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 7, 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; Town Clerk Cindy Stanley; Town Attorney Mark Fenyk; Smyth County News Representative Stephanie Porter-Nichols; Police Chief John Clair; Fire Chief Richard Keesling and Economic Development Director Ken Heath.

**ABSENT:** None.

**VISITORS:** Charles Wassum, Charles Hayden, Maria Saxton, Rose Likens, Andrew Philpott, Charles Harrington, Greg Tucker, Deputy Clerk Anita Catron, Administrative Assistant Christy Horne, Senior Fiscal Technician Paula Null and Fiscal Technician Mandy Scott.

**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 Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting held February 22, 2022 were approved as written. Messrs Barker, Gates, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver, Carter and Cornett voted affirmatively.

**AGENDA:** Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the agenda was approved as distributed.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:** Greg Tucker, Bostic, Tucker Accounting Firm Representative, presented the 2020-2021 Financial Audit. He noted staff provided all information in a timely manner. There were no findings or exceptions on the audit. He also noted the town has good control functions and checks and balances in place. He briefly reviewed the audit. Mayor Helms recognized staff Deputy Clerk Anita Catron, Administrative Assistant Christy Horne, Senior Fiscal Technician Paula Null, Fiscal Technician Mandy Scott, Clerk Cindy Stanley, Deputy Clerk Samantha White and Purchasing Agent Billy Hamm for all their work involved with the audit. Ms. Stanley also expressed her appreciation to staff.

Andrew Philpott, Hungry Mother State Park Manager, gave an Annual Economic Impact park update, noting there were over 240,000 visitors last year. He reviewed maintenance projects, such as HVAC and roofing, that would hopefully be contracted to local vendors. He distributed copies of the Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Virginia’s State Parks report to council and the press.

Maria Saxton, Hill Studios Representative, reviewed the Housing needs assessment completed by that firm. Hill Studios completed a housing study and opportunities for development under a grant from Virginia Housing to Marion Redevelopment and Housing Authority. This study was completed virtually and some in-person assessments. In general, the properties were reported to be in good condition although some were substandard. There is a housing unit shortage in the Town of Marion. Rental housing is highly important for students and young professional. Ms. Saxton distributed copies of the report.

Charles Harrington, Marion Redevelopment and Housing Authority, reported the housing assessment is the first step in being able to qualify for housing grants. There is funding available for mixed use and demolition. He noted there is a current shortage of approximately 40 units to provide housing for Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences students. He wants to proceed with developing Veterans Housing. Mr. Harrington and Mr. Heath will do a National Main Street presentation in Richmond this year.

Rose Likens, Library Director, provided an update on the library. She noted the library is now loaning wifi hotspots and tablets. The library will be holding a COVID-19 vaccine clinic March 31 from 3:00 to 6:00 pm. Citizen science month is April and will focus on bees and plants. The library is preparing for the summer reading program. The budget proposal has been submitted to the town and the request proposes an increase.

**PUBLIC HEARING PHASE VI SEWER DEQ FUNDING NUMBER C-515716:** Mr. Rush reviewed the information, noting this includes composting and refurbishment at the Sewer Treatment Plant for $428,300. Mayor Helms opened the public hearing. With no public comments, the public hearing was closed. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 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 $428,300 and providing for the form, details and payment of the Bond was adopted, authorizing Mayor Helms to sign.

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

Mr. Barker AYE

Dr. Gates AYE

Ms. Spencer AYE

Mrs. Jennings AYE

Mr. Weaver AYE

Mr. Carter AYE

Mr. Cornett AYE

Mrs. Jennings gave a report on activity at the Lincoln Theatre, including a draft for a proposed billboard for the Theatre. There have been 336 tickets sold for Carson Peters’ show on March 12, 2022.

Mr. Carter reported Streets and Sanitation Committee met today at 4:30 pm regarding the need for a traffic study in town for on street neighborhood parking. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, an RFP will be advertised for a side street parking traffic study town wide. The committee also studied the possibility of a garbage truck replacement. Mr. Rush reviewed possible funding methods. Upon motion of Mr. Cornett, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, staff is to begin the procurement process and bring back to council for review.

Mayor Helms noted Youth Government Day will be April 28, 2022. The Salvation Army Red Kettle Drive total was $36,375.64. Fire Chief Keesling and Jim Talley composed a summary on the condition of the fire truck that has been requested to be replaced. The summary will be submitted to the Budget Committee.

Chief Keesling noted the January Fire/EMS report is in the council packet. There were 242 calls in January. Mr. Rush noted the county has implemented Emergency Medical Dispatch.

Chief Clair reported the VFW will provide lunch for the police academy students. He distributed a draft of the accreditation guide.

Mr. Heath reviewed a Resolution for exemption from VDH inspections for temporary food trucks. Mr. Heath requests a public hearing for consideration of the ordinance required for this VDH Exemption. Upon motion of Mr. Cornett, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, a public hearing will be advertised for consideration of exemption from VDH inspections for temporary food booths/trucks at town-sponsored events.

Mr. Rush reviewed a special use permit from Donna Pennington for a tax preparation business in her home at 619 Dover Street. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, special use permit for 619 Dover Street for Donna Pennington was referred to Planning Commission. Mr. Rush reviewed a rezoning request for Ramzi Humsi to build apartments at 1070 Terrace Drive. This would need to be rezoned to R-3. Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the rezoning request for 1070 Terrace Drive for Ramzi Humsi was referred to the Planning Commission. Planning Commission will meet next Monday. Marion received a Tree City Recognition letter. The town has been recognized as a Tree City for over 20 years. A date needs to be set for Arbor Day. April 20, 2022 is the deadline date for completion of the Town Pool renovations.

**CLOSED SESSION:** Pursuant to Code of Virginia, as amended, Section 2.2-3711 (A-1), 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. 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 Clerk polled the Council Members. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver, Carter and Cornett voted affirmatively

Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mr. Carter and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

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Mayor Clerk