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, November 21, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: William D. Coleburn

Council Members: Annie Scott, Shelia Jones, Carolyn Williams, Nathaniel

Miller, Eric Nash, Jake Allman

Town Staff: Philip Vannoorbeeck, Town Manager; Jennifer Daniel,

Town Clerk; Jennifer Hardy, Finance Director; Brittany Harris, Treasurer; Nicholas Kuzmiak, Police Chief; Chastiddy Bryant, Community Development Specialist; Ashley Seamster, Utility Billing Clerk; Zac Beares, Deputy

Fire Chief

Town Attorney:

Those Absent: Lonnie Morgan, Dion Tomer

Mayor Coleburn called the November Council Meeting to order.

Councilman Miller delivered the Invocation.

Mayor Coleburn led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Coleburn congratulated those that won election and those that won re-election.

MINUTES:

Councilman Nash made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented minutes from the Regular Council Meeting on October 17, 2022. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

VISITORS:

Ms. Deborah Rose – Blackstone Chamber – Christmas Parade – 12-9-22 @ 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Rose was not present, so Mr. Chris Page made the presentation.

Mr. Page said the Chamber was requesting the normal street closures and said there is nothing different from last year. He asked if the Town would sponsor the Parade again this year. He said the donations help pay for the bands and their transportation, but also it helps with the prizes for the floats and for marketing.

Mayor Coleburn said in years past, this Council has been asked for \$750.00 to help pay for bands. He asked if this was still needed. Mr. Page replied yes, they were working on a limited budget and those funds help make the event special.

Councilman Nash asked how many bands were participating this year. Mr. Page believed there were 2-3 bands currently. Mayor Coleburn said the last few years the donation from the Town was to cover the cost of the bands. Mr. Page said they return whatever donation is not used.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the requests for the Parade and donating up to \$750.00. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Nash said Finance Director Hardy has come up with a Policy for those that request money from the Town, that is to be done during Budget season.

Mrs. Jean Lacks - Pickett Court

Mrs. Lacks said thank you, but she was not very pleased. She said the speed bumps were not where they should be. Mayor Coleburn said he rode through there, and the speed bumps were of minor consequence, and believed they needed to be raised. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it was already scheduled.

Councilman Nash asked if the locations were approved by engineers beforehand. Manager Vannoorbeeck said they were designed by engineers and approved by Council. Mrs. Lacks said the fifth speed bump needed to be installed between 13 and 14 Pickett Court. A resident from Pickett Court suggested adding two more.

Mayor Coleburn said when we get to the point where there are not enough speed bumps, that might be an enforcement issue.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he saw signs last week and thought they were going to come back, but they never showed up.

Councilman Nash asked if the Town had to pay twice. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we will have to pay for the asphalt.

Mrs. Lacks said she knew asphalt could not be put down in the next few months, but in March she expected to be first. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the plant had not closed yet, so they may still show up this year.

Mayor Coleburn said for years we heard about the narrowness of Pickett Court and how emergency vehicles could not get through, and now we hear it is a drag strip, that does not compute.

Mrs. Lacks said she has lived on Pickett Court for over 50 years, and asked Council for two things that were never done. She said she asked for one more thing and it was screwed up royally. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, Council did not screw anything up, the contractor did. He said the instructions were to make them the same size as on Harris Street.

Mayor Coleburn said there is a human cry around Town for speed bumps. He said if someone is going to be inconvenienced by a speed bump and wants a speed bump, there might be a speeding problem there.

Mrs. Lacks said there also needs to be something done about the alleys. A gentleman from the audience said people use the alley as a cut through. Mrs. Lacks believed a lot of the vehicles are kids from Kenston trying to beat the traffic.

Ms. Micah Lacks thanked Council for the speed bumps, but said they did need to be higher.

Mr. John Listman

Mayor Coleburn said this is the second September that Mr. Listman has had a ridiculously high water bill.

Mr. Listman said he lives at 712 Oak Street, Apartment 1. He said in September 2021 he received a water bill for 13,200 gallons. He said he came to Council and Mr. Andre Hicks determined it may have been a stuck flapper on the toilet. He said Council cut the fee in half and he paid \$61.00 for water he never intended using.

Mr. Listman said he came home October 26th and there was a note from the Town taped to his door that said he used 31,500 gallons of water for the month of September 2022. He said this reading was from September 1st through October 3rd. He said the current reading is 100 gallons per Ms. Ashley Seamster as of today. He said his usage is usually 400 gallons. He said Access Realty sent a plumber and found nothing.

Mr. Listman said the meter was installed in 2015, and after the incident last year, Mr. Andre Hicks changed the register. Mayor Coleburn said this is the second September in a row, and each September there was a weather event. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the water meters are not connected to power. Mr. Listman said Mr. Hicks told him they are run by a 30 year battery.

