

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

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

REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGENDA

Town Manager Wingfield requested that item C. under the Consent Agenda be changed from a Proclamation to a Resolution. Mr. Wingfield also requested to move the Closed Meeting under Other Business.

Councilwoman Hicks made a motion to table item VIII. D. under Discussion and Action by Council until after the election and new Council members were present. Hearing no second to the motion, the motion died.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes of October 12, 2021.
- B. Monthly Bill List.
- C. Approval of a Proclamation for Small Business Saturday for November 27, 2021.

- D. Revised Agreement between the Town of Christiansburg and new River Community Action, Inc. for COVID-19 Response Homeless Intervention Services (U.S. HUD Community Development Block Grant 2019 Program Year). Original agreement approved on September 28, 2021. Revision clarifies the eligible reimbursements and the eligible timeframe for assistance.
- E. Set a Public Hearing for the Park loan for November 9, 2021.

Councilman Showalter made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Bishop and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

V. INTRODUCTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- A. Casey Jenkins, Bob Poff, and Ernie Wade of the Montgomery Museum of Art & History to update Council.

Bob Poff, Museum Board Member, thanked Council for the Town's support over the years and expressed gratitude for the help with the growth of the Museum. Mr. Poff touched on the history of the Museum and explained that the Museum's historical documents, artifacts, and art collection continues to grow. He expressed that the Museum had to utilize off-site storage due to insufficient space and that staff members had to share offices as well. Mr. Poff stated that since they had outgrown the current 2,600 square foot Museum building, they were unable to accept donations, display art, and have certain events. He stated that over the last several years the Museum began studying the feasibility of expanding the current Museum building. Several architectural firms had provided the Museum with preliminary drawings for remodeling and add-ons as well as cost estimates. Mr. Poff explained that a planning grant with Appalachian Regional Commission had also been applied for.

Ernie Wade, Museum Board Member, explained that after going over the cost and length of time to remodel the current Museum it was decided to reach out to the owner of the vacant 15,000 square foot Wells Fargo Bank building on Franklin Street. Mr. Wade spoke about how the Museum had started a private campaign in late September and raised over \$560,000. He explained that the Museum had a contract with the seller with a closing date of February 28, 2022 which would give the Museum time to raise the funds that were needed for the purchase. Mr. Wade also stated they would lease a portion of the current Museum building which would cover the cost of maintaining the garden and operations. He expressed to Council that the Museum had approached the three local governments for grant requests for a \$50,000 donation. Mr. Wade announced there would be an open house at the site on Franklin Street in November of this year.

Casey Jenkins, Museum Director, talked about the role the Museum could play in helping the Town move forward and how the Museum was a viable source for downtown Christiansburg. Mr. Jenkins expressed that as the Town continues to grow and visitors come to the area, art, history, and culture is a big tourism draw. Councilman Huppert inquired where visitors would park when visiting the new Museum building on Franklin Street. Mr. Jenkins explained that both the back and front of the building would have sufficient parking and the Museum had

an agreement with the seller for overflow parking with up to twenty spaces in the back of the property.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Coreen Bookout, 200 Darci Drive, expressed to Council that her disabled daughter had worked at the Falling Branch Elementary School for the last three years and utilized the Go Anywhere bus daily. Ms. Bookout expressed her concern of the bus service cutting back on ridership along with having to call the service every other day to make an appointment in order to get a spot. Ms. Bookout spoke about how cutting out the bus route would impact disabled and elderly citizens and she would like Council to reconsider this decision and make an exception. She implored Council to please look at the statistics again and take into consideration that more residents utilize the transit than they think. Ms. Bookout offered that maybe a second bus that runs at certain hours of the day could be used instead of cutting the program out completely. Mayor Barber explained that a discussion about the bus system would be held later in the meeting.

Don Upham, Riner, Virginia resident, introduced himself to Council and explained he had taught at many Montgomery County Schools and had been attending Council meetings for quite some months. Mr. Upham expressed that he had emailed Council several times and complained that his last email had been blocked. Mayor Barber expressed that the Town would have their IT department investigate the issue and get back to him.

Henry Guess, 810 College Street, addressed Council and inquired if there were any updates on the ongoing College Street drainage project. Town Manager Wingfield explained there had been an update at the previous Town Council meeting. Mr. Wingfield expressed that the engineering study was ongoing and there was an application for the resiliency plan which would open-up to more funding for the project. Mr. Guess referenced the retention pond and explained that on September 21st there was a large amount of rain and his backyard was flooded due to the retention pond at the middle school. He expressed concern for the slow movement of the project and explained that since the 1960's nothing had been done for the College Street drainage issue. Mr. Guess questioned why the Town had funded a new park and not College Street and explained that he felt College Street was not a priority to the Town. He stated that currently he was limited to what he could have in his backyard because of the occasional flooding in that area. Mr. Wingfield explained that the Town had performed a basin study last year and that now it was under design of the physical improvements. He stated that Town staff had also spoken to the residents on College Street about securing easements. Councilman Showalter inquired about the estimate of the project. Mr. Wingfield replied that the project would be in the millions and the exact amount was yet to be determined.

Jason Diggs, 860 Hillcrest Drive, introduced himself to Council and explained he was the newly appointed postmaster for the Town of Christiansburg. He expressed that he lived above College Street and understood the concern of the flooding that comes from the retention pond. Mr. Diggs also expressed concern for a tree that was in the way when they raised their flag at the post office Downtown. He explained that on North Franklin Street there was a dying tree that needed to be taken down as well and would like the Town to investigate. Mr. Diggs expressed the need of renovations to the post office on Main Street and inquired if the Town would partner in those

renovations. Mayor Barber asked Mr. Diggs to make a list of the renovations and send that list to the Town for consideration, but in the past the post office handled their own renovations. Councilman Stipes referenced the comments pertaining to College Street and expressed that the Town had solved a great deal of drainage problems in the past and assured everyone that College Street was a high priority for Council. He explained that this project was a process and takes time and that even though the Town could not change the past, this project was being pursued and would stay at high priority.

Bob Poff, 440 Arrowhead Trail, addressed the Council members that were not seeking re-election and expressed that he had enjoyed his interactions with all of them. He thanked all of Council for their work.

Charles Robins, 1720 Old Farm Village Road, read a recent email he had sent to Council concerning Councilwoman Hicks. *The email will be included in the final Minute book.* Mr. Robins stated that several citizens had expressed concern to him about Mrs. Hicks. He stated that he was openly frightened of her and asked Council to please vote her out of office once elections had taken place.

Bob Beard, Flint Drive, expressed he was new to the area and had known Councilwoman Hicks since he moved here and stated he was surprised at what was being said about her. He stated she was a hard worker and she had done a great deal for the community of Christiansburg.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilwoman Sachs reported there would be a Central Business meeting October 27th at noon.

Councilman Stipes reported that the Street Committee had authorized signage and striping at the intersection of High Street and Craig Street. Councilman Stipes explained that Town staff had been great at looking at low cost and high-impact improvement for that area. Mr. Stipes also referenced the work that had been done at Depot Street and Stone Street and passed on the citizen appreciation.

Councilman Huppert reported there would be a 5K race on October 30th at the Recreation Center along with trick-or-treating in the back of the building.

Councilwoman Hicks commended Town staff for heading the Depot Street/ Stone Street restriping project and that it looked nice.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND ACTION BY MAYOR AND COUNCIL

A. Community Development Block Grant 2020 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the Community Development Block Grant 2020 CAPER Report. Councilman Showalter seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

- B. 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. Councilwoman Sachs made a motion to approve the amendments to the Planned Commercial Development at 2705 Market Street NE by NRV Marketplace LLC. Councilman Showalter seconded the motion.

Councilwoman Hicks expressed concern that hotel A was still under the description of the amendments and questioned if that would be removed. Mrs. Hicks also expressed pleasure for the new businesses in the Marketplace but was concerned about parking spaces and would like to see at least one parking spot per unit. Mr. Wingfield explained that at the recommendation of the Planning Commission, hotel A was not to be included and there would be a height limitation to another building. Councilman Stipes expressed his thanks and support to Developer Walt Rector who was present at the meeting and explained that Mr. Rector had honored his commitments to the Town to-date. Councilman Huppert stated that the Town had been involved in two major projects in the last couple years and the Marketplace had been one of the most important projects and expressed that the Marketplace would make the Town of Christiansburg the retail capital of Southwest Virginia. Councilman Showalter referenced a public comment from David Green on John Lemley Drive that had been received in favor of the Marketplace. *The public comment will be included in the final Minute Book.* Councilwoman Sachs reminded Council that her motion was stated for the Planning Commission recommendations with no changes. Mayor Barber repeated that hotel A was not in the approval. Councilwoman Hicks reiterated her concern for the lack of parking spots for the new development. Councilman Huppert expressed that at the last Council meeting they were presented with a drawing of a parking garage that he felt would help the parking situation.

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

- C. Discussion of Blacksburg Transit service.

Mr. Wingfield talked about the Go Anywhere bus service and explained the Transit Working group had gone over the cost of operations to the system versus the ridership due to the service not being cost effective. Mr. Wingfield explained that regarding the loss of transport to and from doctor's appointments that New River Valley Agency on Aging relayed they could transport residents if it pertained to a medical purpose. Mayor Barber addressed the concerned citizen that spoke earlier in the meeting and questioned if there was a bus service in Town that could accommodate Ms. Bookout's daughter. Mr. Wingfield expressed that the Gold and Blue Explorer Route should be able to accommodate the rider if they live along those routes in Town. Mayor Barber expressed interest in sitting down with the transportation group and discussing the issue further. He also expressed concern about the citizen's complaints and the difficulty in booking an appointment two days in advance. Mr. Barber questioned if there was a special exemption the residents could apply for upfront if

the resident knew they would be using the bus ahead of time. Councilwoman Hicks requested feedback from Mr. Wingfield and the Transit Working group. Councilwoman Sachs offered that if the Town was placing money towards the bus service then she encouraged riders from the Town to be included in the working group to add their input. Mrs. Sachs explained that when the bus gets to the Uptown mall stop there is a lag in time that can make a rider very late, and she would like to see timelines modified at some point soon as well. Councilwoman Hicks expressed that she had also received a complaint that there was not enough public information concerning this change. She offered that the Town consider publishing the information under the Town's website.

D. Discussion of Fiscal Year 2020-21 Unassigned Fund Balance.

Town Manager Wingfield explained this unassigned fund balance was a rollover from the last fiscal year and expressed there was potential usage for funds. Mr. Wingfield explained that the money would put the Town over the fund balance policy of maintaining 30-40 percent of operating. Mr. Wingfield explained the Town would need to either assign the money to reserves or spend the money to abide by the policy. He proposed the money be used for potential pay bonuses for Town employees. He explained that the Virginia State Police was giving a \$5,000 bonus to their employees and all sheriff's deputies would be receiving a \$3,000 bonus. Mr. Wingfield expressed that municipal officers were not included in this bonus. He explained that if municipal officers were to be included in the bonus then it would need to come from Town funds. Mr. Wingfield proposed to fund \$3,000 for first responders, which was currently budgeted in the American Rescue Plan Act money, and a \$2,000 bonus from the Town's general fund. Councilwoman Hicks questioned the money coming from the American Rescue Plan Act. Finance Director Valerie Tweedie explained that the expenditures did not exceed the revenues in the Town's operating budget. Councilwoman Hicks expressed that she would like to see some of the unassigned fund balance go toward the project on College Street. Mr. Wingfield explained that he would like to see funds go towards College Street as well. Mrs. Hicks also stated instead of giving employees bonuses she would like to see raises due to the issues of hiring for Aquatics and Public Works. Councilman Showalter stated that the Town could only use Covid money for the first responders and for stormwater. He explained the money could not solely be used for Town employee raises. Mrs. Hicks questioned the recent water bill increase and fixing certain infrastructures throughout Town. Mr. Wingfield explained the water bill increase was due to maintaining the capital enterprise fund at the level of operating cost because of the increase from the Water Authority. Mr. Wingfield also explained that the Town provides presentations on all capital projects for infrastructure several times a year before the budget is finalized. Mr. Wingfield explained that a portion of the unassigned fund balance needed to be utilized and put in the capital reserve fund, but if you place the funds in the general fund the Town would be in violation. Councilman Stipes expressed that this item was a major discussion for Council to decide and requested that Council wait for the new Council members to start in January to make the decision.

Councilman Stipes made a motion to place the unassigned fund balance into the Town's reserves and let new Council members vote as to where the funds go. Councilwoman Hicks seconded the motion.

Councilman Showalter requested that half of the \$1.5 million in unassigned funds be placed towards the project on College Street. Mr. Wingfield explained that the Town could assign

the American Rescue Plan Act money to certain capital projects, including stormwater. Councilwoman Sachs also agreed that a portion of the fund balance should be placed towards the project on College Street and requested the decision be made now by the current Council. Councilman Stipes questioned when the results from the College Street stormwater study would be back. Mr. Wingfield stated that after the resiliency plan results came back the Town would have a better idea within a few months of the final design and explained the design is subject to change. Councilman Huppert stated that Mrs. Hicks had mentioned raises for the employees and suggested she discuss the subject with the Town Manager and Finance Director to see the effect it would have on the budget. Mayor Barber expressed disappointment that Council would not consider funding the bonuses for employees.

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

IX. STAFF REPORTS

A. Town Manager

Mr. Wingfield stated the Town's new Planning Director Benjamin Tripp started on September 13, 2021. Mr. Wingfield also reported the Town calendar Facebook poll was very informative. Councilwoman Sachs questioned if the Town calendar could be digital instead to avoid the high costs of printing. Mayor Barber inquired if some calendars could be printed for citizens that did not have access to the Town's website. Councilwoman Hicks inquired about the Christmas ornament contest with the Town, and she was referred to the Town's website.

B. Town Attorney No report.

C. Other Staff No report.

X. COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilman Stipes reported that he wanted to encourage everyone to vote on November 2nd. Mr. Stipes referenced a recent Roanoke Times article and commented that Councilwoman Hicks had mentioned that several Council members had served too long on Council.

Councilman Showalter
No report.

Councilman Huppert reported that he was pleased to be able to work with Mayor Barber and expressed that Mr. Barber had kept Council working together the last four years. He expressed appreciation for Town Administration as well. Mr. Huppert talked about the new Marketplace and what an asset it would be for the Town and how the new park would help the people of the community.

Councilman Bishop
No report.

Councilwoman Sachs
No report.

Councilwoman Hicks expressed that she was ready for a change on Council and was glad there were new Council coming.

XI. Other Business

Councilwoman Sachs talked about the emergency sirens in Town and requested that Chief Hanks talk to the Town Manager about a new siren near Uptown Christiansburg. Mr. Wingfield expressed that the siren is used to call members to the Fire department and explained that most members are from the downtown area. Councilwoman Sachs expressed that with recent tornadoes and other weather conditions she felt the need to alert the community in a faster way. Mr. Wingfield stated there may be available grants for additional sirens in the area. Councilwoman Hicks stated that when there is a tornado warning that cellphones seem to alert the community sufficiently. Councilwoman Sachs communicated that the older population could have a harder time getting those notifications if they did not have their phones available. Councilwoman Hicks questioned if there was a way to alert the hearing-impaired community.

Mrs. Sachs also spoke about business signs and felt that when businesses place signs at their business that are against Town code, the Town should think about a penalty if the sign policy is continuously broken. Mayor Barber expressed that a letter from the Town Manager would be appropriate. Councilwoman Sachs expressed that a violation charge could be appropriate for the business and requested a future discussion or a head nod from Council. Mr. Wingfield stated that instituting civil penalties may be a good tool to add to the zoning ordinance and that this would have to be referred to the Planning Commission for review.

XII. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Closed Meeting:

1. Councilman Bishop made a motion to enter into a Closed Meeting under Code of Virginia § 2.2-3711(A)(3), for the discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. The Closed Meeting is being held for discussion of potential acquisition of property in the downtown area. Councilwoman Sachs seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.
2. Reconvene in Open Meeting.
3. Certification.

Councilman Bishop moved to certify that the Town Council of the Town of Christiansburg meeting in Closed Meeting, to the best of each member's knowledge, discussed only the matters lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law and only such matters as are identified in the Resolution to enter into Closed Meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Hicks and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

4. Council action on the matters. No action was taken.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 9:24pm.

Tracy Heinline, Clerk of Council

D. Michael Barber, Mayor