

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, December 19, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: William D. Coleburn

Council Members: Annie Scott, Shelia Jones, Lonnie Morgan, Carolyn Williams, Nathaniel Miller, Eric Nash, Jake Allman

Town Staff: Philip Vannoorbeeck, Town Manager; Jennifer Daniel, Town Clerk; Brittany Harris, Treasurer; Alex Davis, Assistant Utility Clerk; Tony Mayton, Police Sgt., Shay Farley, Police Officer, Mr. Edward Harris, Water/Sewer Supervisor

Town Attorney:

Those Absent:

Mayor Coleburn called the December Council Meeting to order.

Mayor Coleburn delivered the Invocation.

Mayor Coleburn led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

Agency Funding Program

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we get a lot of people that come to Council during the course of a year. He said this Policy will codify the way people ask for Town money, it is more compliant with the State Code, and does require a 501c3 status. He said this creates an application process so that it can be included in the Budget.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this does not tie Council's hands, you will still have the ability outside of Budget to be able to do things.

Mayor Coleburn said if you have an event coming up in the next fiscal year, requests are to be made by March 1, 2023. He said we are trying to get those things that are regular occurring events in the budget process.

Clerk Daniel clarified this was not a Public Hearing, but instead a Public Notice.

Mayor Coleburn asked for any public comment, there were no comments.

Councilman Miller made a motion to adopt the Agency Funding Program Policy as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

MINUTES:

Councilman Miller made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented minutes from the Regular Council Meeting on November 21, 2022. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

VISITORS:

Ms. Kimberly Daum, Deputy Clerk – Swearing In Process

Ms. Daum swore in Mr. L. Benjamin Green.

Ms. Daum swore in Mr. Eric Nash, Mr. Christopher Page, Mr. Wesley Gormus, Ms. Lloyette Wynn, Mr. Jacob Allman, Mr. Nathaniel Miller and Ms. Carolyn Williams.

Mr. Aaron Hawkins – Robinson, Farmer, Cox

Mr. Hawkins apologized for the PDFs getting to Council so late, it had been a tough year for them with a new auditing standard they had to implement. He thanked staff for their help during the audit process.

Mr. Hawkins started on Page 2, which is the Independent Auditor's Report. He said this is an Unmodified Opinion, which means based on the testing they have done, the financial statements that follow are free of any material misstatement and can be relied upon.

Mr. Hawkins said there was a change in Accounting Principles, relating to leases, and was quite a bit of work to pull together all the leases that the Town has.

Mr. Hawkins asked to turn to Page 8, which is Governmental Funds, such as General Capital Projects and Special Revenue Funds. He said the total Fund Balance for these funds is a positive of \$184,571.00, but the General Fund in the Capital Projects does have slight deficits right now. He said the General Fund has a deficit of \$245,069.00 and Capital Projects is at \$161,363.00. He said the Special Revenue has a balance of \$591,003.00. He pointed this out in order to get the General Fund and Capital Projects funds back up.

Mr. Hawkins said on Page 13 shows the changes in Proprietary Funds, which are the Electric, Water and Sewer Funds. He said it also shows the changes in the revenues, expenses and the Town's net position. He said for the Electric Fund, the Town began the year with \$6 Million and increased to just over \$6.4 Million. He said Water and Sewer began at \$4,376,000.00 and ended at \$4,726,153.00.

Mayor Coleburn said on this same page, Operating Income, it looks like the Electric Department cleared \$423,000.00 and Water/Sewer cleared \$476,000.00, and are still owed money from FEMA from the 2021 Ice Storm. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed it was \$283,000.00. Mayor Coleburn asked if FEMA has given any reason why it is slow receiving.

Mr. Hawkins said next is Page 57, which is the General Fund, and expenditures were higher than the Budget. He believed it involved Public Works and Capital Projects.

Mayor Coleburn said he thought Mr. Hawkins had been auditing the Town of Blackstone for at least five years. Mr. Hawkins agreed. Mayor Coleburn asked how the Town's financial position had improved or declined in those five years. Mr. Hawkins said across the board, in terms of the total entity, it was level, maybe even slightly up because the Utility Funds were performing quite well. He said the General Fund goes up and down.

Mr. Hawkins said Schedule 1 and 2 are on Page 67, which is where you can compare with a more detailed basis the revenues and expenditures compared to the Budget.

