

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on June 15, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall

Council: Monica Johnson, Jeff Comer, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, Steve Surber
Gary Call arrived during Citizens' Time

Mayor: C. Todd Young

Staff: Brian Martin, Town Manager
Erik Puckett, Police Chief
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

Councilman Eugene Call made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 11, 2021 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Morris seconded. The motion carried 4-0-1 with Councilwoman Johnson abstaining since she was not present for that meeting.

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 18, 2021 budget meeting with Rural Development. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 1, 2021 budget meeting, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

Citizens' Time

Terry Hunt spoke on the following:

- 1) The Re-enactment was cancelled last year, but there's going to be one this year. Donations are being taken this year to help offset the costs.
- 2) He said he quit the Sons of Confederate Veterans camp but still belonged to the Historical Foundation and the Blue/Gray. This year will be the 42nd time the Historical Foundation will sponsor the Re-enactment.
- 3) This year's event will be called Living History and be held on the weekend of August 20th at the Salt Park.
- 4) There will be no charges this year but, like he mentioned before, they will just take donations.

Missy Turner, the owner of the Lily Pad, asked if her establishment or any other would be allowed to deliver food to the pool since the concession stand will not be open this year. The Mayor said this would be discussed during the Town Manager's Report.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilman Morris made a motion to take the Closed Session portion off of the agenda and then approve it. He asked it to be taken off since the town's attorney was not present for the meeting. Councilman Eugene Call seconded the motion, and it carried 5-1 with Councilwoman Johnson voting no.

Old Business

1. Illegal truck traffic in the town

Councilman Morris said the town continues to get complaints about big rigs being on roads they should not be on. He's unsure of what to do since there are signs on Sycamore Road and Highway 107 proclaiming no truck traffic is allowed, but they still continue to use roads they should not. A local citizen has requested a sign where Wiley Drive intersects with Palmer Avenue saying *No Trucks Allowed*, which the town can do, but other options need to be explored if there are any available.

Police Chief Erik Puckett said Officer Hogston watches Sycamore for the trucks and has written several tickets there as well as on Old Quarry Road. However, the trucks continue to use those roads. Councilman Morris asked if the minimum fine could be raised to help prevent this, and Chief Puckett said a new ordinance could be adopted. The Mayor said that VDOT is starting to put up signs telling truckers not to follow their GPS devices since most of them are more for regular traffic since they are cheaper and not the more expensive ones they should be using. Town Manager Brian Martin said he had reached out to a VDOT contact to check on this a little deeper.

Councilwoman Johnson said nothing has worked the town has tried including removable speed bumps and more signage, and these trucks use her street as well. Mr. Martin said he had met with the people at United Salt, and they are willing to help fund additional signage in the town limits. The Mayor asked if patrols could be stepped up on Councilwoman Johnson's street, and especially on Sycamore. Chief Puckett said he would break down the stats involving tickets just for these trucks for next month's meeting. This topic will be continued next month.

2. Dead trees in the cemetery

Councilman Morris stated that several trees, some quite large, in the cemetery need to be cut down since they are either dead or dying. If they fell, they would take out several headstones and maybe worse. He then made the motion to bid out this tree-cutting, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor. Bids will be opened at the August meeting.

3. Town shop

Councilman Morris said he would like an update on this since the town first discussed it several months ago. The Wellness Center lease is about a year old, so the maintenance crew needs to be out of that side of the building. Councilwoman Johnson stated that there are three locations currently marked as a town shop including the one beside the Wellness Center, the one on Lake Drive, and the one off of Battleground Avenue where the salt shed is, and none of these locations are blocked off from the public and need to be secured. The town needs to tidy its own backyard before it expects its citizens to do the same. In that vein, Councilman Eugene Call said he has noticed even more equipment keeps getting added to the parking lot where the maintenance crew is currently housed, and it needs to be moved to the location at Battleground.

Councilman Morris suggested meeting with the SIDA since they were going to fund the construction of a new shop. He said had recently spoken with SIDA Chair Ron Orr, and the SIDA is still holding \$200,000 for the shop. Clerk/Treasurer Steve Johnson said the original estimates were all over the board, so meeting with the SIDA would be a good first step. This topic was tabled.

Councilwoman Johnson stated that she would still like the cleanup of those areas to start now even though the topic was tabled. The Mayor asked what was left at the old town shop area that needed to be hauled off, and Mr. Martin said some equipment was still there. The town's gas pump is still there as well. Some of that equipment could go to Berry's, so the Mayor asked that be done before the next meeting. Mr. Martin replied that the town crew is currently down two members due to recent resignations, so there are currently only four workers including the Director, R.B. Henderson. Therefore, he asked that deadline be extended to August 1st.

