

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 21, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Mayor David Helms, Vice-Mayor Dr. Jim Gates, Jim Barker, Tricia Spencer, Suzanne Jennings, Bill Weaver, Avery Cornett, and Larry Carter 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, Lieutenant Andrew Moss, Sergeant Jeff Horn, and Senior Police Officer Amber Eades; Economic Development Director Ken Heath and Economic Development Deputy Director Alexandra Veatch; Fire Chief Richard Keesling.

**ABSENT:** None.

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

**VISITORS:** Joe Naff, Cathy Cooper, CB Gwyn, Laura Sullins, Andy Altizer, Brian Beck, Rex Anders, Ernie Sullins, Carol Sullins, Malcolm Brown, Christy Moss.

**MINUTES:** Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the minutes of the meeting held December 7, 2020 were approved as written. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver, Cornett, and Carter voted affirmatively.

**AGENDA:** Upon motion of Dr. Gates, seconded by Ms. Spencer and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the agenda was approved as distributed with the addition of \$60 to Smyth County Treasurer to accounts payable.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS:** Mayor Helms recognized Ernie Sullins for his career as a local business owner and for his many contributions to our community. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Ms. Spencer and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Resolution in Recognition of Ernie Sullins upon his Retirement was adopted.

Mayor Helms read and presented a resolution for retiring K-9 Officer Cooper. Upon motion of Ms. Spencer, seconded by Mr. Weaver and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Resolution in Recognition of Honorable Service for K-9 Officer Cooper was adopted.

Mayor Helms read and presented a resolution to Lt. Andrew Moss for his dedication and years of service to Marion Police Department. Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Resolution in Recognition of Honorable Service for Lieutenant Andrew Moss was adopted.

Mayor Helms presented newly-appointed Fire Chief Richard Keesling with his Chief Badge.

Brian Beck and Andy Altizer, Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens representatives, presented a proposal for purchase and redevelopment of property located at 555 South Main Street, Marion. AASC is a 501c3 who would like to expand to Marion. They plan to operate a Program of All-Inclusive Care for

the Elderly (PACE). Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the proposal for purchase and structure of payment by AASC for 555 South Main Street property was approved.

Ms. Spencer reported the Tourism Center is in the process of hiring a new director.

Mrs. Jennings reported The Lincoln Theatre's recent fundraising drive raised approximately \$20,000 and they were awarded a \$5,000 grant from Crescent City Charities.

Mr. Weaver noted the town looks very nice with its Christmas decorations.

Mr. Cornett agreed with Mr. Weaver, but noted that some decorations will need to be replaced soon.

Mayor Helms reminded everyone of the upcoming holiday Town office closures on Christmas Eve, Christmas and New Year's Day. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Mr. Cornett and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Council meeting scheduled for January 4, 2021 was cancelled. Mayor Helms expressed his appreciation to all Town employees for their hard work and commitment during this difficult year.

Mr. Fenyk noted that he is working on the draft for review on 1116 Matson Drive purchase. He also continues work on the Option on Callen Drive Recreation Park.

**ACCOUNTS:** Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the accounts were approved for payment in the amount of \$1,671,482.84. Messrs Dr. Gates, Barker, Spencer, Jennings, Weaver, Cornett, and Carter voted affirmatively.

Chief Clair reported they have been working through the transition of Lt Moss leaving the department and wish him the best in his new role as Chilhowie Chief of Police. He also noted both Qualified Immunity and Mental Health Detention Orders issues will be addressed in the upcoming Virginia Legislative Session. Senior Police Officer Eades reported that Shop with a Hero in support of the Santa Elves program was different due to Covid-19 guidelines, but it went well. Marion Police Officers came together with other organizations and contributed funds to the family who very recently lost their home to a house fire on South Iron Street.

Mr. Heath reviewed the RBEG \$100,000 Small Business Loan Pool grant. Upon motion of Mrs. Jennings, seconded by Ms. Spencer and with a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the Resolution to obtain financial assistance of \$100,000 through a Rural Business Development was adopted. Mr. Heath noted that Deputy Director Alex Veatch's last day with the Town will be December 21<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Heath wished her well in her new role as Assistant Park Manager at Hungry Mother State Park and looks forward to working with her in the future.

Ms. Veatch thanked the Council and Mr. Heath for their support. She reported the new website will be live by January 28, 2021.

Mr. Rush provided an update on Cares Act funding and purchases, noting the final report has been submitted to the county. The VDOT Park Boulevard Sidewalk and Drainage Project has been divided into two projects and UPCs have been assigned. Both projects are in the final planning and comments stage. The tax sale scheduled for December has been postponed and may be held in January 2021. Mr. Rush received a Variance request for 1206 Culbert Drive. Board of Zoning Appeals will meet via a hybrid meeting of both onsite and Zoom options on January 19, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

Upon motion of Mr. Weaver, seconded by Mrs. Jennings and a vote of 7 AYES and 0 NOES, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm.

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Mayor

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Deputy Clerk