

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF VINTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT 6:00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2014, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE VINTON MUNICIPAL BUILDING LOCATED AT 311 SOUTH POLLARD STREET, VINTON, VIRGINIA.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bradley E. Grose, Mayor  
William W. Nance, Vice Mayor  
I. Douglas Adams, Jr.  
Robert R. Altice  
Matthew S. Hare

PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEMBERS PRESENT: David R. Jones  
Robert A. Patterson  
Paul R. Mason  
William E. Booth  
Dawn M. Michelson

STAFF PRESENT: Christopher S. Lawrence, Town Manager  
Elizabeth Dillon, Town Attorney  
Susan N. Johnson, Town Clerk  
Ryan Spitzer, Assistant to the Town Manager  
Barry Thompson, Finance Director/Treasurer  
Gary Woodson, Public Works Director  
Anita McMillan, Planning & Zoning Director  
Karla Turman, Associate Planner/Code Enforcement Officer  
Joey Hiner, Assistant Public Works Director  
Chris Linkous, Fire/EMS Captain  
Chad Helms, Lieutenant, Fire Department

**The Mayor called the joint work session to order at 6:00** p.m. to hear a briefing concerning the proposed amendments to Division 11, FO Floodplain Overlay District, Sections 4-56 through 4-61, of Article IV, District Regulations, of Appendix B, Zoning, of the Town. The Town Manager made opening comments, introduced Mellissa Hall, with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and then turned the meeting over to Karla Turman for the presentation.

Ms. Turman began by commenting that she had provided Council and the Planning Commission members with some additional printed materials. One was information from DCR's website regarding floodplain management, a map of the mobile home park on Cedar Avenue, and two maps from 2009 showing the floodplain properties in the Town which include the floodway and the 100 year floodplain. Per Roanoke County, 331 properties are in the floodplain, 105 are either partially or totally in the floodway and 121 are 100% in the 100 year floodplain. Of those 331 properties, there are actually 171 owners. A mailing was sent to all of those owners to let them know that we would be meeting to discuss the amendments to the floodplain ordinance.

Ms. Turman next commented on some questions she had received prior to the meeting. The first question was whether or not the additions proposed by FEMA and the Town have already been determined to meet the federal requirements. The response was that the draft ordinance, which was sent as part of the agenda package, was based on an example floodplain ordinance for Virginia that was provided by DCR, which does meet the federal regulations. The language added by the Town refers to those regulations that make the ordinance stricter than what FEMA requires.

The next question was how many property owners in the Town are eligible to obtain the federally backed insurance. Any property owner in Town can purchase federally backed insurance as long as the Town participates in the National Flood Insurance Program. There are property owners not in the floodplain who have the insurance coverage for sewage back-up, which your homeowner's insurance does not cover. Vice Mayor Nance asked if we know how many actually have flood insurance now. Ms. Turman responded that she does not have those figures with her, but she recalls 56 total policies as of last summer and either six or seven of those were preferred policies. William Booth asked if those outside the floodplain had to get their insurance through a certain company or their own private insurance company. The response was flood insurance would be obtained from their own insurance agent.

Ralph Darienzo, a member of Living Waters Church on Vale Avenue, asked if there is a low cost insurance that FEMA will allow those in the floodplain to apply for. Melissa Hall responded that FEMA floodplain insurance is the low-cost option. Before 1960 when FEMA implemented this program through the National Flood Insurance Act, flood insurance was not generally available in the United States because it was too costly and too high a risk for the standard insured. Now that FEMA has gotten into the flood insurance business, those policies are available for re-sale through standard insurance agents. However, the risks are generally on the backs of the federal government. For new policies, the costs are very high. Those who have had the insurance for several years have been receiving preferential rates. That has now changed and those who purchase existing structures in the floodplain that do not meet the construction standards are getting levied more of the full actuary risk that that structure represents.

Mr. Adams commented that with the hurricanes and floods that have happened up North, he's heard that flood insurance did not pay. Ms. Hall responded there is a cap for individual policies through FEMA of \$250k for structure, but she does not remember the contents cap. In addition, a lot of what we are hearing in these cases is that the owners had homeowner's policies, but not flood policies and did not realize they needed it until the event happened.

Ms. Turman next commented that she was able to get the information regarding how many people have flood policies in the Town. As of last year there were 43 in the special flood hazard areas and six that were preferred risks outside of the floodplain. There were seven policies within the 500 year floodplain. A question was asked if the private sector offers similar insurance and if so, is it more expensive. The private sector does offer flood insurance through Lloyds of London and it also requires the community to participate in the National Flood Insurance Program in order to be provided a policy.