Councilwoman Johnson then made a motion for the town to start cleaning up its own properties. Mr. Martin asked that instead of getting too specific with a motion that the Council instruct the town to have the scrap metal, spare vehicles, and whatever else is lying around taken to Berry's by the end of the summer. Councilwoman Johnson's motion died for lack of a second.

Chief Puckett said some of those vehicles may bring a better price if they are put out to bid instead of being sold for scrap. Mr. Martin replied that if they aren't fit for bidding, then they'll go to Berry's.

4. Bid documents for the upcoming Rural Development project

Mr. Johnson reminded the Council that during the budget meeting with Mr. Hilt and Mr. Barbrow from Rural Development, it was explained that the Council would have to officially authorize the town's engineers to start the design work by preparing the bid documents for the \$6.2 million project.

Councilman Morris made the motion to authorize the Lane Group to prepare the bid documents, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

New Business

1. EMS, Inc. report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The weekly meetings continue with good results.
- 2) The DEQ report for May was submitted, and there was one overflow at the Route 91 pump station.
- 3) The belt press sludge pump motor the Council approved will be installed shortly.
- 4) Regarding the RD project, they have put together a wish list for the engineers of things they'd like to see done.
- 5) Waste Management is taking longer to pick up the sludge, so Mr. Martin is going to look into other companies to do this.
- 6) The VDH monthly report and the VDH Water Treatment Leak Loss report for May have been submitted.
- 7) The Council had asked him to look into the possible discontinuation of putting fluoride in the town's water, so he emailed Eric Herold at the Office of Drinking Water, and Mr. Herold's reply is attached for the Council to consider.

Councilman Comer asked if there may be grant funding for the cost of the fluoride, and Mr. Johnson replied that grant funding was possibly available, but it would be for the cost of the feeding system and not the fluoride itself. However, if the town were to accept this grant and then later decide to stop the fluoridation, the grant money would have to be paid back.

The Mayor asked Mr. Johnson if the town would receive any type of credit on the contract it has with EMS, Inc. since part of their monthly cost is testing the fluoride. Mr. Johnson said that could be looked at even though that is not a big cost. The main cost of the fluoride, around 90%, is the chemical itself, and that continues to rise. They do a lot for the town they don't charge for, but if the Council insists, it could be looked at.

8) There was a VDH inspection in May, and they left ten comments. Three of those have already been addressed, one was stricken, and they are working on the others. As compared to the last inspection which had twenty comments, things have improved.

9) The tank painting will be scheduled soon.

10) VDH wanted more information regarding the lead and copper levels. The town has until the end of September to do this.

Committee Reports

Councilwoman Johnson said the LOVE sign design has been shown around, and there is general consensus it looks good. She will meet with the Tourism Director and the grant writer to go over this soon. The town can spend up to \$1500 and will get reimbursed. The grant requires it to be in a good location, and if can be portable if so desired. This means it can be moved around in case of an event.

Both the Salt Trail and the Barbrow Trail are lacking in trash cans. Maybe the town can purchase some like the ones located at the ball fields which have latches and are pretty much bear-proof. She also took the Tourism Director, the grant writer and the Chamber Director on a big portion of the Salt Trail to get their suggestions on how to make it better. Regarding the Barbrow Trail, some trees were cleared but then left there. If possible, these could be part of a controlled burn by the fire department.

There should be a lock on the gate that goes to the gun range since some people using the newer section of the Barbrow Trail go up that way instead of staying on the trail like they should. And for those who don't know, the Salt Trail behind Pizza Plus contains a disc golf area. This is free for anyone who wants to use it.

As has been mentioned before, the location of the old Clarks Pharmacy would be a good spot for a new library when the town crew moves to their new shop. There is better parking, a drive-in window, more space for books and meeting areas, and better bathroom access. It could also be used as a community center. Her next committee meeting will be on June 30th at 5:00 p.m.

