



AGENDA
TOWN COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION
TUESDAY APRIL 9, 2024
INDEPENDENCE, VIRGINIA
6:00 PM
INDEPENDENCE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
329 DAVIS STREET, INDEPENDENCE, VA 24346

- Public Hearing – Planning Commission – Core Commercial Zoning Change
- Public Hearing – Water, Nuisance, and Building Code Changes
- Call to Order – Mayor Sexton
 - Welcome/Decorum
 - Approval of Agenda, Consent Agenda, Meeting Minutes
- Reports, Presentations or Requests
 - Kim Davis - Friends of SW VA/Crooked Road
- Old Business
 - Community Development Block Grant - Housing Grant – MRPDC Representative (TBD), Town Manager Ratcliffe, Councilwoman Marshall
 - See included information
 - Independence EDA Tourism Zone Program – Steve Marshall, EDA Chairperson
 - Motion to Approve Tourism Zone Program credits as presented
- New Business
 - Core Commercial Zoning Change – Mayor Sexton
 - Motion to approve subject to Public Hearing outcome and Planning Commission recommendation.
 - Water, Nuisance, and Building Code Change – Mayor Sexton
 - Motion to approve subject to Public Hearing outcome.
 - 2024 Unallocated funds and capital expense redistribution between funds–
 - Town Manager Ratcliffe
 - See included materials for details
 - Motion to approve moving \$130,030 Unallocated funds from GA budget to Sewer budget and \$44,183 unallocated funds from GA budget and reflect the same changes for capital expenses.
 - Potential Street Abandonment - Poole Place – Town Manager Ratcliffe
 - See included materials for details
 - Discussion
 - Donations for Town Park– Town Manager Ratcliffe
 - See included materials for details

- Discussion
- Town Staff Report
 - Town Clerk/Treasurer
 - Police Report
 - Utility Directors Report
 - Special Events Report
- Town Manager’s Report
 - Programs, Projects and Updates
- Mayor’s Report
- Town Attorney’s Report
- Committee Updates
 - Personnel Committee – Councilman Cassell
 - Recommendation 2024-25 Town Holiday Schedule (schedule included)
 - Finance Committee – Councilman Meier
 - Budget meeting dates
 - Infrastructure – Councilman Cassell
 - Next Infrastructure Meeting Date
 - Community Development Committee - Councilwoman Marshall
- Informational Items
- Community Matters – Registered Speakers and Public Comment
 - Michelle Pridgen, Executive Director, Independence Farmer’s Market
 - Pedestrian safety at Hwy 21/Hwy 58 during Farmer’s Market
- Closed Session
 - Personnel
 - Chain of Command Process
 - Proposed Position Descriptions
 - Potential Benefit & Compensation Changes
 - Review of Town Manager Annual Performance
 - Litigation
 - Contract Negotiation
 - Land sales/land purchase
 - Economic Development
 - Healthcare Services
- Adjourn

-Meeting Decorum-

All official meetings are to be observed by the following decorum:

- Behavior during all official meetings shall be consistent with the behavior exercised in any court or legislative room found within the Commonwealth of Virginia; and,
- There shall be no outbursts, heckling or other forms of disrespectful behavior by any individuals present within these chambers; and,
- Persons wishing to speak shall do so respectfully and in accordance with the applicable Rules of Procedures and/or at the specific direction of the presiding official; and,
- Out of respect for the official business being conducted, for those conducting the official business and for those present for same purpose, there shall be no private conversations taking place in the audience or other forms of distractive behavior or nuisance; and
- Please turn off cell phones and other such devices before entering the meeting room.

Public Hearing on April 9th at 6pm

Fire Department, 329 Davis Street, Independence, VA

Two Public Hearings will be held on Tuesday, April 9th, to gain feedback on the following proposed code and zoning changes:

Water Code: As it relates to Section 51, it is proposed to:

Water 51.01 Connection Required change from:

All residents of the town shall be required to be connected to a public water system approved and licensed by the State Department of Health.

To:

All residents **and businesses** of the town shall be required to be connected to a public water system approved and licensed by the State Department of Health, **unless the owner meets the requirements listed in 51.03.**

51.06 Right of Inspection change from:

Every person occupying any property into which water is conveyed under this chapter shall permit any authorized agent of the town to enter such property, at reasonable hours, to inspect works therein or to see if provisions of this subchapter have been violated.

To:

Every person occupying any property into which water is conveyed under this chapter shall permit any authorized agent of the town to enter such property, at reasonable hours, to inspect works therein or to see if provisions of this subchapter have been violated. **It is the obligation of the property owner to provide free and clear access to the meter.**

51.10 A) 2 Disconnection for Late Payment change from:

That if any bill is not paid by or before that date, a second bill will be mailed containing a cutoff notice that if the bill is not paid within ten days of the mailing of the second bill, service will be discontinued for nonpayment

To:

That if any bill is not paid by or before that date, a second bill will be mailed containing a cutoff notice that if the bill is not paid within ten days of the **billing** of the second bill, service will be discontinued for nonpayment

51.14 Guidelines for Service change from:

Unless otherwise specified, it shall be assumed these guidelines apply to three quarter inch or smaller connections. Any connections over three quarter inch will require negotiations with the Council

To:

Unless otherwise specified, it shall be assumed these guidelines apply to three quarter inch or smaller connections. Any connections over three quarter inch will require **approval** by the Council

51.14 (F) Guidelines for Service change from:

If the service is available to a unit serviced by the town system, the customer will be required to pay the monthly fee. The only exceptions to this rule are:

In the case of illness lasting 30 days or more in which case the customer would be in a hospital, rest home, nursing home or other such facility and the unit to which the service is provided would be unoccupied for the entire period. In such case, the meter bill will still be read at the regular time and the customer will be billed if the meter shows any usage.

To:

If the service is available to a unit serviced by the town system, the customer will be required to pay the monthly **minimum** fee. The only exceptions to this rule are:

In the case of illness lasting 30 days or more in which case the customer would be in a hospital, rest home, nursing home or other such facility and the unit to which the service is provided would be unoccupied for the entire period. In such case, the meter bill will still be read at the regular time and the customer will be billed if the meter shows any usage. **In case of customer death or property vacancy, if the property owner or estate does not want services at the unit, they may request the services be disconnected and the meter removed. In such cases, the property owner/estate will be required to pay a fee set by Council from time to time to help offset the overhead costs of maintaining the Town's water system.**

Note: Committee recommendation is for this fee to be \$15 per month.

51.99 Penalty

Add section C – Late Payment:

Any bill not paid on or before the due date will incur a 10% penalty for late payment.

Nuisance Code: As it relates to Section 91.03 Nuisance Enumerated, it is proposed to:

Remove the word “**annoying or annoyance**” from sections 91.03(A) 2,3,4,7

Add to section 91.03(A) 3 “**All downed trees, including root ball, will be removed within 60 days of occurrence or discovery.**”

Change section 91.03(A) 5 from:

All obstructions caused or permitted on any street or sidewalk to the danger or annoyance of the public and all stones, rubbish dirt, filth, slops, vegetable matter or other article thrown or placed by any person on or in any street, sidewalk or other public place, which in any way may cause any injury or annoyance to the public.

To:

Only organic materials readily susceptible to decay or rot may be maintained in compost piles for the express purpose of producing compost for use on the property where it is located. Examples of such acceptable materials include leaves, grass clippings, food scraps, etc.

Compost piles must be well-controlled, screened from public view, and maintained to prevent the contents from burning or blowing off of the subject property. No other materials, such as trash, rubbish, tires, or similar waste materials, may be accumulated on any property. Compost piles which stink or produce foul or offense orders beyond the subject property lines must be either removed or appropriately confined to prevent the smell from escaping the subject property.

Add to section 91.03(A) item 10:

Grass, weeds, or similar vegetation in excess of 8 inches in height shall be deemed to be a nuisance subject to trimming or mowing by the Town, or its agents, at the expense of the property owner.

Add to section 91.03(A) item 11:

All vehicle parking must be in compliance with Town Code Chapter 70

Land Usage Code: As it relates to Section 150.24 Posting and Size Numbers, it is proposed to:

Change the language from:

Numerals indicating the official numbers for each principal building or each front entrance to such building shall be posted in a manner as to be visible and distinguishable from the street on which the property is located. These numbers shall be at least three high in size.

To:

Numerals indicating the official numbers for each principal building or each front entrance to such building shall be posted in a manner as to be visible and distinguishable from the street on which the property is located. **Buildings not visible from the street shall have the numbers posted at the street.** These numbers shall be at least **4”** high and **½ inch wide.**

Note: this change is necessary to be in compliance with the State Fire Code

Zoning: It is proposed to:

Change the definition of allowable occupancies in the Core Commercial District Zone to include: “Temporary vacation rentals not to exceed 2 bedrooms per unit”. This would include first floor/ground floor occupancy for these types of temporary vacation rentals.



**TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE
REGULAR SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY MARCH 12, 2024
INDEPENDENCE, VIRGINIA
6:00 PM
INDEPENDENCE VOLUNTEER 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: Laura Ratcliffe, Town Manager, Roger Brooks, Town Attorney, Matthew Adams, Police Chief, Kim Farmer, Town Clerk, Terry Osborne, Public Works Director, and Mary Ann Halsey, Special Events Coordinator.

CITIZENS & GUESTS: Shaina Stockton, The Declaration, Michelle Pridgen, Jennifer Snow, Shannon Miller, Maykayla Miller, Mary Meier, Robbie Patton, and Mary Thomas.

- Public Hearings
 - None
- Call to Order
 - Welcome/Decorum-Mayor Sexton called the meeting to order this 12th day of March 2024, and declared a quorum present.
 - Approval of Agenda, Consent Agenda, Meeting Minutes-Mayor Sexton stated there were two changes on the old business agenda regarding special events and police vehicles. Mayor Sexton asked for approval of the changes as presented. **VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER made a motion to approve the agenda, consent agenda, and minutes as presented. COUNCILWOMAN JOAN COLLINS seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- Reports, Presentations or Requests
 - Mary Thomas, Wythe Grayson Library Director, gave council an update as to what programs/services the library has to offer residents. Ms. Thomas stated that this year is the library's 75th anniversary. Ms. Thomas encouraged council and citizens to use their services.
 - Mary Meier, and Robbie Patton, Family Resource Center, gave council a refresher of the services the Family Resource Center provides. The agency helped 76 victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, etc. last year. The month of April is child abuse/sexual assault month. Mr. Patton reinforced that there is not a charge for services provided by the center. Mr. Patton stated to let Ms. Meier know if they can be of any assistance to the Town and they are open to educating the public about their services.
- Old Business
 - Motion to Approve 2023 Audit:

- The FY 2023 Audit was presented at last month's meeting. The council needs to approve the audit. **VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER made a motion to approve the FY 2023 audit as presented.**
- Prior year Utility Uncollectible Payment and Penalties Write Off:
 - Recommendation from Infrastructure Committee is to approve writing off all uncollectible amounts incurred by the Town from January 2015 to December 2022 for customers in balance or inactive status. **COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY made motion to write of the prior uncollectible payment and penalties as presented in Town Manager's report. COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- Police Vehicle:
 - Rural Development has a grant available for \$25,000 that may be used to purchase a vehicle for the Police Department. Chief Adams is driving a 2015 Explorer that needs several repairs. An additional amount of \$11,820 to \$18,000 is needed for capital to replace the 2015 Explorer. Chief Adams got three quotes, Durango, \$51,267, Dodge Ram \$52,386, and Ford F-150 \$58,275. After general discussion **COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL made a motion to proceed with purchasing the Dodge Ram pickup in next year's budget. COUNCILMAN MARK MILLER seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- Special Events:
 - Town Manager Laura Ratcliffe stated that Jennifer Snow and Crystal Cureton are both willing to help with the Town events. After general discussion council agreed to hold the Mtn Fall Foliage/Privy Race Event for one more year. The Town will work with Grayson County Parks & Recreation, put more effort into getting the word out and get more volunteers in hopes of getting more people to attend. Then will decide if the event will continue or not.
- New Business
 - Surplus Public Works Equipment: (Public Works Director Terry Osborne)
 - Public Works have a boring machine that is not in use. Project Director Osborne and Town Manager Ratcliffe recommend surplus it. **COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL made a motion to surplus the boring machine. VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
 - 2024 4th of July Fireworks: (Councilwoman Kit Marshall)
 - There are three options to sit off the Fireworks for 2024. The first one is at the Independence Elementary School, where they were put off last year, the second one in the field at the Methodist Church, and the third one is at the Grayson County Park. The park is not in Town limits and there is the potential that you will not be able to see them. The Committee decided that the best option was to keep them at Independence Elementary School. Town Manager Ratcliffe will reach out to the Cureton's and Nester's regarding their animals. **COUNCILWOMAN KIT MARSHALL made a motion to have the fireworks show at the Independence Elementary School, COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
 - Main Street America Membership: (Councilwoman Kit Marshall)
 - Councilwoman Kit Marshall and Town Manager Laura Ratcliffe have been looking into the Exploring Main Street Program. As a member of the program there are grant opportunities. There is no cost to join the program. The only obligation would be to participate in a one-hour virtual webinar and pass a resolution. This program would consist of engagement with Town business owners. More information was included in the packets. **COUNCILWOMAN KIT MARSHALL made a motion to approve the Resolution for Application to the Exploring Main Street Program for the Town of Independence, VA as presented. COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
 - Hope Grant: (Councilwoman Kit Marshall)
 - Councilwoman Kit Marshall was made aware of a grant opportunity through Well Spring Foundation which opens up June 1st. There is a possibility of getting \$25,000 of which can be used to put in a bike rack, playground equipment, picnic tables, etc. The reporting is very simple

with no matching funds. The only cost would be Councilwoman Kit Marshall's time in writing the grant. **COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL made a motion to approve applying for the HOPE grant. COUNCILMAN MARK MILLER seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**