Regarding the mobile home park on Cedar Avenue, a question was asked if our current ordinance allows those trailers to be replaced as they are. The response was yes, but the new trailer would have to go back in the same spot. It could not be any bigger than the trailer being replaced. However, if this new ordinance is passed, replacing a mobile home would be considered a substantial improvement if it is more than 50% of the home's value. Once it becomes a substantial improvement, it will fall under the new construction requirements and will have to meet all of the construction and elevation standards, which are now at two feet above base flood elevation. Also, they would have to have hydrologic and hydraulic engineering done to prove the structure would not cause any rise in flood waters.

This is the only mobile home park in the Town and the map referred to earlier shows all the mobile homes that are in the park, a total of nine. Seven of those are in the floodway at least partially. Vice Mayor Nance asked if these mobile homes are the only homes that would be impacted on their right to build with the passage of the suggested changes. Ms. Turman responded that any structure built in the floodway would have to meet the new requirements, not just mobile homes. Ms. McMillan commented that the Town bought seven former structures in the floodway with the flood mitigation grant money in the late 1990s, and in 2005 the Town bought two properties on 5th and Walnut and demolished the structures that were on the lots. There are no other structures now in the floodway except the seven in the mobile home park.

Vice Mayor Nance commented that we are definitely going to be limiting individuals' ability to rebuild homes, but without the passage of these changes, no one is going to have the ability to obtain flood insurance. Ms. Turman said commercial properties would also be affected as well as homeowners who have a mortgage which requires the flood insurance. Ms. Hall commented that this is not just a matter of flood insurance, but a matter of any federally backed mortgage being available. You cannot have a federally backed mortgage in the floodplain without flood insurance and all of those homes would be affected by the failure to maintain the Towns' National Flood Insurance status.

Ms. Hall also commented regarding the floodway and the issue of no rise in flood waters. Existing homes within floodplains have been calculated into the base flood line level. Basically, the ordinance says if you build to here (the base flood elevation), the waters can get no more than one-foot above the base level. If you build past here, you are going to increase that flood which will affect other people. If you replace the mobile home, you will have to elevate it properly because you will still have to comply with the general regulations and not increase the footprint that is a reasonable and acceptable floodway application. However, if someone replaces a single wide with a double wide, obviously they are increasing the amount in the floodway and that is unacceptable.

Ms. McMillan commented that the Town does allow development in the floodplain as long as for residential it meets the two feet above floodplain and commercial the foundation has to be one foot above the base flood elevation. After further comments from Ms. McMillan, Planning Commission Chair, Dave Jones, asked when the offers were made to buy properties as part of the flood mitigation program, were these mobile homes excluded. Ms. McMillan responded that VDEM indicated that a mobile home park costs a lot more, so they asked that we go into residential, not commercial since there was only a certain amount of money. The Mayor asked the history of these eight locations shown and do they get flooded regularly. Ms. Turman responded that we do not have any way of knowing that unless they were to submit a claim for flooding.

The Mayor referred to a comment that was made earlier about homeowners' insurance not covering backups. He knows you can get a rider for your policy to cover that at a cost of approximately \$35-50 a year. The Town Manager reiterated the Mayor's comments that you can purchase a rider for water/sewer back-up. Ms. Hall commented that flood insurance will not cover a single home event, but that two homes must be affected in order for flood insurance to kick in.

Dave Jones asked if there was a cost to the Town to be in an NFP community and the response was only staff time in putting together the ordinance. The Town Manager commented that there had been discussion in the past regarding our potential to change our CRS rating to allow those with flood insurance policies to possibly receive a slightly lesser policy rate. In order to do this, it would take more time of our Planning staff to devote to education, policy development and implementation and it was decided not to proceed at that time.

In Section 1.5 (A) of the draft ordinance, Mr. Hare asked for clarification regarding other ordinances still being in effect if they are more restrictive. Ms. Hall responded that the flood

insurance is an overlay district which means that you have to follow all the rules for the flood ordinance. In addition, if it is a commercial structure, you have to have the same set-back and zoning requirements that are already in the ordinance. Whichever is the more restricted has to be followed. Ms. McMillan also stated that any requirements of the stormwater ordinance would apply in addition to the floodplain ordinance. Ms. Turman said there would possibly be some wording change in that section to make it more understandable.

In response to a question about variances, the Town Manager stated that staff can review all of those and see how they might be affected. Ms. Turman commented about the recent variance that was given to Mr. Butler for his new building to be moved back to get it out of the floodplain.

