

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 December 4, 2023 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; Assistant Town Manager Billy Hamm, Town Clerk Cindy Stanley, Town Attorney Mark Fenyk, Smyth County News Representative Stephanie Porter-Nichols, Police Chief John Clair, Police Sergeant Wes Thomas, Fire Chief Richard Keesling, Economic Development Director Ken Heath, IT/Engineering Assistant Flave Davis and Director of IT Todd Long.

**ABSENT:** Suzanne Jennings.

**VISITORS:** David Fulton, Delphia Little, Charles Wassum, Teri Owens, Robert Pike, Rex Anders, Joe Naff, Shannon Naff, Charles & Nancy Hayden, Mrs. Wes Thomas and Lili Cornett.

**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 Mr. Carter and a vote of 5 AYES and 1 NO, the minutes of the meeting held November 20, 2023 were approved as written. Messrs Gates, Barker, Spencer, Weaver and Carter voted affirmatively, Mr. Cornett voted no.

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

**PUBLIC PRESENTATION:** Chief Clair presented Sergeant Wes Thomas with an FBI-LEEDA Certification.

Robert Pike and Teri Owens, Henry Street, spoke about transportation shortfalls in the area and expressed interest in opening a taxi service. They noted they were met with opposition when trying to get the process started. It was noted the first step in the application process will be completing an application with the Police Department. Chief Clair noted he will facilitate this process.

Mr. Wassum, Wassona Circle, expressed his concern with the recent Zoning Ordinance update regarding residential rental inspections.

David Fulton, Pearl Avenue, spoke about on-street parking restricting emergency vehicle access. Mayor Helms asked if the VDOT study for this has been initiated. Mr. Hamm will discuss with Mr. Rush.

Mr. Cornett expressed dissatisfaction with the process that led to the vote on the current zoning. Mr. Long provided clarification and confirmed that Mr. Cornett did have the most recent documents in hand.

Mayor Helms noted the Fire/EMS Chief application deadline was Friday, December 1, 2023 at 5:00 pm. Mr. Rush will keep council informed on the review process. Blue Ridge Job Corps will hold a meeting December 12, 2023. They have a new director.

Mr. Fenyk noted upcoming town cases in General District Court, regarding overgrown properties.

Chief Clair reported Academy Graduation will be Thursday, December 7, 2023. Interviews begin tomorrow for one opening at the Police Department. Shop with a Hero will be December 16, 2023.

Chief Keesling reported Jerry Breen continues to work on the generator install. The exhaust system project should start this month.

Mr. Heath noted the 2024 calendar of events has been set. He reviewed an RBEG loan application. Upon motion of Mr. Barker, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the RBEG loan application for Greg Clisso/Chef GW Clisso Restaurant for \$15,000 was accepted contingent on executed lease agreement.

Mr. Long reviewed the process for the next Zoning Ordinance update which will be rental inspection districts. He reported servers at the Police Department will be relocated tomorrow to another room due to an overheating issue.

Mr. Hamm reported there will be no EDA meeting in December. The next meeting will be January 3, 2024. Rough grading continues at Callen Drive Rec Park. Mr. Hamm noted paving has not been completed and the asphalt plant will be closing soon. Mr. Barker suggested having a clause in the paving contract that requires paving completion by end of fall.

Mayor Helms noted the employee Christmas Luncheon will be Wednesday, December 13, 2023. The Salvation Red Kettle Drive is underway. Town offices will be closed Monday, December 25 and Tuesday, December 26, 2023 for the Christmas holidays.

Upon motion of Mr. Carter, seconded by Dr. Gates and a vote of 6 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

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Mayor

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Clerk