

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 15, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.**

A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA. WAS HELD AT CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN HALL, 100 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA, ON MARCH 15, 2022 AT 6:00 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor D. Michael Barber; Vice-Mayor Henry Showalter; Samuel M. Bishop; Johana Hicks; Tanya Hockett; Casey Jenkins; Tim Wilson.

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren; Executive Assistant/Clerk of Council Tracy Heinline; Finance Director Valerie Tweedie; Public Works Director Jim Lancianese; Human Resources Director Alicia Dials; Police Chief Mark Sisson; Assistant Engineering Director Justin St. Clair; Building Official Jerry Heinline; Engineering Director Mike Kelley; Engineering Assistant Don Cole; Aquatics Director Terry Caldwell; Fire Chief Billy Hanks.

WORK SESSION

I. Call to Order

II. Revenue Projections and Budget Assumptions

Finance Director Valerie Tweedie presented Council with a general overview of the budget and its distinct funds. Councilwoman Hicks questioned how much was in the Cemetery fund. Mrs. Tweedie explained there was \$750,000. Mr. Wingfield noted the receipts from lot sales goes into that fund, so that amount should continue to grow in the future. Councilwoman Hicks questioned the long-term plans for the Cemetery. Mrs. Tweedie expressed that \$60,000 is allocated towards burial expenses and the Town takes 100% and places it in the perpetual fund. She explained that once we no longer sell lots then the maintenance and employee fees could be less expensive to operate the Cemetery. Councilman Showalter noted that no matter what the Town set aside it would take financial sustainability to maintain the fund.

Mrs. Tweedie noted that the first draft of the budget would be presented to Council on March 22nd at the regular Town Council meeting. She expressed that the economic outlook for the Town had improved, except for the high inflation rate and noted that meals, lodging, and sales tax were all trending upward and exceeding current year expectations. Mrs. Tweedie provided Council with numbers for meals tax collections and projections and explained that the expectation is to bring in \$8.2 million in 2022 and almost \$8.4 million for 2023. She explained that fuel and material cost were rising which would cause an increase in departmental budgets and noted that an increase for the 2023 budget should be expected. Mrs. Tweedie showed Council an increase in lodging tax between 2022 and 2023 and noted that sales tax would run about 6% over last year's numbers.

Mrs. Tweedie touched on a proposed \$1.00 per 1,000 gallons increase for water rates for 2023 that had been scheduled over several years but was deferred two years ago. She also explained that 2022 scheduled rate change was from \$9.00 monthly for the first 1,000 gallons to \$10.00 per month.

III. Capital Projects

Assistant Director of Engineering, Capital Projects and Utilities, Justin St. Clair provided an overview of the FY23 capital projects for transportation, stormwater, and water and sewer. Mr. St. Clair talked about the completion of several projects as well as ongoing and new proposed projects for the Town. In the current/upcoming projects for transportation, Mr. St. Clair included the paving on Roanoke Street from East Main Street to Depot Street and expressed that the Town has applied for a funding grant with VDOT. He also explained that the waterline project for that area had to be completed prior to the paving improvements. Mr. St. Clair touched on stormwater and noted College Street Improvements as one of the ongoing projects for the Town. Mr. Wingfield noted that once the Town received easement acquisition from the property owners then it would be brought back to Town Council for further consideration. Mr. St. Clair continued and stated that several of the water and sewer projects would be completed this fiscal year and others were moving into subsequent phases. Mr. St. Clair provided Council with descriptions of the capital projects for this budget cycle and explained the different funding sources for those projects. He also spoke about the upcoming completion of Christiansburg Industrial Park stormwater basin improvement and explained that the Town applied for SLAF (Stormwater Local Assistance Fund) and was successful and able to secure an extra \$300,000 from the state. Mr. St. Clair continued to discuss the Resiliency Study and explained that the Town had received a grant from the Community Flood Protection Fund (CFPF) in order to perform a Town-wide study. He explained that applying for that funding would potentially open future funding from CFPF for the projects identified in the study. Mr. St. Clair spoke about the Buffalo Tank rehabilitation options and designs. Mr. Wingfield explained there had been discussion concerning the tank appearance and possibly adding a Christiansburg theme to the outside, which would be visible from Interstate 81 and the Harkrader Sports Complex. Mr. St. Clair concluded his presentation with future capital projects that were under consideration such as the Booker T. Washington Parkway Extension (Connector Road), culvert replacement on Stone Street, and sewer replacement and upgrades on Tower Road.