Mayor Coleburn said it was a 25% increase over the previous year. He said Meals Tax hit a new record last year, and thought this coming year would be even greater with FASTC trainees now being able to sleep in Blackstone. He said the Cigarette Taxes were lower than budgeted, at \$87,300.00 and budgeted \$90,000.00. He said Blackstone in the Budget year sold 397,000 or so packs of cigarettes, with our tax being \$.22 a pack. He believed the State Code allows towns to tax as much as \$.50 a pack. He said Lodging Tax went up, and this is year ending June 30th, so there are good things on the horizon, and thought some of that money should be earmarked to bring more people to Blackstone.

Mr. Hawkins said on Page 90 was the Federal Compliance work that had to be done. He said the Town has several loans and grants through USDA, which are federal dollars and had to be tested for Federal Compliance this year. He said there were no findings to report on the Federal Compliance work they did. He said this is the third year in a row that the Town had to have a Single Audit for having greater than \$750,000.00 of Federal Assistance, so now the Town is a low risk auditee. He said from an auditor's standpoint that means rather than testing 40% of the revenues, it can be dropped down to 20%.

Councilman Nash said looking at the hotel/motel taxes, the Town budgeted \$31,000.00 for this year, and are a little above right now, he asked Manager Vannoorbeeck what he sees in the future. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we are seeing an influx of Air BNBs, but with the increase at the Inn at Blackstone, in October they have paid over \$5,000.00 in Lodging Tax, and November was not due yet. He said that is because of the certain class of students that pay a certain way. He said some classes at FASTC stay more than 30 days, some classes are exempt because the Federal Government is paying. He said the classes from FASTC for the most part are paying Lodging Tax.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there are only two hotels in Blackstone according to the Town's Zoning, Academy Square and the Inn at Blackstone. He said Patriot Square and Dave McCormack's buildings are apartments. He said an apartment cannot rent for less than 7 days.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Patriot Square was built to serve FASTC, there are 27 rooms in the first building, with 24 rented to a class at FASTC. Mayor Coleburn said they have a bus for the students. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. Fitzgerald has three available he could rent as an apartment.

Councilman Nash said the students at Patriot Square are there for two months and would be exempt from Lodging Tax.

Mr. Edward Harris - TTHM

Mr. Harris said this stands for Total Trihalomethanes. He said a sample was taken in August 2022, and the numbers were 50% higher than he has ever seen. He said they did a second sample and sent off to bring the numbers down, and the courier lost the samples. He said this caused the Town to be stuck with the first results. He said the letter that was included in everyone's Utility Bill was a byproduct of the first set of samples. He said the number being looked at is a running average from four quarters. He said the number received in August is usually between 100-110, but in August it was between 150-190. He said we have made adjustments at the Plant; they are feeding more carbon to help settle out some of the organics. He said we really need to install some tank aerators at \$30,000.00 per tank. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the numbers he was quoted were appreciably higher, but yes, it is being recommended to install aerators inside the water tanks.

Mr. Harris said TTHMs are when organics combine with chlorine. He said we treat the water to disinfect with chlorine. He said there is another option called chloramines, but then we start adding ammonia to the chlorine to the water. He said this would just be another cost to add, because we still have to feed chlorine.

Mr. Edward Harris said the Town of Blackstone's drinking water is safe. He said he drinks a gallon a day.

Mayor Coleburn said when you cross Jonesboro Bridge, there was an algae. Mr. Harris said yes and it was treated with algacide and it goes away.

Councilman Nash asked what the numbers were now for TTHMs. Mr. Harris said they are already down in the 050s, where when the previous test was a .19.

Councilman Nash said we need to be looking in the Budget for diffusers in the four water tanks. Mr. Harris said the aerators will aerate the finished product and that will take the TTHMs and HAAs out in the air and released.

Mayor Coleburn referred the tank aerators for the four water tanks to the Account and Finance Committee.

Mr. Harris said the notices sent out recently, there may have to be another notice sent out in February.

Councilman Allman said this is more of a problem treating organics in the warmer months. Mr. Harris replied, yes sir, definitely.

Ms. Alex Davis – Town of Blackstone Website

Ms. Davis said Manager Vannoorbeeck had her come tonight to discuss the updates she had been doing on the website. She said the previous home page was cluttered and is now decluttered.

