

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 November 21, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Mayor David Helms, Vice-Mayor Dr. Jim Gates, Jim Barker, Tricia Spencer, Bill Weaver, Larry Carter and Avery Cornett Council Members; Town Manager Bill Rush, Assistant Town Manager Billy Hamm, Town Clerk Cindy Y Stanley, Town Attorney Mark Fenyk, Smyth County News Representative Stephanie Porter-Nichols; Police Chief John Clair, Fire Chief Richard Keesling, IT Director Todd Long (left early) and Recreation Director Jamie Hall.

**ABSENT:** Suzanne Jennings.

**VISITORS:** Dr. John Wells, Dr. Lou Fincher, Harry Howe, Charles Harrington, Charles Hayden, Michael Kravitz, Marie Lord, Don Cornwell, Rex Anders, David Fulton and Delthia Little.

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

**MINUTES:** Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Ms. Spencer and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting held November 7, 2022 were approved as written. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Weaver, Carter and Cornett voted affirmatively.

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

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:** Dr. Lou Fincher, Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences Senior Vice President, conducted a power point presentation on academic program updates. This included student enrollment numbers, building renovations, the newest program, Mental Health Counseling and Speech Language Master's Program, will be added in 2026. Dr. John Wells, Emory & Henry College President, conducted a power point presentation on the main campus updates. The college will be adding a new Equestrian Center, a multi sports complex, new housing and School of Business.

Charles Harrington, Marion Housing Authority, gave an update on the Housing Authority noting there are still plans to develop housing for Veterans, which will be a long term project. Harry Howe, Marion Housing Authority, reviewed the process for consideration of new members. Don Cornwell is the Housing Authority's recommendation for replacement of Malcolm Brown. Ms. Spencer made a recommendation of David Milstead. Discussion ensued. Mr. Carter nominated Don Cornwell and Ms. Spencer nominated David Milstead. With 3 votes for each, Mayor Helms voted for Don Cornwell, therefore, Don Cornwell will be appointed to the Marion Housing Authority to complete Malcolm Browns' term.

David Fulton, Pearl Avenue, reported the difficulty seeing the overhead red light at the Bank of Marion during the late evening hours due to the sun. Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, staff will have VDOT do a study on the traffic lights.

Mr. Barker reported the Ordinance Committee met today and there is a rough draft ready to be submitted to VML for review regarding homeless people.

Dr. Gates asked if zoning allowed people living in cars on parking lots.

Ms. Spencer gave an update on tourism noting there is a significant grant awarded to improve the Appalachian Trail in Groseclose.

Mr. Weaver reported Personnel Committee is still working on Mr. Rush's review and the comp time policy.

Mr. Carter noted District III will be increasing locality's contributions per capita from .49 cents to .53 cents.

Mr. Cornett reported the Recreation Committee met. Jamie Hall, Recreation Director, gave an update on the Water Park renovations. All Recreation programs are back up and running fully since COVID. Mr. Cornett noted 2/3 of recreation program participants are county residents. Mr. Rush noted Smyth County has increased the financial support of the recreation programs. Mr. Barker would like the cost of force account labor on the pool renovations. Mayor Helms reviewed a Resolution of Jim McGregor. Upon motion of Mr. Barker, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the Resolution in Recognition of Jim McGregor was accepted.

Mayor Helms noted the Fire/EMS Committee will meet with Smyth County tomorrow with the Public Safety Committee on Auto Aid. Mayor Helms reviewed the DMV program for animal friendly plates. Upon motion of Mr. Barker, seconded by Ms. Spencer and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the grant of \$105 will be donated to the Smyth County Animal Rescue. Mayor Helms reviewed the Christmas and New Year's holidays. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mr. Barker and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the council meeting for Monday, January 2, 2023 will be rescheduled to Tuesday, January 3, 2023. VML Legislative Day will be January 18-19, 2023. Mayor Helms noted the Cherry and Commerce Street traffic light is difficult to see and light at Macado's is crooked. Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, this will be referred to VDOT to study.

**ACCOUNTS:** Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the accounts were approved for payment in the amount of \$1,984,778.36. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Weaver, Carter and Cornett voted affirmatively.

Chief Clair reviewed upcoming events for the Police Department.

Chief Keesling reported 263 calls in October 2022. Dr. Gates asked about the potential EMS personnel for the new Atkins Station. Mr. Rush noted Smyth County has received their EMS license and have acquired 2 ambulances. Mr. Rush reviewed the financial impact to implement Dr. Bruzzo's request to staff 2 crews 24/7/365. This would require 12 full time employees. Mr. Rush noted Auto Aid is for Fire only and not EMS.

Mr. Rush reported the Marion EDA will meet November 30, 2022. The Water Treatment Plant received the VDH Gold Award for Excellence again. The next council meeting, December 5, 2022, will include 2 public hearings. Upon motion of Mr. Barker, seconded by Mr. Carter and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, a Joint Public Hearing with Planning Commission will be held December 5, 2022 to consider the Comprehensive Plan draft. Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mr. Barker and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, a Public Hearing will be held December 5, 2022 on the CIRP Phase 7 Water project.

**CLOSED SESSION:** Pursuant to Code of Virginia, as amended, Section 2.2-3711 (A-1), upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Dr. Gates and vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, Town Council entered into Closed Session for discussion of personnel matters. Mr. Weaver 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 Dr. Gates and carried by a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES. The Clerk polled the Council Members. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Weaver, Carter and Cornett voted affirmatively.

Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mr. Cornett and a vote of 5 AYES and 1 NO, the comp time policy will be changed to reflect reimbursement ratio of hour for hour instead of hour and half for hour effective December 1, 2022.

Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Dr. Gates and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

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Mayor

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Clerk