

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 15, 2025 – 6:30 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 JANUARY 15, 2025, AT 6:30 P.M.

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

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Scot Shippee; Clerk of Council Tracy Heinline; Public Relations Director Christina Bolt; Fire Chief Billy Hanks; Deputy Fire Marshal Curtis Whitt; EMS Deputy Director Josh Settlege

WORK SESSION

I. Call To Order

Mayor Barber called the work session to order.

II. Adjustment of the Agenda

No adjustment to the agenda

III. Discussion and Action by Mayor and Council

A. Emergency Services Funding Requests for Montgomery County

Mayor Barber explained he had instructed Town Manager Wingfield to reach out to Montgomery County to ask for their proposal for Emergency Services funding and that they desired a request letter from the Town.

Councilman Wilson expressed that he would like to discuss with Council where they would like to see Emergency Services in five years. Mr. Wilson noted there was a significant amount of work still to do; finding property for a new emergency services building, allocate funding for the land, and hiring additional full-time firefighters for the Fire Department. He stated that Council should commit to something soon in order to

move forward. Councilman Wilson asked for Council discussion on the parcel at the Christiansburg Huckleberry Park for a potential location for emergency services.

Fire Chief Billy Hanks expressed the call volume in the uptown Christiansburg area was the heaviest compared to the downtown area and that a considerable amount of citizen growth was on that side as well. Chief Hanks added that since 2010 he has asked for paid firefighters in the budget and has been denied most years. He stated that the Town continues to grow so the Fire Department needs to grow with it. Chief Hanks felt two additional firefighters staffed and the lot at the new park would be sufficient for emergency services explaining they need at least five acres.

Councilwoman Hicks voiced that the County should help fund the new emergency services building or the Town should give the County property in Town and let them be responsible for Emergency Services. Councilman Wilson clarified that the Town is responsible for their own fire and rescue and does not have the ability to give it all to the County and walk away.

Councilman Jenkins agreed the Town needs a plan to move forward and that placing Emergency Services in the Roanoke Street area is not sufficient due to the call volume showing a greater need in uptown. Mr. Jenkins felt the Town should commit to the new park area due to density as well as look at incorporating more full-time firefighters.

Mayor Barber added that the market for experienced firefighters was low, and that Christiansburg has recently had two career firefighters resign and that while they are currently hiring to replace those two there is still the issue of the department being short-staffed. He suggested Council could approve a budget amendment for more full-time staff at the Fire Department if needed. Council agreed. Chief Hanks estimated \$88,000 for each full-time firefighter.

Councilwoman Hockett agreed that the Town should first define what the need is for the paid firefighters and what will it cost to fill the gap before asking the County for funding. Town Manager Wingfield suggested asking for a percentage of total operating salaries and fringe benefits.

Councilwoman Bowman recalled that the piece of property at the Christiansburg Huckleberry Park was supposed to be sold to bring in economic growth and help pay for the debt service and felt this would be a vanity property if emergency services used it. Mrs. Bowman felt the Town could find a more affordable property. Councilwoman Hockett noted there was a shortage of property to purchase in Christiansburg.

Assistant Town Manager Scot Shippee noted the heat map shows what percentage of emergency services calls were within the Town versus what was in the unincorporated areas. He added that looking at the average of those numbers you could see what percentage was in the Town and what was in the County. Mr. Shippee questioned if the funds the County had already provided to the Town equal the percentage of services the Town is providing to the County. Chief Hanks clarified that the numbers do align, especially after his department received an increase in their budget last year.

Councilman Wilson expressed concern for the continuous discussion and no action concerning potential property. He added that currently emergency vehicles must drive through N. Franklin Street traffic to get to the Peppers Ferry Road area which was very difficult and time consuming.

Councilwoman Hockett clarified that now they have action items to take back to the Emergency Services Committee to discuss from this work session. Council was agreeable to Chief Hanks interviewing for two firefighters to replace previous staff as well as two additional firefighters.

Councilman Wilson noted the Emergency Services Committee would meet on January 27th and would develop a plan to share with Council including a set figure from the hiring of firefighters. And once a plan was agreed upon it could be presented to the County.

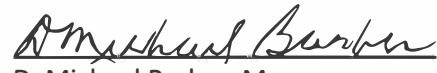
B. Purchase of property for Parks and Recreation

Councilwoman Hicks expressed concern there was not sufficient parking at the Recreation Center for events and suggested the Town purchase the land near the building in the next five years or it would be gone. Councilman Wilson suggested that since she was discussing buying property it should be considered a closed meeting topic. Councilwoman Hicks asked that the discussion be placed on the next Town Council meeting for a closed session. Council agreed.

IV. Adjournment

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


Tracy Heintz, Clerk of Council


D. Michael Barber, Mayor