

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 21, 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 can call into the meeting using this phone number: +1 646 558 8656 or +1 312 626 6799. Webinar ID: 921 7579 8619. 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 21, 2020 AT 6:00 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 PARTICIPANTS: 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.

Finance Director Val Tweedie provided a summary of the changes to the draft budget since the work session on April 7 that included adding \$800,000 into the street maintenance program, removing employee compensation increases, and other miscellaneous minor adjustments to revenue and expenditures. The resulting unassigned fund balance was \$15.5M, which is a rate of 43.21% of operating expenses.

Town Manager Wingfield requested Council's opinion on proposed changes to Blacksburg Transit (BT) service, which included the recommendation to eliminate funding for the commuter service to Blacksburg, and the community support tally results.

Councilman Stipes said he supported eliminating the BT commuter service, and supported community support requests as presented in the current tally sheet with the following changes to be considered by Council: Downtown Christiansburg Inc. up to \$10,000; Montgomery Museum - \$18,000; ACCE - \$25,000; and Christiansburg Institute - \$15,000. Councilman Stipes noted that he did not support any increases to amounts contributed in FY 2019 - 2020 to community support applicants.

Councilman Showalter talked about his past experience using the BT commuter service, which helped him to understand the importance of the service to Christiansburg residents that rely on it for transportation. Although sparsely used, Mr. Showalter said he is aware that it is regularly used by Virginia Tech employees who live in Christiansburg, and he expressed support for continued funding of the service. In regards to community support requests, Councilman Showalter recommended waiting until the end of the first quarter of FY 2020 - 2021 to consider modifying contribution amounts, since the Town should then have a better understanding of the financial impact of COVID 19.

Councilman Huppert cautioned against delaying support for Wonder Universe, since it had invested in the Christiansburg community and was an educational opportunity for children, and he voiced support of \$15,000. Councilman Huppert voiced support for Montgomery Museum of \$18,000, Downtown Christiansburg Inc. \$10,000, ACCE \$25,000, and he proposed postponing Christiansburg Institute's request for further review in the fall. Mr. Huppert agreed with eliminating the BT commuter service.

Councilman Bishop agreed with the recommendation to eliminate the BT commuter service, and expressed support for a contribution of \$25,000 to the ACCE program. Councilman Bishop said he would like additional time to consider the request of Christiansburg Institute, and recommended postponing action on the request until this fall.

Councilwoman Sachs commended Town staff on efforts to trim costs while drafting the budget. Considering current economic uncertainties because of the pandemic, Councilwoman Sachs proposed allowing all community support applicants to amend requested contribution amounts with the understanding that Council would vote a yes or no to requested amounts, with a cap of \$25,000 on all requests for FY 2020 - 2021.

Councilwoman Hicks voiced opposition to funding Downtown Christiansburg, Inc., and the Virginia Tech Montgomery Executive Airport, and proposed no water rate increase for FY 20-21. She further proposed increasing the request by Montgomery County Emergency Assistance Program to \$55,000, since the organization provided emergency assistance to the Christiansburg community. Ms. Hicks expressed that, at this time, the Town should not provide funding to any organization that did not offer assistance for needs within the community.

Councilwoman Hicks voiced concern that the items that had been removed from the draft budget for review in the fall, could be added back in at that time, which included a water rate increase that she did not support for FY 20-21, and she recommended using reserve funds to pay for the rate increase from the Water Authority. Councilman Huppert noted that the water rate increases were necessary to maintain the infrastructure of the water plant, and without gradual increases, the Town would eventually be faced with a very large

increase to meet its authority obligation in updating/maintaining the water facility and lines. Further, Councilman Huppert stressed that it was prudent to maintain reserves and that he did not support stealing from one fund to pay for another. Town Manager Wingfield noted that revenue from water service went into an enterprise fund that could not be used for any purpose other than providing water service.

Council discussed the importance of the airport, and the other authorities the Town is a member of, to the economic success of Christiansburg and the region as a whole. Councilwoman Hicks disagreed, and suggested that it was a conflict of interest for Councilman Showalter to vote on airport matters because he was an employee of Virginia Tech.

Mayor Barber clarified Council's support for a re-vote on community support requests. Councilwoman Sachs noted her support only if applicants were permitted to amend requests, and Councilwoman Hicks voiced opposition to a re-vote. The remaining Council agreed to a re-vote. Mayor Barber asked Council if there was support for removing \$10,000 from the airport contribution. Councilwoman Hicks was the only member to voice support for removing the funding.

Finance Director Val Tweedie gave an overview of Council direction related to postponed items and a re-vote on community support applications.

III. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 6:53 P.M.

Michele Stipes, Clerk of Council

D. Michael Barber, Mayor