

MINUTES OF THE TIMBERVILLE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

May 11th, 2023

The regular monthly meeting of the Timberville Town Council was held Thursday May 11th, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Council chambers with Mayor Donald Delaughter presiding.

MEMBERS: Carl Turner-Present Sharon Jones-Present
Clarence Fox-Absent Sarah Berry-Present
Debbie Jessup-Present Isaac Kelley-Present

PRESENT: Austin Garber, Town Manager
Melinda Hooke, Clerk/Treasurer
JR Dodd, Chief of Police
Quinton Callahan, Town Attorney
Beverly Garber, Town Historian
Jeremy Hooke, Police Sergeant

GUESTS: Paula Bowman Darlene Coffman
Butch Bowman Blaine Bieber
Siv Yeing Ung-Liambounheuang Colleen Gray
Va Ung-Liambounheuang Andrew Kauffman
Drew Spiggle Natalie Watts
Richard Coffman Tyler Jessup
Emma Strawderman

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Mayor Donald Delaughter led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Sarah Berry and seconded by Isaac Kelley to approve the April minutes, along with the budget minutes from April 11th and April 27th. The motion carried with all present members voting in favor.

Roll Call Vote:

Isaac Kelley-Yes Debbie Jessup-Yes
Sarah Berry-Yes Carl Turner-Yes
Sharon Jones-Yes

TREASURER'S REPORT: General Fund	\$80,588.73
Water/Sewer Acct.	\$287,425.65
Loan Balance	\$764,670.31
Money Market Acct.	\$1,187,949.03
ARPA Funds	\$1,120,465.63

BILLS FOR PAYMENT: A motion was made by Sharon Jones and seconded by Debbie Jessup to pay the bills as presented. The motion carried with all present members voting in favor.

Roll Call Vote:

Isaac Kelley-Yes Debbie Jessup-Yes
Sarah Berry-Yes Carl Turner-Yes
Sharon Jones-Yes

POLICE REPORT: Chief Dodd sent out his monthly email to Council. The ARPA grant through DCJS (Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services) was approved. The FOIA request that was received has been completed.

Sharon Jones asked about the grass ordinances. Chief Dodd stated there were 30 documented. The police department has been working on them. He stated that Sergeant Hooke contacted the owner of the old Mason Motor lot and part of the property has been mowed.

PUBLIC WORKS: Mayor Delaughter requested that Maintenance Supervisor Chris Coffman send his monthly report directly to Council.

Austin Garber had a zoom meeting with the Planning District Commission. There is grant funding for charging and fueling infrastructure for electric vehicles. The PDC is hoping there would not be cost to the towns. There is funding for level 2 and level 3 chargers. Level 2 cost \$10,000 per charger and level 3 cost \$100,000. There needs to be a minimum of 4 chargers per location. Sharon Jones asked about 80/20 match. Austin Garber explained that 80% would be covered by the grant and 20% would be covered by the third party. Mayor Delaughter stated he was not interested if it uses tax payer money. He is ok if a private business wanted to do it. Austin Garber stated the only way he would recommend it is if there was not any cost to the town. Debbie Jessup, Carl Turner and Isaac Kelley were not interested in pursuing further information. Sarah Berry stated she does not see any harm in pursuing for more information.

VDOT hosted their 6-year improvement plan meeting. There were 35 speakers. Austin Garber and Mayor Delaughter went in support of the Rails to Trails. Austin Garber stated that there were others there supporting Rails with Trails. He stated it was an interesting meeting with a lot of good information. The RFP is out for the restrooms at the American Legion Park. Austin Garber stated there were people already interested in putting in a bid. Austin will mark the potential location of the bathroom with yellow flags. He asked the members of the park committee to stop by this weekend and see if they like where he marked.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY: Town Attorney Quinton Callahan explained the town has an Economic Development Authority (EDA) that was created through the Industrial Development Act in Virginia. This allows the Town of Timberville to work with organizations to issue bonds for funding projects. He stated the town has been working with Sunnyside for years on bond issuances. The benefit is that the town receives \$3500 a year that can be used for economic development purposes. The EDA met this evening and voted to approve all the bond requests and pass a resolution adopting that. The Council needs to adopt a similar resolution adopting the recommendation from the EDA. Mr. Callahan read important parts of the resolution and then asked for a motion to approve or deny the recommendation of the EDA. Sharon Jones made a motion to approve EDA recommendation. Debbie Jessup seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

