

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 21, 2022 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, Deputy Clerk Samantha White, Town Attorney Mark Fenyk, Smyth County News Representative Stephanie Porter-Nichols; Police Chief John Clair, Economic Development Director Ken Heath, Fire Chief Richard Keesling, Purchasing Agent Billy Hamm, Parks & Recreation Director Jamie Hall, EMS Lieutenant J.Q. Talley, Administrative Assistant Ally White.

ABSENT: None.

VISITORS: Rex Anders, Lili Figueredo-Cornett, Jeff and Anna Leigh DeBord, Sarah Gillespie, Charles Wassum.

INVOCATION/PLEDGE TO THE FLAG: Mr. Heath 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 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting held March 7, 2022 were approved as written. Messrs Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver, Carter and Cornett voted affirmatively.

AGENDA: Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the agenda was approved as distributed, with the addition of a public presentation by Lili Figueredo-Cornett.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION: Sarah Gillespie, Director of Smyth County Chamber of Commerce, provided an update on Chamber operations. The Chamber has hired a new assistant and has two interns. Avery Cornett is serving as the Town of Marion Representative on the board. The Chamber is back to hosting in-person events. They have partnered with Smyth County Tourism to provide an updated map. The Chamber has received a \$30,000 childcare grant and an additional \$300,000 for Smyth Strong.

Lili Figueredo-Cornett requested a vacation and sale of the Town right of way located at 542 Chatham Hill. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Spencer and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES (1 ABSTENTION, Mr. Cornett), the vacation of right of way located at 542 Chatham Hill was referred to the Street Committee.

Anna Leigh DeBord provided an update on the Smyth County Museum. The Museum will open to the public in two weeks. It will be open six days per week from noon until 4:00 p.m. with free admission. Volunteers are needed on Saturdays. They have many speakers and events planned over the next several months. Mrs. DeBord made a special funding request of \$4,400 to fix a humidity problem in the back room where special items are stored. Upon motion of Ms. Spencer, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Smyth County Museum special funding request was referred to the Budget Committee.

Mayor Helms recognized Ally White, senior at Marion Senior High School, as the winner of the Daughters of American Revolution Good Citizen Award for both Marion Senior High School and Smyth County.

Upon motion of Mr. Barker, seconded by Mr. Carter and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Town will recognize April 29, 2022 as Arbor Day. Mr. Barker reviewed a plan to allow systematic depopulation of deer in Town limits. This plan allows the Police Department to designate an area and harvest some of the deer population. They will work with Hunters for the Hungry. This harvest will likely take place next winter. Discussion ensued. Upon motion of Mr. Cornett, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES (1 ABSTENTION, Mr. Carter), the Police Department will apply for a systematic depopulation permit.

Dr. Gates set a Budget Committee Meeting on Monday, March 28 at 4:30 p.m.

Ms. Spencer reported the Tourism Board met and toured Chilhowie Downtown area and the Bonham house.

Mrs. Jennings reported there is a large variety of upcoming events to be held at the Lincoln Theatre.

Mr. Carter reported the District III Board of Governors met, with two new appointees to the board.

Mr. Cornett asked that Bill Rush, Jamie Hall, and Ally White provide a waterpark update. Mr. Rush noted the original pool renovation is 80% complete and the renovation to the building is 60% complete. Work will not begin on the elevated playground until after this pool season. Mr. Hall provided pricing, policy, and schedule updates and asked that Ms. White demonstrate each of those on the Town website. The waterpark will be open Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, with possible pool parties in September, weather permitting. Mike Sage will provide lifeguard certification and advertisement for lifeguards will begin this week. Discussion regarding rates and rules ensued. All waterpark rentals must be reserved through the Town website. Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mr. Cornett and a vote of 6 AYES and 1 NOE, the Daily Admissions, Season Passes, and Waterpark Rentals rates were accepted as presented.

Mayor Helms noted Memorial Day plans have begun. Marion Middle School seventh graders participated in the VML "If I Were Mayor" contest. Colton Ferland was chosen as the Marion Middle School winner and his essay will be submitted to the VML statewide contest. A DHCD Reception will be held on March 24, 2022 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Heartwood in Abingdon.

ACCOUNTS: Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the accounts were approved for payment in the amount of \$1,378,284.28. Messrs Barker, Dr. Gates, Spencer, Jennings, Carter, Weaver and Cornett voted affirmatively.

Chief Clair noted that he and Lieutenant Hamm will continue their Emergency Management Professional Training in the following weeks. The Accreditation review has been postponed until June. A youth fishing event hosted by DWR will be held at Riverbend Park on May 7, 2022.

Chief Keesling reviewed the 2021 Fire/EMS Comprehensive Report, noting that Lieutenant Talley had composed it. Chief Keesling reported the average age of the department's fire trucks is over 20 years old, noting that pumps and valves are generally what will need replaced or repaired.

Mr. Heath noted there will be a public hearing for the VDH Exemption Ordinance at the April 4th Council Meeting.

Mr. Rush noted additional public hearings to be held on April 4th for a special use permit request from Donna Pennington and a request for rezoning from Ramzi Humsi. The Planning Commission met and reviewed zoning codes and Comprehensive Plan revisions. Gavin Blevins, MRPDC, will be assisting the Planning Commission with this process. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Barker and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the paving contract with W & L was approved. CIRP patch paving will be done through VDH as a 50% grant. Spring paving schedule will be distributed in the upcoming weeks. Two grants have been submitted for the Callan Drive Recreational Park and an additional trail grant is available. The EDA will meet on April 7th.

Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Mayor

Clerk