

The Richlands Town Council held a "Regular Meeting" on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in the Richlands Council Chambers at 6:00 pm with the following present:

Mayor: Rod D. Cury

Town Manager: John O'Daniel

Town Clerk: Rebekah Hackworth

Council Members: Doug Ratliff, Jeff Hurst, Rick Wood, Kristen Thompson-Whitt, Seth White, and Laura Mollo.

Town Attorney: Michael Thomas

Mayor Cury opened the meeting.

Mayor Cury gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Cury- We have before us an agenda. Is there any additions or deletions to the agenda?

Laura- Mayor Cury, I have two please. Really doesn't matter where it's added but there's a refund issue regarding a demand meter. The second is we have the Teen Venture kids with us tonight and if we could let them be first on the agenda and that way, we can let the kids do their presentation and they won't have to sit through the whole meeting.

Mayor Cury- Okay, we will add them after the Consent Agenda which is roman numeral V. So, that would be V. a. Teen Venture Presentation. Then we will have VIII. o. Refund Item.

John- Mayor, if it is okay, I have one to add after that also. It would be VIII. p. Dialog and Design Contract Agreement. We also need to have a first reading on both Ordinances O-2022-09-01 and on O-2022-09-02.

Mayor Cury- Okay, are there any other additions/deletions to the agenda? Okay, I will entertain a motion to accept the agenda.

Jeff- I make a motion to accept the agenda as amended. Rick seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Okay, next we have before us the Consent Agenda which includes The Authorization to Pay Bills (August), Minutes for the month of August, and the Budget Amendment. Is there a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented?

Laura- I actually have two questions about the check registry. The first one is to Blue Ridge Power. Every time we have them here, are we paying a fee for that?

John- That would be a question for Alice, but I think that is part of our membership fee that we pay.

Laura- The next one is to Thompson & Litton. It was my understanding that we were not getting any more bills.

John- It is for another project. We received a grant for a sanitary sewer evaluation survey. I believe it is SSES and that's part of that. We are hopefully wrapping that up. We have done the cameras and the smoke testing that was brought up at our last meeting. So that is part of that, to go through and see where our problem areas are. As far as I know this is the only invoice that we have gotten from them in the last month.

Laura- Okay, thank you.

Seth- What is the Budget Amendment?

John- That is where we moved the money to pay for the EMS vehicle from the Fire Department.

Mayor Cury- Okay, is there anymore question about the Consent Agenda? Is there a motion to approve the Consent Agenda?

Jeff- I make a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Seth seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Okay, next on the agenda is Teen Venture. Who is here to speak on behalf of Teen Venture?

Carol Ann- Hello, my name is Carol Ann Lawrence. I am the Executive Director of Teen Venture. Our address is 217 Railroad Avenue, in Richlands. We are just right down the hill here.

Jim- I am Jim Talbot and I am on the board at the Teen Venture.

Carol Ann- I've given you a copy of our budget for the year as well as the last seven months of 2022. We are coming before you today to ask if the Town of Richlands would be able to pay Teen Ventures utility bills. When Teen Venture started, the Town of Richlands gave them a stipend every year to help with operating expenses. Over the years, that was reduced from \$20,000 to \$5,000 and now we don't receive anything from the Town of Richlands. So, we would please ask for your generosity to help us with our utility bills, so that we can continue operating. I would also like to ask about the roof of the building. The building is still owned by the Town of Richlands and the roof is leaking and causing damage to some of the interior. We would like to request assistance replacing the roof on the older part of the building. Would that be something that you guys would consider? Your generosity would be greatly appreciated. Any help that you can give us would be appreciated. Covid made it difficult for us to operate. We would appreciate anything that the town could do to help us through this rough spot.

Mayor Cury- Thank you very much. This is a budgetary matter so I will turn this over to the council. There is not greater calling then to work with our young people.

Doug- My suggestion, would be maybe the council would consider giving like a \$5,000 credit on their electricity bill per year.

Laura- We have our town's most precious resources in the audience every week, the people, but more so we have our children. We have further down the agenda, we have a couple paving issues in town, and I wouldn't mind adding that down there to discuss the issue with the roof. As far as the utility bill goes, I don't have an issue with making that motion tonight to pay that utility bill for a year. I would like to say so the people in the audience can see, we are looking at the utility bill for the past twelve months, it has been about \$10,300. We have poured money into other situations in town, and I think our kids are very deserving of \$10,300.

Seth- I spoke with Matthew Vance, who is their chairman, a couple weeks ago and I've been involved with the Teen Venture from the very beginning. I served on their board in the very beginning and it's a great organization. The challenge has always been how are we going to find the money to continue to keep it going. They have done a very good job of that. However, I think what they faced during Covid was maybe some leadership failure, not on these guys part but some other folks there. Also, the fact that you don't have kids there, but I think they have a very good board now. They have a good leader, Matt seemed very excited about it. I think he's only been on there for a short period of time too, but he was very excited when he called me. I know from the past that we did help pay the utility bill in the beginning to help them get going. I'll tell you this budget is a very bare budget compared to what it used to be. The directors pay alone was more than what this budget pay benefits alone. So, I think that if we can help them, I would certainly be in favor of us paying their utility bill.

Teen Venture was designed for every student, but it was also designed to be a place for kids who don't play baseball, basketball, football, or golf. Their skate park is amazing, if you haven't been in there, I encourage you to go see it. It is a very nice facility, and they have a climbing wall and all kinds of stuff, but it was a place that was designed to reach out to kids who may not be involved in after school activity. They have a place where they can go and be involved in after school activities. So, I think it's very important that we are reaching the most kids that we possibly can. That is the whole design of the program. As far as the roof is concerned, the building still belongs to us. We need to take care of that just like any other facility that we have. We need to make sure we take care of that, but I, for one would like to see us be able to pay their utilities for a year while that gives them time to fundraise and to seek different grants without all the pressure of not being able to make their payroll.

Mayor Cury- Okay, Doug, Laura, and Seth have spoken about this. Would anyone else like to speak or present a motion?

Laura- I make a motion that we pay Teen Venture's utility bill up to \$10,000 for the fiscal year ending on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Seth seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Okay, next on the agenda is the Scheduled Public Comments. We have Michael Sizemore speaking on the Water Treatment Plant.

Michael- My name is Michael Sizemore my address is 216 Youngs Road, Raven VA.

Ladies and gentlemen, the council, Mayor Curry, thank you for your time and allowing me to speak today. I'm here to address the state of the water treatment plant here in Richlands, VA. The last time our water plant was upgraded was in 1993. Our plant has a 15-20-year life expectancy. If you do the math, we are currently entering into 2023 which is 30 years. Twice as long as 15 years. So, we've had engineers and other people stand up here and address the council and they have told them that the only reason that our water plant is functioning is because of the hard work of the operators inside of it. Which is 100% true, but what the operators inside this plant are doing is shoving gauze into a gunshot wound. I have passed some pictures around for the council to look at. I'm sure all of you haven't seen them yet, but what you will see are our filter valves being held closed with broomsticks and with rope tied to the ceiling. This is because the filters do not close as they properly should. The only way to get these filters closed is to prop them closed. Now if someone from the State of Virginia, Governor Youngkin or someone from another county came to the Town of Richlands water plant and they saw us having to tie filters to the ceiling to get them the close. Is that something that would make you proud of our town? Is that something that would make you proud of the facilities that we have in our town? If students such as the ones that were here today, wanting to go into a career in water treatment came to our plant to tour and saw operators having to tie filters closed or prop them up with broomsticks to close them, do you think that would encourage them to enter into that field? Also, we have a generator sitting on Farmer St, I'm sure you've seen it right across from the Catholic Church, it is useless because there is a part that cost over \$100,000 that must be replaced to use it. You may be thinking why do we need a generator for a water plant? I'm sure many of the council members were living in Richlands during the 1990s when we had multiple power outages throughout the town. Jeff Hurst lived across the street from me, and we didn't have power for 3-5 days in 1996 during a Blizzard. During those 3-5 days, without a generator all of the tanks in the Town would go dry and all of our citizens would either have to enter to a boil notice or be without water for some amount of time. So, Town has been granted an amazing amount of money from the Federal Government, one of the earmarks for that amazing amount of money was for wastewater and water infrastructure. I have not seen any of that go towards wastewater or water infrastructure. Our water treatment plant is falling apart and every day all we can do is put a band-aid on top of it. It is time to remove the gauze from the wound. Remove the bullet and suture the wound. Thank you.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Michael. That was well-spoken and passionate. I would urge the council to see what we can do to improve the situation.

Rick- I think we have that on our agenda items to talk about tonight and I think we can handle that then.

Mayor Cury- Okay, next on the agenda is unscheduled public comments. We have Joella Farmer.

Joella- My name is Joella Farmer and I live at 108 Ray Circle. Thank you all for hearing me out. I've lived up on Ray Circle now for about four years and we haven't really had any issues until here recently. There is a house there that has been abandoned. I would like the town's help with this. I'm not very familiar with what can be done, but the problems we are having is there's people trying to squat in the house. We have had some issues where the police have come, and I do want to thank our Police Department. They have been really wonderful about coming up and helping out and watching, so I really do appreciate that. However, my concern is for safety. We have children up there. I don't know exactly what's going on inside that home but it's obviously not good. I don't want to speculate but hypothetically if something was being made inside that home and it could blow up and I don't want that. Nobody does and I would appreciate your time and consideration on this. I would just like to know what can be done. The people that owned it before, I have called them, and their name is still on the deed. From what I understood if there is like a mortgage company that has been coming up, and they have had people come up to mow the grass and stuff but they're actually not doing that right now. So, that's between them, but it just makes me very nervous with my grandchildren, and my children there and other kids and in the community up there playing. You have people up there basically out of their heads.

Mayor Cury- Are you saying it's illegally occupied?

Joella- Yes.

Mayor Cury- Officer Hankins, are you familiar with this?

Office Hankins- Yes, there has been a contractor up there, so we are hoping something is being done about it with the owners.

Mayor Cury- Thank you. John, are you aware of this issue? Will you put that on the To Do List to follow up because this is obviously a dangerous situation.

Doug- I've checked on that too and it is a dangerous situation and if you could explore avenues on how we can help these people that live near the house with the Town Attorney.

John- I mean we can look at it, but we have a list of properties like this. We can add it to our list to continue to look at. I mean it comes down to money. Are we willing to spend the money to tear it down?

Mayor Cury-I would suggest that we confer with Officer Hankins because he is aware of a contractor up there. I would suggest that you get with Mr. Hankins, and can you let us know at the next council meeting.

John- Okay, I will follow up and let you guys know.

Mayor Cury- Any other thoughts?

Seth- If they are sending a contractor out maybe they are getting ready to foreclose or to sell. I think that is a good thing.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Joella. Next, we have Morgan Earp.

Morgan- Morgan Earp, 1618 6<sup>th</sup> Street in Richlands. My mom was a dispatcher for Richlands for 21 years. She would not call 911 because it was not an emergency matter. We were just wondering if there was going to be something set up for non-emergency calls for people that would need to call over non-emergency issues.

We were also concerned because our utility bill for our electricity was \$310. Back in June, it was like \$185 and this past month it was \$310, and we used a lot less electricity than we did back in June, and we were just wondering how come rates have gone up like that. Thank you.

Mayor Cury- Morgan, I will address one thing, I think there is going to be a lot of discussion regarding the 911 center and how that will be managed. I do not think I am qualified to speak on that at this time. Please, thank your mother for her service to our town.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

Lauren- May I speak? I am Lauren Brown, and I am an Attorney here in Richlands. I am here on behalf of my client which is the Public Library Board of Trustees. Under roman numeral VIII line-item L, the council will be addressing the library project funding. The funds for the renovation of the exterior with the library have already been approved. So, I'm just here on behalf of my client to pass on a memorandum of understanding that's already been provided to Michael Thomas and John O'Daniel. So, I'm just here to reconcile the bid packet or the request for bids that was sent out on behalf of the project and the funding that was already approved.

Mayor Cury- Thank you for speaking, I didn't have you on there and I apologize but we have this discussion coming up under library project funding, so maybe we could do a more comprehensive discussion that time is that okay?

Lauren- Yes.

Mayor Cury- Okay, Next up is the first reading on the Creation of the B-3 Zone. Ordinance O-2022-09-01 and Ordinance O-2022-09-02.

Jeff Hurst conducted the first reading of Ordinance O-2022-09-01.

Mayor Cury- Okay, is there any discussion on this Ordinance? Is there any action that council would like to take on this Ordinance? Kristen, as our presentation of the Planning Commission, what is your groups suggestion?

Kristen- The Planning Commission recommended that we move forward and adopt both Ordinances.

Rick- I make a motion to dispense with the second reading of Ordinance O-2022-09-01. Seth seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Rick- I make a motion to adopt Ordinance O-2022-09-01 as an Emergency Order. Seth seconded the motion.

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

Laura- Mr. Mayor, I just wanted to clarify that the reason we are passing this as an emergency order is because there is a business trying to open and they are waiting on us to be able to open. I am not usually for things being passed as an emergency order, but in this case a business is waiting on us.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Okay, now we need to conduct a reading of Ordinance O-2022-09-02. Seth would you please read this Ordinance?

Seth conducted the first reading of Ordinance O-2022-09-02.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Seth. Is there any action that council would like to take regarding this Ordinance?

Seth- I make a motion to dispense with the second reading of Ordinance O-2022-09-02. Laura seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Seth- I make a motion that we adopt Ordinance O-2022-09-02 as an emergency order. Laura seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Okay, next on the agenda is discussion on the Appointment of the New Police Chief. John, do you have an update that you would like to share with us?

John- We had some interviews and we brought three of the candidates in and did interviews. I have a name that I am ready to present tonight. Traditionally, we start with some of the background checks and drug screening. Sometimes we get that back before the candidate is hired and sometimes, we don't. His has been completed but have not all come back yet. I want to leave it up to you all, if you are ready to move forward, I'll go ahead and let you know who the name is that we are ready to present.

Mayor Cury- Okay, what is the will of council?

Seth- I think we should go ahead and move forward.

John- Okay, if that is the consensus of the council, my recommendation is Ron Holt.

Seth- I make a motion that we confirm John's recommendation of Ron Holt as our New Police Chief. Laura seconded the motion.

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

Kristen- I have thought a lot about this and he has some great credentials, and his resume is exceptional. However, I have some reservations, because the job was only posted for two weeks, and we only interviewed 3 of the 7 candidates. I feel like we have rushed things and have not spent time thinking this through. I think that we should have spoken more to the police officers and the people that are directly affected by this appointment. I feel like this is a very important job and I think we should have spent more time and not rushed into this. I have spoken to several citizens and people from the Police Department, and they do not feel that this is the best decision. For that reason, I feel that I have to vote no.

Laura- I just want to say that this was not a decision taken lightly by any of us sitting here. It was not something that was rushed into. The only reason that we did kind of have to fast track is because the town has to keep moving. This was the best decision. I know I can lay my head down at night knowing that this

town is going to be and continue to be in safe hands. We are a resilient town, and we are going to keep moving forward. With that, I will be voting yes.

Mayor Cury- Any further discussions? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- No, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -5/1.

Congratulations to Ron Holt as our New Police Chief!

Mayor Cury- We are now on Electric Battery Discussion with Alice and Garrett via zoom.

Alice- Good Evening

John- Before we start, we are still in open session. So, when we get to the part that may need to be closed session, just let us know and we will transition to that. If we still need to do anything in closed session.

Garrett- Yeah, I think there is a couple matters that we will discuss in closed session.

Alice- Alright, I'll go ahead and get started with a couple of introductory comments. This project is something we started working on a year ago. So, last September, Garrett and I came in-person to Richlands, and it has taken a year for the whole process. We started with a large number of developers who responded to the proposals, and we have gradually whittled that down. We have had developers visiting the sites, so they know exactly what they're looking at, what they're getting into, and now we're nearing the end of the negotiations on this process. The second project is exactly why the agency was formed by the members so that you could work together on projects that would benefit your customers. I would say this type of project is not one that APCO would be likely to do. Really when you see these type of peak shaving projects, peak shaving for capacity and transmission is much more common among municipality cooperatives. This process has been very thorough, and it's cost effective. So, Richlands share just a portion of the overall RFP with the other Blue Ridge members. Every community that participated share the benefit and how the RFP was conducted and also the benefit of pricing of the actually leasing the batteries. So, with that I'll turn it over to Garrett.

Garrett- I just want to mention that we have been in an RFP process, and it has been a very competitive process. I am grateful for the town entrusting this opportunity to go through with it. We have seen a very competitive offering. I am so grateful that this is happening. During the process, the President actually signed a Tax Inflation Act and that represented a significant savings to the project. Actually, Richlands is situated to benefit the most from this Act. You all will get a 40% benefit rather than a 30% benefit. Like we said last time, being in a region of the retired coal plant, that offers additional economic development opportunities.

So, how do we avoid transmission cost? This is something that we continue to bring up and talk about. We are still in the middle of final competitive negotiation. There will be an item or two that we will need to discuss in closed session, but predominantly we can share the benefits and compelling aspects of the project here. We would like to come to an agreement here, tonight. The battery storage will be held at a Richlands substation. There will be a 15-year term with the battery and that will start on June of 2024. As we share with you on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, the economics have improved since the July 12<sup>th</sup>.

Richlands will benefit from peak avoidance of transition charges and capacity charges throughout the future, and also benefit from the ability to enable the developer to participate in ancillary market and the market around us which is called DJM. We are in the competitive process here within the final stages of dotting I's and crossing T's, but there are some key elements here. I didn't want to go too deep into the details at our last discussion, but when will this project come online? June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 is the proposed date. For the extended delay, we have security levels and delay damages that we can argue for cost in those delays. The security levels are very high and so are the damages, because of the nature of how high AEP transmission costs are. These were difficult to negotiate but we were able to because of the cost of these transmission rates. The capacity is during the peak of the 15-year term. They will have access in order to keep us at 2 megawatts, 2 hours duration throughout the term. That is important to us to continuing to achieve our goal in avoiding cost at peak demands. One of the very important guarantees is avoiding the peak demand. Another important guarantee in our agreement is that we are compensated in the event that the unit is not available, and we can come upon a peak. We are very happy to report that we negotiated a deal that we are compensated in such events. We are also compensated if the transmission peak has occurred. That transmission peak is determined today on an annual basis, so it is an even greater number. This is a very important thing, because we want to be compensated if the battery is unavailable to our specific needs. I just want to point out that our attorneys as well as Blue Ridge, and GDS have went over this agreement extensively and we feel very confident about these conclusions. GDS recommends that the Richlands Council approve the battery storage opportunity in

order to reduce rising AEP transmission cost. We plan to execute this agreement by the end of the month. At this time, I would like for us to go into closed session to talk about the contract agreement.

Mayor Cury- Okay, at this time, I will entertain a motion to go into executive session pursuant to VA Code 2.2-3711 (A) (6) Contract Negotiation and VA Code 2.2-3711 (A) (8) Consultation with Legal Counsel.

Seth- I make a motion that we go into Executive/Closed Session pursuant to VA Code 2.2-3711 (A) (6) and VA Code 2.2-3711 (A) (8). Laura seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- If everyone in the audience will please go out into the lobby and we will have our closed session in council's chambers, so we can continue with Garrett and Alice. Thank you for your understanding.

Mayor Cury- I will entertain a motion to return to regular session.

Seth- I make a motion to return to regular session. Rick seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- I will entertain a motion certifying that nothing was discussed expect for the business at hand.

Jeff- I make a motion that nothing was discussed expect for VA Code 2.2-3711 (A) (6) and VA Code 2.2-3711 (A) (8). Kristen seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Is there any action that council would like to make at this time?

Doug- I make a motion to go forward with the bidder that Blue Ridge has recommended contingent upon Attorney review and final approval of council before signing the final contract. Kristen seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Thank you very much. John and Michael, you all may move forward. Next, we have item d- Utility Rate Schedule Discussion.

John- Essentially, this is a follow up from last month. We had VDH speak about our rate schedule. We looked at delaying the rate increases and from what she said it sounds like their recommendations was that we go ahead and do those rate increases. So based on that, I assume the council wants to go ahead and start that process and do a public hearing starting next month. If not, I would like some direction on what council wants us to do for the water and sewer rates.

Mayor Cury- Okay, is there any questions for John?

Doug- What are you talking about?

John- The rate increases that were talked about when we did the budget for this year.

Seth- I don't have any desire to do any rate increases.

Doug- I don't either.

Laura- Me either.

John- So, the consensus is denied in doing the rate increase?

Members of Council- Yes. No rate increases.

Mayor Cury- Does anyone feel differently?

Jeff- How does that affect our grants?

Laura- It doesn't affect our grants, according to VDH, it does not. The packet that we were given, I don't know how many of you guys read this thing, but I did. One of the pages that I marked to bring up was that in this great rate thing, it says specifically that it does not affect our grants. That we should accept the grants but that these rates are not contingent upon that grant. It says while \$400,000 is a large sum of money and you should accept such a grant if it came along, it would have little effect on the rates that customers would pay. Because of that and other issues with the rates, I'm not comfortable with moving forward with them at that time.

Mayor Cury- Okay, any other questions? Thoughts?

John- Okay, we will just table that until next budget discussion.

Mayor Cury- Next, is Water and Wastewater Plant Maintenance.

John- So, with the wastewater, they have had an issue with the piece of equipment that removes the water from solid. So, then they can haul it off to be disposed of. I think we have it fixed. They have been working on that all week, but we think it's finally back up and running. It may need some additional maintenance or have an expert come in just to look at it to make sure it's going to continue to run for us until we do the larger upgrade projects. For the water, as was mentioned earlier, they have three valves that really need to be replaced. They are to the point where sometimes they can get them closed and sometimes, they can't. If they don't close completely, the next morning, they spend about two hours flushing water back through the filters to clean it. So, there is two hours every few days of wasted time. So, that is really their biggest concern. If those valves finally do go out, I think right now we are looking at probably about 5-6 month wait time. Even if we order them today. So, they have asked that we go ahead and order those now. They may not even come until next year's budget. However, as part of that we also must do some battery backups on those in case we did lose power. So, I wanted to have discussion on that. Do we go ahead and do the upgrade for the generator? So, that if we lose power that switch is fixed and the whole plant is being fed by electricity. If we do have an outage, their recommendation was to get the part for the generator. So, it will cost us about \$145,000-\$155,000, if we go that route, for the three valves and the generator switch. The other option is about \$45,000 it would be the three valves and the battery backup just for those. Eventually we have other valves that will have to be replaced and we would have to buy that additional battery backups for those. I just wanted to start that conversation with you and see what direction the council wants to go. There are some other things that they need down there, but these are the most critical things.

Kristen- How much was the battery backup?

John- The battery backup runs about \$25,000. So, total was about \$45,000 for the three valves plus the battery backup.

Mayor Cury- Is this addressing the technical points that Michael put forth?

John- Yes, these are addressing the main concerns he mentioned. The only other big item is the high flow pump. They have two of them. One of them is much older, so if the main one is not working or having to be repaired, and you have to use the backup, it doesn't pump nearly as fast. So, you have to go from a 10-12-hour shift to a 24-hour shift to keep up with the amount of water you pump into the system. So, at some point, we are going to have to look at replacing that other pump just to keep up with the day-to-day operation.

Doug- I think we should do all of that.

Rick- Does that include the pump?

John- I do not have a quote for the pump. I can get that, but I would think those are pretty expensive.

Seth- This is not stuff that broke yesterday. Why have we not replaced this? Is it because we were planning on building a new plant?

John- I think we were trying to wait on the upgrades.

Seth- I don't know that just doesn't seem like good logic. Let's just say that we voted to go ahead with the water plant upgrades. It would take six months to get it started and trying to get the equipment in. I mean you are looking at two years out, even if we say to do it today. These are things that have to be repaired now and we spent \$1,000,000 on engineering. We probably could have retrofitted the whole plan as is and for a whole lot less than what we spent just on engineering something that now we are not even going to bid. Also, I am looking at that because we are spending \$6,000 a month on interest carry on \$1,000,000 that we



borrowed. Let's say the pump is maybe \$100,000 maybe it's \$250,000, why don't we look at refinancing the debt for the engineering with the new cost. It is not going to cost that much more and refinance that as one debt package. So, that we are not paying out cash that we don't have, but we go ahead and get this done. So, my suggestion would be get the quote on the pump, like Rick said then we look at refinancing that as a whole debt package. We may be able to go to Virginia Resource Authority to do that since we're buying equipment for the plant and refinancing that engineering debt. We need to pay for that. We are just paying interest carry on it right now, and I'm assuming that the long-term goal when we do the upgrade to the plant would be to roll that into the debt package for the plant. I'm assuming that is what is going to happen but in the interim, we are going to have to continue to do the interest carry on that debt and it makes more sense to go ahead and spend the money to get the plant operational. I mean it seems like some pretty crazy things are going on down there.

Mayor Cury- My suggestion is, I'll keep it really general, we need to have a plant and I'm really thinking about what Michael said. We are not trying to tie things up with brooms and rags or whatever it was. We don't want that. So, we need to move in a direction that would move away from that and into a modern, well-kept facility. Council, what is your action? What action do you want to take at this time?

Seth- I think we direct our Town Manager to get a quote on the pump. That is the only piece that he does not have and add that to the total. Once we know the total, we can move forward and go ahead and order the valves. The only question would be the generator. Is that something that's going to last for a while? If we buy this part to fix it?

John- I have to ask somebody that works for the electric department. We would need to know the age of it, and what their thoughts are. Rick and I talked about it the other day, he felt that it was a solid generator. It doesn't have that many hours on it.

Seth- Yes, have someone that knows what they are doing to check and make sure it is something that is worth fixing. I just think we direct John, tonight to get us a quote, but go ahead and order the valves and the parts that you need and then as a separate piece of that, we look at refinancing that debt package either with Virginia Resource Authority or with local financing to pay for it.

Rick- My recommendation on this is that you talk to Caterpillar. They do all the generators, that is who does the hospital. Have them come and evaluate the generator for us. If they don't think it is suitable, then when we redo this financing, we need a new generator to go along with this.

John- I think that is who has done work on it before.

Mayor Cury- John, do you have direction, or would you like it in a motion?

John- I would like it in a motion.

Seth- I make a motion that we direct the Town Manager to order the valves that are needed, and after assessing the generator situation, to go ahead and order the switch if that is going to fix it. He can base that on his discretion and conversation with Caterpillar. Go ahead and get a cost on the pump and to go ahead and get the pump for the water and then also subsequent to that, to look at a financing package to refinance the engineering debt, if possible, through Virginia Research Authority or with another financial institution. Rick seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- We are now on Economic/Community Development Discussion. We have had this discussion multiple times. Does anyone have any thoughts? Or do you want to move on?

Seth- I think we should table this until the new council is elected and let them make this discussion on whether or not someone should be hired for this position.

John- I just want to be clear, we are losing grants. We have received a grant that we just don't have the capacity to manage right now, and we would have to return.

Jeff- Is that the \$90,000 grant?

John- It is \$105,000 with the town matching \$5,000. It is a small business revolving loan fund through USDA. We applied for \$75,000 and we got \$100,000. However, they require quarterly reports. We would have to work with the business to make sure they qualified. It's just a lot of paperwork.

Mayor Cury- What is it for John?

John- It is for small businesses. It is a revolving loan funds. So, any business in town that qualified and needed it could get a loan at a lower rate and we would be able to provide that.

Seth- I thought we decided the IDA was going to assist you and facilitate that.

John- The IDA could oversee it, but all the reporting would still fall back on the staff.

Laura- Between you, the IDA, and the county IDA, we can't make that work?

Heather- No.

Laura- Why is it is? I mean, are you guys saying that it is just not important enough to you guys to make it happen?

Heather- No.

Laura- Well, I don't know if everybody can see that, but the answer was no.

Heather- We don't have the staff. I was saying the report is going to be monthly. I am not saying it is not important enough, we just don't have the staff to do it.

Doug- I'm sure someone in that office could do it. When Sue Wade was here, we had four or five people, now you've got close to 10. I mean, I don't understand. Why couldn't you make a monthly report?

Laura- Before you return it, could you ask the county? Could you ask Tim Danielson if this is something that he would help you guys with the report? Maybe he could help our own town IDA. It's counterproductive to hire \$70,000 employee with benefits and everything to get a \$90,000 revolving loan. Not that we want to give it back, but I feel like you should exhaust every option first.

Seth- Let me ask you this, how many hours do you think per week that it is going to take for someone to administer that grant?

John- I don't know. It would depend on the business that comes in.

Seth- But you have already made the determination that you can't do it. That's why I'm asking.

John- I just can't take on any other projects to make this a higher priority than something else.

Seth- I understand that.

John- If we were to move forward it would fall on me or I don't know who.

Seth-My only point is just like I told you guys a few months ago, I don't know what we have to do, but while we are on this, what is the status of the block grant with the facade renovations?

John- We have received a contract agreement that is what I added to talk about later with the dialogue & design.

Seth- Okay, because if you can't do this one, you are not going to be able to do that one either. We have to do that, there is too much money at stake and too much good things for our town.

Jeff- There is a lot of good money right here too, \$90,000 is \$90,000.

Seth- That is what I'm saying, I don't want to see us return that. Like we definitely cannot return that grant and we need to figure out how can we do this with either what we have. That is why I was asking how many hours would it take? You could hire a part time person who would work, maybe Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday from whatever time you needed them to. Their duties would just be for these grants. I'm willing to do whatever we need to do to make that happen. Then if maybe that position could grow, and they could administer the block grant. You could advertise for that position as part time but maybe it could grow into a full-time position. That block grant could be potentially \$1,000,000? So, it's a lot more money involved, and I just don't want to see us not be able to do it because somebody doesn't have time to do it.

Mayor Cury- No one wants to see us lose \$90,000 or any grant.

Doug- I mean we have businesses leaving Richlands every day because they can't operate, it's too expensive, the electricity is too high and yet, you want to add more personnel which we would have to raise taxes to cover that. I mean Laura made a great point, \$70,000 versus \$90,000 and probably 85% of new businesses

fail. Let's take pop-up Richlands for an example, very few of those will make it. You know that and I know that.

Seth- I hope everyone of them makes it.

Doug- I hope it does too, but watch, we will be talking about this in two years and most of them will be gone because if you look at the percentage, 85% of businesses fail and we were just talking a minute ago...

Jeff- I think it's up to us to support them as well.

Doug- We support them.

Jeff- I mean financially.

Doug- You are running everybody off by raising taxes and add more personal.

Mayor Cury- I would suggest this, everybody here wants to save money and do the best we can in spending money. I suggest that for this meeting, we move forward and put this on the agenda for the next meeting. Maybe we can come up with something better. I am asking you, please do not return or send back or give any negative thoughts to the people we got this \$90,000 from. We don't want that. It's hard enough to get a glance. Maybe council could think of a way to administer this that could be economical for everyone. I don't know John, nor Heather, nor members of council, but I think that's the direction we need tonight, because what I'm hearing is... no, no, no, no, no, and yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. And that doesn't work. So, we must continue this at the next meeting and I'm moving on.

Seth- Mr. Mayor, can I say one last thing, please?

Mayor Cury- One last thing.

Seth- John, could you look at that and maybe at our next meeting in October, let us know that you believe this would take 15-20 hours a week, or 25 hours a week. That way we know, and I think we can give you more of a direction. Maybe we can do this for that, or maybe we can start a part time position.

John- Okay, when we get to that bigger revitalization project, we are going to need someone full-time.

Seth- I understand. I completely understand what you're saying.

Mayor Cury- So, we are going to have someone with a designated job and that is your job period. That's all you do, and nothing else. I think that would be more amenable to council. Okay, moving on to Town Building Maintenance: Town Hall, Police Department, EMS Department and Teen Venture.

John- We have received a couple different bids for some of these. We have a couple options of just doing some repair work or a completely new roof. When we talked to the PD, the EMS also mentioned they had issues. We have received a couple quotes on what that would cost, but I think it would be in our best interest to go ahead and put all four of those out for bids and get bids from whoever submits those before our next meeting. That way we can consider those bids potentially in closed session.

Mayor Cury- So, you are suggesting we have a contract to look at these four building and put them out for bids? Do you want that in a form of a motion?

John- Yes.

Seth- I make a motion that we go out for RFPs on all 4 buildings whether it be for repairs or completely putting a new roof on the building and they can bid on 1 of the buildings or all 4. Jeff seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, members of council and staff. Now we are on Christmas tree discussion. John?

John- So, traditionally we have had a Christmas tree over where the Greenway stage is now. We have had trouble in the past few years finding a tree. In times past, we had someone donate a 10-15-foot tree. However, last year we really struggled to find one, when we were able to find a 10-foot tree, the cost of shipping it here was a lot more than we were going to pay. So, I wanted to know is this something that we want to continue to do? Last year, I thought we got a 6-foot tree but by the time they put it in there, it's not that big tree that we like to have downtown. Do we want to look at the option of getting a plastic replica tree in that space. If we do then we need to go ahead and order that now.

Mayor Cury- I have very strong options about this. Are you ready? No plastic. It's very simple. It doesn't work with the environment, and I don't like that. We don't need that. It isn't real. I like real Christmas. As far as having people donate trees, it fails. We need to buy a tree and be done with it. We also need to buy a tree for the section house. Forget this donating stuff. We need to buy our own. That is how you get what you want. We have the money. God knows, thousands of dollars for this set. Solved! Do I hear motion on this?

Jeff- I'm afraid not to.

Laura- I make a motion that we go buy a tree. Jeff seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Moving on, Dispatch Hours of Operation Discussion. I don't know what you guys want to do about this, but I think this needs to be handled with a lot of care.

John- At this point, we are going to remain 24 hours a day until everything gets switched over and at that point, we would like some direction from council.

Jeff- I think this needs to be discussed with our New Chief. I think we need to let him get his feet wet and see what he needs first.

Laura- My personal opinion would be option B which would keep our two full-time clerks and operate from 8:00am-6:00pm, 7 days a week. That way no job is being lost and I also think it needs to be a discussion that we have with our New Police Chief.

Mayor Cury- So, do I hear a consensus on waiting on the New Police Chief before we make this discussion?

Members of Council- Yes.

Mayor Cury- Moving on, Council Insurance Discussion.

Laura- I asked Mr. O'Daniel to put this on the agenda. We are in zero position to afford council's insurance at this stage in the game. I'll go ahead and make the motion that going forward we don't have anyone on the insurance right now, so I don't believe that should be an option for council. If another council believes they are worthy of that, then let them sit here and say it to the citizens.

Laura- I make a motion to remove council insurance as an option. Seth seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Next, we have Public Safety Committee Discussion.

Laura- I asked for this to be on the agenda. With everything going on and all the changes happening, one of us is not as great as all of us, and I think we would all work together to ensure public safety. We used to have a safety committee years ago and I just think it would be very beneficial to have all your chiefs from each department. I would like to serve on it as well and have them come and give an update each month.

Laura- I make a motion that we form a public committee. Doug seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- I will go ahead and appoint this committee, it will be John, Chief of Police, Chief of Fire and Chief of EMS, Laura, and myself. Is that acceptable to the council?

Members of Council- Yes.

Mayor Cury- Moving on, Library Project Fund. Ms. Lauren, did you want to come up and speak?

Lauren- I was retained to help the library and securing the funding, which was already approved, also just to mediate any disagreement that may happen. This is not contentious.

Mayor Cury- Okay, good. When an attorney comes to us, I always shudder just a little bit. However, it's you, and I don't shudder because I know you and like you. Alright, but do you mind explaining it?

Lauren- Well, the funding was approved for the exterior of the library to be renovated, which I think we can all agree is in desperate need of repair and \$154,000 was approved. So, they have put out the request for bids, and in that request for bids, there are three progress payments that are to be made. So, when the contractor invoices the library, the library can then submit the invoice to the town and three payments of \$51,333.33 adds up to \$154,000. Which was approved by the town in December of 2021. So, that's what this memorandum is about.

Jeff- So, we just need a motion to accept this memorandum?

John- I didn't feel comfortable writing a \$154,000 check with no kind of oversight. So, this is kind of how those grants go.

Mayor Cury- Alright, how much do you need? \$154,000 or \$51,333.33?

Lauren- Well, the request for bids have just gone out, the library hasn't even picked a contractor yet. However, when they do in phase there will need to be the three payments of \$51,333.33.

Jeff- I make a motion to approve the memorandum between the Town of Richlands and the Tazewell County Library Board of Trustees. Rick seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Next, we have the Street Paving Discussion.

John- I asked the staff to give me a list of what they had. It is ranked in order of worst to still needs improvement. The green stars indicate roads that if we were to repave them, we will also need to replace water and sewer line under those. It doesn't make sense to repave a road that you would have a water and sewer line continuing to break and have to constantly deal with that. However, this was just a list of the roads that needs worked on. Also, we can start looking at this paving schedule as something that we discuss every year in the budget. We haven't budgeted any money for stuff like this since I got here, but I wanted to give you all an update and let you all ask any questions. If you all want to review this and then discuss it later. Whatever you all think is best.

Seth- So. I had a couple questions. So, when we were at the county, we did pave every year and we always got matching funds from VDOT to do paving. If we put up half a million, then VDOT puts up half a million. We would then get a million dollars' worth of paving done. Why are we not doing that here?

John- We used to do that, but I think that is something that they have gotten rid of in the last two years.

Doug- I think we get about \$1,000,000 a year to upkeep our roads.

Seth- Can I make a suggestion? So, we get about \$1,000,000 a year and we've done no paving?

Heather- It's not just for paving, it is for up keep. It is a general maintenance fund. You can use it for paving, painting, snow removal, any kind of maintenance. It's not just for paving

Seth- Why don't we budget that money and get started on this list. Why can't we take that money and budget it and we will do this many roads this year and do this many roads next year and get our roads back in good shape. I don't think you can do all these roads in one year, obviously, that is too much to do all at one time. I understand that. However, we should be setting aside and saying 40% of this or 30% or 50% or whatever that number is, we are going to use that for paving, and we are going to go by this schedule the staff has prepared, and we are going to pave these roads. I don't understand why this hasn't been done already.

Jeff- I think we subsidize some of the salaries with that money.

John- It is very complicated.

Seth- It is not complicated. Is that what we are doing with the money?

John- So, like if we budget \$600,000 for paving and then sometimes, we are not able to do the \$600,000 but it was in our budget, so then if we don't do \$600,000, we still owe them. Essentially, it's the last budget issue that we must work through. I have it on the list to try and figure out how to fix it.

Seth- No, stop. We are never going to do that again. We are going to budget every bit of this money. We are going to use every bit of this money that they give us to fix the freaking roads. That is what it is for. It is that simple.

Jeff- I said we need to make a paving fund and put that money in there.

Seth- That's right. Put it aside. Budget this. If you know that you are going to spend X amount of money, we take our bids in the spring and then we start our paving, and it is done. Then it is on a schedule, and it will be done once you know how much you have coming in from your bids, and you have allotted this amount of money for the paving. The rest of it you can save for the maintenance or whatever needs to be done. This is not hard.

Jeff- But then we must find the money to pay everybody. That's what he is saying.

Seth- How are you using VDOT money to pay people? I don't even understand how you do that.

John- That's something that we are going to have to work through when we start the budget process. I had a list of things to discuss, and this was the last one.

Laura- I have read the minutes to these meetings over the last 10 years and Doug asked someone that was sitting on council if we owed VDOT \$1,000,000.

John- We owe them work.

Seth- Oh, I get it now. I see what you are saying. We have already committed the work, and didn't do the work, but we used the money elsewhere in the general fund. I get it now.

Doug- The \$1,000,000 that I was talking about was used elsewhere and not used on the roads and the statement was made to me that we must pay that money back.

John- If we use the ARPA money, it will just fix the issue, it won't fix the problem.

Jeff- The root issue is the salaries.

John- From what I understand, in the past, we had more employees so we could do 1.5 million worth of work on the roads. Now we only have 4 employees, and no one else has been hired because of cost savings, so we are not able to do that much work on the roads.

Seth- Guys, this is terrible.

Heather- This is not a new problem.

Seth- Oh, I know. This is an inherited problem. By the next meeting, if you can give us a list on how that VDOT money can be spent, I am going to try to help you all solve this problem.

Mayor Cury- Okay, I am going to appoint Seth and Jeff to meet with John at Town Hall before our next meeting in October to come up with a plan to help the town with this problem.

Next on the agenda is Fluoride Update and Discussion.

John- We have a couple things we need to check off to be able to start pumping fluoride into the water. This was something that started way before I got here and with all the turnover, I wanted to make sure everybody was on board to continue to move forward with that before we call the Health Department to get the inspections and start sending out letters to the citizens. So, I just wanted to make everyone aware of this. If you want to change course, we need your direction at this point before we continue to make those next few steps.

Kristen- You know my children never had fluoride at the dentist because I just assumed we were in the 21st century and had fluoride in our water here. So, for me, I think that should be a no brainer.

Doug- There's a lot of pros and cons. So, maybe we should put it off and maybe do some studies. I'm just saying maybe we should go slow on this because if you make a mistake with fluoride, you could poison people and we wouldn't be able to use our water for 30 days.

Seth- I think we should wait until we do these repairs with our system, and then you guys bring this back up and let us have that conversation then.

John- Okay, I just needed some direction on what you all wanted. So, we are tabling this until we get our system repaired.

Mayor Cury- Okay, next Laura you wanted to discuss about a refund with a demand meter?

Laura- His residential building was on a demand meter, and he was having to pay that fee every time he hit the demand peak and he was removed and put back to a regular meter, so he is asking for a refund of his \$337.50.

John- When he hit his demand peak, he was charged with \$112.50, and he hit that on three different bills.

Mayor Cury- John, are you looking for approval to refund this guy his money?

John- You all made the decision to switch this guy from a demand meter to a regular meter. I disagreed. He hit his demand meter all three times and I think he should have to pay for at least some of that. Unless he can prove that he fixed whatever was causing him to use that much electricity.

Laura- What caused the demand was because he had a heat pump installed and with that work going on and the temperatures changing...

Jeff- It takes three months to do that?

Mayor Cury- What is fair to him and what is fair to us?

Laura- I make a motion to refund him his money to match whatever his bill would have been if he was on a residential meter. Doug seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes,

Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Doug- I want to go back to my \$1,000,000 comment. I have brought this up several times...

Seth- Is it too late to turn that over to the Commonwealth Attorney's office? I mean if this money was spent inappropriately, then you have an obligation to report that. If we are in this room and we see John or anyone else spend money in a way that's inappropriate of our taxpayer funded dollars, then we have an obligation to turn it over to the Commonwealth Attorney. So, my question is, is there a statute of limitations on someone misappropriating public funds? Probably not. So, if there's not, you all should turn this over to the Commonwealth Attorney and let them investigate it.

Mayor Cury- Okay, moving on. Dialog and Design Contract. John?

John- We received a contract agreement back from the company to do the initial architect work of the Downtown Revitalization project. The attorneys have reviewed it. The main issue they had with it, is that it doesn't state that it's capped at \$50,000, which is what the grant amount was for. So, we are going to go back to them and renegotiate that. I wanted to give council an update on that and see what direction you all want us to go.

Seth- Did we set an amount in the beginning?

John- Originally, it's just the total amount of the grant. The \$50,000 that we received. They came back with a contract agreement that they wanted to get in place before they started the work. However, with the contract, it doesn't specify that it is capped at \$50,000.

Seth- I think that's probably a good idea. Whatever we need to do. I don't think we should give them an open-ended agreement.

Mayor Cury- Okay, thank you, members of council and staff. Moving on, Town Manager Reports.

John- So, I have a lot of different things, I'm going to run through pretty quickly. Just a quick emergency phone update, we reached out to the sheriff that was working on this for the Community College. They gave us some contact information but didn't have any quotes on that. So, if that is something that we want to move forward with in the future, I will need to have some further discussion on what exactly we want those to look like.

Next item is Lake Park restroom. I don't know if some of you are aware or not, but the bathroom was vandalized again. Recently, they basically smashed up the whole sink. So, they will be working to repair that, but it will likely be closed for the rest of the season and be winterized for winter.

Cornelia Cox spoke at our last council meeting. I went and reviewed that. There was a survey line where she thought the property line was. There was some disagreement on that and at this time, I didn't feel like it was

something that we need to get involved with. If that is something that you want legal counsel to look into further then we can have them do that. However, based on where the road was, I didn't feel like it was something that we needed to start doing work to maintain someone's personal property. I feel for her, and I feel for this situation, but I didn't feel like it was something that we needed to get involved with it this time.

Junk vehicles, and dilapidated homes were mentioned at the last meeting. We currently don't have a code enforcement officer. Hopefully, when we get our New Police Chief, he will be able to hire someone for that, who might help us start back up with that, but ultimately a lot of those come down to the funding. If we want to start tearing down houses, then we need to start budgeting money to help pay for those demolitions.

East 2nd Street, I've looked at that one. There's a lot of issues that you come up from the people parking on it, to the street paving, to the wall, if this is something we want to address but we are looking at a lot of money, and a very difficult time because just the proximity of the houses and the way it's laid out and trying to determine what's our responsibility versus what is the property owners and trying to worked with them to potentially address some of those issues. If it's something we do want to pursue, I think it's something we are going to have to get some legal counsel on.

Cliff St is a private road. From Burnett to Prater Drive is maintained by town. As you start to go up the hill, that is a private road. At one time, it was paved. However, the worst part of the road is Cliff Street, and it is a private road.

I did have the brakes checked on the trash truck. From what I was told, this is kind of just an unfortunate side effect of a big piece of equipment moving up and down the hills, but they have looked at those and checked on those.

Laura asked about the website, Ashley was working on that when she was here and then she left, it kind of got dropped and the grant from the county had expired, but AJ sent the link if that's something we want to pursue later to get that updated.

The solar panel update, we received a draft ordinance from GDS on how we could safely implement the rules and regulations on that. I am having some staff and some people that work in the electric system to review that. If there are any issues with things that stand out to them, we need to make sure we are aware of that. I also mentioned to the Planning Commission that we need to start looking at zoning. We don't want to put an ordinance in place that allows solar panels, and they can put them anywhere on their property and we start having zoning issues. So, we want to go ahead and adopt the zoning requirements as well.

Laura mentioned the street lighting on Mason St. Our guys can put a streetlight out there, it is going to be about a \$200 cost. If no one objects to that then we will go ahead and do that.

The last two things, Halloween falls on a Monday this year, at our next meeting we need to discuss and maybe look at asking the residents to observe it on Saturday or Sunday. I will be talking to the New Chief as well as interim to see what they recommend, because they'll be the ones out patrolling to make sure to keep everybody as safe as they can.

Lastly, the Greenway Stage. At some point, we are going to need to come up with a name to call it. Either Green Space Stage or Greenway Stage or do we want it named after somebody? Since we are starting to have events out there, we want to start tagging it on social media and things of that nature. We want to make sure we have a set name before other names start popping up. So, we want to make sure that we are on the same page. That is something I would like you all to think about. If you have any ideas, we will consider those at our next Council meeting. That's all.

Mayor Cury- Wow, that was a very detailed and thorough update. Thank you, John. Now we are on Town Attorney Reports- Utility Easement and Electric System Contract Review. Michael?

Michael- I talked to Nathan on the phone yesterday the utility easement. I looked for the utility easements, and I couldn't find anything on the Shoney's property itself. Nathan was letting me know that they may have to dig up the line that's now currently owned by or on the other property, so we would need an easement from them as well as an easement from the new owners of the Shoney's property. I'll keep looking for the easement but seems to me like we would have to get an easement from each property to be able to move anything. If I can't find one, we may have to go about getting a new easement.

Mayor Cury- Okay, I think you have a general go ahead from Council. Next, where is the contract review?



Michael- As far as the contract review, I have touched base with you already on this, but it looks to me that AMP and Blue Ridge would have the ability to veto any potential sale of the ownership of electric system. So, I think we have settled that on what we are doing going forward on.

Seth- I appreciate the review and I think that's probably the general consensus, and that is that they could veto it so that answers the \$1,000,000 question of whether or not we could sell the electrical system. So, that brings us to phase two of this, which has always been if we can't do that, how do we go forward? I would just suggest that you establish an electrical committee with a couple members of council, couple members of staff, possibly some citizens, whatever you deem would be best in that situation to look at alternatives and future power generation things for the town. I would be glad to serve on this until I exit council and even afterward if you want to me to be a citizen member. I would be glad to serve to help you guys on that. I think it's very crucial for the future of our town that we make sure we make the right decisions.

Doug- I would like to make a suggestion. I would like to be on that committee and Seth and I would like to add Shea Cook to that committee. That was part of the old committee that was disbanded. I think Seth should serve after his term as a council member. I think we should let him carry on with Shea Cook and let them be our representatives of the community.

Mayor Cury- I think it deserves great consideration and I don't care to appoint you or Seth. I would like to do it at the next meeting though so I can have a great time to think about the function of such committee.

Mayor Cury- Okay, anything else, Michael? Now we are on Council Member Reports. These are non-voting items. Kristen?

Kristen- Nothing from me tonight.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Kristen and thank you to the Planning Commission for the diligent work you did. It is very important. Seth?

Seth- Yes, just two small items. One thing John, I think it would be appropriate if we could get better communication notices wise. I don't have Facebook. I don't know if everybody else does or not, but I miss out on some things. There were a couple of ribbon cuttings that I didn't know about, and the emergency services dinner Sunday, I didn't know about that either. So, what I would suggest on that is to maybe relay a message to Bekah or Heather or someone. It might be appropriate for the clerk to do that since it's notification to the council, but if you can just let her know a couple weeks, a month, whatever in advance, to send everybody an e-mail about these monthly events.

The second thing, I got a phone call this week from a lady who has a trailer park on Farmer St. I can't think of her name off the top my head, but I did drop by and look at this and she's lost two sales because the people came and met with Nathan. I think Nathan scared them. She said he basically was telling them all these things they would have to do if they bought this trailer park. Really, they don't have to do anything, all of those things are grandfathered in under what it is now. I don't know what the right answer is, I'm just hearing her side of it.

John- If you will send me that information, I'll look into it.

Mayor Cury- Okay, Thank you, Seth. Doug?

Doug- I have just got one thing, I'd like to make a motion, and this motion...

Mayor Cury- Doug, these are no-voting items. If you wish to make a motion, you will have to wait until the end.

Doug- Okay, that is all I have then.

Mayor Cury- Okay, Rick?

Rick- Michelle Killen reached out to me, she is the same one that talked to Seth. She said she was told she had to replace all the water lines and pave the street.

John- I will have to look at it and see what was going on.

Rick- Dale Shreve and his wife was here, and his wall is in pretty bad shape. Will you look at that wall and let us know at the next council meeting? That's been a problem for 10 years and it is going to take his house out if it falls.

John- I'll look at it.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Rick. Laura?

Laura- Yesterday I contacted you, Mr O'Daniel, about a flag at Critterville. Do you have an update? Was that taken care of?

John- I haven't, but we have flags here, I will try to get someone to take care of that tomorrow.

Laura- Perfect. Also, I had a citizen concerned about the brush pickup truck. I know sometimes it takes a day, sometimes it takes a couple weeks, but someone said it has been a while.

John- I know they have been waiting on a part for the grapple truck. They are doing the best they can with the other equipment in between their garbage run.

Laura- Okay, my next thing is, and I know it is not going to be popular thing, but it ties into what we were talking about earlier, I would appreciate if you could, by our next meeting, bring us information on how we would start the process of a forensic audit. It's not to point fingers at anyone sitting here, it's to find out how we go forward a lot better and more efficiently.

I've also had a lot of business owners, small business owners, reach out to me about only certain businesses in town seem to get all the attention. I would like council to consider forming a small business alliance. We used to have one at one point and it went away when the administration changed.

I also had a question about the ARPA update. I was still waiting on the answer for what the budget needs are.

John- So, we were going to use it for the salaries and things, but we had some debt and things that we could do one-time payments to address those to keep our budget at a point where we won't have to do any additional tax increases. So, it was used to make some payments so that we wouldn't have that added cost in this year's current budget.

Laura- Perfect. Thank you. The last thing, I'm sure everybody has seen in the news that the value of used cars is skyrocketing right now. We have implemented a personal property tax, which I would love to see out the window at this point, because people in Richlands are being taxed twice here and in the county. The county just offered some relief to their citizens with that personal property tax because the value of used cars is going up. If we could look into that, maybe at the next meeting, talk about how we can offer our citizens relief.

John- So, there's already some relief in there and when we passed our budget, we thought the county was going to stick to their total evaluations. They ended up going back, so it was my understanding that they reduced it by about 10%. So, there is already a discount built in based on what we originally did our budget on. But beyond that, I don't care to look into it and see what other options they have. If that is something that council wants to consider.

Laura- I would appreciate that. I'm not sure what the consensus is there, by the council, but even though our rate might stay the same, when the value of those used, cars are going to go up and then the people are going to automatically have to pay more. I think right now we need to do everything we can to help our citizens.

John- We can talk about it. I don't want to put something in place and then the accounting side become a nightmare. However, I'll talk to them and see what options we have to make those transactions easier.

Laura- Okay, thank you.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Laura. Jeff?

Jeff- Yes, just couple things about the Rec Commission. Going back to our discussion on the destruction of the bathroom, we talked about a commission maintenance and hopefully we can have somebody here from the commission next month. We couldn't get together for a workshop this time, but we were talking about the possibility of a maintenance person or adding a maintenance person to be able to check the bathrooms and soap dispensers, and stock stuff at the different parks and they would do a daily drive by of all the parks and check everything. So, maybe it is something we can get some more feedback on.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Jeff. That is a great idea. Doug, you wanted to make a motion, and this is your time to do it.

Doug- I would like to make a motion that our electric system mirrors AEP rate and structure and that would include the demand meters.

If we mirrored them that would make sure we don't have those increases that we shouldn't have. Like Laura said, our town is in trouble, and we are losing businesses left and right. If we don't get in line with AEP, then those new businesses that come in with Pop-Up Richlands are not going to be able to make it. Also, the businesses that have been here for 20 years are not going to be able to stay unless we match AEP's rates.

Mayor Cury- We have a motion. Do we have a second?

Seth- I will second the motion so we can have discussion about it.

Mayor Cury- Okay, we have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion?

Seth- Doug, I completely agree. I think whatever we do in town should at least match what AEP is doing. If we can't have a better rate than AEP, then we should at least match AEP or there's really no point of us being in the power business. However, I just don't know that it is that simple as us making a motion here. I don't know how that works, Mr. Mayor, is it as simple?

John- My concern would be, I would need to look and figure out a way that we could do that because they may have 10 charges and we might have 8. We would just have to find a way to do that. I don't know how you do that. I don't think it is that simple. If they continue to change their rates, then we have to go by the charter with proper advertisement and have public hearings before we would be able to change anything.

Mayor Cury- I will share my thoughts, understand the point of it and I think it's very complex and emotional. I don't think it could be solved in a motion.

Laura- I agree. My concern is we have to have a public hearing. I would like to see what that would look like first.

Mayor Cury- Okay, we have a motion and a second. Doug, would you like to keep your motion?

Doug- Yes.

Mayor Cury- Seth, would you like to keep your second?

Seth- No, I withdrawal my second.

Mayor Cury- Okay, we have a motion, is there a second? Motion fails for lack of a second.

Laura- I just want to make perfectly clear that my stance on that is strictly because we have got to have a public hearing before we do something like that.

Seth- I agree.

Doug- Okay, I make a motion that we have a public hearing on October 11<sup>th</sup> to set our rates as the same as AEP. Laura seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- Okay, we have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion?

Seth- I don't know how you can have a public hearing without setting a rate schedule and letting the people know what AEP's rates are.

John- I can reach out to AEP and see what we can do and try to get that to present at our next meeting.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes,

Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- Okay, moving on to Mayor Comments. First off, I want to thank Captain Hankins for being here tonight. Looking back here. You look like a solid force and a crew back there with Keith and Matt and the others. I appreciate everybody being here and staying until the last. It means you're really digging in and I appreciate it. I'll share with you just a little something, nothing is concrete, but at the section house, we are going to try to have a little something over there for Halloween. We don't know what we're going to do, but we would like for everyone to come. And we accept all the help we can get. So, we really want something for the children.

On a more serious note, I'm in contact with Doctor John Ragosta, who is a superb scholar at University of Virginia. He has just written a book about Patrick Henry. So, I am trying really hard to get him to come here to preview his book on Patrick Henry and I peaked his interest on the very fact that Patrick Henry gave us our name. So, as soon as the university signs the contract, he will be in contact. I want him to come and talk

to us. For anybody interested, it's not anything but just a program, something for everybody. So, I think it would be very interesting and enlightening and it will get our minds off other things. I think you will find him amazing.


I just think we all work toward different things, and that's what makes this town our home. It makes it interesting. I'm so glad we are here. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

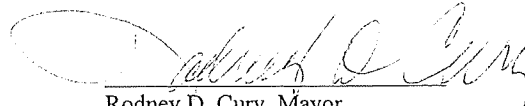
Jeff- I make a motion to adjourn this meeting. Seth seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Next meeting will be October 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 in Richlands Town Chambers.

Adjourned!!

  
Rebekah Hackworth, Clerk

  
Rodney D. Cury, Mayor