She said she has added a Community Spotlight, which lets the citizens of Blackstone know what the Town does. She said she was making sure the pages are staying updated. She is working on the pages making sure the computer view and mobile view match up.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we want the website accessible and useable for those that pay online. He said Ms. Alex Davis replaced Ms. Ashley Seamster, who replaced Ms. Allison Payne.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Utility Write Offs

Mayor Coleburn said a list of write offs has been provided, with the majority being deceased. He said the total is \$14,932.59. He said normally he prefaces this does not mean we cease efforts to collect, but with so many deceased, we are done trying. Councilman Nash pointed out there were roughly ten under \$5.00.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the annual Utility Write Off list as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Councilman Nash asked about the ones that are deceased, how old are these utilities. Treasurer Harris replied, these should be fairly current, because a few years ago they cleaned up the past due utilities.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Mr. Justin Roger Burns – 131 N. Main Street

Mr. Burns said he has lived here since October 2022, and currently works at Mitchell's and volunteers at the Friends of the Library. He said he was in the process of moving his long-term disaster recovery non-profits to Nottoway.

Mr. Burns said one of the biggest voids and gap in this Town is a proper infrastructure to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem. He said in today's globalized digital economy, it is necessary to have access to a digital media lab, to bring concepts to market.

Mr. Burns said a recent rumor was spread about him supporting Section 8 Housing, he does not support this as a form of development, but all funding opportunities have potential if a project based voucher was paired with a career track program, then he could see how one could help an individual stabilize and then create a career path program which includes financial literacy.

Mr. Burns said two funding opportunities he does support in affordable housing is HUD's Distressed Cities and Persistent Poverty Technical Assistance Program and USDA's Mutual Self Help Housing Technical Assistance Grant.

Mr. Burns said he hoped in the future that Town Council develops a coalition of collaboration to take these fundamental community issues on.

Councilman Miller asked Mr. Burns why he did not approve of Section 8 Housing. Mayor Coleburn said Mr. Burns was not opposed to it.

Mr. Burns said he has lived in many places with Section 8 Housing by itself, without a program that took someone through a career path, and had them living in Section 8 Housing much longer than necessary.

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT:

There was nobody present.

Mayor Coleburn said they had a training exercise tonight.

PAYMENT OF BILLS:

Mayor Coleburn stated the bills that have already been paid are in the amount of \$1,129,031.89.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bills that have already been paid in the amount of \$1,129,031.89. The motion was seconded by Councilman Morgan.

Councilman Nash asked if the bills were high because of the South Main Street Project. Manager Vannoorbeeck said this included two drawdowns for HG Reynolds exceeding \$400,000.00. He said the VMEA bill was \$248,000.00. He said Colony Construction's bill for paving downtown was \$128,000.00, and the Fire Department's bonuses, which is not typically included is \$32,000.00.

Councilman Nash said in these bills he saw \$12,000.00 to the Fire Department from FEMA.

Mayor Coleburn said there was a bill to Lunenburg County Combined, which he believed was to the Court, he believed it was maybe child support.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Mayor Coleburn stated the bills not yet approved, and to be paid, are in the amount of \$414,619.70.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve as presented, the bills not yet paid in the amount of \$414,619.70. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Councilman Nash asked about the Bus Department, equipmentsshare.com for AC Rental. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the air conditioning broke down at the Bus Shop, and these invoices were for portable units. He said DRPT paid for the entire replacement of the new unit, which removed the geo thermal.

Councilman Nash said it seems odd to have 14 invoices for AC Rentals, it seems like it went on a long time. Clerk Daniel pointed out there were individual units in each of the offices.

Councilman Miller asked about the \$2,581.25 each from Ronald L. Boyd. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he was not sure why it was broken out like that and would check on it.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said almost half of this total bill list is for the replacement water meters or the ERTS. He said this will allow remote reading. He hoped this would save some money, but there would be some growing pains.

Councilman Nash asked if the Town had been made whole from all the COVID money loaned to businesses. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, no.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said in 2020 there were (4) \$5,000.00 loans issued to businesses. He said all were paid but one, and that business made one payment and no more after that, this has been turned over to TACs.

