

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, July 19, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: William D. Coleburn

Council Members: Christine Hasbrouck, Shelia Jones, Lonnie Morgan, Barbara Thompson, Nathaniel Miller, Eric Nash, Tom Wilkinson

Town Staff: Jennifer Daniel, Town Clerk; Jennifer Hardy, Finance Director, Brittany Harris, Treasurer; Nicholas Kuzmiak, Police Chief, Zac Beares, Deputy Fire Chief

Town Attorney:

Those Absent: Philip Vannoorbeeck

Mayor Coleburn called the July Council Meeting to order.

Mayor Coleburn delivered the Invocation.

Mayor Coleburn led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **PUBLIC HEARING:**

#### **1. Spot Blight Ordinance – 415 Oak Street**

#### **NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TOWN OF BLACKSTONE**

*The Blackstone Town Council shall hold a Public Hearing on July 19, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Blackstone Town Council Chambers, 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia. The Town Council will consider an ordinance declaring 415 Oak Street, Blackstone, Va. 23824 to be blighted and a public nuisance along with a recommended spot blight abatement plan. The content of this ordinance is more fully described by the Town of Blackstone's Spot Blight Abatement Policy and Virginia Code Section 36-49.1:1. Town Council shall receive the Town Manager's recommendation and public comment regarding this ordinance during the Public Hearing. The Town Council may approve this ordinance following this public hearing. Any individual desiring to address the Town Council should attend the public hearing at the above stated date and time.*

Mayor Coleburn said this Ordinance is for homes occupied or unoccupied with structural components visible from the outside.

Mayor Coleburn opened the Public Hearing and asked if there was anyone here to speak for or against the property at 415 Oak Street.

Mayor Coleburn closed the Public Hearing.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to declare 415 Oak Street as blighted. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Clerk Daniel said Manager Vannoorbeeck suggested going with option #4 of the Ordinance, but did not recommend repairs, instead demolishing the structure and sell the property.

- 4. The Town Council hereby authorizes the Town Manager to take all steps necessary to acquire the Property, including by eminent domain if reasonable efforts to purchase the Property are unsuccessful. The Town Manager shall thereafter market the property for sale under such terms as will recoup the Town's expenses and ensure that the blight is remediated. The Town Manager shall bring to the Council for its approval any proposed sale of the Property after the acquisition by the Town. If the Town Council authorizes the acquisition of the property, the Town Manager shall follow the procedure set forth in the Town's Spot Blight Abatement Policy adopted on August 17, 2020.*

Councilman Nash clarified, Manager Vannoorbeeck would have the property appraised and take into account the cost for demolition. He said Manager Vannoorbeeck had spoken with the property owner and they were at a loss.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

Clerk Daniel clarified the motion included proceeding with Option #4 of the Ordinance.

**MINUTES:**

***Councilman Nash made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented minutes from the Continued Meetings on June 2, 2021 and June 28, 2021 and the Regular Council Meeting on June 21, 2021. The motion was seconded by Councilman Morgan.***

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

**VOTE:**

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

**VISITORS:**

1. Juneteenth Committee

Mayor Coleburn said it is rare that events held in Blackstone are all positive, but this event was all positive.

Ms. Chastiddy Bryant thanked the Council and provided goody bags for each of them.

2. Mr. Eric Finch

Mr. Finch said his grandmother lives on Sixth Street, and through the years there is growing concern about employees from Heritage Hall parking on the opposite side of the street. He said other people on the street are having the same problem. He asked for “Residential Parking Only” on that side of the street.

Clerk Daniel said she had contacted the Town Attorney and Attorney Bacon and was trying to find out if it was legal to have “Resident Parking Only” signs installed.

Mr. Finch said they reached out to Heritage Hall and a staff meeting was held, the situation went away for a little while, but is now back with the same people.

Mr. Finch said his grandmother has to have hip replacement surgery in October, and where the curb is, there is one step that he was asking to be removed for wheelchair accessibility. Mayor Coleburn said the Town would work with him, the Town does driveway cutouts and maybe they could do a wheelchair cutout for this.

**Ms. Beverly Ambs – Blackstone Chamber**

Ms. Ambs said the Chamber would like to offer the \$5,000.00 back, since they were not able to have the fireworks show, or there was an option to roll it over for next year's event. Council believed it should be rolled over since it was already taken out the budget.

Mayor Coleburn suggested a compromise, could this money alleviate the donation for bands for the Christmas Parade. He asked to report back next month.

Ms. Ambs reminded Council of Arts & Crafts. Mayor Coleburn added, this would be the 52<sup>nd</sup> year and would be on September 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.

**FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT:**

Deputy Fire Chief Beares thanked Council for all the work that had been done for the aerial truck. He said the new signage was 6-8 weeks out.

Deputy Chief Beares said three members of the Fire Department would be flying to Wisconsin in December for the final spec of Engine 3. He said it should be delivered in January.

Mayor Coleburn said the County was having a meeting on July 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:30 p.m. to more actively discuss the fire report. He encouraged anyone to attend because there may be discussions to reconsider the \$200,000.00.

Councilman Miller asked Deputy Chief Beares if the Fire Department would be able to do some training and burn the brush, if it was piled up, at Greenview Cemetery. Deputy Chief Beares said the Junior Fire Department would love to do some training, let him know when and where, and he would make it happen.

Councilman Wilkinson asked how their golf tournament went. Deputy Chief Beares replied, it went well and they were still calculating the funds made.

**PAYMENT OF BILLS:**

Mayor Coleburn stated the bills that have already been paid are in the amount of \$435,390.06.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bills that have already been paid in the amount of \$435,390.06. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Councilman Nash pointed out the Town donated \$70.00 worth of parking tickets to HELP, again this year.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

Mayor Coleburn stated the bills not yet approved, and to be paid, are in the amount of \$324,258.20

***Councilwoman Jones made a motion to approve as presented, the bills not yet paid in the amount of \$324,258.20. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Hasbrouck.***

Councilman Nash questioned under Wrigglesworth, the \$24,000.00, he asked if the goal posts had been received and if the fencing was completed. He did not want to pay the invoice in full until the work was completed. Finance Director Hardy said she just received the invoice and it had not been paid yet. Clerk Daniel believed the \$11,450.00 was for materials.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

**APPROPRIATIONS:**

**Appropriation #1 – DBi Funding = \$5,000.00**

Mayor Coleburn said this money was approved by Council after the budget and is coming from Bank Franchise Fees. Finance Director Hardy said this was just a projection.

Clerk Daniel said the motion was to make the \$5,000.00 effective August 1, 2021.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the \$5,000.00 appropriation as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wilkinson.***

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Account & Finance – met 6-28-21 – minutes included in July’s Council Packet

**VMEA Rates**

**ARPA Funds (American Rescue Plan Act – 2021)**

**DBi**

Councilman Nash said this meeting was before the budget was adopted and had been acted upon.

Mayor Coleburn reminded everyone that the Town took \$568,000.00 from the ARPA Funds to absorb what would have been a 21% increase in electric rates.

2. Buildings, Property & Cemetery – met 7-7-21 – minutes included in July’s Council Packet

Councilwoman Hasbrouck said there was not much to present because there was not a quorum for this Committee Meeting.

**Tourism – Ms. Sandra Tanner**

This was not discussed.

### **School Properties**

Councilwoman Hasbrouck said Dr. Grimes was in attendance and suggested Council review the Agreement and provide a revised plan for consideration.

Mayor Coleburn believed the Town was ready to demolish the one-story building. He said the Gators field was now going to be in the complex area, so now a secondary agreement needs to be discussed.

Councilman Nash suggested submitting a revised plan to the County, with the single building being demolished and convince the County the two-story building may be of use.

Clerk Daniel said Dr. Grimes told the Committee that the School Board was still against apartments.

Councilman Nash said he did not believe the Town should foot the bill to tear down all the buildings.

Mayor Coleburn said if the School Board does not want apartments, he respected that, and if neighbors are opposing something, he did not want to ram something in a residential neighborhood that is not wanted, but Blackstone does not have to rush in and spend six figures because we want to get it just right for everybody.

Councilman Miller believed creating the Gators Football Field would help satisfy the County.

Mr. Michael Bagley asked if the Town was trying to use every other word, but blight for that area. He said that building should have been down in 1970.

Mayor Coleburn said in the past a library was discussed for that area. He said there was a myth in Blackstone that the current Library's deed said it must be used for a library, but it only says it shall be for public use.

Mayor Coleburn referred the school property Agreement to the Buildings, Property and Cemetery Committee.

### **Armory Use Policy**

Mayor Coleburn said he submitted a Policy and thought it should be short and simple. He said Council was going to renovate the Armory, but we don't know when, but between now and then, his proposal is, the Armory is open for rent for all. He said the rent would be \$250.00 per day of the event, with \$50.00 per day for set up and clean up, and include a \$200.00 security deposit.

Councilman Nash believed \$200.00 as a base for deposit was fine, but if extra work had to be done, such as setting up poles for electric, more should be charged.

Mayor Coleburn said for “for profits”, the rent for the day of the event would be \$350.00.

