

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL  
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 25, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.**

A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA. WAS HELD AT CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN HALL, 100 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA, ON AUGUST 25, 2020 AT 7:00 P.M.

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor D. Michael Barber; Vice-Mayor Merissa Sachs (joined the meeting electronically at 7:07 P.M. from her residence, due to illness); Samuel M. Bishop; Johana Hicks; Steve Huppert; Henry Showalter; Bradford J. Stipes.  
**ABSENT:** None

**ADMINISTRATION PRESENT:** Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren, Clerk of Council Michele Stipes; Town Attorney Reid Broughton; Public Relations Director Melissa Demmitt; Public Relations Specialist Amy Southall; Parks and Recreation Director Brad Epperley; Assistant Events Coordinator Marty Gordon; Public Works Director Jim Lancianese; Utilities Superintendent Don Cole.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**II. ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGENDA**

- A. Councilman Stipes made a motion to add a Resolution Approving Electronic Meetings Policy to the agenda for discussion and approval, seconded by Councilman Bishop. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Absent; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.
- B. Councilwoman Hicks made a motion to remove items B and F from the consent agenda for separate discussion and action by Council. Councilman Stipes seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Absent; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

**III. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

A. 2020 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan.

Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren reported on the 2020 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan, required by the U.S. Department of Urban Housing and Development prior to accepting the annual allocation, to be used for infrastructure improvement in designated areas. It was reported that the sidewalk project on Park Street had been completed, and that 2020 funding would be used for a water line upgrade off Park Street.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of August 11, 2020 Minutes.
- B. Monthly Bill List.
- C. Contract with ESI Electronic Services for printer support services over a 5-year term for \$129,000.
- D. Contract with A. Morton Thomas and Associates, Inc. for Construction Engineering and Inspection Services on the Roanoke Street Sidewalks at US Route 460 By-Pass Project in the amount of \$121,794.68.
- E. Purchase order through NPPGov (a cooperative procurement group) to MES/Lawman Supply for Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus in the amount of \$146,190.
- F. Recommendation of reappointment of Mayor D. Michael Barber to the Montgomery – Blacksburg – Christiansburg Development Corporation Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2020 and expiring June 30, 2023.

Councilman Showalter made a motion to approve the consent agenda, with the exception of items B and F, seconded by Councilwoman Hicks. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Absent; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

(B) Monthly Bill List. Councilman Showalter made a motion to approve the bill list, seconded by Councilman Stipes. Councilwoman Hicks noted that funding had been placed in the monthly bills for the future Town Park, and asked for a copy of the current park contract. Mayor Barber commented that the funding was under the original contract for design of the park. Mrs. Hicks then referred to the Town-offered Weight Watchers program, and asked how many participants were in the program. Town Manager Wingfield reported that the program was part of the Town's Wellness Program, paid largely in part by the Town's insurance company, and supplemented by the Town with funds combined from this year and last. The program was recently implemented, and once participation numbers were available, they would be provided to Council. Mrs. Hicks then requested that greater detail be provided on the bill list for matters related to the CARES Act. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Absent; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

(F) Recommendation of reappointment of Mayor D. Michael Barber to the Montgomery – Blacksburg – Christiansburg Development Corporation Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2020 and expiring June 30, 2023.

Councilman Stipes made a motion to recommend the reappointment of Mayor Barber to the Montgomery – Blacksburg – Christiansburg Development Corporation Board of Directors for a three-year term beginning July 1, 2020 and expiring June 30, 2023.

