



The following minutes are a summary of items on the agenda. This meeting may be viewed in its entirety by accessing the video of the same date online via the Town's website at www.frontroyalva.com for a limited time.

Roll Call by Clerk of Council

PRESENT: Mayor Lori A. Cockrell
Vice Mayor R. Wayne Sealock
Councilman Joshua L. Ingram
Councilwoman Amber F. Morris
Councilman H. Bruce Rappaport
Councilwoman Melissa DeDomenico-Payne
Councilman Glenn E. Wood

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Manager Joseph E. Waltz
Town Attorney George M. Sonnett, Jr.
Clerk of Council Tina L. Presley
Various members of the staff and public

Councilwoman DeDomenico-Payne moved seconded by Councilwoman Morris that Council add a Closed Meeting as #5 to the agenda pertaining to the conditional vacation and sale of a portion of N. Royal Avenue and an unimproved alleyway between N. Royal Avenue and Virginia Avenue.

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Sealock, Ingram, Morris, Rappaport, DeDomenico-Payne, Wood

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

STARS (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) Study Update from VDOT – Adam Campbell, VDOT's Project Manager gave a presentation "STARS US 240/522 Corridor Improvement Study Front Royal/Warren County" via ZOOM. The STARS Program is to develop innovative transportation solutions to relieve congestions bottlenecks and solve critical traffic and safety challenges. He advised that the study was a preliminary recommendation for the Rt. 522/340 N Corridor, noting that the area was mostly in Warren County but there was some Town property it affected. He noted that Warren County submitted three (3) SMART SCALE applications in the last three weeks. He began with the Study Corridor Overview stating that the general land use was extensive commercial development with expansive surface parking lots north of I-66. The Park & Ride and quarry had minimal development south of I-66. He continued that Winchester Road was the primary road into the corridor with relatively high truck volume. He stated that the concerns in this area were widespread crashes throughout the corridor and traffic congestion.

He reviewed the US 340/522 & Guard Hill Road/Riverton Road Improvements recommending channelizing the eastbound left turn lane, so it formed a right angle with US 340/522, relocating the eastbound and westbound stop bars to decrease crossing distance, channelizing the southbound right turn lane with traffic island and signalize the intersection. He explained that Guard Hill Road was a low crash area but highest traffic volume that was not interstate traffic. He advised that a conventional signal was the best alternative to improve the approach to Guard Hill Road. Mayor Cockrell questioned when these improvements could happen. Mr. Campbell advised that if Warren County was successful in receiving the funding it could begin 2028.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the US 340/522 at McDonald's/Exxon Driveway noting that this was an unsignalized intersection thus creating a higher crash area. The recommendation was to reduce conflict points by prohibiting the eastbound left out of the driveway, redirect to the southbound U-turn at US 340/522 &



Riverton Road signal and utilize existing southbound left lane for U-turns as well as installing a two-phase signal. Councilman Rappaport questioned whether the proposal was to add an additional right lane into the McDonalds. Mr. Campbell advised that was correct noting the modification of the I-66 eastbound ramp by adding a third northbound thru lane by extending the westbound on-ramp run lane through the eastbound ramp signal, reconstructing the eastbound on-ramp right turn lane, installing a new eastbound off-ramp configuration (1 left 1 left/thru, 2 right), converting free-flow eastbound right to signal control and removing the weave between I-66 eastbound ramps and McDonald's driveway; and maintaining the southbound right turn lane into the driveway.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the US 340/522 at the I-66 Westbound Ramps recommending converting the signalized dual right turn to a single lane free right turn. He noted that this area was the highest crash frequency location in the corridor at 33 crashes since 2015. Councilman Rappaport voiced concern over the traffic getting to Target from the westbound ramp. It was confirmed that the crashes were occurring on the ramp not on Rt 522.

Mr. Campbell reviewed the US 340/522 at Crooked Run Boulevard/Country Club Road recommending three alternatives to improve the traffic signal (Thru-Cut, Partial Bowtie and Full Bowtie). He advised that this intersection had the most volume and most overall crashes and hoped to reduce the potential for conflict points. He reviewed all three alternatives. Vice Mayor Sealock voiced concern that there would be more accidents if forced to go left or right and suggested waiting for feedback from the upcoming surveys. It was confirmed that data was being used for accidents and fatalities from 2015 – 2023. He stated that if approved the bowtie concept for Crooked Run Plaza it would be the first in Virginia.

Mr. Campbell reviewed Country Club Road & Caroline Drive/Riverton Commons Drive stating that this was an easy fix at a lower cost. He explained the recommendation was to reduce Country Club Road from four lanes to two, update the pedestrian crossing and install raised concrete in the roundabout.

Mr. Campbell stressed that public input was imperative before finalizing recommendations. He continued with the review of the Alternative Options Summary Table that stated the various costs of each project. He concluded with the Schedule and Major Milestones that included public outreach, public feedback, study completion and final deliverables.

Mayor Cockrell confirmed that the Resolution of Support from the Town was beneficial since the Town owned property along the Guard Hill Road and McDonalds areas, and it also would show the Town's support. He advised that the deadline was August 1st. Councilwoman De-Domenico-Payne confirmed that to accommodate those not on social media an in-person meeting could be held.

