



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL
Work Session Minutes
Town Hall – 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
Tuesday, February 18, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Earnie Porta; Vice Mayor Pat Sivigny; Councilmembers Matthew Dawson, Cindy Fithian, Laurie Holloway and Eliot Perkins

Absent: None

Staff: Kathleen Leidich, Town Manager; Adam Linn, Chief of Police; Jason Forman, Town Sergeant; Julie Little, Events Director; Katy Nicholson, Town Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Porta called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m., noting several items:

- Del. Luke Torian’s office notified Mayor Porta that they had sent a letter to the Governor’s office supporting the Town’s need for funding for stormwater management projects. Del. Torian’s office also encouraged the Town to apply for a state stormwater management grant. Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to pursue the grant, as the application deadline might be coming up in March.
- The Town planned to resurrect its historic marker refurbishment program. Individuals or groups could “adopt” the black-and-gold historic markers for \$800 each (\$900 for markers with photos). The cost would cover refurbishment of the markers. Town resident Kendrea DeLauter would coordinate the effort. This program was active in the past, and resulted in the refurbishment of two markers. Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to identify a staff member to be Ms. DeLauter’s contact.
- Mayor Porta said he had discussed with the Town Attorney and the Chair of ARB potential violations of the Town’s ordinances related to flags, banners, and signs, as the ARB Chair had requested. He also spoke with both of them about several prospective changes to those ordinances, including making white outdoor string lights allowable year-round; making colored lights allowable October 15-February 15; making it clear that neither flags nor banners may block architectural features; and adjusting the guidelines on temporary signage. Mayor Porta said he would present the proposed changes at the next Council meeting.
- Mayor Porta requested that Ms. Leidich follow up on an erosion problem on Mill Cross Lane involving a utility line. Ms. Leidich said she would look into the issue.
- Mayor Porta said he planned to schedule a Tanyard Hill Park cleanup day if Council had no objections. Participants would be required to sign waivers and volunteers who wanted to operate a chainsaw would need to bring their own equipment and sign a separate waiver.
- Finally, Mayor Porta reported that Leo Smith, a longtime supporter of the Town, had passed away. Mayor Porta said he would update Council if he learned of any plans for local funeral arrangements. He noted that Mr. Smith’s passing reminded him that some past recipients of the Town’s Volunteer Award may not have received an individual memento of that award and that he would like to ensure that those who were still living receive something.

2. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. Update on Kayak Ramp Project

Ms. Leidich reported that the piles had been driven prior to the February 15 deadline, so the project was still on track for completion in the late spring. Councilmember Holloway asked

what the next step would be. Ms. Leidich responded that the ramp would be fabricated and installed. Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to report on an estimated completion date at the next Council meeting.

Councilmember Holloway asked if there had been any discussion about kayak racks. Ms. Leidich responded that the Town Maintenance Supervisor had looked into the matter and developed a plan for the racks.

Councilmember Fithian noted that she would like some type of signage with a map of Town for visitors arriving at the kayak ramp. Mayor Porta said the Town could likely post such signage on the kayak racks. Vice Mayor Sivigny said he had recently talked to someone from Lorton who expressed interest in storing a kayak near the ramp while visiting Town.

b. Update on Tanyard Hill Park Conservation Easement Requirements

Ms. Leidich reported that a community service crew was scheduled, as required by the monitor of the Tanyard Hill Park conservation easement, to conduct clean-up later in the week of the dumping that had occurred along the western boundary of the park. As also required, the Town ordered “No Dumping” signs for the property.

Mayor Porta said he would contact the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (the monitor of the easement) regarding the status of the project. Ms. Leidich said she had contacted them. Mayor Porta asked Council if anyone would be interested in attending the Conservation Trust’s conferences and presentations. Councilmember Holloway said she would like to attend.

Mayor Porta noted that Council would be unable to approve the FY2020 budget amendment for the kayak ramp project because the amendment included costs incurred prior to FY2020. Mayor Porta said he would discuss this with Ms. Leidich and Council would address the budget amendment at the March 4 meeting.

Ms. Leidich noted that Chief Linn and Sergeant Forman had renovated the Police Office and the conference room in Town Hall. She also explained that Town staff were testing a key fob entry system downstairs, and if it was successful, the system would be installed upstairs as well.

Mayor Porta questioned whether it was necessary to move the March 3 meeting, as there would not be any polling taking place in Town Hall for the Virginia Primaries. After some discussion, Council decided to move the March 3 meeting to March 4 to avoid any potential conflict for those working the polls.

c. FY 2021 Budget Work Session

Ms. Leidich noted the following:

- Three budget work sessions were scheduled: February 18, March 4 and March 17.
- The FY 2021 recommendation was to maintain all taxes at their current levels.
- Projected revenues for all four Town funds (General Fund, Public Event Fund, Capital Improvement Fund and Mamie Davis Fund) were \$1,194,819.00. Proposed expenditures were \$1,316,176.
- A decrease in projected revenues for FY 2021 was primarily due to the Capital Improvement Fund receiving an additional \$283,000 in grant funding in FY 2020.

- The FY 2021 proposal maintained a \$200,000 operating reserve, a minimum of \$500,000 in total available net assets, and capital reserve funds amounting to 5 to 10 percent of general fund operating expenditures.
- Projected operating budget revenues and expenditures each totaled \$979,058.
- The proposed FY 2021 budget included the transfer of \$66,578 from Net Assets to the Operating Fund to balance the budget. Ms. Leidich noted that \$16,900.00 of the proposed expenditures paid for a new police vehicle that would ultimately be funded by public safety fines.

Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to confirm that the proposed budget resulted in a deficit. Ms. Leidich confirmed this, adding that the proposed budget included a 10 percent decrease in revenues and a 5 percent increase in expenditures.

Mayor Porta asked about a change in police officer positions. Chief Linn explained that the hours from several part-time officer positions would be converted to one full-time position, and that the additional cost for benefits would be approximately \$4,000.00.

Councilmember Perkins asked how the parking enforcement cost of \$17,480.00 was determined. Ms. Leidich responded that the cost included equipment and part-time staff, and was included in the Capital Improvement Plan. Mayor Porta noted that this topic would require further discussion.

Mayor Porta asked whether the police vehicle was included in the Capital Improvement Plan or the Operating Fund. Ms. Leidich responded that the expense was listed in the Capital Improvement Plan, and that the funds would be transferred from the Operating Fund to the Capital Improvement Fund.

Mayor Porta asked whether \$66,578 was being transferred to cover a shortfall. Ms. Leidich responded yes.

Vice Mayor Sivigny asked whether \$16,900 for police vehicles was covered by grant funding. Ms. Leidich responded that the grant provided funding for enforcement, which funded the vehicles.

Mayor Porta asked whether the proposed budget assumed the same tax rate. Ms. Leidich responded yes.

Vice Mayor Sivigny asked whether street and curb striping would be paid for by the Town or by the Virginia Department of Transportation. Ms. Leidich responded that the Town would pay for the striping plan and VDOT would pay for the actual striping. Councilmember Holloway asked whether the striping would include streets throughout Town or only Mill Street. Ms. Leidich responded that the striping would include streets throughout Town owned by VDOT. Councilmember Fithian asked whether the striping plan would include wider parking spaces. Ms. Leidich responded yes.

Councilmember Dawson asked for the effective date of the actual numbers. Ms. Leidich responded February 7.

Vice Mayor Sivigny asked what was included in "Other Revenues," which were projected to

decrease in FY 2021. Ms. Leidich Responded that this category included insurance claims received by the Town, and that these revenues had been particularly high in FY 2020 and her projection for FY 2021 was in line with the numbers from past years. Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to follow up at the next meeting with more detail regarding "Other Revenues."

Mayor Porta noted that the proposed budget included additional categories that had not been adopted by Council. He requested that those extra categories be collapsed into adopted budget categories.

Councilmember Holloway asked why there was a proposed 30 percent increase to the Training/Travel budget line. Ms. Leidich explained that the new Clerk and Treasurer would require additional training during their first year of employment.

Mayor Porta asked why the Personnel Services budget line had increased by 11 percent. Chief Linn explained that in addition to the Treasurer position becoming a full-time position, the increase included parking enforcement and on-call labor. Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to provide a breakdown of these cost increases for the next meeting.

Councilmember Holloway asked whether the increase in Professional Services costs was expected due to an increase in the Town Attorney's fees and the significant development projects in Town. Ms. Leidich replied that this was correct. Mayor Porta noted that these costs would depend on the Town's need for legal and other professional services throughout the year. He asked Ms. Leidich to provide a breakdown of Professional Services costs for the next meeting.

Councilmember Holloway asked why the proposed budget included an increase for IT Services. Ms. Leidich explained that the increase was based on actual use, and the Town had exceeded its IT Services budget in FY 2020. Mayor Porta asked whether Council would like to put these services out to bid. Councilmember Holloway said she would support that idea. Ms. Leidich noted that the Town was in the process of making upgrades to its IT system.

Councilmember Holloway asked whether the Mamie Davis Fund was comprised of park rental fees. Ms. Leidich responded that the fund included rental fees and account interest.

Mayor Porta asked whether real estate tax revenues were expected to remain flat for FY 2020, and whether the Town had received projected assessments from Prince William County. Ms. Leidich said the new assessments were expected to increase slightly. Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to report back to Council with the exact figures.

Ms. Leidich said she anticipated discussion about converting the Town's gaslights to electric, which was tentatively included in the Capital Improvement Plan. Mayor Porta said the Town looked into this idea years ago when gas prices were high, but the discussion stalled after gas prices dropped. Ms. Leidich said she would be looking at this as a research project, and the Town would not necessarily need to take action on it. Mayor Porta and Councilmember Perkins requested that Ms. Leidich provide Council with a cost/benefit analysis. Councilmember Holloway said she thought a study had already been conducted by the former Town Clerk, and that this information may still be available.

