

Town of Hurt, Virginia
Council Meeting Minutes
May 2, 2023

Hurt Town Council held its monthly business meeting Tuesday, May 2, 2023, at Town Hall. The meeting opened at 6:00 PM by Mayor Gary Hodnett with a quorum present.

Roll Call

Members present: Mr. Gary Poindexter, Mr. Bob Majure, Mr. Jeremiah Knowles, and Mrs. Kathy Keesee
Members absent: Mr. Glenn Mitchell

Closed Session

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

Motion: Mr. Poindexter Second: Mr. Knowles Passage: Unanimous

Council entered closed session at 6:00 PM and exited closed session at approximately 7:19 PM.

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

Motion: Mr. Poindexter Second: Mr. Majure Passage: Unanimous

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance	Invocation: Mr.
Poindexter	Pledge of Allegiance: led by
Mayor Hodnett	

Welcome/Opening Remarks

Mayor Hodnett welcomed and thanked everyone for coming. It's always good to see a big crowd.

Consent Agenda

A motion was made to pass the April expenditures, March 21st work session, April 4th, and April 18th work session meeting minutes as is.

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

Mayor Hodnett stated no additions to the agenda.

Public Comments

Tommy Neal, Prospect Road stated he had three questions for the Mayor. I know you and I talked a couple meetings ago about fixing the agenda where the public coming in could see what ya'll were going to be talking about, I don't know if you have given any thought to that. Mayor Hodnett replied yes I did, I had some printed at the last meeting and no one showed up, so I didn't print any but I am sure I can get you an agenda. Tommy stated I know there was some discussion about the \$24 meter fee and we got our bill that said they were reducing it. Kelsie replied when we billed for November and December we charged for three months versus the two months, so now we are charging you for two months instead of the three, but next billing it will return to the \$24. Mayor Hodnett stated we talked about reducing it at a work session meeting, but that is going to be an ongoing conversation because I know we would all like

to see it get reduced. Mr. Neal stated I saw that we were advertising for another police officer, did we lose Bubba? Chief Lovelace stated he is still with us but part time, so we are trying to fill a full time position with someone certified to incur the cost to send them to the academy. Mr. Neal stated that is always good but I was reading the starting salary and all those benefits, for the little Town of Hurt, that's more than most departments pay with 100 men. Chief Lovelace replied well, what I did before we came up with that salary was I went to all the departments that are locally and got their salaries, so we can fall somewhere in between. Some are higher than us and some are lower. We're trying to hit the middle of the road. Mr. Neal stated I wish I would have applied. Chief Lovelace stated you are still certified, come on down. Mr. Neal stated well I have got a little bit of age on me now.

Wanda Dews stated I live at 121 East Spencer Rd. I have a question concerning improvements or things to do that would benefit the people of Town of Hurt. Several years ago in our water bills, we had a questionnaire to fill out. I just wondered what happened to those questionnaires, because I had a lengthy explanation of things that I would like to see done to the Town of Hurt that would benefit our citizens. Next door was one of them. To me, I feel like if you're going to sell a piece of property to someone out of state, why not ask them what they're going to do with that piece of property, because if it's not going to benefit the citizens of Hurt, I don't care what you are going to get for it as a price. Why would you sell it and then we have this eyesore and nothing's being done with it that would benefit the Town of Hurt because I get really irritated and pissed off when I have to go to Campbell County to spend my tax dollars when something could be done over here that would benefit everybody in Hurt and probably everybody around Hurt. Mayor Hodnett stated I can help address that to some degree. I don't know about any questionnaires, that was obviously before my time with water bills. I don't disagree that that isn't a good idea to do, we can include that in the newsletter. Over here, I don't think the Town sold the property. It was a private transaction between the people that owned it prior to the plaza going in there. It has been over there since the 1970's. I think we all agree that we'd like to see things done and that's something that we've continually worked on.

Steve Worley, I live at 605 Spring Street. I want to bring forth tonight and discuss with the Town Council on the members of Town Council. There's been some talk about bringing it to four. I would like for it to stay at six up to the 11 like it is now. I had a little petition that words this, the Town of Hurt is seeking to reduce the number of elected council members from six to four. Hurt can have as few as four and as many as eleven elected councilmen. A Town council serves as the policy making body for the Town. Reducing from six to four councilmen can reduce the effectiveness of planning, implementing, and overseeing the policies of Hurt's day to day as well as long term business. I took it upon myself and some help, from citizens of the Town and I actually went from door to door, knocking on doors, talking with people and getting their ideas. I didn't have as much time, I thought I had another week, then I found out last night that it was tonight. If I had more time I think I could have got more names, actually I know I could have. I did manage to get 240 names that wants it left alone. I talked to most of them face to face, we got their names, address and phone numbers. I'm asking Town Council, take a look at the names, make some calls. Another issue that came up before that came from Town Hall, is that I didn't exactly have my facts together. Somebody else done some talking and they got a different story from what I got. Don't take my word for it, make the phone calls and talk to them. Just like I did, knock on the door and tell them who you are and why you are there and you would be surprised. There is a lot of people in the Town of Hurt, not very happy with some things that is going on. The issue right here is for the Town Council to stay as it is. At least we'll have a council person that we can call and talk to. If you bring it