Mr. Listman said last year he paid his normal bill, plus an extra \$61.00, which was half of the overage.

Councilman Nash asked if we are getting accurate readings by using the node, instead of using our eyes. Ms. Ashley Seamster said it is being touch read and being read by eye. Manager Vannoorbeeck said a re-read is when somebody goes back out to check the meter.

Ms. Seamster said the meters are read in 100s, so it only trips every 100 gallons used.

Mr. Gormus said the minimum usage charge is 3,000 gallons.

Mayor Coleburn believed Council should waive all sewer charges. Mr. Listman said he was not going to pay any more than his normal bill. He said everyone keeps talking about the toilet, that is not him, that is Access Realty, they manage the apartments. He said Access Realty is going to talk to the owner and see about installing a new toilet.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said traditionally big water bills are caused by toilets hanging up. He did not have an explanation, and recommended putting the water bill back to the minimum amount. Councilman Nash said he would like to see Access Realty replace the toilet.

Mr. Listman said he was going to pay his normal bill on Wednesday, which comes to \$130.04, and leaves on the current bill \$483.00. He said he was not paying it, but we could contact Access Realty for the difference.

Councilman Nash made a motion to lower the bill to the minimum 3,000 gallons.

Manager Vannoorbeeck suggested reading the meter more often throughout the month.

The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Ms. Jan Daniel - TAA DAA Bakery

Ms. Daniel said decorating the lamp posts with scarecrows for the fall season was not only fun, but an opportunity to bond as a community. She said they would like to continue decorating the lamp posts seasonally, starting with Christmas. She said the goal was to inspire and encourage our downtown community to decorate the lamp posts. She said this would not be a competition, and there would not be prize money, nor were they asking for any sustaining funds. She said the decorations would go up after Thanksgiving and remain throughout the holiday season. She said we would be available as contacts to organize this endeavor and offer decorating guidance to anyone seeking it. She said the letter was signed by Jan Daniel, the TAA DAA Bakery, Susan Fuller, the Black Pig, Gloria Edgerton and Rose Allen, Edgerton Flowers and Gifts and Jeannie Johnson, Liberty Hollow Sweets.

Councilman Nash believed the decorations should only be on posts with just wreaths. Manager Vannoorbeeck asked to avoid the corners. Ms. Daniel said they would respect that.

Councilman Nash asked if they would be charging per pole. Ms. Daniel said absolutely not.

Councilman Nash said he was hearing how people were being charged for Town property. Ms. Daniel said the fall decorating was a fundraiser for Second Saturday Art Walk. She said there is no charge and anybody can decorate. She said we want to keep our little Hallmark Town going.

Mayor Coleburn said by Common Consent, Council agreed to allow the decorating of the lamp posts downtown.

Mayor Coleburn thanked Ms. Daniel for the initiative, and said Second Saturday Art Walk has been great for our community.

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT:

Deputy Chief Beares said Tower 9 is still set to be the first part of the year, and tools have been ordered and starting to come in.

Deputy Chief Beares said Mr. Lee Williams had been working Recruitment and Retention, and held a Vehicle Extrication Class, with 24 people taking the class.

Deputy Chief Beares said December 6, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., will be the Edgar Johnson Memorial Service at the Fire Station. He said this person was the only firefighter who passed away in the line of duty and happened in 1962.

Deputy Chief Beares said Blackstone Primary School was working with the Fire Department on a poster project. He said the kids work on a theme for Fire Prevention Week, which is "don't wait, plan your escape". He said the top 5 from each grade are presented to us and then we pick the top person from each grade and they get a fire truck ride to school.

Deputy Chief Beares said three members took Firefighter 2 in Meherrin.

Deputy Chief Beares said this month we celebrate Dion Tomer with 31 years, Chris Uhrich with 21 years and Michael Smith with 15 years of service.

Mayor Coleburn asked if the Fire Department still had smoke detectors. Deputy Chief Beares replied yes, they try to keep them on hand and have when going on calls.

PAYMENT OF BILLS:

Mayor Coleburn stated the bills that have already been paid are in the amount of \$930,777.60.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bills that have already been paid in the amount of \$930,777.60. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Councilman Nash asked about Meter Deposit Returns, there is an individual on the list, and knew this person owed the Town money previously. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed deposits for utilities was only for utilities, other money owed would not be held from utility deposits. Councilman Nash asked if accounts could be cross checked before returning deposits.

Treasurer Harris was not sure if the Town could legally take a deposit and apply it elsewhere.

