

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 26, 2021 – 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 JANUARY 26, 2021 AT 7:00 P.M.

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

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren, Town Attorney Reid Broughton; Clerk of Council Tracy Heinline; Rescue Chief Joe Coyle; Director of Engineering Wayne Nelson; Finance Director Valerie Tweedie; Fire Chief Billy Hanks; Information Technology Director Craig Hatmaker; Police Chief Mark Sisson.

REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGENDA

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes of January 12, 2021.

Councilwoman Hicks noted she would like both items A and B of the Consent Agenda to be discussed separately. Mrs. Hicks requested the minutes be amended to provide more information under Public Comments by Mr. Greg Revin. Mrs. Hicks would like it noted that *she (Mrs. Hicks) did receive two hundred dollars in cash from Mr. Revin on one occasion, but that was the only payment she received.* Mrs. Hicks would also like to include under the Code of Ethics discussion concerning 103 College Street that *she (Mrs. Hicks) felt that regarding the information being provided today that there was a failure of due process.*

Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the amended minutes. Councilman Bishop seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

B. Monthly Bill List.

Councilwoman Hicks questioned the bill for \$12,240 for the College Street project and inquired what the estimated end-date would be for payments for this project. Town Manager Wingfield explained he would compile a cost estimate and schedule.

Councilwoman Sachs made a motion to approve the monthly bill list. Councilman Huppert seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

C. Schedule Public Hearing for February 23, 2021 to: (a) vacate the right of way; and (b) authorize the conveyance from the Town to the Montgomery County School Board for the Christiansburg High School “bus loop” at 100 Independence Boulevard N.W. (Tax Parcel No. 466-2-11A) (.954 acres).

Councilman Bishop made a motion to approve the public hearing scheduled for February 23, 2021. Councilwoman Hicks seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

V. INTRODUCTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

A. Executive Director of the Montgomery County Regional Tourism Program Lisa Bleakley to provide a tourism update.

Lisa Bleakley updated Town Council on the local Tourism Program and touched on the past year coping with the pandemic. Ms. Bleakley expressed to Council that several from the local hospitality industry had expressed appreciation for the actions Council had taken during Covid19 to support them in their time of need. She touched on the 2019 positive impact of visitors and tourism related jobs in Montgomery County. Ms. Bleakley also mentioned that the beginning of 2020 looked positive with Christiansburg Aquatic Center swim meets, university activities, and construction travel. She reported that in March of 2020 things started to shift due to the pandemic and the Tourism Program had to reassess their activities scheduled for the year. Ms. Bleakley explained that, during the pandemic, the Tourism Program acted as a resource for businesses and shared information including how to report illnesses, new restrictions on businesses, and available grants. Ms. Bleakley also spoke about the occupancy level in the local hotels and how it compared to year 2019, stating a negative impact. She explained that although the pandemic brought many issues, there were still bright spots during 2020. Sports teams were able to organize and followed certain restrictions to safely play and parents were still traveling with their children and staying in our local hotels. The approval of a County allocation of the CARES funding for tourism recovery was used as well as a fraction of the transient occupancy tax from each of the towns and the county. Ms. Bleakley also noted the tourism program searched for additional funding in 2020 through grants like the VTC MLP grant and a partnering with VISIT NRV to sponsor a Blue Ridge PBS travel series for the NRV. Ms. Bleakley pointed out that vaccines were being administered and the expectation was that in 2021 we would see a continuation of travelers seeking less populated areas to visit and more outdoor recreation. Ms. Bleakley introduced Kayla Rogers, General Manager of the Hampton Inn at 380 Arbor Drive in Christiansburg. Ms. Rogers expressed to Council how important the relationship is between the hotels, restaurants, and retail stores in the community and that the health of the hotels had a direct impact on our restaurants and retail stores. Ms. Rogers touched on

the redevelopment of the new Marketplace and how it would enhance her customers stay at the Hampton Inn and provide food and shopping at their backdoor. But Ms. Rogers expressed concern due to the pandemic and the decrease in hotel stays. She mentioned the need for more youth athletic baseball and soccer fields that would bring in families to the hotels which in turn would give business to our local restaurants and grocery stores. Ms. Rogers concluded by urging everyone to unite to find solutions that would support the hospitality industry.

Councilman Huppert mentioned that Ms. Bleakley had been elected to Board for the Southeast Tourism Society. Ms. Bleakley explained this society is an association that serves 14 states in the southeastern United States and works on promoting tourism. Councilman Stipes reiterated that everyone has had to adjust to virtual meetings, and it was an uphill battle and believed it would remain a challenge ahead.

