

The regular meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Front Royal, Virginia was held on February 24, 2020, in the Warren County Government Center's Board Meeting Room. Mayor Tewalt led Council and those attending in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and a Moment of Silence.

Councilman Cockrell moved, seconded by Councilman Holloway to appoint and recognize Tina Presley as Clerk of the Front Royal Town Council pro tempore for the meeting of Front Royal Town Council on February 24, 2020 Regular Meeting; and for such additional and further meetings and times that are a continuation of the February 24, 2020 meetings at her services such as Clerk pro tempore may be needed.

Vote: Unanimous

ROLL CALL for MAYOR/TOWN COUNCIL

PRESENT:

Mayor Eugene R. Tewalt
Vice Mayor William A. Sealock
Councilman Lori A. Cockrell
Councilman Gary L. Gillispie
Councilman Chris W. Holloway
Councilman Letasha T. Thompson
Town Attorney Douglas W. Napier
Interim Town Manager Matthew A. Tederick
Clerk of Council Pro Tempore Tina L. Presley

ABSENT:

Councilman Jacob L. Meza

(The above represent municipal officers of the Town of Front Royal as stated in Town Charter Section 4)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Gillispie moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Sealock to approve the Regular Council Meeting minutes of February 10, 2020 as presented

Vote: Unanimous

RECEIPT OF PETITIONS AND/OR CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE PUBLIC

Gary Kushner, 1106 Fetchett Road, Browntown, VA – opined a communication disconnect between citizens and government. He noted that he asked Council if he could deliver a presentation on promoting communication to them at their 2/19/20 Work Session but was denied due to needing unanimous consent. He noted that the three-minute limit during public presentation was not enough time to effectively communicate ideas and opinions and suggested it be extended. He advised that he created a video “Town Talk” and is available on the Royal Examiner.

Ken Dameron, 715 Stockton Road, Front Royal, VA – questioned the redundant water line costs and opined that the Town did not have to pay for its cost and suggested having the County and/or Dominion bear the costs due to its location in the County. He suggested paying EDA cash to pay for the Police Department and eliminate the debt service. He opined that the tax rate is only “petty cash”.

Mayor Initial ERT

Janice Hart, 1120 Ashby Street, Front Royal, VA – noted that she did not want her taxes lowered and asked the Council to reconsider lowering them. She questioned how lowering taxes will pay for the much-needed improvements in Town, the new Police Department, and outsourcing. She opined that cooperation with the EDA is a must. She encouraged that Council come together for a positive solution. She voiced concern on lowering the tax rate this year and the expectation of a large tax increase next year.

Linda Allen, 15 Massie Street, Front Royal, VA – noted “errors of fact” on a report given to Town Council at the 2/19/20 Work Session specifically to the performance of the Visitors Center and former Director of Community Development/Tourism. She then referred to the report she had given to Council tonight to assist in correcting the previously made errors. She voiced concern over having no way to create income for Tourism or economic development. She encouraged Council to investigate the findings in her report.

Paul Gabbert, 1221 Valley View Street, Front Royal, VA – questioned whether those citizens who are new to the Town would not have a voice. Asked that Council not “lose sleep” over those issues in the corridor. He questioned why the Town taxpayers were paying for the redundant water line if it was requested by Dominion. He suggested that Council stop playing games with the EDA and pay for the Police Department. He noted that the County taxpayers are paying for the loan and Council was putting that burden on them. He reminded Council that since the tax rate is already advertised at 13, they could not increase it back to 13.5. He encouraged Town Council to listen to those who are coming before them and not Mr. Tederick.

Bruce Rappaport, 300 W. Main Street, Front Royal, VA – opined that we have “a failure to communicate”. He encouraged Council to find a Town Manager that can straighten things out. He voiced respect for Mr. Tederick but opined that he was placed in a tough spot by going to work on the budget from the start and has done the best he could. He noted that the ½ cent decrease would get him “two glasses of wine”.

Paul Gabbert – 1221 Valley View Street, Front Royal, VA – suggested that Council form a six to eight member panel to help them with the budget and form another panel to help select the next Town Manager.

REPORTS

a. Report of special committees or Town Officials and Interim Town Manager

County Administrator Doug Stanley gave his report by briefing Council on various topics that included the Development Review Committee, New Housing Starts, Population Estimates, Delinquent Tax Sales, Broadband, Tourism Committee, LOVEwork Sign, Burrell Brooks Music Park Playground, Fire and Rescue Training Facility and Commercial/Industrial Projects.

Commonwealth Attorney John Bell – Advised Council of issues pertaining to online speech and harassment. He advised that his office takes a robust view of the First Amendment and a lot of what has been complained about comes under protective speech; however, there are limits. He read the Code of Virginia (18.2-60) A. 1. *Any person who knowingly communicates, in a writing, including an electronically transmitted communication producing a visual or electronic message, a threat*

to kill or do bodily injury to a person, regarding that person or any member of his family, and the threat places such person in reasonable apprehension of death or bodily injury to himself or his family member, is guilty of a Class 6 felony. Voiced appreciation to those that spoke tonight, stating it was a classic example of free Americans standing up and speaking their mind to their elected officials in a firm and frank, but respectful manner. He noted that his office was available to answer any questions.

Introduction of Brittini Dennis, Communications Officer and Promotion of Officer Brian Whited to Sergeant. Chief Magalas introduced Ms Dennis as the new Communications Officer at the Police Department and Brian Whited as the new Sergeant for the Police Department with this wife pinning his with his new Sergeants badge.

Presentation of the Star of the Month Award for January 2020 to Jason Neal – Interim Town Manager Tederick and Mayor Tewalt presented Mr. Neal with the Star of the Month for going above and beyond during his normal work duties based on two emails from two different citizens.

Interim Town Manager Tederick made the following announcements:

- 1) a waterline upgrade requiring a road closure on Parkview Drive until March 13 by Bushong Construction.
- 2) Town is accepting applications for a Town Scholarship with applications due March 20.

b. Requests and inquiries of Council members.

Councilman Cockrell – Ms Cockrell clarified that the half cent tax rate would be \$67,000 instead of \$67 million. She also noted that some citizens are not having one glass of wine due to not being able to afford it and that Council has to take every citizen's finances into account. She shared the opportunities she experienced on Main Street recently by reminiscing about the past and noting the new businesses.

Councilman Gillispie – Mr. Gillispie noted that the Council has hired an Executive Search Firm to assist them in finding the next Town Manager and Mr. Tederick did not participate in any of the meetings to hire the firm. He further noted that the Interim Town Manager will have no process in selecting the new Town Manager, emphasizing that the selection will be determined by the Council with citizen input. Mr. Gillispie continued by explaining that if there is a break in the Town's water service it can be isolated everywhere expect in the Corridor. He noted that if there is a break in the water service in the Corridor the industries and businesses will be without water and the Town runs the risk of being sued for failure to supply water.

Councilman Thompson – Advised Mr. Kushner that she wanted to add him to the 2/19/20 Work Session and would be viewing his video. Advised Ms Allen that she would reviewing her material and contacting her since her information is different than what she had received. Reiterated to Mr. Gabbert that Mr. Tederick was not involved in the process of selecting the Executive Search Firm and that Council had requested community input in the selection of the next Town Manager.

c. Report of the Mayor

Thanked everyone for coming and welcomed them to voice their concerns on any issue in the future.

Mayor Initial 

d. Proposals for Addition/Deletion of Items to the Agenda – None**CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS - None**

PUBLIC HEARING – Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 175-106.B.1.b[6] Pertaining to Sign Regulations for Medical Facilities with a Medical Center – Valley Health (1st Reading)

Rhonda Neal Vice President of Identity America thanked the Council for their cooperation and assistance. She expressed the sign would be a great benefit to the hospital.

Mayor Tewalt closed the Public Hearing.

Councilman Holloway moved seconded by Councilman Thompson that Council affirm on its first reading an ordinance amendment to Town Code Chapter 175-106.B.1.b.[6] by defining what a medical center is and modify existing standards pertaining to just medical centers, as presented.

Vote: Yes – Sealock, Cockrell, Gillispie, Holloway, and Thompson

No – N/A

Abstain – N/A

Absent – Councilman Meza

ROLL CALL

PUBLIC HEARING – Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 9-303 to Provide for the Abatement of Blight Property (1st Reading)

Councilman Thompson moved, seconded by Councilman Holloway affirm on its first reading an ordinance amendment to Town Code Chapter 9-303 “Spot blight Abatement” as presented.

Mayor Tewalt closed the Public Hearing.

Vote: Yes – Sealock, Cockrell, Gillispie, Holloway, and Thompson

No – N/A

Abstain – N/A

Absent – Councilman Meza

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS – Town Scholarship Committee

Councilman Cockrell moved, seconded by Councilman Holloway to appoint Councilman Gillispie and Councilman Thompson to the Town Scholarship Committee for 2020.

Vote: Unanimous

CLOSED MEETING – Afton Inn

Councilman Holloway moved, seconded by Councilman Thompson that Town Council convene and go into Closed Meeting with respect to the former Afton Inn property for the following purposes: (1) Discussion or consideration of the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interest of Town Council would be adversely affected, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711. A. 6. of the Code of Virginia;

Mayor Initial set

(2) Discussion of the award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contract, where discussion in an Open Meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of Town Council, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711. A. 29. of the Code of Virginia.; and (3) Consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by Town Council regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711. A. 8. of the Code of Virginia.

Vote: Unanimous

Councilman Gillispie moved, seconded by Councilman Holloway that the Mayor/Town 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 the Mayor and Town Council be taken by roll call and recorded and included in the minutes of the meeting of the Mayor and Town Council.

Vote: Yes – Tewalt, Sealock, Cockrell, Gillispie, Holloway, and Thompson

No – N/A

Abstain – N/A

Absent – Councilman Meza

ROLL CALL

APPROVED:



Eugene R. Tewalt, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tina L. Presley Pro Tempore Clerk of Council

Councilman Meza moved, seconded by ^{Councilman} Holloway approved the Regular Council Meeting minutes of February 24, 2020 on March 9, 2020.

Mayor Initial ET