

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia, held in the Council Chambers located at 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia, on Monday, May 19, 2008, at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: William D. Coleburn

Council Members: L. Benjamin Green, John W. Hill, Jr., C. Duncan Quicke, Barbara Thompson, Alfred V. Tucker, Constance T. Wynn

Town Attorney: Kennon C. Walden, Jr.

Town Staff: Jennifer H. Beck, Administrative Assistant; David Dunn, Assistant Town Manager; J. Larry Palmore, Town Manager; Joan R. Palmore, Town Clerk; Charles C. Wells, Finance Director

Those Absent:

Council Member: J. A. Wilson, Jr.

Town Staff: Nicholas C. Kuzmiak, Police Chief

Mayor Coleburn called the meeting to order and led in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Coleburn led those in the Chambers in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

Councilman Quicke made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented the Minutes of the April 21, 2008, Council Meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Tucker and approved unanimously. Vote:

Councilman Quicke	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Green	-	Aye
Councilman Hill	-	Aye
Councilman Tucker	-	Aye

VISITORS

1. Tom Daniel, Brunswick Avenue, addressed Council. He stated that he would like to encourage the Town to move forward with the transfer of the deed to the Armory to the Friends of Blackstone. He also asked that the Town continue to work on getting a new Medical Center.

Councilwoman Thompson entered the meeting.

Mayor Coleburn stated that it was only last month that the Friends of Blackstone asked to have the property transferred to them and we are continuing to pursue this. He also added that the Town Manager has been working tirelessly on the new Medical Center. He stated that Bon-Secours decided to rebid the project so now we have to go through that process again.

2. Lafayette Dickens thanked the Town Clerk for her help in assembling a packet that has been given to the Downtown property owners. He stated that this packet will be a guide for the property owners. He added that he has started learning a new software program that will help him keep up with the business square footage downtown and many other things. Mr. Dickens informed Council that the Virginia Main Street Signs will be going up very shortly. There are six signs and they will be placed near the entrances to Blackstone. He added that he is very excited that the facade improvement requests for the Downtown District will be going before the Review Board next month, June 5th. The next step will be sending them to the Department of Historic Resources for their review and then these facades will go out to bid.

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT

Assistant Fire Chief Sam Nunnally presented the Fire Chief's report for April. He asked Council for permission to purchase two sets of turn-out gear.

Councilman Green made a motion to approve the request for two sets of turn-out gear. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Thompson and approved unanimously. Vote:

Councilman Quicke	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Green	-	Aye
Councilman Hill	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Tucker	-	Aye

Assistant Fire Chief Nunnally stated that the Fire Department recently applied for two grants that they just received approval on. One was a 50-50 grant through the Department of Forestry for some forest fire fighting gear which is different gear than what they use to fight structural fires-- this gear is a lot lighter. They will be getting 10 sets this year and hope to

continue this every year until they have the entire department equipped. He stated that the Department of Forestry will pay 50% and the Fire Department will pay the remaining 50%. They also got a grant for some incident reporting software to help them keep track of their calls and our cost for this grant will be \$4,000. He informed Council that they have four more members certified as Firefighter 1. Assistant Chief Nunnelly stated that the County did not approve giving the fire fighters in Nottoway County the property tax exemption. We are really disappointed with this decision and we are still working on this. He also informed Council that several members were hurt in an ATV accident the other day. They are at MCV hospital and will hopefully be coming home this week.

Manager Palmore stated that the Fire Department is making the match on both of the above mentioned grants.

Councilman Green asked about Medflight, how much does it cost when you call.

Assistant Fire Chief Nunnelly stated that it is usually paid for by the insurance company although the State Police MedFlight is free. He informed Council that there are also two other helicopter rescue flights-- Life-Evac and SkyStat which have better care because they carry medicines on board for the patients. He added that the fire commander on the scene has the authority to call MedFlight or any of the other helicopters. Assistant Chief Nunnelly stated that Fire Chief Bradford asked him to convey to Council how much the Fire Department appreciates the Council's support and all they do for them.

Mayor Coleburn and Councilman Hill stated that they appreciate all the Fire Department does for the Town.

PAYMENT OF BILLS

Councilman Green made a motion to pay the bills in the amount of \$932,422.67. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Discussion: Councilman Green asked several questions on the bills.

The motion made and seconded was approved as follows.

Vote:

Councilman Quicke	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Green	-	Aye
Councilman Hill	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Tucker	-	Aye

Council discussed the American flags Downtown and how great they look.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Building and Property Committee - Chairman of the Committee, Councilman Green read the attached Building and Property Committee Report.