- Food Truck Rally: (Town Manager Laura Ratcliffe)
 - Town Manager Ratcliffe would like to explore the option of having a Food Truck Rally on Fridays at the North Independence lot. The council asked Town Manager Ratcliffe to get more details about the event.
- Making Grayson Glow Light Storage: (Town Manager Ratcliffe)
 - The lights are going to need to be stored in a different location than where they are now. Rixey's U Store it has a couple of units available. **VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER made a motion for the Town to cover the expense for the storage of the lights for Making Grayson Glow Lights and to ear marked in the budget going forward. COUNCILMAN MARK MILLER seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- Infrastructure Code Change Recommendation : (Councilman Jason Cassell)
 - Included in the packets were the recommendations from the committee for Chapter 51 of the Town code book. **VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER made a motion to hold a public hearing on April 9th, 2024, 6:00pm at the Independence Volunteer Fire Department to take public comments on the proposed changes to the Independence Town Code Chapter 51 with the exception of 51.03. COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- Community Development Code Change Recommendations: (Councilwoman Kit Marshall)
 - Councilwoman Kit Marshall stated that Police Chief Matthew Adams brought up an issue regarding the Independence Town Code regarding Nuisance. **COUNCILWOMAN JOAN COLLINS made a motion to hold a public hearing on April 9th, 2024, 6:00pm at the Independence Volunteer Fire Department regarding the proposed changes to the Independence Town Code Chapter 91 and Chapter 150. COUNCILWOMAN KIT MARSHALL seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**

Town Staff Report

- Town Clerk/Treasurer: (Kim Farmer)
 - Town Clerk, Kim Farmer, stated that she and Kim Phipps would be attending the FMS conference March 18th through March 21 at Myrtle Beach.
- Police Report (Chief Matthew Adams)
 - Chief Adams stated the Police Department along with Food City Pharmacy will hold National Drug Take Back on April 27th. Policeman Joe Holderfield got certified to do the breathalyzer testing. The Police Department worked on several serious cases over the past month. Chief Adams was very proud of his department.
- Project Manager/Utility Directors Report- (Terry Osborne)
 - Project Manager Terry Osbornes written report was in packets. The unaccountability rate is still increasing. Public Works found one leak in the woods while checking for a valve. Hopefully this find will help decrease the unaccountability. Rural Water is coming next week to meet with the public works department. The lead and copper project has to be completed by October.
- Special Events Report- (Mary Ann Halsey):
 - Mary Ann did not have anything to report on.
- Town Manager's Report- (Laura Ratcliffe):
 - Programs, Projects, and Updates
 - Town Park - the Town received two quotes for the Town Park which will be discussed in closed session. The quotes are higher than budgeted.
 - Lead & Copper – Project planning meeting is scheduled. The Town has a \$250,000 grant for the project. Mailing to resident's regarding the survey will be done by next month.

- Zoning Request – for adding temporary vacation units to core commercial. Planning Commission voted to hold a public hearing on April 9th. Also, a request from AEP regarding new transmission lines and towers. Information given to Board of Zoning Appeals Chairman Joe Reeves.
 - Upcoming Events – Legends of Grayson Old Time event will be at the 1908 Courthouse on April 5th & 6th and Grayson County Art & Ag Tour is in September. Flyer in packets regarding Cleaning up the Town of Independence which will be on March 23rd at 10am.
- Mayor’s Report
 - Mayor Sexton stated himself and Town Manager Laura Ratcliffe met with the employees in the different departments. Next week they will be going to the WWTP. This gives employees the opportunity to discuss individual concerns and/or needs.
- Town Attorney’s Report:
 - Town Attorney Roger Brooks did not have anything to report on in open session.
- Committee Updates
 - Personnel Committee – Councilman Cassell has a closed session issue. Councilman Cassell called a personnel committee meeting for Thursday, March 21st, 11:00 am, at 136 East Main Street to review Town Manager Ratcliffe’s performance.
 - Finance Committee – Vice Mayor Meier called a committee meeting to be held Thursday, March 21st, 5:00pm at 136 East Main Street.
 - Infrastructure- Councilman Cassell called a committee meeting for Tuesday, March 19th, 6:00 pm, at 136 East Main Street.
 - Community Development-Councilwoman Marshall stated that the Town will hold a litter pickup day on March 23rd, 10:00 am and would love to have council attend. The committee purchased 4 new trash receptacles with the money received from the litter grant which will be placed at the Town Park. The committee is looking at options for planting trees, annuals, evergreens, etc. The committee is also looking at ways to improve neglected areas in Town and resources to maintain what is going to be done in the future. Approximately 50 pavers were left over from the Tractor Garden project. These will be used as a fundraiser for the Town Parks. Councilwoman Kit Marshall will head up this fundraiser. The committee will meet with Cynthia from the Permacultural group so she can share her knowledge regarding what plants will be the best for the Town. Councilman Buddy Halsey made a suggestion for to have VDOT come and clean the streets.
- Community Matters – Registered Speakers and Public Comment-
 - Michelle Pridgen, Independence Farmer’s Market, stated that the vendor meeting for Farmers Market vendors is on April 5th. Ms. Pridgen thanked Town Manager Ratcliffe for giving her a really good understanding regarding the Town Park structure. Ms. Pridgen thanked Police Chief Adams for handling an issue at the Free Market.
- Closed Session
 - Personnel
 - Litigation
 - Contract Negotiation
 - Economic Development

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 and Steve Marshall to stay. VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER 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
Buddy Halsey-I So Certify
Mark Miller -I So Certify

Jason Cassell-I So Certify
Joan Collins-I So Certify
Kit Marshall-I So Certify

- The Town received two quotes for completing phase 3 of the Town Park project. **VICE MAYOR JIM MEIER made a motion to accept the lowest bid at \$130,600 submitted by Jones Excavating. COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL seconded. Motion carried with all ayes.**
 - There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned
-

-Meeting Decorum-

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- Behavior during all official meetings shall be consistent with the behavior exercised in any court or legislative room found within the Commonwealth of Virginia; and,
- There shall be no outbursts, heckling or other forms of disrespectful behavior by any individuals present within these chambers; and,
- Persons wishing to speak shall do so respectfully and in accordance with the applicable Rules of Procedures and/or at the specific direction of the presiding official; and,
- Out of respect for the official business being conducted, for those conducting the official business and for those present for same purpose, there shall be no private conversations taking place in the audience or other forms of distractive behavior or nuisance; and
- Please turn off cell phones and other such devices before entering the meeting room.



Town of Independence
PO Box 99; 317 East Main Street
Independence, VA 24348
(276)773-3703

To: Mayor Sexton & Town Council
From: Laura Ratcliffe, Town Manager
Date: April 4, 2024
RE: Community Development Block Grant Housing Opportunity

Virginia Community Development Block Grant – Mount Rogers Planning District has approached the Town about restarting the process for applying for a housing grant, focusing on rehabilitating properties in certain areas of the Town. They are currently working with two other localities (Wytheville and Damascus) to apply. Several members of council were involved in approving the Town to apply for this grant in 2019. Unfortunately, due to the former Town Manager leaving in May 2022, the process stopped. Included with the Town Council packet is the report prepared by MRPDC for the project. In order to re-start the process:

- MRPDC would update the current status of the houses identified in the report.
- The Town will need to go through the process for the two public hearings outlined in the included document.
- **There is a tight time frame as the application deadline is expected to be in June.**
- If awarded in July 2025, the project period would not start until October 2025.

It is important for Council to understand the Town's future role in this process:

- The Town becomes a mortgage holder for the grant funds. There is ongoing responsibilities by the Town employees to administer the process once the rehabilitation is completed.
- The Town can elect to forgive or waive the debt
- If the Town elects to do a project, and is awarded, it is better to focus on one area and then look to do another project focusing on another area of Town. Multiple grants may be obtained this way vs. a single grant for the entire Town. It gives the Town a longer period of time to complete the projects.

TOWN-WIDE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE, VIRGINIA



May 20, 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This plan was prepared on behalf of the Town of Independence, which would like to acknowledge the Town Council and MRPDC employees for their efforts in the plan's development:

Town of Independence Council

E.F. "Butch" Reeves, IV, Mayor
Tom Maxwell, Vice Mayor
A. Jason Cassell, Council Member
Ronald Sexton, Council Member
Buddy Halsey, Council Member
Jeff Miller, Council Member
Jim Meier, Council Member
Reid Walters, Town Manager



MRPDC Staff

Brian Reed, Deputy Director, Mount Rogers PDC
James Moss, Housing Director, Mount Rogers PDC
Jordan Powers, Senior Planner, Mount Rogers PDC

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Independence has a vested interest in understanding and quantifying the condition of its housing and residential neighborhoods. Healthy, stable neighborhoods provide a solid foundation for a vibrant community. The Town has undertaken a comprehensive community-wide survey of housing to determine the extent of deficiencies at an area level. The study aims to identify the areas in Town with the highest levels of housing deficiencies. Another purpose of this study is to develop a plan to rehabilitate the identified housing units and improve neighborhood infrastructure.

The age of the current housing stock means that many Town residents with low-to-moderate incomes will be increasingly burdened by the deterioration of their homes. Given the level of need and fiscal strain in the community, resources are limited and must be strategically targeted to those neighborhoods demonstrating the most need.

The Town of Independence applied for a housing needs assessment planning grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and was notified of a conditional award on March 11, 2020. The Town was tasked with making visual assessments of housing units utilizing a five-point scale. The scale rated each property as 1) sound; 3) intermediate deficiencies; 4) major deficiencies, or 5) dilapidated. The Town was divided into 5 Areas and visual assessment ratings were grouped by area and recorded. The Mount Rogers Planning District Commission assisted the Town with the assessment and implementation of the planning grant.

Through this plan, the Town has identified viable neighborhoods for concentrated improvement efforts, emphasizing addressing housing issues. This master plan for revitalization will be the Town's roadmap in its efforts to promote safe neighborhoods and sustainable housing.

PURPOSE AND INTENT

The Town of Independence has an interest and need to understand and quantify the current state of housing in the Town. Substandard housing can lead to other problems throughout the community, such as resident safety, property values, health issues, and other indicators factoring into the quality of life. Concentrations of substandard housing conditions can have a downward effect on the entire community, and it is in the best interest of the Town as a whole to address those concentrated areas of substandard housing and prevent other existing neighborhoods from transitioning to a state of disrepair.

The Town has utilized the information gathered during the needs assessment to quantify the approximate number of substandard housing units and identify/prioritize those areas where concentrations of deteriorating housing units exist. This information has been used, in part, to identify project areas that are potentially eligible for Virginia Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) assistance. The Neighborhood Needs Assessment Management Team has prioritized those areas with the highest concentrations of substandard housing units and other neighborhood deficiencies so the Town can address those areas in an orderly fashion. Other strategies will be utilized by the Town to address scattered-site issues.

BACKGROUND

Like many of its neighbors in southwestern Virginia, the Town of Independence ranks among the more fiscally distressed communities in the Commonwealth and has an aging housing stock.

The following data, taken from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 decennial Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data, illustrate the need identified on a Town-wide level:

- The Town of Independence has a median household income of \$34,706 whereas the state of Virginia's is \$76,398.
- The Town's poverty rate is 22.3% percent, compared to the state rate of 9.9 percent.
- There are 603 housing units in the Town; 504, or 83.6 percent, are occupied.
- Percentage of households spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing:
 - Owners with a mortgage, 25.4 percent
 - Owners without a mortgage, 10.1 percent
 - Renters, 47.7 percent
- 46.1 percent of all housing units are 40 years old or older; only 6.9 percent of units have been constructed since 2010

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

A demographic analysis of the existing Independence housing supply provides insight into the current state of housing within the Town. While certain demographic factors (primarily household income) are directly applicable to eligibility for future CDBG funding, other demographic characteristics provide insight into the existing conditions of the Town of Independence, and how those conditions may affect housing. *It should be noted that decennial Census data and, particularly, American Community Survey estimates may vary from on-the-ground documentation.*

Population

The population of Independence has decreased significantly in recent decades. U.S. Census data reveal a decline from 1,305 persons in 2010 to 1,211 persons in 2015, a drop of 7.2 percent. The 2020 Census population estimates of 1,101 persons reflect a total decline of 15.6 percent during the last decade.

Age

The median age in the Town increased from 46.9 years in 2010 to 53.0 years in 2020. This “aging” of the Town’s population is reflected in the age distribution in **Table 1** below.

Table 1
Age Distribution

Age	2010	2015	2020
Median Age	46.9	39.9	53.0
Under 5 years	3.2%	4.1%	4.2%
5 to 19 years	14.6%	17.7%	15.3%
20 to 64 years	53.2%	51.6%	47.7%
65 years & over	29.0%	26.6%	32.8%

Sources: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2010, 2015, 2020

Income

Table 2 shows recent average household income for both owner- and renter-occupied households. While owner-occupied income has seen a noticeable increase in the past eight years, renter-occupied income has seen an increase that is nearly double of what was seen by owner-occupied. This is in part due to a shortage of available housing stock that requires higher-income individuals to rent, instead of purchasing a home. Another possibility is the increasing popularity of renting properties by the younger demographic.

Table 2
Average Household Income

	2010	2020	Change
All households	\$25,978	\$34,706	33.6%
Owner-occupied	\$40,833	\$55,750	36.5%
Renter-occupied	\$13,456	\$23,721	76.3%

Sources: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2010, 2020

Housing Occupancy

Table 3 reflects an increase over the past decade in total housing units, stagnation in the number of occupied housing units and a significant increase in vacant units.

**Table 3
Occupied Housing Units, Vacancy Rate**

	2010		2015		2020	
Total housing units	558		650		603	
Occupied	504	90.3%	587	90.3%	504	83.6%
Vacant	54	9.7%	63	9.7%	99	16.4%

Sources: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2010, 2015, 2020

Housing Physical Characteristics and Value

Single-family detached homes comprise 74.1 percent of the housing units in the Town, with mobile homes accounting for 2.0 percent. The remaining units are multi-family or attached single-family units.

