

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE WYTHEVILLE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON MONDAY, JULY 27, 2020, AT 7:00 P.M.**

Members present: Beth A. Taylor, Cathy D. Pattison, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman

Others present: Town Manager Stephen A. Moore, Town Clerk Sharon G. Corvin, Town Attorney/Director of Administrative Services Christopher R. Menerick, Director of Operations T. Brian Freeman, Mary Thomas, C.J. Patel, Anil Patel, Patrol Officer Chastity Russell

RE: CALL TO ORDER, QUORUM, PLEDGE

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order and established that a quorum of Council members was present. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice-Mayor Pattison.

RE: CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Taylor presented the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the regular meeting of July 13, 2020. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented or to somehow be amended. A motion was made by Councilman Bloomfield and seconded by Councilman Gillman to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the regular meeting of July 13, 2020, as presented. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion to approve the consent agenda. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: For: Beth A. Taylor, Cathy D. Pattison, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman. Against: None.

RE: CITIZENS' PERIOD

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is Citizens' Period. She noted that there is one citizen attending the meeting who stated on the sign in sheet that he wished to address the Council during Citizens' Period, therefore, she would ask that he come to the podium and speak into the microphone so that the minutes could be recorded.

Mr. C. J. Patel was recognized and stated that he is a hotel owner in town. He commented that the hoteliers are still having a lot of issues as far as hotels go. Mr. Patel discussed the percentage of capacity that the hotels are seeing this year, compared to last year. He commented that he was discussing the low numbers with the Comfort Suites owner, and they had inquired with the Town of Wytheville's Director of Tourism, Ms. Rosa Jude, about getting a board started for tourism several months ago, however, nothing has been done about this. Mr. Patel inquired of the Council if the Town received any grant funding for Fiscal Year 2020-21, or is there a backup plan for the Town's tourism businesses. He stated that he heard something earlier in the day about the downtown theatre. Mayor Taylor commented that the Council will discuss the Millwald Theatre later in the meeting. She remarked that regarding the tourism board that Mr. Patel asked the Town to consider doing to kickoff tourism, and then inquired with Director Jude regarding that board, around June 20, 2020, Director Jude responded to Mr. Patel with a very nice email. Mayor Taylor commented that he is sure that Mr. Patel feels the same as the Council, and that Director Jude has been doing, and is doing, everything that she can to promote tourism in the Town of Wytheville during the COVID-19 pandemic. She continued to discuss the ways that Director Jude has been promoting, and continues to promote, the area throughout the State of Virginia, etc. Discussion continued regarding the future of the tourism

businesses in Wytheville and a meeting that could be facilitated between the businesses and the Town. Mayor Taylor stated that Mr. Patel had inquired about the Sustainability Loan Fund. She noted that this grant funding is provided through the Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County (JIDA), Downtown Wytheville, Incorporated (DTW) and the Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce, Incorporated (WWBCOC). Mayor Taylor explained that they had two hoteliers apply for this grant funding, which they received. Councilman Bloomfield advised that this funding is not actually grant funds, but, rather a loan. Mayor Taylor stated that earlier in the day, Governor Northam distributed information regarding "Rebuild Virginia." Mr. Patel remarked that if a tourism business received the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP), they are not eligible for Rebuild Virginia funding.

Director of Operations Freeman stated that any funding the Millwald Theatre has been awarded would not be funding that could be used for anything that could help hoteliers. He noted the type of grant that the theatre received. Director Freeman commented that one thing the Town has done is establish a committee of economic development leaders consisting of the JIDA, DTW, WWBCOC, the Wytheville Convention and Visitors Bureau, Councilman Bloomfield and himself. He explained that the Committee applied to the Department of Housing and Community Development for a Small Business Recovery Assistance Program requesting \$800,000 in funding, however, that does not guarantee that the request will be funded. Director Freeman stated that this program is designed to provide up to \$10,000 in rent or mortgage relief and then another \$5,000, per applicant, in COVID related expenses. He noted that his fear is that if a business participated in PPP, they would not be eligible for the funding. Director Freeman commented that the Committee's hopes were to disperse at least 50 grants with the funding. Discussion continued regarding the Small Business Recovery Assistance Program.

