

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 August 3, 2020 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, Town Clerk Cindy Stanley; Town Attorney Mark Fenyk (arrived late); Smyth County News Representative Stephanie Porter-Nichols; Police Chief John Clair; Assistant Recreation Director Jamie Hall; Economic Development Director Ken Heath and Economic Development Deputy Director Alexandra Veatch.

**ABSENT:** None.

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

**VISITORS:** Joe Naff, C. B. Gwyn, Cathy Cooper, Travon Brown, Tommy Crigger, Helen Meade, Michael Meade, Joshua Widener, Brad Mullins, Alexis George, Isabel Jacobi, Mike Edwards, Herbert Clay, Joey Carrico, Danielle Johnson, Misty Russell, Sabrina Meadows, Leigh George, Claude Heath, Terrance Parks, Claud Perkins, Stephanye Vaccarino, Julius Winebarger, Ryan Boone and Mike Albano.

**MINUTES:** Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting held July 20, 2020 were approved as written. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver, Carter and Cornett voted affirmatively.

**AGENDA:** Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Dr. Gates and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the agenda was approved as distributed with one addition for Mike Albano under public presentation.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:**

Mike Edwards gave an update on the airport. He also noted he will be resigning from the Airport Commission, as he is moving to Minnesota. He would like to recommend Cecil Hicks to fill his position. Mayor Helms and Mr. Heath expressed their appreciation for Mr. Edwards' contributions to our community. Mark Fenyk arrived. Upon motion of Ms. Spencer, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, Mr. Cecil Hicks was appointed as the Town's representative to the Airport Commission.

Herbert Clay presented the Resolution Establishing Unity Day. Mr. Clay noted he doesn't see a division of community as he is an attorney and a paramedic for Marion Fire/EMS and has spent time in many areas of the community. He noted Joey Carrico, Legal Aide Executive Director and Attorney, assisted with drafting this resolution. Mr. Carrico read the resolution into the record.

Travon Brown, 424 Pearl Avenue, noted there can't be true unity until racism is addressed. He believes change can be achieved by asking questions and seeking answers. He also expressed his concern for the need to advertise voting, especially to the young people.

Alexis George, 5105 Azalea Lane, noted racist comments aren't being addressed. An event has been scheduled for August 15, 2020 with the community to discuss and address issues.

Misty Russell, Bristol, VA, spoke in support of Travon Brown and to acknowledge there is a racism problem.

Sabrina Meadows has been a Smyth County resident since she was 5 years old. She stated she experiences racism here and the issues have never been about a statue, rather equality.

Mr. Clay noted he is a third generation freed slave and he understands racism. He hopes for Unity Day to be a starting point.

Ryan Boone, local business owner and 30 year Marion resident, noted the writers of the Unity Resolution draft should have reached out to the community for input. He would like to see the town host conversations with diverse groups.

Mr. Barker expressed his disappointment in our community showing so much hatred during both protests. He supports getting groups together to help something good come out of this.

Mrs. Jennings thanked the speakers. She supports getting the different groups together with council/staff/committees to work out the issues.

Mr. Rush noted he is available to anyone to work toward unity.

Mr. Cornett noted his wife is from Columbia, South America and he understands racism. He noted Unity Day would be a good starting point. Mr. Cornett made a motion to accept the Resolution Establishing Unity Day.

Mayor Helms noted until he met with Nolan Wolfe at Mt Zion, he did not realize the issues. He expressed his appreciation for everyone's thoughts. Mayor Helms acknowledged the motion on the floor and called for a second, with no second on the motion, the motion dies. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Cornett and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the leaders of these groups and staff will begin the conversations and draft a plan to move forward with unity. Mayor Helms noted several citizens expressed interest in the meeting tonight, however they are uncomfortable attending during the pandemic. He noted we may need to meet when more attendance is allowed due to the interest concerning this issue.

Mike Albano, 1028 Robinhood Drive, gave an update on the Futsol Pitch Proposal. He asked for council to reconsider the Futsol Pitch at RiverBend Park tennis courts. He noted there will be fundraising for the project and the town will not incur any costs. He noted the tiles for the base are available and ready for construction to begin. Mr. Rush reported he teleconferenced with Rob Andrews, President of Futsol USA, and learned this is the technical side of teaching soccer. The composite base can be installed, posts removed and gauge interest without a huge commitment. Dr. Gates noted immediate play would be determined by the Governor's guidelines on organized sports and social distancing. Mr. Hall, Recreation Director, noted the parks are being used more than ever. Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mrs.

Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Futsol Pitch will move forward at the RiverBend Park location with the Albano Soccer Foundation working with the Recreation Department to bring this to fruition.

Brad Mullins, 263 Corbin Drive Chilhowie, owner of Tasty Dawgs Catering reviewed some issues with locations for his mobile food vendor business. He proposed approval for allowing him to use the road to the East Chilhowie Street bridge. He would like to find a solution to be able to continue his business in Marion. Discussion ensued with the Town Attorney reviewing the process of allowing public bids. Dr. Gates reviewed a proposal for use of the town pool parking lot for mobile vendors since the pool is closed for the remainder of the year. Mr. Rush would like to draft a set of guidelines that is fair for all. Upon motion of Mr. Cornett, seconded by Mr. Barker and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the mobile vendor location issue was referred to the Community and Economic Development Committee for a recommendation at the next meeting.

Mr. Barker reported he has been monitoring Marion Fire/EMS the last 6 weeks and in June there were 181 calls and in July there were 227 calls.

Mayor Helms reported the Economic Development Department is keeping everyone aware of the Governor's orders. A Blue Ridge Job Corps report was distributed, noting the new Director is Mr. Randall.

Mr. Fenyk reported the Sewer Treatment Plant proposal for DEQ was presented to Dave Matney.

Chief Clair noted the JEPC will host an event at the RiverBend Amphitheatre on August 15, 2020.

Mr. Heath noted his department continues to look at the fall calendar of events, considering a Pop Up class in September or October.

Mrs. Veatch reviewed grants the department is working on.

Mr. Rush noted the water leak study started Sunday night. He reviewed Phase V Water application progress. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Dr. Gates and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, a public hearing will be set for September 7, 2020 for Phase V Water. Mr. Rush noted the town will be receiving a second round of Cares Act Money. A completed survey about how each locality intends to spend the funds must be submitted by 5:00 pm Friday, August 7, 2020. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Dr. Gates and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, a Finance Committee meeting will be set for this Wednesday at noon to compile the list of acceptable items to submit for Cares Act Funding. Council will need to authorize 3 people to sign the survey. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Town Clerk, Cindy Stanley, the highest elected official, Mayor Helms and the highest appointed official, Bill Rush are authorized to sign the survey for the Cares Act Funds.

Upon motion, duly seconded and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 pm.

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Mayor

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Clerk