Utility Billing Clerk Seamster said there is a Policy in place for utilities, if they owe money from another account, they have to pay in full before starting new service.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Mayor Coleburn stated the bills not yet approved, and to be paid, are in the amount of \$331,366.64.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve as presented, the bills not yet paid in the amount of \$331,366.64. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Councilman Nash asked about the Electric Department, an invoice from Farmville Wholesale Electric for a pole lamp, is this for one that got damaged. He asked if the Town ever gets insurance proceeds for damaged light poles. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, sometimes. Finance Director Hardy said she would see if Ms. Carol Lyons submitted a claim.

Councilman Nash asked about the termite warranty invoice for Schwartz Tavern. Clerk Daniel said the termite issue was bid out a few years ago, and was treated, this invoice is to maintain the warranty.

Mayor Coleburn said the age of Schwartz Tavern will be coming to light, but we have always been taught in Blackstone it dates back to 1794, but there is new information that the Nottoway Historical Society has found that it may date back to the 1750s.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

APPROPRIATIONS:

Appropriation #1 - Water/Sewer Department = \$18,155

Mayor Coleburn said this is from lightning damage.

Appropriation #2 - Electric Department = \$223,065

Mayor Coleburn said Councilman Nash asked a few months ago to submit the malfunction at the Peak Generator Plant to the Town's insurance, and lo and behold, the Town received insurance proceeds in the amount of \$223,065.00.

Appropriation #3 - Street Department = \$326,444

Mayor Coleburn said this appropriation is for change orders on the S Main Street project. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the paving was done further than originally planned, and went almost to Walmart. He said the sidewalk beyond the church to Tenth Street is included as well.

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

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Insurance - met 11-1-22 - minutes included in November's Council Packet

Airport Insurance Renewal

Finance Director Hardy said last year the Town paid \$5,475.00 and this year the company is charging \$14,626.00. She said they cast the net for better pricing and the low bid was from AIG for \$5,000.00 for the premium. She said this flows through VRSA and has been checked to make sure it is comparable.

Councilman Nash made a motion to award the Airport Insurance to the low bid from AIG in the amount of \$5,000.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Fire Department Insurance Renewal

Councilman Miller made a motion to renew the Accident Policy with The Hartford in the amount of \$8,768.00 and renew the Property/Casualty Policy with McNeil in the amount of \$10,182.00. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Workers Comp, Vehicle & Accident RFP

Mayor Coleburn said VRSA has recommended waiting to bid this out after the first of the year. Manager Vannoorbeeck said VRSA would be able to look at a full year of losses after the first of the year.

Health Insurance

Manager Vannoorbeeck said staff recommended to the Committee to wait another year. Finance Director Hardy said prices were compared to the State in FY19.

Mayor Coleburn said the Town allows Town retirees to remain on the Town's insurance plan. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the retirees pay 100% of the premiums. He believed the overall Policy was higher because we do allow retirees to stay on the Plan.

Finance Director Hardy said the retirees pay a Supplemental Plan of \$200.00 a month. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Council is allowed to be on the Town's Health Insurance Plan.

Councilman Nash said the retiree insurance needs to be looked at when being bid out.

2. Health & Ordinance - met 11-1-22 - minutes included in November's Council Packet

Utilities – Payment Agreements & Extensions

Mayor Coleburn said he learned from reading the Packet, that there are only 13 people on the Budget Plan.

Treasurer Harris said currently customers can get (2) 10 day extensions within a twelve month period. She said they were getting lots of payment agreements now, so she was asking for a cap on this. She recommended (3) 15 day Payment Agreements within a twelve month period. She said with Payment Agreements the customer has to come into the office to sign it. She said if the customer does not uphold the first Agreement, they cannot get another one for twelve months.

Councilman Nash made a motion to adopt the Payment Agreement Policy for Utilities as presented, effective immediately.

Councilman Miller asked how customers will know about this. Treasurer Harris replied, when a customer signs up for service, they are given a copy of all utility policies. A member from the audience asked to post the Policy on the website.

Councilwoman Williams clarified this Policy starts immediately, but does not affect previous Payment Agreements.

The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mr. Michael Bagley said when Mr. Green was on Council, he and Mr. Green went back and forth about the Budget Plan. He said even now, he did not think the Budget Plan was published and presented to the people for them to understand. He believes a Budget Plan helps customers. Councilman Allman said that is probably correct, but the Utility Department is running into a problem with the current software provider, they are not capable of doing it effectively. Councilman Nash added there was a staffing issue.

Councilman Nash said in the next year, we hope to have a new accounting system that would make the process easier.

Mr. Bagley said we need to keep the people informed, and we do not do that effectively.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Mr. Chris Page said if most people are paying the extension and the rate is low, what's the problem with giving extensions, they are paying the late fees and interest. Councilman Nash said what would be the point of a due date then.

