

TOWN OF RICHLANDS
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

The Richlands Town Council held a “Regular Monthly Meeting” on Tuesday, August 8, 2023, at 6:00 pm in the Richlands Council Chambers with the following present:

Mayor: Rod. D. Cury
Interim Town Manager: Clarence Monday
Office Manager: Susan Whitt
Town Clerk: Amanda Beheler
Finance Manager: Ronnie Campbell
Council Members: Doug Ratliff, Gary Jackson, Rick Wood, Jordan Bales, Jan White, and Laura Mollo.
Town Attorney: Michael Thomas

The Town Meeting was called to order at 6:00pm and opened with the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Cury.

IN RE: Additions, Deletions, or Corrections to the Agenda

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Jan White and the roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve the agenda.

IN RE: Authorization to Pay Bills

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Gary Jackson and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve paying the bills.

IN RE: Minutes

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all member present, the Council voted to approve the following Minutes: Regular Meeting July 11, 2023 and Special Called Meeting July 19, 2023.

IN RE: VDOT Smart Scale Project Modifications Presentation

Mr. Monday provided a brief background to the Council regarding a US-460 Corridor Safety Study completed in 2017. The study provided recommendations for Front Street and Second Street. The Town applied for project funding and was approved at an estimated 1.5 billion dollars. In 2020, the Town adopted a resolution stating they were interested in moving forward with that initiative. The Virginia Department of Transportation realized there were issues in the original design and felt that a revision was necessary.

Blake Allor, VDOT Bristol District Planning Manager and Alex Shoemaker, VDOT Bristol District Traffic Engineer presented a Smart Scale Project Modification Presentation to the Council. Mr. Shoemaker explained the needed changes to the project.

Mr. Cury advised the new Resolution R2023-08-01 would need to be signed by the Council to move forward with the project.

Mayor Cury read Resolution R2023-08-01.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Gary Jackson and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to adopt resolution R2023-08-01.

IN RE: Blue Ridge Power Association Appointment and Alternate

Mr. Monday advised the Town currently does not have a Representative or an Alternate Representative appointed to the Blue Ridge Power Association. Mr. Monday recommended the Council consider appointing the towns new Financial Director, Ronnie Campbell. Mr. Campbell has a background in private sector utilities. Mr. Monday also recommended Allen Compton, who currently works in the town’s electric department as the Alternate Representative.

At Mayor Cury’s request, Mr. Campbell gave a brief overview of his experience and background.

Mayor Cury read Resolution 2023-08-02.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Gary Jackson and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to adopt resolution R2023-08-02.

IN RE: Communications Grant

Mr. Campbell advised the Council that fourteen thousand dollars will be taken from the department's expense items. Mr. Campbell also advised that the town would receive an additional ten thousand dollars from the county, which will finish funding what is needed for this project to move forward.

IN RE: Waste Water Flowmeter Replacement

Mr. Campbell advised this is a meter that is used in the billing process at the Waste Water plant that has been giving erratic readings and cannot be repaired. Mr. Campbell stated he had an estimate of six thousand one hundred and twenty-four dollars for a replacement and requested the Council to transfer the needed funds from the maintenance expense budget to the capital budget for the procurement of this meter.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Jordan Bales and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve the purchase of a new flowmeter.

IN RE: Oriole Street Bridge Update

Mr. Campbell advised the Council that structural damage was discovered on the Oriole Street Bridge on July 12, 2023. Mr. Campbell stated he had procured under emergency procedures steel plates for seventy-four hundred dollars and signage to warn drivers of the bridges weight limit.

Mr. Monday discussed plans to finish the bridge repairs and funding for repairs with the Council. Mr. Monday advised he would have more information for Council at the next meeting.

IN RE: Donation Request Procedure

Council member Laura Mollo advised that the Town currently does not have any procedures in place for donation requests. Mrs. Mollo expressed her concern for the need to have a more streamlined and fair process to handle donation requests. Mrs. Mollo provided the Council with a guideline used by a neighboring town.

This Council discussed different options regarding donations.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Doug Ratliff and the roll call vote of all members present, with Jordan Bales voting no, the Council voted 5-1 to approve a five-thousand dollar cap on donations given out per fiscal year.

IN RE: Southwest Virginia Community College- Festival of the Arts- Donation Request

Mayor Cury read a donation letter from Southwest Virginia Community College requesting five hundred dollars for their Festival of the Arts. Council Member Jan White asked Office Manager Susan Whitt to compile a list of donations given so far this fiscal year before the Council votes on this request. Council agreed.

Mayor Cury advised this will be placed on hold until the next meeting.

IN RE: Electrical Rate Decrease

Council member Doug Ratliff discussed electrical rates with the Council and recommended a ten percent decrease for three months to help citizens.

Mr. Monday provided an Electrical Department Budget Rate Reduction Proposal spreadsheet made by Mr. Campbell to the Council.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Jan White and the roll call vote of all members present, with Gary Jackson and Jordan Bales voting no, the Council voted 4-2 to approve a ten percent decrease in electrical rates for three months.

Mayor Cury declared a ten-minute recess.

IN RE: CPPDC Grant Project

Jordan Dillon, Economic Development Director for the Cumberland Plateau Planning District spoke to the Council about finishing Project Greenway. Mrs. Dillon stated the next phase of this project would be mulch and fencing at the playground. The Town will receive fifty thousand dollars from the CPPDC Grant leaving an estimated twenty thousand dollars to be paid by the Town.

Mrs. Mollo asked Mrs. Dillon if the Town is required to move forward with this project.

Mrs. Dillon suggested to at least move forward finishing the playground area with the mulch and fencing for it to be a safe and useable space.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Jordan Bales and the roll call vote of all members present, with Laura Mollo voting no, the Council voted 5-1 to approve moving forward with this project.

IN RE: Scheduled Public Comments

a. Janet Humphrey Gibson, Owner of Red's Variety located at 1233 Front Street advised there are no ramps or handicapped parking spots near her business creating dangerous situations with traffic for her and her customers.

Mayor Cury suggested Mr. Monday work with Chief Holt to find a solution for this issue.

Mayor Cury thanked Mrs. Gibson for bringing this issue to the Councils attention.

b. Cecil Ball, 202 Vicky Drive, advised in 2014 the Town placed a sewer along the bottom of his driveway. He stated the Town did not place a ditch back and he could no longer use his driveway.

Mayor Cury suggested Mr. Monday and the Street Committee visit his property.

IN RE: Unscheduled Public Comments

a. Morgan Earp, 1618 6th Street, advised he started a petition to have a council member removed under Code of VA 24.2-233 Section 1 and Section 3. Mr. Earp gave the Council three options: 1. To continue with petition, 2. File a discrimination claim against the Town, or 3. Allow the Council to decide on disciplinary action and restitution.

Mr. Earp provided the Town Attorney with these documents.

IN RE: Attorney Comments

a. Repeal of Personal Property Tax Ordinance: Mr. Thomas stated during the last Regular Monthly Meeting the Council voted to Repeal Personal Property Taxes. Therefore, Mr. Thomas advised he has drafted an Ordinance to Repeal Personal Property Tax for the Council to adopt.

Mayor Cury read Ordinance No.: 0-2023-08-01 to the Council to serve as a First Reading.

b. Mr. Thomas advised the Virginia State Code allows up to two hundred thousand dollars to be a small purchase. Under Richlands Town Code, the current threshold for a small purchase is ten thousand dollars. Mr. Thomas asked the Council if it was their desire to raise this amount for the Town.

Mayor Cury thanked Mr. Thomas for bringing this to the attention of the Council.

The Council agreed to consider this and discuss it at the next meeting.

IN RE: Town Manager Report

a. Mr. Monday advised the Council that the Board of Zoning Appeals currently has two open vacancies that need to be filled.

Mrs. Mollo suggested posting these vacancies to the Towns Facebook page.

IN RE: Council Members Report

Laura Mollo-

- Asked if there was an update on the electric transfer reserves from the previous meeting. Mr. Campbell explained it was a timing difference that showed a decrease.
- Stated that she had received numerous concerns about mowing in Town. Mrs. Mollo suggested the Town get on a mowing schedule to be more consistent as a possible solution.
- Stated she has also received concerns regarding the Town using garages located outside of Town limits for vehicle maintenance. Mrs. Mollo advised businesses within Town limits are insulted by this and suggested using only garages located in Town and to use a garage list to ensure that each garage is getting business from the Town.
- Advised she is continuing to work with the Mayor and the Army Corp of Engineers on the Flood Study and there would be a final report made to the Council from that study soon. Mrs. Mollo said the study has not only identified problems but has offered solutions to the problems for the Town.
- Also advised the Town will be doing interviews for a new Town Manager soon.
- Reported that National Night out at the Police Department was a huge success this year. \
- Stated she is continuing to work with Council on making a splashpad in Richlands a reality.
- Reported the brush pick-up service needs to be addressed. Suggested having a Public Meeting to let the citizens be involved in finding a solution to this issue.
- Asked if the Street Dept. could address the signs placed at Hidden Valley for yard sales, etc.

Jan White-

- Asked why the Town cannot sell some of the old and outdated equipment to help purchase something the Street Department could use. Would like the Council to consider auctioning this equipment.
- Advised the Town needs to have a mowing schedule.

Gary Jackson-

- Advised he has received many complaints also about large item pick-ups.

- Asked the Council if Mr. Campbell and Mr. Monday can look at the finances to give the Council direction on purchasing a new grapple truck.
- Mr. Monday advised he would bring to the Council a proposed policy on surplus items and possible solutions for large item pick-ups at the next meeting.

Jordan Bales-

- Advised the State Little League Tournament was a huge success.
- Stated the “Don’t Stop Believing 5k” was also a huge success and raised money for a good cause.
- Reported that “Rock the Clinch” was awesome and fun. Mr. Bales thanked everyone who helped with this event.
- Advised the Rec Park hours will be changing as school goes back in session.
- Thanked the Town for cutting the grass on Kents Ridge.
- Also advised the Council needs to re-appoint Craig Earls to the IDA, due to conflicting records on when his term ends.

IN RE: IDA Appointment

Upon a motion by Jordan Bales seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to re-appoint Craig Earls to the IDA.

Rick Wood-

- Stated he had received multiple complaints about the mowing.

Doug Ratliff-

- Stated he has also received multiple complaints about mowing, and the issue needs to be addressed.

Mayor Cury-

- Thanked the staff for all their work.

IN RE: Executive Session

Mayor Cury advised the Council would be going into Executive session pursuant to:

- a. VA Code Section: 2.2-3711 (A)(8)

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Gary Jackson and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to go into Executive Session.

Upon a motion by Jan White seconded by Rick Wood and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to return to Open Session.

Upon a motion by Jan White seconded by Rick Wood and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council certified that only VA Code Section 2.2-3711 (A)(8) were discussed during the Executive Session.

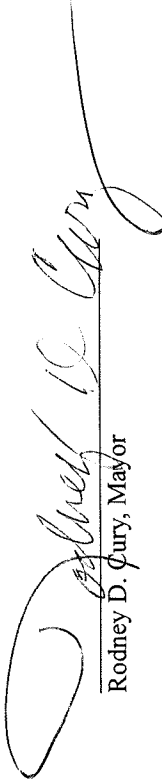
IN RE: Board of Appeals Appointments

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Doug Ratliff and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to appoint Phillip Cook to the Board of Appeals, with the appointment expiring on June 30, 2027.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Jordan Bales and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to appoint Glayde Brown to the Board of Appeals, with appointment expiring on June 30, 2024.

IN RE: Adjournment

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the meeting was adjourned.



Rodney D. Cury, Mayor



Amanda Beheler, Town Clerk