

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, January 22, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: L. Benjamin Green

Council Members: Wesley Gormus, Lloyette Wynn, Christopher Page, Carolyn Williams, Nathaniel Miller, Eric Nash, Jake Allman

Town Staff: Philip Vannoorbeeck, Town Manager; Jennifer Daniel, Town Clerk; Brittany Morgan, Treasurer; Sam Murphy, Police Chief; Chastiddy Bryant, Community Development Specialist; Emma Wright, DBi Executive Director

Town Attorney:

Those Absent:

Mayor Green called the January Council Meeting to order.

Dr. Allen delivered the Invocation, and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Green said he would be adding a Resolution for the Armory to Ongoing Projects #6.

**MINUTES:**

***Councilman Miller made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented minutes from the Regular Council Meeting on December 18, 2023, the Continued Meeting on January 3, 2024, and the Special Called Meeting on January 10, 2024. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

**VISITORS:**

Mayor Green said he would be continuing this meeting on February 7, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. He said this would include a Public Hearing for changes to the Town’s electric bill collections.

**FIRE CHIEF’S REPORT:**

There were no officers in attendance.

Mayor Green said the Board of Supervisors met last Thursday and received a presentation on the proposed radio system for the County. He said this system will require 95% coverage of the County, and will be designed for most of the buildings in the County. He said the initial cost is around \$6.7 Million, and an \$11 Million project, including the yearly maintenance and upgrades. Mayor Green said Chairman Roark appointed a committee.

Slate of Officers:

\* 601 Fire Chief – Dion Tomer \* 602 Deputy Fire Chief – Zachery Beares \* 603 Assistant Fire Chief – Cody Lewis \* 604 1st Captain – Archer "Lee" Williams \* 605 2nd Captain – Devin Foster \* 606 1st Lieutenant – Robert "Hunter" Oakes \* 607 2nd Lieutenant – Jonathan Repollet \* Treasurer – Tony Bradford \* Secretary – Tonya Langenstein

*Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the Fire Department’s Slate of Officers as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.*

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

**PAYMENT OF BILLS:**

Mayor Green stated the bills that have already been paid are in the amount of \$868,256.11.

*Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bills that have already been paid in the amount of \$868,256.11. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.*

Councilman Nash asked about the invoice from Hawthorne & Hawthorne. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that is a deposit, and should be reimbursable. He said it is for Southside Outreach purchasing more properties for Workforce Housing, and will be reimbursed at closing.

Councilman Miller asked about the amount of \$274,008.34. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that is for the \$400,000.00 line of credit at Benchmark, and we paid it off. He said we used money earmarked for the meter replacement project, and have since been nearly reimbursed for the Reservoir project.

Councilman Gormus asked about Child Support. Councilman Nash said it was through payroll deductions.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

Mayor Green stated the bills not yet approved, and to be paid, are in the amount of \$211,980.42.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve as presented, the bills not yet paid in the amount of \$211,980.42. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.***

Councilman Miller asked about TACS in the amount of \$2,288.50 and \$1,175.25. Manager Vannoorbeeck said these are title search fees for properties going to tax sale. He said these are for properties with lack of payment for three years.

Councilman Nash asked about meter deposit refunds, how long before they are returned when an individual moves. Treasurer Morgan replied, approximately 45 days.

Councilman Miller asked about Class A Uniforms for the Fire Department. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed that would be a dress uniform. Councilman Nash said the uniforms are the members until they are not members anymore, then they have to be returned.

Councilman Page asked about meter deposits, are they returned or applied to a customer's bill. Treasurer Morgan said it could be either, we check their account and if not paid in full, it is applied to their account.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

**APPROPRIATIONS:**

There were no appropriations.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

*Buildings, Property & Cemetery – met 12/21/23, minutes included in January’s Council Packet*

*LCCDC Building*

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there was a group from Spring Hill Baptist Church scheduled to tour the building this week.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the building was not in great shape, and very inefficient, no insulation.

Mayor Green said Manager Vannoorbeeck would provide the tour and report back to Council at the February 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting.

Councilman Nash said if Spring Hill has an offer, the Town will need to open the process up for proposals from other entities.

