



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL
Regular Meeting Minutes
Town Hall – 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
Tuesday, September 1, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Earnie Porta; Vice Mayor Jenn Loges; Councilmembers Krys Bienia, Cindy Fithian, Laurie Holloway and Eliot Perkins

Absent: None

Staff: Martin Crim, Town Attorney; Bruce Reese, Town Engineer; Kathleen Dellinger, Town Treasurer; Adam Linn, Chief of Police; Jason Forman, Town Sergeant; Julie Little, Events and Community Development Director; Katy Nicholson, Town Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Porta called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CITIZENS' TIME

Sarah Burzio, owner of Hitchcock Paper Co. and treasurer of the Occoquan Merchants' Guild, said many members of the Guild were concerned about parking in Town for businesses and customers. She noted that the Guild had proposed the idea of restricting overnight parking to prevent people from parking broken-down vehicles in Town for long periods of time. Ms. Burzio also asked if another ATM would be installed in Town, as BB&T recently had removed its ATM.

Nathalie Omar, owner of So Bohemian, also expressed her concerns about the lack of parking in Town, as her customers often had trouble finding spaces. She asked if there was any protocol for business owners and employees taking up parking spaces.

Mayor Porta responded that Council would discuss parking later in the meeting. He said the Town would inquire with its three banking institutions, but he was skeptical that any bank would install a new ATM because people had been using significantly less cash lately. Chief Linn confirmed that the VFW had an ATM. Ms. Burzio noted that Good Hair Day also had an ATM, but they had restricted public access due to the pandemic.

Mayor Porta asked if Chief Linn had anything to say about broken-down vehicles being left in Town. Chief Linn explained that the Town had the authority to remove broken-down vehicles or those with parking violations, but the Town could not remove vehicles without violations.

Mayor Porta asked Mr. Crim if the Town had the authority to restrict overnight parking in the parking lot under the Route 123 bridge. Mr. Crim responded that the lot was subject to the Town's lease agreement with the Virginia Department of Transportation, and the Town had the authority to implement timed parking on the streets.

Councilmember Holloway asked about the Town's Parking Ordinance that had been adopted on March 4. Chief Linn responded that the ordinance only gave the Town the authority to tow vehicles for violations, and that the police had eased up on enforcement during the pandemic.

Councilmember Perkins noted that customers who could not find parking would do business elsewhere, and that a timed parking policy would help to maintain a flow of people going in and out of businesses.

Mayor Porta asked if the Town could identify additional parking and reserve those spaces at no cost for employees of Town businesses, would the employees park there? Ms. Burzio responded that the Guild had discussed the idea of purchasing reserved parking for employees, so she thought businesses would be interested in free reserved parking. Ms. Omar and Ms. Little agreed that such an option could be popular.

Councilmember Fithian noted that there would be fewer spaces available under the Route 123 bridge when the kayak ramp opened. Mayor Porta responded that most kayakers would need to arrive early to find a parking space, and that they likely would either leave or return from the river to patronize Town businesses by the time most businesses opened. Councilmember Perkins said he had observed more people kayaking and paddle boarding on the river than in previous years.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. July 7, 2020 Regular Business Meeting Minutes

Moved by Councilmember Perkins; seconded by Vice Mayor Loges.

Motion **passed** unanimously by voice vote.

b. July 15, 2020 Special Meeting Minutes

Moved by Councilmember Fithian; seconded by Councilmember Perkins.

Motion **passed** unanimously by voice vote.

c. July 21, 2020 Work Session Minutes

Moved by Vice Mayor Loges; seconded by Councilmember Bienia.

Motion **passed** unanimously by voice vote.

2. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Porta explained that he would combine this report with the Town Manager's Report. He reported on the following:

- A public meeting for the proposed Mill at Occoquan development was scheduled for September 23, during which the developer would present the latest project renderings. Mayor Porta noted that the public was being encouraged to participate through Zoom due to limited space in Town Hall during the pandemic.
- The Prince William Trails and Streams Coalition had scheduled a Tanyard Hill Park Trail work day for September 26, in conjunction with National Public Lands Day. Mayor Porta added that he would be putting out a call for volunteers at a later date.
- Mayor Porta said he had met with the incoming Town Manager and that regular Town Hall operating hours would resume starting October 1.
- Mayor Porta noted that he had updated the Town Code page on the website to better differentiate between the old and current versions.

