

**TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE
REGULAR SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2022
6:00 P.M.
INDEPENDENCE FIRE DEPARTMENT
329 DAVIS STREET; INDEPENDENCE, VA 24348**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor E.F. “Butch” Reeves, Vice Mayor Tom Maxwell, Ronald Sexton, Jason Cassell, Ronald Sexton, Buddy Halsey, and Jim Meier.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeff Miller (deceased).

TOWN STAFF PRESENT: Roger Brooks, Town Attorney, Matthew Adams, Sergeant, Kim Farmer, Town Clerk, and Terry Osborne, Utility Director.

CITIZENS & GUESTS: None.

CALL TO ORDER:

The Council Meeting was called to order by Mayor E.F. “Butch” Reeves on this 8th day of November 2022 and declared that a quorum was present.

GUESTS

None.

MINUTES for October 11, 2022, regular scheduled meeting, October 17, 2022, special called meeting, and October 26, 2022, special called meeting were presented for approval. **VICE MAYOR TOM MAXWELL made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**

MONTHLY FINANCES were presented in the amount of \$81,411.72. Town Clerk Kim Farmer stated that included in the payables was the water usage to VCWA, and trench box purchase. Councilman Jim Meier asked what the actual water usage was for the Town from the Water Authority. Councilman Buddy Halsey stated that it was way up. Utility Supervisor Osborne stated that it was. The Town has cut back using the wells to increase the water usage from the Water Authority. Utility Supervisor Osborne stated that there was a bad water line break which may cause the Town to increase the well usage to catch up from the lost water. Councilman Buddy Halsey asked what the ECO Sport. Town Clerk Farmer stated that it was Sergeant Adams vehicle. Councilman Halsey asked about the \$20 bill for the boom truck. Utility Supervisor Osborne stated that it was the Town’s cost for repairing the truck. The cost is split between the 3 owners, the Town, School, and County. **COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made a motion to approve the finances in the amount of \$81,411.72. COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**

POLICE REPORT

Sergeant Matthew Adams stated that he did not have anything to report on except for the police report which was included in council packets.

UTILITY SUPERVISOR:

Utility Supervisor, Terry Osborne, stated that there were 188 work orders, 22 cutoffs, a water leak on 21 N, a construction company drilled a hole in the Town's waterline while installing guard rail. The Town lost approximately 200,000 plus on this leak. Councilman Jason Cassell asked whose responsibility it was to cover the cost. Utility Supervisor Osborne stated that in the past that companies that are contracted with VDOT call the Town to have the water/sewer lines marked. Utility Supervisor Osborne spoke with the contact person with the contractor which stated they did not know they were in the Town limits. The person also stated that they checked with 811 and the Town was not listed. Utility Supervisor Osborne gave Town Attorney Roger Brooks a copy of the 811 contract to look at to see if the Town would be interested in signing up for the program. Utility Supervisor Osborne stated that the approximate cost to repair the water line would be \$3,000. Council asked Supervisor Osborne to contact VDOT to see if they might help with the incurred cost. Supervisor Osborne stated that the dump truck is being worked on now. It will be needed for snow pushing this winter. The Town's utility trailer broke down. The axle broke. The Town has had it for approximately 12 years, it was used when it was purchased. It will need to be replaced. There was a water leak at Penn Court which public works just patched for the time being. Mr. Hilt with Rural Development is still waiting on information on the water line project at Penn Court. Town Attorney Roger Brooks stated that he would contact Mr. Hilt along with the person that is with Penn Court. Supervisor Osborne set in on the lead and copper project that is required to be completed by 2024. The project is to replace all lead and copper lines. The Town received a quote from Core & Main. Councilman Cassell asked if there was an application somewhere to get funding for the project. Supervisor Osborne stated that there was with the maximum amount of \$500,000. The county is looking for a dump site for food which contains gray water. Councilman Halsey suggested the school. Supervisor Osborne stated that the requirements include, having water and a concrete pad. Utility Supervisor Osborne has been talking with Matthew Lane with the Lane Group regarding this matter. Mayor Reeves asked where the waste goes. Utility Supervisor Osborne stated that it goes into the Towns wastewater system.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Utility Supervisor Terry Osborne stated that Safe Halloween was held at the Fire Department due to the weather. There was a good turnout.

