

The Richlands Town Council held a "Recess Meeting from June 23" in the Richlands Council Chambers on June 29, 2020 at 7:30pm with the following present:

Mayor:	Paul Crawford
Town Manager:	Tim Taylor
Town Clerk:	Connie Allen
Council Members:	Richard Brown, Mary Ann Strong, Rick Wood, Doug Ratliff
	Rod Cury
Town Attorney :	K.W. McClanahan

Mayor Crawford opened the meeting.

Mary Ann - I would like to ask for a moment of silence in the memory of a very special lady to all our community who passed away on Tuesday, Ms. Charlotte McVey.

Mary Ann Strong gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Crawford – "Scheduled Public Comments" – Laura Mollo

Mayor Crawford - We will have to clean the podium after each person speaks, give us time to do that before the next person comes to the front.

Laura – I just wanted to bring the "911" situation back to the forefront of everyone's mind. I did provide anyone who wanted the fifty-page study to have the whole fifty-page study. We do have a couple of laws that were enacted a few years ago, one being that on or before July 1, 2020 each PSAP from the Commonwealth shall deploy equipment, products and services necessary or appropriate to enable the PSAP to receive and process calls for emergency assistance set via Short Message Service which is text messaging. Our Police Department and our PSAP they are considered a secondary PSAP and not able to do that. I believe we should be in compliance with our law. As of today, we actually are still promoting the use of a number other than "911" for emergencies on the Town website. I would also like to read from the Bluefield paper today.

Article from Bluefield Paper - Bluefield VA area residents who have an emergency will now go through the Tazewell County 911 Call Center rather than the Town. Representatives of the Town and County gathered last week in Bluefield Town Hall to announce the switch of services. It takes away the delay of time and gets us a quicker response for an emergency said Sheriff Brian Heatt. The way it impacts us is when a person calls us for an emergency now instead of being put on hold and having to transfer the call from the Town dispatch, we can dispatch directly to the police officers without putting them through a transfer. Another service will also be available to Town residents. It also opens it up for the citizens of the Town of Bluefield to have the "text to 911" service, which we just came out with this year. Fast communication between law enforcement officers is a plus as well. Another big impact is we have worked on our radios, so we have closer communication from the deputy sheriffs to the Bluefield VA Police Department police officers. Tazewell 911 Operations Manager Lt. Randy Ann Davis said everything will happen at a quicker pace than before. It's faster for the public to get the resources and to get directly in contact with the Bluefield Police Department. If we get a "text" call and then we can update the Bluefield officers en route to maybe someone hiding from someone who is trying to break into their house. It's just a very direct contact. Access to new technology pleases Bluefield, VA, Police Chief Shane Gunter. It's going to provide higher degree of technology than our dispatch has provided. This is a good partnership. It's going to give us better communication between agencies. That faster service is crucial. You hear about how seconds matter and this will afford more seconds for us. Bluefield Mayor Don Harris is also pleased with the plan. I think it will be an improvement for the residents of the Eastern District as well as the Town. It will give us quicker response time in case of an emergency and the 911 Center has all the technology. That adds up to a win-win situation. I am pleased with what they have to offer us. I will also be a cost savings for the Town.

Laura - I am asking you guys to consider this, not only to be compliant with the state law but also to give us as residents a chance for faster and better communication. You guys are about to vote on taxes that I implore you not to raise. This will also cut money from the budget that could be used in other areas. I

know back in April, Ms. Strong had told numerous residents that she was very much against a meals tax and would not support the meals tax because of the state the Town is in right now financially and with COVID-19 hitting this is not the time for that burden to be placed on the citizens. I appreciate your time and hope you guys consider what I have said.

Mayor Crawford - Anyone else want to address the Council?

Mayor Crawford – Let me get myself in order a little bit, Blake do you want to address Council?

Blake Ray – Yes, I will go last.

Mayor Crawford – Who else wants to address Council?

Mayor Crawford - I have Larry Johnson, Angie Johnson, Craig Earls, and Blake Ray.

Larry – First, I would like to say the reason I came tonight I want everyone to know that Ms. Mollo does not represent everybody in this Town. I know sometimes the squeaky wheel gets the grease but, in this case, just because you have time on your hands don't mean you are the only person that has an opinion. Talk to the citizens and see what they think, and I think a lot of you already have. The second thing I have, I am glad she brought that up about dispatch, she is 100% right, she really is. Since you all have been talking about the budget, I challenge each one of you to make the proper appropriations to update our dispatch. Make it compliant and get us where we need to be, because there are lives in danger. The last thing, times that are brought up will not change with 911, they know it they just don't talk about it. With that I yield the rest of my time to Angie Johnson.

Angie - I yield the rest of Larry's time and my time to Blake Ray.

Blake - I just wanted to say quickly.

Mayor Crawford - You ask to be last we have another person; we also need to sanitize.

Blake – I'm sorry.