Clerk Daniel asked for clarification on insurance, it is understood if alcohol is onsite, a TULIP policy is required, but for anyone using the building, is insurance going to be required and have the Town listed as additionally insured.

Finance Director Hardy believed the Town’s insurance company recommended everyone have their own policy, because of the slight issues with the building. She said the TULIP Policy would allow more coverage for people renting the building and would be cheaper with no alcohol involved.

Councilwoman Hasbrouck thought it would already be covered by the Town. Councilman Nash agreed.

Mr. Jake Allman reminded Council that the Civil Air Patrol event was cancelled because they did not have the proper insurance. He added at some point it was decided everyone needed to have insurance.

Finance Director Hardy suggested having insurance be required until the Armory is renovated, because of all the discussions.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the Armory Policy as presented, and include the fees and require insurance for rentals. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.***

Mayor Coleburn clarified this Policy is through the end of the year and may be renewed longer.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

**Museum App**

This was not discussed.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

There were no Consent Agenda items.



**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

*1. Spot Blight Ordinance – 511 Fifth Street*

Mayor Coleburn said the property owner spoke with Manager Vannoorbeeck and has agreed to sell the property to the Town.

***Councilwoman Thompson made a motion to authorize Manager Vannoorbeeck to pursue acquisition of 511 Fifth Street after an appraisal is completed. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Hasbrouck.***

Councilman Nash reminded everyone that the appraisal figure would be minus the demolition cost and to sell it.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

*2. Washbucket Initiative Requests*

Mayor Coleburn said this group would like to serve wine at their event.

Mrs. Sue Yeatts said they were trying to engage the business community, and Blackstone now has a distillery, so they were going to reach out to them. She said they wanted to reach out to as many businesses as possible, to include food, wineries and the distillery.

Mayor Coleburn said Mrs. Yeatts had some questions in the packet, with one being the capacity of the Armory. He said downstairs holds 517 right now. He said there is no heat in the building except everyone’s 98.6 degrees.

Councilman Nash said a TULIP Policy would have to be obtained to serve alcohol.

Mrs. Yeatts said they were trying to have an upscale event; the dress would be business. She said they were trying to open the event during the day to allow families to see the trees and possibly have Santa there. She said the plan was for two hours during the day for families and end that around 2:00 p.m. to get ready for the evening event and children would not be invited to this.

Mrs. Yeatts said the date would be Saturday, November 6, 2021.

Clerk Daniel asked Mrs. Yeatts if food would be sold. Mrs. Yeatts replied, she was not sure.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the alcohol request as long as a TULIP Policy is in place. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wilkinson.***

Councilman Wilkinson advised Mrs. Yeatts that the TULIP Policy is determined by the number of people in attendance.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

3. Armory – Virginia Brownfields Remediation Grant

***Councilman Nash made a motion to authorize the Town to apply for the Brownfield Remediation Grant to abate the asbestos and lead based paint hazards, plus remove an existing underground storage tank in the Armory. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wilkinson.***

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

4. Armory – RFP – Architectural/Engineer Services

***Councilman Nash made a motion to authorize the Town to seek RFPs for architectural/engineer services to move forward with the Armory. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Hasbrouck.***

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

### 5. Skilled Gaming

Mayor Coleburn said Manager Vannoorbeeck had spoken with Commonwealth Attorney Watrous, because skilled games are now illegal. He said Manager Vannoorbeeck has requested Commonwealth Attorney Watrous and the Attorney General's office provide the enforcement.

Mayor Coleburn asked Chief Kuzmiak if he knew of any people in Blackstone actively violating the State ban. Chief Kuzmiak replied, he did not know, but he and Manager Vannoorbeeck would be looking into this when Manager Vannoorbeeck returns from vacation.

Councilman Nash was concerned about businesses just unplugging the machines, he thought they should be removed.

Mayor Coleburn asked to have this on the Agenda next month and let Manager Vannoorbeeck report.

### **ON-GOING PROJECTS:**

#### 1. Dilapidated Buildings

Mayor Coleburn said the dilapidated mobile home on Third Street had been removed, and enforcement of condemnation at 806 Falls Street was proceeding.

#### 2. Meals Tax / Lodging Tax

Mayor Coleburn reported all taxes were up to date.

3. Street Improvement Projects

Mayor Coleburn said Manager Vannoorbeeck wants to seek bids for improvements on South Main Street from Sixth Street to Tenth Street. He said the bids came in high previously, but Manager Vannoorbeeck thinks the Town has enough cash to proceed now.

