

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 May 18, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Mayor David Helms, Vice-Mayor Dr. Jim Gates, Jim Barker, Tricia Spencer, Suzanne Jennings, Bill Weaver and Larry Carter Council Members; Town Manager Bill Rush, Town Clerk Cindy Stanley; Town Attorney Mark Fenyk; Smyth County News Representative Stephanie Porter-Nichols; Police Chief John Clair; Purchasing Agent/Fire Chief Billy Hamm; Assistant Town Manager/Town Engineer Cecil Hicks; Economic Development Director Ken Heath and Economic Development Deputy Director Alexandra Veatch.

**ABSENT:** Avery Cornett.

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

**VISITORS:** Joe Naff, Ralph Price, Bob Valentine, Michael Hall, Mike Guy, Chris Saufley and Rick Romans.

**MINUTES:** Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting held April 20, 2020 were approved as written. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver and Carter voted affirmatively.

**AGENDA:** Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the agenda was approved as distributed.

**PUBLIC HEARING DEQ FUNDING PHASE V SEWER:** Mr. Rush reviewed the Authorizing Resolution for DEQ. Phase V Sewer total is \$657,621 with principle forgiveness of \$94,563 and loan portion is \$563,637 at ½% interest for 25 years. Mayor Helms opened the Public Hearing. With no public comments Mayor Helms closed the Public Hearing. Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the Resolution Authorizing the Issuance and Sale of a General Obligation and Water and Sewer Revenue Bond of the Town of Marion in an amount not to exceed \$563,637 and providing for the form, details and payment of the Bond was adopted.

**The roll call vote was as follows:**

Mr. Barker	AYE
Mr. Carter	AYE
Mr. Weaver	AYE
Mrs. Jennings	AYE
Ms. Spencer	AYE
Dr. Gates	AYE

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:** Ralph Price spoke about tomorrow's council elections. Mr. Price asked the three candidates for re-election how many years they had been on council and why they wanted to be re-elected. Dr. Gates has served 28 years, he enjoys serving, wants to continue being involved in projects and feels he is effective. Mr. Weaver has served 10 years, likes being involved in the

procurement for projects and enjoys giving back to the community. Mr. Carter has served 8 years, he is a people person and enjoys serving.

Mike Guy, 904 Hollow Road, distributed one page of comments regarding the Golf Course. He noted approximately 50 to 60 golfers have signed memberships with other course since the April 23, 2020 restructure. Mr. Guys stated the fixed costs account for vast amount of the expenditures and the value of the membership is underestimated. He is asking for the town to reinstate memberships.

Rick Romans expressed his opinion that the course is not worth \$35 for weekday play and \$45 for weekend play. He noted he has paid his membership dues and not played for several months at a time. Ms. Spencer and Mrs. Jennings would like to review the restructure.

Joe Naff, 148 Countryside Drive, asked why the memberships were stopped. Mr. Rush noted since 2012 the town has tried many different options while continuing to operate at a loss, with a budgeted loss of \$179,000 this year. With a restructure and closing the course for 4 months during the winter and reducing expenditures, we may be able to mitigate that loss considerably. Mr. Naff noted he has been against the town owning the Golf Course from day one. Having been involved with the Golf Course as semi-privately owned, Mr. Naff recognizes it will not make money.

Bob Valentine, Chilhowie, asked if input was received from the Golf Advisory Committee. Mr. Rush noted the core services are water, sewer, garbage, Police, Fire and EMS. The restructure was a council decision. Mr. Valentine wants to present ideas to help reduce the losses at a later meeting. Discussion ensued. Mr. Rush noted this has been a tough and controversial decision.

Michael Hall thanked the Economic Development Department for helping to implement the outside dining spaces. Mr. Hall expressed concern that we might be missing the market to encourage youth participation in golf. He suggested focusing on the younger population over all aspects. Mr. Naff noted it requires 375 to 400 members to breakeven.

Mayor Helms expressed his disappointment in the golf members bailing when the town had to make changes, when the town had provided cheap golf for 8 years. Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, a committee meeting will be scheduled to include the Golf Advisory committee and the Recreation Committee with a recommendation to be presented at next council meeting.