- Mayor Porta and Ms. Little had placed information on the Town website regarding residents' most frequent questions and concerns. The first two topics included drainage issues from 430 Mill Street and development delays and refuse issues on Center Lane between Union Street and Ellicott Street.
- The Tourist Information Center sign had been removed and the curbs had been painted. Mayor Porta said the County planned to terminate its lease by September 30.
- Mayor Porta reported that the Town was investigating long-term solutions for the water flow from 430 Mill Street, including the idea of directing the water into storm drains.
- A state special session had identified a \$2.7 billion shortfall, which potentially could affect state stormwater funds that the Town had been counting on to address its stormwater issues.
- The BB&T ATM and street light had been removed. Mayor Porta noted that Chief Linn had determined the lighting in the area was adequate without the additional street light, which was an eyesore.
- Mayor Porta said he had sent a request for proposals to the Town's three banking institutions, as the Town was working to consolidate its banking relationships to better manage transfers and cash flow.
- The General Assembly had passed legislation extending site plans through July 2022.
- The Town would receive an additional \$94,380.00 in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding from Prince William County on September 8.
- Town staff planned to change its bi-weekly payroll system to a semi-monthly system.
- Mayor Porta said he and councilmembers Fithian and Holloway had attended the screening of *Good Trouble* in River Mill Park on August 30. Prince William County Supervisor Kenny Boddy's office had collaborated with the Town to host the event.

Mayor Porta requested unanimous consent to add to the agenda a motion to appoint the Town's Assistant Town Engineer, Subdivision Agent and Assistant Subdivision Agent. No objections.

Motion to appoint Sara Fila as Assistant Town Engineer, Bruce Reese as Subdivision Agent, and Sara Fila as Assistant Subdivision Agent.

Moved by Councilmember Fithian; seconded by Councilmember Perkins.

Motion **passed** unanimously by voice vote.

3. COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS

Councilmember Fithian reported that she had attended the screening of *Good Trouble* on August 30. She thanked Ms. Little and the Police Department for their contributions to the event. Mayor Porta noted that Supervisor Boddy's office had set aside a number of tickets for Town residents and that all tickets for the free event had been reserved in advance. He added that fewer than 100 people had attended and that he wondered whether a modest ticket fee would have prevented people from reserving tickets and not attending. Councilmember Fithian agreed, adding that the Town could charge \$5.00 per ticket or more for future events.

Councilmember Holloway reported that Prince William County was scheduled to conduct its final inspection of the Kayak Ramp the following day, and that the Town could schedule the opening of the Kayak Ramp if no issues were identified during the inspection. She recommended staffing the

ramp during the weekends initially, particularly to ensure proper use of the handicapped ramp. Mayor Porta responded that he would put out a call for volunteers. Councilmembers Holloway and Fithian said they would be happy to help staff the ramp.

Councilmember Fithian asked whether there had been any progress on welcome signage for the kayak ramp. She noted that the “Free Parking” sign planned for the corner of Washington and Mill streets could include a reference to the Kayak Ramp. Mayor Porta asked Chief Linn to develop a recommendation for the signage. Councilmember Fithian offered to help with this. Councilmember Holloway recommended posting “Leave No Trace” signage as well.

Mayor Porta noted that the police would need to ensure that people did not fish from the Kayak Ramp. Councilmember Fithian asked whether people could be cited for fishing from the ramp. Mr. Crim responded yes, assuming that the Town posted appropriate signage. Chief Linn said he had not encountered many people fishing from that area recently, but he had noticed people fishing from the private property nearby. Mr. Crim responded that the property owner could authorize police to ban trespassers. Mayor Porta asked whether the Town would be able to keep the fines. Mr. Crim responded yes. Councilmember Holloway noted that people also may try to launch kayaks from private property when the ramp was crowded. Vice Mayor Loges said the property owner should ensure that “no trespassing” signage was posted near the water.

Councilmember Fithian asked if there were still plans to install a kayak rack. Councilmember Holloway responded yes. Sergeant Forman said he would provide Council with information about rack options at the next work session.

Councilmembers Fithian and Holloway noted that they would like to receive advance notification of major events, as they had not been notified about the Mill at Occoquan public meeting. Mayor Porta apologized for the oversight, explaining that in the rush to include the information in the newsletter, he had not realized that all of the councilmembers had not been notified.

Vice Mayor Loges reported that she had met with staff regarding AV system problems that had come to a head during the pandemic. She noted that the Town could use CARES Act funding to make it easier for Council and/or the public to attend meetings virtually. She said she had met with a company from Manassas that had helped her compile a “wish list” of Town AV needs, and that she had asked the company to keep the system simple so anyone could use it. She said the company had submitted a quote for the equipment, and that two main factors were affecting the price: pandemic-related supply disruptions and the commercial-grade requirement. She asked Council to review the price quote, \$12,775.00, and determine whether all of the equipment listed would be necessary. She noted that the company could install the system within 30 days.

Councilmember Fithian thanked Vice Mayor Loges for her work. She asked if the proposed equipment would allow the Town to livestream meetings for the public. Vice Mayor Loges responded yes, adding that the cities of Alexandria and Manassas appeared to use the same system. Mayor Porta asked Mr. Crim whether any of his other clients used similar systems. Mr. Crim responded that the Town of Haymarket broadcast its meetings on its website.

Councilmember Perkins asked if there was any equipment listed in the proposal that would not be eligible for CARES Act funding. Vice Mayor Loges said she was not sure about the second monitor, but she thought it was important for those in the audience to be able to see presentation materials and remote participants. Councilmember Perkins agreed, noting that he thought the Town should seek clarification from Prince William County regarding eligible expenses.

Mayor Porta asked whether Mr. Crim could provide any insight into this. Mr. Crim responded that the law required that everyone be able to hear the voices of those participating remotely, and that he would like to check with Prince William County to find out which expenses were eligible for CARES Act funding. Mayor Porta said he would start a conversation with the County.

Councilmember Holloway said she thought the additional monitor was important. She asked whether the Town's internet connection was strong enough to support the proposed equipment. Chief Linn responded that it was not, but staff was working with Comcast to improve the connection. Town resident Walt Seiberling noted that it was useful for the audience to be able to see presentation materials at Prince William Board of County Supervisors meetings, and that this technology would be useful for the Town.

4. STAFF REPORTS

a. Town Attorney

Mr. Crim said he had researched the issue of people jumping into the river, and that he had drafted an ordinance that could be added to a future meeting agenda. He noted that the most effective means of discouraging this behavior would be engineering, followed by education, and finally enforcement.

Mayor Porta asked Mr. Crim to distribute the ordinance at the next meeting. He asked whether a public hearing would be necessary. Mr. Crim responded no, but the ordinance would need to be posted publicly at least 30 days prior to enforcement.

b. Town Engineer

The meeting agenda included a written report from the Town Engineer.

Mr. Reese reported that he was proposing a parking striping survey and plan, at costs of approximately \$2,500.00 and \$800.00 respectively. He added that there was no rush, but he wanted to ensure that the plan was complete before the Town's streets were repaved. Mayor Porta agreed that this plan should be coordinated with the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) 2021 paving schedule, as the Town had missed the 2020 schedule. He asked Mr. Reese to submit a formal proposal for Council's consideration. Vice Mayor Loges noted that such a plan could help to resolve some issues, such as people driving the wrong way on one-way streets.

Mr. Reese noted that he had met with VDOT regarding flooding from Boundary Branch crossing Poplar Lane. He added that VDOT personnel had suggested asking George Mason University's senior design class to work on the issue, and that his firm would donate the survey work. He said he hoped to start the survey work the following week, as letters already had been sent to residents in the affected area.

Mr. Reese reported a stop work order at 430 Mill Street had been lifted and that staff continued to monitor the site on a regular basis. He added that staff was working to direct the water flow underground and into a storm drain. Councilmember Fithian asked if it had been determined where the water was coming from. Mr. Reese responded that the answer would require extensive access to both properties in the location, and that staff had not been granted such access. Mayor Porta noted that the site had always been wet, but it had been producing more water recently.

Mr. Reese reported that he had sent registered letters and posted an enforcement notice at 104 West Locust Street. He added that if the Town did not receive a response, staff could pursue the matter legally. Councilmember Perkins asked what the Town could do about the situation. Mr. Reese responded that 10 days after notification, the Town would remove the ladder from the front of the residence. Councilmember Perkins asked what could be done about the other issues if the Town could not get in touch with the property owner. Mr. Crim responded that the Building Official could board up the windows and if the utilities were turned off, the Town could secure the building as an abandoned building. He added that the Town would need to proceed carefully, as this was private property. Mayor Porta noted that the Town would need to provide proper notice before boarding up the windows. He added that the property owner was current on property taxes, HOA dues and utilities. He noted that if the owner paid for the Town's work to secure the building, the Town could not take further action. Councilmember Fithian asked whether anyone had ensured that the owner was alive. Councilmember Perkins said he thought there was likely to be extensive damage to the property due to the absence of windows. He asked if the Town could replace the windows, as boarding the windows would be unsightly. Mr. Crim responded that the Town would need to notify the owner of the cost up front.

Mr. Reese reported that the Rivertown Overlook development was experiencing a problem with weed overgrowth and that Town staff would ensure that the owner trimmed the weeds. Mayor Porta responded that Town staff planned to begin cutting the weeds and charging the cost to the owner because it took too long to contact the owner each time the weeds grew too high. Mr. Crim noted that this would be permissible if the weeds grew to more than 12 inches tall. Councilmember Holloway noted that the weeds were an eyesore and that the Town should keep them trimmed.

Mr. Reese reported that there were visible trash containers at the Berrywood development, and that the Zoning Administrator would cite any problems she saw when she visited Town for other zoning issues. Mayor Porta said that the prior Zoning Administrator had noted the absence of a trash enclosure on the property. Mr. Reese responded that staff was just beginning to investigate the situation. Mayor Porta noted that the development no longer had an HOA and that property owners might not have been aware of the problem, as previous notices had been sent to the defunct HOA.

Mr. Reese reported that in regard to 119 Washington Street, the grass around the residence had been cut, and other nearby properties were overgrown. He explained that the Zoning Administrator would need to cite any additional properties that were in violation. He added that some of the issue may have been related to the VDOT right-of-way and that the Zoning Administrator would determine whether there was a violation of the Town Code. Mayor Porta noted that vines were growing on the residence at 119 Washington Street. Mr. Reese suggested that the Town bring the Building Official into the discussion.

Vice Mayor Loges asked whether any enforcement had been conducted regarding the string lights at Third Base Pizza. Mayor Porta responded that this issue related to a pending Zoning Ordinance change.

c. Building Official

The meeting agenda included a written report from the Building Official.

Mayor Porta asked Council to send any questions regarding this report to him and he would contact Prince William County. He added that he had received some complaints about inconsistencies in the Prince William County Building Department's requirements.

d. Zoning Administrator

The meeting agenda included a written report from the Zoning Administrator.

No further discussion.

e. Town Treasurer

The meeting agenda included a written report from the Town Treasurer.

Mayor Porta noted that the surplus shown on the profit/loss statement was due to the inclusion of CARES Act funds, which would be used to reimburse some of the Town's COVID-19-related expenses. He asked Ms. Dellinger whether the \$54,552.00 deficit reflected that fact that the Town had not been reimbursed for some of its Kayak Ramp expenses. Ms. Dellinger responded yes, adding that approximately \$13,000.00 of the Kayak Ramp expenses were pending payment. She noted that the expenses would need to be submitted for reimbursement by September 17 to avoid a delay in the processing of the reimbursements. Mayor Porta responded that he expected the Town would be able to submit the expenses by September 17.

Mayor Porta asked about the tax delinquencies for Riverside Coffee & Ice Cream and Ballywhack Inc. Mr. Crim responded that if the Town could show that a business had willfully failed to pay a tax that it was required to collect from customers, the business could be charged criminally. He added that the normal enforcement method would be to garnish the businesses' bank accounts. Mayor Porta said he would follow up with Mr. Crim about the delinquent businesses.

Ms. Dellinger noted that she would be adding five real estate tax delinquencies to her report if they were not paid by the next meeting. Ms. Dellinger also noted that the Town expected to receive four service revenue payments from the prior fiscal year.

Ms. Dellinger explained that she was hoping to convert the Town's payroll to a semi-monthly system, to better match the Virginia Retirement System's payment system. Mayor Porta responded that this did not require Council approval, so Ms. Dellinger should proceed with the plan. Ms. Dellinger noted that she would like to have a new payroll system in place by October 1. Mayor Porta responded that he had inquired with the Town's banking institutions regarding payroll systems, but he did not think it would be possible to implement a new system by October 1.

j. Boards and Commissions

Architectural Review Board (ARB) Chair Brenda Seefeldt reported that the ARB had approved one Application for Exterior Elevations at its August meeting. She added that the ARB was still in need of a Council representative. Mayor Porta responded that he would follow up on this.

Ms. Seefeldt noted that the Town was experiencing a problem with off-premises A-frame signs, as well as those that had been placed in rights-of-way. Mayor Porta responded that he had moved some of these signs and notified the business owners that they were not permitted to place them in the rights-of-way.

Ms. Seefeldt also stated that she had noticed an increase in unapproved banners. She noted that several businesses were using banners as permanent signs and that the Town needed to enforce these sign violations. Mayor Porta responded that the Town website included a form for complaints, but the Town had not received any complaints in regard to signage. He asked Ms. Seefeldt to send him a list of the issues so he could write letters to the business owners.

Councilmember Holloway noted that the former Town Manager had worked on this issue. She said she had spoken with the owner of Third Base to let them know that their newest banners were not allowed. She added that some business owners found it worthwhile to violate the Sign Ordinance due to the lack of enforcement. Mayor Porta responded that even when the ordinance was enforced, the penalty was not always significant enough to discourage violations. He added that the Town would try to work with the business owners to ensure that they were in compliance.

Vice Mayor Loges asked whether the Town was required to issue business licenses to businesses that were in violation of the Sign Ordinance. Mr. Crim responded that the Town's business license system was part of the Town's business tax system, and that withholding it was not an effective enforcement method.

Mayor Porta asked whether the Town had the authority to remove illegal signs. Mr. Crim responded that the Town could remove signs that posed immediate health or safety issues.

Councilmember Perkins asked if Mr. Crim knew of other jurisdictions with more effective enforcement tools. Mr. Crim responded that he was not aware of any. He added that the Town needed to adopt a set of rules that would allow businesses to advertise themselves while maintaining the Town's aesthetics. Ms. Seefeldt suggested that the Town make an effort to re-educate business owners, as many new businesses had opened in recent years.

Vice Mayor Loges asked about "store closing" signs. Mr. Crim responded that it was a Class 1 misdemeanor to post "going out of business sale" signs without a permit. Mayor Porta said he would write letters to the businesses in violation of the law.

Vice Mayor Loges noted that the impending adoption of the Town's new Sign Ordinance would present an opportunity to educate the business owners. She added that the Town could write a letter to all of its businesses informing them of the new regulations.

f. Chief of Police

The meeting agenda included a written report from the Chief of Police.

Chief Linn reported that residents on Tanyard Hill Road had contacted him with concerns about traffic speed and safety. He noted that they had proposed installing a three-way stop at the intersection of Tanyard Hill Road, Union Street and Ellicott Street, and he wanted to find out how Council felt about pursuing that option with the Virginia Department of

Transportation (VDOT). Mayor Porta responded that residents in that area seemed to be OK with the idea, but the Town would need to consider that it would inconvenience cut-through commuters and Town residents entering or leaving Town via Union Street.

Councilmember Perkins asked Chief Linn whether he thought this would be an effective option. Chief Linn responded that it would require an education period to notify drivers of the proposed stop signs, but something needed to be done about speeding in that area.

Vice Mayor Loges asked whether a speed hump would help. Mayor Porta responded that VDOT would not install speed humps or rumble strips in that location.

Councilmember Perkins asked if there were any potential issues with this plan. Chief Linn responded that some residents would be upset about needing to stop at the intersection. He also noted that the narrowness of Tanyard Hill Road could pose enforcement challenges.

Councilmember Holloway asked if Chief Linn anticipated any problems with collisions since some drivers were accustomed to accelerating hard on the hill. Chief Linn responded that this could be an issue and an education period would be necessary. Mayor Porta asked whether Council had any objections to pursuing this plan with VDOT. No objections.

Chief Linn explained that the Police Department was moving forward with a soft accreditation process. Mr. Crim noted that the Middleburg Police Department had found that it did not deal with enough crime to complete the accreditation process, and that Occoquan may run into the same issue. Chief Linn responded that he was not sure whether the Town would proceed with the full accreditation process, but he wanted to ensure that his department was meeting the Virginia accreditation standards and best practices.

Chief Linn noted that the Police Department was distributing cards with the contact information for local law enforcement and emergency services departments.

Chief Linn reported that the Prince William County Police Department was transitioning to encrypted radios. He noted that half of the Town's police radios were not encrypted and would no longer be compatible with those of the Prince William County Police Department. Councilmember Perkins asked what the Town could do about this. Chief Linn responded that he would look into borrowing radios until the Town was able to purchase additional encrypted ones.

Chief Linn noted that maintenance staff had installed planters near the Kayak Ramp, and that a throw ring was being installed on the ramp.

Vice Mayor Loges noted that Police Department volunteer hours had decreased, and asked what was a normal amount of volunteer time for the department. Chief Linn responded that volunteer hours were returning to normal, as some officers had extra spare time in previous months due to the pandemic. Councilmember Perkins said he thought the number of volunteer hours reported in previous months had been impossible to maintain, and he thanked the Police Department for their volunteer work.

g. Public Works

The meeting agenda included a written report from the Public Works Department.

