

The Town of Washington

"THE FIRST WASHINGTON OF ALL"

November 8, 2021

Council Meeting

APPROVED Agenda

7:00 p.m.

- CALL TO ORDER Action
- APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA Action
- MINUTES • October 11, 2021 Council meeting minutes Action
- REPORTS
 - Mayor's Report: Mayor Catlin Information
 - Planning Commission Information
 - Architectural Review Board Information
 - Treasurer's Report: Ms. Swift Action
 - Public Works Committee Information
- TOWN ATTORNEY & ZONING ADMINISTRATOR Mr. Bennett Information
- OLD BUSINESS
 - a) Discussion of allowing a Council member to attend a meeting electronically Possible Action
 - b) Discussion regarding water and sewer rates Information/Action
- NEW BUSINESS
 - a) Water/wastewater engineering study Information
 - b) Discussion regarding sidewalks Information
- PUBLIC FORUM
- ADJOURNMENT

NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
December 13, 2021

The Town of Washington

"THE FIRST WASHINGTON OF ALL"

November 8, 2021

7:00 p.m.

APPROVED Minutes

- CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Fred Catlin opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Council members Jean Goodine, Mary Ann Kuhn, Patrick O'Connell, Brad Schneider, Gail Swift and Joe Whited were present. Town Attorney John Bennett and Town Clerk Barbara Batson were present.
- APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Mayor Catlin requested adding a closed session to the agenda to have a consultation with the town attorney concerning adjustments to the Town boundaries. He also added item b) a discussion regarding sidewalks under new business. Mr. Whited asked that b) Discussion regarding water and sewer rates be amended to say information/action. Mayor Catlin motioned the amended agenda be approved and Ms. Swift seconded and a roll call vote was taken.

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"

Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"

Ms. Swift voted "yes"

Mayor Catlin voted "yes"

And the motion passed 7-0

Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"

Mr. Schneider voted "yes"

Mr. Whited voted "yes"

- MINUTES: Ms. Swift motioned to accept the minutes for October 11, 2021 and Ms. Kuhn seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"

Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"

Ms. Swift voted "yes"

Mayor Catlin voted "yes"

And the motion passed 7-0

Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"

Mr. Schneider voted "yes"

Mr. Whited voted "yes"

REPORTS:

Mayor's Report: Mayor Catlin reported that Rappahannock Electric Cooperative still needed to hook up service to the new post office. It is his understanding that given the upcoming holiday season, the U. S. Postal Service doesn't want to disrupt service by transferring staff from one post office to the other and his guess is that the new post office may not open until early 2022. He thanked citizens who served on the post office task force, including Mr. Drew Mitchell, Mr. John Fox Sullivan, Ms. Fawn Evenson, Ms. Ruth Welsh, Mr. Kim Abraham, Ms. Nancy Buntin and others for their work and thanked post office patrons for their patience during this long process.

Mayor Catlin also shared that the Christmas in Little Washington parade has been canceled. He said there were plans underway to still have a festive celebration on December 5. There will be

activities centered around Avon Hall starting at 1:00 p.m. Some activities being planned are an artisan fair, a bonfire, singing and Santa. A list of all activities will be sent as soon as the details are confirmed. He encouraged town residents to decorate their home for the holidays.

He also shared that he submitted a grant proposal last week for studying pathways throughout the town to make the town more pedestrian friendly. He also congratulated Mr. O'Connell on the opening of Patty O's Café.

Architectural Review Board (ARB): Mr. Mitchell reported the ARB met on October 13 to consider three applications, which were approved. He also shared that Mr. George Eatman is resigning from the ARB after the November 10 meeting.

Planning commission (PC): The PC did not meet in October; the next meeting is scheduled for November 22.

Town Attorney/Zoning Administration: Mr. Bennett reported he was still working on Mr. Ryan Crabbe's zoning application and they were down to the technical discussions with ESS. He also reported an application was approved for a temporary tent. He advised that during the last Town Council meeting it was determined to donate equally the monies allocated in the budget for the holiday party between the Benevolent Fund and the Rappahannock County Food Pantry. Mr. Bennett shared he reviewed the Virginia Code and determined that the Town could not donate funds to an organization that was controlled in whole or part by a religious entity.

Mayor Catlin motioned to donate the entire holiday party budgeted funds to the Rappahannock County Food Pantry and Ms. Kuhn seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"	Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"	Mr. Schneider voted "yes"
Ms. Swift voted "yes"	Mr. Whited voted "yes"
Mayor Catlin voted "yes"	
And the motion passed 7-0	

Public works committee: Mr. Whited deferred his report until agenda item b) Discussion regarding water and sewer rates, under old business.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Swift presented the October Treasurer's Report and reviewed the bills to be paid. She also shared that a comparison of year-to-date numbers for the wastewater system shows that income was only covering 24% of expenses.

Ms. Swift made a motion to approve the bills to be paid and Ms. Goodine seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"	Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"	Mr. Schneider voted "yes"
Ms. Swift voted "yes"	Mr. Whited voted "yes"
Mayor Catlin voted "yes"	

And the motion passed 7-0

- OLD BUSINESS:

- (a) Allowing a Council member to attend a meeting electronically: Mr. Bennett shared that the policy presented to the Council meets the standards in the Virginia Code. He pointed out under the personal reasons section nothing is listed. He said that a councilmember's request and details need to be submitted to the Mayor or Vice-Mayor the day of or before the scheduled meeting. He also clarified that the request would be public record; that this was not a resolution but a policy; and that the policy could be modified at any time.

Ms. Kuhn motioned to adopt the policy and Ms. Swift seconded. After discussion Ms. Kuhn withdrew her motion and Mayor Catlin motioned to table this item until the December meeting to give Council more time to review. Ms. Swift seconded and a voice vote was taken with unanimous approval.

Mr. Bennett requested that councilmembers send him any suggested changes.

- (b) Water and sewer rates: Mr. Whited revisited the discussion from the June Town Council meeting. He shared that previously deferred maintenance is still causing challenges with the water and wastewater systems. He pointed to the repair of a water pipe break on Main Street last month. Additional cost was incurred because the valves were not regularly maintained. He shared that the water revenue continues to be high so there is not a need to adjust water rates.

Mr. Whited said that expenses to revenue on the wastewater system are currently running 2 to 1. He is proposing the Town do an \$8 increase to the sewer base rate, from \$40 to \$48 that would take effect in January 2022. By applying an increase to the base rate, the cost will be shared by all sewer users. The \$8 increase will equal approximately \$10,000 in wastewater revenue annually.

Ms. Goodine asked for clarification on why there is such a difference between the expenses for the water and wastewater system. Mr. Whited responded that the wastewater system just costs a lot more to operate. He said that the wastewater bond is being paid from the general budget. He explained that the wastewater system is aging and the fact that previous maintenance had been deferred is coming into play now. He added that the water and sewer rates will be reviewed annually during the budget cycle.

Mr. Bennett reminded Council the sewer bond has a shorter amortization rate then the water system bonds. Mr. Whited said there is approximately eight or nine years left on the sewer bond.

Mr. Catlin made a motion to advertise to the public an agenda item to consider at the next Town Council meeting to increase the base sewer rate from \$40 to \$48 bringing the minimum water and sewer charge to \$75 per month beginning in January and Ms. Swift seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Goodine voted “yes”
Mr. O’Connell voted “yes”
Ms. Swift voted “yes”
Mayor Catlin voted “yes”
And the motion passed 7-0

Ms. Kuhn voted “yes”
Mr. Schneider voted “yes”
Mr. Whited voted “yes”

- NEW BUSINESS:

- (a) Water/wastewater engineering study: Mayor Catlin is working with an organization that funds projects for water and wastewater systems. He would like Council to approve reaching out to the firm to do a top to bottom engineering study of the Town’s water and wastewater systems and to help prioritize the capital needs the Town has. The study would be working with both Country Water, ESS and the public works committee. Hearing no objections from Council, Mayor Catlin will submit the grant proposal.
- (b) Discussion of sidewalks: Mayor Catlin shared he met with a VDOT representative and walked the sidewalks on the west side of Gay Street and Porter Street. They also discussed the sidewalk on the east side of Gay Street in front of the courthouse. He shared that VDOT would fix the sidewalk in front of the courthouse by removing the brick and putting down concrete. In order to replace the sidewalk with brick, the Town would be responsible for funding the repair. Mayor Catlin is worried about someone being injured by the current condition of the sidewalk.

It was suggested that VDOT could repair the sidewalk with concrete and then an overlay of a brick façade be put down. Another suggestion was to have VDOT replace the sidewalk with colored concrete with a brick pattern. It was also suggested that perhaps there would be state funds available to repair the sidewalk since the brick is historical. Another concern mentioned was that the bricks were not the only problem, that there are tree roots pushing through the brick. Ms. Kuhn volunteered to look into this issue and present her findings at a future Council meeting.

There was a discussion about the storm drains. Concerns were raised about the drains being covered by leaves thus causing a dangerous situation since you can’t see them. It was also mentioned that the drains were clogged and not working properly. Mayor Catlin said as part of his discussion with VDOT the storm drains would be cleaned annually.

PUBLIC FORUM: Mayor Catlin opened the public forum at 7:49 p.m.

Mr. Keir Whitson, Hampton District Representative of the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisor (BOS), said that he met with the Board of Directors of the Washington Volunteer Fire and Rescue Company to share that his colleagues on the BOS have a preliminary agreement to use American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds to possibly install fire hydrants on Piedmont Avenue. He also shared that Company 1 is eager to be tied into the Town’s sewer system. He is also going to try to have his colleagues use ARPA funds to cover the hookup cost to the sewer. The county received \$1.4 million in ARPA funds.

Ms. Nancy Buntin shared that she feels the sidewalk in front of the courthouse is dangerous, and when it rains, is slippery. She hopes the County will help with repairs. She is not in favor of using colored concrete to repair the sidewalk. She also shared that the storm drains on Porter Street are filled with gravel.

Mr. Schneider suggested to Ms. Kuhn that she may be able to work with the Rappahannock County Administrator to find funding for the sidewalk repairs in front of the courthouse. Mr. Whitson said that the county was considering significant restoration to the courthouse complex and may be able to include repairing the sidewalk in that effort.

Mayor Catlin closed the public forum at 8:04 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION:

At 8:05 p.m. Mayor Catlin motioned to go into closed session in accordance with the provisions of Section 2.2-3711 A.7 of the Virginia Code for consultation with the town attorney regarding a specific legal matter, the adjustment of the Town boundaries, requiring the provision of legal advice and invited Ms. Batson to stay and Mr. Whited seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"	Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"	Mr. Schneider voted "yes"
Ms. Swift voted "yes"	Mr. Whited voted "yes"
Mayor Catlin voted "yes"	
And the motion passed 7-0	

OPEN SESSION: At 8:55 p.m. Council returned to open session. Mr. Bennett asked each member: Do each of you certify that to the best of your knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in such meeting?

A roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"	Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"	Mr. Schneider voted "yes"
Ms. Swift voted "yes"	Mr. Whited voted "yes"
Mayor Catlin voted "yes"	
And the motion passed 7-0	

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Whited made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 p.m. and Ms. Kuhn seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"	Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"
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Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"
Ms. Swift voted "yes"
Mayor Catlin voted "yes"
And the motion passed 7-0

Mr. Schneider voted "yes"
Mr. Whited voted "yes"

THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL IS
December 13, 2021.

Barbara Batson, Town Clerk

Attachments:

Treasurer's report

Bills to be paid

Policy for a council member to attend a meeting remotely