

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 15, 2021 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 (arrived late) Council Members; Town Manager Bill Rush, Town Clerk Cindy Stanley, Deputy Clerk Samantha White; Town Attorney Mark Fenyk; Smyth County News Representative Stephanie Porter-Nichols; Police Chief John Clair, Police Detective Brian Sexton, Fire Chief Richard Keesling, Purchasing Agent Billy Hamm and Economic Development Director Ken Heath.

ABSENT: None.

VISITORS: Allen Kelly, CB Gwyn, Joe Naff, Carolyn Cooper, Dr. Charles Wassum and Cecil Hicks.

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

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 March 1, 2021 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 with the amendment to the time from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS: Chief Clair recognized Detective Sexton for receiving the VFW "Officer of the Year" Award. He has been with the Police Department 22 years and recently moved to the Detective's position.

CB Gwyn, 1503 Park Boulevard, expressed his concerns regarding the condition of the street repairs. He requests the town do a better job on street repairs. Mr. Cornett arrived.

Cecil Hicks, Smyth-Wythe Airport Representative, gave an update on the airport noting a used fuel truck has been purchased and reviewed other projects for the airport.

Mr. Barker noted new applicants have been interviewed for the Fire/EMS Department. Mr. Keesling reported the RSFA 80/20 Grant for a new ambulance was submitted today. The town's portion of the cost will be approximately \$4,200 for the cot and \$55,000 for the ambulance.

Ms. Spencer noted the new Tourism Director is working on the website.

Mrs. Jennings reported receiving several phone calls related to dangerous and barking dogs in the Hollow Road area. Chief Clair noted he will send an officer there tomorrow.

Mr. Cornett noted his second COVID-19 vaccine went very smoothly at Chilhowie Christian Church. He reminded everyone it is important to help others by being vaccinated.

Mr. Fenyk noted pet owners are responsible for damages and injuries caused by their pets.

Mayor Helms noted Spring Clean Up Day is April 22, 2021 (Earth Day). The VFW is on hold for now with regards to their programs. The town will continue to rely on Governor's orders and our Insurance carrier about gatherings. Mayor Helms and Mr. Heath traveled to Cedar Bluff today to visit the company that purchased the old Police Department building. There are approximately 200 employees at that location. Mr. Barker will follow-up on Arbor Day. Per the new General Assembly Laws, the Town Elections will be moved to November. The next Town Election will be November 2022.

Mr. Fenyk reported Sergeant Wes Thomas was commended by the Commonwealth Attorney's office for assisting with the unsolved case of a missing female.

Ms. Stanley reported the budget process is on schedule and going well.

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 \$1,394,404.87. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Weaver, Jennings, Carter and Cornett voted affirmatively.

Chief Clair reported he will be out of town this week attending the Police Chief's Conference. Sergeant Morgan, Office Eades and Lee Anne Hamm will be attending a Women in Police Workshop. Applications are being accepted for a Police Officer vacancy. Incident Command Training will begin soon as part of the Emergency Plan for the town, referred to as the Pocket Plan.

Mr. Heath noted there is a two-year waitlist for the Wayne Henderson Guitar Workshops at the Henderson School. Due to recent changes in Executive Order, CDC guidelines and our Insurance carrier's recommendations the town will slowly begin to resume pre-COVID-19 activities. The Henderson School Jam held on Monday nights can easily meet all guidelines and will be the town's first public activity. Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, Monday Night Jam will begin Monday, March 22, 2021 following Governor's guidelines. The town will continue to consider resuming more activities as we anticipate guidelines changing this spring. Mr. Heath reviewed RBEG Loan application #25. Staff and committee recommend denying. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, RBEG Loan application #25 was denied. Mr. Heath reviewed a Pop-Up Grant in the amount of \$8,000 from Wells Fargo. Mr. Heath reviewed possibilities for upgrading the King Bridge Food Court area with flower planters, lights and picnic tables. He noted this is a good opportunity for community engagement. Discussion ensued regarding the weight limit of the bridge and viable options. Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Economic Development Department will be allowed to spend up to \$1,000 to beautify the East Chilhowie Street Bridge, King Bridge Food Court area. Mr. Heath reminded council the Farmer's Market awning needs repairs and noted Mr. Muncy has a plan for a wood truss system, metal roofing and awning, which is significantly less expensive than submitted proposals. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Public Works Department will refurbish the Farmers Market awning with an allowance of \$10,000.

Mr. Rush noted the Atmos Franchise negotiations will begin soon. He reviewed the Regional Cigarette Tax Authority and noted the counties will now be allowed to impose cigarette tax. The town shop parking lot is under refurbishment including new drains and catch basins.

CLOSED SESSION: Pursuant to Code of Virginia, as amended, Section 2.2-3711 (A-1, A-3, A-5) upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Dr. Gates and vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, Town Council entered into Closed Session for discussion of Personnel, Real Estate and Prospective Business. 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 7 AYES and 0 NOES. The Town Clerk polled the Council Members. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Weaver, Jennings, Cornett and Carter voted affirmatively.

Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Cornett and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, Mr. Barker and Mr. Rush have the authority to enter into Real Estate negotiations.

Upon motion, duly seconded and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 9:06 pm.

Mayor

Clerk