

**TOWN OF RICHLANDS**  
**REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING**

The Richlands Town Council held a “Regular Monthly Meeting” on Tuesday, March 12, 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

Absent: Seth White

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:        Additions, Deletions, or Corrections to the Agenda**

Mayor Cury asked if there was anyone who would like to speak during unscheduled public comment.

Morgan Earp advised he would.

Mr. May requested he would like to remove (k) Water Tap Ordinance from the Agenda.

Mr. Wood requested he would like to switch (a) and (b) under IV.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Laura Mollo and the roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve the agenda as amended.

**IN RE:        Minutes**

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 Special Called Meeting January 29, 2024, Public Hearing February 13, 2024, and the Regular Scheduled Meeting February 13, 2024.

**IN RE:        Authorization to Pay Bills (February)**

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

Mrs. Mollo advised she had a citizen ask her if the money for the Refs came out of the Basketball Fees. Mr. May advised it does.

Mrs. Mollo inquired about check #15271 National Pools of Roanoke for \$800.50. Mr. May advised it was for training for two employees to become certified pool operators in anticipation of the pool opening this summer.

Mr. Wood inquired about check #15291 RC Services for \$22,000.00. Mr. May advised it was for the purchase of two message boards that were previously approved and currently being used at the Oriole Street Bridge.

Mayor Cury inquired about check # 15355 Musicians Friend for \$2,036.00. Mr. May advised it was for speakers and sound equipment for the Wisteria Stage as part of the CPROP Grant. Mr. May advised the Town has crossed the threshold for this grant and anything going forward will be reimbursed to the Town.

Mr. Wood inquired about check # 15297 West Hills Tractor for \$64,500.00. Mr. May advised it is for the tractor approved for mowing at the February meeting.

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 for February.

**IN RE: Scheduled Public Comments**

Linda Keen, 570 Doran, VA, spoke briefly to the Council about the cats in Town. Mrs. Keen advised in December 2021 she helped start the group Friends of Tazewell County Community Cats Inc., a non-profit organization. Friends of Tazewell County Community Cats is a trap, neuter, vaccinate and return program. In 2022, the group helped 576 cats, in 2023 they helped 701 and 162 cats in 2024 already. Mrs. Keen also advised the Council of how many cats they have gotten medical help for.

Mrs. Keen asked the Council and the Town Manager not to destroy all their hard work and to allow the cats to continue to live where they are currently at.

Richard Keen, Pastor at Keen Trinity Chapel Church- spoke to the Council about the mistreatment of animals and what the Bible says about it. Mr. Keen asked the Town to consider helping the Friends of Tazewell County Community Cats.

Mrs. Mollo gave a brief speech to address both public comments. Mrs. Mollo advised she would like to clear up some misinformation and stated that no one in the Town has threatened to kill a cat. Mrs. Mollo advised she has offered to help relocate the cats.

Mr. May spoke to the Council about the cats living in the Town Barn and how it affects the employees.

Chief Holt also spoke briefly about how this secondhand information began and advised the Police Department has never threatened to kill the cats.

Pastor Keen advised the rumor started in a veterinary office in Christiansburg.

**IN RE: Unscheduled Public Comments**

Morgan Earp, 1618 6<sup>th</sup> Street- advised the Council there is a blind spot when you're traveling from Tazewell Avenue onto Front Street. Mr. Earp expressed his concerns about this issue and asked if the Town could install a traffic light in that location.

Mr. Earp also stated there was erosion at the river behind Giovannis, advised that it makes it difficult to walk or fish in that area. Would like the Town to fix this issue if possible.

Mayor Cury declared a five-minute recess.

**IN RE: Recommendation from the Planning Commission**

Mr. Jackson advised the Planning Commission recommends approving the proposed Conditional Use Permit request located at 478 Fleming Lane with the conditions of being in compliance with the water connection, sewer, underpinning, and porches with the ordinances and state codes within a six-month period.

Mrs. White asked the age of the home, Mr. Jackson advised it was a 2018 model.

Upon a motion by Gary Jackson seconded by Rick Wood and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve the proposed conditional use permit (a.k.a., "Special Exception Permit") request located at Tax map #123 A 0124A or 478 Fleming Lane with regards to the proposed purpose of placing a mobile home.

**IN RE: Chamber of Commerce/ Taste of Appalachia**

Keishia Cole, Tazewell County Chamber of Commerce, gave the Council a brief overview of their new Taste of Appalachia event. Mrs. Cole asked the Council if the Chamber could hold their second annual event in Richlands.

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 hosting the 2025 Taste of Appalachia in the Town of Richlands.

**IN RE: Richlands Police Department- 2023 Annual Report**

Chief Holt presented the 2023 Annual Report to the Council.

