

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 10, 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 AUGUST 10, 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.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren; Town Attorney Reid Broughton; Executive Assistant/Clerk of Council Tracy Heinline; Police Chief Mark Sisson; Finance Director Valerie Tweedie.

REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGENDA

None.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Lease from September 28, 2021 through December 31, 2021 to New River Valley Unwired Ventures, LLC of space on four municipal water tanks to site communication equipment for the provision of internet service. Such equipment is currently sited on these locations, and the current lease expires September 27, 2021.

Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren explained that this was a lease for All Points Broadband who leases several spaces at the Town's water tanks. He explained that the Town was still in negotiations with All Points Broadband and would like to start a three-month contract with them until the end of the year for the four tanks in Town. Mr. Warren explained this contract would be a continuation of the terms in the original contract (which expires on September 27, 2021). Councilwoman Hicks inquired if the properties were subject to taxes. Mr. Wingfield explained that the tanks in town were municipal property and not subject to property taxes. He stated that the telecommunications facilities would be assessed by the State Corporation Commission, but Town property would not be assessed taxes.

B. Town of Christiansburg Community Development Block Grant Substantial Amendment to the 2019 Annual Action Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Andrew Warren reported that last year Council had revised the amendment to the 2019 Annual Action Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He explained the Town had received an additional \$111,118 for the Community Development Block Grant, and he wanted to bring it to Council's attention to amend the action plan again to work with the allocated funds. He explained these funds would be expended over the next few years but specific agreements with agencies would need to determine how it was spent. Mr. Warren stated the dollars for the project were different than typical CDBG project dollars, where normally they are focused on infrastructure projects. Mr. Warren explained that these dollars would go towards social service projects, such as homeless prevention, food security, healthcare, and economic development. He stated that the Town was currently working with New River Community Action and expected to work with more non-profits in the future, expressing to Council that a contract was in progress and there would be more information to come. Councilwoman Hicks inquired if this type of money could be used to replace community support money. Mr. Warren explained that this was a separate project from community support and these types of programs related to U.S. HUD, and the Town had to work through their requirements. He stated that the Town would have a monitoring responsibility, and this would be an ongoing relationship with an agency rather than a one-time award to a non-profit.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes of July 27, 2021.
- B. Approval of a contract for Electrical Survey with CHA consulting.
- C. Approval of a contract for Janitorial Services, Honest Royal Cleaning LLC for Recreation and Aquatics in the amount of \$138,871.
- D. Contract for the purchase of 2 patrol vehicles and one support vehicle for police department with Haley Ford South in the amount of \$111,000.
- E. Schedule public hearing for September 28, 2021 for Amendments to the Planned Commercial Development in the B-3, General Business zoning district at 2705 Market Street NE by NRV Marketplace LLC to allow multi-family residential uses, increased building height, reduced onsite greenspace, and reduced residential parking requirement on Tax Parcel 436 - ((5)) - 1. The property is designated as Business/Commercial on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.
- F. Schedule public hearing for September 28, 2021 for a Major Home Occupation for a single-chair salon in the Agricultural zoning district at 725 Stafford Drive on Tax Parcel 405 - ((A)) - 4D. The property is designated as Residential on the Future Land Use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.
- G. Schedule public hearing September 28, 2021 for a Rezoning from R-3, Multi-Family Residential and B-3, General Business to B-3, General Business by the Montgomery Museum & Lewis Miller Regional Art Center at 300 Pepper Street SE on Tax Parcel 527 - ((A)) - 235. The property is designated as Business/Commercial and Parks/Open Space.

Councilwoman Sachs made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Stipes.

Councilman Stipes commented on item C of the consent agenda and inquired if the amount for janitorial services was a new cost for the Town. Town Manager Wingfield explained that a contract had been in place prior to the pandemic, but it was stopped for a year and there had been more temporary and part-time janitorial staff which had since been eliminated. He stated that basically the contract would be started again and that currently there were two full-time janitorial staff at both locations. Mr. Wingfield stated that the temporary and part-time staff usually provide a general day cleaning, making sure the bathrooms were in good order and trash cans emptied. He explained that the new janitorial service providers would come in at night and provide a deep cleaning and disinfecting as well as clean the pool decks at the Aquatic Center. Councilwoman Hicks questioned the contract with the new janitorial company and how the cost compared to last years. Mr. Wingfield stated the cost was lower with the new company. Mr. Wingfield also offered to speak to the Town's insurance and inquire about age restrictions and hiring people under 18 for janitorial services.

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

V. INTRODUCTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

None.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilwoman Sachs reported that the Arts Advisory Board had met previously and reviewed the options for art to be placed throughout the town.

Councilman Huppert reported that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board had met last week and stated there would be several gatherings in downtown Christiansburg in September of this year. He reported there would be an eight-mile walk again this year at the Parks and Recreation Center on September 18th. He explained that a bus would pick up those interested at the Recreation Center and drop them off at the Blacksburg Library, from there they would walk back to the Recreation Center. Mr. Huppert stated that the Wilderness Trail Festival would be held on the same day as the walk. He also reported there would be a Halloween Run (5-K race) at the end of October as well as a Trick – or - Treat event for young children. He noted that the Recreation Center had many sign-ups for their sports activities and reported that the Aquatic Center had a full summer camp and did very well with twenty-five kids per summer session. Mr. Huppert also noted that the new park was moving along swiftly.

Councilman Stipes reported a Virginia Tech/Montgomery Executive Airport meeting and stated that Walmart was now using the airport to fly into Roanoke. He explained Airport Director, Keith

Holt had been very active in getting the airport integrated with the community. Mr. Stipes announced there would be a 5K Run on November 6th and noted increased demand for hangar space at the airport as well.

Councilwoman Hicks reported that the Recreation, Fire, and Police departments did a good job at the Guns and Hoses softball event that helps raise funds for the Special Olympics.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND ACTION BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL

- A. Conditional Use Permit request by James Tannahill (applicant) on behalf of Sawyers Living Trust (owner) for a towing service in the General Industrial (I-2) at 2500 Brammer Lane (Tax Parcel 501 - ((1)) - 13J). The property is designated as Industrial on the Future Land use Map of the 2013 Christiansburg Comprehensive Plan.

Councilman Bishop made a motion to approve the conditional use permit request per the Planning Commission recommendation by James Tannahill for a towing service at 2500 Brammer Lane. Councilman Showalter seconded the motion. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

- B. Discussion of charging the customer a convenience fee for use of credit/debit cards and e-checks with implementation of Tyler Munis Customer Self Service for Business, Professional, and Occupational Licensing and the payment of personal and real property taxes and related fees.

Finance Director Valerie Tweedie explained that the Town absorbed more fees concerning the credit/debit cards than previously, due to Covid and an increase in payments over the phone. She explained that with more online portals and customer self-service the usage will continue to increase. She stated that the Town could pass the fees onto the customer by charging the convenience fee for the use of credit/debit cards or continue to absorb the costs. Mrs. Tweedie explained that moving forward in the Tyler Munis training, it would be a good time to set this up and charge the fee rather than going back and making the change later. Mrs. Tweedie explained that there was a flat \$10 fee for utility billing phone ins currently, but that this would institute a percentage fee for other transactions. She stated that the Town had paid over \$151,000 a year absorbing these fees in the last few years. Councilman Stipes stated he was against charging a convenience fee but inquired if the fee could only be charged to bills less than \$200. Mrs. Tweedie explained that it would need to be equal across the board for all customers. Councilwoman Hicks stated that she felt customers should not be charged a fee for paying with a card because everyone is still dealing with the pandemic. Mrs. Tweedie explained that this would also help reduce calls to restore service and would relieve some of the strain that had been placed on staff by the abundance of calls. She hoped this would push customers to pay in-person, online or place in the drop-off box outside. Councilman Huppert stated that all businesses had slowly been forced to pick this fee up and did not see an issue for a customer that did not want to pay that convenience fee to pay in person or use the drop-off box.

Councilman Huppert made a motion to approve the convenience fee for use of credit/debit cards and e-checks as presented. Councilman Showalter seconded the motion.

Councilwoman Sachs stated that she supported the fee and explained the money would go into the General Fund which means everyone that pays taxes is paying that fee, not just the ones using the convenience of the service.

Councilman Showalter inquired if this fee included e-checks as well. Mrs. Tweedie explained that this included e-checks but they are charged a fee, not a percentage, and the convenience fee is different than the charge for credit/debit cards. She explained the customer could opt to set up an e-check payment on the 15th of each month with no fee attached.

Councilman Showalter withdrew his motion of a second stating that he did not agree with charging for e-checks but explained he would support the charge just for debit/credit cards.

Councilwoman Hicks questioned when this convenience fee would go into effect if passed. Mrs. Tweedie explained it would only go into effect for business, professional and occupational licensing and for real estate and personal property tax bills in mid-September. Mrs. Hicks stated she felt this item needed more Council discussion before a firm decision was made.

Councilman Huppert withdrew his original motion to approve a convenience fee for debit/credit cards and e-checks.

Councilman Showalter made a new motion to approve the convenience fee for use of credit/debit cards and continue to absorb the e-check fee. Councilwoman Sachs seconded the motion. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Nay; Hicks – Nay; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Nay. The tie-breaking vote, not in favor of approval of the convenience fee, was made by Mayor Barber.

- C. Budget Amendment #1 to accept grant from the Department of Criminal Justice Services for \$129,732 for the police department for the acquisition of night vision equipment.

Chief Mark Sisson stated that the police department's night vision equipment was aging and very expensive. He explained that the department had picked up a grant in the amount of \$129,732 earlier in the year. Mr. Sisson stated this was an up-front cost for his department, which meant the equipment would not be delivered until a payment was made. He explained the Town would be reimbursed by the state once the grant came through. Councilman Huppert questioned how critical the equipment was to the department. Chief Sisson replied that it aids in help find missing persons and explained that the heat component is a top-of-the-line component and its generally used for night-time operations.

Councilman Showalter made a motion to approve the Budget Amendment #1 to accept the grant from the Department of Criminal Justice Services as presented. Councilman Bishop seconded the motion. 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

Mr. Wingfield reported that several localities in the NRV through the Department of Housing and Community Development were offering to local businesses a grant called the New River

Valley Small Businesses Resiliency Grant program. He said DHCD had recently opened the program up to Entitlement Communities and he wanted to reach out to Council and see if they would like the Town to participate. Council agreed to the Town's participation and Mr. Wingfield explained he would send a letter of support requesting participation.

Mr. Wingfield also stated there was an increase in Covid in the region and the Town of Blacksburg would be mandating mask usage in the Town buildings, though there is not a state mandate. He explained he does not plan on mandating masks within the Town of Christiansburg buildings at this time. Council agreed that wearing a mask at the Town Council meetings was an individual decision at this time.

B. Town Attorney
No report.

C. Other Staff
No report.

X. COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilman Stipes
No report.

Councilman Showalter
No report.

Councilman Huppert
No report.

Councilman Bishop
No report.

Councilwoman Sachs reported that the Farmers Market was doing fabulous, and people could still drop off plastic grocery bags to donate towards new benches on Thursdays from 3-7p.m.

Councilwoman Hicks questioned Chief Sisson if the Police department had ever considered motorcycles as a way of patrolling for the officers. Mr. Sisson explained that it had been brought up over the years but did not feel like the layout in Christiansburg would coincide with motorcycle travel. Councilman Huppert stated that the Police did patrol the Huckleberry Trail on bicycles. Mrs. Hicks also mentioned the Town Employee picnic had turned out nice.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

XII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 8:00pm.