Mr. Patel stated that he has a meeting scheduled with the County regarding his water/sewer bill. He expressed that he is concerned because he pays his bills on time, and then he received a mowing assessment, which he paid because he did not want to receive a penalty for not paying it. Mr. Patel commented that the point that he is trying to make is that the hoteliers are paying their bills during the pandemic crisis, and they need some help. He remarked that this situation has been ongoing for approximately five or six months, and this year is a lost year for everybody. Mr. Patel stated that he is still having issues with VDOT not trimming the trees near his property along the interstate and along Peppers Ferry Road. He noted that he is aware that most of the VDOT personnel are working from home, therefore, they should answer the telephone. He inquired of the Council if there is anyone to contact to get a number so that someone will return his telephone call. Mayor Taylor inquired of Town Staff if there is a number to the VDOT representative in Marion, Virginia. Town Manager Moore stated that Town Staff would contact the local representative regarding Mr. Patel's concerns. Mr. Patel continued to express his concerns to the Council regarding the tourism industry in town. He stated that he feels like if a small meeting could be held between five to seven hoteliers and Town representatives to discuss ideas about how to improve the town, etc. Mayor Taylor advised that she would take the responsibility of arranging a meeting and contacting Mr. Patel with the details. Mr. Patel thanked the Council for allowing him to speak during Citizens' Period. Mayor Taylor thanked Mr. Patel for his comments.

Mr. Anil Patel was recognized and stated that he would like to say thank you to the Town Council for listening to the hoteliers' concerns. Mayor Taylor thanked Mr. Patel for coming in to address the Council during Citizens' Period. She noted that if there was no one else who wished to address the Council, she would proceed with the agenda.

RE: OLD BUSINESS

Under Old Business, Town Manager Moore reported the following:

1. The next Council Work Session will be held on Tuesday, July 28, 2020, at 7:00 a.m., in the Council Chambers.

RE: BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Councilman Bloomfield, reporting for the Budget and Finance Committee, stated that Ms. Mary Thomas, Director of the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library, contacted Town Treasurer Michael Stephens at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2020-21 requesting confirmation that the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library was allocated its usual donation of \$3,500 in the Town's budget for FY 2020-21. He noted that the Wytheville Town Council has funded the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library with this annual donation for many years, and the Council continues to support the important access to the library and its services that it affords Town citizens. Councilman Bloomfield advised that though the library is temporarily closed at the present time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee that the Council authorize Town Treasurer Michael Stephens to issue a donation of \$3,500 to the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library for FY 2020-21. A motion was made by the Councilman Bloomfield and seconded by Councilwoman Atkins to authorize Town Treasurer Stephens to issue a donation of \$3,500 to the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library for Fiscal Year 2020-21. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion to authorize the Library's donation for FY 2020-21. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: For: Beth A. Taylor, Cathy D. Pattison, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman. Against: None.

Councilman Bloomfield reported that the Industrial Revitalization Grant Funds (IRF) is a grant fund administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). He stated that it is available through a competitive application process to local governments and economic or industrial development authorities. Councilman Bloomfield noted that the IRF provides up to \$600,000 in grant funds to assist in the redevelopment of vacant or deteriorated industrial or commercial properties. He explained that eligible projects include old retail stores, manufacturing facilities, hotels and theaters. Councilman Bloomfield remarked that the Town will be applying for funding to renovate the Millwald Theatre on behalf of the non-profit organization, Millwald Theatre, Incorporated. He explained that a resolution from the governing body is required that authorizes the application. Councilman Bloomfield noted that a copy of the resolution is included in the Council meeting package, and it delineates all of the numerous funding sources and amounts that have been secured or are anticipated. He stated that this project will complete one of the last large building renovations in the downtown and will provide a major entertainment venue. Councilman Bloomfield advised that it would be the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee that the resolution be adopted when it is considered later in the meeting. A copy of the Budget and Finance Committee report is attached and made part of these minutes.