Treasurer Harris said there are some people that just need an extension for a few days, but others say they need until December for cut offs in October. She said when the Town relies on the funds, it makes it hard when the Town is receiving payments in December for August and September bills.

Councilman Allman said from the day you get your bill, you have 45 days to pay it, plus 10 days and you can do that 5 out of the 12 bills in a year.

Treasurer Harris said she has spoken with Southside Electric and Dominion and they are capped on extensions and payment agreements.

Transition Solutions – Annexation Request

Clerk Daniel said this request was tabled.

Mayor Coleburn said he gets branded as anti-annexation. He urged this Council and the next to consider if Mr. Paul wants to increase the number of housing units, and he commended his Program, but what will be key for the Board of Supervisors to agree on, is if you are a neighbor, do you want that many more neighbors next to you than County statute allows.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. Paul wants the Town to assist him in activities and programs.

Mayor Coleburn said not as much as this Council, but how his neighbors feel will be important. He said this Program is transitioning people back from incarceration, and not everybody is going to be thrilled about that.

3. Account & Finance - met 11-15-22 - minutes included in November's Council Packet

Investments

Mayor Coleburn said the Town who could barely make payroll or pay vendors now has \$4 Million to invest. He said Citizens Bank has offered an option of Treasury Bonds with a rate of roughly 4.375%, and backed by the US Treasury, so it is safe. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the actual rate would be based on the day they are purchased.

Councilman Nash said the Committee discussed \$1 Million in Treasury Bonds for six months, \$1 Million for twelve months and \$2 Million for two years.

Mayor Coleburn said the FED will meet in December and raise rates again, he suggested waiting until then before proceeding.

Councilman Nash said by the amounts being invested, Manager Vannoorbeeck believed it would be \$160,000.00 a year.

Councilman Nash made a motion to put \$1 Million in Treasury Bonds for six months, \$1 Million for twelve months and \$2 Million for two years, but wait until December after the Treasury meets.

Mayor Coleburn advised he is on the Board for Citizens Bank & Trust.

The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Manager Vannoorbeeck said of the \$4 Million, \$3.7 is undesignated reserves, and the difference is Meter Deposits and Perpetual Care. He said in designated reserves there is \$3.66 Million, and still owe ourselves \$40,000.00 from the pandemic, and are waiting on the FEMA contribution.

Budget Billing

Councilman Nash said the Committee recommended discontinuing Budget Billing effective January 1, 2023. He said the reason is because the Town's software, Bright, is incapable and there have been mishaps.

Mayor Coleburn asked if it would be brought back when the Town gets new software. Councilman Nash replied, absolutely. He said the Town was already starting to budget for new software, it is around \$160,000.00.

Councilman Nash made a motion to discontinue Budget Billing, effective January 1, 2023, and revisit Budget Billing once new software is installed. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Agency Funding Program

Mayor Coleburn said the Committee discussed anyone during the year that gets funding from the Town for events, requests have to be in by March 1st.

Councilman Nash said one of the stipulations is to limit and be more savvy with taxpayer dollars, and should be a 501c3 organization, or a non-profit organization. He said the State Code says you cannot give to those that are not non-profit.

Mayor Coleburn asked if courtesy calls could be made. Finance Director Hardy said letters would be sent in December.

Councilman Nash said Agency Funding would be a line item, but there would still be the Council Discretionary Fund for smaller donations.

Mayor Coleburn said this would provide more structure to the Budget.

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

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

PCA Adjustment

Manager Vannoorbeeck said it is going to cost more to heat your house this year because of the Fuel Adjustment Charge. He said the Fuel Adjustment has gone up by 50% and is just a mid-year adjustment.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said last year during Budget there was a \$459,000.00 True Up. He said the Town has collected all but \$88,000.00 in cash over the past twelve months, with the \$88,000.00 being a credit from VMEA. He said VMEA won a case against Virginia Power, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ruled in VMEA's favor.

Councilman Nash said the question is how do we get the money back to the citizens. He said the three options are (1) an eight month credit, which would take the average amount down by \$8.00, (2) a nine month credit, which both will have to be reevaluated because of the Fuel Adjustment or (3) equalize it and pay the same. He said he likes the eight month credit, let's give it back and lower the credit now.

Councilman Allman said the downside with the eight month credit, on month nine there is no more credit and an increase at the same time.

Councilman Nash said we need to educate the people about the eight month credit, and after that it will go up.

Councilwoman Williams suggested posting something in the lobby when they are paying their bills. Someone from the audience suggested putting a letter with the bill.