down to four, let's face it you get yes men to the mayor the Town has lost. They make any judgment they want too. That is not a good idea for the Town. I am for leaving it as it is. There are some more issues, but I'll discuss that at a later time, but this is the point I wanted to make there. Trust me I don't want to come down here and address you all, I hate speaking in public, but when I see things that I don't agree with, I have to have my say. I wish you would consider that, you don't have to take my word for it, make the calls. Thank you.

Mayor Hodnett replied I would like to address one thing, I don't think that we have six council people that go with what the mayor says, rarely do I have input, and I certainly don't have a vote. Honest to God I don't remember ever casting a vote in a tie breaker. Almost everything down here has been unanimous. I think anybody that sits on Council, will tell you that the first speech I give to them is this is your vote, you're elected by the people to come down here and cast your vote, the way that you see fit. The only criteria for that vote is what is in the best interest of this Town and that's all you have to weigh out is how it benefits the Town. Mr. Worley stated not necessarily the Town but the Town's people. Mayor Hodnett replied well the Town's people in the Town are basically the same thing. Mr. Worley replied no they are not. Mayor Hodnett stated well we can agree to disagree. Mr. Worley stated that's fine, you have your opinion, and I have mine. Back to the Town Council since you brought it up, the Town of Hurt wants to know why we can't keep six, do you want to get into that? Mayor Hodnett replied no we have a meeting to move on with. Mr. Worley stated I thought once I brought that up you would be ready to move on with the meeting. Mayor Hodnett replied we aren't going to spend all night talking about that. We have a forum and you are welcome to come to that when we have it. Mr. Worley replied I don't need a forum, I need to talk to you face to face with the Town Council. Mr. Majure stated I'll address one of these things, because we are having a special election in November, we are moving to make this a referendum. Mr. Worley replied well that is the purpose of this petition. We know what the majority of the Town of Hurt wants. We don't need a referendum. We just need to leave it alone. How much experience would it be for this referendum? Mayor Hodnett replied I don't know, I can't answer that. Mr. Worley replied well we know it is going to be an expense and the majority of the Town wants it left alone. You could sell it right here, right now. The Town Council can do that. Mr. Majure asked Attorney Eller how much it cost. Attorney Eller replied, no the registrar would know that. Mr. Majure stated well, I'm of the opinion that I'd like to have it as a referendum. We're already having a special election. We might as well put it to a vote for those citizens to have it better than a petition in my mind. Mr. Worley stated your choice, you can fix it now or leave it until later, either way.

Kim Johnson, Lynn street. I just would like an update on the chicken and roosters? Mayor Hodnett replied I think only one person in Town has applied for their chicken permit. With Tom being on part time, it's been a little difficult to get around to it. With everything else has been going on down here on projects, budgets and stuff like that it's been difficult, but we definitely want to get to that and hope within the next couple of weeks to have some visits made out there and remind people that you need to get a permit. Also the question we got to look at on the ordinances is can you put dog locks in your front yard. Mrs. Johnson stated and of course sidebar to that is there going to be any patrolling for weed ordinances, I know we have had a lot of rain, but I see a lot of grass that is out of control. Maintaining our Town starts with just the basics. We're not in a rural area and this isn't a farming community. I still got the Hallelujah Chorus next door to me every day. Mayor Hodnett stated we are talking about it and we are getting ready to go to work on it.

Michael Blackstock, 106 Knollwood Drive. You just mentioned in your last statement that y'all have been working on the budget or the upcoming budget for July for 2023-2024 year. With that in mind, Tommy spoke to the police enforcement. The public safety director, are you planning to put it in the budget for the \$30,000 for Mr. Jones to be hired on for your consultant fees for the upcoming budget? Mayor Hodnett replied that things are being considered, yes. Mr. Blackstock asked are you allocating \$30,000 and it may go up or down, for the budget for the upcoming year? Mayor Hodnett stated that is what Council will be deciding, it is no yes or no to it, it is going to be discussed and talked about. We do not have an approved budget at this point in time. Mrs. Johnson stated I think what he is asking is the intention to continue his employment. Mr. Majure replied we have versions of the budget that have that position in there, and we have versions that do not. Myself, I would like to keep the help that we have, but we have not made that decision yet. Mr. Blackstock stated with the Town people here, does anybody feel that we need Mr. Jones? No comment. My second question, Jason, directing this to the Police Department, the biggest crime that I know of that happened last year in the town of Hurt was the breaking and entering into vehicles. How are we looking at that investigation? Chief Lovelace replied it is still being investigated. Mr. Blackstock asked so nobody has been charged? Chief Lovelace replied nobody has been charged. That is not the biggest crime we are investigating.

