

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 16, 2023 – 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 MAY 16, 2023 AT 6:00 P.M.

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

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Andrew Warren; Executive Assistant/Clerk of Council Tracy Heinline; Director of Finance Valerie Tweedie; Chief of Police Mark Sisson; Public Relations Director Christina Edney; aquatics Director Terry Caldwell; Director of Public Works Jim Lancianese; Assistant Superintendent of Public Works, Streets Travis Moles

WORK SESSION

I. Call to Order

Mayor Barber called the work session to order and stated that there be no public comment.

II. Discussion of proposed Fiscal Year 2023 – 24 Budget

Finance Director Valerie Tweedie presented to Council an overview of the proposed fiscal year 2023 – 2024 Town Budget.

COLA AND MERIT

Councilman Showalter questioned the proposed 5% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and the 2% merit increase for Town employees. Mrs. Tweedie referenced a spreadsheet that reflected cost-of-living adjustments and merit increases for employees in the last 10 years and noted that she had sent this information to all of Council for review. Councilman Showalter questioned the jump from a 1% COLA in 2020-2021 to a 5% increase in 2021-2022. Town Manager Wingfield explained that due to the high percentage change in the Southern Urban Consumer Price Index he felt the cost-of-living percentage should be raised. Mr. Showalter expressed concern that Town employees could receive more than a 7% increase when considering the COLA and their merit increases combined. Councilwoman Hicks agreed that the COLA percentage was too high.

Councilman Jenkins expressed that he felt the COLA percentage was appropriate in order to remain competitive with other localities. Councilman Bishop agreed that the employee increases were justified. Mayor Barber noted the short-staffing in the Public Works Department and reminded Council that cost-of-living increases help retain employees. Mr. Barber explained that merit increases for current employees were based on the employee's evaluation score and since the score varies for each employee a 2% increase was not guaranteed.

Councilwoman Hockett expressed that the Town should match what the other localities were presenting to their employees. Councilman Wilson noted that two cost of living studies had been completed previously to determine if the Town matched what other localities were paying out and he felt comfortable with the results and would support the increases. Mayor Barber noted that four Council members supported the COLA and merit increases for Town employees.

REVENUE

Mrs. Tweedie noted that revenue numbers were adjusted to be closer to what is actual and was presented as part of the budget. Mayor Barber communicated that the Town staff had completed a conservative budget and commended staff for taking that approach.

SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING FEES

Mrs. Tweedie explained the recommendation of a \$1 increase in solid waste collection fees due to the increase in tipping fees at the Montgomery Regional Solid Waste Authority. Councilwoman Hicks suggested that recycling be voluntary for the community. Mr. Wingfield noted that the decision to recycle had come from the Solid Waste Committee previously and it was decided that if you received solid waste pickup then it was mandated that you have recycling as well. Councilman Wilson expressed that when the Town decided to have recycling cans it eliminated 60% of recycled materials added to their solid waste which the Town paid for when dumped at the landfill. Councilman Showalter noted that the garbage and recycling service is optional, and that citizens could otherwise dispose of their solid waste.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT GRANTS

Mayor Barber noted the comments concerning the reconsideration of funding for the Montgomery County Museum at the last Town Council meeting. Mr. Barber added that he had recently received several emails from other concerned citizens urging Council to fund the Montgomery Museum. The emails were received from the NAACP, Diane Akers, Paula Austin, Emily Beard, Deb Travis, Charlie Whitescarver, and Steve Huppert. Councilwoman Hockett expressed that the Town should fund the museum as well as the Wonder Universe/Blacksburg Children's Museum. Mrs. Hockett noted that 20,000 people had visited the Children's Museum in 2022 and the Town had gifted \$25,000 to the museum last year. She added that the Town had given \$18,000 to the Montgomery Museum in 2022 and questioned why the Town was not supporting either this year.

Mayor Barber agreed and expressed that Council should reconsider their decision to fund both museums. Councilman Wilson noted that his opinion to not fund any non-profits had not changed. Councilman Jenkins expressed that the Children's Museum had many families that has visited the museum this past year and expressed it was a mistake to not see the value in what was being provided for the kids. Councilwoman Hockett noted the potential for increase in revenue for Christiansburg if both museums were granted funding from the Town and expressed that the Town needs to support cultural arts.

Councilman Showalter expressed that he appreciates both museums but chose to support other non-profits with services applied to childcare and after school childcare such as the Boys and Girls Club. He mentioned other services that assisted the community such as the Free Clinic, Good Samaritan Hospice, Literacy Volunteers, and MCEAP.

Mayor Barber noted that three Council members were against funding both the Montgomery Museum of Art and History and the Wonder Universe/Blacksburg Children's Museum. He added there was one abstention for the Montgomery Museum.

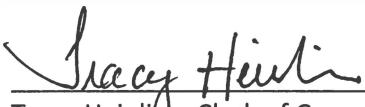
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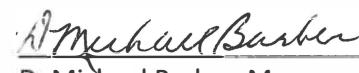
Mrs. Tweedie noted that she would make updated changes to the budget per tonight's discussions. She mentioned that she would add the approved budget amendment #3 to recognize the award of the three grants received for which expenditures would occur within Fiscal Year 2022-23. Mrs. Tweedie added that there were several capital items going into May that would need to be rolled over to the next budget cycle. This included several Police Department patrol cars that were backordered. Chief Sisson clarified that this was an industry wide issue, and that the interceptor package for the patrol cars was slowing down shipment. Mrs. Tweedie also mentioned the renovation funds for the Police Department may roll over to the next budget cycle as well.

Mrs. Tweedie noted that she would send a copy of the budget to Council once she has completed the changes. Councilwoman Hicks inquired a date to meet again with the Central Business Committee and discuss façade grants for this upcoming year.

III. Adjournment

There being no further business brought before Council the meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.


Tracy Heinl, Clerk of Council


D. Michael Barber