More than 46.1% percent of the Town's housing stock was built before 1980, with the highest concentration of new housing built in the 1980s and 1990s. In contrast to the aging housing stock, housing stock that has been built in the last decade accounts for less than seven percent of the total supply.

**Table 4
Physical Characteristics, Age of Housing Stock**

Units in Structure	2010		Year Built		2020	
	Count	Percentage	Year Range	Count	Percentage	
1-unit, detached	447	74.1%	2014 or later	37	6.1%	
1-unit, attached	11	1.8%	2010 to 2013	0	0.0%	
2 units	21	3.5%	2000 to 2009	48	8.0%	
3 or 4 units	46	7.6%	1990 to 1999	51	8.5%	
5 to 9 units	58	9.6%	1980 to 1989	84	13.9%	
10 to 19 units	5	0.8%	1970 to 1979	107	17.7%	
20 or more units	3	0.5%	1960 to 1969	80	13.3%	
Mobile home	12	2.0%	1950 to 1959	87	14.4%	
			1940 to 1949	64	10.6%	
			1939 or earlier	45	7.5%	

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2020

Manufactured Housing

As noted in **Table 4** above, roughly two percent of Town housing units are manufactured homes. Because of their age and condition, many of these units cannot be repaired to suitable standards under existing federal funding guidelines and will likely need to be replaced with conventionally constructed or modern modular units.

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Independence is \$108,100, which is slightly lower than Grayson County (\$109,800), but remains far less than that of Virginia's median value (\$282,800) for owner-occupied housing units.

Table 5
Value of Owner-Occupied Housing

Value		
Less than \$50,000	32	11.3%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	86	30.5%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	79	28.0%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	20	7.1%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	55	19.5%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	0	0.0%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	7	2.5%
\$1,000,000 or more	3	1.1%
Median (dollars)	\$108,800	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2020

Housing Affordability

The annual median incomes of all occupied housing units are noticeably lower in Independence than in the entirety of Grayson County. The difference in income and housing cost that is most apparent when comparing the Town and County, is with renter-occupied units. Housing costs as a percentage of income are higher within the Town, in every group represented below but most noticeably with renter-occupied units.

Table 6 Housing Cost

	Independence		Grayson County	
	Median Income	Housing Cost	Median Income	Housing Cost
Occupied units	\$34,706	21.8%	\$41,558	16.2%
Owner	\$55,750	12.4%	\$44,613	13.0%
Renter	\$23,721	28.3%	\$27,207	21.9%

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2020

While the average owner-occupied household pays much less than 30 percent of its income for housing in Independence, there are still some households for which housing is unaffordable. Housing Unaffordability is defined as monthly housing costs that exceed 30% of monthly income.

Chart 7 illustrates that households that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing are most commonly renter-occupied households with annual incomes of less than \$20,000/year. By using the definition of unaffordability that was previously stated, roughly 52% of all occupied households in the Town of Independence are living in unaffordable housing.

Chart 7

Households Paying 30 Percent or More for Housing

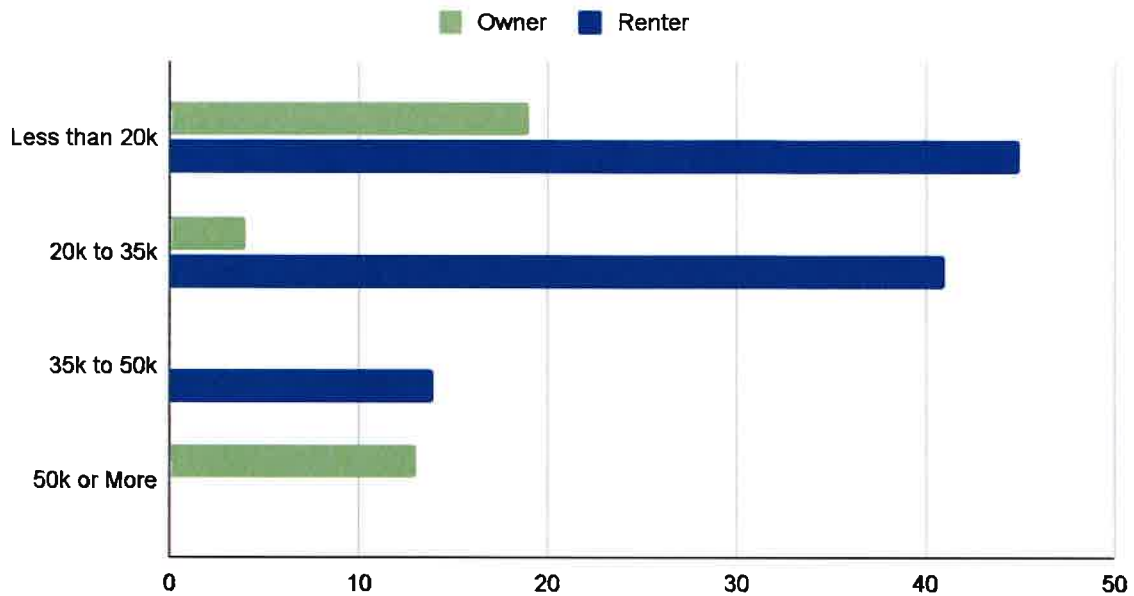


Table 9 illustrates the median cost of housing for homeowners using selected monthly costs for owner-occupied units. These selected costs include property expenses such as mortgages, property insurance, real estate taxes, utility and fuel bills, and, where appropriate, condominium fees and mobile home costs. Monthly costs are shown separately for units with and without a mortgage.

The median monthly cost for homeowners with a mortgage in the Town of Independence is \$807. Just over 48 percent of the Town's homeowners with a mortgage payment of less than 20 percent of their household income for monthly costs, while 73.6 percent pay less than 30 percent.

The median monthly cost for homeowners without a mortgage in the Town is \$242. The vast majority, nearly 89 percent, of homeowners without mortgages in the Town pay less than 20 percent of their household income toward household costs, while less than 2.1 percent require more than 30 percent of their monthly income to cover housing needs.

TABLE 8
Selected Monthly Owner Costs (SMOC)

MONTHLY HOUSING COSTS			SMOC AS A % OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
Less than \$300	154	30.6%	Less than 20 percent	66	48.5%
\$300 to \$499	115	22.8%	20.0 to 24.9 percent	34	25.0%
\$500 to \$799	139	27.6%	25.0 to 29.9 percent	0	0.0%
\$800 to \$999	52	10.3%	30.0 to 34.9 percent	13	9.6%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	23	4.6%	35.0 percent or more	23	16.9%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	15	3.0%			
\$2,000 or more	0	0.0%			
Median (dollars)	447				
Owner-Occupied Units	282				

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2020

Gross rent, or total housing costs for tenants, is the contract rent plus the average monthly cost of utilities and fuels paid by the renter. The median gross rent paid by Town renters is \$429, with nearly all falling below \$1,000 per month.

The median cost of gross rent is lower than the monthly cost for town homeowners with a mortgage, but more than the monthly cost of Town homeowners without a mortgage. Nearly half of town renters require over 30 percent of their income to meet monthly housing costs.

TABLE 9
Gross Rent

MONTHLY HOUSING COSTS			MONTHLY HOUSING COSTS AS A % OF INCOME		
Occupied Units Paying Rent	216		Less than 15 percent	66	30.6%
Less than \$500	114	52.8%	15 to 19.9 percent	21	9.7%
\$500 \$999	88	40.7%	20 to 24.9 percent	6	2.8%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	14	6.5%	25.0 to 29.9 percent	23	10.6%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	0	0.0%	30.0 to 34.9 percent	41	19.0%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	0	0.0%	35.0 percent or more	59	27.3%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	0	0.0%	Not computed	6	
\$3,000 or more	0	0.0%			
No Rent Paid	6				
Median (dollars)	429				

Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2020

NEIGHBORHOOD DEFINITION

A windshield survey was performed through each neighborhood area; all residential streets were covered to identify general neighborhood housing conditions and any concentrated areas where the houses are in greatest need of housing rehabilitation

Using a map provided by Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, the Town of Independence was divided into four quadrants using US Rt. 21 and US Rt. 58 as primary identifiers for the study. Each area contains a mixture of housing types and dates constructed. Area 2 covers the area containing a portion of E. Main Street, S. Independence AVE, and the Hilltop Street areas, and Area 4 consists of the E. Main St. and the Klondike Road area. These two areas contain the largest number of homes with the most concentration.

The following table outlines each of the four neighborhood assessment areas.

#	Area Name	Windshield Assessment
1.	Area One	The East area of Town from Grayson PKWY to the start of East Main Street has a mixture of businesses, schools, residential housing, and Industrial. Most of the houses along with the main road range from good condition to substandard.
2.	Area Two	Middle section of the Town includes a section of Main Street, South Independence AVE, and the Hilltop area. The section includes downtown businesses, and single-family dwellings both rental and owner-occupied. The houses in the Hilltop area have the largest cluster of homes in disrepair.
3.	Area Three	Western area of the intersection of US 21 to Town limits near Michelin Dr, includes some businesses and industry with a mix of housing. This area has a small-scale mobile home park.
4.	Area Four	Northwest section of Town from the intersection of Main and N. Independence AVE to the Elk Creek PKWY. This area has banking and a few businesses before one would pass Davis St. After Davis the area is mostly residential with a few scattered gas stations and stores.

METHODOLOGY

The Town of Independence with the assistance of James Moss Rehab Specialist Services and other MRPDC staff skilled at compiling housing needs assessments, to conduct a housing conditions assessment of residential structures in the town. A street-by-street windshield survey of housing conditions was conducted for the Town. With the majority of the assessment completed in 2020. The visual assessments were based on observations of building exteriors from the public right-of-way. The condition ratings utilized in this initial assessment were:

- Sound / Good Condition– well-maintained appearance
- Requiring Rehab – failing exterior conditions such as roof, windows, porches, siding, etc.
- Major Deficiencies – broken windows/doors, failing roof coverings, damaged foundations, structural failures, etc.
- Vacant/Abandoned – houses with no visual residents, posted for sale or rent, or houses in non-livable condition with structural damage, burned out, or overgrown structures and sites.

The condition assessment categories were based on the amount of Community Development Block Grant funds available per unit for rehabilitating each property using DHCD’s Housing Quality Standards. If the property appeared to require more than the maximum to rehabilitate, the house was noted as having “Major Deficiencies” and will probably require auxiliary funds or be a “Substantial Reconstruction”.

Table 11: Housing Conditions By Neighborhood Area with Total Counts

Area	Total Houses Counted	Good / Sound	Requiring Rehab	Major Deficiencies	Vacant For sale or rent	Abandoned
Area 1	149	108	13	24	2	2
Area 2	66	22	25	14	5	0
Area 3	98	61	21	12	3	1
Area 4	101	71	14	15	1	0
Totals	424	262	73	65	11	3

HOUSING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

Table 2 tabulates the housing conditions assessment, conducted in 2020 of the residential structures in the Town of Independence, VA. The assessments were based on visual observations of residential building exteriors from the public right-of-way using a set of defined condition ratings. Exterior conditions were assumed to represent the overall condition of the structure since detailed interior inspections were not feasible. The condition ratings utilized in the assessment are explained in the Methodology Section on Page 2, scored on the following five-point scale:

- 1) **Sound / Good:** No defects beyond regular maintenance needs 1 point
- 2) **Intermediate Deficiencies:** One or more deficiencies beyond regular maintenance warranting rehabilitation 3 points
- 3) **Major Deficiencies:** Warranting substantial rehabilitation 4 points
- 4) **Dilapidated:** Unsuitable for rehabilitation / warranting demolition and removal 5 points

Buildings scored between 2 and 5 are considered blighting influences as they are in various stages of disrepair beyond regular maintenance needs. All areas have some degree of blighting influences and a wide range of building conditions. A summary of the housing conditions for each neighborhood follows:

Table 12: Housing Conditions Assessment, Average Condition by Unit, Total Counts

<i>Building Condition</i>	<i>Sound/ Good</i>	<i>Intermediate</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>Dilapidated</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Avg Condition</i>
	1	3	4	5		
Area 1	108	15	24	2	149	1.7
Area 2	22	14	26	4	66	2.8
Area 3	61	21	12	4	98	2.0
Area 4	71	14	15	1	101	1.4
Total	262	64	77	11	414	2.0

Source: Rehab Specialist & MRPDC staff, Field Assessment, 2020

HOUSING SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Although housing conditions throughout the Town of Independence consist primarily of homes in sound condition, there are **two areas** with maximum need:

1. Area #2 which includes Hilltop has 26 houses with major deficiencies.
2. Area #1 has 24 homes with major deficiencies and 15 with intermediate deficiencies.
3. Area #3 demonstrated a higher need than area 1, however, it has fewer homes with major deficiencies.

Overall, 48% of the housing stock in Independence is in sound condition. Independence has very few vacant homes for sale and the market for those houses is very good with a quick turnaround.