Blake - With Larry and Angie's time and with my time it gives me eight (8) minutes. I will be quick and thorough. First of all, I want to thank everyone in this room for everything you done to pass the budget. I am not living here currently; I reside in Shenandoah Valley. The mess with the budget was getting around to the rest of the Commonwealth and it was making us look like a laughingstock, which we are not. I really appreciate you guys and applauding you for setting aside your differences and passing the budget. Next I would like to thank four (4) of the Council members, Mayor Crawford, Tim, Adrienne and Connie for the last year you guys have made it very easy for me to bring some change to the Town by bringing a really quality restaurant where people will be able to go and enjoy and hopefully will spark the revitalization efforts. I have talked to each of you; pretty sure in the next five (5) to ten (10) years Richlands is going to be a different place because of that. I applaud you guys and thank you for creating the landscape to make that happen. I am going to make sure that I do everything in my power to support you guys as you work to grow the Town. Coal Town Taps is officially open and that is my gift to the Richlands Community to help everyone. I just want to recap what has already happened this past weekend. The last year I have talked about how this particular business could really drive pedestrian traffic in the downtown area in that strip. I would like to say it is definitely having an impact. I spoke with one of the local business owners who is a florist; she has already had six (6) new walk-in clients that she had never seen before just simply by the traffic we were creating. The gas station right around the corner had to get extra labor because they were overwhelmed with the pedestrian traffic that came in; they had to call in two (2) extra cashiers to support. I think it is already positive change. Look at the Town of Richlands symbol; it is right there on the back wall, Recreation, Agriculture, Industry and Mining. We were incorporated in 1892. Here is what I want you to think about as we move forward. We have to get an augur mind because it is what built this Town, however, due to the current market conditions there are cheaper forms of energy and we have to look other ways to grow our Town. From the Recreation standpoint, we have to start taking advantage of our above ground assets, the same way we took advantage of our below ground assets that built this community. From the Industry standpoint we have to look for new industry and we have to sell this place as a vital place to do business. You guys

have already started the groundwork and if you don't continue to make positive progressive change then what is going to happen is this Town will cease to exist. People are moving away because they can't afford to live here. I had a conversation with all five (5) of you about this budget issue, four (4) of you were receptive. One person said that their mission was to fight for the sixty percent of the people that didn't have jobs and had low income. The only way to do that is to create jobs. (I will pause real quick) If there is question about yielding of time, parliamentary procedures according to Roberts Rule of Order, a member who has the floor may yield the floor to another member and so doing the former surrender his right to continue speaking at that time when they pass to someone else.

Mayor Crawford - Laura please keep your seat.

Laura -- According to our Town Resolution, we can defer to Mr. McClanahan you passed the resolution, each speaker not included on the agenda shall be limited to three (3) minutes, no speaker will be allowed give his three (3) minutes allotment to another speaker.

Blake - Roberts Rule of Order trumps that ordinance. Thank you

Blake -- In the last two (2) weeks that I have been home I have been accompanied by friends of mine that are looking at Richlands to do business in which could create 50 to 100 jobs in this Town. They were impressed with our Southern Hospitality and they are looking at the logistics going forward. Agriculture, we need to support our Farmers, we need to support our local grown products, and you can do with working with the Farmer's Market. I know Connie has done a really great job at trying to spearhead. I can tell you from a Coal Town Taps standpoint as soon as COVID issues are over and the meat situation is over we have already partner with local farmers to use their products. I really ask that we all work together because if we keep tearing each other down there is not going to be anything left for us to fight over. I want to address the budget issue. Business and municipality government are different, but they are the same. You can cut the budget; you can raise revenue, or you can do a combination of both. Having a conversation about cuts all the time is not going to leave anything to cut. I have been watching all the Town Council meetings for the last two (2) months and I am sorry I am calling all of you out, not one (1) of you had a conversation on what to do to raise revenue other than taxes. Taxes are important but that is not the only way you raise revenue. I employ you to look at other alternatives and partner with other municipalities that are making success happen that are in the same boat you are. Look at the Town of Marion who has completely revitalized their downtown area. Look at thriving cities that started in the same boat that we did, and they are currently growing, work to copy their ideas. It is OK we can borrow ideas from other places that is what is going to make us better. To be completely honest with you I have not had an idea that has not already existed, I just tweaked it and made it my own, and we have to do that. I am going to yield the rest of my time because I have said my peace. I appreciate every single one of you and hope that something I said tonight has resonated with some members of this room because if we don't do something we are going to lose. Thank you