*Account & Finance – met 1/3/24 – minutes included in January’s Council Packet*

*FY25 Bus Budget / RFP – CD Investment*

Mayor Green said Council dispatched with both these items at a previous Continued Meeting.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

### **1. Spring Festival – 3-30-24 / Seay Park / Banner Request**

Mayor Green said this was a request from Bright Lights Entertainment to use Seay Park. He said the applicant was asking to waive items F, G, H and K from the agreement. He said these items include amplifiers, dances or paid admissions, political functions, and religious services being limited to 60 minutes.

Councilman Page said Bright Lights Entertainment wanted to do two events this year, the first being a Spring Festival, and the second being a Halloween event. He said the Spring Event was slated to be in the Town Square, but there was some delay from DBi on approval, so the date was pushed back to now being April 27, 2024. He believed Seay Park would be a better location because of more space.

Councilman Page said this is a festival, so there will be entertainment, so people may dance. He said in reference to political functions, historically each party has a booth at the Arts & Crafts Festival. He said his event would be a month before the June Primary, so they may do the same thing. He said this would be a free event to vendors, as well as attendees. He said someone may have a booth talking about God, and we don't want the event shut down.

Councilman Miller said when a request like this comes up, it goes to a committee. Councilman Page said he never had a request go through Committee.

Councilman Allman said he did see some things on the application there were outdated. Mayor Green said we can handle this request now, or it can be postponed until Health & Ordinance can look at the agreement.

Councilman Nash believed the request for Seay Park was legit, he thought the banner request was more of a problem. He said the event ends at 5:00 p.m. so we are not looking at any Noise Ordinance violations.

Councilman Page said we are asking for a waiver on the Noise Ordinance from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. He clarified this event would be free to attendees and vendors.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the event application for Seay Park, with the exceptions. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.***

Councilman Gormus said we are looking at four exceptions on another Policy in place, and let it ride. Councilman Allman said some of the items are dated, but thought it needed to go for legal review before denying somebody based on these items. Councilman Miller said he had a problem with H and K on the Seay Park Agreement.

Councilman Page said items H and K are the most protected forms of speech in a public park.

Councilman Gormus asked if the property was donated to the Town. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, yes. Councilman Gormus said with the understanding it would be for relaxing and enjoying peaceful tranquility. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied for public use.

Councilman Allman said he didn't want to update the Policy for a specific request, but did think this Policy was outdated. He did not believe the update applied to this event; he thought it would apply to the event in October. Councilman Page said the October event was not planned to be at Seay Park.

Councilman Gormus said we have rules in place and we move past them, here we are again. Councilman Miller said he preferred to table the request and take to a committee.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Nay
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Nay
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Abstain
Councilman Page	-	Abstain
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

Councilman Allman asked that the Seay Park Agreement be referred to the Health & Ordinance Committee.

**Banner Request – Bright Lights Entertainment**

Councilman Page said we understand the Town has an Ordinance that is geared towards non-profit organizations. He said Bright Lights Entertainment has for years been involved with community events in Town, and they would like to advertise the event like other non-profits are able to do. He said in the Ordinance it says to promote events in Town to increase commerce, he believed the spirit of this request does do that. Councilman Page said there will be a logo on the banner, that is how we can provide free admission and free to the vendors. He said this helps with costs to hold the event. He added there have been sponsorships on banners before. He said this event will bring people to Town, and the Town will make Meals Tax, and businesses will benefit. He said we want to advertise and sell sponsorships for the banner.

Councilman Page believed the Ordinance was outdated, and limits events to non-profits.

Councilman Miller asked Councilman Page who would benefit from this. Councilman Page replied, everyone, Bright Lights Entertainment will benefit from this because we are a business to make a profit. He said vendors will benefit from this because they can attend the event for free and sell their products.

Councilman Page said he understood the request was pushing the limits of what Council is used to. He said Bright Lights Entertainment believed some portion of the Town's Ordinance was not enforceable because it is unconstitutional.

Councilman Miller said he got beat up so bad on his first night of Council because people were saying Council was giving privilege to Eric Nash, and basically this is the same thing. He said as a council member we are looked at different. He said if it looks like Councilman Page is making money, then people come back to Council.

Councilman Gormus said everything about the banner is contradictory to the Code. He said nothing from the request is non-profit.

Councilman Nash said if there is a banner erected, he would like it to simply say Blackstone Spring Festival with the date and time. Councilwoman Williams agreed, and said there should not be sponsorship on the banner.

***Councilman Allman made a motion to decline the banner request as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.***

Councilman Allman said some Ordinances can be changed if Council is in agreement, but right now the way it is currently written the request is not in line.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

## 2. DBi – Banners

Mayor Green asked this be on the Agenda this month for further discussion. He said this was to turn banner requests over to DBi for their approval.

Councilman Allman believed more research needed to be done, he said at the last meeting there was common consent on an approval board with the expertise of a design team at their disposal, such as DBi to help get banners approved. He said DBi can make a recommendation to the Town Manager if favorable, and if not, it would come to Council. He said he would like to discuss further with the Health & Ordinance Committee.

Councilman Nash agreed it should go to Committee first before handing it to DBi, with the status it is right now. He said Council is here to do the job, so we need to first dictate what needs to be done.

Councilman Miller talked about items going to Committee. He said Council says things and then they don't do them. He added we see what is happening, and don't want to recognize it until it smacks us in the face.

Councilman Allman said we are trying to be more proactive by changing the Policy before requests are in front of us. He said with Seay Park, we cannot deny a request before we change an Ordinance.

Councilman Page said he had never seen a waiver request go to committee. He asked if his Noise Ordinance waiver was approved. Mayor Green replied yes.

Councilman Page with DBi we need to be careful, they are a 501c3 and did not think they could be used as an extension of an arm of the Town. He said if DBi were to deny a request for a banner it could open them up to liability, as well as the Town. He said 501c3's have to be non-political.

Councilman Allman said DBi has resources, such as the design committee, that the Town does not have.

Councilman Gormus believed the value of having DBi involved is more for the design, than approval. He said adding another layer for approval will make it more difficult.

Councilman Allman said if there was a way to have one approval, he would go through DBi, then have the Town Manager sign it, however, more research needs to be done.

### 3. Award Bid – Tree Removal – Sixth Street

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there are three trees located on top of a sewer line adjacent to Mr. Banks' home. He said Mr. Banks has an issue with electricity that runs from the rear of his property and the trees are in conflict. He said the Town needs to set a new pole.

Councilman Nash asked if this was in preparation for electric work. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the trees are in the Town's sewer easement. He said the electric lines cannot be adjusted with the trees there.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bid from Treescapes, Inc. in the amount of \$7,700.00 to remove trees from the Town's sewer easement in order to adjust the electric lines. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.***



Councilwoman Williams believed when the Town does projects, they get at least three bids. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he advertised the project, but nobody else bid on it.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Abstain
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

#### 4. RFP – Town Attorney

Manager Vannoorbeeck said two proposals were received from the Town’s RFP that were due on January 15, 2024. He said these two firms are already engaged in local government, one from Roanoke and the other is from different locations, there is no central office.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked if Council wanted to interview as the full Council or through a committee. Mayor Green suggested interviewing both at Council level, and on a separate night from a Council meeting.

Mayor Green asked to have some available dates at the February 7, 2024 Continued Meeting.

#### 5. Crewe Water Project

Councilman Allman said we have been working with Crewe for a while trying to get some decent numbers to keep Crewe alive, and be fair to citizens of Blackstone. He said if Crewe could not figure out a solution to sell water to the State facilities, he did not think their budget could handle it, and if they lose that revenue, they may not survive very long as a Town. He said per the letter included in the packet; he did not know if the Town would be able to figure out a solution.

Councilman Allman said the State has \$24 Million in grant money to help, which will either be the Town of Blackstone or Prince Edward. He said Prince Edward wants to provide water to the State facilities, with or without Crewe. He said Crewe wants the \$24 Million to fix their own water and pipelines. He said he could not recommend moving forward with that since the Town of Blackstone would be taking on all the debt and risk. He said Crewe at this point had not expressed any interest in taking out loans to pay for the system, or take on any risks.

Councilman Allman recommended meeting with Crewe one more time, but he wanted people to know Blackstone was being backed into a corner, and did not think we could make the numbers work. He said he hoped to get more faces from Crewe's Council at this meeting. He did not know how we could make the numbers work, and make Blackstone whole with the debt, plus supplementing Crewe with our tax dollars and be a burden on our taxpayers.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the recent letter from Crewe included in the packet says Crewe assumes no capital outlay costs, any capital expenses for our existing system are paid for from the \$24 Million in state funding. He said it also says Crewe will have three rates, residential, business and State facilities, retail water rates for the State facilities drop from their current \$11.45/1,000 gallons to \$11.00 and business and residential retail rates remain at their current rate.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said in order for Blackstone to serve Crewe, just improvements for the raw water system, the intake at the Reservoir, lines on Tenth and Military Road, and from Rocky Bump Road to Main Street would all have to be changed. He said we have based the rates, with a 10% contingency based on \$26,662,000.00 from September 2023. He said that does not run a water line to Crewe, but does upgrade our system to provide water to Crewe with bigger and newer pipes.