- Letter from the Chief to the Council.
- Training
- Grants & Equipment
- Mrs. Beheler's VLESPC Senior Assessor Award.
- Accreditation
- Community Outreach/ Events
- New Policy
- Academy Graduates- Tyler Hutchinson and Seth Freeman.
- Promotions- Lieutenant Matthew Whited, First Sergeant Shawn Short (absent), and Sergeant Charley Dupree
- Recognized Captain Crouse for graduating with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Bluefield University.

Mayor Cury thanked Chief Holt.

Mayor Cury requested the Police Department take pictures.

**IN RE: RYBC (Richlands Youth Baseball Parents Club) MOU**

Mr. May gave a brief description of the MOU to the Council. Staff added the area immediately outside the outfield fence to the MOU and the renewal language updated.

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 RYBC MOU.

**IN RE: Real Estate Broker**

Mr. May advised the Town received two solicitations for the Broker Service RFP that was put out in February. Mr. May suggested the Town go with the lowest price, Solutions Real Estate.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Laura Mollo and the 4-1 roll call vote of all members present, with Jordan Bales abstaining due to a conflict of interest, the Council voted to approve employing the services of Solutions Real Estate.

**IN RE: 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of \$1 Fee; Brush/Bulk Pick-up Ordinance.**

Upon a motion by Rick Wood seconded by Gary Jackson and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to dispense the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading of Ordinance NO.: O-2024-03-01.

**IN RE: Ordinance NO.: O-2024-03-01.**

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 Ordinance NO.: O-2024-03-01.

**IN RE: Capital Account Ordinance/ O-2024-04-03 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.**

Mr. Thomas and Mr. May gave a brief overview of this Ordinance to the Council.

Mr. Thomas gave the first reading of Ordinance No.: O-2024-04-03.

**IN RE: Disconnect to Last Monday of the month.**

Mayor Cury read the Staff Summary for this to the Council.

Mrs. Mollo asked if there was any way the Council could pick a different day for the disconnect day to be, stating she was worried that it would put citizens in a bad spot at the end of the month.

Mr. May suggested the date be set for the 28<sup>th</sup> of each month.

After a brief discussion between council members, Mr. May recommended that he go back and speak to the staff about other possible solutions. Mr. May will bring those back to the Council at a later date for consideration.

**IN RE: Mowing / Code Enforcement**

Mr. May presented the new Standard Operating Procedures for Code Enforcement and Mowing.

Mr. Jackson asked what kind of fee would be associated with this. Mr. May advised there would be an hourly rate for each employee. This will be printed on the citation.

Mrs. White asked if we could post this on Facebook so the citizens would know what the expectations are.

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 new Standard Operating Procedures for Mowing and Code Enforcement.

**IN RE: Budget Amendments**

Mr. Campbell advised the water treatment plant had an old push mower for keeping the grounds up, and to operate more effectively and efficiently a new riding mower was purchased. This is part of the overall initiative to purchase new equipment for the departments and return mowing to in-house. This purchase was funded by the current fiscal year Plant Parts Budget in the amount of \$7,347. Since it is greater than the \$5,000 capital threshold, it needs to be capitalized per the Town of Richlands' Financial Policies.

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 budget amendment.

**IN RE: Beer Garden**

Mr. May spoke to the Council about the Town hosting a Beer Garden at Wisteria Station.

Mr. May advised he has spoken with Chief Holt and he would have his team train them to properly check ID's.

Mr. Bales asked who would be running the concessions for this event, Mr. May advised it would be a team from Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Bales also asked about taking payments for this event, Mr. May advised there would be a Square device to run payments through.

Mrs. Mollo stated that she was torn on this subject and didn't feel like it would be worth it for the Town. Mrs. Mollo would like to get more feedback from the citizens on this.

Mrs. White agreed with Mrs. Mollo, the Council needs more input from the community.

Mr. Wood stated he does not think the Town needs beer at these events.

A consensus of the Council was not reached at this time.

**IN RE: Health Insurance Resolution R-2024-03-12**

Mr. Campbell advised the Council provides 83.5% health insurance coverage through The Local Choice Health Benefits Program, and the employees portion is 16.5%. The annual renewal must be completed by April 1, 2024, and the coverage will be effective July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025.

The staff recommends moving forward with this.

Mayor Cury read Resolution R-2024-03-12 for this.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo seconded by Gary Jackson and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to adopt Resolution R-2024-03-12.

**IN RE: Tazewell PSA O & M Accounts**

Mr. Campbell advised the Tazewell PSA contracts for the water and wastewater treatment plants provide for the billing of a Monthly User Charge and the maintenance of reserve accounts. This monthly charge includes their portion of debt retirement, O&M costs, a surcharge for additional treatment, transmission fee for delivering treated water and reserve account adjustments. The Town of Richlands determines the monthly charge by April 1 of each year for the twelve months beginning on the following July 1. The monthly charge shall not be changed during the twelve-month period except to correct an error in calculation or to prevent a default in payment of principal or interest on loans.

Mr. Campbell advised that he and Mr. May recently met with Tazewell PSA and they have requested refunding their portion of the balance from both reserve accounts and continuing to adjust and settle once a year. This would eliminate the reserve account component of the calculation above and any contingency allowance. A contract amendment would be required for any changes.

Mr. Campbell advised the staff still has more research to do on this.

Mr. Wood asked if what were doing now is working, Mr. Campbell advised it was.

Mr. May stated he would like to research this more as well.

Mr. May advised he would bring this back to Council at a later date with more information.

**IN RE: Monthly Financial Report**

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

- General Fund- there are still revenues to be received.
- Most departments are tracking under on expenses.
- Personal Property Taxes were removed, so this is a permanent difference.
- Capital Project that was offset by AARPA funds is also a permanent difference.
- Water- Year to date net income is primarily the result of lower revenues, currently at 43.8 %.
- Sewer- also has lower revenues, being offset with lower expenses.
- Electric Fund- reflecting a year-to-date net loss of \$213k.
- General Fund- Unreserved Cash Balance is about 4.5 million dollars.  
The Actual Balance increased by \$165k since December.
- Water Department—Unreserved Cash Balance is \$1,281,000  
The Actual Balance increased by \$19k since December.
- Sewer Department- still showing a negative Unreserved Cash Balance.
- Electric Department- Unreserved Cash Balance is \$2.8 million, about a \$20 k decrease since December.

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

The Council had no questions.

**IN RE: Surplus Sales**

The Richlands Police Department conducted another vehicle surplus sales event in February. They sold a Chevy Tahoe, 2 Dodge Chargers, 4 Ford Crown Victorias, an ambulance, a van (ambulance), and two boats and trailers. The proceeds from the sales were \$24, 248 and used to purchase a new Chevy Malibu for the Police Department.

**IN RE: Town Manager Report**

- Advised movies will begin at Wisteria Station soon and surveys are available to citizens to help choose what movies will be shown.
- Advised the Town is looking for musicians/bands who would like to play on Friday nights this summer.
- Little League Parade is April 6.
- Critterville Volunteer Cleanup Day is April 13.
- Strategic Planning Retreat is March 23 at the Historic Crab Orchard Museum.
- Basketball Debriefing March 18
- Eclipse Viewing Party at Critterville April 8- 1:00pm-5:00pm
- Energy Ingenuity Pre-Application Grant accepted.
- Exploring Main Street Program
- Economic Developer Main Street Position still available.
- Merchants Association being developed.

**IN RE: Council Member Reports**

Laura Mollo-

- Pot Holes- wants citizens to know the Town is aware of the issues and working on them.
- This week is “Sunshine Week” in government, March 10-16. This is where people celebrate open government.
- Addressed rumors that are circulating and issues with Teen Venture.

Jan White-

- Stated she spoke with Mr. Earp about the blind spot in Town and asked that the Town look into this issue.
- Had a citizen from Iron Street contact her and ask if the Town could check with Jason Herndon about leaving a key with the police department in case of a flood or other emergency on weekends.

Jordan Bales-

- Stated the Rec Park had another successful Basketball season.
- Baseball starts soon, and the fields are looking good.
- Thanked the Street Department for their work on the parking issue at the Rec Park.

Rick Wood-

- Wanted to address the potholes.

Mr. May spoke briefly about the potholes and solutions and recommended using VDOT money to purchase a Hotbox.

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 purchase of a Hotbox.

Gary Jackson-

- Asked about the equipment setting out at the Police Department, Mr. May advised it will be auctioned. No date set for this yet.
- Thanked everyone for the Staff Reports and their work.

**IN RE: Mayor Comments**

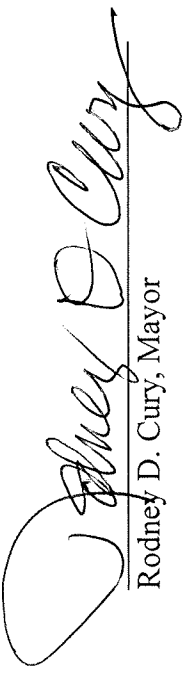
- Richlands Elementary School Silent Auction- March 14
- Complimented the Rec Park for providing a place for children.
- Spoke to the Council about the importance of taking pictures and legacies. Mayor Cury requested that pictures of the Staff be taken.

IN RE: Executive Session

No Executive Session.

IN RE: Adjournment

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



Rodney D. Cury, Mayor

  
Amanda Beheler, Town Clerk