Health and Ordinance Committee - Manager Palmore handed out several draft ordinances on junk cars, property cleanup and dangerous property. He asked that Council review these ordinances for adoption at a later date. He explained that these draft ordinances are much tougher than the ones we have in our Code now. He stated that the Town Attorney is looking into seeing what we can do with the old Armbruster's restaurant property on Church Street. We really hope someone will come in and restore this property, especially given the historical significance to Blackstone.

Mayor Coleburn stated that the old Armbruster's restaurant building is 100 years old this year.

Councilman Quicke asked if someone is restoring a vehicle will they fall under the junk car ordinance.

Manager Palmore answered that we will work with these individuals.

Finance Committee - Due to the absence of Finance Committee Chairman Wilson, Finance Committee Member Hill gave the report for the Finance Committee. He thanked Finance Director Wells, Town Manager Palmore and fellow committee members Councilman Quicke and Councilman Wilson for their hard work on the budget. He then reviewed the proposed 2008/09 budget as follows: This budget shows an increase in meals tax from 4.5% to 6.5%; a new lodging tax of 6%; and a new cigarette tax of 22 cents per pack. It also shows an increase of 5% to electric rates which will increase the average residential bill by \$4.01 a month. We are also proposing an increase to the water and sewer rates of 10% which will increase the average water bill by \$3.12 and the average sewer bill by \$2.50 per month. Councilman Hill also explained that there is a \$277,142 deficit with Capital Outlay. The Debt Service for the year is \$988,000 with Principal at \$615,000 and Interest at \$373,000. The total debt for the year is \$988,000. He added that the proposed wage increase for this budget is 4% but because we haven't refilled several positions and other factors, the effect it will have on the budget is only a 2.5% increase.

Councilman Green stated that he appreciates all that the Finance Committee does and asked that they please not take anything he says as criticism. He is just concerned with the wage increases especially because of the hard times we are in. He feels we need to tighten up in some areas and maybe not give a full 4% raise.

Manager Palmore stated that if you have a man that is making \$7.00 an hour, 4% is not much. Its not even enough to keep up with the gas it costs to come to work or to keep up with the difference in the health insurance. He stated that we need to pay our employees if we want to keep them. If you look at the whole scheme of things, we can't compete with the Sheriff's Department now. He understands where Councilman Green is coming from but from top to bottom he is proud of all the Town Employees. He knows he can call any one of them at any time and they will get here as fast as they can and it hasn't always been that way. We have great employees that work for the Town.

Councilman Green stated that there is no one else in the world that thinks more of the Town Employees then him. He added that he has lost several employees to Fort Pickett, Nottoway County, and Blackstone.

Manager Palmore stated that we try to take care of the employees that we have.

Council discussed the budget process and several issues including personnel as well as VML conferences.

Mayor Coleburn feels that when a citizen finds out that this budget is \$5,000,000 less than last year's but we are still raising fees he wants to know how to answer. He asked, what are the increases.

Manager Palmore gave a break down of revenue and expenses and explained the budget to the Council and those present.

Mayor Coleburn feels we need to be careful when we tax citizens for certain things.

Councilman Green asked the Finance Director to give him the following information-- What is the difference between 4½ percent and 6 percent on the Meals Tax. How much will we make from the cigarette tax and the lodging tax and he also asked for a list of the Town employee's salaries.

Councilman Quicke stated that he appreciates all that the department supervisors did to cut their budgets.

Manager Palmore explained that over \$900,000 of this budget is debt service. The only way we can keep the electrical system is to continue to maintain our system. We also have to pay our electric department employees to keep them. He added that we need to look at our employees and see what a great job they do.

Mayor Coleburn feels that we need to look at the whole picture. He asked what is the next step in this process.

Manager Palmore stated that we need to put in \$10,000 for recycling. We also need to go back to the Fire Department and put in \$2,500. He pointed out that this is the same time table we have been on since 1992.

Mayor Coleburn stated that the reason for this is because we have to wait until the State Budget comes out before we can do ours.

Councilwoman Thompson stated that she is in favor of the employees getting a raise.

Councilwoman Wynn stated that she needs to go home and digest this before she can comment.

Councilman Green made a motion to advertise the proposed budget for public hearing. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn and approved unanimously. Vote:

Councilman Quicke	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Green	-	Aye
Councilman Hill	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Tucker	-	Aye

Councilman Green thanked the Town Manager and the Finance Committee for all their work and stated that he feels better after talking with Councilman Hill and Manager Palmore.

REPORT ON MEDICAL CENTER

Manager Palmore informed Council that we expect to have plans from Bon-Secours by May 23rd for Council's review and then after that the project will again go out to bid. He added that it will probably be sometime in June before we can see any construction.

RESOLUTIONS - VICTORIA ABC STORE

Council reviewed the resolutions as written by the Town Attorney.

ON GOING PROJECTS:

Bus Shop - Everything is moving along fine. We can't get accomplished what we need to because of the rain. It is supposed to be dry after tomorrow so hopefully we can get something done this coming week.

Castles Trailer Park - We just got the permit from the Department of Soil and Conservation so we can move forward.

Fire Siren Grant - The grant has to go back to USDA for their approval which can take as long as four to six weeks.

Mayor Coleburn asked would it be possible that we would have these sirens in place this year.

Manager Palmore answered, he is certain that it will happen this year.

Council discussed several other miscellaneous issues.

PRELIMINARY AUDIT REPORT

Manager Palmore handed out information to the Council on the new auditing standards. He informed Council that we are now going to have to hire someone to come in and prepare what the auditors are going to audit.

Mayor Coleburn stated that Councilman Hill made the point last year that it seems to take too long for us to get the audit report back from Robinson, Farmer, Cox.

Manager Palmore stated that he hopes to receive a preliminary audit report by tomorrow.

RATIFY POLL TAKEN ON RESOLUTION AND LETTER TO VDOT - 460 BRIDGE

Mayor Coleburn is concerned about the width of the bridge. He feels the shoulder should be wider than 8 feet.

Manager Palmore stated that we do not want to stop the project and he added, if they are going to put re-routed traffic on Route 606 we need traffic lights on Barco Road and North West Avenue and also Barco Road and North Main Street. He added that he is going to paint STOP in the road on Barco Road as you approach North West Avenue and see if that will help at this very dangerous intersection.

Councilman Hill made a motion to ratify the following poll taken to adopt the attached Resolution and letter on the VDOT 460 Bridge.

Councilman Quicke	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Green	-	Aye
Councilman Wilson	-	Aye
Councilman Hill	-	Aye

The motion was seconded by Councilman Green and approved unanimously. Vote:

Councilman Quicke	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Green	-	Aye
Councilman Hill	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Tucker	-	Aye

Councilwoman Thompson asked about the Amelia Avenue Bridge.

Manager Palmore answered that we are going to put this back on the 6-year plan.

CONSENT AGENDA

Manager Palmore recommended that we hand this out tonight and come back for discussion next month. He stated that a Consent Agenda has its pros and cons. He added that the current Town Council Agenda would have to be changed which is part of the Town Code.

Mayor Coleburn explained to those present that the Consent Agenda would not prevent the public from seeing what is on the agenda. It is not an effort to hide anything, it is only to make the meeting more efficient.

MAYOR’S MINUTE

Mayor Coleburn mentioned the Memorial Day service which will be next Monday, May 26th at 2:30 p.m., in Seay Park. This is being sponsored by the American Legion Post 40. He added that Tony Daniel asked him to present to the Town a flag, which Mayor Coleburn handed to Manager Palmore. He stated that this Virginia State Flag was flown over Camp Patriot Kuwait by the Officers, NCO’s and Soldiers of Task Force Normandy, 3-116th Infantry Battalion while in support of “Operation Iraqi Freedom” on October 1, 2007, in honor of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia.

Manager Palmore thanked Mr. Daniel and suggested that we have this flag framed and displayed.

POLICE REPORT

There were no comments on the Police Report.

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS

Tom Daniel addressed Council regarding the junk car ordinance. He asked does that apply to residential only or to commercial also.

Manager Palmore answered it applies to both residential and commercial junk cars.

Tom Daniel stated that he knows there was a substantial amount of cost that the Town had to take on when we took over the Water and Sewer Plants. He asked is there anyway that we can look at charging Fort Pickett more for the treatment of their water and sewer.

Councilman Hill answered that out of town residents as well as those businesses at Fort Pickett already pay extra to have their water and sewer treated.

Grace McDonald asked about Downtown Revitalization.

Manager Palmore stated that there is not enough money to do what we want to do with the facades. He wants to ask for a \$1 million grant to do things like street-scaping downtown. We need to look at the figures to see what we are talking about but we do need this additional funding as the facades are going to eat up a good portion of the DBI budget.

Councilman Green asked about Dinwiddie Avenue.

Manager Palmore stated we need to get VDOT to look at this.

CLOSED SESSION

Councilman Hill made a motion to go into Closed Session according to the following:

- Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711
- Sub Section A.
- Disposition of Real Property
- Personnel

The motion was seconded by Councilman Green and approved as follows. Vote:

Councilman Quicke	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Green	-	Aye
Councilman Hill	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Tucker	-	Aye

Mayor Coleburn declared the meeting back in open session.

Councilman Green made a motion to certify that to the best of each member’s knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened, were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Quicke and approved as follows. Vote:

Councilman Quicke	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Green	-	Aye
Councilman Hill	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Tucker	-	Aye

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Coleburn declared the meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

MAYOR
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

_____ APPROVED AND ADOPTED

TOWN CLERK
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

