

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TOWN OF VINTON PLANNING
COMMISSION HELD ON THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 2012, AT 6 P.M., AT THE
VINTON MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 311 SOUTH POLLARD STREET.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Dave Jones, Chairman**
 Dawn Michelsen, Vice Chairperson
 Bill Booth (arrived at 7:10 p.m.)
 Paul Mason
 Bob Patterson

STAFF PRESENT: **Chris Lawrence, Town Manager**
 Barry Thompson, Finance Director/Treasurer
 Karla Turman, Associate Planner/Code Enforcement Officer
 Julie S. Tucei, Planning and Zoning Coordinator

AGENDA:

- I. Call to Order**
- II. CIP Requests for FY 2012 – FY 2017**
- III. Updates:**
 - a. Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VA DHCD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Downtown Revitalization Project**
 - b. Vinton Area Corridors Plan – A Guide to Landscaping Improvement Opportunities in the Plan Area**
 - c. National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS)**
- IV. Other Business**
- V. Adjournment**

The meeting of the Vinton Planning Commission was called to order at 6:44 p.m. by Chairman Jones. All members of the Commission were present, except Mr. Booth who arrived at 7:10 p.m.

The first item on the agenda was the discussion of the CIP Requests for FY 2012 – FY 2017. Mr. Jones asked Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Thompson to present the requests to the Commissioners. Mr. Lawrence stated that the CIP is a planning document. He mentioned that the Commissioners were provided with a list of the requests with the recommended rankings, a copy of which will become a part of the permanent record of the meeting. Mr. Lawrence went over some of the projects that had been completed over the past year such as the re-roof of the fire department building and the paying off of the leases on the black police cars. Mr. Lawrence stated that CIP requests have to cost at least \$5,000 or more, have a lifespan of at least 5 years, and be in line with the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Lawrence explained the top recommendation for the FY 2012 – FY 2017 CIP for the General Fund is the Town's share of the funding for the low water bridge for the VDOT Walnut Avenue project which is set to go out to bid in 2013. He also mentioned that they had received \$136,000 for easements for a new Appalachian power line that will be coming through Town. He stated that he plans to use that money for CIP items, especially for items such as Greenway projects. Second ranked by the Town Manager on the CIP request list is the lease of police vehicles. Mr. Lawrence said they will be replacing several marked cars and a couple of detective cars, for a total of nine vehicles. He said they have found that, in the long run, it is cheaper to lease the vehicles. Third ranked is the greenway pedestrian bridge to connect to the Roanoke River Greenway across Tinker Creek. He said the \$50,000 in Town monies would be matched with money from a private company, Novazymes. Fourth is the

**PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 8, 2012
PAGE 2**

replacement of the two 1980s Ford tractors for public works. Also, ranked in fourth is the Senior Citizen Building Renovation. The sixth ranked request is the planning department's renovation request. He mentioned that the treasurer's office had recently renovated, the police department had recently done some work, and even his own office had been spruced up. He stated that the planning department would like to do some carpeting and also add a customer service counter to create a nice image and working environment for the department and add some separation for safety as well. The proposed renovation would also help to direct people to the front entrance of the department rather than them being unsure of where to enter. Mr. Booth asked when the project would be done. Mr. Lawrence said, if funded, it would be done shortly after July 1st. The seventh ranked request is for a match for a grant for a new stretcher for Fire/EMS. He said it would reduce the chance for injuries to Fire/EMS personnel. Eighth ranked is the building assessment for the Senior Center, which may be put off a year. This would be a first step to planning improvements to the center. Ninth ranked is the installation of guardrails at various locations based on citizen requests. Mr. Lawrence also mentioned the stormwater runoff issue in downtown Vinton that Mr. Jones always champions. He said it is included in the list, but is not ranked. He mentioned that sometime in the future, there may be a stormwater fee that citizens will pay to help fund these types of projects. Mr. Jones asked about the painting of the pool. Mr. Lawrence stated that he thinks they will be able to fund that this year with leftover monies. Ms. Michelsen stated that they may want to look into using salt water in the pool to save money because the chemicals are so expensive. For the Utility Fund CIP, the first ranked item is the design for the Glade-Tinker Wastewater Interceptor Phase III. Next is the design of the Niagara Road Interceptor Improvement. He said the timing on the first two items is important, and the rates for water are not due to be raised again since they were just raised last year. Third ranked is the portable sewer video camera, and fourth is a backhoe/front end loader. Mr. Jones asked for a comparison of revenues from previous years. New revenue is about \$44,000 more than last year. Three years ago it was \$1.5 million more. Mr. Jones asked where the money went. Mr. Thompson said funding from the state has been cut. He said the consumer utility tax has now been taken over by the state and the state distributes it and takes a fee out of it. The Town lost about \$100,000 when the state took over administering the funding. Mr. Thompson said the cigarette tax has added about \$300,000 per year to the funds. Mr. Jones asked about the Clearbrook Walmart move and how much funding the Town got from it. Mr. Thompson stated that the Town receives 11.77% of local sales tax. He said the new Clearbrook Walmart accounts for about \$51,000 in revenue. The OTB has also had nice return on the Town's investment, even though it has not lived up to the original expectations. Mr. Thompson stated that the Town receives approximately \$24,000 from pari-mutuel tax and about \$12,000 from admissions tax for the OTB. Mr. Thompson said Valley Hall only brings in the meals and business license tax. He stated that the meals tax rate for restaurants in the Town is 5%, and it brings in about \$874,000. Both the VRS and life insurance rates have increased for next year. Mr. Lawrence asked the Commissioners for a supportive recommendation to Town Council for the CIP rankings. Mr. Booth stated that he really liked the proposed improvement to the safety and working environment for the Planning Department employees. He made a recommendation that the CIP rankings be presented to Council as it was presented to the Commissioners. Mr. Patterson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and all members voted in favor of the motion.

**PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 8, 2012
PAGE 3**

Mr. Lawrence briefly discussed the downtown Vinton revitalization process. He stated that little has changed since the Town's previous application for the grant money. The money from the grant, if the Town is awarded it this time, will still be used to make downtown look good, help businesses succeed, and to establish a loan pool. He said the "white elephants" really hurt the application last time. One of them, the Dunman Floral property will be made into a new library branch with the purchase of the property by Roanoke County and the Town. The other white elephant is the former Vinton Motors property, and it still needs to be addressed. There is no plan for it currently. The Town has already spent \$20,000 on a feasibility study on the property. Mr. Lawrence stated that the grant application will be resubmitted this year. Mr. Booth asked about the vacant house that is overgrown behind the farmers' market. Mr. Lawrence said the vines would need to be cleared so that the Building Commissioner can look at it again. He also said that Town has the right to go in, clear it out and tear the house down. Then a lien would be placed on the property. As far as the downtown revitalization and the grant, job creation would also be a goal of the project. Mr. Lawrence stated that Council approved the submittal of the grant application at their last meeting. Ms. McMillan will put it together and submit it on the Town's behalf. He mentioned that funding is competitive and takes several years to be funded. This will only be the Town's second year of applying for the grant.

Next on the agenda was an update on the Vinton Area Corridors Plan. Mr. Lawrence said that the first project identified for the Plan is for the Vinton Business Center. He said that last year, a sign for the center was constructed. All the funding for the projects is shared on a fifty percent basis with the County. The plan is to landscape around the sign first, and then plant some trees at the entrance to the center, and finally plant street trees. Mr. Jones mentioned that it would be nice if the Town could possibly clean up the dead growth and trees from 8th street along Walnut Avenue up to Mr. Patsel's building since that is part of the corridors.

The next item on the agenda was the update on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS). Ms. Turman stated that she was asked to look into the CRS system for the Town. The program encourages floodplain management. Points can be earned to help reduce insurance premiums. Currently, the Town has a rating of ten. Being rated a ten allows people to obtain flood insurance, but with no discount on it. To reach a nine rating, 500 points are needed, which will mean a five percent discount on flood insurance for those who have policies in the Town. There are currently fifty-five flood insurance policies in force in the Town. Some policies, depending upon what area they are in, would not be eligible for any discount regardless of the rating achieved by the Town. About \$6,000 total could be saved with discounts that would be earned if the Town achieves a rating of nine. Ms. Turman stated that they may be able to use some of Roanoke County's initiatives to help the Town reach level nine. She has written a grant application to fund the outreach items totaling about \$7,000. The items would need to be done to get any points; therefore, the outreach would have to be funded either with a grant or Town money. Currently, Ms. Turman has found the Town a total of 400 points towards the 500 needed to reach level nine. She mentioned that Roanoke City is at 7 or 8, and Roanoke County is at 9. The County has one person who is devoted to maintaining their rating. Mr. Jones mentioned that it would be good to somehow tie stormwater into the equation. Ms. Turman stated that the direct benefit of a lower CRS rating would be to the citizens and businesses. Mr. Jones thought it was a good thing to try to accomplish. Ms. Michelsen

**PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 8, 2012
PAGE 4**

suggested an article about it be placed in the *Vinton Messenger*. Ms. Turman said she would like to make sure it is going to be funded either through a grant or by Town Council before putting an article in the paper. Mr. Jones mentioned some of the flood initiatives Southern States had put in place since 1985 flood. Ms. Turman said more information any of those items would help the application.

There was nothing further to be discussed; therefore, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m. on a motion by Chairman Jones.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anita McMillan
Planning Commission Secretary