Public Works Director's Report

Mr. Henderson was not present for the meeting.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) Officer Pickle's last day was June 3rd after accepting a position in Alaska. Councilman Morris made a motion to advertise for his position, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. The motion carried 6-0.
- 2) He would also like to see an advertisement for an officer for the inmate program. As of right now, there is still no word on when the inmates will return, but Smyth and Washington counties will get the first pick. Also, any officer who works with the inmates has to be a male per the jail's rules. Councilwoman Johnson made the motion to advertise, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.
- 3) The next Academy will start on July 13th.
- 4) The transformer was moved from Chilhowie to Broadford June 5 -6.
- 5) He and Assistant Chief Lynch attended training in Roanoke last week.
- 6) All stats are included for the last year, and they include citations and arrests.
- 7) The CC Rider Memorial Ride is set for this coming Saturday. The road will be closed when the Ride starts, and will be open while they are gone. It will be closed when they return since there will be several vendors set up along with music and plenty of people milling around. Councilwoman Johnson asked about the port-a-potties being cleaned before this, and Mr. Martin said he would contact Jobsite Johnny to make sure they are.
- 8) Councilman Eugene Call asked about the on-going speeding in town since he's heard a lot of complaints, and Chief Puckett said they would look at this.

Fire Department Report

Chief Lynch spoke on the following:

- 1) There were eleven calls in May with seven being in the town and four in the county.
- 2) Gerald Arnold, Jr. and he attended a Structure I class and then took the state test and are awaiting the results. If they pass, they'll be able to go to the Fire and Rescue Academy and teach the cadets as primary instructors.
- 3) The department now has eighteen total members with the addition of Skylar Call, and two of them recently passed their driver training.
- 4) Councilman Morris asked if the town usually paid for the department's audit since he saw an invoice for \$5800 showing that the town paid for that service. Mr. Johnson said the town has always paid for that.

Emergency Medical Services Report

Kyle Brewster spoke on the following:

- 1) Regarding this new agency, they now have their new FCC license, so there will be no interruption in service. They have four vehicles titled and tagged. They also have a Dodge Ram that AEP donated to the squad a couple of years ago.
- 2) They have completed their tasks required for OMS licensure. The state will do their inspections on June 22nd.
- 3) There are several applications to go over including new people and those who decided to move from the old operation to this new one. All will have background checks and their driver records will be inspected as well.

Councilman Gary Call made a motion to approve the new hires and perform the background checks, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Gary Call then made the motion to approve the existing members who've already had their backgrounds checked. Councilman Surber seconded, and all were in favor.

- 4) An account has been opened at the Bank of Saltville under the name *Town of Saltville EMS*. This will be used solely to keep billing monies coming in separate from other monies. The Bank is requiring the Council formally approve this account. Councilman Morris made the motion to authorize this account, and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

1) Kris Sheets, the town's Librarian, is requesting to be able to use semi-permanent paint at the library for the kids to use on the sidewalk there. It will last through the summer. The Council had no objections.

2) Maintenance issues have been resolved at the pool, although it was a challenge finding workers (lifeguards and pool managers). This was somewhat expected since the pool has not been open since 2019 due to COVID. The pool will open this Saturday. There will be no concession stand this year, so going back to what Missy Turner asked during Citizens' Time, he did not see a problem with local restaurants delivering food to the pool patrons, and the Council agreed.

Mr. Martin said bigger crowds are anticipated since it was closed last year, so there will be times when two managers might be needed as well as more lifeguards being on duty for really big crowds. Since patrons will be able to bring in coolers, those will have to be watched to make sure no glass or alcohol is brought in. There may also still be distancing requirements in place. Due to these circumstances, he thinks there should be a raise in the fees charged. The current structure is as follows: \$5 daily fee, \$35 per pass, and \$250 per party. The daily would stay the same and the passes would go to \$40. Councilman Eugene Call said he would like to see the cost of the parties go up as well as the passes. Councilman Morris made a motion to set the parties at \$300; the daily at \$5; and the passes at \$40 and Councilwoman Johnson seconded. All were in favor.

Councilman Eugene Call asked about the impeller, and Mr. Martin said it still hasn't been replaced. He suggested calling Dollywood or some other place who had a wave pool and see if they had any suggestions about what to do regarding this issue.

Councilwoman Johnson asked about the pay rate since the last time the Council voted, all part-time employees would make \$10 per hour. Mr. Martin said the town had not received any applications, so the pay rate was going to be \$13 per hour this year. That salary brought in more applications. Councilwoman Johnson countered by saying she thought that was excessive since some of the town's full-time workers don't even make that much. She reiterated that the last time the Council voted on a pay structure, they voted that part-timers would make only \$10 per hour.

