

**TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE
REGULAR SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2023
6:00 P.M.
INDEPENDENCE FIRE DEPARTMENT
329 DAVIS STREET; INDEPENDENCE, VA 24348**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Ronald Sexton, Vice Mayor Jim Meier, Jason Cassell, Buddy Halsey, Mark Miller, Joan Collins, and Kit Marshall.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

TOWN STAFF PRESENT: Matthew Adams, Interim Police Chief, Kim Phipps, Assistant to the Town Clerk, Trena Kinser, DMV Supervisor, and Terry Osborne, Utility Director.

CITIZENS & GUESTS: Gary Hash, Independence Volunteer Fire Department, Michelle Pridgen, Independence Farmer's Market, Rick Cavey, Jennifer Snow, Karen Reeves, John Fant, Charlotte Hanes, Steve Marshall, Eric & Gesche Morley, Charlotte Hanes, James Wagoner, Randy Ferrell, Chief Cooper, Chief Breedlove, and Tom Maxwell.

CALL TO ORDER:

The Council Meeting was called to order by Mayor Ronald Sexton on this 14th day of February 2023 and declared that a quorum was present.

Mayor Sexton presented Tom Maxwell with a gift for his years of service on the Town Council.

Mayor Sexton presented James Wagoner with a gift for his 33 years of service with the Town, and Interim Police Chief Matthew Adams presented Mr. Wagoner with a shadow box containing his shirt, badge and gun. Randy Ferrell, Chief Cooper, Chief Breedlove, also presented James with an award.

GUESTS/SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Gary Hash, Independence Volunteer Fire Department Chief, gave council an update on the 2019 pump truck that replaced the equipment truck. The fire department is in need of purchasing equipment to go on the truck. IVFD is working with Rural Development to purchase a new cab and chassis. The fire department is working on replacing the heating system at the department.

John Fant, Grayson County Supervisor, stated he has spoken with Laura Ratcliffe regarding the library parking lot and removing dirt. Mr. Fant stated that the county is currently working on broadband.

Joan Collins, Councilwoman, spoke on the Town Park. Ms. Collins gave everyone figures on expenses and spending of the Town Park. Ms. Collins stated that Interim Town Manager Kenneth Vaught has been working on getting a temporary occupancy permit for the park. Ms.

Collins pointed out that nothing was free. The Town paid for engineering, permits, gravel, survey, etc. Ms. Collins stated that the money to cover the expenses in excess of grants received came from the taxpayers. Ms. Collins thanked everyone for their time.

MINUTES for January 10, 2023, regular scheduled meeting, January 16, 2023, special called meeting, and January 30, 2023, special called meeting were presented for approval.

COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER seconded; motion carried with all ayes.

MONTHLY FINANCES were presented in the amount of \$82,631.59. **VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER made a motion to approve the finances in the amount of \$82,631.59.**

COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL seconded; motion carried with all ayes.

POLICE REPORT

Interim Police Chief Matthew Adams stated the police report was included in council packets. Interim Police Chief Adams stated that he spoke with Town Manager Laura Ratcliffe regarding the security cameras. The contract is up for renewal. They can add two more cameras at no charge. The cost is \$1,489.14 annually. The police chief school is May 2-5 in Glen Allen, VA with limited seats. The cost is \$912. The police department is canceling 3 air cards which are no longer needed. The transmission in the Ford Taurus has gone out. The estimated cost is \$4,500. This is the vehicle the part time officers use.

UTILITY SUPERVISOR:

Utility Supervisor, Terry Osborne, stated that his report was in council packets. Supervisor Osborne stated that the Pall Corporation is working on adjusting the machines at the VCWA plant which, will take approximately three days. The unaccountability rate for this past month was 34%.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Nothing reported.

MANAGERS REPORT:

1) ARPA Funding:

- a. Town Clerk Kim Farmer will turn figures over to Town Manager Laura Ratcliffe to look over.

2) Farmer's Market:

- a. Ms. Charlotte Hanes has offered the Town space at the Tri-tex building to store the stage framing timbers if council approves.

3) Penn Court Waterline:

- a. Town Attorney Roger Brooks will contact Mr. Robert Hilt with Rural Development on Friday.

- 4) **DHCD Housing Grant:**
 - a. The MRPDC will keep the Town informed on the housing grant process.
- 5) **Sewer I & I Project:**
 - a. The Town has needs to make a decision on maintaining an engineer for this project.
- 6) **Rural Development Audit Notification:**
 - a. The Town is waiting on the audit firm to finish up the Town's 2021-2022 audit. The audit for 2022 is still being completed.
- 7) **DEQ Non-Competitive Litter Prevention and Recycling Grant:**
 - a. The Town has received disbursement of funds. It will be distributed to the appropriate agencies along with the new guidelines for receiving the funds.
- 8) **VCWA:**
 - a. Sparta and Independence Town Managers met and agreed the Authority is not following the billing or formula in the agreement. The engineer firm is reviewing the formula to try and help resolve the issue.
- 9) **Solid Waste Ordinance:**
 - a. Town Council and Town Attorney need to review the Town's Solid Waste code to get clarification on the ordinance.
- 10) **Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes:**
 - a. Taxes were mailed out last week.
- 11) **VRS Life Insurance:**
 - a. Town Clerk Farmer is getting information together for council to consider.
- 12) **Town Rate Schedule:**
 - a. Council needs to review and take action to revise the rate scheduled to be implemented in the 2023 budget. Will be presented at April's meeting by Town Manager Ratcliffe.
- 13) **Rural Development Resolution for the Independence Volunteer Fire Department:**
 - a. A copy of the RD resolution for the IVFD was provided in packets for council action. **VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER made a motion to approve the resolution as presented; COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- 14) **Manager Days Worked:**
 - a. Interim Town Manager Vaught worked 14 days in January with 81.5 hours.

TOWN ATTORNEY:

Town Attorney Roger Brooks stated he did not have any matters for open session.

MAYORS REPORT:

Mayor Sexton stated he received a letter from AEP stating that electric rates are to increase again.

Mayor Sexton welcomed newly appointed councilwoman Kit Marshall. Mayor Sexton thanked council for their commitment the past month with it being so busy.

Mayor Sexton asked council for a motion to accept Laura Ratcliffe's contract to be the new Town Manager. **COUNCILWOMAN JOAN COLLINS made a motion to accept Ms. Ratcliffe's contract. COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Vice Mayor Jim Meier stated that the budget committee needs to meet to get started on the 23-24 budget. Also the sewer and solid waste committee needs to meet. **COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made a motion for council to meet on February 23rd, 6:00pm for the budget and 7:30pm for the sewer and solid waste at the IVFD. VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**

COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL made a motion for Council to go into closed session citing VAFOIA Section 2.2-3711, to discuss personnel and contract negotiation asking the Town Attorney Roger Brooks, Interim Town Manager Kenneth Vaught, Interim Police Chief Adams to stay. COUNCILMAN MARK MILLER seconded; motion carried with all ayes.

Councilman Jason Cassell made a motion for Council to go into open session citing VAFOIA Section 2.2-3712 that only matters in closed session were convened for and permitted under was discussed. Mayor Sexton asked for a roll call vote:

**Jim Meier-I So Certify
Jason Cassell-I So Certify
Joan Collins-I So Certify**

**Buddy Halsey-I So Certify
Mark Miller-I So Certify
Kit Marshall-I So Certify**

With no other business Mayor Sexton closed the meeting.