

TOWN OF RICHLANDS
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

The Richlands Town Council held a "Regular Monthly Meeting" on Tuesday, January 9, 2024, at 6:00 pm in the Richlands Council Chambers with the following present:

Mayor: Rod. D. Cury
Town Manager: Jason May
Office Manager: Susan Whitt
Town Clerk: Amanda Beheler
Finance Manager: Ronnie Campbell
Council Members: 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 Rod Cury.

IN RE: Roberts Rules of Order

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Jan White and the roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve adopting Roberts Rules of Order.

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

Mayor Cury asked if there was anyone who would like to speak during unscheduled public comment, there was no one.

Mayor Cury asked if there was any additions, deletions, or corrections to the agenda.

Laura Mollo asked that the following additions be made to the agenda:

- A. Vacant Seat Discussion

Jan White asked that (b) Derek and Maria be removed.

Jason May asked that (d) Generator Q & A be removed. This will be held at a later date.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Jan White and the roll call vote of all members present, with Jordan Bales and Gary Jackson voting no, the Council voted 3-2 to approve the agenda as amended.

IN RE: Authorization to Pay Bills (December)

Mayor Cury asked the Council if there were any questions regarding the Check Register.

Mrs. White inquired about check #14967, Town of Richlands Employee UT Bill 11.22.23 for \$922.29. Mrs. Whitt advised some employees have a signed agreement with the Town to take a portion of their payday to pay on their utility bill.

Mrs. Mollo advised that check #15052 for \$750.00 was for the Tazewell County Chamber of Commerce Membership Dues and going forward she would like to discuss putting that money towards a small business alliance for the Town of Richlands that Jordan Bales had suggested previously.

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

IN RE: Minutes

Mayor Cury advised the Clerk had found an error in the November 14, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes after they had already been approved.

Mr. Thomas advised the Council would need to approve the amended minutes.

Mayor Cury advised on page two of the regular monthly meeting minutes there was an error. It should be the Virginia Institute of Government instead of the University of Virginia.

Mr. Jackson inquired about the Berkely Group check amount. Mr. May advised the correct amount should be \$9,450.00.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Rick Wood and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve the amended November 14, 2023 Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes, the December 12, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes, and the December 12, 2023 Joint Public Hearing Meeting Minutes.

IN RE: Scheduled Public Comments

No Scheduled Public Comments.

IN RE: Unscheduled Public Comments

No Unscheduled Public Comments.

IN RE: Vacant Seat Discussion

Mayor Cury advised Councilman Doug Ratliff resigned.

Mayor Cury also thanked Mr. Ratliff for his service.

Mr. May advised the Council has forty-five days to make this appointment.

Mrs. Mollo stated the reason she made a motion to appoint Seth White was because he was already serving on the Electrical Committee, was up to date on some of the big projects the Town has coming up, and that she had multiple citizens reach out and ask her to consider Mr. White for the vacant seat, stating the Town needed his maturity and experience back on the Council.

Mr. Jackson advised he had multiple citizens approach him about the vacant seat as well and would like to see it done in a fair way. Mr. Jackson also stated he had nothing against Mr. White.

Mr. Bales also advised he had multiple people reach out to him and would agree that Mr. White is more than qualified for the position, however he urged caution and would like to wait another month before making the appointment.

Mayor Cury asked Mr. Thomas if there were any legal consequences to Mr. White serving alongside his mother on the Council, Mr. Thomas advised there was not.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Rick Wood and the roll call vote of all members present, with Gary Jackson and Jordan Bales, the Council voted 3-2 to appoint Seth White to the vacant council seat.

IN RE: Proposed Meeting Dates for 2024

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve the Proposed Meeting Dates for 2024.

IN RE: Little League MOU

Mr. Thomas advised he revised the MOU to state that it will not be an automatic renewal and can be re-executed annually.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve the revised Little League MOU.

Mayor Cury declared a ten-minute recess.

IN RE: Bulk & Brush

Mr. May advised the Council he had been working with staff to determine an appropriate fee to create a revenue source to purchase a Grapple Truck in the future. The Administration recommended a one dollar per month fee for Bulk and Brush. This will generate approximately thirty thousand dollars a year.

