

**TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE
REGULAR SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2022
6:00 P.M.
INDEPENDENCE FIRE DEPARTMENT
329 DAVIS STREET; INDEPENDENCE, VA 24348**

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: Vice Mayor Tom Maxwell, and Jeff Miller (deceased).

TOWN STAFF PRESENT: James Wagoner, Police Chief, Kim Phipps, Assistant to the Town Clerk, and Terry Osborne, Utility Director.

CITIZENS & GUESTS: Michelle Pridgen, Independence Farmer’s Market, Mark Miller, newly elected councilman.

CALL TO ORDER:

The Council Meeting was called to order by Mayor E.F. “Butch” Reeves on this 13th day of December 2022 and declared that a quorum was present.

GUESTS

Michelle Pridgen, Independence Farmer’s Market, thanked Mayor Reeves for his many years of service to the Town. Ms. Pridgen stated that the first grant ever received for the Farmer’s Market was the one that allowed her to be hired. Rick Cavey is a very good grant writer and is available to assist the Town if needed. Ms. Pridgen stated that the Free Market has been in business for 5 years. The market was setup to keep items out of the Landfill. When the market started, they helped 75 families. Now they have helped 350. Ms. Pridgen stated that the Farmer’s Market has seed available to give out if anyone is interested.

Mayor Reeves welcomed and thanked new council member, Mark Miller, for his willingness to serve the residence of the Town of Independence.

MINUTES for November 8, 2022, regular scheduled meeting was presented for approval.

COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY 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 \$72,712.93. **COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL made a motion to approve the finances in the amount of \$72,712.93. COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**

POLICE REPORT

Police Chief James Wagoner stated the police report was included in council packets. Chief Wagoner stated that a vehicle in Town was stolen on Thanksgiving morning and recovered on December 8th in Fairfax Virginia. Police Chief Wagoner thanked Mayor Reeves for hiring him and giving him the opportunity to work for the Town.

UTILITY SUPERVISOR:

Utility Supervisor, Terry Osborne, stated that there were 168 work orders, 50 cutoffs, and 2 water leaks. The dump truck was sent to King, NC to finish the repair. Core and Main gave the Town an estimate of \$60k to \$70k to do the lead study. The price of a new fire hydrant went from \$1,800 to \$2,800 a piece. We do have one spare hydrant. Utility Supervisor stated that this was an example of how prices are increasing.

Currently at the water plant we are using two pumps at a time. We have two back ups and two brand new pumps. Two of the pumps went out. Employees found leaves around the pumps and cleaned out around it. A vent lid had come off which could have played a part of the pump going out. Councilman Jim Meier asked Utility Supervisor Osborne if he knew what would cause the lid to come off. Utility Supervisor Osborne stated that pressure blew it off. Interim Town Manager Kenneth Vaught stated that it is a vent and a standpipe that lets pressure off of the line. Utility Supervisor Osborne has cut down all of the bushes, lowered the ground around the pipe, and done an extension with a screen to prevent leaves from getting into it anymore.

Councilman Buddy Halsey asked about when the testing is going to start. Utility Supervisor Osborne stated that the machine will be maintained on February 13th and testing would be done after that.

Ms. Pridgen thanked public works for setting up the extra lighting for the Christmas Bazar.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Nothing to report.

MANAGERS REPORT:

1) ARPA Funding:

- a. Town Clerk Kim Farmer is working on getting.

2) Farmer's Market:

- a. Mr. Phipps with VDOT has provided a right-of-way easement deed.
COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON made a motion to approve the VDOT right-of-way easement as presented. COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL seconded; motion carried with all ayes.

3) Penn Court Waterline:

- a. Mr. Hilt with Rural Development requested Town Attorney documents be forwarded for grant close out as soon as possible. Town Attorney Roger Brooks stated that he sent the POA along with the easement to Landura. The originals should be coming back to the Town office soon.
- 4) North Park:**
- a. After general discussion council decided to table the project at the North Independence Town Park money is being sent back to Twin County Community Foundation.
- 5) DHCD Housing Grant:**
- a. The MRPDC will keep the Town informed on the housing grant process.
- 6) Sewer I & I Project:**
- a. A letter was mailed August 25th to DEQ accepting the loan/grant offer. Councilman Jason Cassell asked Utility Supervisor Terry Osborne about using Lane Engineer for the project. Utility Supervisor Osborne stated that they would be good for the project because they done the preliminary work for the project. Councilman Buddy Halsey wanted to get a quote from Hurt & Proffitt for the project. Interim Town Manager Kenneth Vaught stated that there have been issues with getting some answers from Hurt & Proffitt.
- 7) 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.
- 8) 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.
- 9) VCWA:**
- a. Town Clerk Kim Farmer will process contract labor invoice for back payment. The MRPDC letter concerning VCWA not following the Authority Agreement was discussed at the board meeting on December 8th. Sparta and Independence Managers are to review billings and resolve this matter.
- 10) Solid Waste Ordinance:**
- a. Town Council and Town Attorney need to review the Town's Solid Waste code to get clarification on the ordinance.
- 11) Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes:**
- a. Information from the county was not received in a timely manner. Interim Town Manager Vaught requested an extension of the due date for the taxes. **COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL made a motion to extend the due date for Town taxes until March 5th. COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- 12) Manager Days Worked:**
- a. Interim Town Manager Kenneth Vaught worked 8 days in the month of November with 30.5 hours.
- 13) VRS Life Insurance:**
- a. Information was provided to council regarding participating in VRS Life Insurance program. One of the requirements is to have 75% of employees participate. Council asked to get employee feedback and to get a cost for the program.

TOWN ATTORNEY:

Town Attorney Roger Brooks absent. Town Attorney Brooks provided an ordinance amending Chapter 159-1 of the Code of the Town of Independence. **COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made a motion to approve the ordinance as presented. COUNCILMAN RONALD SEXTON seconded; motion carried with all eyes.**

MAYORS REPORT:

Nothing to report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Council decided to change the date of the employee meal from the 14th to the 20th.

Councilman Jim Meier thanked public works for putting up the Christmas lights and hopes to continue doing so.

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 eyes.

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
Jason Cassell-I So Certify**

**Buddy Halsey-I So Certify
Ronald Sexton-I So Certify**

With no other business Mayor Reeves closed the meeting.