Delilah White stated I do have some information for you, council members and also Mayor Hodnett. Once again, good evening, everyone, I'm actually invigorated to see this town is so lively and active and their own public lives. It is a pleasure to introduce myself to you tonight and also to be here with you tonight. I have the privilege and honor of serving as the executive director for Offseason, a newly established nonprofit here in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. I'm here to briefly tell you more about the purpose, vision, ambition, and to humbly request your support here in Hurt and partnership to help us bring this to life for the benefit of you, your children, your athletes, and also everyone who lives here. Let me start by introducing Offseason this way. Do you all recall these names? Tommy Womack, Joe Mantiply, the Edmonds brothers, I see a few people shaking their heads. Their faith, path, and careers are all testimonies of where many of our athletes of Pittsylvania County and Danville City should be if they had the proper, selfless resources, support, care, and advocacy to help them reach their dreams. Like the men just mentioned, we realize that many of them in our region have access to this type of support. However, for our female athletes, there are none. This reality became the motto for our nonprofit organization, offseason, there is none. A newly formed organization designed to elevate the skills, performance, and outcomes of female athletes in Pittsylvania County and Danville city. Registered as a 501(C)(3) public charity, Offseason is about empowering female athletes through holistic sports development, training, and education. Our mission is to develop the best female athletes in Virginia. What does it mean to be the best? It means female athletes who are mentally, physically, and spiritually equipped for competition and life. To accomplish this mission, offseason will provide holistic, academic, athletic, and personal development programs for female athletes ages 8 to 21 years old, specifically during their offseason from their school sports programs. We will offer basketball, soccer and track to start off with and we plan to extend to volleyball, women's football and softball as we grow. Offseason customized sports services will include college scouting and recruiting and customized sports training and development programs. The goal of all of this is to provide a clear path for female athletes and their parents to develop, train, and achieve their sports dreams. As natives of Pittsylvania County, former student athletes and with our sports director as a longtime resident of Gretna currently living right over here in Altavista, we could not think of a better place to build the Offseason indoor sports complex than right here in Pittsylvania County. The reserve site is right at the ODAC Center at Cherrystone Missionary

Baptist Church Recreation Center on 29 North making it easily accessible to residents here in Hurt, Gretna, throughout the county, and the city of Danville. The indoor sports complex will contain basketball courts, track and soccer fields, weights and sports training rooms, classrooms and office space. The complex will also host a daycare, providing education and childcare services for special needs children ages zero to three years old, and will also be providing childcare services for children ages zero to 12. The complex will be open to the public during non program hours and will host sports events, attracting community members and visitors alike. In closing, once again, it is my honor to be able to tell the Town of Hurt about Offseason a newly coming Sports Complex for female athletes and also to ask for your support and your partnership. We are looking for donations for contributions to our capital campaigns to get the facility up and going and of course, we're looking for volunteers who are willing to serve and make a difference in the lives of female athletes and community members alike. Please keep us in mind as we continue to go throughout the county. I hope that you've been able to see more of our story on WDBJ seven as well as in the Star Tribune lately. If you haven't, please learn more about us. At this time once again, thank you for your time this evening Mayor, Councilman and women. I'd be happy to answer any questions if you have them and I've also left you with my direct contact information and all the information about Offseason. We will follow up directly with a letter to request your support for consideration. Thank you once again.

Council Replacement/ Planning Commission Appointments

Mr. Knowles nominated Alice Bond for Planning Commission. Mayor Hodnett stated that HA Merricks expressed an interest in staying on the Planning Commission so we have two slots and we had two applicants. Mr. Majure nominated HA to the Planning Commission. All council members raised their right hand in favor of Alice Bond and HA Merricks. Mayor Hodnett stated we interviewed Mr. Richard tonight for the Council replacement, do I hear any recommendations for that? Mr. Majure nominated Pierre Richard at 206 Prospect Rd for the council replacement seat. Mrs. Keesee seconded, all council in favor.

Upcoming Budget

Mr. Poindexter stated I want to thank the Vice Mayor, Mayor, Treasurer and everyone who has collaborated in developing the preliminary draft budget that's on the table tonight. I want to emphasize the word preliminary draft because each year we have this process. This is simply a starting point for deliberations. It is entirely subject to change as the council agrees to. To reiterate, we have a preliminary draft on the table tonight, as a starting point for deliberations, there is absolutely nothing final about it, it's not ready to advertise. It is something for us to begin working through as a Council and fine tune line items or to make decisions about corrections. We continue to face difficulties and challenges and how to keep our operation running and moving forward. As opposed to just getting by, there is a distinction. We're in a critical time when we really need to think long term and do some things that have been needed doing for a very long time and that cannot be accomplished by just getting by with a minimum. One of the things we're looking at this year is a revenue shortfall. Two of our line items that have performed well have not performed as well in the current fiscal year. We will have to look at places to make that up. We've seen north of a \$20,000 decrease in projections from cigarette tax and then a smaller one from utility taxes. This budget provides continuation of core services at or near term levels. It provides meaningful increases on the quality of staff that we have. It allows for continued contributions to reserves from capital projects, future endeavors. It also reflects the ongoing national situation with inflation, it's important to understand that all of us as Americans are dealing with inflation. We deal with it at the supermarket, we deal with it at the gas pumps, we deal with it everywhere we go.

Municipalities are not immune to the effects of inflation. We can't stay where we were, because everything else has passed us by, and that is what we are dealing with. I will not sugarcoat anything, this has been a difficult process to figure out the best way to accomplish things we're trying to accomplish. For all members, on the table there is a preliminary draft and normally, we would have a work session and go through this line item by line item but that's a bit lengthy tonight. The local revenue subtotal as you can see, we've built in appropriate increases to go from 459,000 to 528,000. One thing to keep in mind when looking at this, is it's going to look inflated, because this is the year that we are utilizing federal ARPA popularly known as COVID relief or stimulus package funds to accomplish some special projects that the Town typically would not be doing out of its usual tax revenue. That would include things like economic development projects that are not ready to be announced, and in particular the renovation of the building and grounds for security and to be ADA compliant for safety. Those items are in the budget but they're expected to be funded either entirely or very nearly entirely by federal grant money and are not the core cause of any proposed tax increase.

Page three, we have HR operational, not a great deal of change there. Page four we do not have the large outlay for the municode project, because most of that was covered in the current fiscal year, so it will not be as much this time going forward, it will be more or less annual maintenance, as opposed to a new project. PD, the only item I will point out in there you'll see on your graph that it's highlighted yellow. That amount for medical insurance is not yet known, because we do not know when we will have a new person for the full time position and whether he or she will be an individual subscriber or an individual with spouse and family and that will determine the amount of that line item. Also the \$1,000 line item for LODA (Line of Duty Act) we're still waiting for a final figure from the state on that. We put \$1,000 in there for a placeholder for now, but it is subject to change. The evidence room line item that was 15,000 last year is reduced to \$2000 this year, because presumably most of that project is either complete or will be included in the renovations that will be paid for with ARPA money.

Page five, we have insurances that are pretty much the annual thing. The renovations and ADA compliance I'm talking about are shown at the top of page five under renovation and ADA. That's a new line item for this year, probably this year only. That's the large line item there, the \$336,000. There's not a substantial change in street lighting, refuse collection is the annual escalator, contractual services for lawn care remain the same. Capital reserves remain the same, contract services I forgot this under admin but the preliminary draft includes audits, legal counsel, and public safety. To answer the earlier question that includes the public safety with major security at the same level no increase. Moving down to page five, there's not a major change in IT other than the annual increase in normal operating cost, inflation if you will. The Fire Departments level, were not expecting any change in that. Mayor, did you hear anything about the building fund whether there was any change in that this year? Mayor Hodnett replied I texted Mike Moorefield and haven't heard anything yet. Mr. Poindexter continued under community development, there's a line item there for economic development that is for prospective business and development projects that are not public information and remain hypothetical at this time. Again that is covered by Federal ARPA money. The total general fund is 1.148 million. That takes us to the top of page six any questions or comments? Mr. Knowles asked of this amount how much of it is ARPA funds? Mr. Poindexter stated I believe it to be on the scale of half a million total. Mayor Hodnett stated that is total for both sides of the equation, general and enterprise. That's the total package. Mr. Poindexter stated that some of the original \$600,000 plus that we've received in that some of that was used for the water

meter upgrade project. We do not have all the original amount remaining because of that, that was used year before last to upgrade the meters and the system that goes with it.

