



Roll Call by Clerk of Council

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

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

ACTION ITEM - Appointment of Temporary Deputy Clerk of Council

Councilman Rappaport moved seconded by Councilman Sealock that Council appoint Hillary Wilfong as Temporary Deputy Clerk of Council, said position to be in addition to her job duties as Executive Administrative Assistant to the Town Manager and contingent upon the administration of an oath of office by the Clerk of the Circuit Court.

Mayor Cockrell voiced her excitement for Ms. Wilfong to serve in this role.

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

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

Ordinance Amendments to Town Code Chapter 70 Pertaining to Electricity Rates – Director of Electric Services Carey Saffell reminded Council that Rgrid Power LLC performed a Cost of Service Study to evaluate the Town's current electric rate structure [by ordinance] and provide a recommendation to ensure full cost recovery and long-term stability. Project Manager Kiel Blanton of RGrid Power LLC attended virtually to answer any questions. Finance Director BJ Wilson confirmed that a home office would be billed as a residential use. While there was concern about larger users such as schools, Mr. Saffelle reminded Council that the step approach was to help accommodate those users. Mr. Wilson explained that "historical fund appropriations" were carryover purchase orders from year to year as money set aside for items such as transformers. There was a brief discussion about the Town being one of the lowest rates in the state even after the implementation of the new rate structure. Council agreed to advertise the ordinance for a public hearing on March 23rd.

Recommended Budget to Council and Review of FY27 Proposed Budget – Mr. Wilson began his presentation showing various dates from March 9th to May 26th to complete the budget process. The **FY27 REVENUE FORECASTING** showed the various factors affecting the budget, noting funds that were overdue from Warren County [December 31, 2025]. The **FY26-27 SNAPSHOT OF FUNDS** showed a slight increase. Mr. Willson advised that industrial users were using more. Mayor Cockrell gave an update on the discrepancies with the numbers from the Warren County Commissioner of Revenue's Office during the last reassessment. After some discussion, Council agreed to add an item to the April Liaison Committee Agenda pertaining to the 2027 Reassessment Appeals Process to assist the Town prepare for the FY2028 Budget. Mr. Wilson explained the **REAL ESATE TAX RATE COMPARISON**, reiterating the discrepancies with last year's reassessment. He explained the that the 2025 Real Estate Tax Rate was approved on April 28, 2025 based upon information provided by the Warren County Commissioner of



Revenue's Office showing the real estate tax values had increased 48.3%. On May 12, 2025 the Town received the books from the Commissioner's Office reflecting only a 23% increase reflecting approximately \$321,000 lower than anticipated. To make up for this difference the real estate tax rate is being reflected in this budget to increase from \$0.068 to \$0.082. The personal property rate will remain the same. Mr. Wilson continued with **GENERAL FUND REVENUE HIGHLIGHTS** noting that the Automated Ticketing Revenue was proposed to be budgeted under the Special Projects Fund for FY27. There was discussion about the increases and decreases in meals and transient occupancy [lodging] taxes for the Town and County. **ENTERPRISE FUND SALE OF SERVICE and REVENUE IMPACTS FOR ENTERPRISE FUNDS** were reviewed and Mr. Wilson explained that some industrial accounts had a separate sewer meter. He advised that the Large Meter Testing Program had identified some water meters that were running slow. The **WATER/SWER RECOMMENDED RATE INCREASES** were identified as 3% for water and 2.25% for sewer based upon Stantec Consulting's 2025 recommendation by a chart showing typical residential customer monthly bill impacts. There were no increases in solid waste rates.

A **SNAPSHOT – TOTAL BUDGET** including **EMPLOYEE EXPENSE HIGHLIGHTS** was reviewed. Human Resource Director Laura McIntosh explained the VRS contributions for hybrid and standard rates as well as the health insurance increase at 16%. The **GENERAL FUND HIGHLIGHTS** showed the transfer of various items. Mr. Wilson pointed out that page 72 of the Proposed Budget Book gave a breakdown of all the transfers including calculations. There was some discussion regarding the condemnation funds. It was noted that under the **GENERAL FUND HIGHLIGHTS/ACES PROJECTS** that the tree purchases were to remove/replace trees that had died such as in Bowman Park and on Virginia Avenue. Mr. Wilson explained the Police Department Construction Debt Service and Warren County VRA Bond Construction of Leach Run Parkway under **GENERAL FUND CAPITAL/DEBT EXPENDITURES**. There was discussion about possibly refinancing.

TRAFFIC SIGNAL MAINTENANCE (PART OF STREET FUND) and HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE HIGHLIGHTS were reviewed to include the primary paving plan, secondary paving plan, sidewalks and curbs. There were questions about the track loader, dump trucks, sidewalk installation on Criser Road and Criser Road Boundary Line Adjustment with the County. After discussion Council agreed to add the Criser Road Boundary Line Adjustment to the next Liaison Committee Meeting. The **ELECTRIC EXPENDITURE HIGHLIGHTS** was reviewed. Mr. Wilson noted that there was hope by the end of FY27 the Town would be close to recovering from being "in the hole" and implement Phase 2 of the electric rate increase. Mr. Saffelle advised Council that two AMP Power Purchase Agreements were coming before them for review this month. Council questioned the process of how developers paid for their expenses. Mr. Saffelle explained this process and how the Town recouped their funds noting the Town was breaking even. It was noted that AMI [Advanced Metering Infrastructure] was taken out of the budget explaining that it was mainly for efficiency rather than saving money. Council was reminded that the new software would have features to enhance metering and notifications. Mr. Wilson reviewed the **WATER EXPENDITURE HIGHLIGHTS** and the **SEWER EXPENDITURE HIGHLIGHTS, WATER/SEWER DEBT SERVICE, and POTENTIALLY NEW WATER FUND DEBT SERVICE** updating Council on the clearwater well repairs, 4-H pump station upgrades and Jamestown water pump station upgrade. The centrifuge was discussed under the **NEW SEWER FUND DEBT SERVICE** with Mr. Wilson explaining the bidding process for closing on the loan. Council was informed by Director of Public Works Robbie Boyer that the General Assembly Bill regarding restrictions on wastewater did not affect the Town. The presentation ended with **SOLID WASTE HIGHLIGHTS and NEXT STEPS**. Council was encouraged to contact Mr. Wilson or Mr. Petty with any questions to bring to the next work session.

NEW BUSINESS

Request to Allow a Short Term Rental at 214 Lee Street for Veronica Tello – Ms. Kopishke advised that the applicant intended to rent the entire four bedroom house with no more than ten occupants at a time which is the maximum allowed. She advised that the driveway provided three off-street parking spaces which met the Town Code



requirement. Council confirmed that the applicant purchased the property and used it most weekends therefore voicing concern that the owner lived out of Town. Discussion ensued about options for those owners who live out of Town and whether there were complaints from the other short-term rentals already approved by Council. Council agreed to advertise for a public hearing on March 23rd.

Request to Amend the Zoning Map to Reclassify Two Vacant Lots on Grand Avenue for Dana Cline – Ms. Kopishke advised that the applicant was requesting an amendment to the zoning map to reclassify two vacant lots on Grand Avenue from R-1 to R-3. She stated that the lots were large enough to accommodate two single family dwellings; however, the applicant preferred four duplexes. The Comprehensive Plan, she explained, showed the property was located in the #5 Viscose City Planning Area, noting it was close to amenities but not a lot of connectivity as far as sidewalks. It was explained to Council that even though the Planning Commission's recommendation was to deny the request, Council was required to act on this request during their public hearing since they had the final decision. Ms. Kopishke suggested Council to walk the neighborhood to see if this request was appropriate for the area. Council agreed to advertise for a public hearing on March 23rd.

Request for a Special Exception from Town Code Pertaining to Height of Retaining Wall by Monteverde Engineering & Design Studio on Behalf of Squirrel Hill Development on Orchard Street – Ms. Kopishke advised that the applicant was requesting to increase the maximum allowable wall height to ten feet for undeveloped properties on Orchard Street, noting that the Town Code limited maximum height to six feet. Council agreed to advertise for a public hearing on March 23rd.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Zoning Text Amendments to Chapter 175 to Define the Use of an Auxiliary Dwelling Unit (ADU) – Ms. Kopishke explained the most recent changes to the ordinance including the inspection process and the new Zoning Application Form. She stated that ADUs were already permitted by right as an accessory use on lots larger than 12,000 square feet and that this ordinance made ADUs available to property owners with smaller lots. There was much discussion on the process including but not limited to revoking a permit, relationship with the owner, performance standards, increased density, parking and inspections. Vice Mayor Veitenthal suggested Council read an article in the Washington Post about the pros/cons of ADUs. Council agreed to advertise for a public hearing on March 23rd.

Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 72 Special Events Held on Town Streets and Public Property – Town Manager Joe Petty reiterated the notable changes since 2021 such as Special Event Committee, extended application schedule, Public Safety Plan, fee schedule, reoccurring events, neighborhood block parties, event notification requirements and after action reporting. He explained the updates to the ordinance since Council saw it. There was some discussion on recovering expenses, specifically police officer's time. Council agreed to advertise for a public hearing on March 23rd.

CLOSED MEETING

Vice Mayor Veitenthal 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 insolvency and disposition of assets of the Industrial Development Authority of the Town of Front Royal and the County of Warren, Virginia; and, 2) pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(7) of the Code of Virginia, for consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such



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.

consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body, more specifically, decisions of BZA in case numbers 2600001 and 2600002.

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

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

Councilman Ingram moved seconded by Councilman Sealock 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 Rappaport, DeDomenico-Payne, Ingram, Wood, Sealock, Veitenthal

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

Adjourned at approximately 10:00pm.

Approved by Town Council

Date: -----