Sergeant Forman reported that it had been difficult to obtain replacement parts for the Town's gaslights, and the frequent replacement of mantles had become expensive. He also noted that the Fire Department had turned off some of the extinguished lamps due to concerns from the public about the smell of gas. He explained that staff had discussed replacing the mantles with burner systems, and suggested that the Town test a few of the lower-priced burners.

Councilmember Perkins asked about the cost of the proposed burners relative to the cost of the mantles. Sergeant Forman responded that he did not anticipate an increase in gas usage. Mayor Porta said the Town was spending about \$300.00 per month for mantles and that the cost of the proposed burners would be \$38.00 per head, which would save money.

Councilmember Fithian asked if the gaslights would burn all day. Sergeant Forman responded yes. Councilmember Fithian noted that staff had researched switching to LED lighting during her first term. She added that the proposed burners would be a good solution until the Town could switch to LED lighting. Mayor Porta noted that natural gas prices had decreased since staff had last researched LED lighting, so the conversion might no longer make financial sense.

Councilmember Fithian noted that the lights in Mamie Davis Park had been on all day lately. Sergeant Forman responded that staff had recently replaced the photo cells in those lights and that they planned to do the same for the lights on the building in front of River Mill Park. Councilmember Perkins said that changing the gaslight mantles to burner systems would not preclude the Town from future lighting conversions, but it would help to save money right away.

Councilmember Fithian asked whether lighting would be installed at the Kayak Ramp. Mayor porta responded that the Town could look into this option.

Mayor Porta asked if Council had any objections to staff testing a few of the proposed gaslight heads. No objections.

Councilmember Holloway thanked Sergeant Forman for his help with the Kayak Ramp project.

h. Events and Community Development Director

The meeting agenda included a written report from the Events and Community Development Director.

Ms. Little reported that she was developing ideas for events that would generate revenue without compromising safety. She added that she was looking forward to Trivia Night.

Ms. Little noted that the Town had sponsored two events that brought approximately 200 people to River Mill Park. She asked Council to revisit the decision to prohibit private bookings in the park, as she saw the potential for a "Rent Our Parks" campaign.

Mayor Porta asked if the Town could reserve areas of River Mill Park for private events. Ms. Little responded yes. Council agreed that Ms. Little should proceed with this plan.

Ms. Little noted that the Town's tagline "Authentic Occoquan" did not include a call to action. She asked what Council thought of using "Experience Authentic Occoquan" instead. Councilmember Bienia noted that "Experience Authentic Occoquan" was wordy but she liked the intent. Mayor Porta confirmed that the Town would retain the "Authentic Occoquan" tagline, but stamp the word "Experience" in front of it. Ms. Little responded that this was her intent, and that she could use other calls to action such as "Discover." Councilmember Perkins said he thought this would be OK. Vice Mayor Loges said she preferred "Experience Occoquan" but she was OK with Ms. Little's proposal.

Councilmember Holloway said she did not think any additional words should be added to the Town's logo, as the logo was intended to be used as-is. She added that Ms. Little's proposed wording could be used as a tagline separate from the logo.

Vice Mayor Loges noted that a few residents did not like the term "Authentic" in the logo. She said she wanted to make it clear that the Town was not changing its logo, but enhancements of the messaging were OK.

Ms. Little reported that she had been looking into a walking tour smartphone application called Traipse. She suggested that the Town consider purchasing the service with funding that had been freed up by event shuttle cancelations. Councilmember Perkins asked who would compile the information for the app. Ms. Little responded that it would be a team effort and that the company already was working with the towns of Staunton, Winchester and Fredericksburg.

Councilmember Perkins asked Ms. Little why she thought Traipse would be a good option for the Town. Ms. Little responded that she thought the app would be a good business initiative to help support the Town's merchants. She added that it would be another way to engage visitors while the Mill House Museum was closed.

Councilmember Bienia asked if Ms. Little had any information about expected usage. Ms. Little responded that usage would depend on the Town's marketing of the app. Councilmember Bienia asked if there were any other towns that might have usage data. Ms. Little said she would look into this. Councilmember Bienia asked if high usage of the app could lead to the types of crowding issues posed by Pokémon Go. Ms. Mayor Porta responded that Traipse would encourage people to do business in Town, unlike Pokémon Go.

Councilmember Fithian said she thought the idea was interesting and might encourage visitors to shop in Town. She asked whether the Town would sell alcohol at Trivia Night. Ms. Little responded yes.