Councilman Miller asked if the business was still in operation. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, yes. He said once items have been sent to TACS, there are no deals. He said the attorney fees are paid through the collections. Treasurer Harris said sending items to TACS is last resort.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

APPROPRIATIONS:

There were no appropriations this month.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. *Employment & Police – met 11-30-22 – minutes included in December’s Council Packet*

Revised Loan Policy

Mayor Coleburn said loans will not exceed \$2,500.00, you must be a full time employee and in good standing for at least 2 years, and the payback period is not to exceed 12 months. Manager Vannoorbeeck added, only one loan every five years.

Mayor Coleburn said he thought about this a lot, and didn’t seem very fair, because the average person doesn’t get such privilege, but he realized the Treasurer and staff do payment extensions and payment plans all the time. He said you could make the argument, that is borrowing money from the people of Blackstone.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the Employee Loan Policy as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Morgan.

Mr. Michael Bagley believed the Town should get out of loaning money to the employees. He said to him that was like loan sharking, there are banks in Town, they need to go and establish an account. He suggested setting up an account at the bank and loan out a certain amount and pay back through a payroll deduction, and this would help the employee’s credit.

Mayor Coleburn did not believe a lot of lending institutions would approve some of those for such low amounts, that are in arrears.

Councilman Nash did not believe these loans were for high credit cards, one was for a child that got injured and needed help with medical bills.

Councilman Miller said now if an employee comes to us, it has to be a hardship.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Closed Session – Personnel – Bus Shop / Water/Sewer / Administration

There was nothing to discuss.

CONSENT AGENDA:

There was nothing for the Consent Agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Nottoway School Building Agreement

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he spoke briefly today with the School Superintendent. He said Dr. Grimes' position is the School Board has an agreement with the Town, and he was not sure if she was willing to modify the Agreement. He believed Dr. Grimes would be willing to surplus the property to the County. He said the conversation had today was not as cheery and easy going as he expected. He said he would talk to Mr. Costin after the first of the year to see if they are interested in donating the property to the Town.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said as always, his goal is to tear the building down, and there is no money in the budget for this right now. He said the School Board has been very helpful, and allowed the Town to do pretty much whatever we wanted to do. He said he told Dr. Grimes today; he did not know if the property needed to be surplus, as long as they have the working relationship.

Mayor Coleburn said conversely, the people of Blackstone have been pretty darn good, as we should be, about providing recreation opportunities for young people. He said all we have asked for is some consideration when it comes to removing blight and getting a break on landfill tipping fees. He said the Town is talking about tearing down the one story building, and we would like to entertain proposals for the two story building, but some are scared of apartments because there may be a sex offender that moves in. He said go to the VSP website and google sex offenders in Blackstone, some are a mile within Blackstone Primary.

Mayor Coleburn asked if it met the Blight Ordinance. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, absolutely. Mayor Coleburn said we have torn down people's homes that met the Blight Ordinance, owned by private individuals, yet the government we are giving far more leniency, trying to be good neighbors. He said if you have had your home blighted, it would not leave a good taste in my mouth to see the County of Nottoway, with a \$40 Million Budget, getting a break. He said see if we can do some horse trading.

Mr. Ben Green said it was going to be his intention to get guidance from the new Council, form a plan and meet with both Chairs, set up some deadlines and get it done.

Mayor Coleburn said one thing that could be horse traded is, the County has granted permission to run the waterline on Cox Road to Military Road, but there is more revenue to be gained, and cleaner water by going to the lumber mills.

2. Cox Road Waterline

Councilman Miller said there was no need discussing this because it is just somebody pacifying somebody. Mayor Coleburn said three years late.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the letter received from the County says the Town can build a waterline and charge certain fees, but there is not clarification on mandating connections. He said he has spoken to three different representatives from the County, and all three have said something different.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would like to write a letter asking if this includes a mandatory connection.

Mayor Coleburn said by Common Consent to allow Manager Vannoorbeeck to get a definitive answer in January.

3. 415 Oak Street – Demolition

Mayor Coleburn said the Oak Street demolition looks great, a very clean job. He said he has already had people ask him about Fifth and Brunswick. Manager Vannoorbeeck said there are plenty in Town, but cautioned doing too many, because the Town fronts the costs for these demolitions. He said the three current blighted properties are at the corner of Dinwiddie and High Street, on Luke Street, where fire claimed the life of the young man, and the Dillard Crawley Building.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said two certified letters have been sent to the owner of the Dillard Crawley Building, and the first was not signed for. He said if this building were to collapse, it joins six other buildings, so it is vital. He said he did not believe the current owner had any intention of maintaining or improving the building.