The Mayor stated he wanted to confirm that if this ordinance is not passed, then no one in the Town would be eligible for the federal flood insurance program. Ms. Turman responded that was correct and no one in Town would be eligible for any flood insurance program because even the private company requires that they be in an NFP community. Mr. Hare added that people would also lose their federally backed mortgage which means people would be without a home. Also, the Town Manager commented that if we did have a large flood that caused significant damage, the Town would not be eligible for FEMA reimbursement.

Ms. Turman next commented that Council could just pass the FEMA requirements and not go any stricter than what is required. Ms. Hall commented that at the time the map study was done, if a 100 year flood happened that day, how high would we expect the waters to go. We know that people are going to build and fill the floodplains because that is what people do and the expectation is that some of that activity would cause as much as a foot rise over the base flood elevation. So if FEMA only requires you to build at the base flood elevation, why would they let people build to the point where a foot above the base flood elevation is going to be flooded. That is why sensible communities like Vinton require more because if you build at the base flood elevation, you are planning for failure. Ms. Turman further commented that our ordinance being stricter than FEMA is not anything new, that has been our history.

Dave Jones asked how we compare to other communities in the area or the Valley. Ms. McMillan commented that the Town is just like Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke. They both require a two-foot above flood elevation for residential and a foot above elevation for commercial. Both Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke participate in CRS that gives a reduction to homeowners that have flood insurance. Roanoke City is at Level 7 and Roanoke County is at Level 8. If the

Council decided to proceed with trying to lower the Town's CRS, these restrictions would give us points as far as requiring structures to be above the base flood elevation.

Vice Mayor Nance asked about Article V, Section (B) in deciding which wording to use. Ms. McMillan indicated she would check with Roanoke County to be sure which language we should use. Mr. Nance commented that the blue language "conform to the VA USBC" appears to be a little bit more rational. Ms. Turman commented that what is in blue is the new ordinance and the red language is in our current ordinance.

In response to a question from Mr. Hare, Ms. Turman responded that the new regulations are not going to impact flood insurance policies. What is going to affect the flood insurance policies is the Biggert-Waters Act of 2012. This Act was created to bring more money into FEMA based on an actuary and they are not subsidizing the insurance costs as much anymore. Ms. Turman gave two examples of a lady who said her flood insurance premium has been about \$400 plus for a long time, but last year her bill was \$4,000. The gentleman in the audience who is with Living Waters Church on Dale Avenue stated that they started out at \$600 and now it is \$4,800 a year. The Town can help those individuals through the CRS program by reducing the Town's rating level to give property owners a decrease in their flood insurance rate. Dave Jones commented that Southern States flood insurance premium was in the thousands and now it is in the hundred thousands and you do not operate a business without flood insurance.

Ms. Hall commented that there is one way this ordinance might affect people is that if you have a flood insurance policy, part of your coverage is increased cost of compliance feature. If an event takes place that requires a homeowner to bring their home up to current standards if their home is substantially damaged, those would not be the minimum standards, but the standards of the community. So in Vinton people would have to have their homes raised two feet above instead of base level elevation.

Mr. Darienzo from the audience commented that he was told that the Church's floor is about two inches too low. He asked if they could raise the floor two more inches to four inches, would that pass the regulations. Ms. Turman responded that they would have to look at the elevation permit to see where the base foot elevation is and it would have to be raised a foot above the base foot elevation. Staff can check to see if there is an elevation certificate on file for the Church.

Mr. Booth asked if there is a recommendation from staff to the Council and Planning Commission. The Town Manager

commented that it needs to be approved. There are probably a couple of areas that we might need to have some language adjustment if there is an issue or a higher standard than what the minimum of FEMA is and we will make sure you know what that is. The option of not having it is huge, just two corporations alone would have to move and we want to make sure the community and the people affected are aware of it and that we are able to communicate and work with them to the greatest extent possible. Dave Jones commented that they just did a half million dollar project and in order to get the permit to start, they had to prove that they were within the requirement of the Town. The Town Manager commented that the next step was to hold a joint public hearing on April 15th with the Planning Commission to take action first and then Council would be in a position to take action. We have until the end of April to get this adopted.

The Work Session ended at 6:55 p.m. and Council took a recess.

**The Mayor called the regular meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.**

The Town Clerk called the roll with Council Member Adams, Council Member Altice, Council Member Hare, Vice Mayor Nance, and Mayor Grose present. After a Moment of Silence Mr. Altice led the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

Roll Call

**Mr. Adams made a motion that the consent agenda be approved as presented;** the motion was seconded by Mr. Altice and carried by the following vote, with all members voting: Vote 5-0; Yeas (5) – Adams, Altice, Hare, Nance, Grose; Nays (0) – None.