4. Wrigglesworth Sports Complex / TAP 21

Mayor Coleburn said Manager Vannoorbeeck believes the Town has enough money to proceed with Phase II of the TAP 21 project. He said bids were due August 25, 2021.

5. East End Neighborhood Project

Mayor Coleburn said Manager Vannoorbeeck expects contract approval from USDA for the water and sewer improvements in the month of August. He said plans were being prepared for storm drainage and curb and gutter.

Mayor Coleburn said Southside Outreach had solicited bids for the renovation of two homes.

6. Weatherization

Mayor Coleburn said there are two properties, one on Falls Street and the other on Patterson Street, that the Town is working with, that needs assistance.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Tweedside Woods & The Bargain Bin – Tourism Zone Request

Mayor Coleburn said this Council declared the entire Town of Blackstone a Tourism Zone. He said this request is from Councilman Nash for his private ventures. He said the first request this Council approved was at the old VFW property, for Mr. Herbert Fitzgerald.

Councilman Nash pointed out the abatement is only for improvements.

***Councilwoman Hasbrouck made a motion to approve the Tourism Zone request for Tweedside Woods and the Bargain Bin. The motion was seconded by Councilman Wilkinson.***

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Abstain
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

Mayor Coleburn said Councilman Nash's investments in Blackstone look nice.

2. Award Bid – Vegetative Debris

Councilman Nash said this bid is for grinding the debris at Rocky Bump from the ice storm.

Mayor Coleburn said this included 30,000 cubic yards of vegetative debris. Clerk Daniel said the bids were at Council's desk.

Mayor Coleburn said the low bid was from the same company that removed all the debris, Medek Tree Service, in the amount of \$89,000.00.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to award the low bid for removal of vegetative debris from Rocky Bump to Medek Tree Service in the amount of \$89,000.00, and they must comply with the time frame for FEMA reimbursement. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Councilman Nash pointed out this bid is just to grind the debris and pile it.

Finance Director Hardy said according to FEMA, there is a certain amount of time to have the work completed and invoices received. She said Manager Vannoorbeeck was confident everything would be completed in time.

Mayor Coleburn asked if this work was going to be reimbursed by FEMA as well. Finance Director Hardy replied yes.

Clerk Daniel said Manager Vannoorbeeck told her the Town had six months to get the work done.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Wilkinson	-	Aye
Councilwoman Hasbrouck	-	Aye
Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Thompson	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye

### **COMMITTEE REFERRALS:**

#### *1. Tunstall Avenue - Speeding*

Mayor Coleburn referred this issue to the Street and Light Committee.

Clerk Daniel said a few years ago, Chief Kuzmiak had a traffic count done and at that time it did not justify an additional stop sign.

Mayor Coleburn referred another stop sign request at Tavern and Harris Street to the Street and Light Committee. He requested to clear the brush and paint the big white lines in the street.

### **MAYORS MINUTE:**

#### *1. Annual Committee Reappointments*

Mayor Coleburn said he did not receive any requests from Council to gain or lose a committee. He said he would formally present the committees at the August Meeting.

#### *2. Mayor's Letter to Bon Secours*

Mayor Coleburn said included in the packet was a draft letter that he planned to send to Bon Secours. He said it was motivated by a recent predicament he had, but was also hearing complaints about only wanting to do virtual or send patients to St. Francis. He found it hard to believe that here in Blackstone, with the nice building they have, they did not offer COVID testing or shots. He said Bon Secours renewal comes up in 2023, he wants to find out how serious they are about the building, he does have people that contact him that are very serious about the building. He said he did not like to tell people how to run their business, but the people of Blackstone own that building, and he did not think the people of Blackstone had been getting the level of care that was promised.

**POLICE REPORT:**

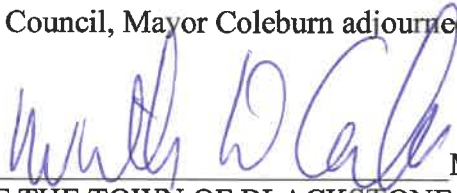
There was nothing to report.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

Mr. Michael Bagley asked about the two houses on Brunswick Avenue, have they been removed from the blight list. Councilman Nash replied no. Mayor Coleburn added, the weeds were cut last summer, but the homes do not violate any Ordinance. He said the properties are being monitored by the Town.

Clerk Daniel pointed out under the informational section; the Republican Committee provided a date of October 2, 2021 from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. for their meet and greet on the grounds of the Armory. She also advised the 2020 VDOT Traffic Count was included in the packet.

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Coleburn adjourned this meeting at 7:57 p.m.

  
MAYOR  
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

August 16, 2021 APPROVED AND ADOPTED

  
TOWN CLERK  
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

