

Minutes of a Joint Public Hearing and Special Called 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, June 30, 2008, at 5:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: William D. Coleburn

Council Members: John W. Hill, Jr., C. Duncan Quicke, Barbara Thompson, **J. A. Wilson, Jr.**

Town Attorney: Kennon C. Walden, Jr.

Planning Commission: Denis J. McCarthy, Chairman, Edwin B. Nash, Jr., Barbara Thompson, Tom Watkins

Town Staff: Nicholas C. Kuzmiak, Police Chief, J. Larry Palmore, Town Manager; Joan R. Palmore, Town Clerk; Charles C. Wells, Finance Director

Those Absent:

Council Member: Alfred V. Tucker, Constance T. Wynn

Commission Member: Robert Rhoades

Town Staff: Jennifer H. Beck, Administrative Assistant, David Dunn, Assistant Town Manager

Mayor Coleburn called the Special Meeting to order and asked the Town Clerk to read the Call as follows:

Special Called Meeting of the Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia for 5:00 p.m., Monday, June 30, 2008.

Pursuant to the authority vested in me as Mayor of the Town of Blackstone, I called a Special Meeting of the Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia to be held in the Council Chambers at 5:00 p.m., Monday, June 30, 2008, for the purpose of considering the following:

- 1 - *Rezzone Castles Trailer Park*
- 2 - *Habitat House - Tap Fees*

- 3 - *Adopt 2008/09 Budget*
- 4 - *Adopt Ordinances - Cigarette Tax; Lodging Tax; Meals Tax; Water and Sewer; Utilities*
- 5 - *Any other business that may need to come before Council.*

Because there was not a quorum present for the Planning Commission yet, Manager Palmore suggested that we continue with the meeting and have the Public Hearing after the other Commission Members arrive.

Manager Palmore handed out a map representing the old Nottoway Lumber Company site. He stated that this does not represent the entire site. He added that the new company has purchased sixteen acres to the South. Manager Palmore stated that what we are proposing is to trade territory, not to swap customers. The area next to the bridge will still be in the Town's territory. He mentioned the Industrial Park and stated that if Southside Electric agrees, we would serve our Industrial Park all except for Frank Carlo's storage building. He stated again that all we are swapping is land. In the future, we will be able to serve everything in the Industrial Park except Frank Carlo's building. He added that he has spoken with Southside Electric and they seem to be in agreement and are proceeding.

Councilman Green asked who is going to pay for this.

Manager Palmore answered that there will be some administrative cost, but it will be minimal.

Councilman Green asked have we done this before.

Manager Palmore answered, no, we have not done this before but other localities such as Franklin and Manassas have. He does not foresee a problem.

Councilman Wilson asked will we need to survey this property.

Manager Palmore answered, no sir.

Council discussed the service territory.

Councilman Green made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to move forward on this issue. The motion was seconded by Councilman Quicke and approved as follows. Vote:

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

HABITAT HOUSE - TAP FEES

Manager Palmore stated that Habitat for Humanity is requesting that we waive the Tap Fees for the new home they are building on the corner of Jackson and Dillard Streets. He explained that this is a little different situation than some of the other Habitat homes because we gave this land to Habitat. He stated that he noticed that the Town of Crewe charged Habitat a pretty large tap fee for a home they built in Crewe and he feels Blackstone has probably done enough.

Council discussed this issue and no action was taken.

ADOPT 2008/09 BUDGET

Manager Palmore read a breakdown of the Budget figures showing the increases. (Attached) He then handed out a report comparing our rates with Southside Electric and Dominion Power and reviewed with the Council. (See Attached)

Manager Palmore stated that he took his bill (he is a Southside Electric customer) and compared it to the Town's and the Town's electric rate is cheaper. He added that the Town just bought a roll of copper wire which cost \$225.00. A year ago the same roll of wire cost around \$85.00. He informed Council of this to explain that we are trying to work on upgrading our electric system but the costs are so much higher then even a year ago. He added that we got a new customer today that we had to run a half a mile line to. It is going to be a long time before we make any money on this customer.

The Council discussed the 3% increase in electric rates versus the 5% increase.

Manager Palmore stated that on an average our outages are about 30 minutes. If we can't keep our system up, you will see the outage time go up. He feels as a manager, we have got to find ways of cutting things. Three years ago the Finance Committee made it real clear that we needed to start making cuts. He just doesn't feel we can trade reliability for being frugal.

Mayor Coleburn asked are we in a hiring freeze in Blackstone right now.

Manager Palmore answered that we are only filling position that we absolutely need. He feels we could cut DMV service on Saturday mornings. Some Saturdays we only wait on one customer.

Councilman Green suggested keeping the office open until 6:00 p.m., on Fridays.

Manager Palmore stated that he has looked at how we could work 10 hour days but he cannot see how that we can provide the services we need to if we are only open four days a week.

Councilman Hill stated that we opened the DMV on Saturdays to make it easier for our citizens to do Town business.

The Council discussed this further.

Councilman Green stated after hearing what Manager Palmore had to say, he would support the 5% budget increase for electricity.

Mayor Coleburn reviewed the proposed increases.

Councilman Quicke stated that he is in favor of the 3% increase. If the Town Manager has to come back later and request more that is fine but he feels we should leave the increase at 3% for now.

The rest of the Council Members present stated that they agree to leave the electric rate increase at 3%.