Approved minutes of the regular Council meeting of February 18, 2014

**The Mayor read a Proclamation declaring the month of March as American Red Cross month.** He then commented that while he was in the military, the Red Cross was always there and was very encouraging. Mr. Lee Clark, Chief Executive Officer for the American Red Cross, Virginia Mountain Region, was present at the meeting to accept the Proclamation. He made brief comments and then read a letter to the local Red Cross from a local family who received assistance during a recent house fire.

**The next item on the agenda was to consider adoption of Resolution awarding a bid and authorizing the Town Manager to execute a contract with Lawrence Equipment in the amount of \$91,238.00 for a Case 580 Super N Backhoe.** Gary Woodson commented that Public Works solicited bids to replace the 1995 Case Backhoe that has exceeded its useful life. Two bids were received, one from Lawrence Equipment, which is the same vendor from which we recently purchased a new tractor, and one from Boone Tractor Company in Salem. We went out with a base bid and five

alternates for attachments, parts or pieces so we could compare and get the most for the dollar amount. Lawrence was the low bidder and we were able to get two additional attachments, the factory installed hydraulics and a plate compactor/tamper. The bid was \$91,283.00. The Town Manager stated for the record that he has no relation to Lawrence Equipment.

Mr. Woodson further commented that the asphalt roller also came from Lawrence Equipment. In response to a question about how many back hoes the Town has, Mr. Woodson stated three. The backhoe being replaced is the one that sets out on the material yard and it is in poor condition. We plan on making it surplus. Vice Mayor Nance asked how we handled this in the budget for the purchase and the Town Manager responded that it is in the water/sewer fund and is tied to the bond sale that we did. A part of the bond went out for 20 years and the equipment part of the bond money only went out for five years. Mr. Thompson commented that it is in the 2013 Capital Improvement Bond Series, not in the operating budget. Vice Mayor Nance then asked what was our target for this purchase and Mr. Woodson responded \$95,000.00.

Vice Mayor Nance made a motion that the Resolution be adopted as presented; the motion was seconded by Mr. Hare and carried by the following roll call vote, with all members voting: Vote 5-0; Yeas (5) – Adams, Altice, Hare, Nance, Grose; Nays (0) – None.

**The next item was to consider adoption of a Resolution** approving the final Revolving Loan Program Plan and Guidelines Manual and its supporting documents to administer the Revolving Loan Program as part of the CDBG Program. The Town Manager explained that Ryan Spitzer was meeting with the Planning Commission to review the CIP for FY2015 so they can make a recommendation back to Council. The Town Manager then commented that following the last Council meeting Mr. Spitzer was directed to work with the Loan Committee and the Town Attorney to create a more formalized loan agreement that would bind the borrower to repay the loan in a more structured way. The proposed agreement has the actual signature of the borrower not just their business. This does not mean that we are guaranteed to get the money back, but it could help us from being a second or subsequent loan if someone filed bankruptcy as a business. The recommendation from the Revolving Loan Committee is that Council approve the final Plan and Guidelines Manual as well as supporting documents, more specifically the actual Loan Agreement. Once approved, the Committee will then start the public process of communicating with those the Committee has already talked with and others who may be interested. We have \$100,000

Adopted Resolution No. 2055 awarding a bid and authorizing the Town Manager to execute a contract with Lawrence Equipment in the amount of \$91,238.00 for a Case 580 Super N Backhoe

and the goal is to dispense primarily in increments of \$10,000 with some flexibility. Also, out of the \$100,000, there is a requirement that four jobs be created.

Mr. Hare asked if this loan agreement would be subordinated to another and the Town Attorney responded that it could be. Mr. Hare then asked if we would want it to be or would we give an allowance and say you cannot subordinate your loan. The Town Attorney commented that the Committee could further discuss the issue, but it is not included in the current agreement. She imagined there could be circumstances where you would want someone to be able to do that and circumstances where you would not want someone to. Vice Mayor Nance said if it is silent, would the Committee have the ability to potentially do it on a case by case basis and the Town Attorney stated there could be an addendum to use on a case by case basis.

The Town Manager asked if everyone knew what subordinate option meant and the Town Attorney explained that if a borrower had a home mortgage and wanted to use their home for collateral on another loan, there would be a determination as to which loan would be subordinate to the other. The Town Manager further commented that one of the bankers on the Committee gave the example of someone going to the bank for a loan and not having the required deposit. They could possibly use their Revolving Loan Fund money for the deposit. The Mayor commented that if we tabled the matter for a few weeks would it hurt the schedule and the response was no. The Town Manager stated the other option was to approve the items tonight and then staff could come back with an addendum.

