

Town of Hurt Meeting Minutes
July 15th, 2021
Hurt, Virginia

The Town of Hurt Council members held a meeting on Thursday, June 15th, 2021, at Hurt Town Hall. The meeting opened at 6:00 PM by Mayor Gary Hodnett with a quorum present.

Roll Call

Member's present were Mrs. Rainy Clay, Mr. Collin Adams, Mrs. Kathy Keesee, Mr. Donney Johnson, and Mrs. Shirley Barksdale-Hill.

A motion was made to enter closed session to discuss personnel, prospective business, and real estate, as authorized by VA FOIA § 2.2-3711 A (1)(3)(5).

Motion: Mrs. Clay Second: Mrs. Barksdale-Hill Passage: Unanimous

Council entered closed session at 6:02PM.

Council exited closed session approximately 7:15 PM.

A motion was made that only personnel and prospective business matters were discussed during closed session, as required by VA FOIA § 2.2-3712 (D).

Motion: Mrs. Clay Second: Mrs. Barksdale-Hill Passage: Unanimous

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation: Mrs. Keesee

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Hodnett.

New Council Member Seat Selection

Mayor stated that all candidates were interviewed during closed session and council discussed, Mayor ask do I hear a motion for nominations?

A motion was made to offer the position to Gary Poindexter to fill the term.

Motion: Mrs. Keesee Second: Mr. Johnson Passage: Unanimous

Mayor stated to Mr. Poindexter that he has been nominated and voted on and that the position is being offered to him and would he accept it. Mr. Poindexter stated that it will be an honor and he accepts. Mayor stated to the other candidates that he appreciated their interest and to please not give up, tha this November there will be a special election for Mr. Johnson and Mr. Poindexter's seats. We also have more elections again in 2023. Mayor Hodnett stated to Mr. Poindexter that we needed to get him sworn in ASAP, and that if he had time tomorrow, we would do so.

Mayor stated that our ordinances are weak and every time something comes up, it looks like we must go back to the table and figure it out. Mayor stated he would like to ask Mrs. Barksdale-Hill to start

looking at our current ordinances and making recommendations to bring us into the modern era, and as you go through them each month bring to council what you found and what you recommend. Mayor Hodnett stated is this something you are willing to do? Mrs. Barksdale-Hill stated yes. Mr. Adams added that boats needed to be looked at and maybe added to the ordinance. Mayor Hodnett stated that since we are looking to update things, he asked if Mr. Johnson would be willing to update our employee handbook, that it is very outdated. Mr. Johnson stated he would be glad too.

Consent Agenda

Mayor asked are we able to approve June 1st and June 15th minutes as is?

A motion was made to approve the June 1st and June 15th minutes as is.

Motion: Mrs. Barksdale-Hill

Second: Mrs. Keese

Passage: Unanimous

Hearing of Citizens/Public Comment Period

Mrs. Barksdale Hill asked the question if you wanted to change the landscaping of your yard and you wanted it to grow up as part of your landscaping, such as wildflowers? Attorney Eller stated flowers and wildflowers are not considered weeds and that it was okay. Jeff Blaesing had a few comments about speeding coming off the bridge from Altavista going into Hurt. He wanted to bring to our attention as well that across from his home there is a spot that people are using as a turn around which is not prohibited and that he has contacted VDOT and has not gotten anywhere with them. Also, there is a power pole that is not being used at all, and it is just sitting there, and it is an eye sore since it is not being used. Mayor Hodnett stated we can certainly contact Dominion and VDOT.

Mayor Hodnett states that we are opening the Public Hearing about the weed ordinance, is there anyone who has anything they want to share about it? Jeff Blaesing states that there are places near his home that is all grown up trees, and that VDOT does not handle that. Mrs. Clay states that there are some yards that aren't being cut, are we still sending out letters? Mayor Hodnett states he signs every letter he gets. Attorney Eller states that we only send them a letter one time, and then after that if nothing has been done then we charge them. The owner is responsible for keeping the yard well kept, not the tenant. Trees are needed to be cut back in the road if they are blocking traffic from seeing, if it is a VDOT road then we must alert them to take care of it. VDOT is supposed to go along the road and cut anything in the way of citizens driving. Mrs. Barksdale-Hill asked if it is their responsibility to cut it back or cut it down? Attorney Eller states just cut them back, and if they are dead then to cut them down. Mr. Vincent stated is it the owner or tenant's responsibility to cut the grass? Attorney Eller stated the owner.