A section of the Hilltop area would be the ideal location for a CDBG project

Summary of raw data from the street by street count:

Total Houses Counted: 414

Total Houses in Good Condition: 262

Total Houses Needing Rehab \$25,000: 23

Total Houses Needing Rehab < \$25,000:77

Total Houses Needing Substantial Rehab: 38 Total Vacant / For Sale Houses: 11

Total Abandoned Houses: 3

Buildings not included in count:

Area 2: MULTIFAMILY/FINANCE apartment complex

Area 3: Penn Court apartment complex

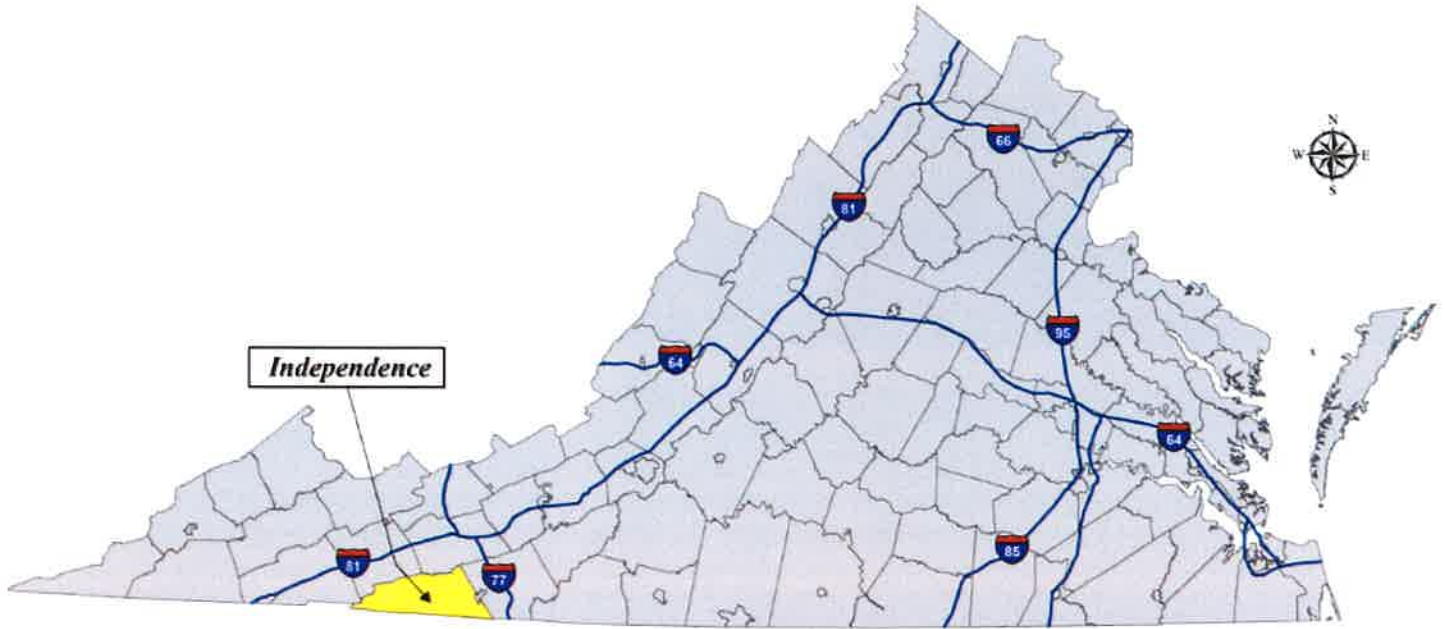
**Independence Housing Needs
Assessment**

Streets in Area 2 East Main, Hilltop Drive, Bedwell St, Hackler, and E. Independence	Sound/ Good	Requiring Rehab \$25,000 to \$35,000	Major Deficiencies	Vacant For sale or rent	Abandoned	Total Houses
Hilltop Drive	2	9	8	5		23
Bedwell Street	10					10
Nichols Drive MULTIFAMILY/FINANCE						
Library Street	1	2				3
Williams Street	2	3				5
Wolf AVE		2				2
East Main		7		1		8
Independence Ave	13	1	1			15
Totals	28	24	9	6	0	66

APPENDIX A

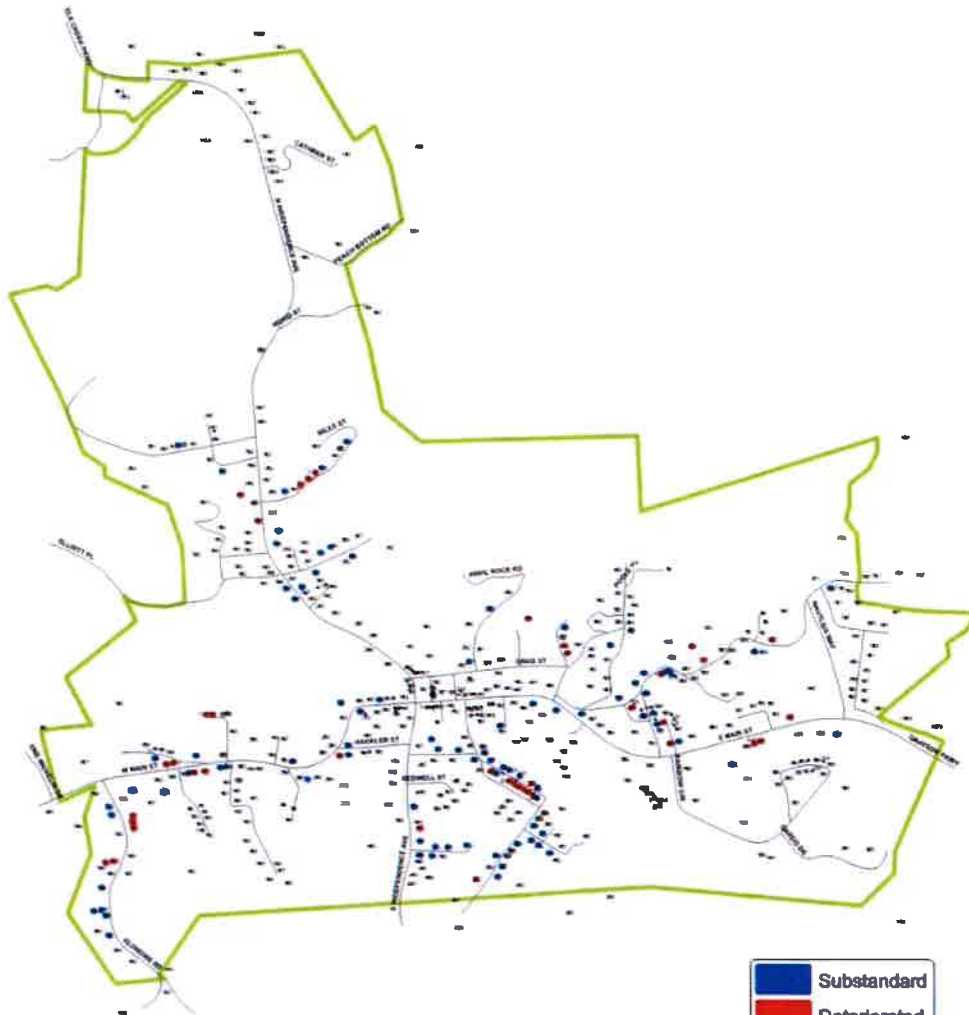
TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE PROJECT MAPS

Independence Housing Project



Map by MRPDC
May, 2022

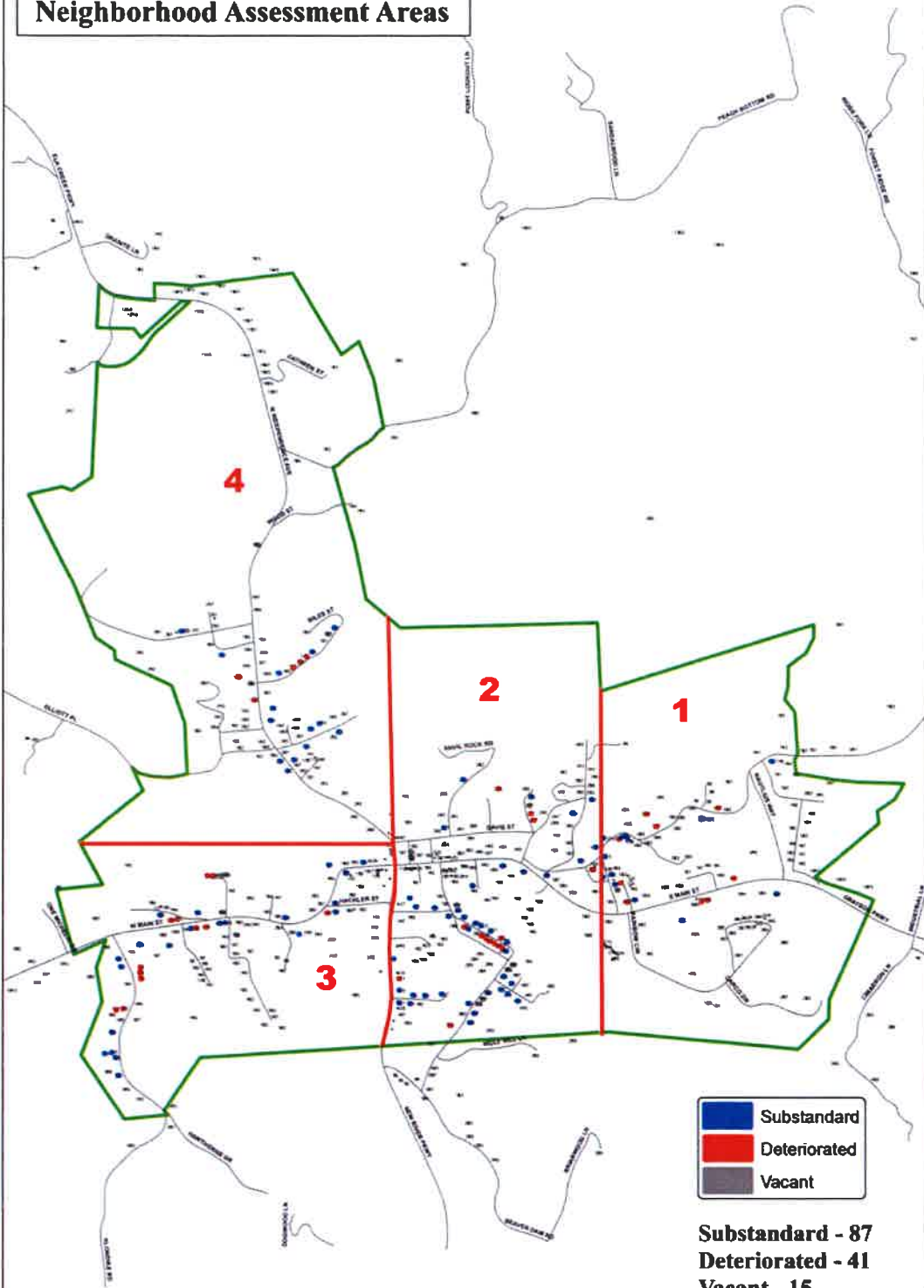
Independence Windshield Survey



Substandard - 87
Deteriorated - 41
Vacant - 15



Independence Windshield Survey Neighborhood Assessment Areas



	Substandard
	Deteriorated
	Vacant

Substandard - 87
Deteriorated - 41
Vacant - 15



Legend

- Architecture Resources
- Architecture Labels
- Individual Historic District Properties
- Archaeological Resources
- Archaeology Labels
- DHR Easements
- USGS GIS Place names
- County Boundaries



Title: Independence Housing Project

Date: 5/19/2022

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice of AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.

APPENDIX B
UTILIZED FORMS

Surveyor _____
House Number _____

**TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY**

LMI _____
Date _____

TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE is currently involved in a study to access the needs for housing improvements. This information will be used to apply for a Department of Housing and Community Development Block Grant. If funded, the grant money would be used to make improvements to substandard housing in isolated areas/communities within the TOWN.

Information requested from you in this survey is needed to complete this study. THIS INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL. The Mount Rogers Planning District Commission is working with the Town at their request to help with this study.

Name (Required) _____ Phone # _____
Mailing & Physical (911) Address _____
Do you own or rent this house? Own _____ Rent _____
If you rent, would you be interested in pursuing a homeownership opportunity for this property? Yes _____ No _____
How many bedrooms are in the footprint of the addressed unit? _____
What source (electric, oil, gas, other) of heat is used to heat the unit? _____

TO BE ANSWERED BY OWNERS OF RENTAL PROPERTIES ONLY

Owner's name _____ Phone# _____
Mailing & Physical (911) Address _____

1. If funded, would you be interested in creating homeownership with your current or a new renter? Yes _____ No _____
2. If funded, would you be willing to rent this property to a LMI household for a minimum of 10 years? Yes No _____ If yes, please sign the Landlord Participation Agreement attached.
3. If funded, would you be willing to create a homeownership opportunity with the current, or a new renter? Yes _____ No _____
4. If funded, would you be willing to provide any matching financial contribution to your property? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, approximately how much? Amount \$ _____ or % _____
5. Please comment on any specific problems or needs which you feel definitely should be addressed for this proposed neighborhood/community. _____

_____ # of Dependents \$ _____ Mortgage/Rent

RACE/ETHNIC STATUS: CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

American Indian or Alaska Native ___ Asian ___ Black or African American _____ White _____
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander ___ Asian and White _____
American Indian or Alaska Native and White ___ Black or African American and White _____
American Indian or Alaska Native and Black or African American _____
Balance of individuals reporting more than one race _____
Subcategory Hispanic or Latino _____ Not Hispanic or Latino _____

Please indicate any categories that apply to you or any members of your household:
Elderly (62+) ___ Handicapped _____ Female Head of Household _____
Black ___ Hispanic _____ American Indian Asian/Pacific Islander _____

Surveyor _____
 House Number _____

**TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE
 HOUSEHOLD SURVEY**

LMI _____
 Date _____

Please circle the number of persons residing in your household and check the appropriate blank (Above, Between, or Below) for your FAMILY INCOME on the same line as your family size. *Estimated Annual Income is needed to determine A-T-P.*

#IN	HOUSE	Below	(30%)	Between	(50%)	Between	(80%)	Above
1	_____	\$ 12,490	_____	\$ 19,300	_____	\$ 30,900	_____	_____
2	_____	\$ 16,910	_____	\$ 22,050	_____	\$ 35,300	_____	_____
3	_____	\$ 21,330	_____	\$ 24,800	_____	\$ 39,700	_____	_____
4	_____	\$ 25,750	_____	\$ 27,550	_____	\$ 44,100	_____	_____
5	_____	\$ 29,800	_____	\$ 29,800	_____	\$ 47,650	_____	_____
6	_____	\$ 32,000	_____	\$ 32,000	_____	\$ 51,200	_____	_____
7	_____	\$ 34,200	_____	\$ 34,200	_____	\$ 55,700	_____	_____
8	_____	\$ 36,400	_____	\$ 36,400	_____	\$ 58,250	_____	_____

If this project was funded would you be interested in participating based on the information provided to you concerning the program's requirements and the information discussed pertaining to the Ability-To-Pay procedure? Yes _____ No _____

Are you currently on the public water system? Yes _____ No _____ If no, what is your water source? Well _____ Other _____

Are you experiencing any problems with your water system? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please describe: _____

Are you currently on the public sewer system? Yes _____ No _____ If No, What are you on: _____

Have you experienced problems with your sewage disposal system, such as failing drain fields, commodes flushing slowly, saturated drain fields, rodents, other? Yes _____ No _____

Do you have complete indoor plumbing? Yes _____ No _____

(Complete plumbing includes hot and cold piped water, a flush toilet, and a bathtub or shower.)