Mayor Coleburn asked where the former Lucky 8's owner resided. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, North Carolina. Manager Vannoorbeeck said when someone cannot be located, Attorney Bacon is recommending a service for delivery.

Mayor Coleburn asked about the latest on the 800 block of South Main Street. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have applied for \$100,000.00 in Weatherization Funds from Nottoway County. He said the daughter has indicated her parents were moving out and she would be fixing the house up. He said he had not received a response from Mr. Costin on the Weatherization Fund request.

Mayor Coleburn asked this property be on the February Agenda.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said when the Deed for 415 Oak Street was transferred to the Town, he met with Mr. Wallace Akers about tearing the house down, but Mr. Akers said it was too big. He said the Town bid out the demolition and received no bids. He said at the same time Mr. Josh Pope, another Town employee, decided he could take the house down.

Councilman Nash asked Manager Vannoorbeeck if he would proceed on with contacting a realtor. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had spoken with two agents already, but still needed to put an ad in the paper.

4. Citizens Bank & Trust – Treasury Bonds

Mayor Coleburn said included is information on the \$4 Million being invested in Treasury Bonds through Citizens Bank and Trust. He believed they were the only bank to reply to the RFP. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that is correct.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the investment is \$1 Million for 6 months, \$1 Million for one year, and \$2 Million for two years. He believed it would be in the 4.4% or 4.5% interest rate.

5. Award RFP – Airport Engineering Services

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the current engineers are Talbert & Bright, but their term had expired. He said we readvertised and received one proposal from Talbert & Bright. He said he had copies of their proposals if anyone was interested to do interviews. He added, he was very happy with Talbert & Bright, and if Council was agreeable, he asked to renew.

Councilman Allman made a motion to renew the Agreement with Talbert & Bright as recommended by Manager Vannoorbeeck. The motion was seconded by Councilman Morgan.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

6. 2023 Holiday Schedule

Clerk Daniel said Council asked her to poll the department heads, and they preferred to keep Columbus Day and remove Election Day and move it to December 26, 2023.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the 2023 Holiday Schedule as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn said there is a Town building used on Election Day, the Police Department, but it shouldn't cause any problems. Councilman Nash said they are open every day now.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

7. Jan's Residential – Extension Request

Mayor Coleburn said Jan's Residential is asking for a six month extension on their current agreement.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said in June 2022, Council voted to only allow up to 8 residents, as is allowed through Zoning. He said she currently has 10 and is asking for another six month extension. Councilman Nash said only one has been removed since June 2022.

Councilman Nash said when Mr. Rapp was purchasing Clay's Rest Home, in 30 days, there were homes for all the residents.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there was a house being renovated on High Street, who is the owner of Jan's Residential. He believed Ms. Bennett wants to move the extra residents to the renovated house.

Mayor Coleburn said in any zoning these types of homes can be allowed. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it is considered a single family home.

Councilman Nash asked Sgt. Mayton if there had been many calls lately. Sgt. Mayton replied, not recently. Mayor Coleburn added, he had heard on the scanner, some medical calls and the occasional disturbances. Mayor Coleburn said the State Code allows up to 8 residents. He said this is one of the facilities that have been cited in a state report, they are only provisionally licensed as an adult care facility.

Mayor Coleburn said he knows somebody in the industry that has been concerned, they have filed a complaint about the standards there for the residents.

Councilman Allman bet there was a Code Section that addresses buying certain amounts of homes and playing a shell game with houses.

Council asked Manager Vannoorbeeck to have Attorney Bacon look into this, to include any residential zoning.

Mr. Chris Page asked if anyone knew if the owner had come up to date with the latest violations from the State. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, he did not know.

Mayor Coleburn said if her request is denied, what action can Manager Vannoorbeeck take. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would take legal action; he did not think he could physically remove anyone.

Councilman Nash said if she has not complied by the next Council Meeting, then proceed with legal action.

Mayor Coleburn asked what legal action can Council take, file a complaint with Social Services or the State. Councilman Nash said it could be deemed noncompliance and shut the business down.

