

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 7, 2020 – 6:00 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. However, this was a work session, and there were no public comments. 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 SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL, MONTGOMERY COUNTY,
CHRISTIANSBURG, VA. WAS HELD VIA ZOOM ON APRIL 7, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor D. Michael D. 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; Treasurer/Finance Director Valerie Tweedie; Clerk of Council Michele Stipes.

- I. CALL TO ORDER BY MAYOR BARBER
- II. DISCUSSION BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL
 - A. Draft Annual Budget for FY 2020-2021.

Town Manager Randy Wingfield and Finance Director Valerie Tweedie presented the latest revised draft budget to Council via PowerPoint, and communicated that the document was based on forecasted economic impacts of the current Declaration of Emergency. The presentation highlighted conservative revenue and expenditure projections, with the expressed intent to review amounts once the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were better understood. Modifications to the draft budget in response to the economic impacts of current events were the removal of additional funds for the town park project, removal of previously proposed water rate increases, and the removal of all non-essential purchases. Mr. Wingfield provided an

overview of proposed increases to employee compensation that included the stipulation that increases would not go into effect until this fall and that administration would seek final Council concurrence at that time. He then reviewed capital projects included in the draft budget, with Ms. Tweedie summarizing less essential capital projects removed from the draft that can be further reviewed in the fall. Ms. Tweedie then noted that she had sent a community support tally sheet to Council today, which was based on individual votes of council, and discussed the unassigned fund balance, which she noted was well above the adopted policy minimum. During the presentation, Mr. Wingfield updated Council on the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and efforts to keep the public informed and up to date on current events regarding the pandemic. In closing, Mr. Wingfield asked Council to review the Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget amendment items previously provided and to reach out to him or Ms. Tweedie with questions.

Council's response to the presentation:

Councilman Showalter expressed support for freezing water rates and nonessential capital projects for review later in the year, and recommended tabling the proposed increases to employee compensation for review in the fall. Mr. Showalter talked about the current high rate of unemployment due to the ongoing pandemic shutdown, and stated he was pleased that the Town had been able to keep its employees employed during this unstable time. Recalling information previously provided regarding VDOT funding for the street maintenance program (\$1.2 million) and Town funding (\$200,000 in the draft), of which \$800,000 had been removed from the draft as a nonessential capital project, Mr. Showalter recommended adding the full Town street maintenance program of \$1,000,000 back into the budget, and, additionally, to research the feasibility of including more streets to the paving program for FY 20-21. Mr. Showalter stated his respect for the community support process and support for the proposed reserves identified in the draft.

Councilman Stipes expressed support for freezing the water rate increase, but cautioned that the Town would be required to subsidize the anticipated shortfall. He then spoke about the value of the Town's employees and said he was committed to no lay-offs during these uncertain times. However, he supported Mr. Showalter's recommendation to table employee compensation increases for further discussion in the fall. Mr. Stipes said he was supportive of including the street paving program in the budget since asphalt plants close later in the year, and noting paving funding of \$1.2M from VDOT and \$200,000 from the Town, he supported considering adding the additional \$800,000 to paving streets to the program for Fiscal Year 2020-21.

Councilman Huppert expressed his appreciation for the trimmed down draft budget including postponing funding for the Town park, but supported revisiting the matter in the fall. He added his support for the proposed capital projects, and agreed with comments by Mr. Showalter and Mr. Stipes to postpone employee compensation increases due to the impacts of the pandemic. Mr. Huppert questioned freezing water rates since it would cost the town considerable funds to subsidize the shortfall, and stressed he would like further discussion regarding the outcome of the community support vote tally.

Councilman Bishop stated his support for freezing water rates and for delaying and revisiting the proposed employee compensation increases. Mr. Bishop said he was committed to no lay-offs during the ongoing pandemic shutdown, and he asked Town Manager Wingfield to research the consequence of delaying the multiplier requested if it was not implemented at the beginning of

the fiscal year. Mr. Bishop asked for clarification of funds for the wall maintenance program and expressed support for the results of the community support vote tally.

Councilwoman Sachs stated her support for freezing water rates, for the proposed reserve funds, and for moving forward with the full street maintenance program before asphalt plants close. Ms. Sachs talked about the turmoil within communities due to the pandemic shutdown and noted she was unable to support employee compensation increases at this time, but was willing to revisit the postponed matters later in the year once the economic impact of the pandemic was better understood. Ms. Sachs stated she accepted the outcome of the community support vote tally.

Councilwoman Hicks commented she believed there was too much revenue projected in the budget, then she expressed support for freezing water rates permanently for Fiscal Year 2020-21, and recommended using the general fund to supplement water service. Mrs. Hicks stated she did not support the proposed increases to employee compensation, and questioned projected remodeling costs to the bathrooms at the parks and recreation facility. Town Manager Wingfield noted that the renovation project would be subject to a bidding process. Mrs. Hicks supported moving forward with the full street maintenance program, but voiced opposition to the proposed purchase of an LED sign for the aquatic center as a nonessential item. She then questioned various items in the draft including the amount of proposed reserves, and certain expenditures that included an additional \$10,000 to the Virginia Tech Montgomery Executive Airport. Mrs. Hicks commented that she did not support Christiansburg being a member of the airport authority because she was not aware of any residents who used the airport, and she requested a copy of the budget request by the airport authority. Ms. Hicks then questioned the \$10,000 for the Farmers' Market since the market was uncertain due to the pandemic shutdown. Mr. Wingfield replied that other options for the market were under consideration, including the possibility of a drive-thru market. In reviewing the proposed draft, Mrs. Hicks said she expected the aquatic center and recreation department budgets to be lower since the facilities were currently closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finance Director Val Tweedie pointed out that the proposed budget would be for the fiscal year July 2020 through June 2021, and that it was not known if, or for how long, the facilities would be closed during that period. In addition, if budgeted funds were not spent due to closures, those funds would be money saved by the Town. Mrs. Hicks then recommended removing tourism funding from the proposed budget since tourism was inactive due to the current pandemic shutdown, and she commented that she did not see tourism efforts benefiting Christiansburg businesses. Finance Director Val Tweedie explained that tourism funding was an agreed upon amount based on a percentage of the lodging tax collected by the Town.

Mayor Barber said he understood Council's concerns with regard to employee compensation increases, but noted the stipulation that increases would not take effect until the fall, and stated he would like to see the increases included in the budget. He then expressed disappointment that Montgomery Museum was not included in the community support. Mayor Barber stated the museum relied on the Town's annual support and he requested future discussion regarding this matter.

Town Manager Randy Wingfield reiterated changes to the draft as directed by Council:

- Remove employee compensation increases
- Research the VRS multiplier

- Add in the full Street Maintenance Program (increase Town support from \$200,000 to \$1,000,000), with the consideration of adding more streets.

III. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 7:30 P.M.

Michele Stipes, Clerk of Council

D. Michael Barber, Mayor