Mayor Porta asked whether the gaslight banners needed to be replaced yearly. Ms. Leidich responded that they were not replaced yearly, but replacement had been included in the FY

2020 Capital Improvement Plan and would not end up taking place in FY 2020. Councilmember Holloway said she thought the banners were expected to last for five years. Councilmember Perkins said the condition of the banners could be evaluated each year, and individual banners could be replaced as needed.

Councilmember Fithian asked if “Public Trash Containers” included recycling containers. Ms. Leidich responded that it included trash and recycling containers. Councilmember Fithian requested that this line item be changed to “Public Trash/Recycling Containers.”

Councilmember Perkins asked Ms. Leidich to elaborate on Mamie Davis Park renovations. Ms. Leidich explained that the renovations would include repairs to the gazebo and lighting. Councilmember Perkins noted that the gazebo would need to be cleaned and the roof would likely need to be repaired. Councilmember Holloway said it might need a new coat of paint. Mayor Porta said he did not think it would require extensive repairs, but it would need to be cleaned regularly.

Vice Mayor Sivigny asked whether the Stormwater Management Plan costs would be broken down further. Ms. Leidich listed the individual projects included in this budget line. Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to include these projects and costs in her budget update for the next meeting.

Councilmember Perkins asked Ms. Leidich to update Council on the due date for a state stormwater management grant. Ms. Leidich said she would inform Council of the due date.

Councilmember Holloway asked whether the body-worn cameras for police officers were included in the Public Safety section of the proposed budget. Chief Linn confirmed that the cost of the program was included in the budget.

Councilmember Perkins asked if pedestrian safety signs were included in the proposed budget, adding that he thought they were effective. Chief Linn responded that the signs were included in the proposed budget, and that the cost likely would be reimbursed by a grant.

Councilmember Fithian asked about proposed funding for AV equipment, noting that she thought the equipment had already been purchased. Ms. Leidich responded that the Town had purchased AV equipment, and that the funding proposed in FY 2021 was intended for an additional screen and projector to enable Council to view presentations from their seats. Councilmember Dawson and Mayor Porta suggested that small monitors could be placed on the dais instead. Mayor Porta noted that he did not want to spend a significant amount of money, but that the Town’s AV system was inferior to those of comparable localities.

Councilmember Fithian asked whether the Town spent any money on the Annual Tree Lighting. Ms. Little responded that the Merchants Guild paid for the event.

Mayor Porta asked whether the Public Event Fund included all events or just the Craft Show. Ms. Leidich responded that the fund included the Craft Show, RiverFest and Spirits & Spirits. Mayor Porta, noting that he understood the budget accounted for the transition to RiverFest, asked why revenues were projected to decrease from \$128,000 to \$40,000. He added that if the Town lost significant revenue due to the change from the Spring Craft Show to RiverFest, this would defeat the purpose of replacing the spring arts and craft show with this event. Councilmember Dawson added that the event expenses had increased.

Ms. Leidich explained that she and Ms. Little had been especially conservative in their projections for both FY 2020 and FY 2021 because RiverFest was a new event. Councilmember Holloway noted that the Town would need to look at the return on investment of its social media initiatives, but the value of people visiting and spending money on Town businesses may be difficult to measure. Mayor Porta said he wanted to ensure that net revenues did not decline due to additional expenses. Councilmember Fithian asked what the Town would charge for entries to the RiverFest paddleboarding races. Mayor Porta said the entry fees would be \$15.00, but that would mostly pay for the board rentals, and the event was primarily intended to attract people to the event. He noted that the Town may want to consider increasing the shuttle bus fees in the future, as the cost of the buses had increased.

Councilmember Holloway asked about sponsorships for the events. Ms. Little explained that she did not have the time or resources to properly pursue event sponsorships. Mayor Porta noted that sponsors would expect a return on their investment. Councilmember Holloway said a development position may be worthwhile if it paid for itself and generated additional revenue for the Town. Councilmember Perkins noted that there may be more sponsorship opportunities for races and other activities in the future. Councilmember Fithian said she would look into finding a sponsor for the shrimp boil.

Ms. Leidich said she would follow up on Council's budget questions at the next meeting, and welcomed Council to address any additional questions to her.

3. CLOSED SESSION

Motion to convene in closed session to discuss, as permitted by the Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711(A)(1), a personnel matter involving consideration or interviews of candidates for employment.

Moved by Vice Mayor Sivigny; seconded by Councilmember Holloway.
Motion **passed** unanimously by voice vote.

Closed session began at 8:48 p.m.

Closed session ended at 9:37 p.m.

Motion to certify that, in the closed session just concluded, nothing was discussed except the matter or matters (1) specifically identified in the motion to convene in closed session and (2) lawfully permitted to be discussed under the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act cited in that motion.

Moved by Vice Mayor Sivigny; seconded by Councilmember Dawson.

Ayes: Councilmember Perkins, Councilmember Holloway, Councilmember Fithian, Councilmember Dawson and Vice Mayor Sivigny, by roll call vote.

Nays: None.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:39 p.m.



Katy Nicholson
Town Clerk