Manager Vannoorbeeck believed a Zoning Violation would weigh heavy on Social Services with their permitting processes.

Councilman Morgan made a motion to give Jan's Residential 30 additional days to comply. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

ON-GOING PROJECTS:

1. Dilapidated Buildings

There was nothing to report.

2. Meals Tax / Lodging Tax

Mayor Coleburn said there was one outstanding Meals Tax that has been turned over to TACS. He said there were five outstanding Lodging Tax. Treasurer Harris said this is for Air BNBs.

Treasurer Harris said last month there were eight and some have been cleaned up. She said she has received payments from the Air BNB website, as well as two other websites, who collect Lodging Tax, but the places do not distinguish who the payments are for. She said she was in the process of filling out the paperwork to obtain that information. She said she can track the Air BNB website to see who should be paying Lodging Tax.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said after the first of the year, he would put an ad out for Zoning Services, to include election signs, marijuana consumption and gaming machines. He believed if a home is empty, it can be rented as an Air BNB, but cannot if someone is living in the home.

Councilman Nash gave an example, if he goes on vacation for two months and rents his home out for a week, is that legal. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we need to get this figured out.

Councilman Miler asked about Miller Field. He said it looks to him like people are living in the old concession stand. Manager Vannoorbeeck did not believe people were living in there.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said enforcement had been taken on a gentleman and his partner living in a shed on Amelia Avenue. He said they have until Friday to vacate.

3. Street Improvement Projects

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the parking spaces on Main Street have been completed. He said he does not have any paving scheduled until the spring. He said the Town has awarded paving and tar and gravel contracts. He said the majority of this work will be in the East End where there are utility line cut ups and curb and gutter. He believed there would be enough funding to do either North Main Street or North West Avenue.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the speed bumps on Pickett Court will not be happening this year, it is too cold now. He said the Town has a contract with Southern Paving and they are supposed to be doing some patching on Lester Street, and will have them fix the speed bumps when they are here.

Councilman Nash said it bothered him that we will be dealing with a different company, if the previous company didn't build the speed bumps to spec. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he did not pay the previous company for the speed bumps.

4. Wigglesworth Sports Complex / TAP 21

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would be working with the Gators for the interior design of the Concession Stand.

Councilman Miller said they were going to give kids a BBQ, and let them go through the field. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Gators would play on the football field in the fall.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said himself, Councilman Miller and a gentleman from the Gators walked the field recently, and he did not think it rose to the level of tearing the field up.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he spoke with Mrs. McCarthy about her kids picking up rocks one day. He said Mrs. McCarthy asked him to speak to Ms. Delphine Fowlkes.

5. East End Neighborhood Project

Manager Vannoorbeeck said two homes were under construction, one on Fitzgerald Street and the other on Harris Street. He said there will be one more home and is expected to be on Harris Street, but we need to determine how much money is left in the housing portion of the project, and will have to be a renovation based on the numbers.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had plans for the East End drainage, and this work has been bid out. He said there is \$465,000.00 in grant money available, and the difference will be on the Town, and will be more than \$465,000.00. He said the Grant was \$1,250,000.00, and housing has to be priority, which left \$465,000.00.

6. Taylor Bottom Block Grant

Mayor Coleburn said there was a public meeting held in the Chambers on December 13, 2022. He said the Planning Grant will be submitted in February.

Mayor Coleburn asked Ms. Chastiddy Bryant how participation has been. Ms. Bryant said a few showed up recently, and a few came out in November.

Clerk Daniel asked if this would include water, sewer and curb and gutter. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have to decide what the Town can afford. He said the water and sewer prices are more than East End. He said if he had to prioritize, he would do the water portion. He said it will include housing as well.

Councilman Miller asked if any grant money could help clean up a property on Sullivan Street. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had been staying away in hopes grant funding would help clean it up. He said the property is in violation, it is horrible.

7. Armory

Manager Vannoorbeeck said attached is a Resolution in the amount of \$247,217.00 in grant funds that the Town is applying for through USDA. He said he was not sure if this needed to be adopted, but just to be safe we will adopt the Resolution.

Councilman Nash made a motion to adopt the Resolution as presented through the USDA in the amount of \$247,217.00. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Ms. Bryant said the application would be submitted tomorrow.

Mayor Coleburn said the Armory project is moving forward, and is a Town of Blackstone project.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said asbestos bids were opened and this is being paid for with the Brownfields Grant. He said the Town only received one bid from Waco, Inc. in the amount of \$78,470.00.

Councilman Morgan made a motion to award the low bid for asbestos abatement to Waco, Inc. in the amount of \$78,470.00 at the Armory. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. Perry Pence did not bid because he supplied the report and didn't want to conflict with anything.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the removal of the underground storage tank bids were due today. He said three bids were received, with the low bid being \$7,480.00 from Treescapes, Inc. He asked Council to reject the bid, because they did not provide a bid bond. He said Commonwealth Regional Council did the bidding and it was required according to their specs.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the next lowest bid was from Hydrogeo Environmental, LLC in the amount of \$11,400.00.

Councilman Nash made a motion to award the removal of the underground storage tank at the Armory to the lowest responsible, responsive bid from Hydrogeo Environmental, LLC in the amount of \$11,400.00. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

8. Weatherization

Mayor Coleburn said the home at 910 Falls Street should be under roof my Monday.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said two bids were opened today, one for 309 Patterson Street and the other for Workforce Housing at the intersection of Hurt and East Street.

Mayor Coleburn said the low bid for 309 Patterson Street was from QMB Construction in the amount of \$42,050.00.

Councilman Miller made a motion to award the Weatherization Project at 309 Patterson Street to the lowest responsive, responsible bid to QMB Construction in the amount of \$42,050.00. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this bid is for the Commonwealth Regional Council Workforce Housing Grant. He said this will be the first house built at the intersection of Hurt and Broad Street. He said the low bid is from QMB Construction in the amount of \$100,500.00, and being paid for in full by the Workforce Housing Grant.

Councilwoman Jones made a motion to award the CRC Workforce Housing Grant for a new construction to the low bid from QMB Construction in the amount of \$100,500.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Weatherization Project on Patterson Street is being paid for with Nottoway County's \$50,000.00.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Utility Write Offs

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

2. Norfolk Southern Lease

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the previous lease amount was \$2,000.00 and is now \$3,200.00. He said this is the parking lot adjacent to the railroad tracks. He said we anticipate renovating this parking lot in the next fiscal year.

Councilman Allman suggested an extended lease once construction begins on the parking lot.

Councilman Nash said prior to doing the parking lot project, we need to solidify a lease term. He said we just need to confirm the price won't go up because of the improvements.

Councilwoman Jones made a motion to approve the Norfolk Southern Lease as presented, at \$3,200.00 annually. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Coleburn said if the Town does implement the parking spaces, and the railroad does play hardball, the Town can say we are done. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we need to make sure the improvements on the property don't adjust the figure.

Manager Vannoorbeeck believed the proposed parking lot was not for current capacity, but instead for additional residential demand downtown.

Councilman Nash said we have talked previously about buying credits to a parking space, that could help cover some of the cost. Manager Vannoorbeeck said when the residential requests for downtown come to Council, part of the Conditional Rezoning process needs to say they will contribute X number of dollars towards the new parking spaces.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

3. Roofing Design Services

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the money had been put aside, \$115,000.00, and the floors have been bid out at the Fire Station. He said there was a mandatory Pre-Bid on January 3, 2023.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the next Capital Improvement Project is the roof at Schwartz Tavern. He said he would like to advertise for an architect roofing consultant, who would assist with inspections and administration. He said they could also help with the roof at the Fire Station.

Councilman Morgan made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to seek bids for a roofing consultant for the roof at Schwartz Tavern and the Fire Station. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Councilman Allman said they deal with some metal roofing contractors at his work, so he would contact them.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

4. DEQ Litter Grants

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked to hold off on this, and said Finance Director Hardy wrote this Grant for a Household Hazardous Waste Day. He said there are two grants and he would bring them back next month for acceptance.

5. Resolution – Ms. Louise Johnson

Mayor Coleburn said Chief Kuzmiak has presented a Resolution for Ms. Louise Johnson, commemorating her 32 years of wonderful service.