- B. Rescue Chief Joe Coyle to present on Rescue operations and response coverage. Chief Coyle presented to Council that in 2020 the Rescue's mission was "providing efficient, high-quality healthcare". He informed Council that volunteer membership levels decreased during the pandemic due to most of the members being students and returning home. He noted that although those numbers had gone down, Christiansburg still covered 50 percent of all EMS calls countywide in 2020 and expressed that the Town of Christiansburg Rescue is the biggest provider of EMS in the New River Valley. He also reported that better coverage for multiple simultaneous calls and dedicated night shift staffing from 10 pm to 6 am were the critical needs going into 2021. Mr. Coyle expressed to Council that to fill critical coverage gaps to ensure service delivery, staff numbers would need to increase. He reported that in 2021 he hoped to see numbers for Rescue rise from 49 volunteer members to 75 volunteer members. Councilwoman Hicks questioned what type of benefits a volunteer received while employed with Rescue. Chief Coyle explained that Rescue provides their training, life insurance programs, death benefit programs, and a volunteer friendly environment. Councilwoman Hicks also questioned if Rescue had the ability to teach their own trainings in-house. Mr. Coyle expressed that Rescue was currently looking into alternatives to teach EMT classes in-house but that currently members go to Blacksburg for training. Mrs. Hicks expressed that Rescue and Fire volunteers and members have done an amazing job during the pandemic. Councilman Huppert questioned the revenue recovery for Rescue and Finance Director Valerie Tweedie answered that revenue recovery was around \$700,000 each year.
- C. Engineering Director Wayne Nelson to update Town Council on the Stormwater Utility Committee. Wayne Nelson updated Council with a brief background of the Stormwater Utility Committee. He expressed that the Stormwater Enterprise Fund Program had supported the Town construction projects and had helped to maintain regulatory compliance over the last five years. Mr. Nelson also mentioned the meetings were facilitated by President of 3E Engineering Andrew Kassoff along with support from the Engineering, Planning, Public Works, Finance and Administration staff. Mr. Nelson reported that Town staff had compiled a list of over 30 potential candidates to serve on the Stormwater Utility Committee and that list would consist of residents, small business owners, engineers, and developers. He mentioned that contacts were being made and a list would be provided for Council. Mr. Nelson reported that meetings would be conducted by zoom and that approximately 4 to 6 meetings would be conducted every 2 weeks in the next upcoming months. The goal would

be to present the Committee's findings and recommendations at the first Town Council meeting in April. Councilwoman Hicks questioned the process for residents to be a part of the Stormwater Committee and if non-residents, that had local businesses in Christiansburg, could participate as well. Mr. Nelson mentioned that he would welcome those individuals to reach out to him. Councilman Stipes commented that this was a stormwater enterprise fund, which means every dollar the Town has been accessing goes to these improvements only. He questioned if the six million-dollar fees were the Town's fees or matching fees collected thru grants. Mr. Nelson answered these were fees collected through the actual program.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Ken White, 50 Weddle Way, reported to Council he received feedback concerning the latest proffer offered from the last Town Council meeting for the redevelopment at Weddle Way. Mr. White explained the citizens of Weddle Way had updated their petition and although the community supported healthy and appropriate growth, they still did not support rezoning from R-1A to R-2. Mr. White mentioned the petition rejected anything that lowered property value and altered the characteristics of the neighborhood. He explained that while the latest proffer was appreciated and partially accepted, the community still had concerns if the rezoning was necessary and if so, questioned why R1 or R-1A homes were not considered instead. Mr. White also expressed to Council that under the Freedom of Information Act, he had requested documents from our Public Relations Department and was concerned to see e-mails from Mr. Rice that he felt attacked his family.

Jeff Akers, 345 Howery Street Christiansburg, presented Council with a document that showed quotes for windows for his property on 208 Cooper Lane. Mr. Akers explained the Town removed the windows to perform an asbestos removal while he was out of town. He had received two quotes that were submitted to the Town for his property on Cooper Lane and had presented the Town Manager and Town Council with the quotes so he could be reimbursed.

An additional citizen comment was received via email and is recorded in the final minute book for reference.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Stipes and Bishop—Street Committee Report/Recommendation

1. Plat Showing Subdivision of Lot 2, Spradlin Farm Subdivision at the corner of Conston Avenue, N.W. and Spradlin Farm Drive, N.W. creating one lot.

Mr. Stipes referenced a plat showing a subdivision of Lot 2 in the Spradlin Farm Subdivision and explained the large parcel would be divided in to two parcels.

Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the plat redivision in the Spradlin Farm subdivision. Councilwoman Sachs seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND ACTION BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL

- A. Town Computer Decommissioning Policy
Town Manager Randy Wingfield reported to Council on the policy for disposal of Town computers. Mr. Wingfield shared with Council the new policy that would offer decommissioned PCs for purchase by Town employees. He explained that the IT department replaces PCs every five years and it was the Town's hope that the PCs would be a good value to Town staff at this time. Councilwoman Hicks inquired how the Town would manage the number of employees that would buy an electronic device each year. Mr. Wingfield referenced the handout for Town Council and explained there would be no more than three PCs per person, per year. IT Director Craig Hatmaker mentioned the average turnover rate for laptops for the Town was currently five years.

