

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF VINTON TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT 7:00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2012, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE VINTON MUNICIPAL BUILDING LOCATED AT 311 SOUTH POLLARD STREET, VINTON, VIRGINIA.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bradley E. Grose, Mayor
Carolyn D. Fidler, Vice Mayor
Robert R. Altice
Matthew S. Hare
William W. Nance

STAFF PRESENT: Christopher S. Lawrence, Town Manager
Elizabeth Dillon, Town Attorney
Susan N. Johnson, Town Clerk
Consuella Caudill, Assistant Town Manager/Economic Development Manager
Ben Cook, Police Chief
Barry Thompson, Finance Director/Treasurer
Lauren Hodges, Facility Manager
Joey Hiner, Assistant Public Works Director

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call
The Town Clerk called the roll with Council Member Altice, Council Member Hare, Council Member Nance, Vice Mayor Fidler, and Mayor Grose present.

The Mayor welcomed those in attendance. Before the Moment of Silence, the Mayor mentioned Mike Faw, Public Works employee, who is having heart surgery, and Police Officer Chris Hays and his family in the loss of their infant daughter. After a Moment of Silence, Mr. Altice led the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

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

Mr. Nance read a letter from Chief Cook naming MPO Scott Hurt, Officer Stephen Foutz and Officer Michael Byrd as Officers of the Month of December 2011.

The Town Manager announced that Craig Sheets, an alternate member on the Town's Board of Zoning Appeals, has submitted his resignation due to a new position out of town. He indicated that a work session will be scheduled for the first meeting in February to

Approved minutes of December 20, 2011; adopted Resolution No. 1949 reappointing James Warren Childress, II to the Highway Safety Commission; adopted Resolution No. 1950 reappointing Fred L. Swisher to the Highway Safety Commission

present the cost of services study, which is the water and sewer rate study. The Town Manager also acknowledged Mike Faw and the Hays family.

The Town Manager made brief comments on the first item requiring action—the final design and location of the William Byrd High School’s electronic message board at the intersection of Washington Avenue and Bypass Road. He referred Council to their agenda packet and the staff report which indicates that all the zoning requirements have been met as well as all the requirements in the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Mayor opened the floor for public comments. Mike Stovall, Vinton School Board representative, indicated that the project will be put out to bid once the vote is cast.

Robert M. Obenchain of 1041 Washington Avenue asked if the six foot height is from the ground level or from the base level. The Town Manager responded that it is from the ground level to the top of the sign. He then asked about the landscaping, planting of shrubbery and the Town Manager responded that vegetation would be planted. The sign will be constructed first and after consultation with the neighbors, the type of vegetation will be decided.

Walter Darnell, Jr. of 1035 Washington Avenue asked if there was a picture of the back of the sign. Mr. Stovall responded that it will be brick and the sign will be encased inside the brick.

Peggy Harman of 644 Dillon Drive asked if the sign is V-shaped, how it will be situated on the lot. Mr. Nance referred to the aerial view with the red mark indicating the location of the sign.

Mr. Darnell asked who has the responsibility to maintain the area now. The Town Manager indicated that the Town will maintain the overall right-of-way corner as they always have, but the actual sign and its vegetation will be the responsibility of the school.

William Henderson of 727 Arcadia Circle asked if there were any other sites considered at all and made other comments supporting his opinion that the location does not seem right.

The Mayor made brief comments and indicated that he is comfortable with the information that has been presented.

Mr. Nance made a motion that Council approve the final design and location of the electronic message board sign and then made brief comments thanking the citizens for their input. The motion was then seconded by Mr. Hare and carried by the following roll call vote, with all members voting: Vote 3-2; Yeas (3)-Hare, Nance, Grose; Nays (2)-Altice, Fidler.

Vice Mayor Fidler stated that she voted against the sign because of the location and thinks there is a better location.

Mr. Obenchain asked when the sign will be completed. Mr. Stovall indicated that they would have to go out to bid and once the bids are back in and a decision is made that possibly work could begin in March. Mr. Stovall then commended the Town Manager during this whole process for his cooperation and quick response in providing information as requested.

Mr. Hare asked Mr. Stovall to ensure that neighbors will not be inconvenienced during the construction of the sign and he indicated they would not.

Mr. Altice indicated that he did not support the sign because citizens are already questioning the safety of the intersection and he thinks it will create more of a safety issue.