Councilman Eugene Call said it's going around that the town was going to pay for lifeguard classes. Councilman Morris replied that he, the Mayor, and Mr. Martin had discussed this because there had been no applicants at the end of May, and this seemed a way to entice more applicants. Mr. Johnson said several of the lifeguards and their parents had asked this question. Councilwoman Johnson asked how long the certifications were good for, and Mr.

Johnson said two years. She then suggested that the town pay for half of their classes as long as the lifeguards work a certain number of hours. Mr. Johnson replied that if it is a rainy summer, they are going to have trouble getting those hours. Councilman Morris mentioned that this cost could be offset with some of the COVID funds the town will receive since the lack of lifeguards could be traced back to COVID. Mr. Martin repeated that only a few weeks ago the town had zero applications and both the Council and the public were really wanting the pool opened. Therefore, some allowances were made this year that have not had to be made in the past. COVID has changed the way the labor pool has worked in that potential lifeguards did not want to work for the normal wages. Councilwoman Johnson suggested asking the town's attorney if the town could pay for half of the class since paying for half would represent the work they do this summer. Councilman Eugene Call said he did not like the public asking him about the town paying for the classes since it was never discussed, and Councilwoman Johnson agreed. Councilman Morris countered the Council does not meet every day, so the town's staff needs to be trusted. Councilwoman Johnson responded that wages should not be messed with arbitrarily especially since some of the town's full-time workers don't make the proposed rate, and they would have every right to be upset about that. It's fiscally inappropriate as well.

Mr. Johnson asked about the wage for the managers since they made \$10 per hour in the past. Councilman Morris suggested \$11 per hour to bring them a little more than the lifeguards. Councilwoman Johnson made the motion to pay the lifeguards \$10 per hour and the managers \$11 per hour. Councilman Morris seconded, and the motion carried 3-2-1 with Council members Johnson, Morris, and Surber voting yes, Council members Gary Call and Comer voting no, and Councilman Eugene Call abstaining.

Regarding paying for the classes, Councilman Morris said if it had been told his classes were going to be paid for and then they weren't, he would go elsewhere. Councilman Eugene Call stated that someone randomly made that decision. Mr. Johnson replied that nobody in the front office made that decision, and he did not know where that idea came from. The Council agreed to ask the town's attorney whether or not the town could actually pay for these classes.

3) AEP moved the seventh and final transformer last weekend. The Bailey bridge will be removed later in the summer.

4) VDOT has notified the town that a 90-day "flashing" period was required before removing the traffic lights at the intersection of Route 91 and Allison Gap Road.

5) Republic Services could hit the town with a \$70,000 increase next year just like they did Chilhowie this year. The town is currently exploring other options.

6) The town and the Smyth County School Board have done their parts regarding the slide at the Government Plant, but the hold-up continues to be the management company for North Fork Manor. Because they have quite a bit of HUD financing, there are more hoops they have to jump through.

7) The Smyth County Tourism Association and the Chamber of Commerce are having a takeover of the Welcome Center in Bristol for July. The town will man it for three days, and the Lily Pad will be helping as well.

8) There is an application for a grant through VDOT to maybe get help for bike lanes at the Salt Trail.

9) The town will re-apply for the EPA grant money through the Smyth County EDA to help clean-up the old town shop site.

10) The town turned in the appropriate documentation to be eligible for the next round of American Recovery Plan Act funds.

Since Mr. Henderson was not present, Mr. Martin spoke about the following maintenance department items:

1) As of this Friday, the town crew will only have four members as opposed to seven a year ago. He requested a motion to advertise for the open positions. Councilwoman Johnson asked if this required a CDL, and Mr. Martin said that is usually the case, but exceptions have been made for good workers. She then made the motion to advertise for three positions (the amount in the current budget) and have the ad include a CDL is required. The motion died for lack of a second.

Councilman Morris then made the motion to just advertise for open positions without a number attached to it. Councilman Gary Call seconded. After a short discussion, the Mayor gavelled the proceedings and asked for the vote. The motion carried 5-1 with Councilwoman Johnson voting no.

2) The Council had authorized ordering two sets of portable speedbumps, but due to more requests, there are two more on order.

3) Councilwoman Johnson asked about the markings for the trail crossings that had been discussed previously, and Mr. Martin said he would take care of that.

4) Councilman Gary Call said he appreciated the job that Mr. Martin does especially considering that some Council members like to be in the Town Hall all the time. Mr. Martin thanked him and said social media is everywhere now, but the decision for the lifeguard salaries was his alone.

Lastly, Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to adjourn, and Councilman Morris seconded. All were in favor.