Capital Projects Engineer Don Cole presented on the Wastewater Treatment Plant and explained the history of the plant and future proposed projects. Mr. Cole touched on the biosolids preliminary engineering report of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and explained that the report showed obsolete and unsafe equipment. He explained there were issues with disposing of the biosolids product. Mr. Cole also included that operating costs at the plant had steadily increased. He explained that the biosolids design included replacement of some equipment, lowering operating costs, improvement of employee safety, and disposing of product at the landfill which would include a centrifuge that would reduce the amount of liquids in the biosolids. Mr. Cole talked about the prioritization of the needs of the plant over the next 0-5-, 5-10-, and 10-20-year time span. He explained that several of the capital projects were existing projects and were included in the total cost. Councilman Showalter inquired if ARPA funds could be applied to these specific projects. Mr. Wingfield explained that ARPA funds could be used for these projects, but those funds were being considered for the College Street Improvement project.

Mr. Wingfield touched on solar panels for the Town's landfill and explained that since the land is sloped it would likely not be the best location for solar panels.

Mr. Cole continued with the immediate needs of the plant and expressed that electrical work needed to be addressed at the plant soon, concrete areas need repairs, and the biosolid project was shovel ready. Mrs. Tweedie explained that several of the projects at the plant were substantial and the funds could not come out of the general fund or the enterprise fund, they would need to be financed with debt, but would need to be completed within a reasonable amount of time due to deadlines from the lender. She explained that the information given was to show research of the funding for the proposed projects and to formulate a workable solution.

IV. Staffing and Compensation

Town Manager Wingfield explained to Council there were four new position requests from Emergency Services that would be funded through Revenue Recovery. Mr. Wingfield noted that the Town of Blacksburg, Montgomery County, Pulaski County and Radford City were including a 5% COLA in their proposed budgets. He also explained the Town of Blacksburg and Montgomery County were undergoing compensation studies with the intention of funding additional movement of their respective positions and pay scales. Mr. Wingfield proposed a 5% COLA for Town employees and a 2% merit increase and increasing part-time wages to reflect a minimum of \$15.00 an hour. He also proposed targeted increases for 52 positions within the Town that would total \$40,000. Councilwoman Hicks expressed she did not agree with an increase for managers and supervisors but felt all full-time and part-time employees should receive an increase. Councilman Showalter inquired if Mrs. Hicks felt that only full-time and part-time employees should receive an increase and the Town should forego increases for managers and supervisors across the board. Councilwoman Hockett expressed that looking at other municipalities she felt it would be advisable but noted that the Town would not be able to compete and come out on top every time. Councilman Bishop agreed with the increases for all employees as proposed. Councilman Wilson agreed with Councilwoman Hockett. Councilwoman Hicks questioned if sign-up bonuses for new employees was an option. Mayor Barber expressed that the Human Resources would begin attending in-person job fairs in April.

Mr. Wingfield talked about immediate staffing proposals and explained that Montgomery County is currently hiring EMTs at \$19.23 an hour, Advanced EMTs at \$20.19 an hour, and Paramedics at \$22.26 an hour. Mr. Wingfield proposed an increase to \$20.00 an hour for EMTs, \$21.00 an hour for Advanced EMTs and \$23.00 an hour for Paramedics effective March 28, 2022. Councilman Wilson agreed with the increase for emergency personnel and expressed fear of losing current employees to the County. Mr. Wingfield explained this increase would come from the revenue recovery fund so it would not require a budget amendment from Council. Fire Chief Billy Hanks explained the Town would have a hard time back-filling positions if they lost their current employees. Mr. Wingfield informed Council he would place this increase for Emergency Services on the next Town Council agenda for potential approval.

V. Community Support Applications

Finance Director Valerie Tweedie shared a list of the community support applications from several non-profit businesses. Mrs. Tweedie explained that she would meet with Council in July and start the community support process. Councilwoman Hicks expressed the need for consistency throughout the community support application process. Mrs. Hicks expressed that Councilman Showalter had commented several years back that the Christiansburg Institute was not considered cultural. Councilman Showalter expressed that Mrs. Hicks statement was not true. Mrs. Tweedie explained that public hearing comments would be considered, and the final budget would need to be approved by June 30th.

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business brought before Council the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.



Tracy Heintz, Clerk of Council



D. Michael Barber, Mayor