MANAGERS REPORT:

1) DOC:

- a. Town Clerk Kim Farmer stated that the water rate increase went into effect October 1st.
- 2) ARPA Funding:**
- a. Town Clerk Kim Farmer met with the Town of Hillsville Treasurer, LeAnna Surratt, which is also on the Virginia Treasury Board. Ms. Surratt recommended council put the money into a separate account so it can be tracked better. **COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made a motion to transfer the ARPA funds of \$925,464 into a separate account. VICE MAYOR TOM MAXWELL, and COUNCILMAN JIM MEIER both seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- 3) Farmer's Market:**
- a. Council needs to take action approving/disapproving the purchase of cinder block, mortar, sand, and labor for the Farmer's Market. **COUNCILMAN JIM MEIER made a motion to approve up to \$12,000 to purchase cinder block, mortar, sand and contract labor for the Farmer's Market. COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- 4) Penn Court Waterline:**
- a. Engineer and contractor documents were sent to RD August 29th. Mr. Hilt is still in need of the Attorney documents for close out. Councilman Jim Meier asked if there was a possibility of site design change. Town Attorney Roger Brooks stated that the Town hired Hurt & Proffitt to do the design. Councilman Jason Cassell suggested to get the contractors and engineers together to discuss this option.
- 5) North Park:**
- a. After general discussion council decided to table the project at the North Independence Town Park. **COUNCILMAN JIM MEIER made a motion to send back the \$10,000 to the Twin County Community Foundation. VICE MAYOR TOM MAXWELL seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- 6) Twin County Community Foundation:**
- a. An invitation was provided in packets for council to attend a "Scholarship Showcase" at Crossroads in Galax.
- 7) DHCD:**
- a. Town Attorney Brooks stated that the surveying company S. Patz & Associates could get information requested from the tax cards and tax parcel numbers at the Commissioners office.
- 8) Sewer I & I Project:**
- a. Councilman Buddy Halsey asked how much the charge for the engineering would be. Town Attorney Roger Brooks stated it would be in the master plan.
- 9) Rural Development Audit Notification:**
- a. The Town is waiting on the audit firm to finish up the Town's 2021-2022 audit.
- 10) DEQ Non-Competitive Litter Prevention and Recycling Grant:**
- a. The Town is waiting for disbursement of funds. When received Town Clerk Kim Farmer will disburse them to the appropriate agencies.
- 11) VCWA:**

- a. Council discussed the issue of the Town billing of the Virginia Carolina Water Authority. After discussing the Town is getting over charge for what the Town is actually using. Also, the Town is not getting enough payment for the man hours spent at the Water Authority. **COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made a motion to bill the VCWA retroactively to July 1, 2022, for wages set by the Interim Town Manager, Kenneth Vaught. VICE MAYOR TOM MAXWELL seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- b. **COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made a motion to request Laura Ratcliff setup a website for the VCWA. COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**

12) Solid Waste Ordinance:

- a. Need clarification on the previous passed ordinance.

13) Manager Days Worked:

- a. Interim Town Manager Kenneth Vaught worked 7 days in the month of October.

TOWN ATTORNEY:

Town Attorney Roger Brooks stated that he did not have anything for open session.

MAYORS REPORT:

Mayor Reeves had received a request for a stop sign on Morton Drive. The property will need to be looked at to see who the owner is. VDOT will need to be contacted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Town Clerk Kim Farmer stated that the Making Grayson Glow Committee had received close to \$2,000 in memory of Councilman Jeff Miller so far.

Councilman Jim Meier stated that the finance committee needs to schedule a meeting. Councilman Meier would like to have LeAnna Surratt, and Juan Garcia attend the meeting.

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 to stay. VICE MAYOR TOM MAXWELL 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 Butch Reeves asked for a roll call vote:

**Jim Meier-I So Certify
Tom Maxwell-I So Certify
Ronald Sexton-I So Certify**

**Buddy Halsey-I So Certify
Jason Cassell-I So Certify**

COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made a motion to give full time employees \$500 and part time employees \$250 for a Christmas bonus. COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON seconded; motion carried with all ayes.

COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made a motion to pay the Estate of Jeff Miller the rest of his pay until the end of his term, which is December 31st. This would be for 2 checks. COUNCILMAN JIM MEIER and COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON both seconded; motion carried with all ayes.

COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made a motion to grant the family of Jeff Miller his tablet along with outgoing Mayor Butch Reeves to keep his tablet. COUNCILMAN JIM MEIER and COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON both seconded; motion carried with all ayes.

With no other business Mayor Reeves closed the meeting.