Councilman Morgan made a motion to adopt the Resolution for Ms. Louise Johnson as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had been working with Mr. Jason Walker, who has purchased Mr. Frank Carlo's metal building on BABS Lane. He said Mr. Walker would be moving his company and roughly 20 employees into the building.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the last piece of property the Town sold to Mr. Walker, 2/3 of it is in the Town's territory. He said Mr. Walker had cleared 3-4 acres, and he had spoken to Mr. Cody Lewis with the Fire Department, he asked to give him permission to burn the brush pile. He said Mr. Walker has the equipment to put a fire out, if needed.

Councilman Allman made a motion to allow Mr. Jason Walker to burn his brush pile that is in Town limits. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would report on the date.

COMMITTEE REFERRAL:

1. Bus Budget

Mayor Coleburn referred this to the Account and Finance Committee.

MAYORS MINUTE:

Mayor Coleburn said he wanted two things for Christmas. He asked that the next Council and Mayor consider two things, one being, where there are four way stop signs, please add the fat white stop bars.

Mayor Coleburn said the other item, he has been told because of the Town's Ordinances, the County Animal Control Officer cannot write a ticket. Sgt. Mayton said they cannot write a ticket.

Mayor Coleburn asked if Council could take action to allow Animal Control to write tickets.

Mayor Coleburn said his highest honor has been serving as Mayor with this Council and past Council members.

Mayor Coleburn said Mayor Elect Ben Green and his wife have invited the current Mayor and Council Elect for a social gathering at the Blackstone Inn on Wednesday, December 21, 2022.

Mayor Coleburn said Mayor Elect Green wants the public to know that on January 4, 2023, the Mayor and newly elected officials will attend a VML Seminar. Mayor Elect Green said the new officials have asked to meet January 4, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. for the Organizational Meeting.

POLICE REPORT:

There was nothing to report.

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Mayor Elect Ben Green asked to convey his thanks. He said Manager Vannoorbeeck has given him numerous hours to bring him up to date. He said Town staff and everyone has been so kind to him. He thanked Mayor Coleburn for being so gracious and letting him make this transition. He thanked Mayor Coleburn for his 16 years of service, the prime of his life was devoted to the Town of Blackstone.

Mayor Coleburn said the elected officials put in a lot of work. He said Town staff works hard, and he told Manager Vannoorbeeck, we have had some battles in these Chambers. He said he has not met anyone on this Council or previous that were in this to line their pockets, to make their life easier, it is something we felt like we should do, it's a calling.

Mayor Coleburn said he knew the Town was going to be in good hands with the next Council and Mayor. He told Manager Vannoorbeeck there was nobody else he would want managing this Town than him. He said he reads minutes from a lot of governing bodies, there are none better than Jennifer Daniel's.

Mayor Elect Green said he was grateful for how they have left the Town, there was much to look forward to.

The outgoing Council and Mayor, Annie Scott, Shelia Jones, Lonnie Morgan and Billy Coleburn were presented with a key to the Town and a plaque for their service.

Mayor Coleburn passed the gavel on to Mayor Elect Ben Green.

CLOSED SESSION:

Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711

- 1/ Personnel – Administration
- 7/ Acquisition of Real Property

Councilman Morgan made a motion to go into Closed Session for Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body, and Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Councilman Nash 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 Morgan.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Certify
Councilman Morgan	-	Certify
Councilwoman Williams	-	Certify
Councilman Miller	-	Certify
Councilman Nash	-	Certify
Councilman Allman	-	Certify
Councilwoman Scott	-	Certify

Councilman Allman made a motion to accept with regret the resignation of Mrs. Jennifer Hardy as Finance Director. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Coleburn said Mrs. Hardy had accepted a position with an establishment in Lunenburg, and we wish her the best. He said she had been an asset to this Town.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Councilman Nash made a motion to advertise for a bookkeeper position per Manager Vannoorbeek's request. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Coleburn said Manager Vannoorbeek would interview this position and consult with the Employment and Police Committee. He said salary would be based on qualifications and deliberations of the next Council.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Jones	-	Aye
Councilman Morgan	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilwoman Scott	-	Aye

Mayor Coleburn said if this meeting is continued, then somebody has to call it to order at the end of the social gathering and adjourn it.

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Coleburn adjourned this meeting at 9:30 p.m., and said the next meeting according to Mayor Elect Green, would be January 4, 2023.


MAYOR
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

January 23, 2023 APPROVED AND ADOPTED


TOWN CLERK
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA