

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF VINTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT 7:00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 2010, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE VINTON MUNICIPAL BUILDING LOCATED AT 311 SOUTH POLLARD STREET, VINTON, VIRGINIA.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bradley E. Grose, Mayor
Robert R. Altice
Carolyn D. Fidler
Matthew S. Hare
William W. Nance

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Lawrence, Town Manager
Darleen Bailey, Town Clerk
Elizabeth Dillon, Town Attorney
Barry Thompson, Finance Director/Treasurer
Herbert Cooley, Police Chief
Ben Cook, Police Captain

Agenda

- A. 7:00 P.M. – Roll Call and Establishment of a Quorum
- B. INVOCATION
- C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE U. S. FLAG
- D. CONSENT AGENDA
 - 1. Request to Approve Minutes for Regular Meeting of February 16, 2010
- E. AWARDS, RECOGNITIONS, PRESENTATIONS
 - 1. Officer of the Month for February, 2010 – Police Officer Paul Harris
 - 2. Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership Annual Report – Beth Doughty
- F. CITIZENS' COMMENTS AND PETITIONS
- G. PUBLIC HEARING
 - 1. Set Real Estate Tax Rate for Calendar Year 2010 – Proposed Ordinance No. 898
 - 2. Set Personal Property Tax Levy for Calendar Year 2010 – Proposed Ordinance No. 899
- H. TOWN ATTORNEY
- I. TOWN MANAGER
 - 1. Request to Allocate Funding to Pay for Two Damaged Light Poles in the War Memorial Parking Lot – Proposed Resolution No. 1860
 - 2. Request to Approve Health Department Lease Agreement – Proposed Resolution No.1861
 - 3. Non-governmental Agency Requests
- J. MAYOR
- K. COUNCIL
- L. ADJOURNMENT

WORK SESSION

- 1. Report on Law Enforcement Data Sharing – Police Captain Ben Cook
- Mayor Grose called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. | Roll call, invocation
Following roll call, the Mayor gave the invocation and Mr. Altice led | and Pledge of Alle-

the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

giance to U.S. Flag

The Consent Agenda was approved on motion by Mr. Nance and seconded by Ms. Fidler, with all in favor.

Mr. Nance read a letter from Chief Cooley recognizing Paul "Matt" Harris as Officer of the Month for February.

Beth Doughty, Executive Director of the Roanoke Valley Economic Development Partnership, presented the Partnership's Annual Report for 2009. She reported that for the past year, business activity had decreased by 25% and the economy was the over-riding factor. She noted that out of 36 sites in the region, only five were deemed "shovel ready" which was another factor in the low number of business start-ups in the area during the past year. Ms. Doughty stated that her agency had increased activity information assistance by 125% which included economic information and information about the region.

Ms. Doughty reported that most of the area's biggest and best projects almost always come from the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and explained that work with this agency had paid off with activity down by only one file for the year.

She displayed a chart showing activity for the current year which indicated increases in consultant requests; the energy sector; I.T. projects; life sciences; retail and warehousing and distribution with manufacturing showing a decline. Ms. Doughty pointed out that the nature of prospects is changing as the nature of US commercial activity is changing.

Ms. Doughty reported that during a weak economy, she felt the most important thing the Partnership could do for the region would be to raise the visibility of the region, whether it's to locate or grow a business here or for a personal life style. She went on to say that the area does not have a poor image, it has no image, and in an effort to change that, the Partnership managed to have 20 significant media mentions last year that exposed the region to more than sixty million people.

Ms Doughty described their new website and noted that they had approximately 10,000 visitors per month on their site.

In discussing asset developments, Ms. Doughty reported that they focused their asset development for the last year on out-door amenities and would continue to do that to help build up the area's image. She noted that Partnership efforts in image building include a cycling team that carries the Partnership's Roanoke Outside logo all over the East Coast; efforts to assist in establishing several outdoor

businesses in the area; a seminar instructing potential business owners how to establish outdoor businesses and the Blue Ridge Marathon that will take place this April.

Mr. Lawrence pointed out that this year, the Partnership's work would be done with a slight reduction in their budget which will reduce the Town's budget allocation for the Regional Partnership by \$1,500. Ms. Doughty added that because of fiscal budget constraints placed on local governments again this year, they lowered their request by 10%.