A motion was made that we accept the new weed ordinances and that it is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain the grass and weeds.

Motion: Mrs. Keese

Second: Mr. Adams

Passage: Unanimous

Report from Legal Counsel-Attorney Eller

Attorney Eller states that we did the weed ordinances, and that was his report.

Reports from Staff

Administrative: Ellen Brumfield, Treasurer reported that the 2nd quarter reports have been filed with the Federal Government and Virginia Employment Commission. An excel spreadsheet has been created to calculate the GL accounts percentage of the VRSA quarterly invoice payment. We have in the General bank account as of today \$421,158.33, this amount includes the \$300,000.00 that the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) which is the covid relief fund. I have also been working with Jeremy Shelton and Gary Boggs on updating the Comprehensive Plan for the Town. Last, Kelsie and I have been working on a Commonwealth Survey for personal property and real estate taxes.

Administrative: Kelsie Sligh was reported that the 2020 tax collections were at 90.26% collection rate, the highest the Town has ever collected. Sligh reported she is still working hard on the delinquents and collecting those. We have updated a new slideshow on the Town website, so make sure you check that out if you haven't already. Sligh reported she is posting the most updated information as she can. Also, Sligh reported that Robin Goard was so kind to drop off the Real Estate and Personal Property books, and that she has finished the Real Estate book and updated our software with the newest information. Lastly Sligh mentioned a few meetings ago that she was working towards getting her notary, and that she has completed that and has notarized a few of the residents within the Town.

Mayor Hodnett states that Sligh has collected in back taxes \$18,499.00.

Public Works

Public Works: Colleen McGrath reported that she has got the delinquent water bills out, and she has sent out a letter to the residents letting them know that the water cut off has been lifted. She can now start to cut peoples water off if they have not made any efforts to pay their bill. McGrath states that since she sent that letter, she has had several people come in and start a new agreement and several that have paid in full. McGrath states that in the 3 quarters she has done billing, this last time was the highest collecting rate so far with 89% collection. Colleen states that we also sent out a water contamination letter to 641 residents and only received back 146. McGrath states that we have placed an order for the rest of the radio read meters, 256 were ordered, but they will not be here until mid-October. The cost of these new meters is \$64,000.00. Bitter Creek will be installing them as well. Also, we have a gentleman coming tomorrow to meet with me at the Pump Station, we had a small issue with the pump.

Mrs. Barksdale-Hill asked if this was affecting the Town and residents' water? Colleen stated no that we have 2 pumps and basically, they take turns, if one is running the other is not. Altavista has been helping her with any questions she has had.

Mayor Hodnett added that in less than a year this staff has collected almost 50% of our past due taxes that go back 5 years, prior to that the best year ever for collecting taxes was \$5,000 in a single year, which was back taxes. This goes to show what huge progress they are making and getting after things that need to be got after.

Police Department Report

Chief Jason Lovelace reported that the call for service:

Civil Complaints-1, Suspicious Person-2, Public Service-3, Vandalism/Destruction of Property-0, Larceny-1, Disabled Vehicle-1, Arrest-1, Alarms-0, Assist other Agencies-1, Fraud-1, Mutual Aid (LE)-1, Domestic Assault-1, Traffic Stops-0, Nosie Complaint-2.

Other: Miles Driven-374, Training-0

Assist other Town Departments-0

Use of Force-0

Department/Officer Complaints-0

Department Updates: Norfolk Southern advised that they are available Monday-Thursday 7am-5:30pm to assist with the paint. The Police Department messaging sign is in the shop from damage, someone ran into on Prospect Road. Office Sawyer is slated to start on August 1, he will be with me for several weeks to complete his field training. We are working on strengthening the Town of Hurt ordinance. Mike Phelan with Opto traffic has contacted me and advised that they are still waiting for an update from VDOT on the application. I will soon be meeting with the General District Court judge and clerk to discuss the court process. Also working towards Mutual Aid request for PCSO during venue events in the county.

Public Safety/ Assistant Town Manager- Mike Jones

Public Safety & Town Administration

- 1) Police Department is showing great strides with the Officer Sawyer coming on board and Chief Lovelace continuing the work to develop the police department to eventually meet Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPC) standards.
- 2) Working with Council Member Barksdale-Hill in an initiative to increase interest in Hurt Police with seeking additional diversity of all types in our police force.
- 3) The part time police community support officer position is still under development. The purpose is to support town Police and Town services in a non-enforcement role. This program is winning a lot of support nationwide in terms of community service efforts and uniform visibility.
- 4) Emergency Plans are still awaiting information from APCO on inundation mapping locations. Pittsylvania County Emergency manager Chris Slemph and I are working closely in ensuring our emergency service efforts complement each other.
- 5) A new mutual aid agreement is being sought from us by Sheriff Taylor regarding the use of Hurt Police officers on the South County music venue events. They are expecting large crowds and there are not enough police in the regional to ensure safety. Chief Lovelace & I are reviewing it. Be assured that the

Town of Hurt safety and security comes first but we will always need to be a team player in the regional law enforcement MOU plan.

6) Chief Lovelace & I will train staff in emergency use of the Police radio in the front office. This will allow us a better way to get emergency assistance if needed.

7) I am drawing up plans for security protection on the front office and hallway. This will include bullet proof glass and wall space for the public reception area.

8) I am working on our new OSHA Lone Worker protocol for all our staff when they are working alone. It is an updated requirement.

END OF REPORT

TM Mike Jones

END OF REPORT

Reports from Membership, Boards, and Commissions

Administrative: Kathy Keesee reported that she was very thankful for our staff, that they are always willing to help with anything. Mrs. Keesee also reported she is in the process of taking more photos for an additional slideshow to add to our Town website, and that she has a few updates and changes that she wants added to the website as well.

Community Development- Mrs. Clay reported that we need to be gathering any ideas or suggestions for another event early fall. The memorial Saturday was a huge hit, so doing another one would be nice. Mrs. Clay also added that August 3rd Altavista was hosting an event for the "Police Night out", and this was our council meeting night.

Finance: Mayor Hodnett reports since Mr. Watson is no longer here, we have the budget loaded in the data base, it is operational and running. The report Budget Vs Actual came right out of the new budget.

Mrs. Barksdale-Hill asked if we have already used up 60% of miscellaneous expenses, and if we need to budget more or transfer more? Mayor Hodnett stated yes, we have used up that much, and that the council approved this budget and if we go over it, we go over it, you cannot just increase the budget.

Public Works & Planning/Zoning Commission: Collin Adams reported that a couple weeks ago we met with the contractor who is going to do the first phase of our water. They are going to run a line from the Altavista water plant to our Pump station. They plan to start in August, depending on if they can get the materials or not. Mr. Adams stated while we got some contractors down here working, it would be nice to get a barrier to prevent cars coming down the hill and losing its breaks and hitting our Pump Station.

Mrs. Keesee stated it is dangerous, especially with snow and ice. Chief Lovelace stated he has investigated this before and due to a lot of work and people working down there at the station they have put it on hold. Mrs. Barksdale-Hill stated that VDOT says you cannot put a barrier there that could possibly kill someone, but you can put something there that will slow someone down.

Mrs. Brumfield stated the retail sales tax is \$9,000. Mr. Adams stated that this way no way it was correct. Mrs. Brumfield stated this was all we had collected towards it. Mayor Hodnett stated the previous meeting we discussed it was 10 million which is far from that. It was suggested by Attorney Eller that we audit the businesses.

Report from Mayor Hodnett

Mayor Hodnett reported that we have collected half of our covid money, the state government has deposited \$300,000 in our bank account. We are going to be extremely careful with how with use this money due to the strict guidelines, but we plan to use some of it to pay for the remaining of the Radio Read meters. Attorney Eller stated that the government sent out billions of dollars all over the country without anyone asking for it. Mayor Hodnett stated that he got an email from Mike Jones stating a bunch of cities already misusing the money, we want to be sure we are following the guidelines on how we use ours. Mayor Hodnett thanked everyone for coming.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:10PM.

Kelsie Sligh
Clerk

Gary Hodnett
Mayor