Councilman Huppert seconded the motion. Councilwoman Hicks asked if the Town appointed an alternate member to serve in the appointee's absence, and suggested changing the term from three years to one. However, she was advised that, as with all Council appointments, in the event the appointee could no longer serve, a new member would be appointed. Mayor Barber then provided a brief overview of the MBC Development Corporation's mission to help facilitate small business growth in Montgomery County. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Absent; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

*Resolution Approving Electronic Meetings Policy.* Town Attorney Reid Broughton explained that Virginia Code had always permitted remote participation for medical reasons, but required a separate written policy by the locality allowing remote participation. In addition, Virginia Code permitted electronic meetings during a state of emergency, which the Town is currently under, and the Continuity of Government ordinance adopted by Council on March 24, 2020, also allowed for electronic meetings, without a physical assembly, for the duration of the emergency. Mr. Broughton also pointed out that Town Code generally placed control of meetings on the presiding officer, including "excusal" of a member. However, even with those things in place, Mr. Broughton advised it was in the Town's best interest to adopt a policy providing for remote participation for medical reasons, and provided Council with a drafted Resolution Approving Electronic Meetings Policy for consideration. Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the resolution as presented, seconded by Councilwoman Hicks. Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Absent; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye. Mr. Broughton noted that Virginia Code required the location of the elected official's remote participation be stated for the record.

After the approval of the Electronic Meetings Policy, Councilwoman Sachs joined the meeting remotely from her residence at 7:07 P.M.

## V. INTRODUCTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

### A. Recognition of Public Works receiving the Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) award from Virginia Occupational Safety and Health.

Public Works Director Jim Lancianese provided a brief overview of SHARP, and the Town's efforts in seeking the recognition since 2016. He announced that on August 21, 2020, the Town's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) had been recognized as a

Virginia SHARP worksite by the Virginia Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSH) in coordination with OSHA for its exemplary safety and health practices. The WWTP anticipated receiving SHARP certification in 2021. Mr. Lancianese noted that this was the first time the recognition had been awarded within the public sector in Virginia, and recognized the WWTP employees who were instrumental to the achievement: Utilities Superintendent Don Cole, Safety Coordinator Chris Sartin, Operations Supervisor Zack Trout, Lab Manager Helen Pack, Crew Supervisor of Operations Heather Dodd, Program Coordinator Jacque Peyton, Facilities Operator Daniel Todd, and operator-in-training Aaron Cleveland. Mr. Lancianese thanked Town Council and administration for its support, and Council congratulated Mr. Lancianese and the WWTP staff for the recognition, and expressed appreciation for the department's hard work and dedication to the community.

B. Update on the Christiansburg Farmers Market presented by Director of Parks and Recreation Brad Epperley and Assistant Events Coordinator Marty Gordon.

Mr. Epperley and Mr. Gordon provided Council with an update on the 2020 Farmers Market season that included challenges due to Covid-19 restrictions and steps taken to ensure success of the market, despite the challenges. Mr. Epperley talked about the importance of community partnerships in meeting the goals and needs of the community, and announced that the market had secured approximately 18 – 24 vendors, and experienced approximately 300 customers each week. Mr. Gordon provided an overview of the special events held during the farmers market to spark interest in the community and encourage attendance, along with future planned events. Mr. Gordon described the active marketing approach to growing the market through social media, partnerships, and contests, and shared positive comments about the market from vendors. Mr. Gordon clarified that the Town did not charge a fee for vendor set-up, and that vendor sales for the first eleven weeks of the market were approximately \$21,700. The last day of the market was planned for October 22. Council thanked Mr. Gordon and Mr. Epperley for their efforts in promoting the market and for the update.

C. Wing Policy and Governmental Affairs Representative Nick Devereux to Present on Wing's Drone Delivery Operation.

Nick Devereux presented to Council, electronically via Zoom, an update on Wing operations in Christiansburg since its introduction ten months ago. Beginning with a brief background on Wing, Mr. Devereux reported that, while Wing was an international operation, the Christiansburg location was its only location in the United States to date. The program uses a drone delivery system to deliver goods to customers. Mr. Devereux talked about the current partnerships that support the program and efforts to expand partnerships within Montgomery County. Mr. Devereux stated that the community engagement in Christiansburg was an important aspect in the program's success, and he explained the company's efforts to educate local students on drone technology through

on-site tours. Mr. Devereux talked about limitations due to Covid-19, but noted a significant surge in demand during the pandemic. Overall, the community response to the program had been overwhelmingly positive, with concerns limited to safety, privacy, and noise and stressed that they tried to be responsive to concerns. Council thanked Mr. Devereux for the presentation.

