

Minutes of a regular meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Marion, Virginia held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building on March 4, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Vice-Mayor Dr. Jim Gates, Jim Barker, Suzanne Jennings, Larry Carter, Tricia Spencer, Bill Weaver, and Avery Cornett Council Members; Town Manager Bill Rush, Director of Human Resources/Deputy Clerk Samantha White, I.T./Engineering Director Todd Long, Community & Economic Development Director Ken Heath, Police Chief John Clair, Police Lieutenant Rusty Hamm, Fire/EMS Chief Dickie Keesling, Assistant Town Manager Billy Hamm, Town Attorney Mark Fenyk, Stephanie Portor-Nichols Smyth County News Representative.

**ABSENT:** Mayor David Helms.

**VISITORS:** Alex Taschereau, Jim Talley, April Keesling, Brett Miller, Charles Wassum, David Fulton, Delphia Little, Dianne Eller, Katie Perkins, Tracy Thompson, Sam & Courtney Widener, Bob Brandenburg, Greg Tucker, Paula & WJ Clark, Peter Bruzzo, Bucky Blevins, Dan Scott, Valerie Mutter, Dave Matney, Hunter Atwell, and Hannah Hayes.

**INVOCATION/PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:** Chief Clair rendered the invocation. Vice-Mayor Dr. Gates led the Pledge to the Flag.

**MINUTES:** Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Spencer and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting February 20, 2024 were approved as written. Messrs Gates, Barker, Jennings, Spencer, Carter, Weaver, and Cornett voted affirmatively.

**AGENDA:** Upon motion of Mr. Cornett, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the agenda was approved with the addition of Tracy Thompson, David Fulton, and Katie Perkins under Public Presentation and Cemetery Maintenance under Mr. Rush.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATION:** Vice-Mayor Dr. Gates presented David Matney a resolution in honor of his significant contributions to the Town over his 33 years of service.

Dan Scott presented his donation of a Marquetry piece of Town Hall to Town Council.

Tracy Thompson, Lincoln Theatre Director, provided a financial update of the Theatre. Mrs. Jennings thanked Mrs. Thompson for her years as director of the Theatre, noting that she will resign later this month. Bob Watkins has been hired to replace Tracy Thompson as Lincoln Theatre Director.

David Fulton expressed his concern about animal control inside the Town limits. He asked if the Town has ordinances regarding a leash law.

Katie Perkins, partial owner of 314 Pearl Ave, stated her displeasure with the Town's property abatement policies. Mrs. Perkins did not feel the use of Town staff, the signage, and the notification period were reasonable.

Bob Brandenburg, Bostic-Tucker, presented the FY 2023 Audit Report. He thanked Town staff for a smooth audit process.

Mr. Rush announced there will be a public hearing on March 5th for Phase VII Sewer C-515754.

Mr. Cornett addressed Mrs. Perkins' concerns regarding the abatement on Pearl Ave. Mr. Rush stated that Town staff tried to exhaust all measures before a Town crew went to clean up the property. Mr. Long explained Town policy on the abatement process. Bucky Blevins, Commonwealth Attorney, commended Flave Davis and Todd Long on how well they work with citizens, treating them with kindness and respect.

Mrs. Jennings announced a groundbreaking ceremony for the Smyth County Behavioral Health Campus Expansion of Mount Rogers Community Services on May 14, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Cornett, and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, Mr. Rush will advertise an RFP for mowing services at Round Hill Cemetery.

Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Weaver, and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, Mr. Rush and Town staff will create a list of renovation requests for Town Hall that include interior and exterior upgrades and repairs.

Ms. Spencer congratulated Smyth County Tourism on winning three awards for their 2023 promotional videos.

Mr. Barker is planning Arbor Day activities for April 22, 2024.

Dr. Gates reminded everyone that national primaries will be held at the Town Recreation Department and Police Department tomorrow, March 5th.

Upon motion of Ms. Spencer, seconded by Mrs. Jennings, and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, Rusty Hamm was appointed Chief of Fire/EMS. Chief Hamm was sworn into office by Vice-Mayor Dr. Gates. Chief Hamm thanked everyone for the opportunity to serve. Chief Hamm recommended to Town Manager Bill Rush that Richard Keesling be hired as Deputy Chief of Fire/EMS. Mr. Rush made this recommendation to Council. Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mrs. Jennings, and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, Richard Keesling will be hired as Deputy Chief of Fire/EMS. Richard Keesling was sworn into office by Vice-Mayor Dr. Gates.

Mr. Heath announced that Administrative Assistant, Cyndi McCloskey, has resigned. Her last day will be March 11, 2024. Ellen Frazier will be working temporarily in a part-time position for the Community & Economic Development department.

Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mr. Barker, and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the request from Mount Rogers Community Services for the vacation of Cedar St was referred to Planning Commission.

Mr. Long noted there is a Board of Zoning Appeals meeting on March 6th at 5:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Mr. Long and Chris King are working toward a solution for recent email problems and are in the process of purchasing Office 365 for Town staff.

Chief Clair recently attended his first meeting as a member of the Mount Rogers Community Services Board. The Police Department's accreditation assessment has been scheduled for April 9-11, 2024.

Mr. Rush reminded Council there will be an EDA meeting on March 6th at noon at the Police Department conference room. Paving is all that remains on the cemetery upgrade project. McGill has started design work on the Callen Drive Recreation Park. Mike Sage has been hired as the new director of the wastewater treatment plant.

Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mr. Barker, and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, Mr. Rush will be the designated spokesperson for the Town on all VDOT projects.

Mr. Rush is reviewing the artist conception of Riverwalk Extension and estimates the cost to be around \$25,000.

Dr. Gates noted that a citizen attended the Water/Sewer Committee Meeting and asked the Town to review minimal usage charges to non-Town residents.

Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Carter and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 7:27p.m.

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Vice-Mayor

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Deputy Clerk