

Town of Hurt, Virginia
Council Meeting Minutes
October 17, 2023

Hurt Town Council held its monthly business meeting Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at the Hurt Volunteer Fire Department. 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, Mr. Pierre Richard, Mr. Glenn Mitchell, and Mrs. Kathy Keesee via phone call.

Closed Session

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: Mr. Poindexter Second: Mr. Mitchell Passage: Unanimous

Council entered closed session at 6:01 pm and exited closed session at approximately 7:10 pm.

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

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

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation: Mr. Poindexter

Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Gary Hodnett

Welcome/Opening Remarks Mayor Hodnett stated we want to welcome everybody to the meeting, not a big crowd, but a few wishing to speak, we will move right on to that.

Public Comment

Alice Bond stated I live at 109 Kent Circle. I read the minutes from September 19th and got to the point in the discussion whether or not the door would be locked at all, the issues around, and the safety measures being taken. There was a comment about well maybe it depends on how many complaints there were because of inconvenience, and that really hit. I am a nurse and we wear protective equipment to keep patients safe and we don't like it because it is inconvenient, but we do it for patients safety. I think it is imperative that the decision about whether or not to have the door locked or any other issues concerning the safety or your employees should not be part of the equation.

Deborah Davis stated I am running for the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors for the Staunton River District. I am no stranger to some people, but for some people I probably am. I've done a lot of things in the community. I love my community. In the past, I've done some things so far. I'm going to give you an example of some of the things I've done. I did organize the backpack lunch program for Hurt Elementary School who didn't have a backpack lunch at the time and reunited with different churches and it was wonderful. Also, the little thing that calls you in the morning to tell you that school is out because it snowed or whatever the reason, I introduced the schools to that. The renovation of Wayside Park, I'm the one who started that also as far as getting the park remodeled. I've done a lot of things in

the community that help people and I am running for the Board of Supervisors and you ask me why I run is because we on the northern end of the county are slacking a lot of things. Some of the things that the people in Danville have, it's been a long time I think since we've seen growth or anything in our community so now it is our time to get something done in our area. That is what I am trying to do, is to live the best I can and to treat everybody right and try to get things going in our area. If you have any questions or anything please feel free to ask me and thank you for allowing me at this moment to speak.

Additions to Agenda

Mayor Hodnett stated one thing I wanted to add to the agenda, Joe has some trees in the right away up here in between Ella Goodman and Jeff Bowling's house, that little strip of land that the town owns. We've got to do some cutting up there, that is a little too big for us to handle so we are going to have to go outside. Mayor Hodnett asked Attorney Eller if we had to get three quotes on this? Attorney Eller replied it is always a good idea to get more than one quote. Joe asked if it needed to be a RFP or just a quote? Attorney Eller replied with just a quote.

New Business

Public Works Assistant- Mayor Hodnett stated at this point in time we are not prepared to move forward with that.

Old Business

Trunk or Treat October 28th Staunton Plaza- Mayor Hodnett stated it will be from 4:00pm-until. We hope everybody can attend. I think New Prospect Church is going to be teaming up with us. They are going to be down there this year, we had 700 kids last year, and with them attending it will probably be over 1,000.

PD "Christmas Stew for Kids" November 4th Pavilion Town Hall-Mayor Hodnett stated if you want stew, please call ahead of time and it'll be ready for you when you get there to pick it up. Or if you want to sit down and eat some stew with us, we will be glad to have you. Mr. Majure stated one thing on that, Jason does a really great job. Him and his brother in law make it themselves and it really does go and help the kids there and get them gifts and that is dispersed using a council, not just one person that makes that decision. It really does benefit a lot of kids in town, so please, anybody watching Facebook Live, please put an order in. Mr. Knowles asked if it was children from both schools? Mr. Majure replied yes.

December 3rd Christmas at Town Hall & Christmas Dinner Date/location- Mayor Hodnett stated I think it starts at 4:00pm-6:00pm. We will have Santa Claus, the Grinch, and all the treats for the kids. Please bring your children and your neighbors' kids too. Mayor Hodnett stated he was going to let Kathy take over and talk about the Christmas dinner. Mrs. Keesee stated right now we have Judith Hedgpeth catering, working on exactly when we are going to have this and the menu is going to be exactly the same as last year as far as I know. We're expecting around 30 people and she will get back to me shortly about a price per head. It will be held at Hurt United Methodist Church Fellowship Hall this year, and I hope that everyone will attend and have a holly, jolly time. Mr. Poindexter asked if we were looking at the 10th for a date on that? Mrs. Keesee replied she is getting back to me on a date she has available, it will be most likely during a weekday and not a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. I will know more about that as soon as she gets back to me. Mr. Poindexter stated thank you for following that up.

Report from Mayor-Gary Hodnett reported that at the last meeting, someone asked about the possibility of the county doing some radar work for us inside the Town of Hurt. I talked with Mike Taylor

today, the Sheriff, and he said he thought he could accommodate us and help us with that. He is going to talk to some of his guys tomorrow and let me know what they are willing and able to do. Hopefully, that'll be a little help to Jason and take some of the burden off him. Also, one thing that I want to mention is there's a concern about us not answering questions at meetings, and everybody needs to understand that council has rules, we go by Robert's Rules of Order. They do not allow for interchanges between the council, and individuals within the audience. There is nothing in there that allows for back and forth questions and answers. For the last six months I have been holding what I call the Mayor's Forum about every five weeks and the reason I hold that is to give anybody in town that wants to come and ask questions and talk about anything that they have concerns about, or they just want to know about, they have a forum to come and do that. That's the sole purpose of that. I am there from 5:30pm-7:00pm. I think some of the council members have talked about it and are going to plan on coming with me to where maybe it'll be a couple of us, but we can't get any more than that because it becomes a town council meeting. This is very informal, you can ask whatever you want to and I'll answer it, or whoever's there can answer it. As you know, if it's something that comes out of closed, we can't talk about that. We want you to know, we just ask that you come to the forums to take care of the questions and let Council go on with their meetings on meeting night the way that we need to do and get our job done. Mr. Majure asked when the next one was? Mayor Hodnett replied probably next Thursday, not this coming one. I'll put it out on Facebook. Mr. Majure stated so on the 26th. Mayor Hodnett stated yeah whatever next Thursday is. Also it looks like we will be back in Town Hall the first week of November, late in that week, so that'll be good. Hopefully our next Town Council meeting will be at Town Hall. Cross your fingers and let's hope for that. Also there has been some concern about Council meeting and handling business in closed and not bringing it out in public and talking to everybody that's here at a meeting or putting it on Facebook, you have to realize that the state allows for us to conduct economic development, those type of things, and personnel matters inside of closed. John is sitting here and I am sure he will be more than willing to state that the way the plaza was handled, the purchase of it, and all the negotiations for two years being in closed session, council was updated on it. Every council member that has been on council that has been down here for the last three years knew about those negotiations, and they were updated. When it was ready to move forward John made sure that we did everything right and we came out into open session. The vote was taken, the motion was made to purchase it in open with the Altavista Journal setting right up in there and that's when it came out in the paper, but this was handled absolutely right and the way it should be, do you agree with that John? John replied yes sir. Mayor Hodnett stated he saw to it and I can promise you he will not let us do anything that the state doesn't allow us to do. I just wanted to put that out there. It wasn't kept from people because we wanted to, it was kept from people due to the closed session because we had to have a way to negotiate for that plaza and get the price that we needed. We did not need any outside interference help or anything else and that's what the state allows us to do. I want to clear the air on that, it was 100% by the book and for three years every council member knew about it. Mr. Poindexter stated along that line to further clarify, when you look at the Freedom of Information Act, the language of it specifies the real estate acquisition as one of the admissible categories of items to go in closed session. Also it states the reason for that. Public knowledge of any such proposed transaction ahead of time puts the government body in an uncompromised negotiating position. Since the governing body is responsible for the taxpayers money, and the most savvy of us there of, it has to be in a position of strength to do the negotiating. If the details are released, prematurely our position is compromised and we probably would not have been able to complete the deal at all. Most prospective businesses and most prospective real estate transactions, prospective real estate sales, do not want anything like that made public before they are ready for it to be made public and they will pull out at the drop of a hat if there is

a leak. That is the reason why it had to be done that way, and it was fully per procedure in keeping with the provisions of the FOIA. Mr. Majure asked if there has been any update on the solar project, are they still on track to get started with construction next year? Mayor Hodnett replied yes, the last two weeks they have been in and out of the farm up there. The engineers are working now to get all the prep work done for the contractors. It is moving right along. Attorney Eller stated the lease has not been fully negotiated yet. They gave us a lease to look at and after we got the special use permits, then went through the lease and marked it up for the suggested changes which was shared with the council and gave it to them, and they came back and said they had a big deal going on out in the Midwest and they wouldn't be able to look at it for a couple of weeks. We're waiting for them to get back to us with their response to what we suggested and that's where we are on the lease. Mayor Hodnett replied so we are absolutely moving ahead. Mr. Majure asked has there been an update on Municode? Mayor Hodnett replied Kelsie would be better suited to answer that than me. Attorney Eller replied I found out that Kelsie was getting this information and nobody told me about it. I had communication with Municode and they are moving along with it. They didn't say they would have a draft on a particular date, but they are working on it. They didn't say they were having any problems, just having to work through so much, it just takes a long time. Mr. Poindexter stated I can see ours taking a little more time. Mayor Hodnett stated it was brought to my attention that all the surrounding localities around us are taking Election Day off and giving the employees the day off, Gretna, Chatham, Altavista, and everybody as well as Veterans' Day. We wanted to see if that's something that the council wants to allow employees to take Election Day and Veterans Day off paid. Mr. Poindexter asked are they doing either or both? Mayor Hodnett replied both. Mr. Majure replied most people are going to be out of town for Veterans' Day, Election Day, I think it is on its way to becoming a federal point at this point. I would be fine with letting the Town employees have these days. Mr. Knowles stated we do have a council meeting on election day, right? Mayor Hodnett replied yes. Mr. Poindexter stated that it's always the first Tuesday after the first date. Mr. Majure asked if we should reschedule it? Mr. Poindexter stated that's another question, if you're going to observe a holiday that day, then do we want to do a meeting on a different night? Mayor Hodnett replied I would suggest that we do the meeting on Wednesday. Mr. Poindexter stated or Thursday the 9th. Mayor Hodnett replied, either one. Mr. Majure replied I am fine with Thursday the 9th. Mr. Poindexter stated I would advocate for Thursday the 9th because some people have church things and family community things on Wednesdays.

A motion was made to allow Town of Hurt employees to take Election Day, Tuesday, November 7th and Veterans Day, Friday, November 10th paid holiday.

Motion: Mr. Majure

Second: Mr. Knowles

Passage: Unanimous

A motion was made to reschedule our regularly scheduled Hurt Town Council meeting from Tuesday, November 7th and schedule it for Thursday, November 9th of 2023.

Motion: Mr. Majure

Second: Mr. Poindexter

Passage: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 7:42PM

Kelsie Anderson

Kelsie Anderson-Clerk

Gary Hodnett

Gary Hodnett-Mayor