
- b. Councilman Stipes expressed gratitude for the leadership of the first responders in handling preparations for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, and for their collective daily efforts to protect the community.
- c. Councilman Huppert expressed interest in visiting the local COVID-19 test site.
- d. Councilman Bishop thanked Fire Chief Billy Hanks for escorting him to observe the local COVID-19 test site, and noted that he had observed from a distance due to privacy matters.
- e. Councilwoman Sachs commended the members of the Facebook group NRV Mask Makers and others in the community who were dedicated to making masks for distribution, and she expressed gratitude for their efforts and hard work. She then noted that requests had been made by two community support applicants to modify requested amounts in response to COVID-19, and she recommended Council consider allowing a one-time amendment.
- f. Councilwoman Hicks thanked the community for coming together during the pandemic, and encouraged all to stay safe, healthy, and to look after loved ones.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

XII. ADJOURN

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 8:37 P.M.

Michele Stipes, Clerk of Council

D. Michael Barber, Mayor