

The Town of Washington

"THE FIRST WASHINGTON OF ALL"

March 14, 2016

7:00 p.m.

Town Council Meeting

Approved Minutes

- CALL TO ORDER: Mayor John Fox Sullivan called the Town Council to order at 7:03 p.m. Council members, Jerry Goebel, Mary Ann Kuhn, Patrick O'Connell, Katharine Leggett, and Gary Aichele were present. Council member Gary Schwartz was absent. Town Attorney John Bennet was also present. Town Clerk Laura Dodd was present.

- MINUTES: October 12, 2015: Ms. Kuhn discussed that she had some typo and grammar corrections to give to Ms. Dodd. Mr. Goebel made a motion to approve the October 12, 2015 minutes as corrected and Ms. Kuhn seconded and the motion passed 6-0.

- REPORTS: Treasury Report: Treasurer Goebel reviewed the attached Bank Summary Report, the Bills-To-Be Paid List, and the Additional Bills to Be Paid List.
. Ms. Leggett made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report and Mr. Aichele seconded and the motion passed 6-0.

Planning Commission: Mayor Sullivan reported that the Planning Commission would be meeting on March 28th to continue the Comprehensive Plan review.

Architectural Review Board: Mayor Sullivan reported that there was a vacancy on the ARB and it was the one seat that could be held by a non-resident with architectural and/or contracting expertise. The Council agreed by consensus to request that any letters of interest in being appointed to the ARB be received by the Town by Monday, April 4th, to be considered for appointed on April 11, 2016.

- TOWN ATTORNEY: No Report.

- NEW BUSINESS: a). Debbie Keyser, Deputy County Administrator, Report on Tourism in Rappahannock County: Ms. Keyser made a presentation to the Council on tourism in Rappahannock County based on a summary from a Tourism Committee that included members from BizRapp, Mayor Sullivan, herself, Artisan Trail members, and winery people. She discussed that tourism in Rappahannock County included B&Bs, agro tourism, farm tours, artisans, the food and beverage industry and that in the county there were 18+ artist studios, 18 farms and nurseries, 17 lodging options, 17 civil war markers, 2 museums, 10 dining options, 7 wineries, 2 breweries, 6 entertainment locations, 4 antique shops, and a distillery.

She discussed that over 400,000 people went through the entrance to the Shenandoah National Park (SNP) at Thornton Gap each year and that the County needed to capture those tourists. She discussed that the vision of the Tourism Committee was to create and sustain a strong agriculture, artisan, food, beverage, and folklore culture for the county

which supported the pristine environment. She discussed that the Committee's goals included improving economic vitality through increased tourism revenue over the next few years to promote the county and region through virtualization of resources, development of an annual marketing plan, and to have the Board of Supervisors and the Town Council serve as an advisory group to ensure that the things that they wanted to put in place were done. She discussed that their vision was important to create local jobs instead of people commuting, to increase revenue with less of a taxation burden on citizens, and to support the Comprehensive Plan and goals for the community.

She discussed that the future was about volunteer tourism in the next ten to fifteen years where volunteers would try to reduce their carbon footprint and would come to Rappahannock County to volunteer to clean up rivers or work in the Park which would increase tourism revenue with increased retail sales and Meals and Lodging taxes.

She discussed that there had been little growth in sales tax and Meals and Lodging taxes in the last few years but if they could be doubled than the County would have the revenue to support several new fire and rescue members.

She discussed that the Committee had several ideas on how to take advantage of the 400,000 plus people going through the Park including sprucing up the road leading to the SNP, coordinating tourism efforts with the SNP, working with the Rapidan-Rappahannock Regional Commission, researching options for broadband, creating consistent signage so that tourists could tell where to get internet access, creating mobile aps for wineries, creating County tourism packages to put on the State Tourism website, promoting social media savviness for all business perhaps by having classes for business owners, opening the landfill on Mondays, creating professional signage for the villages, and to creating a business kiosk in Sperryville.

She discussed that the Committee hoped to get money from the County, the Town, and businesses to create an action plan and to coordinate efforts to find out what tourists wanted. She discussed that they hoped to start out with a part-time employee to promote the entire county.

Mr. Aichele discussed that the current Visitor's Center was a great resource, that 95% of his inn customers found him online that B&Bs needed to be more text savvy, that the lack of cell service was a big deal for his business, and that technology was critical to be able to compete.

Mr. O'Connell discussed that it was nice to see that the tide was turning and that tourism was now being welcomed in the county. He discussed that it had occurred to him how much could be done by a simple plea to the community to be welcoming to visitors. He discussed that a change in culture could have a great impact and that the county could become known for its friendliness without additional costs, which he had seen happen at the Inn.

He suggested that the word tourism be eliminated and the word visitor be used instead.

Phil Irwin discussed that there need to be increased visibility for the Visitor's Center and suggested more signage.

Ms. Keyser discussed that there needed to be one contact person in the county to find out what people were asking for and to help market the entire county.

Diane MacPherson expressed her concerns regarding Airbnbs operating in the county and in the town and that they should have to pay the same taxed as the other B&Bs.

Mr. Aichele discussed ongoing Airbnb legislation at the state level that might allow them to operate in the future without having to pay local Meals and Lodging taxes.

There was a short discussion of tourism in the county and the need for increased tourism revenue.

- OLD BUSINESS: a). Continued discussion of marketing and sale of Avon Hall property and possible adoption of resolutions relating to and authorizing marketing and offering for sale of the Avon Hall property: Mr. Bennett discussed that he was in serious negotiations with a qualified party very interested in buying Avon Hall excluding the Warren Avenue and Leggett Lane property and also the portion containing the Wastewater Treatment Plant and a southern portion past the electric lines. He discussed that he felt he was closed to receiving an offer and he asked the Council to table the possible adoption of a resolution relating to and authorizing marketing and offering for sale of the Avon Hall property until after the closed session, which the Council agreed to by consensus.

There was a short discussion of process and also of how the property might be divided and that once there was a viable contract there would be an authorized public hearing on the contract and sale of the property.

b).

- NEW BUSINESS: b). Schedule Budget Work Session: Council agreed by consensus to hold a budget work session on April 5, 2016 at 9:30 a.m.

c). Wastewater Treatment Plant Repairs: Mayor Sullivan made a motion to approve the ESS/Clearwater proposal, attached, to replace the faceplate/display of the Magnetic Flow Meter Electronic converter and the analyzer sunscreen for \$1,135.13 and Ms. Leggett seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. O'Connell voted "yes" Mr. Goebel voted "yes"
 Ms. Kuhn voted "yes" Ms. Leggett voted "yes"
 Mayor Sullivan voted "yes" Mr. Aichele voted "yes"
 And the motion passed 6-0.

After a short discussion, Mr. Aichele made a motion to approve up to \$2,411 for the ESS quote # 030716001, attached, to replace sludge holding tank piping and diffusers and Ms. Kuhn seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. O'Connell voted "yes" Mr. Goebel voted "yes"
 Ms. Kuhn voted "yes" Ms. Leggett voted "yes"
 Mayor Sullivan voted "yes" Mr. Aichele voted "yes"
 And the motion passed 6-0.

- PUBLIC FORUM: Mayor Sullivan opened the Public Forum: John MacPherson expressed his concerns regarding the number of buildings in disrepair and the number of empty buildings in town and that his guests often remarked on them. He discussed that the Town should find a way to motivate those property owners to improve those properties.

Ms. MacPherson read an excerpt from a Washington, D.C. document regarding penalties on vacant and neglected properties and asked the Town to start a conversation about the Town enacting similar legislation.

Mayor Sullivan discussed that he felt that there had been a lot of improvements in the town but there were owners who didn't seem to care about their properties. He discussed that his understanding was that it was difficult to put in the kind of legislation discussed by Ms. MacPherson.

Mr. O'Connell discussed that the Historic District Ordinance addressed the subject of demolition by neglect and that the ARB had the authority to pursue the matter and the Zoning Administrator could be asked to send a violation notice and the owners could be fined.

Mr. MacPherson discussed that a letter should go out to the property owner before it got so neglected.

Mr. Aichele expressed his concerns that the skunk, possum, and groundhog populations were growing and were using empty buildings for homes.

Sharone Proper discussed that there were two empty buildings on Warren Avenue that the owner was hoping to renovate soon when she retired.

Mayor Sullivan closed the Public Forum.

- CLOSED SESSION: At 8:30 p.m. Mr. Aichele made a motion that the Council enter into closed session in accordance with the provisions of Section 2.2-3711.3 to discuss and consider the deposition of public property, namely all or a portion of the Avon Hall property, where the discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position and negotiating strategy of the Town Council, and further in accordance with the provisions of Section 2.2-3711.7 for consultation with the town attorney regarding a specific legal matter, namely contract matters relating to Avon Hall, requiring the provision of legal advice by the town attorney Ms. Leggett seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"	Mr. Goebel voted "yes"
Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"	Ms. Leggett voted "yes"
Mayor Sullivan voted "yes"	Mr. Aichele voted "yes"

And the motion passed 6-0.

- OPEN SESSION: Mayor Sullivan reconvened the public session at 9:50 p.m.

Mr. Bennett asked each member to certify that to the best of their knowledge: Only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meetings requirements under the Code of Virginia and only such public business matters as identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed, or considered by the Town Council. A roll call vote was taken and

Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"	Mr. Goebel voted "yes"
Ms. Kuhn voted "yes"	Ms. Leggett voted "yes"
Mayor Sullivan voted "yes"	Mr. Aichele voted "yes"

Mr. Bennett read through the following resolution for consideration by the Council: "Resolution authorizing the Town Attorney to execute agreements or memoranda relating to the sale of Avon Hall Property and to initiate advertising for a public hearing: The Town Council of the Town of Washington, Virginia hereby authorizes the Town Attorney to execute an agreement or a memorandum on behalf of the Town; provided the Town Attorney is prepared to recommend to the Town Council the mature consideration of such agreement or memorandum and for the Council to approve or disapprove the same after a duly advertised public hearing; and provided further any such agreement or memorandum shall be expressly contingent upon and subject to acceptance or rejection by the Town Council after a public hearing resolved below; and that to this end, the Town Attorney shall be authorized to initiate advertising of a public hearing in conformity with the provisions of the statutes made for such matters upon execution of

such agreement or memorandum by the Town Attorney and the purchasers set forth therein.”

Mr. Aichele made a motion to approve the resolution as read by Mr. Bennett and Ms. Leggett seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. O’Connell voted “yes” Mr. Goebel voted “yes”

Ms. Kuhn voted “yes” Ms. Leggett voted “yes”

Mayor Sullivan voted “yes” Mr. Aichele voted “yes”

And the motion passed 6-0.

- CONTINUED MEETING: At 9:59 p.m. Mr. Goebel moved to continue the meeting to April 5, 2016 to hold a budget work session and Mayor Sullivan seconded and the motion passed 6-0.

NEXT SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD ON APRIL 11, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Dodd

Attachments:

Treasurer’s report

Additional Bills to be Paid

Bills to be Paid

ESS Clearwater Proposal

ESS Sludge Holding Tank Piping and Diffuser Proposal

Resolution authorizing Town Attorney to execute agreements or memoranda relating to the sale of Avon Hall property and to initiate advertising for public hearing.