Mr. Hare made a motion that the Resolution be tabled until the March 18, 2014 meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Altice and carried by the following vote, with all members voting: Vote 5-0; Yeas (5) – Adams, Altice, Hare, Nance, Grose; Nays (0) – None.

**Under briefings, the first item was an update on real estate tax assessment for Calendar Year 2014 and request to advertise a public hearing for March 18, 2014, to set the real estate tax, personal property tax and machinery and tools tax rates.** Barry Thompson reviewed the 2014 assessment figure provided by Roanoke County which showed a total decrease of \$1,162,900 from the 2013 assessment. The new construction figure in the Town for 2013 of \$346,000 was then subtracted from that figure for a total decrease of \$1,508,900, which is a .25% decrease. The same tax rate applied for year 2014 as in year 2013, will net a decrease of \$349.

In accordance with Section 58.1-3321 of the 1950 Code of

Tabled Resolution approving the final Revolving Loan Program Plan and Guidelines Manual and its supporting documents to administer the Revolving Loan Program as part of the CDBG Program to the March 18, 2014 meeting

Virginia, as amended, if the tax assessment is an increase of one percent, we are required to advertise. Since there is a decrease for the third year in a row, there is no advertisement required by law. However, we have always advertised. Mr. Thompson requested Council to authorize the advertising of the tax rate for Public Hearing on March 18, 2014.

Mr. Altice made a motion to authorize the advertising; the motion was not seconded. Mr. Altice retracted his motion and Council gave a consensus to authorize the advertising of the public hearing.

**The next item was a briefing on proposal to increase career Fire/EMS staff at Station 2 to provide staff for a 24-hour Fire Engine.** The Town Manager began with a Power Point presentation and first commented that the issues and needs are that local government is committed to provide Fire/EMS as a core service. Over the years on the national as well as local level, volunteerism in Fire and EMS has declined and we are seeing a decline in the ability to respond to fire calls during evening hours.

From the Fire side, our career staff work 12 hours (from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and the 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. along with weekends and all of our holidays are covered by volunteers. This is not just a Vinton Station 2 problem. It affects all of East Roanoke County in that the calls that are not responded to have been on the rise. Last fall, at a meeting with Roanoke City, Roanoke County and the Town, Roanoke City indicated they were willing to provide mutual aid between the County and the City, but the number of calls had gotten to the point of concern that while they were responding to the County, they were leaving their own stations without coverage. Data collected indicates that Read Mountain, which is in Botetourt but is a joint station owned and operated by Roanoke County, did not respond to 58% of fire calls, Vinton was at 32% and Mount Pleasant at 31%. These three stations back up each other's calls and we are one of four core stations in the County.

The Town Manager continued commenting that a joint meeting was held with the three localities to discuss the issue and the City requested that we have some type of solution by July 1, 2014. A joint committee was created to gather input from Roanoke County staff, Town career and administration staff and the Town Volunteer Fire and First Aid Crew.

This committee looked at solutions and options beginning with the demand on the services. A review of the equipment indicated that Station 2 has all of the right equipment, two fire trucks, a ladder truck, three ambulances and support vehicles. We have over 2,000 calls in a calendar year and the demand on the services is great, mostly made up of EMS calls. Fire service is there when you need it, but they do not

Authorized advertising of a public hearing for March 18, 2014, to set the real estate tax, personal property tax and machinery and tools tax rates

run as many true fire calls as there are clearly EMS calls. The committee then developed two primary options to address needed level of service and took into consideration what resources (people and funds) do we have available within our span of control as staff. Renovation needs and options were also reviewed for the current station because the Fire career staff does not spend the night there. Renovations to try to encourage and promote the volunteers to spend the night and/or stay at the station longer were considered, along with what would be needed for the 24-hour career staff.

Next, the Town Manager commented on incidents and staffing. From January to October of 2013, there were 1,885 total calls from the Vinton station. That represents 17% of all the calls throughout the entire County and the Vinton station is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in all 12 stations of the number of calls that went through Vinton. The fire truck/engine and ladder truck are staffed by career staff on Monday through Friday for 12 hours. During the day there are two ambulances staffed by career staff, one being 12-hour and one being 24-hour. If the second ambulance is needed, two run that call and the ladder truck cannot be run. If the ladder truck is needed, then the ambulance gets dropped. All the other times, the fire volunteers cover the fire trucks and generally they have enough volunteers for an engine while they are at the station. The second ambulance is staffed by the First Aid Crew and at times we have a third ambulance when the First Aid Crew has enough volunteers available.