Mayor Grose thanked Ms. Doughty for her presentation and for the Partnership's efforts on behalf of the Town of Vinton.

Mr. Hare asked Ms. Doughty's opinion on what she felt was Vinton's biggest challenge to attracting businesses to the Town. She replied that the reasons are different, depending on the kind of business and what the destination happens to be. She pointed out that it could be traffic numbers, education, the real estate itself and diversity of product.

Mayor Grose opened the public hearing at 7:32 p.m., to take comments and questions on Ordinance No. 898 setting the Town's real estate tax rate. He reported that this year, a public hearing on an effective tax rate was not required because the Town's real estate assessment increased by less than 1%. He noted that the rate this year is .54%

Mr. Thompson reported that the real estate assessments totaled \$468,470,600 for 2010 and \$463,014,500 for 2009, an increase of \$5,456,100 minus \$2,964,600 in new construction. He went on to say that this would bring the Town's net increase for valuation assessments for this year to \$2,491,500. The Finance Director/Treasurer reported that the 2010 tax levy would bring in \$139,652 or an increase of \$748.

Mr. Thompson reported that this year, personal property revenues would not have the substantial loss that occurred last year. He noted that he would be bringing a resolution to Council at the April 6th meeting to set the Personal Property Tax Relief percentage.

He asked that Council consider Resolution No. 898 setting the real estate tax rate for the calendar year of 2010 at \$.03 per \$100.00 of the assessed evaluation. He also asked Council to consider Resolution No. 899 setting the personal property tax rate for the calendar year at \$1.00 per \$100 and 50% or \$.50 per \$100 of the assessed evaluation of one motor vehicle owned and regularly used by a disabled veteran.

Adopted Ordinance No. 898 setting real estate rate and Ordinance No. 899 setting personal property tax rate

Mayor Grose closed the public hearing at 7:40 p.m. and called for a motion to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 898 setting the real estate tax rate for calendar year 2010 at \$.03 per \$100 of the assessed evaluation. Ms. Fidler moved to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 898. Mr. Altice seconded the motion that passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

Ms. Fidler moved to adopt proposed Ordinance No. 899 setting the personal property tax rate at \$1.00 per \$100 of the assessed valuation and \$.50 per \$100 of the assessed valuation for vehicles owned and regularly used by a disabled veteran. The motion was seconded by Mr. Nance and passed on a unanimous roll call vote.

Mr. Thompson wanted the record to reflect that the tax rates set were not increased from previous years.

Laura Reilly, Facilities Manager for the War Memorial, reported on a request to allocate funding to pay for two light poles in the War Memorial parking lot that were damaged. She advised that one of the poles was damaged when Thor Construction backed a big truck into it and the other one was damaged when a Public Works vehicle hit it. She noted that costs to repair the damage for both poles was \$7,361. She pointed out that the light pole damaged by Thor Construction was covered by VML Insurance and was reimbursed by Thor. Ms. Reilly advised that the cost to repair the pole damaged by the Public Works vehicle was covered by VML Insurance except for the \$1,000 deductible.

Adopted Resolution No. 1860 allocating funding to pay for damaged light poles in the War Memorial parking lot.

Mr. Lawrence explained that the purpose of Resolution No. 1860 was to transfer money from Recoveries and Rebates (a revenue account) to an expense account.

Mr. Hare questioned whether the deductible amount would come out a War Memorial account and if so, if it would harm operations in any way. Mr. Thompson replied that it would come out of the War Memorial budget. Ms. Reilly advised Mr. Hare that she had worked it out so that it would not harm operations in any way.

Mayor Grose complemented Ms. Reilly on the appearance of the War Memorial at an event that had taken place on the previous Friday evening.

Mr. Nance moved to adopt proposed Resolution No. 1860 allocating funding to pay for damaged light poles in the War Memorial parking lot. The motion was seconded by Ms. Fidler and passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

Mr. Lawrence reported that the lease for rental of a portion of the Health Department building had been successfully worked out. He recalled that the Health Department had consolidated their offices and moved most of their operations to a building on Williamson Road in Roanoke City. He advised that the clinic operations located on the lower floor of the building would stay in Vinton for at least the next year. He further advised that after the year lease is up, if the clinic stays in Vinton, it will be leased on a month to month basis.