Mayor Crawford - Craig Earls

Craig -- 311 Linwood Drive - Thank you for letting me speak. I had the opportunity to go to the Recreation Department this morning. I wanted to talk to you a little about recreation and the importance of recreation in our small Town. As you know with our small Town and all the budget stuff that has been going on, I kind of echo what Blake was saying, kind of got egg on our face because of this. One of the things that have come out of this, talking in the community brought up issues and I think that is important that debate is important. What is important to me may not be important to you. The debate is important and that the passion is there, I think that is the seed to success that you have to carry forward. That is the start not a finish. For a recreation perspective I am on the Rec Commission and I do encourage each of you to come to our meetings. Mary Ann is our representative that works with us on the Recreation Commission. In our small-Town recreation is important, it is an outlet for kids to get their energy out, and so they can put their energy to good and not bad. It is a place for them to get into the pool, shoot basketball with their friends, get a hotdog and play baseball on the field. The state champions last year, my daughter played, that was a product of Richlands Little League being able to have a facility to use. The importance of that, I want to make sure to continue. You hear people talk and read things with the Recreation Park, if you have not been over there; a lot of people are saying negative things and criticize the road. It is a difficult road to get over there sometimes, but that is something I would like to personally like to address with the Council and try to figure something out, but the location

is the location. It does take leadership to make the future right. If we wanted a different location that is possible, but we have to come together and decide what we want to do. If that is the case lets come together and not tear each other apart. There have been hundreds of thousands of dollars spent over there to remodel that entire place. It is beautiful on the inside. There have been volleyball tournaments there and they have come from other Towns. That is giving us revenue. As Blake said that is one way of getting revenue is getting people into the Town. The concessions for the last two (2) years have made money. People have said we have not made money there, but the proof is in the pudding as they say. We are very proud of the concessions. I just wanted to recognize the hard work of our Recreation Department. We will get the pool ready for the kids and I want to thank everyone for your continued support.

Mayor Crawford - I have a couple of things I need to clean up before we move on. On the IDA Board we have two (2) members that their term is running out, I would like to entertain a motion for Larry Worrell for the IDA Board.

Mary Ann - I will make the motion for Larry Worrell to serve on the IDA Board, Rod seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call – Rick – Yes, Doug-Yes, Mary Ann-Yes, Richard-Yes, Rod-Yes, Motion carries – 5/0.

Mayor Crawford - I would like to entertain a motion for Larry Johnson to serve on the IDA Board.

Rod - I make the motion for Larry Johnson to serve on the IDA Board, Mary Ann seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion?

Rod – Just to clarify it is the “Richlands Industrial Development Authority”

Mayor Crawford - All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call – Rick – Yes, Doug-Yes, Mary Ann-Yes, Richard-Yes, Rod-Yes, Motion carries – 5/0.

Mayor Crawford - Contract for EMS - Wayne please read R-2020-06-01

Wayne - Read the EMS Resolution – R-2020-06-01. We need to entertain a motion to waive the second reading of the Resolution.

Mayor Crawford - I would entertain a motion to waive the second reading of the Resolution.

Rod - I make the motion to waive the second Reading of Resolution R-2020-06-01, Mary Ann seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call – Rick – Yes, Doug-Yes, Mary Ann-Yes, Richard-Yes, Rod-Yes, Motion carries – 5/0.

Wayne - Second motion would be if the Resolution would be effective immediately or 30 days by the Charter.

Rod - I didn't quite understand do we have an option? It can be effective immediately instead of in 30 days.

Wayne - By default in the Charter all Resolutions/Ordinances comes in effect in 30 days after adopted unless 2/3 of the Council votes to be taken as an emergency measure and become effective immediately.

Rod - I make a motion to adopt R-2020-06-01 as an emergency measure and to be taken effective immediately, Rick seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call – Rick – Yes, Doug-Yes, Mary Ann-Yes, Richard-Yes, Rod-Yes, Motion carries – 5/0.

Mayor Crawford - We have on the agenda to discuss the proposed budget; the budget has been adopted.

Doug - We talked about committees, we talked about putting people on the Electric Committee. I would like to nominate Shea Cook to go on that committee. We talked about it two (2) months ago.

Mayor Crawford - I don't know if we have officially set up a committee.

Doug - The Council OK'd it, so with that OK, and you said it was OK, I think it is in order that I can nominate someone to be on that committee.

Mayor Crawford – No, I said I had to think about whether we needed an Electric Committee. I am sure if I didn't say that it will be corrected this week.

Doug - The Council agreed that we would put people on the committee that was my understanding.

Mary Ann - I thought you were going to make that determination if we needed an Electric Committee and other committees.

Mayor Crawford - I don't think we do.

Doug - We have always had an Electric Committee.

Mayor Crawford - We have always had one, but it has not been effective, has not been active.

Doug - As Mayor I don't think you can make a decision that we don't have one. I think that is up to the Council. I make a motion that Council consider, we have had an Electric Committee for years.

Mayor Crawford - Go ahead and make the motion.

Doug - I make the motion that we continue the Electric Committee and also make the motion.

Mayor Crawford - One thing at a time

Doug - I make a motion that we keep the Electric Committee as we had for several years just like any other committee it is a department.

Rick – Do we have one now?

Mayor Crawford - We have not had one since I have been here. We will see if we can get a second and we will discuss it.

Rick - I will second it.

Mayor Crawford - Now, let's discuss it.

Mary Ann - For discussion, in the past Councilman Ratliff and I served on the Electric Committee. So, if we have a committee, I am assuming you will appoint who serves on that committee. Council members and he is proposing a citizen Mr. Cook. It is not automatic that Mr. Ratliff or myself be on it just because we were on it in the past that is my question.

Doug - We are discussing getting the committee. I will make another motion.

Mayor Crawford - As far as I am concerned since I have been in office, the committee has not been active, therefore I have seen no need to reignite the committee or whatever. I think that is my prerogative. We do have a motion and a second before Council unless someone has something else for discussion.

Doug – The Electric Committee is one of the most important things that affect the citizens and probably the largest part of our budget. I think it is like six million dollars, Mr. Taylor, that is probably more than the whole budget and it is my feeling and I hope it is the whole Council that the citizens should have a say in what their rates are along with Council. I sure they would appreciate us putting three (3) Council members.

Rick - You can't have three (3).

Doug - I mean two (2) Council members and two (2) residents/citizens. That is my proposal.

Tim - Can I be part of the discussion? Part of the reason what Mr. Ratliff said, it is so important and its complicated, full Council should represent that committee because it is that important and makes a big impact on the budget.

Doug - If we are going to have all the Council members, we would have five (5) or six (6) why not five (5) or six (6) residents? I think they should be equal partners in the rates that they pay, and I can't understand why any Council member would not vote to let them have a say along with Council of what their rates are. If Mr. Taylor thinks there should be all Council members on it that is fine but the same number of residents so they can have a say on what rates they pay. I think that is the way to go instead of all Council members and an arbitrary decision on what the rates are. I am sure all the citizens would like a say.

Mayor Crawford - If I may be part of the discussion, I learned a very difficult lesson with Council, I failed to appoint someone to fill a vacant seat that we had and I was not told three (3) times to fill it by the way. I know when you get different numbers going with committees or anything else that make up of a committee it can actually be turned on its head. If my input means anything I think if we have a committee, we should have it with full Council, which would be the committee. Whether we need that or not, I have not seen a need for it so far.

Rod - I wanted to add to the discussion is that we cover as representatives of the people; we cover in the budget while we are here. We couldn't have a committee it would be official meeting of the Council. I agree totally that Council should be involved in the discussion and decision making what our electrical services looks like. I refer to the Charter, I don't have with me, but I think the Commission is mandated by the Charter, but I don't think committees are mandated, I believe they are the choice of the Mayor. Since we have a motion on the floor, we can easily take a vote if we want a committee or not. Committees are subject to the discretion of the Mayor, that is my understanding don't hold me to that, I am afraid I will miss quote it, I am backing off right now, but I am telling you what I think. I appreciate your interest; I have lots to say to you tonight but soften your heart because you need it, I mean that from my heart to you.

Doug - We have citizen representatives on the Rec Commission what is the difference?

Rod - It is a Commission Doug, it is part of the Charter, and committees are not.

Doug - I cannot see why anyone would not want the residents to have a say in their rates along with Council. I don't understand why our citizens are not getting a chance to say what they think about the rates with the Council.

Mayor Crawford - I think on November 3 our citizens are going to get to say a lot.

Mayor Crawford - Connie can you read the motion.

Connie – The motion was to form an Electric Committee.

Doug – Mr. Taylor suggested, I don't think it would be legal it only has to be two (2) Council members before Council in a meeting you have to advertise it, we would have to keep it at two (2) Council members and two (2) residents.

Tim - I need to clarify please, I didn't say we had to have a legal meeting, I said it is so important that it should be a Council meeting not a committee. Just to make sure everyone understands Council doesn't set rates arbitrarily they are done thru a professional cost of service study that is done by an independent group. Council looks at and it is not done by the expertise of anybody in here because it takes more than what Council members and Staff can do. It is reviewed by experts and they can make changes based on input at a Public Hearing and that is how I think it should work.

Doug - The rates are set by Council period; they cannot go up or down without the Council's OK. I didn't say anyone was doing anything illegal I said the meeting would be illegal. I said that two (2) Council members on a committee that has been done for many years and that committee should survive.

Mayor Crawford - We have a motion on the floor for the committee, any further discussion on that speak now or forever hold your peace.

Doug - The motion is to keep the committee that we had for many years as the Electric Committee. My motion at first was to keep the committee that we always had for many years it has never be disbanded or anything.

Rod - We have to take the way Clerk took it.

Doug - I know what I said; keep the committee that we had, that is my motion. If you want to make a motion that is fine.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call – Rick – Yes, Doug-Yes, Mary Ann-No, Richard-No, Rod-No, Motion fails – 3/2.

Mary Ann - Would it be permissible before we go to the next thing on the agenda to discuss the budget, could I discuss briefly the plans for the Rec Park with Phase III beginning on July 1, there is one thing I would like Council's approval for.

Mayor Crawford - I think that is Ok.

Mary Ann - In accordance to all the guidelines with Phase III the pool will open on July 1. The Health Department did visit per our request today. They said they really didn't understand most everybody else was doing by phone. I think it was admiral that Mr. Phillips asked them to come and physically inspect our Rec Department just to make absolutely positive that we are doing everything right. I would like to publicly thank Rusty Hess from American Carpet Care; they donated time and donated the expense of the water to fill up the pool. Without their efforts it would have been very difficult to be ready by July 1. It was so exciting to be there this morning; it was a very busy place, full of excitement, I was optimistic this would happen. What I need approval for; it has been proposed on July 4 that we have a free pool day at the Rec Park. In the guidelines we can only have 150 kids. It would be no admission on that day also the Richlands Youth Basketball League generously donated \$1000 for a food truck to come to provide free hot dogs, chips and a drink unlimited. It would be from 11:00am to 8:00pm on July 4 with a very small fireworks display at 8:00pm. That is not a fireworks display that would require a Fire Department, very small by someone who knows how to do that. I am asking for Council approval to have the July 4 celebration which is really positive for our community.

Mayor Crawford - Do you want to put in the form of a motion?

Mary Ann - I would be honored to. I would like to make the motion on the 4th of July Richlands Recreation Department have a "Free Swim Day" from 11am to 8pm with free hot dogs from 1pm to 5pm for all the community abiding by Phase III guidelines. Rod seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford - I am very happy that we are able to do that, and I am very happy to recognize it in such a way. Do you have to be a kid to get a hot dog?

Mary Ann - No sir

Rick - I would ask you to have Keith and them come for the fireworks just in case something happened.

Mary Ann - That is an excellent idea.

Rick - That is the only thing I would ask; I am sure Keith won't have a problem.

Mary Ann - I am sorry fireworks are at 9:00pm.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call – Rick – Yes, Doug-Yes, Mary Ann-Yes, Richard-Yes, Rod-Yes, Motion carries – 5/0.

Mayor Crawford - Anything else for further discussion?

Rod - I think that Ms. Mollo has a good point and I think we need to clarify something, but we can't do it right now. She walked up twice to talk to the Attorney while someone was speaking; her point was about point of order and an ordinance, Correct?

Laura – Resolution

Rod – You're right but we adopt at organizational meeting every year and you probably are aware of this we always adopt Robert's Rules of Order, so if we have a conflict, we can deal with that. I think we should take it up at the next Council meeting, whether we have setting or not, but I will ask for forgiveness and the softening of the heart for the individual, does that make sense, are you good with that.

Laura – Yes

Rod - As concerned as you are, are you good with that? You are out there, and I think it is a good thing and I welcome. You are interested in the community. When I said soften of the heart, I really mean it. I don't think anything that we do we do with malice or any intent of malice. We make every effort to be in compliance and it makes me uptight, it comes off as accusatory. That is why I am asking for softening of the heart. We are sitting up here trying to make decisions about this Town in the best interest and is our best interest to have understanding people. No one here would be non-compliant or break the law or do anything to hurt people or to hurt our Town or the legacy of it. You are part of it we are all part of it one day we will be gone, we hope we see a good legacy thank you for being part of it. Think about that. Are you good with that?

Mayor Crawford - Richard you have something?

Richard – No

Mayor Crawford - Anyone else, any further discussion? Are we going to look at the ordinances for tax increases?

Tim - It is up to Council to decide since we have a budget.

Mayor Crawford - We have passed a budget and it needs to be funded. I would like to put each one of these before Council.

Tim - The way the budget has to be formed we start this process in December, we try to get to Council by March this year it was a little bit different due to COVID. All the revenues are on best guess and historically type of performance or some type of appropriation. Going forward this year is going to be different than most mainly because a lot of discussion thru this process. In July my staff including

Adrienne will present a State of the Town per se on what our performance has been thru COVID and what our last fiscal year would be. We will give snapshot on the State of the Town financially, this will be done regularly; it is not going to be business as usual. Every Town, every city and county in the State of Virginia is going thru the same process. It is going to be a "work in progress", it is a budget despite what everybody thinks you don't get all that fifteen or sixteen million dollars at once. It is "work in progress" based on best guess. Council will be in tune what the financial pulse is of the Town each month. That is why we leveled the capital, we didn't include any because we go as we can we recognize our reserves and we will see the impact of the fiscal year or any type of monies we have underperformed or over performed from last year. That being said you can see why there will be decision made thru out the year to the budget based on need that could be discussion for another day based on whatever is happening. I understand this is going to be a work in progress. That being said obviously you can proceed with the ordinances today. We were going to have to work on it every month that is the way it is going to have to be.

Mayor Crawford - Do I have any motions from the floor?

Mary Ann - I would like to address the Real Estate Tax. Last week I discussed how I understand at all times it is very difficult to have any increase but in January all five (5) of us voted that we would sign to have a fire truck built that is desperately needed. We didn't take a vote, but we all agreed how we were going to pay for that fire truck. It would be a \$0.03 increase in the real estate tax. I am going to say again, and I wish Blake Ray was here, but he is the person that made me aware of Tax Relief Act for the disabled and elderly. In my opinion this will be the ones most hard on to be able to pay. They have my commitment to work with Tazewell County, which already have the Tax Relief Act in place to make sure that we have it. I will make a motion for the fiscal year 2020-2021 that the Town of Richlands adopts a tax rate of \$0.19 per \$100 of assessed value.

Rod - Are you making the motion for Real Estate Tax?

Mary Ann – Yes, will go to \$0.019 per \$100 of assessed property value, it is going up \$0.03

Rod - I seconded the motion

Richard- I am hereby making my required disclosure pursuant to Va. Code Section 2.2-3115, subsection H, that I have a personal interest in this transaction. This transaction involves the Town's overall budget, which includes the budget for the Richlands Police Department. The nature of my personal interest in this transaction is that I am currently an employee of the Richlands Police Department and receive a salary from the Department of more than \$5000 a year. However, I am a member of a group of three (3) or more, the members of which are all affected by the transaction; this transaction does not involve just the Richlands Police Department by itself but involves all the Departments and employees of the Town. I hereby state that I am able to participate in this transaction fairly, objectively and in the public interest. Therefore, I may participate in this transaction fairly, objectively and in the public interest. Therefore, I may participate in this transaction pursuant to Virginia Code section 2.2-3112, subsection B, subdivision 1. However, I will abstain for any specific discussion or vote regarding transactions specifically and solely pertaining to the Richlands Police Department.

Doug - All of us voted for the fire truck, no one every agreed to raise taxes \$0.03, no one. I voted for the fire truck, yes, but I thought we would cut the budget and work it in. It was not my understanding that we raise the tax \$0.03 on the Real Estate. If you look at the county's tax is \$0.59 on \$100 everyone pays that in the county. If you add \$0.16 to that it is \$0.75 on \$100 if we raise \$0.03 it will be \$0.78. The people at Claypool Hill pay \$0.59 they don't have to pay \$0.16; the people in Hidden Valley pay \$0.16. I don't know how many I have had in Hidden Valley come up to me and say we got taken into the Town, what has the Town done for us. We were promised sidewalks and promised this and so on; we have not given Hidden Valley anything, not one thing since we took them in. I think occasionally we have a patrol car go up; the County could have done that. I have seen nothing in Hidden Valley since we have taken them in. I am against raising real estate tax. I want to keep it at \$0.16

Mary Ann - I am also a resident at Hidden Valley; I will have to respectfully disagree. I have had residents tell me they think the snow removal during snowstorms has improved and personally I think it has too. Also, the fact that can have trees cut piled up on the side. All though it is embarrassing I do get calls quite often not just from Hidden Valley from residents thru out Town people asking why is it taking

three (3) weeks sometimes longer to have things picked up but that is because our trucks are so outdated and broken down. I will call the Town Hall to ask, we are very sorry the truck is broke down. It is going to get worse and worse. I know that does not have anything to do with real estate tax but if we don't have some revenue. I would like to applaud Blake Ray in what he said I am guilty, and I think we all are, he mentioned we have not thought of ways to raise revenue other than taxes. I will take full responsibility for that. I don't think that all of Hidden Valley residents feel that nothing has improved since the Town have taken us in.

Doug - I have lived in Hidden Valley for thirty years, even before we were taken in. The first place that VDOT hit was that hill that they melted the snow and got it off before the Town took it over. In know for a fact I have been there. They did a great job as far as cleaning that hill off and making sure the doctors and we all could get off. I have had several people come up and say where are our sidewalks, what have you done for us. Well, I am not sure.

Mary Ann - One more thing on Hidden Valley, I have not thought of before, Doug I give you credit for this, you had the idea before I became a Council member to prioritize the mowing in the Town, American Carpet Care, Rusty Hess. I never remember Hidden Valley so well cared for as far as on the sides of the streets, everything being cut nice and neat. I don't recall that previously.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call – Rick – No, Doug-No, Mary Ann-Yes, Richard-Yes, Rod-Yes, Motion fails – 3/2. (You must have four (4) votes to pass)

Mary Ann - Can I ask our attorney a question?

Mayor Crawford – Yes

Mary Ann – Are there ordinances other than the real estate that can be passed at a later time during the year?

Wayne – Regarding the meals tax, statutory language states the local governing body shall set the tax rate the start of the fiscal year, I am quite confident it does and most certainly includes real estate, and I have yet to find any clarification whether that also includes use based taxes. Obviously, it would be most conservative and the safest if the Council would want to address the taxes before the fiscal year just to insure, not being able to find any sort of exemption for use-based taxes. Regarding the other ordinances I believe there was some licenses fee increases, the Council can take up at its leisure.

Mayor Crawford - Would you like to make a motion on the meals tax?

Mary Ann - I want to clarify one thing, Ms. Mollo I applaud you also, you are a very intelligent lady, you speak well and very passionate about our Town, for one I appreciate that, I hope that we can find a place for you to serve. I think you would do a very good job. Unfortunately, it is too late for you to run for seat on Town Council. I have some other ideas hopefully in the future if there are openings and it is the pleasure, example the Rec Commission, if we should have a vacancy if it is the pleasure of the Commission I would like very much for you to serve on the Rec Commission. In saying that, I did say in April that I was very much opposed to meals tax increase, our restaurants were having a hard-enough time after COVID and it would be more difficult. I think I do have a right to change my mind and that is why I would like for you and anyone else who might be critical of words we say that might not come out correctly or when we do change our mind. I would like for you to sit where we sit, it is not always that easy. I most definitely said that in April as you quoted but after studying the budget and I tell you that is a challenge. I have been on the Council not nearly as long as Richard's previous term, Rod, and Rick came on after me, it is a challenge, I don't claim to be the expert on it. I will say this year I have studied it more and sought more input than I ever have. I have talked to restaurant owners and citizens. The opinions I have been given the \$0.01 increase would hardly be noticed if it had not been so publicized. I am not trying to hide anything from anyone but I don't see this as a real detriment and I see this as a way, when I make my motion I will clarify why, I see this as a way for the non-Richlands citizens to help support our Recreation Center. We don't have a formalized study, but we can certainly do one, but we estimate 60% to 70% of the use of the facility come from outside the Town limits. This will be a way for those people to stay in Richlands and support our restaurants and help support Rec. My motion is to increase the proposed meals tax \$0.07 from the current rate of \$0.06 and to appropriate the \$0.01 increase to the Rec Department.

Richard - I seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion?

Doug - I would like to say one thing, we talked about this three (3) years ago, the way the public outside of Richlands could support the Recreation Center was to charge for a membership. Where are we on that? I don't think people outside the Town limits get to use the facility for the same price as the taxpayers are already paying within the Town limits. What have we done about that?

Mary Ann - The Rec Commission did propose memberships and we did not market. We certainly did not go to large business such as Clinch Valley Medical Center and other large businesses that we have in Town to promote until we had the weight room completed and all the restrooms. I forgot I have photos of before and after pictures of the Rec Park. About the time we were ready to make a big push in marking the membership COVID hit. I would welcome you Doug, it was your idea and an excellent idea. It is open to citizens, every month I mention our meetings, come help us with the memberships. It is a nine (9) person committee with me appointed by the Council to serve on it. We welcome help and we need it and to help market the membership. If you will take a look at the photo album you will see, we have a Rec Center to be very proud of.

Doug - We have talked about that for three (3) or four (4) years, instead of meals tax, 75% of everyone that uses the Rec is out of Town limits. If you want to find a way to equalize it that would be the way you need to work on the memberships, Abingdon and every other Town that I know a charge a little bit more for those outside of the Town limits and takes a little bit of burden off the tax payer. I would urge that, I don't think it is the way to go is a meals tax, which I will vote against.

Rick - Mary Ann, we compare Richlands, Tazewell and Bluefield all the time together. The problem, what Richlands has that Tazewell does not have, we have Claypool Hill sitting beside of us and it is \$0.42 difference on a hamburger.

Mary Ann - I don't understand the math on that.

Rick - Go to a McDonalds and order a hamburger and drive to Claypool Hill and it is \$0.42 more

Doug - You will make it \$0.49 when you do that. Gene Forbes owns them both it is exactly the same price. Earnest Edgell had a ticket from where he bought a hamburger and he showed everyone there was \$0.42 difference when he bought the same product at McDonald's in Richlands than Claypool Hill. When you put that \$0.07 on there it is going to be \$0.49 difference. That is not much but when you have four (4) or five (5) kids and you have a \$20 bill going thru the drive thru that is going to be \$1.40 more, do the math. A \$1.40 may not be much to you but these people on set income \$1.40 means a lot. They are not going to get help from the kind of program you are talking about, and they have to get out of their pockets. The cigarette tax I know we are not talking much about it but a carton of cigarettes already \$2.00 more in Richlands than it is at Claypool Hill. It devastated Cargo; they sell half of the cigarettes that they did before. The \$1.40 on \$20 means a lot on a person going thru drive thru on a set income.

Mary Ann - May I refer to Adrienne, the receipt that Ernest Edgell gave, that was not for a single hamburger that was for several items.

Adrienne - It might have been a combo.

Rick - But it was the same one at the same places.

Adrienne - I think we all know Tazewell County does not have a meals tax and we all know that we don't live in the County, but we live in Town. Because we live in a Town, we pay a little extra to have those services, for a nice downtown and the conveniences. If I don't want to have Town services I will move out to the county. I am speaking as a staff and as a citizen of this Town. I lived in Northern Virginia for a while; I went to college and had my first child. I did everything I possibly could to come back to this Town because I love this place, I have a passion for this place and I still do. I want my children to love

this place and embrace it and the people as much as I have that is what I want. It is very discouraging, and I don't mean to talk so unprofessional or so plain, but it is so discouraging to me as a person who grew up here as a coal miner's daughter to see this happening to our Town. This is one of the most beautiful places I could ever live, the most beautiful. To see what is happening here is very upsetting.

Doug - How do you survive if you are a merchant, the businesses carry the Town, without businesses we don't have a chance, if you run all them a half mile out to Claypool Hill you don't have nothing. That is what is happening, we are running everyone out of Town to Claypool Hill or to Raven and these merchants inside the Town can't survive.

Adrienne - The meals tax is not a tax that is paid by the merchant it is a tax that is collected by the merchant and paid by the citizens.

Doug - If they don't have business, they don't have a business, Adrienne if you run everyone out of Town and then you don't have anything in Town to support your big budget that you propose every year.

Rick - We have a new restaurant coming and they called me concerned about the meals tax.

Mary Ann - Are you talking about Italian Village coming to Randy's Gateway at the old Radio Shack? They chose to come.

Rick - More meals tax makes their food look higher and hurts their sales.

Mary Ann - They still chose to come.

Doug - They may not stay.

Mary Ann - I do wish you would come to Rec Commission and help us with the membership idea. We were in the works of it, like you said we talked about for three (3) years. If you look at these pictures and I wish you would for example the horrible condition of the Rec Park, we have to have a good product to sell and we did not have one. I would not have taken a shower in those locker rooms; you could not have paid me to in the past but when you see the before and the after. We can market something now Doug, but we do need help. The Rec Commission is going to be more active more than we ever have been, before we did not have a good product. May be some members if they are not going to roll up their sleeves and work, they are going to have to make a tough decision and come off and then I would like for Ms. Mollo and other citizens like Amanda Buskill that is interested. I want people on the Rec Commission that is going to market the good product we have now.

Doug - We have 21,000 surrounding Richlands including Richlands, a five-mile radius, 70% to 75% that come into the Rec are expecting 5,000 people to keep them up and that is not right. You are asking 5000 people use to be 5800, we are asking those people to support 21,000 people. I have asked and ask for years to have membership and the Rec Committee will not do it

Mayor Crawford - She is asking for you to help them why don't you tell them you will help.

Mary Ann - Have you been down to our facility?

Doug - Yes, I have, in fact you would not have a pool if I had not worked on it with Gene Hearl. We got the money for the pool from the Thompson Foundation. I have been there many times.

Mary Ann - I am talking about in the last year.

Doug - Yes, I have been there.

Mary Ann - I am trying to make clear and I will end this, the Rec Commission could not sell memberships for a product that people would not want to buy membership in. We have the product now. If you try to charge a kid and no membership, you ask a kid that shows up where you live? What do you do?

Doug –Coomes Center does it I have asked you several years to go to the Coomes Center, have you been to the Coomes Center?

Mary Ann - I have not, we are not Abingdon.

Doug – You said you didn't know how to do it, why don't you go to Abingdon, they do it every day.

Mary Ann - We did not have the product to market. Would you please come to our next meeting; you are very intelligent I need your help?

Doug – Why do you ask 5,000 people to support? You have 75% free membership outside of the Town limits, why did you not sell to those members and say hay we are going to do all this at Rec Park, we still have 75% still coming in to help refurbish the Rec Center.

Mayor Crawford - Doug are you going to go help them?

Doug - What am I supposed to do sell concession or what?

Mary Ann - You have great ideas just come and share with us.

Doug – That is your committee I am not going to tell you how to run it.

Mary Ann - I am asking for help. I think you can help us.

Doug - I am asking you, will you meet me one day in Abingdon and let's take a tour of the Coomes Center and see how they work their memberships. I am available any day and you can work from that and show your Rec Commission how to get 75% to help us keep up the Rec Center. Will you do that?

Mary Ann - I will.

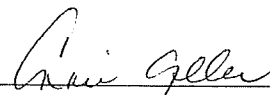
Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call – Rick – No, Doug-No, Mary Ann-Yes, Richard-Yes, Rod-Yes, Motion fails – 3/2. (You must have four (4) votes to pass)

Mayor Crawford - Unless any Council members has anything additional, I am ready to adjourn the meeting.

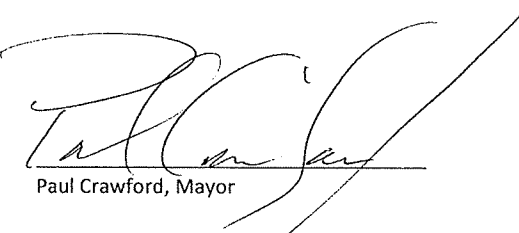
Rick - I make a motion to adjourn the meeting, Richard second the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call – Rick – Yes, Doug-Yes, Mary Ann-Yes, Richard-Yes, Rod-Yes, Motion carries – 5/0.

Adjourn



Connie Allen, Town Clerk



Paul Crawford, Mayor