Councilman Green thanked the Finance Committee for all their hard work.

Councilman Wilson made a motion to adopt the 2008/09 Budget and to adopt the ordinances that enact the new tax rates; water and sewer rates and electric rates. The motion was seconded by Councilman Hill and approved as follows. Vote:

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

Mayor Coleburn opened the Public Hearing and asked the Town Clerk to read the Public Hearing Notice as follows:

NOTICE OF JOINT PUBLIC HEARING

The public is hereby notified that there will be a joint public hearing held by the Planning Commission and the Town Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia, to consider, amending the Town Zoning Map pursuant to VA Code §15.2-2258. There is a “City Block” of land

presently zoned R-3 which allows for a density use where housing densities may range from 8 or greater units per acre.

This block of land is the site of the former Castle Trailer Park. It is bounded by the North by Mann Street, East by Epes Street, South by Dinwiddie Avenue and West by Hurt Street. It is proposed that the block be rezoned into the R-2 Residential District which is a medium density residential district where housing densities may range from 3 to 8 units per acre. Mobile Homes are allowed in R-3 with a special use exception. Mobile Homes are not allowed in R-2.

The public hearing will be held at the Town Council Chambers, Town Office, 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia, on June 30, 2008, at 5:00 p.m. Members of the public are invited to attend to express their views. Copies of the proposed ordinance are available for inspection at the Town Manager's Office, Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia, during normal business hours.

Council discussed this issue.

Mayor Coleburn asked for comments from the public on the rezoning issue.

Denis McCarthy, Planning Commission Chairman, stated that the Planning Commission recommends that Council rezone Castles Trailer Park to R-2, Medium-Residential.

Mayor Coleburn closed the Public Hearing.

REZONING CASTLES TRAILER PARK

Councilman Wilson made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Planning Commission. The motion was seconded by Councilman Quicke and approved unanimously.
Vote:

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

Manager Palmore read a survey that he would like to send out to the citizens. He stated that we will plan to deliver them to each resident.

Mayor Coleburn stated that he was very happy with the meeting that was held last week and he felt that the Town Manager did an excellent job. He feels that this survey is kind of negative.

Manager Palmore stated that he feels this is a start and he asked for input from Council.

Councilman Green asked can we have a place for suggestions or comments on the survey.

Mayor Coleburn feels we should not overlook the positive things that are going on in Blackstone. Blackstone is a growing Town. We have a great Town, we have great Town workers. At the end of the day our problems are good problems. He added that we have a great Town Staff and we need to remember the positives.

Manager Palmore stated that he wishes that more citizens would attend Town meetings and he promises that he will do everything he can to answer their questions.

Mayor Coleburn asked Council can we tweak this survey and have it on the Agenda for discussion at the next Council Meeting.

Councilman Quicke would also like for us to discuss, at next month's Council Meeting, hiring a company to come in and look at the Town employee's salaries and see if we are in line with other localities.

Manager Palmore stated that we need to make sure we are comparing apples to apples such as other localities that are running their own electric utility, etc.

Councilman Green stated that he feels this would be a good idea.

Councilman Wilson wants us to look at this survey further. He added that we are not talking about a whole lot of savings if we go to once a week pickup and if we have to buy the new carts and a new truck to accommodate the carts; the truck alone would cost around \$190,000.

Councilman Wilson made a motion to carry over \$745,000 to next year's budget. The motion was seconded by Councilman Hill and approved as follows. Vote:

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

EDDIE NASH - ZONING PERMIT

Manager Palmore stated that Mr. Nash came to us the other day and Manager Palmore can understand his frustration. The sign in front of his business was knocked down and now he is having to replace the sign. The sign is the exact same sign as the one he had up before. Manager Palmore stated that Mr. Nash came in to get his permit and under Town Ordinance we have to charge \$25.00 for a Zoning_Permit.

Mr. Nash stated that he was unhappy with the way DBI approached him and he does not feel he should have to pay the \$25.00 fee. He does not feel that it is a very user friendly ordinance.

Councilman Wilson doesn't feel that it should apply if the sign is rotten and they want to put up a new one but if the sign is damaged and the owner has no control over the sign being damaged then a permit should not be required.

Council discussed this further.

Mayor Coleburn asked should we put this on the July agenda.

Councilman Green asked Mr. Nash was it the \$25.00 that upset him or was it having to go through the permit process with DBI.

Mr. Nash answered that the \$25.00 was insignificant. It was the principal of the thing. The thing that really upsets him is the property owners downtown that have not maintained their property, many of whom are very financially capable of doing so, but have chosen not to do so and now he is being asked to pay \$25.00 to replace something; it just seems to him that this is not a very user friendly system.

Councilman Green asked the Town Attorney can we do this.

Town Attorney Walden answered that he would like to see the wording of it; he is surprised there is even a problem.

Councilman Hill made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to work with Mr. Nash and to by-pass the DBI regulations in order for him to put up the exact same sign as he had previously. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wilson and approved as follows. Vote:

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

Manager Palmore thanked each Council Members for the time they spent on the budget. He stated that he does not think that everyone understands how much time and energy was put into this. He also thanked Finance Director Chris Wells for his hard work.

Councilman Wilson thanked the Finance Committee and the Town Staff for their hard work.

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Coleburn declared the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

MAYOR
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

_____APPROVED AND ADOPTED

TOWN CLERK
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA