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 6, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Mayor David Helms, Vice-Mayor Dr. Jim Gates, Jim Barker, Tricia Spencer, Suzanne Jennings, Bill Weaver, Larry Carter and Avery Cornett Council Members; Town Manager Bill Rush, Assistant Town Manager Billy Hamm, Town Clerk Cindy Stanley, Town Attorney Mark Fenyk, Smyth County News Representative Stephanie Porter-Nichols; Police Chief John Clair, Police Lieutenant Rusty Hamm, Police Lieutenant Kevin Testerman, Fire Chief Richard Keesling and Director of Economic Development Ken Heath.

**ABSENT:** None.

**VISITORS:** Charles Hayden, Bradley Powers, Charles Harrington, Janene Walker, Philip McElraft, Michael Kravitz and Mary Lord.

**INVOCATION/PLEDGE TO THE FLAG:** Mr. Heath rendered the invocation. Mayor Helms led the Pledge to the Flag.

**MINUTES:** Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting held February 21, 2023 were approved as written. Messrs Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver, Carter and Cornett voted affirmatively.

**AGENDA:** Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Ms. Spencer and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the agenda was approved as distributed.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATION:** Bradley Powers, 1245 South Main Street, reported he is running for Commissioner of Revenue as Jeff Richardson is retiring.

Mr. Barker noted we received Tree City USA recognition again this year. Arbor Day will be set soon.

Ms. Spencer noted Amanda Livingston will be hosting a speaker in April to review the visitor study that was recently conducted. This will be at the Smyth County Board of Supervisors room at the county building on April 10, 2023 at 5:00 pm.

Mr. Cornett asked about signage to be placed at the traffic light at Wassona since the recent weather took that signal out of service.

Mayor Helms noted the next Memorial Day planning meeting will be tomorrow night at 6:30 pm at the VFW.

Mr. Fenyk noted the Drug Court Program Graduations are open back to the public.

Police Lieutenant Testerman reviewed the deer de-population program noting the goal of 55 deer was met. The Police Department is back up to fully operational staff. Some officers have expressed interest in wanting advanced first aid training. Officer of the Year Awards will be April 6, 2023 at the VFW. The Police Department will be hosting a Crisis Intervention training this year. Officer Eades will be speaking to the Senior Citizens regarding fraud and scams.

Police Lieutenant Rusty Hamm noted he is managing about 8 grants currently ranging from $4,700 to $216,000. The USDA Grant for Police Vehicles is close to being completed. He reviewed the need for upgraded computers and IT equipment at the Police Department. The department is working on a Norfolk Southern Grant for $5,000 in conjunction with Ring Cameras. There is also a regional grant in process for a Law Enforcement Mental Health App that has potential to reach approximately 800 users. The department is in the final stages of an $86,000 grant for Leadership Training.

Chief Keesling reported there were 208 Fire/EMS calls in February. The new hires are working out well.

Mr. Heath reviewed a VA Tourism Grant for a metal gateway sign over Highway 16. This came in extremely over budget and the funds were allowed to be reallocated to marketing. Student Government Day will be April 20, 2023. Mr. Heath reviewed a Digital Projection Project Proposal which may be funded by the PEG funds by cable franchise for technology upgrades. This would upgrade 2 sets of equipment, one of which would be owned by the town and loaned to local museums for recording programs and the other would be to upgrade technology in the council room and lobby’s in Town Hall. Mr. Heath noted this package would be less than $10,000. Mayor Helms asked if we could include the Police Department in that package and Mr. Rush noted that would be agreeable. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the technology upgrades discussed were approved using PEG Funds. Mr. Heath presented a Resolution for a grant for affordable housing. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Spencer and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Resolution Authorizing Participation in Community Investment Services Program of Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta was adopted. Mr. Heath reviewed a CDBG Application for Veterans and Affordable Housing. Mr. Rush noted there would be two Public Hearings required and the application deadline is June 1, 2023. The Town of Marion and the Marion Redevelopment Housing Authority would work together on this project with the MRHA administering the project. Mr. Harrington, MRHA, reviewed proposed development sites and noted the houses would be 1-2 bedroom units, handicap accessible. Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Cornett and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, authorization was granted for submittal of the CDBG application in support of this project.

Mr. Rush noted he is implementing a clear, written procedure for variance requests through the BZA. Mr. Fenyk stated the BZA is an independent board appointed by the judge. Mr. Barker represented the EDA at the most recent delinquent tax sale and was the successful bidder on 2 properties. Mr. Rush noted the war room group met at the Sewer Treatment Plant and spent several hours’ hands on, reviewing and prioritizing Phase 6, 7, and 8 Sewer projects. The Wassona traffic light went down this past weekend due to weather related events. Richardson Wayland contractor has been contacted. The signals will remain on flashing caution and flashing red until it can be replaced or repaired. Mr. Rush gave an update on the Park Blvd Drainage project. Mr. Rush reviewed the committee meetings schedule.

Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

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Mayor Clerk