Which condition best describes your house?

- 1. Doesn't need repairs to roof, foundation, wiring, plumbing, etc.); Sound _____
- 2. Needs some repairs, old roof, poor wiring, no insulation, etc.); Deteriorating _____
- 3. Needs siding, roof leaks, poor or no foundation, dangerous wiring) Substandard _____

Do you feel the following are needed in your community

Housing Rehabilitation		St. Drainage Improve.		Water Improvements		Sewer Improvements		Other	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Please comment: _____

I certify that the information contained in this survey is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. **(It is a Federal offense to make willfully false statements or misrepresentations when participating in the VCDBG program.)**

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

**Town of Independence,
Virginia**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Step A: Gross Household Income: \$ _____ (A)

Step B: (-) Dependents \$ _____ (B)
\$480 for each dependent under the age of 18 years old.
Do not include head of household or spouse.

Step C: (-) Elderly \$ _____ (C)
\$400 per elderly Household (age 62 years and older).

Step D: (-) Other Deductibles \$ _____ (D)
Include documented, out-of pocket medical expenses
in excess of three (3%) of annual income.

Step E: A- (B+C+D) = Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) \$ _____ (E)

Step E: Monthly Income (AGI/12) \$ _____ (F)

Step G: Income Available for Housing \$ _____ (G)
(Monthly Income of Homeowners x .25)
(Monthly Income of Renters x (not to exceed)
.35)

Step H: Monthly Housing Costs \$ _____ (H)

Mortgage Payment: _____ \$

Homeowners Insurance: _____ \$

Real Estate Taxes: _____ \$

Utility Allowance: \$ _____

_____ (Gas, Electric, Heat, Public Sewer/ Water, and Garbage Only)

Step I: (G) - (H) = Amount available for Loan Repayment: \$ _____ (I)

APPENDIX B – CDBG CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

For All Potential Local Government Applicants:

It is important that community development projects carried out wholly or in part with Virginia Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds involve extensive citizen participation during the applications development process. Local citizen participation should be encouraged throughout the process of developing a Community Improvement Grant (CIG) application. In particular, participation by low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents of the project service area or a slum and blight area should be encouraged. Participation is encouraged prior to submitting a Planning Grant application, but there are no firm requirements.

The following steps, however, are required for each local government wishing to submit a Community Improvement Grant application, including both competitive round projects and projects being submitted under the open submission funds.

PUBLIC HEARING REQUIREMENT

At a minimum, at least two public hearings must be held during the CIG applications development period.

- The two hearings must, at a minimum, be held one week apart.
- Advertisements for the two public hearings must be published separately. Applicants may not only publish one advertisement that includes information on both public hearings.
- Both public hearings must be held within twelve months of the application deadline (defined by DHCD in 2020 as after March 30, 2019). In the case of the same applications being resubmitted from the prior competitive year, DHCD may waive the public hearing requirement on community development needs (first public hearing).
- Files must be maintained containing documentary evidence that the hearings were held, to include at a minimum a list of attendees, minutes of the hearings, and notices (2 types) of the public hearings.
- For regional applications, each participating locality must hold two public hearings as described above.
- Applicants must provide timely written answers to written comments and grievances, within 15 working days where practicable.

Each hearing must be held after adequate notice as described below:

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Advertisement must be made in a non-legal, locally-circulated newspaper with the largest general circulation at least seven days prior to each hearing. The public hearing notices must provide the address, phone number, TDD, and times for submitting comments and grievances to the applicant locality. If publishing in a weekly paper, be sure the ads are published in such a manner as to comply with the requirements outlined here.

Website; Bulletin Board are also accepted.

At least one other type of announcement must be done for each public hearing (examples below), at times and locations convenient to potential or actual beneficiaries, and with accommodation for the handicapped.

- Advertisement through local radio broadcast and/or television stations;
- Distribution of flyers in LMI areas and in the proposed service area(s);
- Announcements at local community organization meetings; or,
- Announcements through local churches and community centers located in LMI and proposed project areas.

FIRST PUBLIC HEARING

The first hearing must be held early in the CIG applications development process to identify the applicant's community development and housing needs, the range of eligible project types funded through the CDBG program and the amount of money available to the applicant, as well as the applicant's past performance (if applicable) in the CDBG program during the previous five years. At a minimum citizens should be furnished with information concerning the amount of funds available (including program income) for proposed activities and the range of activities that may be undertaken, including the estimated amount to be used for activities that will benefit low- and moderate-income persons, the proposed CDBG activities likely to result in displacement, and plans for minimizing displacement of persons as a result of the CDBG project, and plans to assist persons actually displaced by the project.

Between the two hearings applicants must make available to the public a fact sheet or applications summary that identifies the proposed activities and objectives for the project and identifies who will be affected by these activities. Citizens must have an opportunity to comment on this document.

SECOND PUBLIC HEARING

A second hearing must be held for public review of and comment on the final draft of the CIG applications. A final draft or detailed fact sheet presenting the key activities and eligible benefits of the project must be available at the second public hearing, if not before.

ADDITIONAL CITIZEN PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Local citizens should be provided with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information, and records relating to the applicant locality's proposed and actual use of CDBG funds. Meetings should be conducted according to the standards established for the public hearings cited below. CDBG-related information and records must be made available to interested citizens with the availability of such items announced at least in the same manner as the public hearing advertisements.

Technical assistance must be provided to groups representative of persons of low- and moderate-income that request such assistance in developing applications for use of CDBG funds. The level and type of assistance is determined by the applicant locality but must include at least consultation and written communication between a local contact person responsible for the CDBG applications' development and interested groups. The name, address, and telephone number of the contact person(s) must be made available upon request and announced at all public meetings held on the CDBG applications.

Where 5 percent or more of public hearing participants can be reasonably expected to be non-English speaking residents, applicants must take measures to accommodate their needs. Census data on the proposed project area and on the locality as a whole should be consulted to determine if this provision applies in a particular instance. Meeting this provision requires, at a minimum, having printed material available in the non-English language(s) and retaining the services of an interpreter(s) for all CDBG-related meetings and public hearings.

An applicant with a current CIG project to which activities are to be added, deleted, or substantially changed (that is, substantial changes made in terms of purpose, scope, location, or beneficiaries) must provide local citizens through a public hearing with an opportunity for comment on such changes, after the locality has informed citizens of the changes at least seven days prior to the hearing.

Applicants must keep documentation of how they met the above requirement in their CDBG files for verification. This documentation should include:

- Documentation of the Public Hearing advertisements,
- Documentation of the second method used to notify citizens of the public hearings,
- List of attendees,
- Minutes from the first hearing showing:
 - Available funds,
 - Available activities,
 - Past use of CDBG funds,
- Minutes from the second hearing showing:
 - Description of proposed activities,
 - Plans to minimize displacement and assist displaced persons (if applicable), and
 - Any requested special accommodations.

None of the foregoing may be construed to restrict the responsibility or authority of the local government applicant in the development and execution of its Community Improvement Grant project.

PUBLIC HEARING ADVERTISEMENTS

These advertisements should be made in accordance with the Plan above.

Model Advertisement – First Public Hearing

(Locality) will hold a public hearing on (date) at (time) at (location) to solicit public input on local community development and housing needs in relation to Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for a project in our community.

Information on the amount of funding available, the requirements on benefit to low- and moderate-income persons, eligible activities, and plans to minimize displacement and provide displacement assistance as necessary will be available. Citizens will also be given the opportunity to comment on (locality's) past use of CDBG funds. All interested citizens are urged to attend. For additional information, contact (local contact name and information).

Comments and grievances can be submitted in writing to (locality) at (address) or by phone at (phone number and TDD) until (cut-off date).

If you plan to attend and have any special needs requirements, please call the number listed above.

Model Advertisement – Second Public Hearing

(Locality) will hold a public hearing on (date) at (time) at (location) to solicit public input on the proposed Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications to be submitted to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development for (project name). Residents of the project area are encouraged to attend. The (project name) applications will include the following activities (list activities).

The draft CDBG applications will be presented for comment along with information on projected beneficiaries, including the number of low- and moderate-income residents to benefit from the proposed project, and plans to minimize displacement. Citizens will also be given the opportunity to comment on (locality's) past use of CDBG funds. A fact sheet on the proposed project and the draft applications is available at (location). For additional information, contact (local contact name and information).

Comments and grievances can be submitted in writing to (locality) at (address) or by phone at (phone number and TDD) until (cut-off date).

If you plan to attend and have any special needs requirements, please call the number listed above.

I will prepare and send this to you.



Town of Independence, VA

PO Box 99

Independence, VA 24348

Proposed Tourism Zone Program Elements:

- Same qualifying guidelines as Grayson County to simplify process
 - New Business - \$7500 capital investments (real or personal property)/1 Full Time Employee (can be owner employee)
 - Existing Business - - \$7500 capital investments + 1 full time or 2 part time employees (in addition to the existing full time employees)
 - Must be a tourism related business, including agritourism. Includes restaurants, hotels, spas & personal services, breweries, wineries, tours/guided tours
- Proposed Town Fee Waivers
 - Business License Fee
 - Waived 1st Year
 - 50% waived second year
 - 75% waived third year
 - Waive water/sewer deposit fee up to \$375
 - Real and personal property tax – waive on value of documented capital investment for up to three years.
 - **Maximum incentive per business - \$2,000**
 - Business could qualify using funds they expended in an EDA matching grant.

Grayson County

Grayson County
Board of Supervisors



Commonwealth
of Virginia

TO: Laura Ratcliffe & Independence Town Council
From: Stephen A. Boyer, County Administrator
RE: Tourism Zone Incentives
Date: March 13, 2024

It is our intent to inform you that Grayson County's office of administration will honor all incentives deemed appropriate for approved tourism zone applicants within all incorporated towns within the boundaries of Grayson County, Virginia.

These include but are not limited to:

- Building, zoning, and water connection fee waivers
- License tax rebates
- Expedited permitting and inspection programs
- Inclusion in tourism marketing programs such as website, advertising, and social media
- Priority consideration for EDA grants/loans

*These incentives are subject to change and are outlined and defined in Grayson County Ordinance 65 which can be found at <https://www.graysoncountyva.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Tourism-Zone-Application.pdf>

Please do not hesitate to contact the Tourism Department with any questions you may have regarding this matter at 276-773-8002.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Stephen A. Boyer".



Town of Independence
PO Box 99; 317 East Main Street
Independence, VA 24348
(276)773-3703

To: Mayor Sexton & Town Council
From: Laura Ratcliffe, Town Manager
Date: April 4, 2024
RE: 2024 Unallocated Funds & Capital Expense Redistribution

Situation: The current year budget needs to be adjusted so that the unallocated revenue funds used to cover the capital expenses are spread across all funds (General, Water & Sewer). Currently they are all shown in General.

Background: When the 2024 budget was prepared, it was assumed that all AARPA funds that were being used for capital expenses were part of the General fund. During the audit process, the auditors identified these funds should be allocated to each operating fund. As such, we need to revise the current year budget to reflect the appropriate allocation. This does not change the overall budget of the three funds. See below for the summary of the changes:

Assessment:

Unallocated Fund Revenue for Capital Expenses	Original Budget Amount	Redistributed Budget Amount
General Fund	\$350,438	\$176,255
Water Fund	\$0	\$44,183
Sewer Fund	\$0	\$130,030
Total:	\$350,438	\$350,438
Capital Expense	Original Budget Amount	Redistributed Budget Amount
General Fund	\$350,438	\$176,255
Water Fund	\$0	\$44,183
Sewer Fund	\$0	\$130,030
Total:	\$350,438	\$350,438

Recommendation: Town Council make motion to authorize the Town Clerk to make the adjusting entries outlined above to the current year budget so that funds are recognized correctly.



Town of Independence
PO Box 99; 317 East Main Street
Independence, VA 24348
(276)773-3703

To: Mayor Sexton & Town Council
From: Laura Ratcliffe, Town Manager
Date: April 4, 2024
RE: Poole Place Road

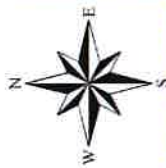
Situation: A request has been made to the Town to abandon their portion of Poole Place Road so that it may be added to the Secondary Road System and maintained by VDOT. VDOT is agreeable and has provided the attached documentation for this change. However, the request has brought up an issue of property lines with the property owners around the portion of land deeded to the Town. Town Council needs to decide if they want to turn over maintenance to VDOT and how they want to handle the property line issue.