Town Manager Joe Waltz advised that the Resolution of Support would be brought back to a work session for Council's review.

New Business

A. Repeal and Reservation of Section 9-303 Spot Blight Abatement from Town Code – Planning Director Lauren Kopishke advised that this was a follow up from the presentation on derelict structures held a few meetings ago. She explained that it was originally adopted without the use of intent and recommended that Council repeal and reserve it in the Town Code. She explained that there were a few references to it in the Zoning Ordinance but would be removed during the rewrite of that ordinance. Councilwoman Morris voiced concern about affordable housing units and whether removing this from the Town Code would



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hinder this kind of development. Ms. Kopishke advised that this section was not for affordable housing, it was more for large scale development that included entire blocks. Ms. Morris suggested defining affordable housing. There was much discussion on affordable housing and how the median income affected the definition.

Town Attorney George Sonnet stated that the Town has the tools it needs under property maintenance and nuisance, noting that spot blight abatement was a much larger issue in state law. Ms. Kopishke reminded Council that Chapter 9-303 was not being used to address derelict structures. Mr. Sonnett stated that the section created confusion, and the Town did not need it. He reminded them that drug blight had nothing to do with the Housing Title of state law. Mr. Waltz stated that staff was moving on a recommendation of Council and reiterated that the Town did not need Chapter 9-303.

Councilmembers Ingram and Morris reiterated that affordable housing, large scale and/or block needed to be defined. Councilman Rappaport stated that affordable housing was a difficult subject matter noting that the market defines what it will be. There was continued discussion about the various surrounding counties' property values, taxes and salaries compared to Front Royal.

Mayor Cockrell reminded council that before them tonight was to repeal this section of the Town Code and reserve it for future use. Ms. Morris suggested rewriting the section not repealing it. Mr. Sonnet stated that Title 36 of state laws envisions the creation of a housing authority that drives the acquisition for property. Ms. Morris suggested adding this to the Joint Planning Commission Meeting.

Councilwoman De-Domenico-Payne questioned if there was harm delaying this request. Mr. Waltz advised that it was born out of a work session and was placed on the agenda for Council's consideration. It was suggested that Council send Mr. Waltz or Mr. Sonnett their thoughts on this item and it would be added to a later work session for further discussion.

B. Liaison Committee Meeting Items for April 18th Meeting – Mayor Cockrell reviewed the two items suggested by the County for the upcoming Liaison Committee Meeting 1) discussion on the process of flow and differences between the County and Town when handling complaints and 2) McKay Springs. She continued that staff was suggesting a Criser Road Boundary Line Adjustment. Mr. Waltz explained that the land Criser Road sits on belongs to the Town but the road itself does not and staff would like to see the boundaries moved to accommodate the road.

Councilman Wood stated that since the WCEDA had dropped the suit against the Town, it could be time to talk with the County for a resolution on who owes what. Mayor Cockrell advised that it was not a conversation to have in public since nothing had been filed with the court. Mr. Sonnett agreed, noting that there had been no entered orders.

There was a suggestion to update the County on FREDA, however Mr. Waltz advised that he updated them during his report to them in March.

Councilwoman De-Domenico-Payne suggested an update on the Water Supply Plan presented by CHA a few weeks ago to Council. This was agreed upon and will be added to the Liaison Committee agenda.

There was concern about vandalism and maintenance of the parks but it was concluded that it was not the Town's position to ask those question but encouraged citizens to do so.



It was agreed that the Mayor and Councilman Wood would be attending the meeting.

Clerk of Council Presley will advise the BOS Deputy Clerk of their actions and to determine if the meeting will be videotaped and/or livestreamed.

C. Virginia Municipal League (VML) Policy Committee Nominations – Council agreed to the following nominations to be added to the April 22nd agenda for approval.

Community & Economic Development – Councilwoman Morris/Director of Community Development/Tourism Lizi Lewis
Finance – Councilman Wood/Director of Finance BJ Wilson
General Laws – Vice Mayor Sealock/Town Attorney George Sonnett
Human Development/Education – Councilwoman DeDomenico-Payne/Town Manager Joe Waltz
Infrastructure (Transportation & Environmental/Natural Resources) – Councilman Rapaport/Director of Public Works Robbie Boyer

It was suggested to confirm with Mr. Boyer if he would like to attend and if not, Councilman Ingram agreed to attend.

Old Business

A. Continued Discussion of Urban Agriculture Performance Standards in Town Code – Ms. Kopishke advised that since the past discussions on the proposed amendments to Town Code Sections 175-3 and 175-110.5 staff had determined that the most appropriate place for these requirements was in Chapter 66 - Dogs and Other Animals subsection Keeping Certain Animals Prohibited Within Town Limits (66-12, 66-13, 14). She continued by reviewing the various changes to the ordinance noting that they were the same requirements and processes.

Councilwoman DeDomenico-Payne voiced concern that the chickens and bees raised could not be used to supplement income by selling the products they would produce such as eggs and honey.

Ms. Kopishke confirmed that issues were complaint based and that staff has not had to pull any permits for non-compliance or violation. She also confirmed that rabbits were not allowed to be slaughtered, noting they are considered domesticated or pets.

Mayor Cockrell confirmed that the request was to “clean things up” by moving text from Chapter 175 to Chapter 66 and that rabbits and bees were added and defined with nothing else changing. Councilwoman Morris respected staff’s recommendation but disagreed with the text pertaining to chickens since it did not align with larger lots in Town. She agreed to move forward with advertising the amendments to the ordinances. Ms. Kopishke stated that one area of Town Code permitted livestock and one did not, so the contradictions were removed.

Councilman Ingram pointed out that slaughtering chickens needed to be considered and agreed that there were some lots in Town that could handle six (6) chickens or more.



Mrs. DeDomenico-Payne questioned whether there could be two phases of the vote, one to clean up the code and the other amending the text itself. Mr. Sonnett stated that it was possible but reiterated that it did not make sense for chickens to be in the zoning ordinance.

Ms. Kopishke advised that the sale of products would require a business license. There was discussion about public health concerns for chickens and people.

It was agreed to advertise for a public hearing on May 28th.

B. Alley Vacation Request at 225 E. 7th Street/631 Kibler St – Town Manager Joe Waltz advised that the request was discussed at the February 12th work session and a public hearing was held on March 25th where Council voted to direct a Viewing Committee to issue a report on their findings. He advised that the Viewing Committee's Report was included in the packet recommending approval of the vacation conditioned on an easement so the Town could gain access to Happy Creek. Council agreed to place the adoption of an ordinance for the alley vacation at the April 22nd meeting.

C. Request for an Easement on Town Property from Donald Stallings near Duck Street – Mr. Waltz reminded Council that the easement was discussed at the February 12th work session with multiple questions that included the VDOT Permit Expiration Date, access clarification, keyholders and use of the property. He asked that Council give staff direction on the easement and what restrictions should be included.

Councilwoman De-Domenico-Payne questioned what kind of lock the gate would have. Mr. Waltz advised that it would be a daisy chain within their lock.

Mayor Cockrell questioned whether the property would be used just for the owner and not for other people, noting liability issues. Mr. Waltz advised that Council could put perimeters and restrictions in the easement document. Mrs. DeDomenico-Payne suggested that the owner be present and be the operator of the gate when there is access. Ms. Morris agreed.

Mr. Sonnett advised that a public hearing would have to be scheduled due to it being a conveyance of a land easement.

Mayor Cockrell questioned whether a time limit could be placed on the easement and how a change of ownership would affect it. Mr. Sonnett stated that if the terms of the easement were violated it would discontinue and a change of ownership could be placed as a condition in the document. Councilman Wood suggested placing it for one year and see if there were any issues.

Councilman Rappaport questioned the Town's liability if something unforeseen were to happen. Mr. Sonnett stated that the Town would have to have some knowledge of the condition.

Mrs. DeDomenico-Payne suggested placing a condition that the Town was not obligated to keep the path maintained.

Mr. Waltz advised that after a year the Town would know if there were any issues. Mr. Sonnett stated that the easement would have to come before council every year for approval. It was mentioned that a lease agreement could be considered and therefore would not have to be recorded.



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Council agreed to bring back to May 6th work session to review the easement document.

CLOSED MEETING

Councilwoman Morris moved seconded by Councilman Wood that Town Council convene a closed meeting, pursuant to Sections 2.2-3711 and 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia, for the following purpose: 1) pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(8) of the Code of Virginia, for consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel, more specifically, the conditional vacation and sale of a portion of N. Royal Avenue and an unimproved alleyway between N. Royal Avenue and Virginia Avenue.

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Sealock, Ingram, Morris, Rappaport, DeDomenico-Payne, Wood

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

Councilman Ingram moved seconded by Councilwoman Morris that Council certify that to the best of each member's knowledge, as recognized by each Council member's affirmative vote, that only such public business matters lawfully exempted from Open Meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act as were identified in the motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the Closed Meeting by Council, and that the vote of each individual member of Council be taken by roll call and recorded and included in the minutes of the meeting of Town Council.

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Sealock, Ingram, Morris, Rappaport, DeDomenico-Payne, Wood

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

In furtherance of the Ordinance Approving the Closure and Vacation of Approximately .3518 Acre of Public Rights-of-Way in a Portion of N. Royal Avenue Abutting 1516 N. Royal Avenue and in the Unimproved Variable Width Alley Located Between N. Royal Avenue and Virginia Avenue Abutting 1516 N. Royal Avenue and 1505 Virginia Avenue, Councilman Ingram moved seconded by Vice Mayor Sealock approve the offer to purchase received by the Town Manager from the applicant in the amount of \$27,000, along with satisfaction of all of the terms and conditions stated in the ordinance.

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Sealock, Ingram, Morris, Rappaport, DeDomenico-Payne, Wood

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

Adjourned approximately 9:43PM

Approved by Town Council

Date: April 22, 2024