Director of Operations Freeman advised that the report stated that hotels were eligible to receive funding with this project, however, he would like to note that the IRF is only for the renovation of vacant and deteriorated structures. Mayor Taylor thanked Director Freeman for the clarification and proceeded with the agenda.

RE: PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORT

Councilman Gillman, reporting for the Public Works Committee, stated that the Council Personnel Committee was established a number of years ago to be a conduit for communication between employees and Council Members. He noted that it was composed of alternating Council Members, the Town Manager and selected employees who met regularly to provide employees a mechanism to voice concerns, suggestions, thoughts or gratitude relative to their work environment. Councilman Gillman explained that a number of matters important to employees were evaluated through this process. He commented that the Council has evaluated this forum, and it suggests that an employee comment box located in each department may be an improved mechanism for employees to express themselves to the Council. Councilman Gillman remarked that the comments may be anonymous, or may be signed, and can involve any aspect of the employee experience. He stated that the comments will be collected on a regular basis and evaluated by the Budget and Finance and Public Works Committees. Councilman Gillman advised that a Council response to each comment will be made available to employees. He stated that the Public Works Committee looks forward to hearing the comments of the Town's employees, and the Council hopes that this will be a less intimidating way for them to express employment related issues.

Councilman Gillman reported that for years, the Town has had an ordinance that required property owners in the Town to "cut grass, weeds and other foreign growth" on a regular basis during the growing season. He stated that this ordinance has been modified over the years to better define what areas need to be mowed and to increase the frequency of mowing, all with the intention of improving the appearance of properties in town for the protection of adjacent neighbors. Councilman Gillman noted that the ordinance provides for the Town to mow properties whose owners are either unwilling or unable to keep their properties mowed according to the regulations. He commented that when the Town mows a property that is in violation of the ordinance, the cost is assessed to the property owner. Councilman Gillman remarked that, historically, the work has been contracted to a private entity, and the costs have been reasonable. He stated that the Town has pursued recouping only the actual cost of the mowing and has not imposed penalties. Councilman Gillman noted that this low cost has caused many property owners to shirk their responsibility under the ordinance and to merely let the Town mow their properties. He advised that as of the next mowing cycle, the Town will impose the minimum penalty of \$50, in addition to the cost of the mowing. Councilman Gillman explained that the Public Works Committee hopes that this will provide a financial incentive for property owners to assume responsibility for the maintenance of their properties. A copy of the Public Works Committee report is attached and made part of these minutes.

RE: NEW BUSINESS

Under New Business, Town Manager Moore advised that he did not have anything to report to the Council.

RE: APPOINTMENTS – BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider the appointment of a member to the Board of Zoning Appeals to fill the expiring term of Mr. Harold Mills (term expires September 10, 2020). A motion was made by Councilman Bloomfield and seconded by Vice-Mayor Pattison to recommend to the Circuit Court to appoint Mr. Kerry Eans to the Board of Zoning Appeals to fill the expiring term of Mr. Harold Mills, which will be for a five year term and will expire September 10, 2025. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion to recommend to the Circuit Court the appointment of Mr. Eans to the Board of Zoning Appeals. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being

no opposition: For: Beth A. Taylor, Cathy D. Pattison, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman. Against: None.

RE: APPOINTMENTS – BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider the appointment of an alternate member to the Board of Zoning Appeals (term will expire September 10, 2025). A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Pattison and seconded by Councilman Gillman to recommend to the Circuit Court to appoint Mr. Mark Zammit as an alternate member to the Board of Zoning Appeals, which expires September 10, 2025. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion to recommend to appoint Mr. Zammit as an alternate member to the Board of Zoning Appeals. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: For: Beth A. Taylor, Cathy D. Pattison, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman. Against: None.