Adopted Resolution
No. 1861 approving
Health Department
Lease.

The Town Manager advised that the Health Department will continue to pay for all utility costs except for 30% of electricity used to heat the upstairs portion of the building. He went on to say that if and when the upstairs portion of the building is rented, the expenses for the building will be reallocated so that the new tenant would be paying for their share of utilities. It was noted that the Town Attorney had reviewed the proposed lease and had made several recommendations that were agreed upon by the State.

Mr. Lawrence reported that staff is actively advertising to rent the upper level of the building

Mr. Altice moved to adopt proposed Resolution No. 1861 approving the Health Department's one-year lease. The motion was seconded by Ms. Fidler and passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

Ms. Fidler asked why the State's lease was set up for them to pay at the end of the month rather than at the beginning like most leases and Mr. Lawrence replied that it was just the way the State wrote the lease contract.

Mr. Hare asked if the lease covered radon gases and the Town Attorney referred him to the section of the lease that covered this issue.

Mr. Lawrence pointed out the State Department of Historic Resources had been considering leasing a portion of the building but had backed off because of budget constraints.

Mr. Lawrence reported that no action would need to be taken on the non-governmental agency budget requests. However, staff wanted to advise Council of requests that have come in this year and what these agencies were given last year.

In response to a request from Mayor Grose that the Town Manager share information with Council he had received on some agencies that receive community contributions from the Town each year, Mr. Lawrence replied that the both the Regional Commission and the CATV Committee have reduced their budget requests for this year.

He went on to say that funding for the Greenway Commission will remain the same as last year and the Regional Partnership had actually lowered their request for next year.

Mr. Lawrence noted that funding for the AEP Steering Committee, who negotiates electrical rates for local governments, would remain the same as last year. He further noted that funding for the Franklin County Contribution to the Roanoke River which was spent to help clean up debris that flows into Smith Mountain Lake from creeks in the Roanoke Valley, would remain the same as last year at \$1,000.

The Town Manager reported on funding for other contribution requests:

1. the Vinton Dogwood Festival would remain the same as last year
2. the Blue Grass Festival would not be held again this year so it would not receive a contribution
3. the Chamber of Commerce had asked for \$10,000 but would be funded at \$9,000
4. the Historical Society requested \$10,000 to help pay for a part time employee but would be funded at \$1,500
5. Rebuilding Together requested \$2,800 but it would be up to Council as to how much would be funded
6. the Volunteer First Aid Crew requested \$20,000 and the Volunteer Fire Department requested \$19,000 but both would be funded at \$17,000
7. Youth Sports Recognition would not be funded
8. Clean Valley Awards would be reduced to \$300 from \$500 last year
9. the decision to fund Mayor's Christmas Parade Awards would be left up to Council to determine
10. Vinton Jr. Miss would not be funded any longer as the event had been moved to Lynchburg
11. the Advancement Foundation did not ask for funding this year
12. Manna Ministries is not requesting a cash donation but has asked for in kind services which will be provided due to safety issues.

Mr. Lawrence noted that the Dues and Subscriptions account would remain unchanged from last year. He also noted that although the Town has received contribution requests in the past from the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitor Bureau (RVCVB), the Town has never contributed to this agency. He recommended that when or if services from the RVCVB are requested, the Town will need to provide some funding.

The Mayor recommended that the Town provide funding for the

Advancement Foundation if at all possible. Ms. Fidler explained that the Advancement Foundation trained women for jobs who had never been in the work force.

The Town Manager asked Council to let him know if there were any other agencies with whom they would like to meet. He recommended that Council meet with the Volunteer Fire Department, the Volunteer First Aid Crew and the Chamber of Commerce due to their large contribution request.

Ms. Fidler asked if staff would recommend funding the Needy Family Program and Mr. Lawrence replied that it would be up to Council to decide whether to fund that request.

Mr. Lawrence recognized Chief Cooley for the assistance he provided to Lexington during their search for a Police Chief. He also recognized Police Sergeant Wooten who will represent the Town at Virginia Western Community College's Public Safety Day.

The Town Manager reminded Council that the consultants for the Downtown Study will be in town the following week. He advised that 44 people were invited to interview with the consultants. He advised Council that if they wish to be a part of that group, to let him know.

Mr. Lawrence advised that he had been notified by Roanoke County that there would be no Enchanted Eve this year. He noted that this decision opens the door for the Vinton Area Chamber of Commerce to hold a gala on New Year's Eve.

The Mayor asked if anyone was planning to attend the Local Government Communications Workshop on March 31st. Mr. Lawrence advised anyone planning to attend should let the Town Clerk know so that she can RSVP for everyone.

Mayor Grose announced Clean Valley Day on March 27th and advised that he would participate if the Town is planning an activity this year.

The Mayor advised that Goodwill wants to sponsor a recycling day with the Town of Vinton and that Goodwill would cover all the costs. He noted that the only request made by Goodwill is for the Town to help promote it. Mr. Lawrence responded that the Town was very interested in participating. Mayor Grose pointed out that Goodwill partners with Dell and is very involved in recycling electronic waste.

Mayor Grose reported that State Senator Ralph Smith had advised him that the Town's requested Charter amendment extending the time limit to fill a Council vacancy to 45 days, had been approved by

both houses but had not yet been signed by the Governor.

Mr. Nance asked the Town Manager to convey his thanks to Anita McMillan for her efforts in persuading the owner of the abandoned gas station to tear down the damaged building located at Bush Drive and Washington Avenue. Mr. Lawrence noted that the property owner is planning to sell the lot after it is cleaned up.

Staff was asked to check on the condition of the bridge on the Wolf Creek Greenway as it is impassable at the moment. Mr. Hare congratulated the Police Chief and his staff for apprehending the suspects who invaded the home in Bush Farms. Chief Cooley reported that a neighborhood watch member got the license number and turned it in to the police which led to the arrest.

As there was no further business, Mayor Grose adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

WORK SESSION

1. Captain Cook reported on the Law Enforcement Data Sharing Program for the Vinton Police Department called Roanoke Area Criminal Justice Information Network or RACJIN. He explained that RACJIN is a multi-jurisdictional data sharing system that went into operation on February 22nd and had been in the works since 2006 when Roanoke City received a grant of over \$800,000 to put the program in place. He further explained that the system will help law enforcement to better conduct investigations and locate suspects.

Captain Cook advised that the current participants in the program include the Town of Vinton PD, Roanoke County PD, Roanoke City PD and the City of Salem PD. He pointed out that each of the current participants have their own records systems with information that is extracted by RACJIN and compiles it in one place allowing police officers from each of the localities to log in by computer and look at the compiled information. He stated that it is hoped other jurisdictions will eventually become involved.

He reported that the Town's share of RACJIN would be 5% of the annual project fees with Roanoke City paying 50% of the fees. Captain Cook noted that any new jurisdiction who joins the program would pay a share of the fee.

Captain Cook reported on the Police Department's new website created by Bob-Cop that went on-line in December. He noted there have been 3,161 visits to the site since December resulting in 19 submissions that were documented by officers. He gave a brief demonstration of how a citizen can use the website. Captain Cook advised that the BobCop website costs the Town \$1,000 per year.

He discussed "Leads on Line" which is a new database program that receives information from participating pawn shops allowing police departments to have access immediately to any item that is pawned. Captain Cook reported that the cost to the Town for the program is \$2,148.

He reported that the Department has been using Accurint since 2006. This program is designed for law enforcement and compiles information from public records from every source available such as court records, bank accounts, drivers license information, etc. He went on to say that this program is one of the most beneficial programs utilized by the Police Department and has saved many man hours and other expenses to locate information. He added that they have been able to assist the Planning Office as well as the Treasurer's office with this program. Mr. Lawrence reported that Ali Henderson, who works in the Finance Department, has collected over \$10,000 in delinquent accounts in just over a month using the Accurint program. He reported that the annual cost to the Department for Accurint is \$800.

Captain Cook thanked Council and staff for their support and for allowing the Police Department to have access to these programs. Mr. Lawrence asked how the Town compared to other towns of Vinton's size with regard to the use of these technical aids. Captain Cook reported that Vinton seems to be well ahead of most localities in this respect.

A discussion took place regarding the perception that the Town is not business friendly and ways this perception might be changed.

The work session adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

APPROVED:

Bradley E. Grose, Mayor

ATTEST:

Darleen R. Bailey, Town Clerk