D. CARES Act Funding Update by Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren.

Mr. Warren provided Council with an update on the Small Business Recovery Grant program, including parameters of the program, eligibility criteria, and maximum funding. In addition, he introduced two traditional community support programs to potentially allocate CARES Act funding included provisions for non-profit support and childcare provider support. The Small Business Recovery Grant program, which opened August 19, has received twenty-two applications to date, and Mr. Warren noted that an Application Review Committee member recommendation would be presented to Council on September 8 for consideration. Councilwoman Hicks requested that an announcement of the Small Business Recovery Grant be advertised on the Town's website homepage banner, and recommended that staff from the Montgomery County Economic Development Commission be appointed to the review committee. She then offered the recommendation that a local bank administer the grant program; however, Mr. Warren noted that bank administration had not been a model used by localities. Mrs. Hicks said it was important to make the public aware that a business was not required to be located in the Central Business District, nor a member of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, to be eligible for funding under the Small Business Recovery Grant program.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENTS

- A. Jeff Akers, 345 Howery Street and lifelong resident of Christiansburg, expressed concern for the safety of his family following specific complaints he stated regarding the Police Department involving his daughter's assault case. Mr. Akers said he believed his family had been harassed through the situation and continued to be harassed by the Town in the potential demolition of the house at 208 Cooper Lane that was owned by his family, and subsequent billing and lien for costs incurred by the Town for the demolition. Mr. Akers said procedures had not been followed by the Town in demolition preparations, and that Town Manager Wingfield had not provided him with inspection reports for various other properties that he had requested. In addition, Mr. Akers said he was an essential worker through the pandemic, and cautioned the Town that the blinking signs and prohibition of parking near Power Zone deterred people from coming into the community.
- B. Lauren Yoder of Floyd County and 9-year member of the Floyd Board of Supervisors, addressed Council as a vendor of the 2020 Farmers Market. Mr. Yoder said it was a privilege to represent his business, No Rest Farm, at the Christiansburg Farmers Market,

and talked about the importance of farmers markets to his family farm, and farms in general, especially during difficult times like the pandemic, a sentiment expressed during a recent committee meeting of the Virginia Association of Counties Agriculture and Environment Committee, which he Chaired. No Rest Farms, which offers USDA beef and pork, was invited to participate in the market by Marty Gordon, which Mr. Yoder said had been good for his business, and he planned to continue participating. Based on his experience selling at other farmers markets, Mr. Yoder recommended the Town provide a permanent structure for the market to increase its success in the future.

- C. Angela Akers, 345 Howery Street, commented that the photos presented by her husband, Jeff Akers, were of the damage done to 208 Cooper Lane during asbestos removal in preparation for demolition. Mrs. Akers said she did not understand how damage like that could be done to their property, and then they be billed for it. She added that the property had been secured and surrounded by fencing prior to the Town's involvement, and that the entire situation had been unfair to her family.

## VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### A. Stipes and Bishop – Street Committee Report/Recommendation on:

- 1. Plat Showing Boundary Line Adjustment between Christiansburg Primary and Elementary School Properties and the Re-Alignment of Betty Drive, N.W. Right-of-Way.

Councilman Stipes reported on the request that would tidy up property lines and allow for the expansion of Christiansburg Primary School and Christiansburg Elementary School, as well as re-align the right-of-way for Betty Drive to ensure it followed the original road design. The requests have been reviewed by staff and Street Committee, and Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve, seconded by Councilman Huppert. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

- 2. Subdivision Plat for NRV Marketplace, LLC of Property Located at 2705 Market Street, N.E. Tax Map Number 436-5-1 Showing Parcels G, H, N, O, and P (5 new parcels created).