The need to provide a 24-hour career staffed fire truck will increase the ability to respond to calls throughout the night because career staff will be at the station and can supplement the volunteers. This will make the City as automatic mutual aid and rather than going through a cycle of County stations, we will get the truck that is closest to the incident first.

The Committee came up with two options. Option One is to drop the second medic truck and put that staff plus two additional staff (to be hired by the County) on the fire truck 24 hours a day plus one ambulance. The pros are having 24-hour fire coverage, but the cons are loss of the ladder truck and loss of the second medic truck during the day which will create a domino effect on the County system. We will also lose transport revenue and the Town Captain as a department head. The Town Captain would work the same 24-hour shift as the other career staff and probably be available less than six days a month in an administrative position. The County has already hired the two additional career staff who will complete the academy and be available to work in early July.

Option Two maintains the current system in place today with one 24-hour fire truck and one ambulance. On the 12-hour shift will be the ladder truck and a medic truck. This option would require the addition of seven new employees, two by the Town and five by the County. This option would meet the current needs and maintain the current level of service; however, there are limited resources to fund seven employees in one year from the Town and the County.

Staff has been working through the Town's Public Safety Committee. With the resources we have in working directly with the County, we will be able to work diligently through the FY2015 budget process to afford Option One. However, there is a real concern about dropping the second medic truck. The recommendation is for the Town to also fund a new position to accommodate maintenance of the department head position. The expectation is that we would fund Option Two in the FY2016 budget to prepare for implementation on July 1, 2015. That means for one year, we would have one fire truck and one ambulance and then in July 2015, we would have enough staff along with the County to add back that second ambulance. The Town Manager next commented that funding for Option One would require approximately \$60,000 per person, a reduction in transport fees of approximately \$30,000 and minor promotional expenses.

Option Two would cost approximately \$120,000 to fund two additional career staff plus some additional promotional expenses. It would, however, maintain our transport fees. Roanoke County would have to fund five new positions now and they have currently committed to two and any additional positions cannot be supported by their current budget. They would work towards funding the additional three new positions a year from now.

In regard to Town staffing, a department head is needed at the Fire station. Under Option Two, we would have to hire two people half way through the year and get them through the academy. Rather than doing that, we recommend changing Captain Linkous' title to Deputy Chief which will maintain the ranking system. The volunteers have their Chief and the County has their Chief, the volunteers and the County has their Assistant Chiefs and then Captain Linkous would fit in as Deputy Chief. Without this change, he will be one of four Captains. This will allow us to maintain the department head integrity and keep the realty that the Vinton station is a funded Town-owned station and there is an understanding between the County Captains that the Town.

Proposed renovations include a bunk room for six more career staff and improved facilities for the volunteers. The Committee developed a proposal to make some renovations

in the fire station by turning the current career office and day room into the bunk room. This day room and office would be moved upstairs. The large kitchen upstairs would be renovated as well as the volunteer bunkroom, the Volunteer Apartment kitchen and the public bathrooms upstairs.

The Committee considered another option for renovations, but the major concern with that option related to the age of the fire station and possible issues with the HVAC system and the structure as a whole. The County has agreed to fund one-half of the total renovations which would be approximately \$60,000 with the recommended option.

The recommendation is to proceed with Option One and suggested renovations. Based on the time frame of the new County staff that will complete the academy and be available for work on July 26<sup>th</sup>, we need to start bids in April for the renovations to be completed on time.

The Mayor asked for comments from the Council Members on the Public Safety Committee. Mr. Adams began by commenting that he left the meeting with some spirited conversations, but he has some major concerns. He agrees 100% that we need to have the fire service there and it needs to be able to respond in time. However, at the same time, losing that second ambulance really concerns him. When the medic truck goes out today on a call, if a second call comes in and is on the Mount Pleasant side of Town, it will roll to Mount Pleasant. If it is on the other side of Town, it will roll to Read Mountain. The issue is that a number of times when the second medic truck was on call and we needed a third truck and you go to Read Mountain, 60% of the time they are in Botetourt County and not available. At Mount Pleasant, they are controlled by the Captain at Clearbrook and we have heard that often times they are at Clearbrook.

We have a system that works today for EMS and normally when those calls come in, they are life-threatening. When a fire comes in, it is property threatening in this Town, most of the time. This will save response time to the fire service, but it will hurt the service that answers most of the calls, life-threatening calls. Hiring one person will cost \$60,000, but this option will also cost the Town \$90,000 because of the anticipated loss of 30,000 in revenue for transport reimbursement.

The Public Safety Committee met and discussed all of this and we are not ready to go forward. We feel the Town needs to write a letter to our representative on the Board of Supervisors and there needs to be more discussion. It is putting the residents of East Roanoke County and the Town of Vinton in danger. Mr. Hare commented that Mr. Adams had correctly stated the discussion of the Committee. This is

a public safety issue. When you eliminate an entire ambulance we are putting citizens at risk. This deserves a higher level of conversation because we are trying to fix one problem, but breaking something that is working.

Mr. Hare further commented that he has no doubt that Roanoke County wants the best for this part of the County by trying to provide the level of service we currently have plus increasing that with 24-hour fire coverage, but everything has stalled at money. He thinks the conversation should be had in more than just a private work session that is not open to the public or for public debate.

Vice Mayor Nance asked if the 32% that is being quoted to us could be inflated because we are covering the Read Mountain 58% and the response was that a part of it is. Mr. Nance then asked if the County is attempting to rectify that problem at the same time. The Town Manager responded that the County is working on Vinton first because it is a core station. Mount Pleasant has the same need and we do not know about Read Mountain. Mr. Adams commented that if a fire truck is dispatched and disregarded before it leaves the station that counts as a non-response. There are a number of different incidents that can count as non-responses, but he does not count that way. There are so many variables in the statistics.

Vice Mayor Nance asked where does Read Mountain fall in the volume of calls and Mr. Adams responded that in Roanoke County they are probably in the lower two-thirds. The Town Manager commented that 60% of the time Read Mountain is responding to Botetourt.

The Mayor commented that this is very serious in the fact that our citizens may realize a reduction in a very critical service. Mr. Altice commented that we need more information before we make a decision. The Town Manager commented that he has reached his threshold of working with Mr. Goodman, the Roanoke County Administrator and it has now become a political funding question. The Committee and staff all want the same thing and agree that Option Two is the right thing to do.

The Mayor reiterated that the Town and Roanoke County staff has taken it as far as they can. He suggested that the next step be that Council asks for a meeting with our representative or the Board as a whole. He personally would rather see Council as a whole meet with the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Hare said that he thinks the Board of Supervisors would echo what Council is saying because public safety is a very high priority for Roanoke County as well.

The Mayor stated that he be willing on behalf of Council to contact our representative on the Board to see what the next step would be. Council supported the Mayor making this contact on their behalf.

**The Town Clerk commented that the record needs to** reflect that at the February 18, 2014 meeting, Council appointed Christopher S. Lawrence and Gary W. Woodson as Board Members and Bradley E. Grose and William W. Nance as Alternates, for unspecified terms to the Western Virginia Regional Industrial Facility Authority. The beginning date of those terms has now been set as February 4, 2014, and she has administered new Oaths of Office to reflect this date.

The Town Manager commented that the first meeting of the Board was last week and the Authority has received funding through the Department of Housing and Community Development to fund the study to go through the region covered by the Authority to find sites that meet the set criteria.

**The Mayor next asked if the Finance Committee would** make their report next rather than during the usual Council section.

Mr. Hare commented that the Committee met yesterday and reviewed several topics. The financials as of January 2014 for the War Memorial were reviewed and year-to-date the revenues are at \$136,000 with five months left to go. The goal is \$147,000, but there are some pass-through items. The most important item is from a year-to-date basis, the subsidy to the War Memorial is down almost \$30,000. Based on the reservations for the rest of the year, revenue will probably come in \$50,000 plus over the projected budget.

Regarding the January financials, the revenues are over what was projected by \$651,000 which is a timing issue on when we received the gain-sharing funds from the County. The cigarette tax continues to be behind at this point around \$100,000. The sales tax and meals tax continue to be strong. Some changes made in our investment policies have given us come increased revenues.

Now that we do have the gain-sharing funds from the County, the amount is \$93,000 less than what we had budgeted. The pari-mutuel tax from Colonial Downs could easily be off \$20,000 if they do not negotiate their contract issues. If we take the cigarette tax, the gain-sharing and the pari-mutuel tax, we are looking at \$220,000 less this budget year.

On the spending side, generally it is a timing issue. Part is

due to the higher wages in the Police Department because of overstaffing of employees and they are understaffed now. There were some true-ups in that the Western Virginia Water Authority did a retroactive price increase to the tune of \$27,000 when they raised their rates. The Town Manager and staff are working to fill a gap of about \$100,000 even after cutting back on the CIP and other items. We will not fund anymore CIP except for the renovations to the fire house which we discussed earlier. On the utility side, it is slightly under the projection and they are under spending, so the ability to recover should not be too difficult.