Mike Albano, 228 Robinhood Drive, presented a Mini Pitch Soccer Proposal. Mr. Albano noted the cost estimate is \$45,000 and the Eric Albano Soccer Foundation will do fundraisers for financial support. The proposal includes utilizing one of the town's underused tennis courts and working with the Recreation Department to establish leagues and tournaments. Mrs. Veatch noted this would boost/enhance the recreation program and would be a good use of the facility. Discussion ensued about the sturdiness of the structure and possible locations, RiverBend Park or Chatham Hill tennis facility. Upon motion of Mr. Barker, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, Mr. Albano's Mini Pitch Soccer Proposal was accepted.

Dr. Gates reported the Finance Committee met and the 2020-2021 Proposed Budget has been distributed to council. Mr. Carter questioned the merit raise being included in the proposed budget and discussion ensued. Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, a public hearing on the Proposed 2020-2021 budget will be scheduled for June 15, 2020 at 5:30 pm. Mr. Rush noted the municipal insurance package was quoted by VACORP this year. Upon extreme detailed comparison VACORP provides significantly better coverage for approximately \$30,000 less than VRSA. Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Barker and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the VACORP Insurance quote was accepted.

Mr. Rush reviewed a Youth Golf Rate Proposal. Mr. Barker noted the Golf Course needs to get youth involved and a professional teacher would help greatly. Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the Youth Golf Rates were approved.

Mayor Helms expressed his appreciation of the town staff and the amount of work they are doing during this unusual time. He also expressed his support for a merit raise in the proposed budget. The Memorial Flags will be placed on the courthouse lawn this week.

Mr. Fenyk reviewed a Deed of Gift to the Town of Marion from Susan Marie Thornton, for property located at 1254 Matson Drive. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mr. Barker and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the Deed of Gift for 1254 Matson Drive was accepted. Mr. Fenyk reviewed a Letter of Support of the Drug Court. The Drug Court is submitting a grant application to expand the program. Upon motion of Mr. Barker, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the Drug Court Support Letter was accepted.

**ACCOUNTS:** Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the accounts were approved for payment in the amount of \$1,530,210.55. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver and Carter voted affirmatively.

Chief Clair reported the two new officers in the Academy will graduate mid-July.

Mr. Heath reported the 8<sup>th</sup> loan from the Small Business Loan Pool has been processed. The Economic Development Department is working with USDA regarding a potential \$100,000 grant for the Small Business Loan Pool. A recommendation will be made June 1, 2020 about the Chili Cook Off.

Mr. Hicks reported North Main Street Paving is complete. There should be an update in August on the other State of Good Repair projects. Spring paving starts in two weeks. South Church Street Drainage project is substantially complete. Mr. Hicks reviewed the W & L Paving Bid at \$105.75 per ton. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the paving bid was awarded to W & L Construction & Paving, Inc for \$199,895.

Mr. Rush reviewed the potential opening of the Holston Hills pool and the main Town Pool, recommending not opening Holston Hills pool and preparations have been made for the main Town pool to open at a later date this summer. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Barker and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the main Town pool opening will be delayed and the Holston Hills Pool will

not open this summer. The closing of the CIRP Phase V Sewer will be May 28, 2020. Mr. Rush reviewed a potential scenario of an undeveloped right of way on Second Street. A Public Hearing will need to be set and the adjoining landowners must have a purchase option of equal percentages. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Dr. Gates and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, a Public Hearing will be set for June 15, 2020 to declare an undeveloped right of way on Second Street surplus and affirm a price to the adjoining property owners.

**CLOSED SESSION:** Pursuant to Code of Virginia, as amended, Section 2.2-3711 (A-1) and (A-3) upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Dr. Gates and vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, Town Council entered into Closed Session for discussion of Personnel and Real Estate. Mrs. Jennings moved that Town Council return to Open Session and identified it be known that only those matters legally exempted from Open Session and identified in the motion were discussed during Closed Session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Weaver and carried by a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES. The Town Clerk polled the Council Members. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver and Carter voted affirmatively.

Upon motion, duly seconded and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.

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Mayor

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Clerk