Mr. Majure stated, we've continually seen the amount of water usage decrease over the past three years, because of that, the cost has actually gone up and because of inflation. We also have had infrastructure that is needing replacement, as well. We have less that's coming through the Town being purchased. Therefore, the amount that we're receiving is decreasing, as far as revenue for the Town as far as enterprise. We got wastewater, but most of it's coming from water usage. Wastewater is based on a percentage of the water usage and only a very small amount of our customers actually utilize the wastewater. No major changes are occurring. Insurance is going up based on what the VRS is telling us. We're using ARPA money to fund the improvements, like we've been talking about. We're adding improvements that are going to improve the water quality for all the citizens. It is nice that we are getting that money at this time considering that there hasn't been a large reserve of money that was built up for these improvements, really maintenance. Mr. Poindexter stated I forgot to elaborate a little bit further about a couple of things. The initial starting point for this draft is a .05 increase in the real estate tax rate, .50 increase in the personal property tax rate, and decal fee from \$40.75 up to \$42 each. Meals tax went from 6% to 7%. There are items that I have discussed about, but that's how we arrive at a balance at this point. We were talking about potentially some bigger increases in that, but we found some ways that we can fine tune in at the end of April, a couple of those revenue items actually trended upward and looked a little bit better. The escalator from the cell tower lease came in a little bit better. We were able to mitigate that slightly from what we had first been talking about. It is important to consider the scale of the Town. A .05 increase in tax is big in a way but it is small in a way because each penny of increase in that only translates into \$7,000 in revenue for the Town. That's not the same for the County, it would be a much bigger spike on the bill than it going from 22 to 27. I have some reservations about that, I'm going to be honest, I think there needs to be some discussion about the amount of the increase if it is all done that way or if it is accomplished by a one time draw from the reserves. We're expecting some situations to perhaps look a little bit better this time next year. This is for us to discuss, it is not a me or a mayor thing. I thought it was worthwhile to point out the scale of it when you're dealing with locality this size as opposed to large. I know on the water side that is uncomfortable because to balance the enterprise fund were planning on keeping the meter free the same as there's a potential for the volumetric rate to go from \$14.00 per thousand to \$17.50 per thousand. That is a good size increase, but it's important to point out that much of this is state mandated. We're required by the health department to do what's commonly referred to as the consent order which is a two stage project where we upgrade the water system to address some deficiencies and some of the tasks and also to provide additional pressure and volume at SVM Park. We have a good arrangement on that to get grant money and loan money both from the state, but when you ask money from the state, or the feds, it's going to come with conditions. It's much like going to a bank and asking for a loan. They want to look at cash flow, they want to look at assets, they want to look at what ifs. You have to be able to justify it and show them that you're going to be able to service that loan, we're getting ready to go into service and loan, which is a conversation that we have not had in this building in many years. We recognize that this volumetric rate is high compared to some localities, but we have to service the loan, we have to be able to qualify for the grant. We have a 40 year old water system that continues to break. I can't really think of a much more succinct way to put it than that but it's where we are. I really wish that the Capital Improvement Fund had been started decades ago and added to over the years and then this conversation would be

easier. We have to deal what we have before us today. There's not much change in the wastewater, but that's what we're looking at for the water.

Mr. Majure stated dipping into those reserves, it's going to be a dangerous game to play, in my opinion, considering the age of our water system, and the lifespan of components that make it up. We're getting to the point that we are getting to the end of life on a lot, and we need to start to be prepared for something to fail. If we have no reserves, then that is going to put all of us in a very bad situation. I want to make sure that we can maintain our reserves, so that we can take care of issues that they occur. In a perfect world, we would be able to increase our reserves, so that we can continue to be more prepared and have inventory on hand, so we don't have to go to Lynchburg to ask for them to give us a piece of hardware that we may need. That's an unfortunate reality we're facing right now, but I do know that we all want to have drinking water and access to cold drinking water as well. Unfortunately, we are looking at its volumetric rate, price increase. I personally do not want to go into our reserves, so that we can actually have reserves to pay for the issues that may occur. Also, you made a very good point here, we have that Capital Improvement Fund. That is a major step in the right direction, so that when these do go to the end of life, we're going to be able to pay for them without going to the people and raising it really high. We're going to have this fund in our hands now so that we can actually be prepared for the future.

Mr. Poindexter stated as far as looking at the future, there's nothing on this budget in mind while we're talking about the future of the water system. Let's not forget, as we mentioned, I think our last work session or meeting before, no pun intended, but there's another big project coming down the pipeline. It's not small, the Town's fire hydrants are north of 40 years old, per state requirements, and just due to the fact of their age and wear, they are going to have to be replaced. That's going to be something on the scale of half a million dollars. That wouldn't be a one time event, it would be staged over a few years, but it's not far away. We're expecting that to begin in maybe 3 years, but that is coming. It's best not to take the bridge when we get to it because we're at some bridges now that we took that approach two years ago. Unfortunately, what we're really doing here is things that most Town's our size have been doing for decades and regrettably we should have been doing. Every one of them has been involved and I accept responsibility for my part. I think everyone else would too. That is where we are and it is not a comfortable spot for anyone. Mayor Hodnett stated one of the things that the last couple of years councils have taken the steps to increase meter sizes so that industry will pay a much higher part of carrying the reserve funds than individuals will. The one going in over here at Staunton River Plastics is \$900 a quarter whereas residents pay \$24 a quarter. When a new meter goes in, it is based on the size of industry. That is a heavy increase that the Town didn't have, and that goes right back into the reserve. As an industry comes into Town that will really prove to be significant. If somebody draws water through our system for an industry, we can place transfer fees on that water from point A to point B so that would be an increased rate for industry. We could pick up more money there to help out the taxpayers on water rates. We've inserted a lot of additional taxes on businesses, as opposed to individuals, for example Staunton River Plastics is up and running, and they start using water they will be contributing a much higher rate than you as an individual. We didn't have these in the past but we have them now to help protect you. The meter fee that Tommy alluded to earlier, when we put that in it was for infrastructure development and repair, we didn't have anything there. That's why I told Tommy when we get that infrastructure reserved to the point that we're comfortable with it then we can start eliminating that, dialing it back, or getting rid of it. We got to have that money there for reserves because you can't borrow money, and you can't get money without something in the bank. The thing that was in the newsletter about phase two it's a \$1.6 million project, we were on the hook for 1,000,003 of that, until

we got that all reversed. The state is paying for that. That'll be a huge difference in the burden three years from now that individuals will have to pay and it's a whole lot cheaper to pay for a half a million dollars, than it is 1,000,006. Our cost of doing business on our loan will be reduced. These steps haven't kicked in yet, but they will kick in as industry comes to Town.

Mr. Poindexter stated it is important to know that the two paying consultants we have on board, it is a lot of money in a way, but it's a bargain in a way because expertise experience does not come cheap. We have to keep in mind most towns our size can pay for a professional town manager and have for decades, not years. We're fortunate to have a mayor who's willing to be here during the day and function as town manager. Although we don't agree on all issues, we do agree on moving the town forward and doing what we call the greatest good for the most people. If we had to hire someone else to do the things that these two gentlemen do and outside or if we had to hire a full time manager, which again, there's going to come a time that's going to need to happen. That's just reality. It would be quite a bit more than what is on the table for those two consultants so that's something to keep in mind. Mrs. Johnson asked two consultants? Mr. Majure stated the other consultant is an expert in water and wastewater. Mr. Poindexter stated it's hard to describe it but from this side of the desk they have each paid for themselves more than. The expertise that they have brought in each I would say both played a role in being able to get our part of this big water project, our part is now a half a million dollars instead of 1.3. Just for example, and that's not the only project they've worked on. That is something to keep in mind and that's not an insistence about anything, it's just a statement of fact. Mr. Knowles stated my quick calculations, we are getting \$500,000 in ARPA Funds, if you take out what we are paying with ARPA Funds we are at \$627k give or take, does that sound about right? Mr. Poindexter stated that another important observation is, these two people line items that are listed in there are funded by ARPA if you were to take that out. the rest of what we're doing this year is not really as much as you might think. Now, as far as how to balance the general budget, there's been some discussions here. Some members are not fully up to date, but the Mayor and I have a difference of opinion about how to do this. I feel personally, that the amount of that tax increase is a bit much especially in view of the amount of water increase also. Even though I agree with the Mayor on that, I don't like pulling out of reserves either, I would not want to start a habit of doing that, by no means but I feel that if we needed to do a small amount of that on a one time basis I think that might be a better way to do things this year. I feel like next year at this time, we will be in a position to talk about how to replace that money within one or two fiscal cycles. I am only referring to the general fund. There is no suggestion here to touch reserves on the Enterprise Fund and I don't think there needs to be, I am only referring to that one thing. I see where the Mayor is coming from and I comprehend it. I don't want to pull it down either. I want to see the reserve grow. We're nowhere near where we should be for a 55 year old Town. I'm just trying to balance it all. I will say this, as far as the county is concerned they threw out the reassessment last year, and the effects of that will kick in next year. We'll be having a conversation about the reassessment this time next year in the spring, that's going to cause an increase in taxes at the county level and presumably one at the town level unless we have to cut the rate to keep it within 1%. There's a question of is this the year to be, and the counties not doing a real estate increase this year, so that's a question of is it really the best year for us to do it. I am one of six sitting here. I question the amount of and that's where I am. I want to accomplish what we've got here on the table, the budget, but we do have a difference of opinion about how to get from point A to point B.

Mayor Hodnett stated typically I stay out of the conversations with Council, but I can't stay out of this and I agree with Bob 100%. You cannot touch your reserves to balance a budget. If you do that, you will be looking at next year even more increases because that money will not be paid back, it never has. The town has taken money from reserves in the past and used it and didn't pay it back. What will happen is you will take a little bit this year to use it, but next year that money will only be gained by more increases of what you're talking about right now. We have to have these reserves. If you don't, the cost of borrowing money will go up, the ability to get it will go down, and this Town is not even remotely close to where it needs to be in reserves. One of the things that we're having to do with this consent order that was talked about is we have to hire professional financial people to look at our assets, our money and everything we have. They're going to give us an opinion of where we need to be, with taxes and water this year, next year, the year after, five years down the road, 10 years down the road and all of that is state mandated that we have to do that stuff. We're going to have professional opinions on these things, but I can tell you, hitting your reserves, if this was a business, would be the kiss of death. I think Bob would agree with me, if you put in an application with a company and you start talking finance with them and they tell you that we used half of our reserves to balance the budget, the best thing you can do is leave because that is going to be short lived, and you got to go somewhere else to find your job. It's the worst thing that can be done. It will cost you more money next year. Mr. Majure stated I do not like pulling from reserves. They're just that they're reserved. Looking at our past years, we've pulled from reserves it seems like the last three years consecutively. I'm of the opinion, don't push things down the road, deal with them now, and I plan on being here for the rest of my life. I don't want there to be a lack of money to get projects done. That's why unfortunately. I don't want to pay any more taxes than anyone else, but I do believe we need to keep it so that we keep it flat and don't pull or even put into reserves at this moment. Then if it does occur next year that reassessment to build back that reserve. Mrs. Keese stated I agree with Bob, I think we should leave our reserves alone. Mr. Knowles stated I don't like pulling from the reserves. We're getting ready to be in for a lean time for the citizens of the Town. I don't think that it is necessarily just discounted outright, but I think there's other things that we should look at first before we start pulling money out of the reserve. Mr. Poindexter stated we have to decide whether we want to advertise this preliminary draft as is for a public hearing, or if we want to modify and advertise that for a public hearing and that's where we are. We are getting ready to have a work session and I don't think we can have one in time for that, because it has to be advertised twice so we are looking at the end of May or June business meeting. Attorney Eller stated it only has to be advertised once for the budget. Mr. Poindexter asked, has it changed? Attorney Eller stated no, you've just been doing it two times so people see it, but it is not mandatory. It was a brief discussion about meals tax going from 6% to 7% which is the max percentage that it can go. There's nothing else to tax but real estate, personal property, meals tax, cigarettes tax. I'm very disappointed in the performance of the cigarette tax because it did well the first couple of years that we had it in place, and it plateaued the third year. It has declined especially this year. The forecast is almost \$20,000 less on that line item. That \$20,000 would make up about three out of the five cents that we proposed if we raise the house tax. Communication tax hasn't performed as well either. We also don't have the Cova game of skill anymore, we were getting a little bit from that, but that is gone.

A motion was made to advertise the preliminary draft budget as is for a public hearing.

Motion: Mr. Knowles

Second: Mr. Majure

Passage: Unanimous

DMHP update and BOZ

Meeting tomorrow at 6:00pm

Old Business

Charter change referendum in November

Mayor Hodnett stated we are having a special election in November and if we have the referendum then everyone in Town can cast their vote to see if we go from six to four. Mr. Poindexter asked was this really a big deal, due to all the other projects going on, was this something to really focus on and put the time into? If it is an issue we are going to pursue, then a referendum is the way to go. Mr. Majure stated I don't believe there is anything else we need to work on, we either decide to send it for a referendum or we decide ourselves. Attorney Eller stated that the referendum will need to be turned in 90 days. Mayor Hodnett stated Steve you brought your petition down here, one of the things that I've been doing down here is when people come in and pay their water bills, explain the same thing to them and ask them for their opinions as well. Most people say the four and that they like that, some don't care. That's why I personally think the referendum is better because everybody in town gets to vote, not just your petition, not just the people that I've talked to. That's how I look at it, everybody here gets a vote.

A motion was made to send the resolution presented to be a referendum to moving six to four council members.

Motion: Mr. Majure

Second: Mrs. Keesee

Passage: Unanimous

Report from Legal Counsel- Attorney Eller- no report other than working on the things that were discussed in closed session.

Report from Staff

Treasurer- Ellen Brumfield reported that the Town's bank account at first national is \$588,414.59 of that is APRA covid relief grant, remaining is \$139,217.19. That's the balance for the ARPA that was mentioned in the budget, \$387,388.81 was added into the general. Town Council on Friday, I sent you the April check register, I'll be passing this around for everyone to sign off on it so we can store it with the minutes.

Administrative- Kelsie Anderson reported water collections were at 47% and taxes were at 79%. Anderson stated she is still working on social security numbers in the system to implement the DMV stop. All of the 2023 tax information was received from Pittsylvania County and I will be contacting Southern soon to get all of that information added into Southern for the 2023 billing. The Memorial Day Event will be held on May 20th 11am-3pm with face painting, balloon dude, bounce houses, and pop corn machine. I was unable to secure a band this year due to funds or availability. Please keep in mind volunteers are always appreciated.

Public Works-Joseph Smith reports that he has been doing a lot of maintenance with his pumps. We sent out water billing, and sent out leak letters and went over with customers. I also have been working on cut offs, I did 35 cut offs for customers who aren't paying. We have got up to about 20 responses, the rest are holding out. A lot of people want to make payment arrangements, for example if their water bill is \$350 they want to pay \$20, and don't understand why you can't do that. Also been working with the state on water business operation plan, it is a template we have to fill out that is about 65 pages. Before you can apply for the business plan, the people have to come in and they have to review that and go over it with us. Also I have to send out a RFP to all the WED and NBE members, plus I can publish it in the paper. I have an issue over here at the Staunton River Plaza at the post office. Apparently there are three

old tanks that are manholes and they are starting to come to the top. I am going to have to call the septic company to come and suck it down, they tie into sewer lines behind the building, but nobody tied those tanks. That is an issue I am dealing with now, we are going to pump it down and try to figure out where those lines run.

Police Report-Chief Lovelace

April 2023 Police Report

Calls for Service-

Disorderly Conduct- 1

Suspicious Person-2

Public Service- 1

Vandalism/Destruction of Property- 0

Trespassing- 1

All other Offenses- 2

Alarms- 2

Assist Other Agencies (Emergency Services)- 0

Mutual Aid (LE)- 1

Paper Served- 1

Check for stolen/wanted- 1

Automobile Accident- 1

Other

Miles Driven- 1507

Use of Force- 0

Department/Officer Complaints- 0

Department Updates-

7 speeding violations in the school zone with the cameras

Evidence room lights should be installed next week.

We have started to receive applications for the PD.

A motion was made to accept the Allied Security contract as presented.

Motion: Mr. Majure

Second: Mr. Poindexter

Passage: Unanimous

Public Safety-Mike Jones reported just a few updates the local governments are beginning to be more and more subjected to scams both through IT and ransomware. We're in pretty good shape. We just need to remind ourselves to be careful with what we answer through emails and solicitations.

Ransomware is something we don't want to get tied up with. The weed and the grass ordinance we'll give everybody time to catch up with the grass and then we'll start with notices. Working with the West Piedmont Planning district commission hazardous mitigation plan updates. That's why I sent the item to you for you to review when you have your opportunity. The best way to keep a large document like that is annual updates because things do change, especially some of the railroad mitigation issues. Also sent you a copy of the active shooter from the threat management group. That's a concern raised for local governments being affected more by this going down from federal and state governments to more local. Working with Gary and everybody else on Plaza development. Also working with the architect on optimal tenants for the plaza and developing a look for people to say this is what we would like. Working with the security vendor for the renovation ensures that we have the best products, at the best price and it's coming along well. Our police radio system study that's ongoing, where we're looking at changing the

bandwidth for the policing agency. That's an evolving and always continuing thing, but it's something we have to plan for financially as the bands go to higher withs. The Virginia State Police Crime and Virginia report, which is the seminal document for telling everyone what it's like. Preliminary figures have shown Hurt maintaining still one of the safest localities in the state. They're not 100% finished yet, but they're pretty much finished data. That's something that's important, not only for us today, but for economic development today and tomorrow. People actively look at that data and the strength and composition of police, fire, and public safety. It's a nice look for this month.

Attorney Eller stated he needed to elaborate a little bit on the board of zoning appeals, where we are on that. We actually have a various request from the Pine Acres trailer park to permit them to put some larger mobile homes in to replace some of the old ones which would be slightly larger than the footprint that they were on and that would require variance from the ordinance. That is the type of thing that the Board of zoning appeals is supposed to do here. They are going to have to have a hearing. We found that one of our members' terms has expired so we appointed the new member, Mr. Johnson. He has to be approved by the circuit court judge. He's officially on board and sworn in. We have a full board of zoning appeals ready to go tomorrow night and meet to get oriented to have an organizational meeting. I put together a package of information about laws relating to what the board of zoning appeals does and the variance that they will be hearing and the rules on that. We will have the hearing on the following Wednesday which is the 10th. Mayor Hodnett stated I don't have anything else, thank you for coming.

Meeting adjourned at 8:32pm.

Kelsie Anderson

Kelsie Anderson-Clerk

Gary Hodnett

Gary Hodnett-Mayor