Isaac Kelley-Yes Debbie Jessup-Yes

Sarah Berry-Yes Carl Turner-Yes

Sharon Jones-Yes

BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING: Town Manager Austin Garber stated there is a proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 totaling \$2,583,894.00. The following increases are proposed: 1% meals tax; \$0.75 per month on trash charges; additional trash containers charged at full trash rates; 5% increase on water and sewer rates resulting in an additional \$1.65 per month for minimum users. Mayor Delaughter opened the public comment section.

Tyler Jessup from 180 S. C Street stated he served 4 and half years on Council. He stated it was always his opinion that as a member of the Council, it was the Council's responsibility to be fiscally responsible to the citizens. Mr. Jessup stated he has roasted Council members in the past over the Christmas Village and he was here tonight to roast more. He explained his wife is on Council and the reason he knows about things is because he asks questions and he feels he has a right to know just as well as anyone else. The budget includes a 10% increase in pay for all employees. Mr. Jessup stated he has been in public service for over 26 years and has never received a 10% increase in pay that includes promotions, cost of living or those combined. Mr. Jessup stated that when he was on Council there was not another Council member more in favor of an employee than himself. He fought for hazardous duty pay for the police department amongst other things. Mr. Jessup reminded that the employees received a 5% increase last

year with a \$3500 bonus and now this year a potential 10% increase on the backs of the tax payers and few restaurants in town. He stated he has a problem with that. Mr. Jessup told a story of an 80-year-old lady who lost her husband to COVID and is renting a home in Timberville. She told him she is at the top of what she can afford to pay. Her air conditioning went out and the landlord fixed the problem, but then increased her rent. He asked the Council what they think will happen when you increase something that is a recurring payment is going to do to the future of tax rates. He stated that if you think it is anything other than increase then you are a fool. Mr. Jessup states he has talked to other elderly residents around him and they said they determine whether they pay for groceries, prescriptions or they are going to pay for bills and that is a problem. He states he is not in favor of supporting people who do not want to work, but want to live on the system, but work their whole damn life and now they cannot afford to live because we keep increasing the cost of their living. Again, he stated that is a problem. Mr. Jessup said he is all in favor of the employee, but 10% is a bit extravagant. He said he thinks some things need to be thought about before the passage of this budget. He also stated that the citizens in the town need to think about the "wolves in sheep's clothing" that sit amongst them. He said when it comes time to vote, he understands we have not had a plethora of candidates, but maybe more people need to come forward because there are too many people who are willing to increase and increase and increase because they think it is no big deal. He states that it is a big damn deal to people who are on a fixed income.

Emma Strawderman from 196 West Riverside Drive stated there was a lady who lived in Timberville on a fixed income. She had to leave her house and go to a 442 square foot apartment. She stated the lady was found at the park by one of the employees. Mayor Delaughter stated he found her. Ms. Strawderman stated she was a friend of hers and the lady had enough and could not afford anything. She asked who else might be on that boat and that she did not know. She also asked if more people would be found like that and she stated she did not know, but she hoped not. Ms. Strawderman said would it be on the citizens or the leaders and that it was up to Council.

Darlene Coffman from 249 Walnut Drive stated she moved to Timberville in 1970 and has watched the town grow and she loves the town and it was a great place to raise her kids. Ms. Coffman asked why the community events line on the budget jumped from \$500 to \$7000. Town Manager Austin Garber explained that the community events account was combined with the police departments outreach account and now it was moved and combined in one account for all community events. Ms. Coffman looked for the minutes for the budget and could not find them. She asked if the minutes had to be approved first. Austin Garber confirmed that they did need to be approved before posting them. Ms. Coffman stated that citizens do not know about the budget. Mayor Delaughter explained that the budget is advertised. Ms. Coffman asked if it was on the website. Austin Garber stated that it was posted on the website. Ms. Coffman asked when it was posted and Austin Garber stated it was posted after the second budget meeting. Ms. Coffman stated they live in front of the maintenance shop and know what they do and they work hard. She thinks the police department is great and has no complaints with any of the employees. Ms. Coffman states she has an issue with a 10% raise and she has never received more than a 3% raise while working. She states most people use the minimum for water and sewer and they do not get a break for not using any extra. She suggested rollover gallons since they are paying the minimum and never using the minimum. She stated with all increases it is becoming impossible to live in the Town of Timberville. She states that there are empty houses for sale in Harrisonburg because no one can afford to pay the taxes and she feels the same way. For older people living on fixed incomes, it is getting impossible. She states in her household they are lucky because they have two receiving social security checks. They have not touched their IRA because they are leaving it for when one goes and the other will have one income and it would be impossible to live in the Town of Timberville. It would be impossible to pay Rockingham County taxes and Timberville taxes and see everything else go up. She asked Council to relook at that. She states that Plains Elementary has been considered low income because the citizens of this town are considered low income and cannot afford it. She states the rates do not reflect that. Ms. Coffman suggested looking into salary caps for the employees. She thinks that should be considered and looked at very closely.

Richard Coffman from 249 Walnut Drive stated that young people are working and are dead to their feet. He asked Council to consider giving a 5% discount for the people who are 70 years or older. He

states that a lot of older people are working and it is killing them. He feels sorry for people trying to work and are struggling. He said he would like to work, but he cannot anymore and it is hard on people who have done hard labor jobs. He stated he worked in construction all his life. He said that people who are on a fixed income need a break. Mr. Coffman said that the government and everybody are taking money out of them and that the government is taking care of people who are working and they are getting the kickback. He stated that people on a fixed income are not getting anything and they need help. He said he loves the area but if it keeps going, you are forcing people out and they do not know where to go to.

Mayor Delaughter closed the public comment section of the public hearing.

ZONING ACTIVITY:

-153 Garrett Circle – Fence

-5127 Orchard Drive – Accessory Building

PARKS AND RECREATION: Boat launch grand opening will be scheduled at an upcoming date and at that time, the town will thank Cargill for their contribution.

Sharon Jones asked if they should plant flowers this year. Mayor Delaughter stated they would like for them to.

Austin Garber explained that the public hearing is all that can happen at tonight's meeting. Per the code of Virginia requirements, there needs to be a 7-day period between the public hearing and adoption of the budget.

FINANCE: None

PERSONNEL: There is a vacant position on the EDA. You are required to live in town or an adjacent location, which is Rockingham County.

PLAINS DISTRICT MEMORIAL MUSEUM: Sharon Jones thanked the town for helping with the vintage fair. Sharon stated the event did not go over well because of the rain. The tea event is scheduled for May 21st. Historical Broadway is still on display. Bluegrass is every Sunday at the museum from 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. Sharon asked if the town has recognized Nelson Sprouse for his years of service. She said something should be done and maybe given to his wife. Sharon will work with Melinda Hooke on doing some sort of recognition.

OTHER BUSINESS: None

PUBLIC COMMENT: Colleen Gray from 263 South Main Street thanked whomever is posting the items on Facebook. She asked about people who do not have Facebook and if there was a way to communicate what is going on in the town. Clerk/Treasurer Melinda Hooke said there was a sign out in front of the office. Ms. Gray stated she was not sure if it was her eyes, but she is unable to read it. Mayor Delaughter asked if she had any ideas and that we tried the newsletter and that did not work. Ms. Gray suggested sending out emails. Sharon Jones suggested doing a newsletter online and then they can read it online. Mayor Delaughter stated that we will talk to Marketing/Events Coordinator Cecilia Valdez about other ideas for getting information out. Sarah Berry stated that she would help as well. Paula Bowman from 272 South Main Street stated that years ago the decision was made that a sidewalk was needed on Memorial Park and was approved. Ms. Bowman said that the previous mayor decided that they were not going to spend the money on that. She said there is still not a sidewalk there and that it goes down to an important park. Ms. Bowman stated that you cannot walk on Memorial Park safely, it is too dangerous. She asked Council to please go back to putting the sidewalk in. Mayor Delaughter stated that we would contact VDOT and keep talking to them about it. She said people are walking to work and when school is out, kids will be walking on the street and it is dangerous without a sidewalk.

ADJOURNMENT: No further business, the meeting adjourned.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Melinda Hooke, Clerk

Donald Delaughter, Mayor