Councilmember Holloway said she had developed a similar app in Dallas and that this type of app was only effective if incentives were offered during the walking tour. She added that it could be a fun activity targeted to the Town and that success would depend on the creativity of the content.

Mayor Porta said he would like to see data from other towns like Fredericksburg and that staff could talk to other towns and cities to gather anecdotal information. Councilmember Holloway said she thought the app would be a good enticement for visitors, depending on the businesses' engagement level.

Councilmember Bienia asked if there were any other companies the Town could consider. Councilmember Holloway said these types of apps had been an interesting concept when they first came on the scene, but they never found a foothold in larger cities. She added that perhaps there was more of a place for such apps in smaller towns. Councilmember Fithian said she thought the response might be stronger during the pandemic because people were looking for things to do.

Vice Mayor Loges noted that the City of Winchester had been using the app since 2018. Mayor Porta asked Ms. Little to gather more information for Council's consideration.

9. REGULAR BUSINESS

e. Discussion of Draft Noise Ordinance and Draft Exhaust System Ordinance

Vice Mayor Loges explained that at its last meeting, the Planning Commission had discussed the Noise Ordinance and Prince William County's Exhaust System Policy prohibiting modified mufflers. Mayor Porta noted that these ordinances did not require public hearings but Mr. Crim had recommended that Council take the time to thoroughly discuss them prior to adoption.

Councilmember Fithian asked whether the Town would be using a decibel system. Vice Mayor Loges responded that the first version of the draft Noise Ordinance used a decibel system but feedback from the Mr. Crim and Chief Linn had led to the conclusion that a decibel system would not work for the Town. She noted that the draft Noise Ordinance employed a "plainly audible" standard.

Councilmember Holloway thanked Vice Mayor Loges for her work on the Noise Ordinance. She asked whether Prince William County was enforcing its own Exhaust System Policy, as she had noticed a lot of loud cars in the County. Chief Linn responded that Prince William County was not enforcing its Exhaust System Policy and that he had been told the County generally did not need to enforce its Noise Ordinance. He added that the Town was experiencing noise problems that were becoming harassment, so the Town would need to enforce its own ordinance.

Councilmember Holloway said she often could hear loud cars leaving the parking lot under the Route 123 bridge and was wondering if this would be enforced. Chief Linn responded that the Police Department could set up directed enforcement for such situations.

Councilmember Perkins noted that the Town of Leesburg had adopted a similar policy requiring annual permits for amplified music and it had worked out well. He added that a permit system would provide an opportunity for education and accountability.

Councilmember Bienia said she did not see any problems with the proposed ordinances but she did not know how the Town could enforce the Exhaust System Ordinance.

Mayor Porta noted that the "plainly audible" standard seemed difficult to enforce. He added that people would experience sounds differently depending on their location, such as people in more elevated areas hearing more sound. Mr. Crim responded that the Town needed to determine what it was trying to accomplish with its Noise Ordinance. Councilmember Perkins said the ordinances would provide law enforcement with the ability to enforce noise issues if someone was causing a problem.

Councilmember Holloway asked how the police would handle enforcement for residents with modified exhaust systems. Chief Linn responded that the owners would need to remove the modified systems or they would continue to receive tickets. Mr. Crim noted that there would not be a legal problem with notifying residents that their vehicles were illegal under a new ordinance. Mayor Porta asked for an estimate of how many resident vehicles would be illegal under the Exhaust System Ordinance. Chief Linn responded fewer than 12.

Mayor Porta asked Council to be prepared to vote on the proposed ordinances at the next meeting.

d. Proposal for Use of Tourist Information Center Building

Mayor Porta noted that Ms. Little had submitted a proposal to Council for a use for the Tourist Information Center, which was being vacated by the Prince William County Visitor Center.

Councilmember Perkins said he liked Ms. Little's idea because it would help the Town promote itself. He noted that he was concerned about the cost and wanted to be sure that the proposed plan would generate enough revenue to be worth the effort.

Vice Mayor Loges said she thought three businesses had expressed interest in renting the property. Mayor Porta responded that there had been some interest, but the Town had not actually received any proposals.

Vice Mayor Loges said she shared Councilmember Perkins' cost concerns, and she also was unsure about the idea of spreading out staff to an additional facility. She also said she was wary of allowing the Town to cross the line into a commercial effort that might compete with other businesses. She noted that the Town could use the space as an incubator for new businesses, providing reduced rent in exchange for public access to the restrooms. Mayor Porta responded that the proposed business was intended to sell products that were not sold by Town merchants. Councilmember Perkins noted that there were not many Occoquan-branded products sold in Town but he understood Vice Mayor Loges' philosophical argument.

Councilmember Holloway recused herself from the discussion.

Councilmember Fithian said she found the proposal interesting and she thought it would be nice to make more Occoquan-branded items available. She added that she was conflicted about the idea due to cost concerns in light of the cancellation of both 2020 Craft Shows. Councilmember Bienia said she liked the idea of the proposal, but she also was concerned about the idea of the Town government launching a business.

Mayor Porta explained that the idea was to have the building operate like a tourist information center, but he understood the concerns about separating government from private industry and he also was concerned about costs. He noted that the Mill House Museum often received requests for Occoquan-branded items like T-shirts, and that this had been a lost opportunity for the Town.

Councilmember Perkins said he would like to hear more from Ms. Little. Ms. Little said she thought the proposal presented an opportunity for the Town, but she knew there would be a cost involved. She added that she could order a small amount of merchandise initially to gauge interest.

Mayor Porta asked Council whether they wanted to instruct Ms. Little to move forward with her proposal, or whether the Town should issue a request for proposals. Vice Mayor Loges responded that the Town did not need a storefront to sell Occoquan-branded merchandise, as such items could be sold online. She added that the building was an asset and the Town needed money. She said she would like the Town to put out a request for proposals, as she did not think it was the right time to pursue Ms. Little's proposal.

Councilmember Fithian said she would like more time to consider the idea. Councilmember Bienia said she was in favor of pursuing rental opportunities but if those did not work out, she would like to explore Ms. Little's proposal.

Councilmember Perkins said he would eventually like to see a more fleshed-out proposal, but he would like to rent out the space for the time being. Mayor Porta responded that the Town would solicit bids from the business community and Ms. Little could continue to work on her idea.

Councilmember Perkins said he recognized that it was a difficult time and that Ms. Little was trying to do something positive for the Town. He added that he thought her idea might work in the future.

c. County Tourist Information Center Kiosk

Mayor Porta noted that the agreement included revisions from Mr. Crim, to which the Prince William County Attorney had agreed.

Motion to authorize the Mayor to execute a memorandum of agreement with Prince William County regarding the CTIC kiosk.

Moved by Councilmember Holloway; seconded by Councilmember Perkins.

Motion **passed** unanimously by voice vote.

a. Request to Accept DMV-National Highway Safety Administration Highway Safety Grant

Motion to accept the grant funds from the DMV pass-through grants from the National Highway Safety Traffic Safety Administration and approve the soft match of up to \$6,427.50.

Moved by Councilmember Perkins; seconded by Vice Mayor Loges.

Motion **passed** unanimously by voice vote.

b. Discussion of CARES Act Funding

Chief Linn explained that he had provided Council with a list of ideas for purchases that could be charged to the CARES Act grant.

He noted that Council might want to use town-issued tablets to prevent their personal devices from being subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Mayor Porta explained that Council's personal information was not subject to FOIA, but this would help to limit the use of personal devices for Town business. Councilmember Perkins noted that if the Town was going to purchase tablets, he would prefer that they be of a higher quality.

Councilmember Holloway asked where the proposed jersey barriers would be placed. Chief Linn explained that he was recommending the purchase of portable plastic barriers. Mayor Porta asked where they would be stored. Chief Linn responded that they would be stored in the fenced-off area next to the Police Station.

Vice Mayor Loges said she was in favor of all of the proposed purchases except for the tablets and microphones.

Motion to authorize Town staff to purchase the listed items in response to COVID-19 utilizing CARES Act funding in an amount not to exceed \$10,000, subject to further discussion about tablets and microphones.

Moved by Councilmember Fithian; seconded by Councilmember Bienia.

Motion **passed** unanimously by voice vote.

5. STAFF REPORTS

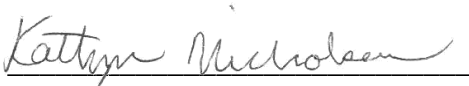
j. Boards and Commissions

Councilmember Perkins reported that the Planning Commission had:

- Approved a boundary line adjustment for 127 Washington Street/114 Commerce Street.
- Authorized a public hearing for the revised Sign Ordinance.
- Recommended Council's adoption of the revised Noise and Exhaust System ordinances.
- Discussed plans for the upcoming Mill at Occoquan public meeting on September 23, 2020.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.



Katy Nicholson
Town Clerk