Councilman Nash said with the credit for eight months, the current rate for the Power Cost Adjustment is \$24.28 and we will drop it to \$18.20, but after the eight months it could possibly go up to \$35.28.

Councilman Nash made a motion to provide an eight month credit to citizens pertaining to the Power Cost Adjustment, which is reimbursing the Town for previous monies collected in the amount of \$459,000.00. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

CONSENT AGENDA:

There was nothing for the Consent Agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Nottoway School Building Agreement

Manager Vannoorbeeck said enclosed is the Agreement from the School Board as far as tearing down the one story School Building. He said there were some changes, to include changing the tear down date to January 2024, which was in a motion.

Councilman Allman said last time this was discussed we talked about meeting with the School Board to see if they would surplus the property to the Town. He said if the Town tears the building down, at least the taxpayers are getting the property.

Mayor Coleburn said the School Board has declared the building obsolete. He said if they declare it surplus, then it goes to the Board of Supervisors.

Councilman Allman said he would entertain meeting with the County to discuss if the School Board would surplus the property with the intention of the property coming to the citizens of Blackstone for recreation. Councilman Nash said the Town has proven themselves that we are willing to put money into recreation over there. Manager Vannoorbeeck said if the Town wants the property, that is the way to do it.

Mayor Coleburn said they are having a joint meeting in December or January, and that might be an opportunity to have our School Board Representative approach the topic.

Councilman Nash said he liked Councilman Allman's idea, if we are tearing a building down, it should be on the Town's property, not the County's.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he did not know if the Town should jump into getting the whole property, for now just the property where the one story building sits. He said the whole property would be taking on a liability for the two story building. He suggested trying to get the recreation complex property and the lot where the one story building sits. He did not believe this would include the basketball courts, because Harris Street would be the delineation.

Mayor Coleburn said the Town signed the lease with the County in 2007 for the recreational complex.

Councilman Nash said there still needs to be a plan for the two story building and Ms. Yvonne Wilson's building.

Councilman Miller said Ms. Wilson does need a new building, but the shape the building is in, why are we putting \$10,000.00 in the building.

Councilwoman Scott asked what the Town is getting out of this. She believed the School Board was holding all the cards, they get to dictate what we can do. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town is getting rid of blight. He said the Town holds all the cards, because the buildings are so dilapidated. He said we get to clean up a mess in the community.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town could declare the property blighted, and take it from the School Board, just like we did on Oak Street.

Mayor Coleburn believed either party could abandon the Lease Agreement with 30 days notice, and then the School Board would have to maintain the property.

Mayor Coleburn said Ms. Wilson could become a tenant at the Armory. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed the cafeteria building next to the two story building might be the more logical plan for Ms. Wilson's building.

Mayor Coleburn said by Common Consent, have Manager Vannoorbeeck talk to Dr. Grimes and Madame Chair Shekleton, about tearing down the one story building. He said if the people of Blackstone are going to pay to demolish a building, it should be on the people of Blackstone's property.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town's Lease Agreement included in the packet, states that the Town is responsible for routine maintenance, but does not include a roof on an abandoned structure. He said when this was brought up previously, there was a letter prepared by Mr. Mike O'Yorke saying the Town was not responsible for the roof.

2. Cox Road Waterline

Mayor Coleburn said the Board voted last night, after 3.5 years, to let Blackstone run a waterline down Cox Road, stopping at Military Road. He said they also gave Blackstone the option on charging connection fees, and set rates as necessary. He said the bad news is because it has been 3.5 years and inflation, the \$1.3 Million waterline is now \$3.8 Million. He said meanwhile Blackstone is having conversations with the western end of the County possibly serving them, so it may not be a high priority item.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said more importantly, the County declined to include mandatory connections, the Town could run a \$3.8 Million waterline, and serve one house. Mayor Coleburn said we need clarification on that. Councilman Nash said even with mandatory connections, it will still be difficult to foot the bill.

Mayor Coleburn thought what would make this project easier is continuing the waterline on Cox Road to the lumber mills, which uses roughly 16,000 gallons of water a day, which would have taken away the necessity of mandating connections. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we had approached the County about paying for that portion, and that was not included in the motion.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we cannot do the project, to include borrowing money, without a mandatory connection.

Councilman Allman believed everybody needs clean water, but the Town is solving a County problem with Blackstone funds. He said the County needs to participate with funds.

Mayor Coleburn suggested we go to the next Board of Supervisor's meeting and ask for the record, is the County not allowing the Town to mandate connections, and no County funds are being provided.

3. Award Bid – 415 Oak Street – Asbestos Abatement

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town now owns 415 Oak Street. He said Rugby Environmental was the low bid in the amount of \$6,051.00 for asbestos abatement.

Councilman Nash made a motion to award the asbestos abatement bid to Rugby Environmental in the amount of \$6,051.00 for 415 Oak Street. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Coleburn asked if Gilmore Environmental submitted a bid. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, they are not abatement, but more a consultant.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

4. Award Bid – N. West Avenue Ditch

Mayor Coleburn said the low bid for this ditch work came in at \$92,700.00. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the entire ditch was on private property. He said he received executed drainage easements from four property owners.

Councilwoman Jones made a motion to award the low bid for the ditch work on N. West Avenue to S. Walker Construction in the amount of \$92,700.00, and accept the easements. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Councilman Nash said we discussed previously, only doing half the project, because technically any water coming from N. West Avenue is only affecting Mr. Robert Evans' property.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this price includes from Sam Fitzgerald's property to Mr. Aaron Somerville, then under the street to Mr. Evans' property.

Mayor Coleburn reminded Council that we told Mr. Armes that his ditch would be done before June 30th of next year. Clerk Daniel clarified, if funds were available.

Clerk Daniel believed Council voted on a two year moratorium for ditches after Mr. Armes' ditch is completed.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said \$100,000.00 was already set aside for the N. West Avenue ditch project.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said one of the property owners still owes the Town money. He said he has asked this be paid before the work starts, but to date it has not been paid. He said this property owner owes \$178.00 for burying underground electric.

Councilman Allman said we are about to spend \$92,000.00, which is \$27.00 per meter from citizens. Mayor Coleburn believed there were 2,200 electric meters.

Councilwoman Williams said this subject was already voted on, so we cannot go back and reverse it, so let's move forward.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Nash made a motion that before work begins on the N. West Avenue ditch, one of the property owners involved must pay the \$178.00 owed to the Town. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

ON-GOING PROJECTS:

1. Dilapidated Buildings

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he was requesting authorization to file legal proceedings against Mr. Curtis Clark, who owns 806 Falls Street. He said the property has been condemned and Mr. Clark had signed an Indemnity Agreement, but never had it notarized. He said the legal proceedings would have a judge act on the condemnation, and allow the Town to demolish the structure.

Councilman Nash made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to move forward with legal proceedings for 806 Falls Street for condemnation. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had solicited bids for the demolition of 415 Oak Street, and would be presented to Council in December.

Councilman Nash said let's make sure the Town is compensated for this work, and start the solicitation for real estate services.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he did not want to sell it to someone and find out it is going to sit vacant. He said there needs to be a Performance Agreement that there will be a single family home of a certain size built within a time frame.

Councilman Nash said the lot is not going to be worth what the Town's expenses will be in it. He said if there is a neighbor that wants to buy it to keep someone from building there, and is willing to pay the full price of the money the Town has in it, then absolutely we should sell it. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he disagreed, that was not the purpose of doing this process. Councilman Nash said the purpose is to clean the neighborhood up. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the ultimate reason is for community development. Councilman Nash did not believe someone was going to pay \$30,000.00 for a vacant lot in Blackstone, and build a new home.

2. Meals Tax / Lodging Tax

Mayor Coleburn said there were 2 additional outstanding Meals Tax and 8 outstanding Lodging Tax this month.

Treasurer Harris said they searched Air BNBs in Blackstone and found more and more are opening. She said they may not technically be delinquent; some may not have stayed 30 days or less. She said last week she sent out a mass notice with the Policy and State Code.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this includes Patriot Square and Academy Square, and have found they have not had students staying less than 30 days. He added it is sales tax exempt if a government card is used.

Mayor Coleburn asked if taxes were being paid at the Blackstone Inn. Treasurer Harris replied, not yet. Manager Vannoorbeeck said there would be a significant check coming for the month of October.

Councilman Nash asked if Air BNBs were allowed in certain residential areas. Manager Vannoorbeeck said currently we don't have anything from preventing them.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said tonight he was going to ask for authorization to work with someone like Community Planning Partners on Gaming Machines, Marijuana Consumption and Sales, Election Signs and Air BNBs.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mrs. Christine Hasbrouck first informed him about Air BNBs in Blackstone.

Councilman Nash said in some localities Air BNB automatically collects, how do we do that in Blackstone. Treasurer Harris believed that was something the business owners had to set up themselves.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked for authorization to solicit bids, and perhaps have a committee screen the applications. He said zoning modifications would be recommended by the Planning Commission.

Councilman Allman asked about VML, they may have sample ordinances.

Mayor Coleburn said Manager Vannoorbeeck mentioned marijuana consumption, and Blackstone has a Specialized Business District, which is the Food Lion and Walmart Shopping Centers. Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is not included anywhere in our Ordinances, and it needs to be included.