Councilman Page asked if that needed to be done already. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the raw water line needed to be done, which is roughly \$14 Million. Councilman Page said the raw water line needed to be done and shouldn't be stuck on Crewe. Councilman Allman said in the figures from B&B Consultants, there is cost splitting for that. He said the portion specific to Crewe was based on consumption.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Crewe extension or to the Department of Corrections for water service connection would be \$21,590,000.00 and goes from N. West Avenue to the courthouse in Crewe. He said according to Mr. Phil Miskovic, the replacement of water lines from Crystal Lake back to the State facilities was an additional \$7 Million, making the total \$28 Million. He said the State has said they would provide \$24 Million. He said there could be a potential \$4 Million for the upgrade of a 100 year waterline on the other end of the County. He believed all the risk was being taken by Blackstone.

Councilman Nash did not want Blackstone's citizens to foot the bill for Crewe. Manager Vannoorbeeck said there is no money being made, it will just be paying debt service.

Councilwoman Wynn asked why does Crewe expect Blackstone to foot the whole bill, and it only benefits them. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it would benefit Blackstone also, we would sell the water and make money. Councilman Nash added, after the debt service is paid off.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we can get a rate structure established to pay for the debt service, but if it costs more, then we have to take on more debt. He said if the State facilities close in the next 20 years, Blackstone eats the debt and Crewe has no skin in the game.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said right now the Town has \$10 Million in principal debt.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the RFI is due March 8, 2024. Councilman Allman said he wants to meet one more time so the entirety of Crewe understands this decision.

Mayor Green said we are looking at 6 weeks to provide a proposal, and will take a lot of time and at a significant expense. Councilman Allman said included in the letter from Crewe, there is no longer any benefits for Blackstone.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there needs to be a decision made by the February 7, 2024 Continued Meeting. Councilman Allman said he would like to meet with Crewe before this meeting.

Mayor Green said we do have a 7-0 vote to authorize himself and Councilman Allman to be liasons for the Town. He said he would call Crewe tomorrow to set up a meeting.

Councilman Page asked what the delivery rate was being offered by Blackstone. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, \$9.17 per 1,000 gallons, and includes debt service.

Councilman Page asked if we needed to analyze the figure if it is higher, is there any wiggle room on the number. He said we would not make any money for 25 years. Manager Vannoorbeeck said what could be beneficial is if the State customers paid half or more on the raw water line. He said Blackstone wanted to keep the rates on par with "In Town" customers.

Councilman Page said Manager Vannoorbeeck was good at finding grants, would that reduce the cost and help negotiate a lower rate in the future. Manager Vannoorbeeck said maybe at some point, but those are yearlong processes. Councilman Allman said Crewe should go for the grants.

Councilman Gormus asked if there was an option to provide water to the State facilities and not Crewe. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that is an option. Councilman Allman said we could bypass Crewe, but we want to keep this revenue in the County and we don't want Prince Edward to steal some of our other water customers. Manager Vannoorbeeck said once Prince Edward is here, they will go after Pickett.

Mayor Green said he was going to ask for a motion to either suspend the water issues, or give himself, Councilman Allman and Manager Vannoorbeeck the opportunity to negotiate or pass our position along.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said bring this back to Council February 7<sup>th</sup>. Councilman Allman said if we cannot make a deal with Crewe by February 7<sup>th</sup>, he would open the question, do we bypass or bow out

Councilman Nash said Blackstone has shown all means to help Crewe, instead of bypassing them.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there will also need to be some legislation from the Board of Supervisors or from the State allowing one jurisdiction to serve in another jurisdiction.

***Councilman Page made a motion to postpone this issue until we get an update by Councilman Allman on February 7<sup>th</sup>. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.***

Mayor Green said the motion is the liaison committee would meet with Crewe, and report back on February 7<sup>th</sup>, and postpone any action until that time.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

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

#### ***1. Dilapidated Buildings***

Manager Vannoorbeeck said after two extensions, 902 Second Street is still blighted. He said we have sent a final letter and if the structure is not demolished, we will petition the court. He said he may have to ask Attorney Bacon for assistance.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve proceeding with legal action to remove the structure at 902 Second Street after January 31, 2024. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.***

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he was notified that on January 10, 2024, Mr. Coffey, the owner of the Dillard Crawley property was served in Vance County, North Carolina, with papers concerning this blighted property. He believed he would now be contacted by Mr. Coffey's attorney or him. He said the petition is for a condemnation and taking of the property.

2. Meals Tax / Lodging Tax

Mayor Green said Meals Tax would be addressed tonight on Closed Session.

3. Street Improvement Projects

There was nothing to report.

4. Wrigglesworth Sports Complex

Manager Vannoorbeeck said based on Mr. Dan Martin and Mr. Jason Stokes' estimate to complete the Gators' Concession Stand, it will be roughly \$15 - \$20 Thousand. He believed Town staff could do all the work.

Councilman Nash asked where the money would come from. Manager Vannoorbeeck hoped it was in the General Fund. He said the estimated cost was just materials.

Councilman Page asked how much the County gave the Town. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, \$50,000.00, but he still needed to purchase scoreboards, but could tap into that to start with.

Councilman Miller asked about the bleachers. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had not heard anything yet. Councilman Miller said they were provided by Native Indians to perform a ceremony. He said they had not been used for 10 years, and asked if they could be donated to the Gators. Councilman Nash believed they would need to be donated to the Town.

Mayor Green said he and Manager Vannoorbeeck would be meeting with Chairman Roark and County Administrator Bowen on several issues, so he would press for an answer.

Councilman Nash asked to use the donated \$50,000.00 towards this.

Councilman Page said he heard recently that the County did not own the bleachers.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve up to \$15,000.00 for the Gators' Concession Stand using the \$50,000.00 provided by the County. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Councilman Page made a secondary motion to authorize up to \$18,000.00 from the \$50,000.00 from the County.

Mayor Green said there was no second, so the motion failed.

Councilman Gormus said if there is \$50,000.00 to use for Wigglesworth, why are we capping how much to spend to get it done. Councilman Nash said from sitting up here, it is a lot easier to cinch the belt in the beginning, pinch pennies now.

***Councilman Gormus made a secondary motion to remove the limit to complete the Gators' Concession Stand, and use the funds provided by Nottoway County in the amount of \$50,000.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.***

Councilwoman Williams asked if the Gators would be the primary users of the field. Councilman Miller replied yes.

Councilwoman Williams asked if the Gators were paying for anything. Councilman Miller replied yes, he said the Gators are self-sufficient, and do the best they can with what they have. Councilwoman Williams suggested fundraisers.

Councilman Nash believed the Gators would have sole use of the Concession Stand, but he hoped the field would be used for soccer or other things.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

Manager Vannoorbeeck said included in the packet is a picture of the interior of the stand-alone school building. He said the ceiling has collapsed and the floor tiles are all asbestos. He said he had been provided a cost estimate of \$35,000.00 to remove the asbestos, and if we wait much longer the floor tiles will be in the basement. He said he could wait on the demolition, and the County has already waived the tipping fees, but he needed to get the asbestos removed.

***Councilman Nash made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to bid out the removal of asbestos from the stand alone one story school building. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

5. Taylor Bottom Block Grant

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there was a letter in the packet prepared by Community Development Specialist Bryant, and provided to each household in Taylor Bottom. He believed it was going to be a challenge getting these documents together from the home owners.

Councilman Gormus asked what we can do to help. Manager Vannoorbeeck said legal fees may be part of the Planning Grant. He added, if we cannot get enough participation, we cannot apply for a construction grant.

Councilwoman Williams suggested people from the East End talk to the Taylor Bottom residents to help them out.

Mayor Green asked Community Development Specialist Bryant to have a meeting in the chambers to give a briefing, and he would attend.

Community Development Specialist Bryant said they had been working on surveys in Taylor Bottom, and some of the residents are heirs of the property, but had not changed the deeds over. She said she was trying to get Legal Aid to help the residents.

