



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL
Work Session Minutes
Town Hall – 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
Tuesday, April 21, 2020
7:00 p.m.

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

Absent: None

Staff: Kathleen Leidich, Town Manager; Kathleen Dellinger, Town Treasurer; 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 7:03 p.m., noting that Councilmembers Dawson and Fithian were participating electronically from home due to COVID-19 health concerns.

Mayor Porta invited Town resident Walt Seiberling to address the Council. Mr. Seiberling inquired about several topics:

- The status of stormwater management funding from the State of Virginia:
Mayor Porta responded that the due date for state stormwater remediation grants would be coming up in the summer and the Town planned to apply.
- The latest information on Town elections:
Mayor Porta responded that the Virginia General Assembly would be meeting the following day and would be addressing this topic. He added that he had written to Del. Luke Torian and State Senator Scott Surovell opposing the postponement of elections until November. He said both had written back and noted that potential compromises included the possibility of delaying elections until August.
- Mr. Seiberling said he had not seen the building plans for the kayak ramp, and was concerned about safety and use controls.
Mayor Porta responded that he would like Ms. Leidich to make the plans available online again. He added that Council would address Mr. Seiberling's other concerns during the kayak ramp project update.

2. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. Update on Kayak Ramp Project

Ms. Leidich reported that she expected the Town to receive a building permit for the project by May 11, and that construction was slated to begin the first week of June.

Councilmember Holloway noted that she shared Mr. Seiberling's concerns about safety and use of the ramp, as she had noticed an increase in fishing and trash accumulation in the area. Councilmember Dawson responded that the increase in fishing was likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that he had seen several people fishing on his property. Mayor Porta said he also had noticed more people fishing, but had not seen an increase in trash behind the Mill House Museum.

Mayor Porta asked whether the police had encountered many people fishing without licenses. Chief Linn responded that most of the people he talked to had licenses, and that the

police were simply directing them away from River Mill Park. He added that he had spoken with a representative from Fairfax Water and that, for the time being, they were not interfering with people fishing on their property as long as they did not go beyond the pipe.

Councilmember Holloway noted that she was concerned about fishing lines and hooks interfering with people using the kayak ramp. Mayor Porta responded that he thought the Town could post signs to limit fishing in the vicinity of the ramp. He encouraged Council and staff to keep an eye on the fishing and litter situation.

Ms. Leidich said she had spoken with the Town Engineer and Prince William County Transportation Department about crosswalk installation, and she would like to discuss some questions with Council.

First, Ms. Leidich addressed the location on Mill Street at Ellicott Street across from Town Hall. She explained that there likely would be no impact on parking, but there was a possibility of losing one space. Mayor Porta expressed concern about losing the space in question. Ms. Leidich responded that it was unlikely that the space would be eliminated but she wanted to let Council know that it was a possibility.

Ms. Leidich also addressed the location on Mill Street at Washington Street. She explained that the Town had the option of maintaining the current parking configuration, or creating a more pedestrian-friendly design by moving one standalone parking space into the Post Office parking lot. Mayor Porta noted that he had heard differing opinions on that particular parking space, and he recommended relocating it. Councilmember Perkins asked how the space would be moved into the Post Office parking lot. Ms. Leidich explained that the sidewalk would be moved out further, creating more space in the parking lot. Council collectively agreed that they preferred the option of moving the standalone parking space into the Post Office parking lot.

Councilmember Fithian noted that there was no stop sign at the top of McKenzie Drive, and that she had nearly been hit by cars speeding up the hill when she walked along the road. She added that she had spoken with a resident of Barrington Point who shared her concern. Mayor Porta said he would speak with Ms. Leidich about reaching out to the Barrington Point and Occoquan Point HOAs about the matter.

3. FY 2021 BUDGET WORK SESSION

a. Consideration/Action – FY 2021 Budget to be Advertised

Council had the following questions/comments about the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):

- Mayor Porta asked why the costs for in-kind matches for speed and alcohol enforcement grants were included in the budget. Chief Linn explained that the grant required the Town to budget for and pay for fuel and vehicle maintenance, and the grant would match those funds.
- Mayor Porta asked staff to add a narrative to the CIP budget for the Town's pedestrian and bicycle safety grant.
- Mayor Porta asked staff to ensure that each project included a five-year total.
- Mayor Porta asked about the meaning of "set the standard for the community" in regard to the narrative about Building Maintenance. Ms. Leidich explained that the Town should maintain its own buildings since it required private owners to do the same.
- Mayor Porta noted that the interior chimney in the Mill House Museum was deteriorating and would need to be inspected in the near future. Councilmember

Holloway said she would like this to be done soon to prevent the issue from becoming more expensive to resolve. Mayor Porta added that he could provide Ms. Leidich with a conservator report on the Mill House Museum.

- Vice Mayor Sivigny inquired about the Mill Street storage shed. Ms. Leidich responded that holiday decorations were stored in the shed. Councilmember Perkins said he would like the Town to find a way to make the structure look more attractive.
- Councilmember Holloway noted that the River Mill Park bathhouse repairs were listed in the proposed budget. Ms. Leidich responded that she would remove that cost from the budget, as the repairs had been completed.
- Councilmember Dawson noted that there was not much funding for recycling in the proposed budget. Councilmember Fithian said the plan from several years prior had been to place a recycling can next to every trash can in the Historic District. Mayor Porta asked how much the recycling cans cost. Ms. Leidich said she thought the price was approximately \$500.00 per can. Councilmember Perkins proposed purchasing a few recycling cans per year. Councilmember Holloway noted that recycling regulations had changed recently and the Town should determine the latest rules before investing heavily in recycling bins. Councilmember Fithian said she had seen many water bottles in the Town's trash cans, and that those were recyclable. Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to change this budget line to \$2,000.00, to cover the purchase of four recycling bins in FY 2021. Councilmember Dawson asked staff to ensure that any new trash bins were designed with covers.

Council had the following questions and comments about the Operating Budget:

- Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to include the updated projections in the General Fund Consolidated Table.
- Mayor Porta said he appreciated the narrative addressing the financial uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, and he would like to see that reflected in the projected revenues. He noted that Business, Professional and Occupational License (BPOL) tax revenues likely would decrease in FY 2021 due to decreased business in 2020. He asked Ms. Leidich to reduce the FY 2021 BPOL revenue projection by \$18,960, the equivalent of three months' worth. He also asked Ms. Dellinger to contact Prince William County regarding the Town's projected sales tax revenues.
- Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to determine whether the Town could further decrease its FY 2021 expenditures to compensate for the expected decreases in revenue. He noted that the current economic crisis would justify the transfer of reserve funds to the operating budget if necessary.
- Councilmember Holloway asked if any expense lines in the FY 2020 budget were expected to come in under budget. Mayor Porta responded that Facilities Maintenance and Special Events were likely to end up under budget.
- Mayor Porta said he was concerned about decreasing the FY 2021 budget for Facilities Maintenance. He explained that he had observed significant Town maintenance issues, such as overflowing trash bins, trash in the streets, damaged banner holders and debris in storm drains. Councilmember Perkins said he agreed that the Town required more consistent maintenance. Councilmember Holloway noted that she also had noticed maintenance issues, and that the trash bin problem seemed to be exacerbated by increased carry-out trash. Mayor Porta noted that he

was particularly concerned about maintenance issues because the cancelation of Town events presented an opportunity to catch up on Town maintenance. Ms. Leidich responded that she would address the issue with staff.

- Mayor Porta asked Ms. Leidich to make the requested adjustments to the proposed FY 2021 budget. He noted that Council could call a Special Meeting if necessary to ensure timely advertisement of the proposed budget.

b. Consideration/Action-Joining VRS

Councilmember Perkins said he thought the Town should join the Virginia Retirement System. He noted that current staff members would benefit from the system and that it was likely that future staff members would like to be VRS members. He added that he had considered the arguments against joining VRS, but he thought the arguments for joining were stronger.

Vice Mayor Sivigny said his main concern regarding VRS was the lack of flexibility. He added that current staff wanted to join and that it would help employee morale and retention.

Councilmember Dawson said he was concerned about the fact that the Town would not control the contribution rates, but he thought joining VRS would benefit the Town overall.

Councilmember Fithian said she strongly supported joining VRS due to the system's good reputation, low administrative overhead and general benefit to employees. She noted that the Town already had staff who were vested in the system and that joining would be good for retention and future recruitment.

Mayor Porta said he had previously posed the question of retention versus recruitment and wondered whether future staff would prefer a defined benefit plan. He added that some younger workers may think they could outperform VRS with defined contribution investments. He noted that most employees who seek a career in local government want to be VRS members, and that the Town primarily hired such employees. He also explained that he was concerned about the fact that the Town would be locked into the system permanently and that VRS would set the rates, but the Town could compensate for rate increases by lowering other personnel costs.

Noting that most council members seemed to be in favor of Joining VRS, Mayor Porta asked whether Council would prefer to join immediately or at the beginning of FY 2021. Ms. Leidich noted that joining May 1 would cost an additional \$2,800.58, as the Town's Simple IRA matches would be redirected to VRS for eligible employees.

Motion to authorize the Mayor to sign the resolution, as presented as Attachment 7 at the April 21, 2020 Budget Work Session, on behalf of the Council to formally enroll the Town into the Virginia Retirement System as a New VRS Employer:

Moved by Councilmember Holloway; seconded by Councilmember Perkins.

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

Nays: None.

Mayor Porta asked if Council wanted to discuss any additional topics.

Vice Mayor Sivigny asked if the Police Department was planning to switch to a different type of weapon. Chief Linn responded that the department planned to retain the same type of weapon system, and that they were simply planning to switch to a less expensive caliber.

Mayor Porta asked for Council's opinions on whether he should send out a public communication regarding the reopening of other locations. He explained that he had heard from several people about other jurisdictions/states reopening beaches and parks, and that he wanted to make it clear that Occoquan had not closed these types of amenities to the public in the first place. He also noted that some people seemed not to be aware of the latest local COVID-19 statistics. Councilmember Holloway responded that these were important points to make, and that the Town should continue its clear messaging with the public. Vice Mayor Sivigny agreed that such communications would be beneficial.

Ms. Little said she planned to post banners at the Town entrances to notify the public that various businesses were open for pickup, delivery and online ordering. Councilmember Holloway thanked Ms. Little for her work on the Occoquan Marketplace Facebook page.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 p.m.



Katy Nicholson
Town Clerk