RE: RESOLUTION – INDUSTRIAL REVITALIZATION GRANT FUNDING

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider a resolution authorizing the application for the Department of Housing and Community Development Industrial Revitalization Grant Funds for the Millwald Theatre. She inquired if there is a motion to adopt the resolution. A motion was made by Councilman Gillman and seconded by Vice-Mayor Pattison to adopt a resolution authorizing the application for the Department of Housing and Community Development Industrial Revitalization Grant Funds for the Millwald Theatre. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion to adopt the resolution. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: For: Beth A. Taylor, Cathy D. Pattison, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman. Against: None.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be discussed, a motion was duly made, seconded and carried to adjourn the meeting (7:29 p.m.).

Beth A. Taylor, Mayor

Sharon G. Corvin, CMC, Town Clerk

BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

JULY 27, 2020

1. Ms. Mary Thomas, Director of the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library, contacted Town Treasurer Michael Stephens at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2020-21 requesting confirmation that the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library was allocated its usual donation of \$3,500 in the Town's budget for FY 2020-21. The Wytheville Town Council has funded the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library with this annual donation for many years, and we continue to support the important access to the library and its services that it affords our citizens. Though the library is temporarily closed at the present time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee that the Council authorize Town Treasurer Michael Stephens to issue a donation of \$3,500 to the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library for FY 2020-21.
2. The Industrial Revitalization Grant Funds (IRF) is a grant fund administered by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). It is available through a competitive application process to local governments and economic or industrial development authorities. The IRF provides up to \$600,000 in grant funds to assist in the redevelopment of vacant or deteriorated industrial or commercial properties. Eligible projects include old retail stores, manufacturing facilities, hotels and theaters. The Town will be applying for funding to renovate the Millwald Theatre on behalf of the non-profit organization, Millwald Theatre,

Incorporated. A resolution from the governing body is required that authorizes the application. A copy of the resolution is included in the Council meeting package, and it delineates all of the numerous funding sources and amounts that have been secured or are anticipated. This project will complete one of the last large building renovations in the downtown and will provide a major entertainment venue. It would be the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee that the resolution be adopted when it is considered later in the meeting.

Mark J. Bloomfield

Holly E. Atkins

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORT

JULY 27, 2020

1. The Council Personnel Committee was established a number of years ago to be a conduit for communication between employees and Council Members. It was composed of alternating Council Members, the Town Manager and selected employees who met regularly to provide employees a mechanism to voice concerns, suggestions, thoughts or gratitude relative to their work environment. A number of matters important to employees were evaluated through this process.

The Council has evaluated this forum, and we suggest that an employee comment box located in each department may be an improved mechanism for employees to express themselves to the Council. The comments may be anonymous, or may be signed, and can involve any aspect of the employee experience. The comments will be collected on a regular basis and evaluated by the Budget and Finance and Public Works Committees. A Council response to each comment will be made available to employees. We look forward to hearing the comments of our employees, and we hope that this will be a less intimidating way for them to express employment related issues.

2. For years, the Town has had an ordinance that required property owners in the Town to “cut grass, weeds and other foreign growth” on a regular basis during the growing season. This ordinance has been modified over the years to better define what areas need to be mowed and to increase the frequency of mowing, all with the

intention of improving the appearance of properties in town for the protection of adjacent neighbors. The ordinance provides for the Town to mow properties whose owners are either unwilling or unable to keep their properties mowed according to the regulations.

When the Town mows a property that is in violation of the ordinance, the cost is assessed to the property owner. Historically, the work has been contracted to a private entity, and the costs have been reasonable. The Town has pursued recouping only the actual cost of the mowing and has not imposed penalties. This low cost has caused many property owners to shirk their responsibility under the ordinance and to merely let the Town mow their properties. As of the next mowing cycle, the Town will impose the minimum penalty of \$50, in addition to the cost of the mowing. We hope that this will provide a financial incentive for property owners to assume responsibility for the maintenance of their properties.

Cathy D. Pattison

Gary L. Gillman