6. Armory

Mayor Green said he, Manager Vannoorbeeck and Community Development Specialist Bryant attended a Tobacco Commission meeting on January 8, 2024. He commended Community Development Specialist Bryant on receiving grant funds and her professionalism.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said on January 8, 2024 the Town was awarded an additional \$121,000.00 in grant funding for the kitchen in the Armory. He said the estimated total for the kitchen is \$247,000.00, so we continue to seek funds from additional sources. He said one of the additional sources is from Southeast Crescent, which is administered through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we received a Resolution this afternoon, which is no additional commitment in cash, but an authorization to apply for \$500,000.00 to complete the kitchen.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to apply for Southeast Crescent Funding in the amount of \$500,000.00 for the kitchen in the Armory, and adopt the Resolution as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

7. Weatherization

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town had not set aside its \$50,000.00 contribution for this year.

Councilman Gormus believed weatherization was for better preparing homes for weather. He asked if these funds could go towards helping people that cannot pay their light bills. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that could be an option if Council wanted to do so. He was considering having something on the utility bills where citizens could donate to a fund, and maybe the Town could match it.

8. Workforce Housing

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have two houses under construction, one on Broad Street and the other on Dillard Street. He said the Town had been paid back for the first house, so we can pay the bills by cash on hand, and then when these two houses are completed, and we are paid back, we should have \$300,000.00.

9. Roundabout – Water Relocation

There was nothing to report.



**NEW BUSINESS:**

*1. Resolution – VDOT Urban Maintenance Inventory*

Mayor Green said Manager Vannoorbeeck is requesting Council adopt the Resolution to include Rolling Acres Lane into the VDOT system.

***Councilman Allman made a motion to adopt the VDOT Maintenance Payment Resolution as presented, to add Rolling Acres Lane into the Town’s road system. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.***

Councilman Nash said \$4,800.00 would be allocated for this street annually, and asked what is the cost to maintain, does the Town come out to the good. Manager Vannoorbeeck said for the first few years yes, because no work would be needed. He said when it gets paved that would be roughly \$20,000.00, so the Town would be in the red for a few years.

Councilman Nash said it is currently tar and gravel, will it ever be asphalt. Manager Vannoorbeeck said no, it will just be tar and gravel.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

**VOTE:**

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

*2. Industrial Development Authority – Resignation / Nominee*

Mayor Green said Mr. Taylor Quicke is moving out of Town limits and resigning from the Industrial Development Authority.

***Councilman Page made a motion to accept Mr. Taylor Quicke’s resignation from the Industrial Development Authority. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

Mayor Green said Mr. Quicke had recommended Mr. Robert Motley as his replacement for the IDA.

***Councilman Allman made a motion to open the floor for nominations. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Nay
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

Councilman Allman nominated Mr. Robert Motley for the Industrial Development Authority.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to close the nominations. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

Councilman Page asked if this was a Town of Blackstone organization. Mayor Green replied yes.

Councilman Page made a motion to dissolve the Industrial Development Authority organization.

Councilman Page said they have not met in a very long time.

Mayor Green said there was no second to Councilman Page's motion.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to appoint Mr. Robert Motley to the Industrial Development Authority. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

### 3. Out of Town Trash Collection Request

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. Bolter contacted Clerk Daniel on December 21, 2023 concerning trash pickup at his home, which is outside of Town limits. He said Mr. Bolter does not have utilities with the Town, but had his trashed picked up in the past.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked Treasurer Morgan if Mr. Bolter did not have utilities, how was he being billed for trash pickup. Treasurer Morgan did not know.

Councilman Nash asked Treasurer Morgan to see if there were any other trash collections on that street.

Mayor Green asked if Mr. Bolter was asking for an exception to Town policy. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes.

Councilman Page said there are potential customers out there, even if they are not on water and sewer. Manager Vannoorbeeck said a separate manual bill has to be prepared. Councilman Page suggested polling the neighborhood to see if there are others interested.

Mayor Green asked Manager Vannoorbeeck his opinion. Manager Vannoorbeeck said unless there is additional information, he would deny the request.

***Councilman Miller made a motion to postpone this request until next month's Council Meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.***

Councilman Gormus said what are we waiting on, the fact that he lives out of Town. Clerk Daniel said it does get confusing in Cole Harbor, because the trash guys don't know who pays, and who doesn't. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town will end up picking up trash from those who do not pay.

Councilman Allman asked if the Town was still picking up the trash for Mr. Bolter. Manager Vannoorbeeck said no it has stopped.

Councilman Nash asked staff to see how many people pay for trash pickup in Cole Harbor, it may be worth saying no trash pickup in Cole Harbor.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

#### ***4. Nottoway Softball – Use of Batting Cages***

Mayor Green said Coach Travis Andrews has requested use of the Town's batting cages on rainy days for Nottoway's softball team.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve Nottoway's softball team using the batting cages at the Wrigglesworth Sports Complex as needed. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

### **COMMITTEE REFERRALS:**

Mayor Green said he had a discussion today with Manager Vannoorbeeck about 222 Forest Drive, and a better solution.

Mayor Green referred 222 Forest Drive to the Street & Light Committee.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the N. West Avenue ditch had been bid out. He said \$140,000.00 had been set aside to do Forest Drive and N. West Avenue. He said B&B Consultants came to him, unsolicited, and said the recommendation for Forest Drive is very expensive. He said B&B Consultants has recommended another solution with not as much pipe.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said B&B Consultants was concerned with the pipe design, it may be in conflict with the force main and gravity line.

Councilman Nash asked if B&B Consultants designed the plan originally. Manager Vannoorbeeck said they did, they did what they were told to do.

Mayor Green referred removing the trees in the sidewalk on Main Street to the Street & Light Committee. He said he knew of three areas where the sidewalk was buckling up and causing a trip hazard.

Manager Vannoorbeeck advised Council that someone tripped on the sidewalk last week in front of Moncure Insurance.

Mayor Green said he had been compiling a list of ditches, and added 316 Sixth Street, he then referred it to the Street & Light Committee.

Mayor Green said the other ditches being referred are 222 Forest Drive, Mr. Somerville's ditch on N. West Avenue, Mr. Armes' ditch on Dillard Street, the Bunnell's on Lunenburg Avenue, and 410 Fourth Street. Councilwoman Williams asked to add 814-816 Luke Street.

Mayor Green referred the Seay Park Agreement, DBi approving banners, and Weatherization funds being used to help utility customers to the Health & Ordinance Committee.

### **MAYORS MINUTE:**

Mayor Green said he has now completed his first year as Mayor and has found Manager Vannoorbeeck and his staff are dedicated, loyal, serious about their work and know their jobs and do them well. He said he appreciates all that staff does every day for the Town.

1. Proposed Electric Legislation

Mayor Green said Manager Vannoorbeeck has asked him to seek Council's blessing to write our Senator and Delegate to oppose a proposed Bill included in the packet. He said this Bill would allow a three month period suspending cut-offs after utilities are due.

***Councilman Allman made a motion to approve having Mayor Green write a letter to the Senator and Delegate opposing the proposed Bill and be in line with what MEPAV and VMEA recommend. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.***

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there had been some movement on the Bill, Ms. Lashrecse Aird introduced it, but has since backed off some of the items. He said he would like a letter of non-support but be in concert with what MEPAV and VMEA are doing.

Councilman Page said there are some good things in the Bill. He said he preferred the letter include the items we 100% object to.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Nay
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

**POLICE REPORT:**

Mayor Green asked Chief Murphy to call or email him when there are significant crimes.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

Councilman Nash asked if the stop light at Eighth and Main could be fixed. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would have Mr. Dan Martin look at it.

Councilman Nash said everyone is now receiving tax reassessments, he asked if we were going to look into lowering our tax levy to account for the huge increase. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the State Code requires equalizing the rate. He said we will look at the entire rate and are allowed to make a 1.5% windfall, anything over that requires a Public Hearing.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711

- 5/ Prospective Industry
- 7/ Legal Matters

***Councilman Gormus made a motion to go into Closed Session for Discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community and Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

***Councilwoman Wynn 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 Nash.***

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Certify
Councilman Nash	-	Certify
Councilman Allman	-	Certify
Councilman Gormus	-	Certify
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Certify
Councilman Page	-	Certify
Councilwoman Williams	-	Certify

***Councilman Nash made a motion to proceed with criminal and civil charges for 101 on Main/Mr. Gordon Lee for overdue Meals Tax. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

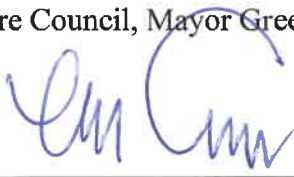
Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Nay
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye

Mayor Green continued this meeting to Wednesday, February 7, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Green adjourned this meeting at 9:38 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR  
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

February 26, 2024 APPROVED AND ADOPTED

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
TOWN CLERK  
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA