

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 September 21, 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, Purchasing Agent Billy Hamm and Economic Development Director Ken Heath.

**ABSENT:** None.

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

**VISITORS:** Joe Naff, Rex Anders, James Tyler, Stacey Ely, Neal Randol, and Charles Wassum, III.

**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 September 8, 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.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:** James Tyler, Smyth County Community Hospital, gave a brief report about the hospital and distributed a Becker's Hospital Review. Prior to re-opening the Urgent Care early 2021, there will be renovations made. One of those renovations will allow for access through the hospital. He noted there were 23 new COVID-19 cases today. Mr. Tyler also noted how well prepared Chief Clair and Marion Police Department were for the recent protests held in town.

Stacey Ely, Ballard Health, noted a daily and weekly report of COVID-19 is being distributed to council and leaders. Appalachian Highlands Community Dental Care is open in Abingdon providing dental services on a sliding scale based on ability to pay.

Neal Randol, Blue Ridge Job Corps Center Director, noted the Job Corp is currently open with no students onsite as they are doing virtual learning. No re-open date has been established yet.

Mr. Barker referred the report for the Emmaus Medical Clinic application to Town Manager. Mr. Rush noted the Planning Commission met on this item for about three hours last Monday. Mr. Rush spoke with Dr. Backus extensively. It is being requested that the Joint Public Hearing be moved to October 19, 2020. The Mt Rogers Rezoning Request has also moved the Joint Public Hearing to November. Mr. Barker strongly encouraged council members to attend the Planning Commission meeting Monday, October 12, 2020 for further discussion on these two items.

Mrs. Jennings gave an update on the Lincoln Theatre, noting the Interim Director was doing a good job getting all the bills paid, reimbursements processed and overseeing maintenance. Smyth County is

donating \$10,000 to the theatre. Funding is currently the biggest issue for the theatre. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Barker and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the monthly funding will be reinstated to the pre-fiscal 2021 budget, \$4,166.66 beginning September 2020. Mr. Fenyk arrived.

Mr. Carter reported District III board met Thursday and the new director, Rhiannon Powers is doing a good job.

Mr. Cornett noted several members of the Golf Advisory Committee would like to request a meeting about the future of the Golf Course. Mr. Cornett recommends a Recreation Committee meeting take place first. Mr. Cornett also noted a citizen complaint over loud music. Mr. Heath noted he has already contacted the complainant and will shorten the time and reduce the volume of the next event.

Mayor Helms noted the VML Conference will be virtual this year, October 7-8, 2020. Charlie Atkins will be the new Chairman of the Tourism Board and Ms. Spencer will represent the Town of Marion. A Memorial Dedication for the Chilhowie Farmers Market will be September 30, 2020 at 5:30 pm. Mayor Helms expressed his appreciation of the Marion Downtown group.

Mr. Fenyk reviewed the Rector Property Donation. Mr. Fenyk will do a title check and prepare a deed. Mr. Rush noted Joe Rector's daughter contacted Mayor Helms about this property donation. Mr. Rush recommends accepting the donation due to an existing sewer easement on the property. Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, this donation will be accepted once clear title has been obtained.

**ACCOUNTS:** Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the accounts payable were approved for payment as submitted in the amount of \$1,012,362.35. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver, Cornett and Carter voted affirmatively. Discussion ensued regarding the 4 Community Development allocations that were not included. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Library and the Song of the Mountains will be paid for the month of September at the current fiscal 2021 budget and the Chamber of Commerce and the Smyth County Tourism Center will not be paid for the month of September.

Chief Clair noted the Police Department report is in the packet. Chief Clair has been appointed to the Executive Board for the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police.

Mr. Heath noted the next Pop Up Class will begin at the Henderson School September 24, 2020, for new and expanding businesses. The deadline for Smyth County COVID-19 grants is September 25, 2020. Mr. Heath reviewed the Fall & Winter schedule of events; Scarecrow Lane, Halloween Madness, Christmas Market and Parade. Discussion ensued. Mr. Rush recommends to approve going forward with these events unless Governor or insurance carrier states otherwise. Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the town will continue with scheduling these events until other directives preclude.

Mr. Rush gave a CARES Act Project update noting a \$250,000 grant cycle prepared to implement October 1, 2020. Sewer Ordinance is still waiting on response from DEQ. Prater Pump Station is out for

bid from FEMA. Mr. Rush encouraged council to participate in the virtual VML Conference. Mr. Rush thanked Chief Clair for accepting the position to the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police Board.

Upon motion, duly seconded and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 7:34 pm.

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Mayor

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Clerk