Mr. Hare further commented that the Committee also reviewed some of the controls issues listed in the audit under the management section. Some changes have been made and responses will be reviewed with the auditors to see if we can get them cleared and off of our audit statement going forward.

The Committee also spent a considerable amount of time discussing the cigarette tax and reviewing some information from wholesalers as to what has been happening with the actual sales to the stores in Vinton and the report is very similar to what the citizens and store owners had already told us. The Town is down around 38% and wholesalers are down about 23% across the board which takes into account about \$42,000 that was pulled ahead in the previous fiscal year and the volume being down. The Committee felt there was enough information to make some conclusions that the tax rate had a negative impact on the Town and on our businesses. We discussed what we wanted to do with next year's budget and we have already figured in a decrease. On behalf of the Committee we thought about our citizens' comments to us and those who have come back and asked us to do something, although there was a valid reason for why we implemented the increase. However, we feel that we need to go back and lower the rate.

Mr. Hare next made a motion that effective immediately we lower the tax rate by 10 cents from its existing \$0.35 to try to give businesses some relief so that hopefully they can recover. Vice Mayor Nance commented that he is very much in favor of what Mr. Hare has explained to Council. It is the appropriate thing to do because it is not helping the Town's bottom line and hurting our stakeholders, then there is something wrong. Mr. Nance then asked if we could make such a motion tonight or do we need to direct staff to have that motion prepared by the next meeting.

The Town Manager responded that action needed to be taken at the next meeting because it requires an ordinance. The Town Attorney commented that the same way we set the tax we have to decrease the tax. Barry Thompson asked if it

would have to be advertised and the Town Attorney responded she would have to check, but probably not to lower it. Mr. Hare then retracted his original motion and requested staff to prepare the necessary ordinance to lower the cigarette tax rate from \$0.35 to \$0.25.

The Town Attorney commented that if we do have to advertise, we may not be able to do it at the next meeting, but as soon as possible.

Mr. Hare made a motion to approve the January 2014 financial report as presented; the motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Nance and carried by the following vote, with all members voting: Vote 5-0; Yeas (5) – Adams, Altice, Hare, Nance, Grose; Nays (0) – None

Approved the January 2014  
Financial Report

**The Mayor expressed thanks to the Planning Commission** for meeting with Council tonight to discuss the floodplain ordinance. He also commented that there has been a lot of good news in Town such as the library and the downtown grant and he thinks we have a bright future. However, none of those projects to date have brought in extra revenue, so we do face some challenges. He does think in years to come that we will see those increases in revenue that we will need to not only survive as a Town, but to move ahead.

**Comments from Council: Vice Mayor Nance expressed** thanks to both Committees for their reports. Mr. Adams experience in the public safety field is a very welcomed voice on Council especially in regards to the 24-hour fire issue. The concern about the options presented does not reflect on the hard work that was put into those options. It is perhaps that this is one of those times that we need not only to invest ourselves, but also invest political capital into this situation as well. He does not want anyone to be discouraged because they did not necessarily proceed with the options presented this evening. He also appreciates Mr. Hare's impact on the Finance Committee and all of Council's willingness to readdress the concern of the cigarette tax. The Mayor commented that Council and all of staff have areas of expertise and we all respect each other enough to listen to each other.

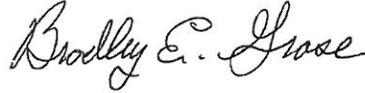
Mr. Hare commented that the January reports mentioned that the bridge work is behind schedule and do we know how far behind. Gary Woodson responded that based on the weekly reports they are making progress. They have put efforts in working seven days a week to meet the March 18<sup>th</sup> deadline. Because of the log perch, they cannot work back in the creek until after June 18<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Adams commented on the community meeting last week

with the consultant regarding the small park that we want to put downtown. This was a very constructive meeting with the three Lions Clubs downtown and the consultant was given several ideas that he will bring back to another meeting which is tentatively set for March 27<sup>th</sup>. We very much want to get the public input on this.

Vice Mayor Nance made a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Hare and carried by the following vote, with all members voting: Vote 5-0; Yeas (5) – Adams, Altice, Hare, Nance, Grose; Nays (0) – None. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

APPROVED:



Bradley E. Grose, Mayor

ATTEST:



Susan N. Johnson, Town Clerk