Councilman Stipes reported that the request would advance outparcel development, which he described, and noted that all aspects of outparcel development would be reviewed by staff for compliance with the Town Code, the applicable ordinances, and other requirements. The Street Committee has reviewed the request and recommended approval. Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the subdivision plat, seconded by Councilman Showalter.

Council voted on the motion and second as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

3. Plat Showing Subdivision of Tax Parcel 500-(A)-5M1 Hereby Creating Lots 1, 2, & 3 – Located at 350 Industrial Drive, N.E.

Councilman Stipes reported that the request was to subdivide one lot into three, for possible development of one lot for a use that complied with approved uses for the industrial park district. All parcels would share one entrance point. The Street Committee has reviewed the request and recommended approval. Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the subdivision plat, seconded by Councilwoman Hicks. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

## VIII. DISCUSSION AND ACTION BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL

- A. Ordinance Amending Chapter 18 “Finance and Taxation” of the Christiansburg Town Code in Regards to Provision of a One-Time Waiver of Penalty and Interest of Transient Lodging Tax and Meals Tax for Customers in Good Standing and Providing for an Effective Date.

Councilman Showalter made a motion to approve the ordinance amendment with a retroactive effective date of July 1, 2020, as recommended by Finance Director Val Tweedie, seconded by Councilwoman Hicks. Councilwoman Sachs noted that the lodging and meals taxes were “pass through” taxes, and suggested the Town consider additional ways to offer relief to small businesses across the board through various required fees, such as business license fees. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

- B. Council Options in Appointment of a Member to the Vice-Mayor Position.

Councilman Bishop pointed out that he had inquired about procedures for appointing vice-mayor when he was first elected to Council, but that there had been no follow up discussions on the matter. Mr. Bishop asked Council to consider options other than the current nomination process for possible discussion in a work session, with the goal of developing a process that would allow Council alone to select its vice-mayor, rather than the sitting mayor suggesting a candidate for vote, and he suggested a “straw-vote” process to determine the nominee. Councilman Showalter clarified the current written Town policy that interested members seek nomination and appointment by fellow council members only, and expressed support for the existing nomination process. Councilwoman Hicks expressed concern that she could be discriminated against under the existing nomination process and supported exploring other options. Councilman Showalter pointed out that a nomination/appointment was not an act of discrimination

against other council members who were not nominated/appointed. Councilman Huppert said he supported council's tradition of rotating members in its nomination process, which allowed all members the opportunity to serve as vice-mayor. Councilman Stipes said he saw no problems with the current nomination process, but was willing to consider other options if that was Council's decision. Councilwoman Sachs commented that there did not seem to be a problem with the Town's nomination process, until the current year, and she expressed support for the nomination process, but agreed to discuss other options if that was Council's decision. Mayor Barber noted the majority of Council favored leaving the policy as is, but would bring back for further discussion at a future meeting.

## IX. STAFF REPORTS

### A. Town Manager:

- Mr. Jim Stewart, long-term Chair of the Board of Zoning Appeals, recently passed away. Council agreed to advertise the vacancy, with applicants to be interviewed by Council.

### B. Town Attorney:

### C. Other Staff:

## X. COUNCIL REPORTS

- A. Councilman Stipes, no report.
- B. Councilman Showalter, no report.
- C. Councilman Huppert, no report.
- D. Councilman Bishop announced a Central Business District Committee virtual meeting on August 26, 2020 at noon.
- E. Councilwoman Hicks requested information on the diversity of individual Town departments, and Councilman Showalter recommended the Town develop a Diversity and Inclusion Committee to oversee the reporting. Town Manager Wingfield said he would discuss the matter at the next staff meeting.
- F. Mayor Barber, no report.

## XI. OTHER BUSINESS

## XII. ADJOURN

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 9:03 P.M.

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Michele Stipes, Clerk of Council

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D. Michael Barber, Mayor