Mr. Thomas advised there would need to be a public advertisement due to it being a new fee, an Ordinance, and a Public Hearing.

Mrs. White asked if this fee would be billed separately or included with the trash bill. Mr. May advised it would be billed with the trash, however it would be separated on the bill so that the customer and staff could differentiate between the two.

Mr. Bales asked if there was a plan on when to dispose of the truck. Mr. Mays advised the Town is currently doing a demo of a tracking software that could be added into the trucks. The software would allow the ability to track where the trucks go by GPS and to be able to provide a cost benefit analysis on each truck to the Council.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve a Public Hearing to discuss adding a one dollar per month fee for Bulk and Brush pickup.

IN RE: Water Plant Pump Bid Solicitation

Mr. Campbell advised the Staff had solicited bids in October 2023 and December 2023 and was successful with the December 2023 solicitation. The Town received a bid from Service Pump & Supply located in Huntington, WV for seventy-eight thousand dollars to replace one of the high-service pumps.

Mr. Campbell asked for the Councils approval to move forward with this purchase.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Gary Jackson and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to move forward with the bid solicitation for the high-service pump.

IN RE: Monthly Financial Report

Mr. Campbell gave a brief overview of the Monthly Financial Report for November as follows:

General Fund

The General Fund had a nominal change of about five thousand dollars. This change was due to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in real estate taxes that were received early in the month of November.

Expenses

Expenses are trending lower.

Water and Sewer

Water and Sewer are holding constant.

Water Line Sewer Maintenance

No revenue stream for this, expenses are tracking lower. Mr. Campbell stated this was most likely due to timing.

Electric Fund

The Electric Fund has a year-to-date net loss of one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars and a thirty-seven thousand dollar loss for the month. Mr. Campbell stated most of this has been a result of the ten percent reduction.

Mayor Cury asked Mr. Campbell if he anticipates the Town will be able to reduce this negative amount based on the Council's action to return to the normal electric rates earlier in the meeting, Mr. Campbell advised he does.

General Fund- Reserves

Holding Constant. Cash Balance is 6.7 million with 4 million being unreserved.

Water and Wastewater Reserves

Not much has changed. Mr. Campbell expects there to be some turnaround once the new rates on sewer are implemented.

Electric Reserves

As expected, the unreserved cash balance has come down a couple hundred thousand dollars. Holding constant at around one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in surplus.

Mayor Cury asked the Council if they had any questions about the Financial Report.

Mrs. White asked if the staff had contacted the company to assist in collecting delinquent taxes.

Mr. May and Mr. Campbell advised they would look into this and report back to the Council.

IN RE: Attorney Report

Mr. Thomas advised Doug Ratliff's Term was set to expire this year, so the Town is not required to hold a special election. Seth White will serve out the remaining term expiring December 31, 2024.

Mr. Thomas advised he had received a contract for the Fireworks. Mr. Thomas stated he does not see any concerns with this contract.

Mayor Cury asked the price of the fireworks; Mr. Thomas advised it was sixty-five hundred dollars.

Mayor Cury asked the Council if they had any questions concerning this contract.

Mrs. White advised the Town typically receives donations for the fireworks.

Mrs. Mollo stated there had been several people who had already advised they would donate again this year.

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 the firework contract.

IN RE: Town Manager Report

Downtown Coordinator:

Mr. May advised the Downtown Coordinator Position is posted on the website, have had some good applicants already.

Mr. May also advised the deadline to apply for this position is January 12, 2024, and encouraged anyone interested to apply.

Oriole Street Bridge Update:

Mr. May stated he had spoken with DEQ and they advised that as long as the Town is not placing anything into the creek, they would not need a permit. Unfortunately, during the process of removing the old bridge off they realized the concrete pieces on both sides of the ledge were made of crushed river rock and the structure would not be strong enough to carry the new bridge. Mr. May advised he is working with engineers to find a solution. If permits are required from DEQ the project will take longer than expected.

Mr. Jackson asked if this process could be expedited as an emergency measure since everyone who lives there would be trapped if the detour road were to get washed out.

Mr. May advised that he is speaking to DEQ about that and hopes that it can be.

Mr. Wood asked if the Hill Creek Road near Maple Lane could be opened to lighten the load off this.

Mr. May advised he would speak to the staff about this to determine if this would be a possibility.

US Army Corp of Engineers:

Mr. May advised he has a meeting scheduled with the Army Corp of Engineers to determine the next step in the flood mitigation process. Mr. May also advised that FEMA has tripled their Safeguarding for Tomorrow grant program and would like to get through the process with the Army Corp of Engineers as quickly as possible to be able to get help from FEMA. Mr. May stated early indications show the Town may be able to mitigate most of the flooding, up to a twenty-year flood.

Mrs. Mollo stated that Mr. May has done a great job catching up on this flood study and being engaged to keep it going.

Mr. Jackson asked if the flood map would change after the dredging, Mr. May advised it would.

Mayor Cury asked if there were any updates on the wastewater improvements. Mr. May said he is working with engineers to get the construction documents ready by the middle of February.

IN RE: Council Member Reports

Laura Mollo-

- Advised the Forensic Audit is still being done and the Final Report will be discussed publicly. Mr. May advised he is currently working on a date for this.
- Inquired about a new fire truck. Mr. May advised the staff is searching for a replacement tanker. The length of the tanker has been an issue, due to the limitation of the station.
- Inquired about paving. Mr. May advised the invitation to bid is on the website and due back on January 31, 2024.
- Stated someone had reached out to her and advised that if the landfill in Russell County goes through, all of the trash would be brought through the Town of Richlands and is concerned about the environmental hazards that would come from this. Mrs. Mollo wanted to bring this to the Councils attention.

Jan White-

- Thanked the Richlands Police Department for doing patrols and business checks.

Jordan Bales-

Upon a motion by Jordan Bales seconded by Rick Wood and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to appoint Richard Boyd to the Richlands Recreation Commission.

Upon a motion by Jordan Bales seconded by Gary Jackson and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to appoint Jeff Hurst to the Richlands Recreation Commission.

- Thanked the Richlands Police Department for doing patrols and business checks also.
- Stated the Richlands Wrestling Club hosted a great event over the weekend.
- Advised REC League Basketball is starting with over three hundred kids signed up.
- Thanked all the businesses that participated in the storefront decorating contest, stated the Town looked amazing.

Rick Wood-

- Asked for an update on the Iron Street Property. Mr. May advised that he and Mr. Thomas are working on this, and the Council will need to do a Resolution or Ordinance. Will

bring it back to the Council in February or March when they have the correct wording on this.

- Inquired about the AARPA Fund Balance. Mr. Campbell stated it is around two million.

Gary Jackson-

- Thanked Mr. May and the town employees for all of their hard work.

Mrs. Mollo advised she received a request from a citizen wanting the Town to preserve the stone bridge in Lake Park. The bridge is one of the few original pieces left remaining in Richlands. Mr. May said he would keep that in mind.

IN RE: Mayor Comments

- Thanked everyone for being there and praying for everyone's safety due to the flooding happening within the area.
- Stated everyone is working in harmony and wants it to continue, it is in the best interest of the Town.
- Reminded everyone that the Town Hall will be closed Monday in observance of Martin Luther King Day.

IN RE: Executive Session

Mayor Cury advised the Council would be going into Executive Session pursuant to VA Code Section: 2.2-3711 (A)(3).

Mrs. Mollo invited Seth White to the Executive Session, with the consensus of the Council.

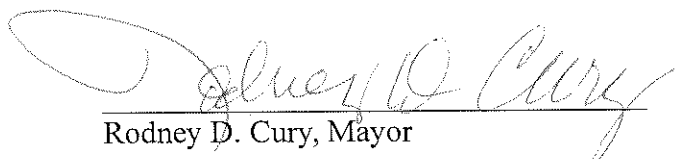
Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to go into Executive Session.

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

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council certified that only VA Code Section 2.2-3711 (A)(3) was discussed during the Executive Session.

IN RE: Adjournment

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


Rodney D. Cury, Mayor


Amanda Beheler, Town Clerk