Background: The Town was deeded approximately 1000 feet of Poole Place Road in 1962; however, the Town has not been maintaining this road. This has created an issue for the resident who lives on Poole Place. The resident spoke directly with VDOT about the issue. In the meantime, the property owner south and north of the road requested ownership information from VDOT because they want to install a fence and do not want to be on VDOT's right of way. In working through this issue with VDOT and the property owners, I've discovered several issues:

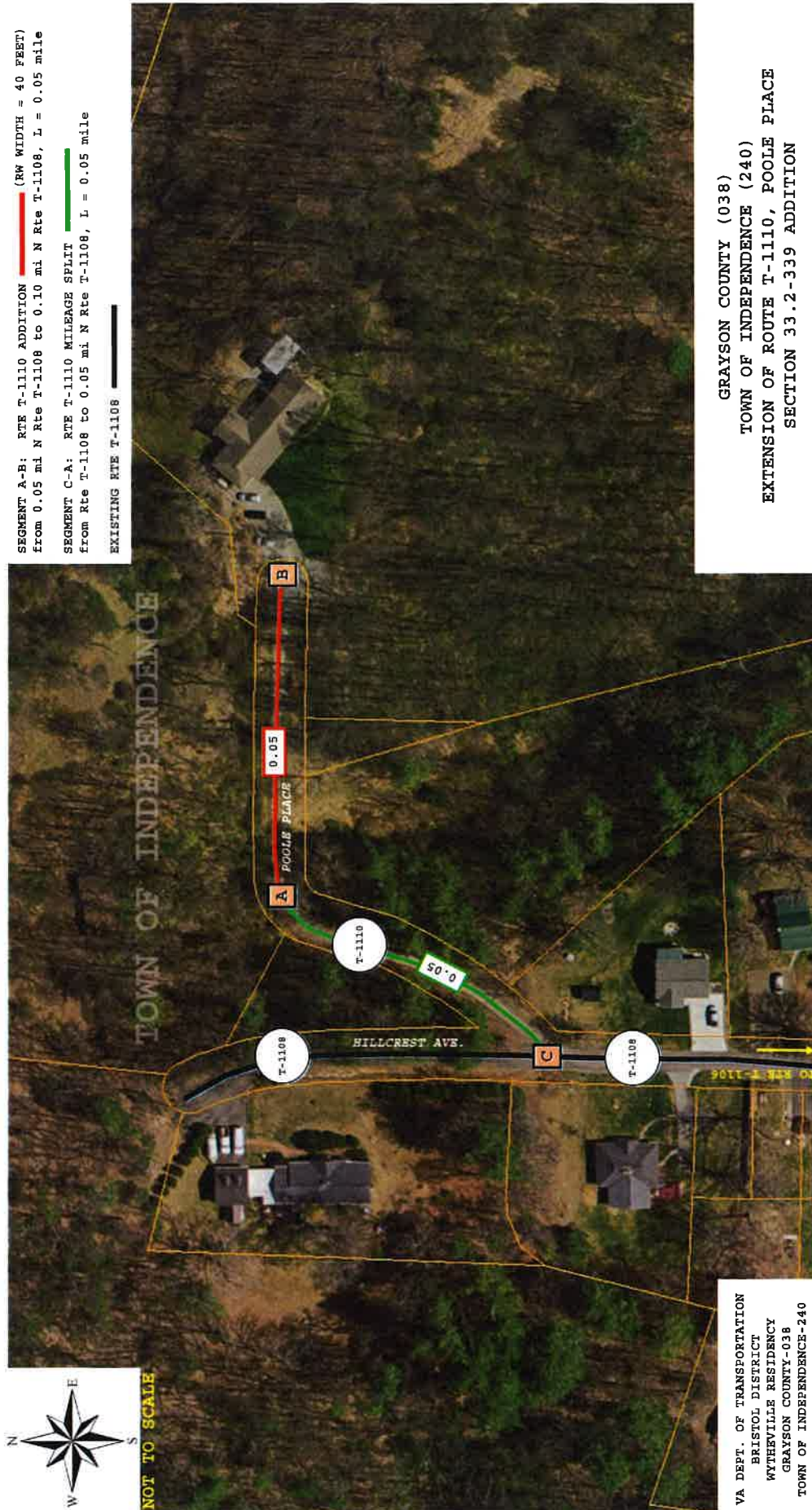
- 1) The current road appears to not follow the deeded description
- 2) A portion of the deeded road description is no longer a usable road bed. In fact, it has now mostly the front yard of the Poole Place property owner. This occurred when the homeowner performed renovations and asked the property owner to the south if he could move dirt to fill in the sloped area which he thought was owned by the property owner to the south. This happened in 2018. Since then, he has used the property as his front yard. Additionally, the other property leases the property to the Poole Place owner for use as his yard.
- 3) The owner to the south of the deeded road is now requesting the full road be recreated as he would like to have access to his property for future development. The property owner currently has access to said property off Poole Place in other locations.

Assessment: This is a very complicated situation.

Recommendation: Council should consider having the deeded description property surveyed. Council will then need to decide whether they wish to rehabilitate the road, deed portions of the road not in use to either or both of the landowners, or do nothing. Council also needs to decide if they would like to move forward with turning over the portion of Poole Place that is usable road to VDOT for maintenance or would like to begin maintaining it. If they want to turn it over to VDOT, they will need the included resolution approved.



NOT TO SCALE



SEGMENT A-B: RTE T-1110 ADDITION (RW WIDTH = 40 FEET)
from 0.05 mi N Rte T-1108 to 0.10 mi N Rte T-1108, L = 0.05 mile

SEGMENT C-A: RTE T-1110 MILEAGE SPLIT
from Rte T-1108 to 0.05 mi N Rte T-1108, L = 0.05 mile

EXISTING RTE T-1108

GRAYSON COUNTY (038)
TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE (240)
EXTENSION OF ROUTE T-1110, POOLE PLACE
SECTION 33.2-339 ADDITION

VA DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
BRISTOL DISTRICT
WYTHEVILLE RESIDENCY
GRAYSON COUNTY-038
TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE-240

The Town Council of Independence, Virginia in regular meeting on [Click or tap to enter a date.](#)
adopted the following:

**RESOLUTION FOR THE ADDITION OF TOWN STREETS TO THE SECONDARY
SYSTEM OF STATE HIGHWAYS: ROUTE T-1110 EXTENSION**

WHEREAS the Town of Independence has authority pursuant to §33.2-339 of the *Code of Virginia*, to request the addition of street(s) to the Secondary System of State Highways provided that said street(s) conform to Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) requirements for right-of-way width, and the total mileage of said street(s) does not exceed the 0.25-mile maximum limitation for new Secondary System mileage per VDOT fiscal year that may be added pursuant to §33.2-339; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Town Council of the Town of Independence requests the Virginia Department of Transportation to add segment(s) A-B to the Secondary System of State Highways, as described on the attached sketch and VDOT Form AM-4.3; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Independence Town Council guarantees a clear and unrestricted right-of-way of forty (40) feet, as described on the attached VDOT Form AM4.3, and any necessary easements for cuts, fills and drainage; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Independence Town Council requests that future improvement of these streets be provided for in the Secondary Six-Year Improvement Plan of Grayson County; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, a certified copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Resident Engineer for the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Recorded Vote

Moved By: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Seconded By: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Yeas: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Nays: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

A Copy Teste:

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#), [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Form AM 4.3

In Town of Independence

by Resolution of the governing body adopted 4/9/2024

The following VDOT Form AM-4.3 is hereby attached and incorporated as part of the governing body's resolution for changes to the secondary system of state highways.

A Copy Testee Signed (County Official): _____

Report of Changes in the Secondary System of State Highways

Project/Subdivision: **Route T-1110 Extension**

CHANGE TYPE	RTE NUM & STREET NAME	CHANGE DESCRIPTION	FROM TERMINI	TO TERMINI	LENGTH	NUMBER OF LANES	RECORDATION REFERENCE	ROW WIDTH
Addition	Rt. 1110 - Poole Place	Town 1/4 mpy, pre-existing street §33.2-339, §33.2-705	0.05 mile East 1108	0.10 mile East 1108	0.05	2	DB 655, PG 220	40



Town of Independence
PO Box 99; 317 East Main Street
Independence, VA 24348
(276)773-3703

To: Mayor Sexton & Town Council
From: Laura Ratcliffe, Town Manager
Date: April 4, 2024
RE: Town Park Donation Offers

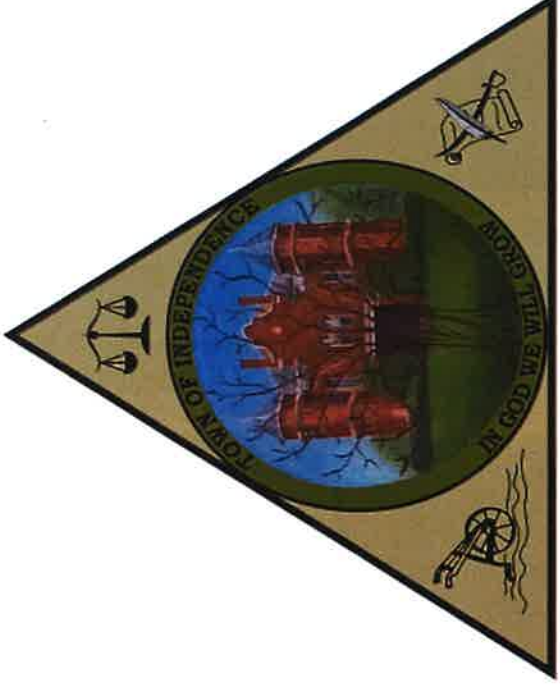
Situation: Entities and individuals have offered to make a donation to the Town to cover a portion of the remaining Town Park Expenses.

Specifically, if Council is willing to give naming rights to the park for a 10 to 15-year period, Skyline Bank will donate \$30,000. If there are no naming rights, the amount would be less, approximately \$10,000.

Others have asked if there would be an individual plaque recognizing the donor if a large donation is made.

When this was shared, I advised Council was planning to erect some type of permanent signage that acknowledged all donors; however, there had been no discussion to date about specific plaques for donors.

Please discuss and let me know how you would like to proceed.



Trended Data

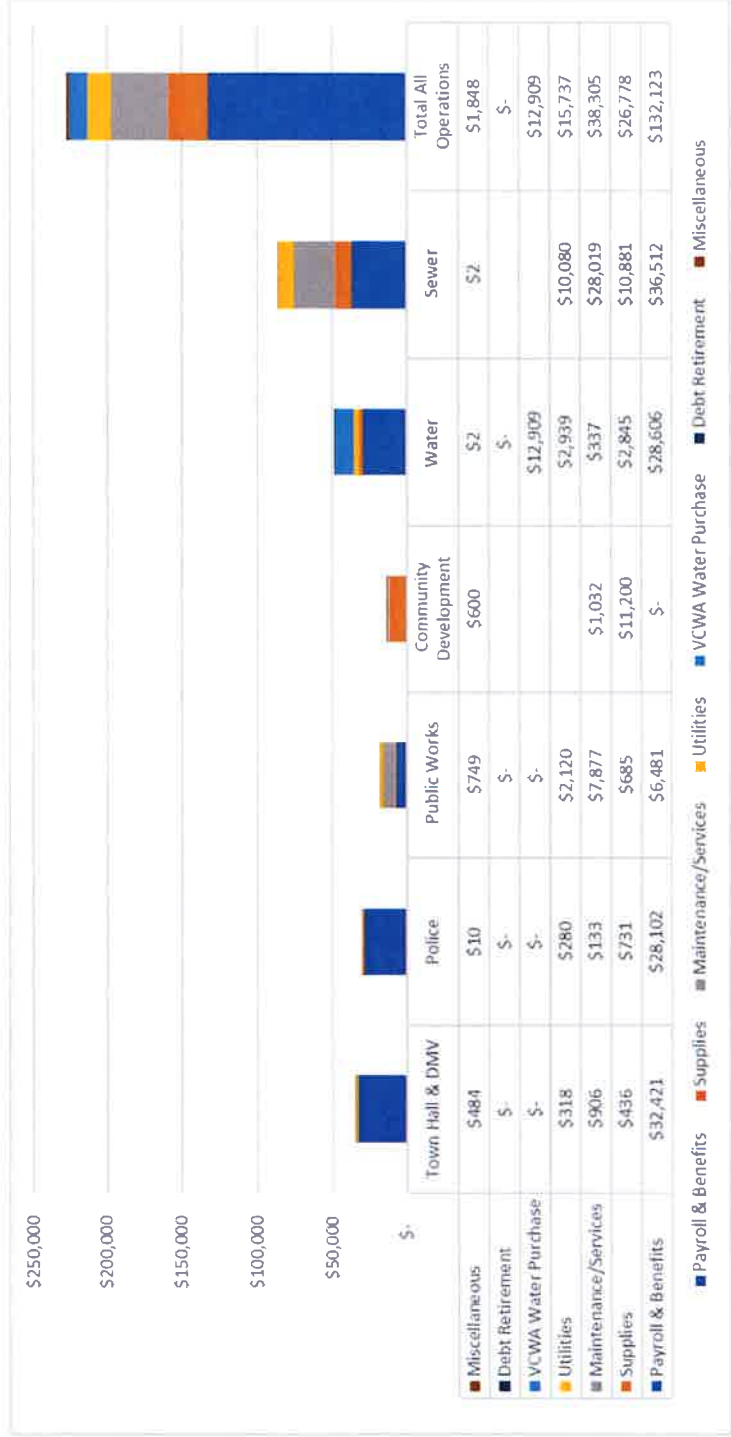
April 2024



Finance



March 2024 Expenses

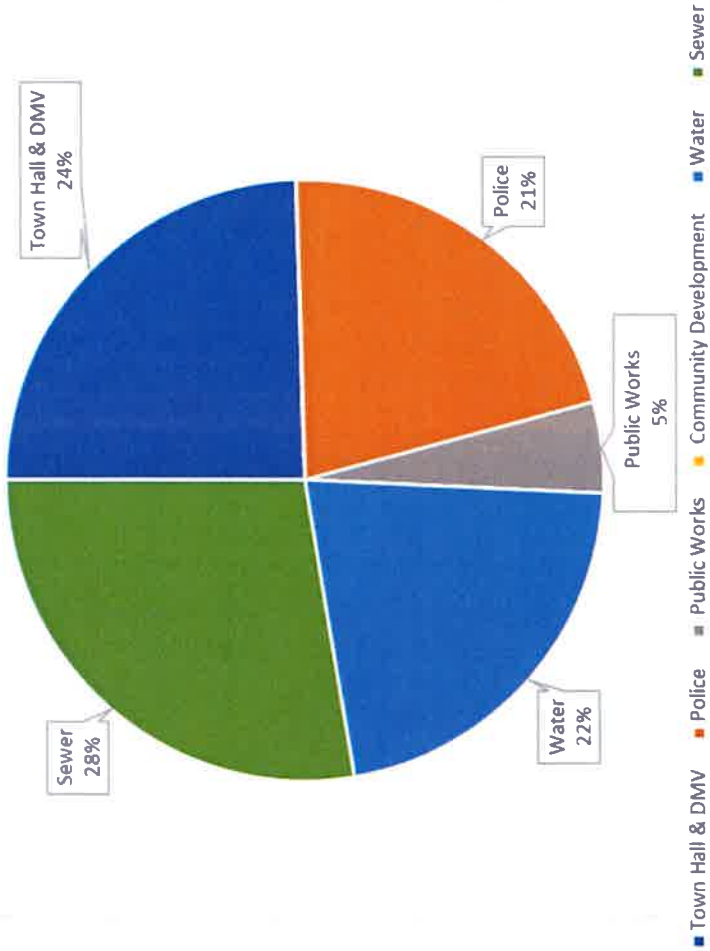


■ Payroll & Benefits
 ■ Supplies
 ■ Maintenance/Services
 ■ Utilities
 ■ VCWA Water Purchase
 ■ Debt Retirement
 ■ Miscellaneous



March 2024 Expenses by Department

March 2024 Expenses by Department



February 2024 v. March 2024 Expenses Large Single Costs



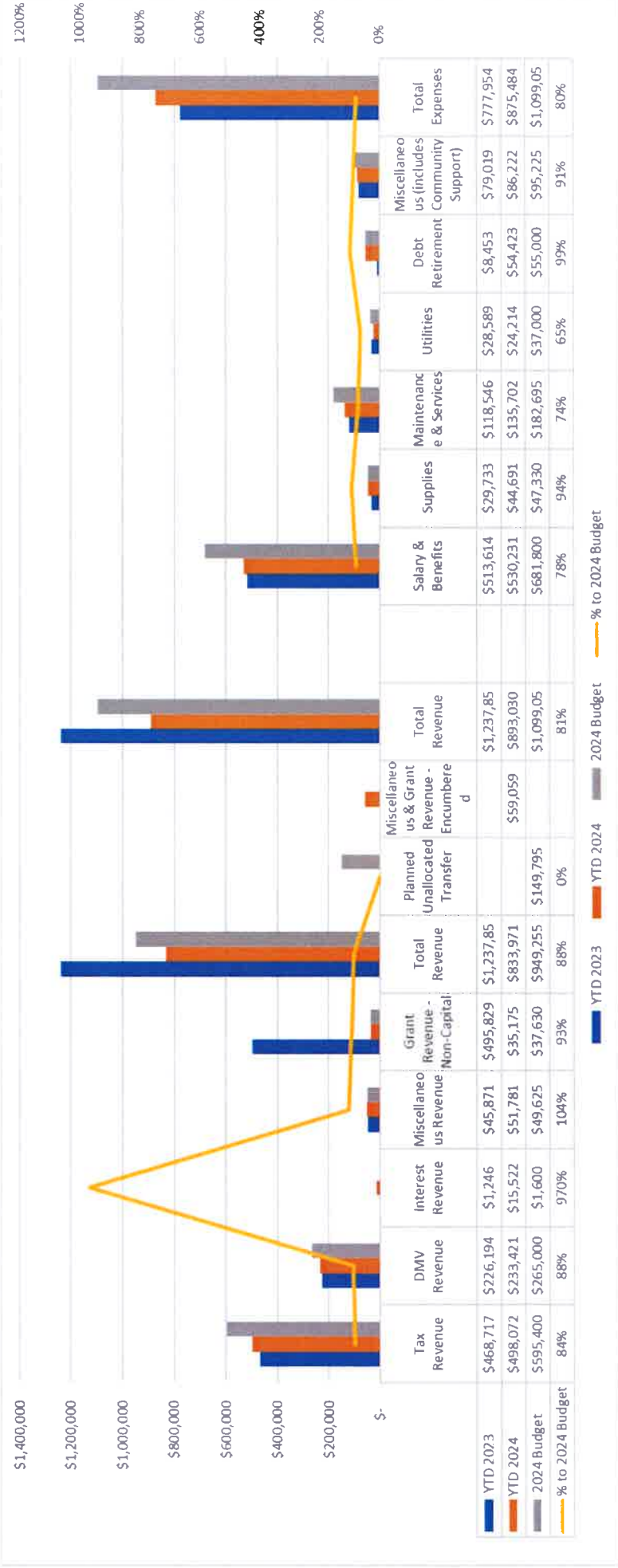
February 2024 Expenses were \$172,257
March 2024 Expenses were \$227,699

The increase of \$55,442 is attributed to:

- 1) \$35,000 for additional pay period
- 2) \$10,000 additional for maintenance and repairs – most significant Sewer plant air leak repair \$24k
- 3) \$10,000 additional for supplies – most significant new mowing equipment and meters \$8k



General Administration 2024 YTD





Water 2024 YTD

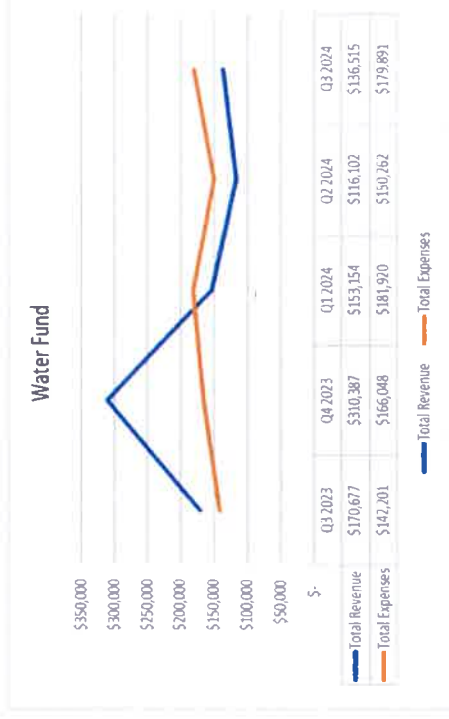
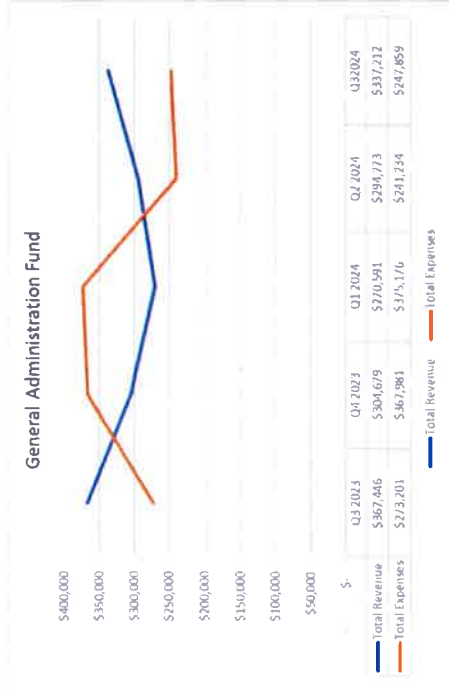




Sewer 2024 YTD



Trended 2024 YTD



Revised Capital Budget 2024

Revenue	YTD 2023 Actual	YTD 2024 Actual	2024 Budget	% to Budget
Rural Development Grant		\$ -	\$ 175,000.00	0%
Unallocated from Savings/ ARPA Money	\$ 33,000.00	\$ 249,018.49	\$ 350,215.00	71%
Miscellaneous Gifts		\$ 29,358.54	\$ 29,358.54	
Total		\$ 278,377.03	\$ 554,573.54	50%
Grants Returned			\$ (175,000.00)	
Revised Capital Budget		\$ 278,377.03	\$ 379,573.54	73%

Expenses	YTD 2023 Actual	YTD 2024 Actual	2024 Budget	% to Budget
Capital Project Costs - General Admin General Administration/DMV		\$ 6,636.42	\$ 7,247.00	92%
Public Works	\$ 22,242.68	\$ 26,631.66	\$ 64,755.00	41%
Police		\$ 55,161.73	\$ 54,000.00	102%
Community Development - Town Park		\$ 89,449.26	\$ 79,358.54	113%
Water Capital Expenditures		\$ 37,431.97	\$ 44,182.85	85%
Sewer Planned Capital Expenditures	\$ -	\$ 93,631.37	\$ 130,030.50	72%
Total	\$ 22,242.68	\$ 308,942.41	\$ 379,573.89	81%

Items

Server
Excavator, Line Detector, Public Works Bldg Roof Repair
Police Car
Town Park Design
Excavator, Line Detector, Well House Roof Replacement, Public Works Roof Repair
Excavator, Line Detector, Sewer Plant Roof Replacement, Public Works Roof Repair

Projects/purchases pending/not included- 3 six inch meters, Gorman Rupp Pump, PLC, Composite Sampler

Penn Court Project	YTD 2023 Actual	YTD 2024 Actual	2024 Budget
Miscellaneous Grant - Rural Development/ MRPDC	\$ 156,250.00	\$ 112,685.70	\$ -
Penn Court Repair - 2024 Expenses		\$ 381,754.01	
Town Funds Used - Not Budgeted in 2024		\$ 112,818.31	

Sewer I & I Project	YTD 2023 Actual	YTD 2024 Actual	2024 Budget
Engineering Expenses		\$ 54,422.50	\$ 6,550.00
Town Funds Used - Not Budgeted in 2024		\$ 47,872.50	

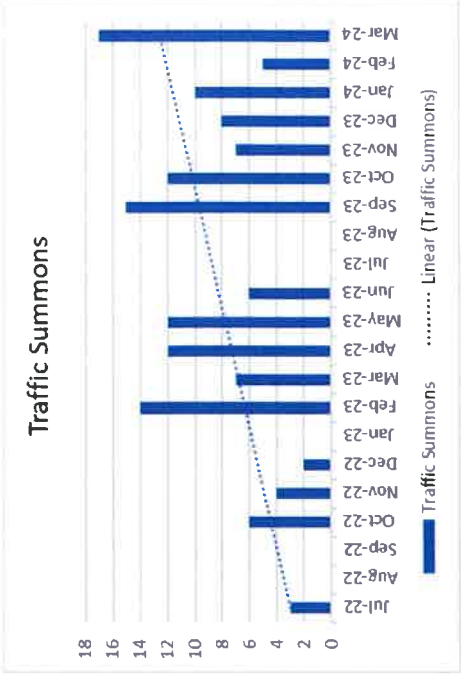
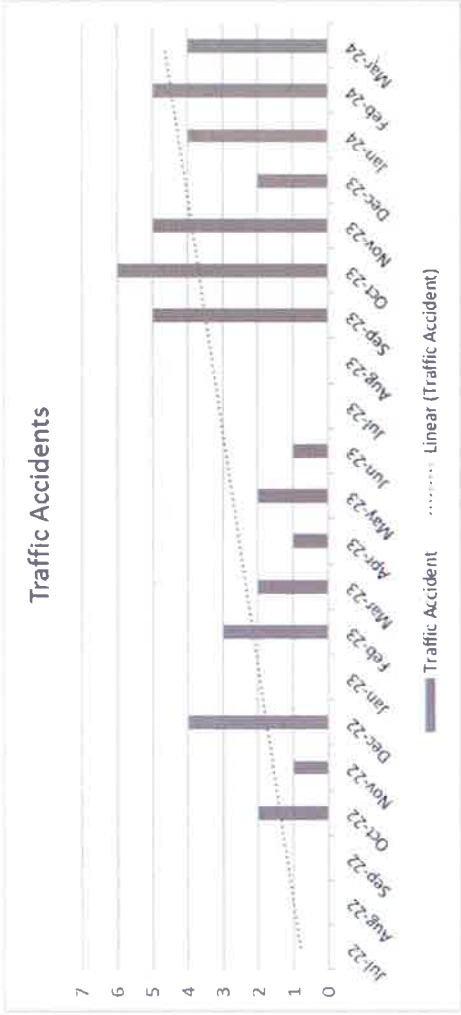
Town Park Project	YTD 2023 Actual	YTD 2024 Actual	2024 Budget
Original Budget for 2024			\$ 225,000.00
Less Rural Development Grant Returned			<u>\$ (175,000.00)</u>
Town Funds			\$ 50,000.00
Additional Funds approved March 2024 Town Council			\$ 92,792.22
Gift Funds			<u>\$ 29,358.54</u>
Total Funds in 2024			\$ 172,150.76
Funds Used as of 3/31/24			\$ 89,449.26
Funds Remaining			\$ 82,701.50

VOF Grant funds for Landscaping/Furnishing			\$ 65,000.00
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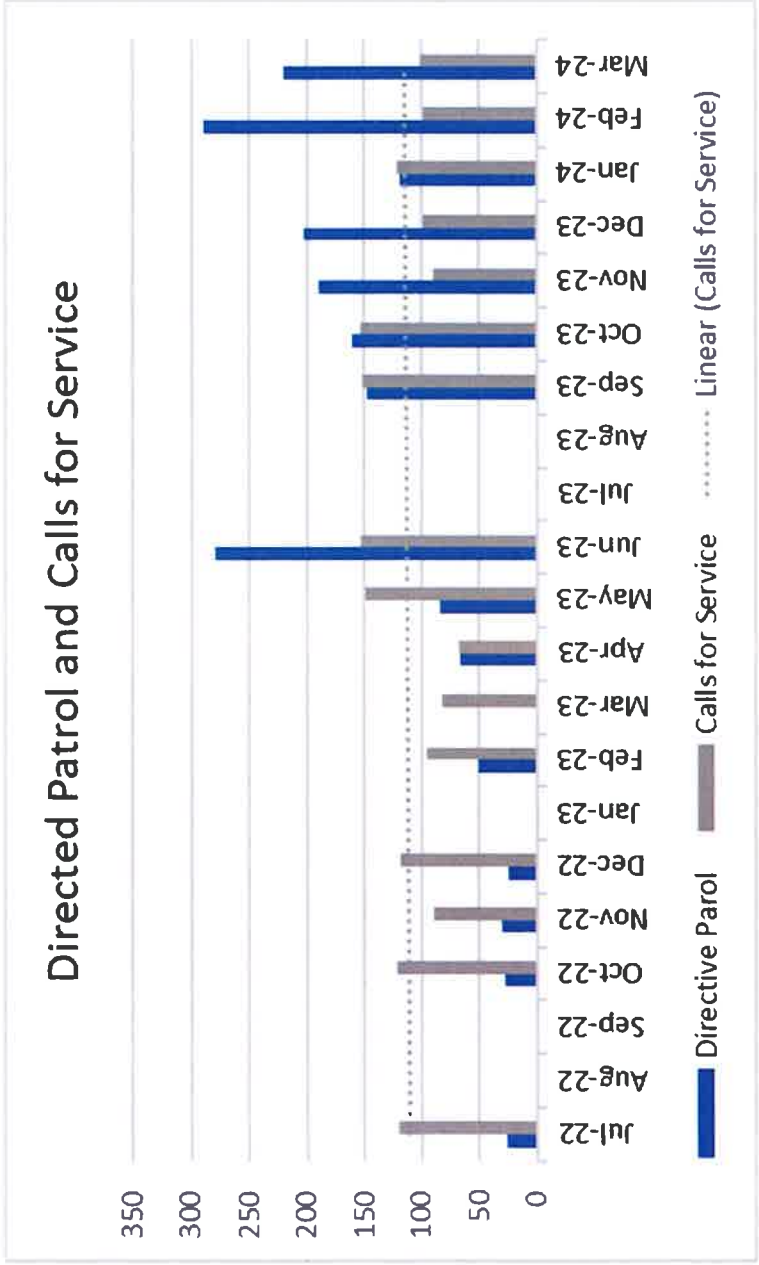
Police Department

March 2024 Traffic Stats





March 2024 Service Stats





Public Works

Public Works Service Data



Public Works data will be
available on Monday, April 8th



Town of Independence, VA

To: Mayor Sexton and Town Council

From: Laura Ratcliffe, Town Manager

Date: April 4, 2024

RE: Manager's Report

Following is a summary of the status of various projects and other activities since the last update in March 2024:

- **Personnel**
 - a. No significant activities related to personnel during the past month.
- **Finance/General Administration**
 - a. **Grants –**
 - i. Virginia Outdoor Foundation Grant – All requested materials have been submitted to Virginia Outdoor Foundation. I'm awaiting their final approval before recording the deed of dedication.
 - ii. Sewer I & I VRA Grant/Bond Funding – As reported last month, I requested an extension to the funding offer which was to expire March 31, 2024. At this time the offer has not been extended. I've provided all information requested by the VRA analyst. Their concern is the ability for the Sewer fund to have enough margin to repay the additional debt. All information requested by Rural Development for the Parity request has been submitted. We recently learned these requests are taking up to 90 days to be approved by the national office.
 - iii. Lead & Copper Grant – I have spoken with our contact at VDH regarding expenses reimbursable under this grant. We have not been able to provide all requested documentation for the engineering procurement from 2020. Our contact has stated to submit what we have and they will review for possible flexibility. Once approved, we can be reimbursed for our time spent on this project and I am in the process of making that request. Additionally, the cost of the survey mailers and the \$25 credit for those building owners who complete the survey are reimbursable funds.
 - iv. Virginia Community Development Block Grant – Mount Rogers Planning District has approached the Town about restarting the process for applying for a housing

grant, focusing on rehabilitating properties in certain areas of the Town. They are currently working with two other localities (Wytheville and Damascus) to apply. Several members of council were involved in approving the Town to apply for this grant in 2019. Unfortunately, due to the former Town Manager leaving in May 2022, the process stopped. Included with the Town Council packet is the report prepared by MRPDC for the project. In order to re-start the process:

1. MRPDC would update the current status of the houses identified in the report.
2. The Town will need to go through the process for the two public hearings outlined in the included document.
3. **There is a tight time frame as the application deadline is expected to be in June.**
4. If awarded in July 2025, the project period would not start until October 2025.

It is important for Council to understand the Town's future role in this process:

- The Town becomes a mortgage holder for the grant funds. There is ongoing responsibilities by the Town employees to administer the process once the rehabilitation is completed.
 - The Town can elect to forgive or waive the debt
 - If the Town elects to do a project, and is awarded, it is better to focus on one area and then look to do another project focusing on another area of Town. Multiple grants may be obtained this way vs. a single grant for the entire Town. It gives the Town a longer period of time to complete the projects.
- b. **FOIA** – There was one FOIA request in March. The request needed clarification which was not received until April 1st. The response is being sent on Friday, April 5th.
 - c. **Business License Renewal Notices** – Notices were mailed on February 28th per Town Code. We reiterated the need for documentation to support the claimed revenues and communicated that, as allowed by Town Code, we would request documentation from the Virginia Taxing authority for any license applications returned without proper documentation. Applications are due by mid-May and payments are due by July 14th. Applications are being returned and most have provided the requested documentation.
 - d. **Department of Corrections Contract Audit** – To date, I have not received communication from the DOC regarding the audit. I have and will continue to follow up.
 - e. **Online Bill Pay, Auto Draft, Email Bills** – Email billing is live and we have had 29 customers sign up as of today. We'll continue to advertise and encourage customers to use this service. Online Bill Pay is taking longer to implement than expected. We are working with the vendor and will keep you informed. Auto draft will be last and should be implemented by the end of the year.
 - f. **2025 Budget** – We are actively working on the draft 2025 budget.
 - g. **Water & Sewer Revenue** – As previously reported, water and sewer revenues are below expected levels. Some of this is due to reduce usage by larger customers for various permanent (the schools no longer watering the field) and temporary reasons (lower

number of inmates at the prison because of mechanical issues). At the same time our unaccountability rate has been increasing over the last year. All of this has been reported and discussed in depth at the Infrastructure Committee meeting. Town Management is actively working to identify the causes of these changes. Rural Water was on site for two days looking for leaks in our water system. None were found. We are now focusing on the meters and our billing process. We are looking at historical usage data, by customer, back to July 2022 which is twelve months prior to when the usage reductions started. Results will be reported to the Infrastructure Committee and Town Council.

- **Infrastructure**

- a. **Penn Court** – The contractor made repairs to both the entrance and parking lot areas of the project. VDOT has approved. The engineer has submitted revised inspection cost documents to Rural Development. We are awaiting final draw request from the contractor in order to close the project.
- b. **Sewer I & I** – Bids are due April 16th at 2pm. Bid information will be presented for review and recommendation at the April Infrastructure Committee (date TBD). As reported earlier, the financing for this project is now on hold subject to final underwriting by VRA and final parity approval by Rural Development.
- c. **Lead & Copper Assessment** – Surveys were mailed this week as part of the larger newsletter mailing to all residents. The survey will be mailed to all customers within the next month. Customers may complete the survey online through a link on our website or on paper. Once the survey response is validated, the customer’s account will be credited as approved at last Town Council. We had a planning call with Lane Engineering on March 4th. The project is on track to be completed by August. The deadline for filing is October 14th, 2024.
- d. **Zoning Appeal Request** – AEP has submitted a draft application for a height variance for 4 towers to support the new station and lines. BZA Chairman Reeves has reviewed and requested a public hearing be scheduled to gain feedback. AEP has provided several dates with their availability in May. AEP expects the project to begin in the next fiscal year.

- **Community Development**

- a. **Town Park** – Jones Excavating was awarded the Phase 3 project and began work immediately. The project has passed all compaction, grade and material inspections performed by Hurt & Proffit. Weather permitting, the work should be completed by mid-April which give Public Works ample time to reinstall/install the additional fencing and the water service. Michelle Pridgen and I have walked the site, discussing market day operations. Additionally, I have reconfirmed with Tony Flippen that the Town is able to use his vacant lots across from the park for parking and other activities. _
- b. **Town Clean-up Day** – The rescheduled clean-up day is Saturday April 13th at 10am. Volunteers are asked to meet at the Town Office. We’ll have vests and trash bags for pick up. In addition to litter pickup, volunteers will also be asked to help with weeding at the Tractor Garden and Town Office, planting at Town Office, and curb clean out on

Powerhouse. The event has been shared on social media. We would like to see all Town Council involved in this activity.

- c. **Town Newsletter** – Our first newsletter was mailed this week to all Town Residents and Business owners and out of town utility customers. It is also posted on our web-site and was circulated through social media. The plan is to create and share every other month (June will be the next one) in an effort to communicate information about the Town’s activities. We mailed 540 at a total cost of \$750 (including materials and labor). The annual cost will be approximately \$4500. We need to monitor the response for the next year to the newsletter to determine if it is a valuable communication tool.
- d. **Pedestrian Safety** - I have had multiple conversations with VDOT regarding pedestrian safety in Town. “Yield to Pedestrian” signs are being installed at the Hwy 21/58 intersection. They are also working on the Town’s request for the lights at that intersection to go to a 4 stop “red” when a pedestrian walk signal is triggered. Additionally, I requested the crosswalk at Quick Check/Ciros’ be repainted and 7 additional cross walks be added throughout town. Two of the seven are under consideration by VDOT. One will be on Main Street near Lonesome and the other at the Elementary school connecting the bike trail. The issue with the other 5 is they are either within 300 feet of an existing crosswalk or sidewalks do not exist on both sides of the road. Finally, VDOT has approved the town to install flexible barriers in the pedestrian crosswalks. The Town is responsible for purchase, installation and maintenance. I’ve sourced quotes for the devices and believe we can install them for approximately \$300 each cross walk.
- e. **Mass Communication** – The Town’s Everbridge Mass Communication site is enabled and configured. To date, 78 residents and 14 businesses have enrolled. This is approximately 20% of our utility system users. We’ll continue to advertise and encourage enrollment. Going forward, all alerts about our water and sewer system will be issued through this system.
- f. **Town Sponsored Special Events** – The Businessowners group has volunteered to assist with the planning and implementation of Safe Halloween this year. I’ve asked them to create a plan for presentation to the Community Development Committee and Town Council. Mary Ann and I have met regarding planning for the upcoming events. We have our first Privy Race entrant and I’m working with Crystal Cureton to formulate an advertising plan for the Privy Races.

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

- Tuesday, April 16th @ 9am – Community Development Committee – Fire Department
- Tuesday, April 16th @ 2pm – Sewer I & I Bid Opening – Fire Department
- Tuesday, April 23rd @ 6pm – Infrastructure Meeting – Review Sewer I&I Bids - TBD
- Thursday, April 25th @ 6pm – Finance Committee – Budget - TBD
- Thursday, May 2nd @ 6pm – Finance Committee (all Town Council Members to attend) – Budget – TBD
- Thursday, May 9th @ 4pm – Businessowners Meeting – Fire Department
- Tuesday, May 14th @6pm – Town Council Meeting – Fire Department

Upcoming Town Closures:

- 1. None



Town of Independence
PO Box 99; 317 East Main Street
Independence, VA 24348
(276)773-3703

To: Mayor Sexton & Town Council
From: Personnel Committee
Date: April 4, 2024
RE: 2024-2025 Town Holiday Schedule

Following are the recommended holidays for the upcoming fiscal year:

Thursday, July 4th – Independence Day
Monday, September 9 – Labor Day
Monday, October 14th – Columbus Day
Tuesday, November 5th – Election Day
Monday, November 11th – Veteran’s Day
Wednesday, November 27th – ½ Day (with option for full day – see below)
Thursday & Friday, November 28th & 29th - Thanksgiving
Tuesday, December 24th – Christmas Eve ½ Day (with option for full day – see below)
Wednesday & Thursday, December 25th and 26th – Christmas
Wednesday, January 1st – New Year’s
Monday, January 20th – MLK, Jr. Day
Monday, February 17th - President’s Day
Friday, April 18th – Good Friday
Monday, May 26th – Memorial Day
Thursday, June 19th – Juneteenth

Employees may take a full day on either the Wednesday before Thanksgiving or Christmas Eve. But adequate coverage will need to be maintained by Town employees for the Town operations to be open ½ on each day.

This will total 16.5 days which is 1.5 days less than the 2023-24 schedule.



Town of Independence
PO Box 99; 317 East Main Street
Independence, VA 24348
(276)773-3703

To: Mayor Sexton & Town Council
From: Finance Chairman/Vice Mayor Meier
Date: April 4, 2024
RE: 2025 Budget Schedule

1. Key Dates for Budget Process -

Activity	Date	Responsible Party
Adopt Budget	6/11/24	Town Council
Public Hearing	6/11/24	Finance Committee Chair
Public Comment Posting	TBD	Town Clerk
Draft Accepted	5/14/24	Town Council
Draft Budget Circulated in Council Meeting Packets	5/9/24	Town Clerk
Budget Meeting (Full Council)	5/2/2024	Finance Committee Chair
Finance Committee review Preliminary Operational and Capital requests	4/25/2024	Town Manager
Operational and Capital Requests due to Town Manager	4/19/2024	Town Clerk, Public Works Supervisor, Interim Police Chief, Committee Chairs