The next item related to an Ordinance to amend Ordinance No. 915 and Deed of Easement, approved on June 21, 2011, relating to conveyance of an access easement to Eula B. Ayers to amend the amount of insurance coverage. The Town Manager indicated that Kathy Stafford, the owner's daughter, was not able to secure insurance coverage in the amount of \$2 million and asked that the amount be reduced. Staff is recommending that the actual amount of insurance be removed from the actual Deed of Easement, but that \$1 million be the new amount required. Mr. Altice made a motion to approve the Ordinance and the motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Fidler.

Mr. Hare asked what forces the \$1 million insurance if it is not going to be in the Deed. The Town Manager indicated that Staff would write a letter indicating the amount that the Town is requiring and the Town Attorney

Approved final design and location of the WBHS electronic message board monument sign at the intersection of Washington Avenue and Bypass Road with 3-2 vote.

explained that the Deed of Easement states that insurance coverage is acceptable to the Town and there is also a hold-harmless clause that protects the Town. The motion carried by the following roll call vote, with all members voting: Vote 5-0; Yeas (5) - Altice, Hare, Nance, Fidler, Grose; Nays (0) - None.

The Mayor made brief comments about the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday that was just celebrated and the impact he had on our Nation towards freedom and equality for everyone.

The Town Manager reminded everyone of the next Council in the Neighborhood meeting on February 21, 2012, at W. E. Cundiff Elementary School.

Vice Mayor Fidler moved that the meeting be adjourned, the motion was seconded by Mr. Hare and carried by the following vote, with all members voting: Vote 5-0; Yeas (5) - Altice, Hare, Nance, Fidler, Grose; Nays (0) - None. The regular meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Council then went into work session. Consuella Caudill briefed Council concerning a proposed use for the Vinton Health Department Building. A partnership is being formed between The Advancement Foundation and Rowe Furniture to put together a job training program for their clients who are typically low-income, unemployed individuals who want to get some training to be able to get back into the workforce and have their own source of income.

Rowe would propose to bring three of their commercial sewing machines that they utilize in making furniture and do training on a one-on-one basis with three or four individuals over a 4-12 week period. Then these individuals would have the skill set to become employed with a company that uses these similar skill sets. They will also work on soft skills such as showing up on time, being consistent, having right attitude about work and being able to converse with a manager or supervisor.

The Town has been contacted to see if there is space available for this program and Ms. Caudill thought of the Health Department. The Charity Cottage does have space upstairs in their current building, but having to take the equipment to a second floor location

Adopted Ordinance No. 921 to amend Ordinance No. 915 and Deed of Easement, approved on June 21, 2011, relating to conveyance of an access easement to Eula B. Ayers to amend the amount of insurance coverage.

Regular meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

presents a problem and there are also some zoning issues.

The Health Department would be suitable for the program and would only require some minor permits for some pneumatic air that they would have to use. The Fire Department did not see any problems and there is no change of use. Some issues may relate to utility charges, but an agreement would be worked out based on usage by each tenant. Ms. Caudill asked if Council would approve of the use by The Advancement Foundation and if so, would they want to charge rent. She indicated that the top floor is in need of some upgrading in the event the building wanted to be marketed for sale. When prospects come to Town she tries to push them to privately owned properties since she wants our citizens to prosper first. An RFP was done in November for State space, but she has not heard anything.

Mr. Altice stated he thought we were interested in selling the building. Ms. Caudill said that had been discussed and there is a current month to month lease with the Health Department. Vice Mayor Fidler asked if the load bearing had been checked, but it was indicated that these particular machines are not that heavy.

Mr. Nance asked if we know the Health Department's long-term plans with the part they are leasing now and Ms. Caudill said has not been contacted by them. Mr. Altice commented again that he would like to see it sold and if we use it for commercial use it might downgrade the building.

The Town Manager indicated that one of the short-term benefits is that we have the unique opportunity to at least begin a workforce development relationship which we do not currently have in Town. Ms. Caudill said she has contacted Virginia Western about such a program and they want to do it on campus. This is a great opportunity to make a connection with a corporate sponsor

The Mayor asked if we agreed to do this would we have a contract. Ms. Caudill indicated that a lease would be prepared setting forth specifics such as utility costs, the exact term of lease and a provision for notice to the tenant should the building be sold.

The Town Manager wants to know if there is enough consensus from Council for Staff to proceed with

negotiations with The Advancement Foundation and Rowe for this program. Mr. Hare asked if this would have any impact on the CDBG Grant application. Ms. Caudill indicated it would help on the LMI component of being able to reach that segment of the population and that we are providing a program for them.

Mr. Nance asked what the actual cost to the Town is having the building sitting there partially empty. We have money invested in the building and every year what are we putting in citizens' dollars toward that building. Is allowing this use delaying us from making a long-term decision on this building?

Mr. Hare expressed concern that when someone starts using the building will issues arise that will necessitate repairs. Ms. Caudill indicated that we maintain the building to the extent that it needs it. Vice Mayor Fidler said it is not something that we cannot cancel or re-evaluate and she feels it would be better to have someone in there rather than it sit empty. Mr. Hare reminded Council that in the strategic planning we wanted to sell it. The Town Manager commented that the building was built in 1983 and the rent received off the Health Department lease has paid for the building. The cost right now is around 40 percent of the utilities and if a tenant could cover operating expenses, it would be a help in the short-term. We would need to get a new appraisal.

The Mayor commented that he did not want the Town to commit to something that would hinder the sale of the property if the opportunity did arise, but he thought it was a good idea for the short term.

The Town Manager indicated that Ms. Caudill would go back to The Advancement Foundation and discuss the options available and make a report back to Council for further consideration. Also, Staff can also have a new appraisal done and talk with a real estate agent and report back to Council as well.

Lauren Hodges next gave a power point presentation as a further update on the War Memorial Business Plan. Ms. Hodges stated that the 2011 revenues are going to come in above the projection at \$126,778 and there were a total of 141 events with approximately 11,000 guests. An update was also provided on the facility as well as comments about two events.

Ms. Hodges then commented that a new marketing strategy of 20% off for new customers has brought some new business. Other strategies being used are matching or beating prices of comparable venues and joining an online network called WeddingWire.

A new approved caterer agreement has been created which increases the number of caterers allowed to no less than 10 and no more than 15. Guidelines also require any caterer to submit an application between March-May; a \$75 application fee will be charged for new caterers to cover administrative costs; there are expectations of each caterer to bring business to War memorial; the possibility of removing a caterer from the list who is seen the least over a one year period; and renaming and restructuring the Kitchen Usage Fee to use a caterer not on the approved list to be based on the number of guests.

Mr. Hare asked if the least caterer had 12 of all the events for the year would we remove them. Ms. Hodges indicated there is one caterer on our current list that they saw one time last year and every event is not catered. The Town Manager also commented that he asked if they have a caterer that is only seen one time but it is the biggest or most profitable event would they be removed. The new policy gives the manager some discretion based on each event. Mr. Nance said he liked Ms. Hodges' aggressiveness.

Mr. Hare asked if these changes would take us to the next level. We are at \$126,000. How do we get to \$200,000? Ms. Hodges commented that she did not know if having more caterers on our list will make a difference. The Town Manager then commented on the current economy and its effect on the number of events because businesses have cut back on the number of events and the price they are willing to pay. However, this facility was designed as a community facility and the community is using it.

The Mayor asked if he understood that the \$500.00 flat fee is no longer charged if a caterer on the approved list is not used, but the fee will be based on number of guests. Ms. Hodges responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Hodges commented that because we are a special events space they are having problems with getting business for the Monday through Friday daytime. They are willing to drop their fees to get this new business and to be competitive.

The Mayor asked if we could tell how many of the guests are local and how many are from out of town. Ms. Hodges indicated that she could go back and create such a report based on zip codes.

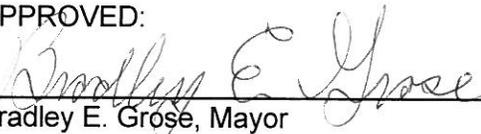
Mr. Hare complimented Ms. Hodges on the job she was doing but wanted to remind Council that as we go into another budget cycle that we pushed for the plan update to do something different because of the amount of money we are losing in the building. This plan is not closing the gap. Mr. Hare asked Ms. Hodges if she could get a report on the week day market in the Valley and see how we might win some of that market. The Mayor said that we do need to match other facilities prices to be competitive. Mr. Hare then commented that we need flexibility to be competitive in this market.

The Town Manager mentioned that the team identified that bringing the catering in house would be more profitable, but there is a lot of risk involved in the up-front costs.

The Town Manager asked Council if the February 7th meeting could start at 5:30 p.m. with a work session on the cost of services study and Council agreed. He also gave an update on the Public Works Director position indicating that they will be interviewing four candidates.

The work session was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

APPROVED:


Bradley E. Grose, Mayor

ATTEST:


Susan N. Johnson, Town Clerk