Councilman Showalter made a motion to approve the Town Computer Decommissioning Policy. Councilman Bishop seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

- B. Rezoning request by Balzer and Associates, Inc., on behalf of RWW36, LLC (applicant), for an approximately 4.306 acre property owned by Mary Maxie Jewell Trust, Mary Stewart, Janet Epperly, Bill Jewell, Trustees, located west of Weddle Way, N.W. (tax map no. 435-A-13). The request is to rezone the property from R-1A, Rural Residential to R-2, Two-Family Residential with proffers in order to create 7 two-family dwelling lots for a total of 14 units as well as a lot designated for stormwater management. The property is designated as Residential on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan. The Public Hearing was held December 8, 2020 and Council action was deferred from January 12, 2021.

Councilman Huppert questioned the Planning Commission vote for the rezoning on Weddle Way. Councilwoman Hicks expressed the rezoning request was a very difficult decision for the Planning Commission and mentioned Mr. White had been a great source of information to Council and the residents of Weddle Way. Mrs. Hicks also expressed she had struggled voting for the rezoning and although she had heard from the residents and understood their concerns, that many of those concerns had been addressed.

Councilman Bishop made a motion to approve the rezoning from R-1A to R-2 located at Weddle Way. Councilman Stipes seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Nay; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

IX. STAFF REPORTS

- A. Town Manager
Town Manager Wingfield requested to transfer building maintenance funds to capital funds for the Fire Department. Currently the Fire Department had men's shower rooms only and now there was need for a women's shower room. Mr. Wingfield mentioned he would like to receive a general consensus from Town Council to approve a transfer of funds. Councilwoman Hicks questioned whether the Town was required to build a neutral gender shower room as well. Mr. Wingfield replied he would discuss the legality and report back to Council. Council agreed that a women's shower room was needed at the Fire Department and agreed to transfer building maintenance funds to capital funds for the added room.

Mr. Wingfield addressed the idea of refinancing the 2014 Carter Bank loan and expressed the rates were low at this time. He also expressed to Council it would save the Town approximately \$75,000 in net savings. Town Council agreed to refinancing the 2014 Carter Bank loan.

Mr. Wingfield also updated Council concerning the Blacksburg Transit working group mentioning good attendance at the work group. He expressed that Monday February 15th had been scheduled for the return of the Gold and Blue Explorer route. Mr. Wingfield also mentioned the limited Go Anywhere service to Blacksburg as a possibility to help with the loss of the Commuter Route. Councilman Huppert mentioned the concern of the cost of only having one or two customers on the Go Anywhere bus at one time and inquired whether it would be worth the cost. Councilman Showalter mentioned the Go Anywhere ridership had tripled, and everything would be revisited once the pandemic ended. Councilwoman Hicks mentioned she received a phone call from a citizen mentioning a phone call did go through to the Blacksburg Transit customer service. Councilman Showalter noted that BT had revamped their call-in procedures after the last discussion at the Town Council meeting.

B. Town Attorney
No report

C. Other Staff
No report

X. COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilman Stipes, no report.

Councilman Showalter, no report.

Councilman Huppert reported on the Aquatic Center and encouraged the community to visit the facility. Mr. Huppert also mentioned that at the last Town Council meeting he had presented a letter to all Council members with encouraging ideas for more professional Council meetings. He encouraged Council to reach out to himself or Mr. Wingfield with their suggestions. Also, Councilman Huppert expressed that he was not against the 2nd Amendment and people having firearms in their homes but did feel there was a time and place for everything. Mr. Huppert suggested placing the subject of firearms in Town facilities on an upcoming agenda for a conversation.

Councilman Bishop noted that Councilwoman Sachs had requested a week's delay for the Central Business Committee meeting.

Councilwoman Sachs reported to Council that she would like to request a work session or have a committee formed to discuss business license fees and offering a reasonable deduction to see how businesses could be helped during this time. Mrs. Sachs also mentioned that personal property tax collection was time consuming for Town staff and proposed Council eliminating personal property tax and look at increasing real estate tax instead. Councilman Showalter and

Mayor Barber expressed this item could be a part of a budget work session if Councilwoman Sachs would like to bring this subject back to Council then.

Councilwoman Hicks reported that retiree Police Officer Maureen McClanahan made a difference in the community and requested retirees from the PD should receive a special recognition letter showing they mean a lot to the Town. Mayor Barber expressed he would gladly sit down with Public Relation's and create a letter but questioned the previous retirees and how to thank them as well. Councilwoman Hicks offered the Town to go back and send those retirees recognition letters as well. Mrs. Hicks mentioned she would like to see the retirees come to Town Council meetings to be presented with letters or certificates.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

XII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 8:42 PM.

Tracy Heinline, Clerk of Council

D. Michael Barber, Mayor