Councilman Nash made a motion to authorize Manager Vannoorbeeck to advertise for services to help update the Town's Ordinances. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Mayor Coleburn believed there were a lot of areas in Blackstone that are zoned R2, but should be zoned R1, for example Dr. Bradshaw and Mrs. Jenny Davis Bunn's property, why is that zoned R2. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the property across the street is zoned Public and Open Space.

Mayor Coleburn said those houses are single family, and it should be R1. He said what your land is zoned is very important.

Councilman Nash asked about the 2 outstanding Meals Tax, how far behind are they. Treasurer Harris replied, one is four months, and she was told they were out of business, but this business had been sent to TACS. She said the other business was just one month behind.

3. Street Improvement Projects

Mayor Coleburn said we were still waiting on the one block of parking spaces to be striped downtown.

Councilman Nash asked if the company had been paid in full. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, no.

4. Wrigglesworth Sports Complex / TAP 21

There was nothing to report.

5. East End Neighborhood Project

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked for authorization to seek bids for curb and gutter. He said the paving portion had already been awarded for next year.

Councilman Miller made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to seek bids for curb and gutter in the East End. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

6. Taylor Bottom Block Grant

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the PER was done. He said the water and sewer replacement was very expensive, almost \$5 Million. He said this could cost more than the East End Project for utilities. He hoped there would be more homes by what the Town was trying to accomplish.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said with the cost at roughly \$5 Million, maybe this project will just be water, with curb and gutter and no sewer.

7. Armory

Manager Vannoorbeeck said asbestos bids would be presented to Council in December. He said he and Community Development Specialist Bryant would be talking with the architect tomorrow. He said the underground storage tank was out for bid.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we await responses from DHCD and the Tobacco Commission on grants. He said the Town is requesting \$1 Million from DHCD and \$581,000.00 from the Tobacco Commission.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked for authorization to submit a Rural Business Enterprise Grant to USDA in the amount of \$250,000.00 for kitchen equipment and technology improvements.

Councilman Nash made a motion to authorize the Town to submit a Rural Business Enterprise Grant to USDA in the amount of \$250,000.00 for kitchen equipment and technology improvements. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there would be no additional match for this grant.

8. Weatherization

Manager Vannoorbeeck said 916 Falls Street was demolished, and under roof.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked for authorization to seek bids for renovations on a home on Patterson Street. He said this is the same property that we rejected bids for the tree removal. He said he did receive from the one bidder a modified price to take the tree down and not grind the stump for \$7,500.00. He believed this needed to be rebid, because Council already rejected the first bid.

Councilman Miller made a motion to authorize seeking bids for the renovation of a home on Patterson Street, using the County's \$50,000.00 Weatherization Funds. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he did know of a grant the Town could apply for with one single home. Mayor Coleburn said this is the home a tree fell on over two years ago.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this house has been declared blighted. He said it creates a problem because the house is occupied. He suggested we contact the County because they were still sitting on Weatherization Funds, and ask for up to \$100,000.00 to build a new home, with the County being the recipients of the payments. He believed you could spend as much renovating the house, as building a new one.

Councilwoman Williams asked if we would do this for everybody else. She believed it was discussed previously that the house on S. Main Street had an owner.

Councilwoman Jones said there is nothing wrong with this, but we have to be fair. She said when she came on Council, Mr. Boogie Tucker's house was in poor condition, and it was looked at as he had drunks hanging out there, she said we should not have looked at it like that. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the house on S. Main Street would not be his first choice, maybe the 50th. He said when we went to Mr. Tucker's house, he would curse me and ask him to leave.

Mayor Coleburn said adjoining property owners are watching their property value decline.

Councilman Nash said Councilman Miller has been seeing a lot of the good graces of the Town with housing rehabs in the East End, but it needs to be spread out.

Mayor Coleburn said there might should be a list, because right now, there is no rhyme or reason. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he was trying to follow instructions and this was his only plan.

Mr. Green asked about the current liens, are they being satisfied. Manager Vannoorbeeck said there might have to be a Special Warranty Deed to eliminate liens.

Councilman Nash made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to contact Nottoway County about additional Program Income Funds.

Councilman Nash said he would rather see the funds be used to help a family. Councilman Allman asked if these funds would be designated. Councilman Nash said he would be asking for these funds for the house on S. Main Street.

Councilwoman Jones asked if there were any other houses on the list before this one, because we need to be fair. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes, 10-15 houses.

Mayor Coleburn said this house on S. Main Street was declared blighted by Council, which makes it different.

Councilman Nash said he did not know why this would not be a priority, as the Mayor said, it is on our Main Street. Councilwoman Jones said Mr. Boogie Tucker's house was on Main Street.

Councilman Miller seconded the motion.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Utility Write Offs

Clerk Daniel said Treasurer Harris and staff have done more extensive research and found more deceased than previously reported. She asked if this could be voted on next month.

2. Airport Grant

Mayor Coleburn said the Town has been approved for \$45,200.00 in Grant Funds from the Department of Aviation, with the Town's match being \$11,300.00.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this grant is just for design work to improve lighting at the Airport.

Councilman Allman made a motion to accept the grant funds in the amount of \$45,200.00, with the Town's portion being \$11,300.00 for design work to improve lighting at the Airport, and to authorize execution of the contract documents. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Councilman Nash asked where the Town's match would come from. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, fueling.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

3. 2023 Council Meeting Schedule

Clerk Daniel said these dates are approved every year, with January, February and June being on the fourth Mondays each year, instead of the regular third Mondays.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the 2023 Council Meeting Schedule as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

4. 2023 Holiday Schedule

Mayor Coleburn said there were 14 days being requested for 2023.

Clerk Daniel presented the holidays the State had approved.

Councilman Nash wanted to see the day after Christmas be a holiday, he likes family to be together during Christmas. He suggested removing Columbus Day and adding it to the day after Christmas. Manager Vannoorbeeck questioned Election Day; he said it created trash issues.

Mayor Coleburn asked if there would be trash issues the day after Christmas next year. Councilman Nash said it will be the same issues as this week for Thanksgiving.

Councilwoman Williams said being off the day after Christmas, December 26th, residents will be complaining about trash overflowing. Councilwoman Jones suggested eliminating Columbus Day because kids are out of school on Veterans Day.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the 2023 holidays as presented, but remove Columbus Day and add December 26th. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Councilwoman Williams suggested asking staff what their preference is. Mayor Coleburn asked to poll the department heads.

Clerk Daniel said she would reach out to department heads and report back next month.

5. Christmas Bonuses – Ordinance

Mayor Coleburn said full time employees get \$200.00 each, part-time gets \$100.00 each, \$50.00 for the firemen and \$25.00 for the junior firemen. He said these total \$18,150.00 and are included in the Budget.

Councilman Miller made a motion to adopt the Christmas Bonus Ordinance as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

6. Fire Call Disbursements

Mayor Coleburn said this used to be called the Clothing Allowance. He said this totals \$28,806.00 and is in the Budget. Councilman Nash said this is more of an incentive to run more calls.

Councilman Miller made a motion to approve the Fire Call Disbursements in the amount of \$28,806.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

COMMITTEE REFERRAL:

1. VA 250 Marketing Leverage Program

Mr. Justin Burns, who is in the audience, is a local volunteer and already talking about the 250th anniversary of our Country, which is in 2026. He said there is a group called the Virginia 250, and Nottoway County is going to have a Committee headed by the Nottoway Historical Association. He said he would like Mr. Burns to serve, along with DBi, a member or 2 of Council, and the Chamber of Commerce. He said the Town has an 18th Century Building and the Carriage Museum that are naturals.

Councilman Allman agreed to be the Council representative.

2. Auditing Services Bids

Mayor Coleburn referred auditing services and leases to the Account & Finance Committee.

MAYORS MINUTE:

Mayor Coleburn congratulated the new members of Council and said to those of us departing, we will still keep in touch.

POLICE REPORT:

There was nothing to report.

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Mr. Michael Bagley said he has terrible radio reception, and believed some years ago the Town talked about bringing airways closer to the ground. Councilman Nash said there was supposed to be a satellite near Dr. Bradshaw's office. He said this was supposed to help with being blocked downtown by the buildings. He believed it was more for WIFI and cell phones.

Councilman Nash believed the Bobcat Radio Station has increased their wattage, and is makes it harder to get any other radio frequency.

Mayor Coleburn asked if the water tower on Church Street had Verizon antennas to help with 5G. Manager Vannoorbeeck said yes there are antennas, but was not sure about 5G. He believed there were antennas on the towers on N. West Avenue and Pickett.

Mayor Coleburn told Mr. Bagley what he was referring to, might be something for the FCC to look into.

CLOSED SESSION:

Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711

- 5/ Prospective Business or Industry Town Square
- 1/ Personnel Administration
- 7/ Acquisition of Real Property

Councilman Nash 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, 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 Allman.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Mayor Coleburn asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Councilwoman Scott made a motion to authorize Manager Vannoorbeeck to issue an RFP, due by the end of December for making the Town Square a concert event, family gathering and more programmed activity type venue, but notifying DBi and the Chamber of Commerce first. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Jones.

Mayor Coleburn asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Coleburn adjourned this meeting at 10:59 p.m.

MAYOR

OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

December 19,2022 APPROVED AND ADOPTED

OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA