

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 9, 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 NOVEMBER 9, 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; Parks and Recreation Director Brad Epperley; Assistant Police Chief Chris Ramsey.

REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGENDA

Councilman Showalter made a motion to move item C. under Discussion and Action by Council prior to Adjournment. Councilwoman Hicks seconded the motion.

Mr. Showalter also questioned item E. under Discussion and Action by Town Council being placed on the agenda again. Town Manager Wingfield explained that Councilman Bishop, Councilman Huppert & Councilwoman Sachs requested it be placed on the agenda again for discussion. Councilman Bishop explained that after the discussion took place at the last Council meeting, he needed better clarification. Councilman Huppert expressed he would like to see this item approved and not pushed to the January meeting.

Council voted to move item C. under Discussion and Action by Council prior to the agenda Adjournment and voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. \$9.3 million in debt for the park financing.

Finance Director Valerie Tweedie explained that in June 2021 Council had approved the new park construction project. Mrs. Tweedie also explained that a portion of the approval was for the Town to enter into \$9.3 million in debt to cover a portion of the project cost. She stated that the debt resolution passed which meant the Town could reimburse themselves and as of the end of November 2021, the Town would be out of reserve funds for the park moving forward. Mrs. Tweedie informed Council the current interest rates available were 1.48% for a 15-year no-call loan and a 1.57% for a 20-year no-call loan. She expressed that rates were manageable at the present time and stated that it was time to move forward with the loan in order to pay Faulconer Construction per the mutual agreement. Mayor Barber explained the Town would save approximately \$500,000 with a 15-year loan rather than a 20-year loan. Mrs. Tweedie agreed and expressed that usually around the 15-year mark of a loan you start to have major renovations and they become harder to fund when you still have 5 years left on a loan. Councilwoman Hicks questioned the dollar amount that would be associated with the maintenance at the park. Parks and Recreation Director Brad Epperley answered that it would cost the Town approximately \$800,000 annually to maintain the park.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Minutes of October 26, 2021.
- B. Contract for renovation of restrooms at the Recreation Center in the amount of \$471,000 with SRC, Inc.

Councilman Showalter made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Councilwoman Sachs seconded the motion.

Parks and Recreation Director Brad Epperley explained the renovation of the Recreation restrooms had been costly and they had worked to narrow down expenses and stretched the project out to a four-year plan to make the renovation affordable. He expressed that the Recreation Center restroom project was a basic renovation and there had been some transitioning in the shower area but that prior renovation plans had not changed. Councilwoman Hicks inquired if most of the bidders were from out of town. Finance Director Valerie Tweedie responded that she would check with Purchasing Coordinator Mark Hamric in Finance and would report back to Council. Mrs. Hicks also requested to see the purchased items for the project.

Council voted on the approval of the consent agenda as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

V. INTRODUCTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- A. Park sponsorship presentation.

Town Manager Wingfield gave a broad overview of the park and discussed sponsorship opportunities as well as naming rights for the park. Mr. Wingfield talked about the different levels of sponsorship opportunities and the potential tier packages from a sponsorship's

perspective. Parks and Recreation Director Brad Epperley touched on the marketing approach for a sponsor and how the Town could give back to a sponsor which included signage or banners for their business, ribbon cuttings, featured stories, social media mentions, etc. He talked about the employment for the new park and explained a full-time administrative position, full-time park maintenance supervisor, 2 full-time maintenance positions, and 4,480 hours of seasonal part-time employment would be needed for the park itself. Mr. Wingfield spoke about the secondary staffing needed for the park which included police, fire, and rescue. He explained the police department's role would include "ride-bys" at certain times of operating park hours. Mr. Wingfield presented potential park names to Council as well. Councilwoman Hicks questioned if some sort of a memorial brick walkway could be included so the community could display names of loved ones there. Mr. Epperley stated that could be a possibility and explained there were different types of sponsorships for things like that. Mrs. Hicks questioned if the public could be involved in the naming of the park. Councilman Showalter expressed that the park would need a name by April of 2022 and felt the community should be involved as well. Councilman Stipes suggested that the information go into the utility bills for residents to give their feedback.

VI. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Chris Waltz, 1370 Rigby Street, expressed concern that the Council elect members were asked to fill out the non-disclosure agreements. He stated that the Council elect had been chosen by the citizens and were trusted to make any appropriate decisions at the closed meetings. Mr. Waltz concluded that the Closed Meeting was not a secret and stated his understanding of the Closed Meeting details.

VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Stipes and Bishop – Street Committee Report/Recommendation

1. Relocation of a portion of an existing fifteen-foot drainage easement across portions of Tax Parcel Nos. 500-(A)-2, 500-(A)-2A, and 500-(A)-3 situated along Roanoke Street and Hammes Street (2250 Roanoke Street).

Councilman Stipes explained the above property had improvement underway including a building expansion for a maintenance operation at the Shelor Toyota building. Mr. Stipes informed Council that a storm drain easement with a pipe was located running from Hammes Street down to Roanoke Street. He explained the Shelor business had coordinated with the Town for a dedicated easement. Councilwoman Hicks questioned who would take care of the maintenance going forward. Councilman Stipes answered that the Town currently takes care of the facility. Once it is relocated and accepted by the Town, it would be the Town's responsibility to maintain the drainage pipe.

Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the relocation of a portion of an existing fifteen-foot drainage easement across portions of the tax parcels mentioned above. Councilman Bishop seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

2. Subdivision and Boundary Line Adjustment on Lots 43, 45, 46, 47, and 48 of the Reserve at Round Meadows located on Round Meadow Drive NW and Putter Lane (creates 5 new lots).

Councilman Stipes explained this boundary line adjustment was the final act of this development plan and expressed that several months ago Council approved the addition of the five new lots and Council approval was needed.

Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the subdivision and boundary line adjustment on the lots mentioned above. Councilwoman Hicks 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. Amendment to Town Computer (IT) Decommissioning Policy.

Town Manager Wingfield reminded Council that the Decommissioning Policy had been adopted earlier in the year. He explained the reason for the amendment stating that the major change was to remove the existing pricing in the policy which would provide more flexibility for the actual implementation. Mr. Wingfield explained the IT department would be able to compare prices for used equipment in order to sell at a reasonable price.

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

B. Revisions to Employee Handbook.

Mr. Wingfield explained there were minor revisions that had been made to the handbook and a summary sheet had been included in the agenda packet.

Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the revisions to the Employee Handbook as presented in the agenda packet provided for Council. Councilman Huppert seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

C. Montgomery Museum of Art and History request.

Councilman Bishop stated that a grant from the Town had already been provided to the Museum earlier in the year and inquired what the new request would go towards. Mayor Barber explained the money would be used specifically to buy the new building on Franklin Street for the Museum to occupy. Councilwoman Hicks stated that she would abstain from this vote due to owning property around the area. Councilman Huppert expressed that the Museum operating downtown would be a major plus for the Town and encouraged the community to take a tour of the Museum. Councilwoman Sachs stated that the Museum was

a good partner to have in Christiansburg and reminded Council they had supported Christiansburg Institute in their endeavors and believed the Museum should be supported as well.

Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the request for funds for the Montgomery Museum of Art and History. Councilman Huppert seconded the motion and Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Nay; Hicks – Abstain; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

D. Resolution to enter into the \$9.3 million in debt for the park project.

Councilman Stipes made a motion to approve the resolution to enter into the \$9.3 million in debt for the park project as presented by Finance Director Valerie Tweedie. Councilwoman Sachs seconded the motion.

Mayor Barber stated his appreciation to Finance Director Valerie Tweedie for her efforts in the favorable rate on the park loan.

Councilwoman Hicks expressed her concern for the cost of the park as a whole and the timing of the park project. Mrs. Hicks stated she would not be voting in favor of this particular item.

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

E. Budget amendment #3 to approve and appropriate funds for employee bonuses.

Councilwoman Sachs made a motion to approve the budget amendment #3 to approve and appropriate funds for employee bonuses. Councilman Bishop seconded the motion.

Councilwoman Hicks read the Code of Ethics to Council and expressed concern that Council had already voted on this item at the previous meeting. She expressed that the Town employees deserved a bonus but did not feel the timing was appropriate. Mrs. Hicks expressed that she would like to see a rate increase for all part-time employees and for the Public Works departments and stated that she felt Public Works was not compensated appropriately. Councilman Huppert expressed his agreement with the \$3,000 for emergency workers, \$2,000 for full-time employees, and \$500 for part-time employees as well as volunteers. He explained that the timing was appropriate because of the holiday season and expressed it had been a rough couple years for everyone. Mr. Huppert expressed that the Town should gift employees more than the usual \$50 dollar gift card this year. He also expressed that raises would be a massive amount of money and thought that subject should be brought up during budget discussions. Councilwoman Sachs referred to a spreadsheet she had generated and explained that Christiansburg had received a small percentage of the ARPA funds compared to other surrounding municipalities. Mrs. Sachs agreed with Councilman Huppert and stated that during the pandemic some staff had covered extra positions for others that could not be present at work. She stated that Council needed to determine the general funds from the ARPA funds and stated that the stormwater project should be pulled from the general fund. Mrs. Sachs recommended that \$2,500 go towards first responders, \$1,000 to full-time, and \$500 to part-time. She stated that the Town had budgeted expenses high and revenue low and she felt comfortable with spending the Covid recovery money towards bonuses. Councilwoman Hicks reiterated that the Public Works

departments were underpaid and felt the need for raises was more pressing than one-time bonuses. Mayor Barber expressed that the subject of raises would be a budget discussion for the new Council at the beginning of the year. Mr. Barber explained that he would not recommend changing the budget in the middle of a budget cycle and expressed that he liked what was proposed at the last Council meeting for ARPA funds.

Mayor Barber expressed that Council needed to take a vote and that the proposal by the Finance Director and the Town Manager was \$3,000 for first responders, \$2,000 for essential workers and full-time employees, and \$500 for part-time employees and volunteers (part-time employees and volunteers that worked or provided at least 100 hours of service to the Town between April 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021).

Councilman Showalter inquired how the bonus discussion had originated. Mr. Wingfield explained that the Town usually had an unassigned fund balance. He explained that this year the Town had a \$2.1 million unassigned fund balance. Mr. Wingfield stated that the Town's policy provided fund balance greater than the 30-40 percent target should allocated. He also stated that the state police were receiving a bonus of \$5,000 and sheriff's deputies were receiving \$3,000 from the state. Mrs. Tweedie explained that the provided ARPA funds had to be spent or the Town would have to return the money. Councilman Showalter questioned what would be proposed to Council next year as far as merits and cost of livings were concerned. Mr. Wingfield explained that he would like to keep the 2% merit pool and the costing of living would be determined by increases to the consumer price index but expected it to be high for 2021. Councilwoman Hicks expressed concern that the pandemic was not over and talked about the Town having enough money for the upcoming year. She expressed agreement with bonuses for the Police department, Public Works departments, as well as volunteers and part-time workers and volunteers but felt the bonuses for full-time employees should be lower. Councilman Bishop noted that the Town employees should receive bonuses like other workers had and felt Council should show appreciation for the Town employees. Councilman Stipes stated that he had voted to delay the bonuses at the last Council meeting but after some research he explained the act of financial rewarding for employees would create a good work morale and employee retention and felt that based on those things he would like to take positive action. Mr. Stipes explained he would not vote concerning the part-time employees due to his daughter being an employee at the Aquatic Center. Mr. Stipes expressed that he liked Councilwoman Sachs proposal but explained the original proposal was fewer total dollars. He requested that part-time bonuses be set aside for a separate vote. Councilwoman Hicks questioned if they all could be voted on separately. Councilman Showalter explained he would abstain from the part-time bonus vote due to his daughter being a part-time employee as well and stated he would also like to see the ARPA funds separated from the general funding.

Councilwoman Sachs retracted her previous motion and made a new motion to approve the budget amendment #3 to appropriate funds for employee bonuses pay out for the following: \$3,000 for first responders, \$2,000 for Public Works essential employees and other fulltime employees and leave out the part-time volunteers to vote on separately due to abstentions. Councilman Showalter requested a separate vote for the ARPA funds and the general funds as well.

Councilwoman Sachs retracted her previous motion again and made a motion to approve the budget amendment #3 to appropriate ARPA funds for employee bonuses pay out for the following: \$3,000 for first responders, \$2,000 for essential Public Works employees.

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

Councilwoman Hicks made a motion to approve the budget amendment #4 to appropriate ARPA funds for \$500 for first responders and volunteers. Councilman Showalter seconded the motion. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

Councilwoman Sachs made a motion to approve the budget amendment #5 to appropriate general funds for employee bonuses pay out for \$2,000 for full time employees. Councilman Huppert seconded the motion. Councilman Showalter commented that he would not support the \$2,000 bonus for full time employees due to foreseeing an increase in salaries next fiscal year. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Nay; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Nay; Stipes – Aye.

Councilwoman Sachs made a motion to approve the budget amendment #6 to appropriate general funds for employee bonuses pay out for \$500 bonus for part-time employees. Councilwoman Hicks seconded the motion. Council voted on the motion as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Abstain; Stipes – Abstain. Councilman Showalter inquired how the discussed and approved bonuses would be paid out to the Town employees and if there were any qualifications to receiving the bonus. Mr. Wingfield specified that to be qualified for the bonus the employee had to have been employed with the Town during the pandemic emergency declaration and employed at the payment date, which is planned for December. Mayor Barber expressed that any employee that had come on board in the last six months would not be eligible for the bonus. Councilman Stipes explained that a good relationship is a two-way trust and appreciates employees and hoped the employees would see this as an incentive to stay at the Town.

F. Discussion of Council elect members inclusion in closed session, Town Council e-mails, etc.

Mayor Barber stated that he did not have an issue with Council elect members attending the closed session and felt that in the last four years things that were discussed in closed session unfortunately did not stay in closed session. Mr. Wingfield stated that he would be including the Council elect in all future Council emails moving forward.

Councilwoman Hicks made a motion to include the elect Council members in the closed meeting discussion. Councilman Stipes seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

Mayor Barber proceeded to clarify a public comment earlier from Mr. Chris Waltz and questioned how many parking spaces were being considered at the property in the downtown area. Mr. Wingfield stated that there were more than 38 parking spaces being considered.

IX. STAFF REPORTS

A. Town Manager

Mr. Wingfield stated that gift cards are given out to employees annually at Christmas and usually they are put out to bid in November. He asked Council if they would like to approve the gift cards this year since there would be a bonus given to employees this year.

Councilman Stipes made a motion that due to employees receiving a one-time bonus before the Christmas holiday there should not be gift cards this year. Councilwoman Sachs seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Aye; Stipes – Aye.

B. Town Attorney

Town Attorney Reid Broughton informed Council that Alleghany Construction Company had filed a lawsuit against the Town on December 13th concerning the N. Franklin Street improvement project. Alleghany Construction Company alleged there were errors in the engineering design and \$700,000 in damages as a result. Mr. Broughton stated that the Town had three weeks to file a response to the lawsuit.

C. Other Staff

X. COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilman Stipes reported that the Town was doing well financially and appreciated Mrs. Tweedie's up-to-date information. Mr. Stipes stated that the first quarter of this year's meals tax, the largest source of the Town's revenue, was 26% over last fiscal year 2021. He expressed that meals tax was up 9% over two years ago and 16% over three years ago. Mr. Stipes talked about Council's positive actions on the new park and encouraging people to visit Christiansburg and live in the Town. He congratulated everyone that ran for office, including those that were successful and expressed his support for Mayor Barber. Mr. Stipes also addressed the Council elect members and explained that Council decisions were not always easy decisions and as Council members they would not always make everyone happy.

Councilman Showalter
No report.

Councilman Huppert reported that the Recreation Center had their annual Trunk-or-Treat for the community on October 30th and there were at least 500 children in attendance. Mr. Huppert talked about the Farmers Market and the successful year the market had with around 550 customers each week. He spoke about the Shred-A-Thon presented by the Recreation Center and stated there were about 13,000 pounds of material shredded. He acknowledged the Aquatic Center swim meet last weekend and stated there were 800 kids in attendance. Mr. Huppert concluded by addressing Mayor Barber and expressing his gratitude for a job well done.

Councilman Bishop
No report.

Councilwoman Sachs reported there would be a Public Arts Advisory Board meeting, via Zoom, at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, the 10th. Mrs. Sachs noted that the first installment of art would be in the Cambria area.

Councilwoman Hicks agreed that the Farmers Market did very well this year and it was nice to see all the events and different activities. Mrs. Hicks wished everyone a Happy Veterans Day and Happy Thanksgiving Day.

Mayor Barber reported that Christmas at the Market would be held on December the 10th from 5-9 p.m. and the Town's Christmas parade would start at 7 p.m. with the tree lighting at 6:55 p.m. Mr. Barber also reported that the Winter Wonderland would be held outdoors at the Recreation Center on the 11th.

XI. 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 Hicks seconded the motion and Council voted as follows: Bishop – Aye; Hicks – Aye; Huppert – Aye; Sachs – Aye; Showalter – Nay; Stipes – Aye.
2. Reconvene in Open Meeting.
3. Certification.
Councilman Bishop made a motion 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 on the matter.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 9:04 p.m.

Tracy Heinline, Clerk of Council

D. Michael Barber, Mayor