

Minutes of the Public Hearing held by the Saltville Town Council on November 9, 2021 at 6:40 p.m. in the Town Hall

Council: Jeff Comer, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, and Gary Call
Monica Johnson and Steve Surber were not present.

Mayor: C. Todd Young

Staff: Brian Martin, Town Manager
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

The Mayor opened the Public Hearing by stating its purpose was to receive public input on the proposed leasing of the Salt Park and the Palmer Mill. Per a question from the audience, the Mayor stated that the Sons of the Confederacy wanted to lease the Salt Park, and the Allison Gap Community Center wanted to lease the Palmer Mill. There was no further comment, so the Mayor then closed the Public Hearing.

Minutes of the Public Hearing held by the Saltville Town Council on November 9, 2021 at 6:50 p.m. in the Town Hall

Council: Jeff Comer, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, and Gary Call
Monica Johnson and Steve Surber were not present.

Mayor: C. Todd Young

Staff: Brian Martin, Town Manager
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

The Mayor opened the Public Hearing by stating its purpose was to receive public input on making Bank Street a one-way road where vehicles would only enter Bank Street from East Main Street or the Walgreens parking lot. No one made any comment, so the Mayor then closed the Public Hearing.

Before the regularly scheduled meeting started, a member of the Sons of the Confederacy said they would rather wait until maybe next year to lease the Salt Park since they needed to check into the insurance ramifications more and work out other logistics. The group withdrew their request to lease the Salt Park now.

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Saltville Town Council held on November 9, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall

Council: Jeff Comer, Eugene Call, Bryan Morris, and Gary Call
Monica Johnson and Steve Surber were not present.

Mayor: C. Todd Young

Staff: Brian Martin, Town Manager
Paul Cassell, Town Attorney
Erik Puckett, Police Chief
R.B. Henderson, Public Works Director
Steve Johnson, Clerk/Treasurer

Councilman Gary Call made a motion approve the minutes of the October 12, 2021 Public Hearing. Because not enough members of the Council in attendance tonight were present for that Public Hearing, the motion died for lack of a second. This will be on next month's agenda.

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 12, 2021 regularly scheduled meeting, and Councilman Comer seconded. The motion carried 3-0-1 with Councilman Eugene Call abstaining since he was not present for that meeting.

Citizens' Time

Randall Smith said he was following through with his comments at the meeting from last month concerning the use of the stage for a variety of town events. The Mayor replied that Councilwoman Johnson was the head of this particular committee, and Mr. Smith should discuss it with her first.

Mr. Smith also asked about the parcel of town-owned land that he requested, and Clerk/Treasurer Steve Johnson said the surveyor was re-doing his survey since the original one covered too much land, and he would let Mr. Smith know when it was done.

Kimberly Lester was representing Jr. Panther basketball, a new program for kids from kindergarten through the sixth grade. They are starting from the ground up and need uniforms, insurance, and other equipment. There have been two sign-ups so far with over eighty kids involved. The Mayor suggested that she send an official letter to Town Manager Brian Martin requesting help from the town.

She said the insurance would cost \$800 at most and that each of the seven teams would receive five basketballs. Mr. Martin said he had received an official email from Ms. Lester for this, so Councilman Morris made a motion to authorize \$500 for this new program, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

Approval of the Agenda

Councilman Morris made a motion to approve the agenda, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

Old Business

1. Leasing of the Salt Park and the Palmer Mill

The Salt Park discussion was tabled. Regarding the Palmer Mill, Councilman Morris said he would like to see a time frame when the Allison Gap Community Center would actually start using the facility, and Councilman Eugene Call said he would like to see the water wheel be put back in use after repairs are made. Councilman Comer mentioned that if the Community Center rented out the building, then they should get the proceeds and not the town since they are the ones leasing and doing the upkeep.

Councilman Morris made the motion to have Town Attorney Paul Cassell prepare a lease agreement, and while that is happening, the Community Center members can continue with the renovation. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

2. Making Bank Street one-way

Police Chief Erik Puckett reiterated his thoughts from previous discussions involving problems with parallel parkers and sight distance for people trying to exit Bank Street. Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to make Bank Street one-way, and Councilman Gary Call seconded. All were in favor.

During the discussion, Councilman Morris said it was his opinion that the whole process would be more complicated than it may appear to be. The Mayor said it would be a drawn-out procedure since the town will be dealing with more signage, road striping, advertising, the effect it would have on the local businesses there, etc. The vote on the motion was 2-2 with Councilmen Gary Call and Eugene Call voting yes, and Councilmen Comer and Morris voting no

with Councilman Comer stating that he just didn't know how familiar the public was with this proposed change, and Councilman Morris stating that there needed to be more than just a month for detailed advertising. The Mayor voted no, so the motion failed 2-3. He then suggested having Mr. Martin contact VDOT to get their opinion on this since Bank Street intersects Main Street, and Main Street is a VDOT road. Councilman Morris made the motion for Mr. Martin to contact VDOT, and Councilman Eugene Call seconded. All were in favor.

New Business

1. Grant opportunities update

Catherine Van Noy, the town's grant writer, spoke on the following:

- 1) So far, she has brought in \$20,000 to the town in grants, and there is currently \$1.6 million in the application pool.
- 2) Grants in general have to be viable and have to fit a body's needs in terms of the grant's size relative to what the body can accomplish.
- 3) Sometimes a regional style grant application carries more weight than just a local one. That is how the Museum received a \$10,000 grant recently. The Museum is part of a combined website that links to other museums in Southwest Virginia.
- 4) The town received \$10,000 as part of the Drive 2.0 effort. This money will allow the town to use the money how it wishes as long as it is used on something that is based in tourism.
- 5) The \$1.6 million mentioned earlier is for improvements to the Salt Trail. She feels the Salt Trail is one of the best in the region.
- 6) The grant market is more competitive now than it has ever been, so communities are having to be more creative in their approach. It helps in the grant application to note how a town receiving money will also impact the entire region as well.
- 7) The American Rescue Plan Act is helping to put over \$3 billion across the country which should help the travel and tourism industry in this area. Also, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is going to be giving away \$30 million over the next three years. Saltville by itself is not in the best position to receive some of this grant money by but making sure that Saltville shows how this will affect the region really helps in the grant process. Regional ideas are more productive.

8) Her contract with the town ends on November 15th, and she believes she could help the town better by having a regional contract instead of one just with the town, and those seeds are already being sown. Like she mentioned before, working with counties and more towns and cities together would ultimately help Saltville more than just submitting applications on Saltville's behalf. Moreover, working regionally will enable her to go after larger grants, too.

2. Vehicle and equipment maintenance

This was tabled.

3. EMS, Inc. report

Gary Johnson spoke on the following:

- 1) The weekly meetings with the town's staff continue.
- 2) The DEQ report for October was submitted as was the DEQ/VA Dental Rule Compliance report which had to be completed by the Dental Clinic.
- 3) The VDH monthly report and the VDH Water Treatment Leak Loss report were both submitted for October.
- 4) The 107 tank is back in service, and the Edgewood tank is still being disinfected after both were painted.
- 5) The Lane Group is working on the wastewater plant upgrade.
- 6) The town received a grant from DEQ for \$50,000 for the aerial crossing replacement. This will cover 50% of the cost with the remaining balance probably coming from the ARPA funding.
- 7) There will be a pre-bid conference on November 11th at 2:00 p.m. for the meter replacement project. Right now, there is a six to nine-month lag time on the meters due to so-called supply chain issues. The town will get what it can, so probably ten percent of the meters will be put in up front, and the software will be installed to get the bugs out before the rest of the meters are installed as they come in. At the request of the Mayor, Mr. Martin said he would mention at the pre-bid conference that not all of the meters will be here at the same time so hopefully, any contractor selected would not charge any extra mobilization fees, and all meters will be placed on the town's right-of-way.
- 8) Mr. Johnson said he was going to get quotes from other sludge hauling companies to see what else is out there in terms of saving money.

9) Some of the fencing around the wells and stations needs replacing, so the town has enlisted the Smyth County Department of Emergency Management to help with grants for this.

10) Councilman Morris said the Marion paints their own tanks and asked if Saltville could do it here. Mr. Martin said this would be looked at more next year when the current tank contract expires.

4. Meeting times for December, January, and February

Councilman Morris said he knows the office staff would prefer a 5:00 p.m. starting time for the winter meetings, but he disagreed with the change even though he said he would go along with it. Councilman Eugene Call said he actually preferred the 5:00 p.m. starting time and made the motion to have those meetings start then. Councilman Morris seconded, and all were in favor.

Committee Reports

Councilman Comer said he and Mr. Martin met with school board employee Mike Sturgill about how the board could support the town in terms of the athletic fields and other things.

The Mayor said the Tourism Board met here yesterday to discuss the proposed campground and the Salt Trail and how it needs to be completed. He and Mr. Martin are also meeting with Glade Spring this week to discuss the Salt Trail more in-depth. Hopefully, the Washington County Board of Supervisors will get on board with helping the trail since the biggest portion of it falls in that particular county.

The Mayor also mentioned that he would like to see the town's engineers put a study together about forming a new subdivision in town since there is a housing shortfall in the town and the counties. He would like to see them find a location for this to help with LMI (low to moderate income) housing. This would help the town grow and provide a bigger tax base.

Councilman Morris made the motion to have Mr. Martin contact the engineers to perform this study, and Councilman Comer seconded. All were in favor.

Public Works Director's Report

Mr. Henderson spoke on the following:

- 1) Both tanks have been rehabbed. The 107 tank is back online, and the Edgewood tank will be online by the end of the week.
- 2) He received an email from VDH asking if the town was having problems getting chemicals. The town is fine so far but has ordered more chlorine and fluoride just in case.
- 3) The town has procured 180 tons of road salt.
- 4) The fall clean-up will be extended to next week.
- 5) Councilman Comer thanked Mr. Henderson for having the town crew pick up more trash around town. Mr. Henderson replied that the overlook and the ball fields were where the most trash was. Councilman Morris asked about possibly getting a light at the overlook to help deter the littering. Mr. Martin said he would put together a request for AEP and also get some prices for solar lighting there as well. Councilman Call said that a light was needed on Second Avenue, so Mr. Martin said he would look into that, too.

Police Chief's Report

Chief Puckett spoke on the following:

- 1) A new DMV grant period has begun.
- 2) The Trunk-or-Treat and Halloween, in general, went well.
- 3) The suspect in the Cargo robbery was extradited back to Virginia, and the trial will begin shortly.
- 4) There have been more speeding tickets written as the officers are working grant time, and Councilman Eugene Call thanked Chief Puckett for this.
- 5) The Mayor asked if some officers could park at the ballfields to watch for littering since trash has become a big issue there, and the Chief replied that the evening shift officers would do that.

Fire Department Report

Chief Lynch spoke on the following:

- 1) They had twenty-five calls last month with nine in the town and sixteen in the county which includes five aid situations.
- 2) The department now has twenty-four members with the addition of two new ones who were voted in last Sunday.
- 3) The Christmas banquet will be December 4th at 6:30 p.m., and the Council is invited.
- 4) They will hold their extrication training on December 5th at 11:00 a.m.
- 5) For the year, there have been 175 calls, and that represents a 29% increase from last year.
- 6) With their aforementioned Christmas banquet being on December 4th, the Mayor asked if anyone had any problem with the Christmas parade being on December 11th starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Medical Center. Additionally, a couple of other communities are having their parades on December 4th.

Councilman Eugene Call made the motion to have the parade start at 6:00 p.m. on December 11th starting at the Medical Center. Councilman Morris seconded, and all were in favor.

Emergency Medical Services Report

Director Kyle Brewster spoke on the following:

- 1) They had seventy-eight calls last month.
- 2) The open house for the Explorer Program was held on November 2nd. There are currently four Explorers with the expectation of having ten next month.
- 3) Richelle Loman told the Council that they took in \$61,069 last month which includes billing income, the county allotment, and the sale of some old equipment.
- 4) Expenses came to \$44,900 for October with \$27,000 of that being the reimbursement of payroll back to the town. Therefore, they have a net income of over \$16,000 for the month.
- 5) So far in November, over \$14,000 in billing income has been deposited.
- 6) They will know in the next 3-6 weeks if they received approval for their grant applications.

Town Manager's Report

Mr. Martin spoke on the following:

- 1) There will be a hot dog lunch for veterans on Veterans Day here at the Town Hall. This is being sponsored by Five Loaves and the Northwood Fellowship.
- 2) There will be music after the Christmas parade hosted by the Rich Valley and Locust Grove Presbyterian churches.
- 3) VDOT replied to his email regarding the hump in the road at the Dental Clinic entrance from Highway 107 first brought to attention by Councilman Morris. The permitting has been obtained, so that should be fixed soon.
- 4) All Council members are invited to the December 7th meeting of the Smyth County Economic Development Authority.
- 5) The paving and road striping have been completed.
- 6) The Smyth County Tourism Association held their November meeting at the Town Hall, and both he and the Mayor hosted a tour of the town.
- 7) The Friends of the Saltville Playground has changed its name to the Friends of the Salt Trail to reflect a change in their overall mission.
- 8) The campground application and the Salt Trail application for bike lanes and the grade connector will both be submitted by January 1st.
- 9) There will be a so-called Spring Spruce-up of town properties next spring. Painting, maintenance, clean-up, pressure washing, etc. will be on the docket, so let the front office know if there are specific requests.
- 10) The Smyth County Chamber of Commerce is coordinating community surveys in preparation of the design for a Saltville tourism website made possible through the Drive 2.0 grant award.
- 11) The project for the bridge at the end of Government Plant Road has been bid out.
- 12) Councilman Morris thanked everyone that the crosswalk in the Wellfields has been painted.
- 13) Councilman Gary Call asked about the naming of the recreation area after Chub Arnold, and Councilman Comer said that is still being discussed, and the details are still being worked out. Others are being contacted for their opinions.

Closed Session

Councilman Morris made a motion to enter Closed Session in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) to discuss personnel in the maintenance department and Emergency Medical Services department; and Section 2.2-3711(A)(29) to discuss a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contract, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

After exiting Closed Session, Councilman Morris made a motion to certify that the Closed Session was conducted in conformity with Virginia law regarding those matters that are exempted from open meeting requirements and nothing was discussed other than what was mentioned in the motion to convene Closed Session. Councilman Gary Call seconded, and the roll call vote was 4-0 in the affirmative.

Councilman Morris made the motion to advertise an RFP for household refuse collection services to be completed by the next Council meeting. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Councilman Morris made a motion to give a \$1 per hour raise to the employee discussed in Closed Session. Councilman Eugene Call seconded, and all were in favor.

Councilman Gary Call made a motion to hire the two Emergency Medical Services employees discussed in Closed Session for full-time positions. Councilman Morris asked if these positions had to be advertised and that he was concerned this could turn into a larger pay compression issue within the other town departments. Councilman Eugene Call said he would like to see this tabled, so Councilman Gary Call withdrew his motion.

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

