

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 8, 2025**  
**CHINCOTEAGUE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Council Chambers**  
**7:00 p.m.**

**Council Members Present:**

Denise P. Bowden, Mayor  
Christopher D. Bott, Vice Mayor  
J. Nicholas Howard, Councilman  
William T. McComb, Jr., Councilman  
Ellen W. Richardson, Councilwoman  
K. Jay Savage, Councilman  
Gene W. Taylor, Councilman

**Council Members Absent:**

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager  
Mr. Tyler Greenley, Chief of Police  
Mr. Bryan Rush, Director of Emergency Services  
Mr. Wes Parks, Public Works Director

**Call to Order**

Mayor Bowden called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Invocation**

Councilman Savage offered the invocation.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Bowden led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Consider Remote Participation**

**Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Richardson to allow Councilman Bott to participate remotely. Unanimously approved.**

**Public Comment**

Mayor Bowden opened the floor for public comment.

- Chincoteague Chamber Executive Director, Mrs. Joanne Moore introduced herself in the new position. She advised it is an honor and privilege and looks forward to working with the Town to promote the growth and development of the Town. She is committed to fostering partnerships with local businesses, the community and government leaders with the goal of making Chincoteague a more vibrant place for visitors and residents. As well as a wonderful destination for Island guests to make memories last a lifetime. She thanked the Town, specifically Public Works, Emergency Management Services, the Police Department, and the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company for the support and participation during the Christmas parade. She advised of the December statistics for the Chamber. She advised she will present the 2024 Annual Report in February. She thanked Council for their time and hopes to reach out

individually about what the Chamber does for the community and hear insights of how they can work together.

Mayor Bowden congratulated Chamber Executive Director.

### **Agenda Adoption**

**Councilwoman Richardson motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adopt the agenda as presented. Unanimously approved.**

### **Election of Vice Mayor**

Mayor Bowden read the Code Section pertaining to the duties of the Mayor and Vice Mayor. She advised that in the past Vice Mayor has been the highest vote getter, but not necessarily the case. She opened the floor for nominations.

**Councilwoman Richardson nominated, seconded by Councilman Taylor for Councilman Howard to serve as Vice Mayor. Mayor Bowden asked for any further nominations. There were none and the vote was called. The vote was unanimously approved**

### **Announcement of Christmas Decoration Winners**

Mayor Bowden announced the winners of the 2024 Christmas Decorated Homes:

1<sup>st</sup> place: David Taylor and Jean Jester at 4147 Ridge Road

2<sup>nd</sup> place: Mr. & Mrs. Delmas Mears at 4403 Chicken City Road

3<sup>rd</sup> place: Mr. & Mrs. Bill Birch at 7079 Bunting Road

### **Consider FY26 Budget Calendar**

Town Manager Tolbert advised that the FY 26 Budget season is upon us and in order to allow Council sufficient time for review and input, he proposed the schedule for budget discussions. As in previous years, most budget work has been scheduled for Council Workshop and Budget and Personnel Committee meetings reserving first the Monday Council meetings for regular business. He intends to discuss the budget at each of the meetings for formal approval and appropriation on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

**Councilwoman Richardson motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to approve the FY26 budget calendar as presented. Unanimously approved.**

### **Consider FY26 Trolley Budget**

Town Manager Tolbert advised that the operating grant application for the Pony Express Trolley Service is due on February 1<sup>st</sup>. Council traditionally considers the Trolley budget at the first January Council Meeting. This allows time to make changes before the submission deadline. He added that this proposal contains funds for a new trolley replacement with a cost to the Town of approximately 4%. He added that the drivers will also receive an increase.

Councilwoman Richardson asked about the funds from the sale of the last trolley.

Town Manager Tolbert advised this new trolley will replace Stormy and then Stormy will be sold.

Councilman Taylor stated that the cost of \$10,000 for a new trolley and a \$0.50 raise is a good deal and worth every penny.

Transportation Director King stated that DRPT advised there is a possibility the Town would get more for the replacement trolley.

ACCOUNT	DESCRIPTION	FY26 PROPOSED BUDGET	FY25 APPROVED BUDGET
<b>REVENUES - TROLLEY</b>			
	<b>TROLLEY</b>		
704501.0100	TROLLEY GRANTS	\$64,871	\$62,341
704501.0110	PROGRAM INCOME	\$5,000	\$5,000
704501.0200	RTAP REIMBURSEMENTS	\$0	\$0
704501.0300	MISC. NONPROGRAM INCOME	\$0	\$0
704501.8900	TRANSFER FROM GEN. FUND	\$26,496	\$25,462
	FED GRANT – NEW TROLLEY	\$208,000	\$0
	STATE GRANT - NEW TROLLEY	\$41,600	\$0
	TR FR CAP - NEW TROLLEY	\$10,400	\$0
	SALE OF SURPLUS TROLLEY	\$40,000	
	<b>TROLLEY TOTAL</b>	<b>\$396,367</b>	<b>\$92,803</b>

ACCOUNT	DESCRIPTION	FY26 PROPOSED BUDGET	FY25 APPROVED BUDGET
<b>EXPENDITURES - TROLLEY</b>			
	<b>SALARIES</b>		
703010.0100	SALARIES	\$44,790	\$44,220
	TOTAL	\$44,790	\$44,220
	<b>BENEFITS</b>		
703010.2001	SOCIAL SECURITY	\$3,427	\$3,383
	TOTAL	\$3,427	\$3,383
	<b>OPERATIONS EXPENSES</b>		
703030.3401	INSURANCE & BONDING	\$3,400	\$3,400
703030.4400	COMMUNICATION SERVICES	\$800	\$800
703030.4401	PRINTING & REPRODUCTION	\$3,000	\$3,000
703030.4402	ADVERTISING	\$1,200	\$1,200
703030.4403	EDUCATION & TRAINING	\$2,000	\$2,000
703030.4404	CLEANING SUPPLIES	\$300	\$300

703030.4406	SUPPLIES, MATERIALS	\$500	\$500
703030.4407	MEMBERSHIPS & DUES	\$250	\$250
703030.4408	TRAVEL & MEALS	\$1,000	\$1,000
703030.4701	FUEL & LUBRICANTS	\$5,000	\$7,000
703030.4702	TIRES & TUBES	\$2,000	\$3,000
703030.4703	UNIFORMS	\$500	\$500
703030.4704	PARTS	\$1,200	\$750
703030.5201	DRUG TESTING	\$1,000	\$1,000
703030.6100	RTAP EXPENSES	\$0	\$0
703030.7302	REPAIRS/MAINT	\$10,000	\$4,500
703030.8505	RENT TO GENERAL FUND	\$16,000	\$16,000
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$48,150</b>	<b>\$45,200</b>
	<b>CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS</b>		
703090.9001	TROLLEY & VAN PURCHASE	\$260,000	\$0
	TRANSFER TO TROLLEY CAP ACCT.	\$40,000	\$0
703090.9100	CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	\$0	\$0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>
	<b>TROLLEY TOTALS:</b>	<b>\$396,367</b>	<b>\$92,803</b>

Total FY26 Trolley Operating Funds	\$96,367.00
Federal Grant (50% of non-fare revenue)	\$45,683.50
State Grant (42% of Federal Grant Contribution)	\$19,187.07
Local Match 58% of Federal Grant Contribution	<b>\$26,496.43 (Cost to Town)</b>

**Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilman Savage to approve the FY26 Trolley Budget. Unanimously approved.**

### **Staff Reports**

#### **General Government**

Town Manager Tolbert reported that a few weeks ago a team from Old Dominion Electric Cooperative was in Town to perform surveys and locate utilities and underwater obstructions that may affect the construction of a new submarine cable to supply the Town of Chincoteague with electric service from the mainland. The project is in the early phases of approval and permitting and is currently slated to be completed by 2029.

Town Manager Tolbert also reported on the ARPA Project progress. He reminded everyone that the Town received over \$2.9 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds back in 2022. Since the original distribution of ARPA funds, the rules have changed. A lot of different things are allowed now to be done with those funds. However, all funds must be encumbered for these projects by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and completely expended by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026. He reported that the Town has encumbered over 100% of the \$2.9 million. He reported that the cost of construction of the sewer collection system is \$2.248 million, and almost \$300,000 in design cost. He added that there are a lot of legal fees. He advised that another thing that the funds can

be spent on is open space. He reported that anything after the funding that has been done at the Brianna's Kindness Park also qualifies.

Town Manager Tolbert also advised that the Town office has identified over 150 existing businesses located along the route of the initial sewer system. The sewer offerings will be limited to 37,000 gallons per day. They will have to make decision on how to allocate the capacity. HRSD is currently working on plans to upgrade and expand the plants at Sunset Bay along with obtaining additional discharge permits and construction upgrade should be completed by December of 2026. The collection system they are designing will max out at 350,000 gallons per day. This was chosen because of the maximum amount of allowable discharge permitted at Sunset Bay. If HRSD can obtain permits, at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, the plant should be able to have the capacity of 350,000 gallons per day. He added that this will only be offered to businesses, not residents.

Town Manager Tolbert reported on the real and personal property tax collections to date. He reviewed the Meals and Transient Occupancy Tax Report as well as the Financial Report for December. He advised that the trolley operated on December 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> to assist the Museum with their holiday light tour. It was also used for Delegate Bloxom's New Year's Eve party. He added that the trolley service expanded to 7 days a week for 2 months over the summer. He gave the Building and Zoning Report for December.

There was brief discussion regarding the ARPA funds that were already spent.

Mayor Bowden stated that it looks like next year's budget is going to be \$11.7 million. She added that Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes don't even bring \$1 million in.

Town Manager Tolbert corrected that it is this year's budget, FY25.

Mayor Bowden stated that the money for the Transient Occupancy and Meals Taxes goes a long way in the Town. She added that Town Manager Tolbert and the staff do a good job keeping the budget lined up. She added that some people say their real estate taxes are high, and they might be to some and not to others. She added that no one wants to raise taxes of any kind. She commended staff for doing a fantastic job with collections of the real estate and personal property taxes.

#### Police Department

Chief Greenley was absent. The December Report was in the packet for review.

#### Public Works Department

Public Works Director Parks reported that the tie-in of the new watermain at Wildcat was completed. He stated that drywall repairs and painting was done in the foyer of the downtown bathrooms, new vents were installed at the Brianna's Kindness Park restroom all due to vandalism, the concrete floors were painted in the women's and men's bathrooms at the Brianna's Kindness Park and Memorial Park. VDOT installed a newer traffic signal cabinet at the intersection of Maddox and Deep Hole Road. He added that the Water Department sent a letter requesting waterline material and size information. He expressed his appreciation for

everyone calling in. Every call that comes in is one less “unknown” that the Town is reporting, and one less letter to mail out again next year. He reported that he has received 350 calls to date. He also reported that in January they plan to remove and store Christmas decorations, clean up at the Harbor, begin Taylor Street renovations, and continue with routine maintenance of equipment and vehicles.

Councilman Taylor stated that the Public Works staff has done a great job on the roads.

Vice Mayor Howard asked how the water pressure is at Wildcat now.

Public Works Director Parks advised he will look into it but feels it’s improved.

Councilwoman Richardson asked if the Wildcat waterline was a larger pipe.

Public Works Director Parks advised it was the same size.

Mayor Bowden asked about the vandalization, how often they are being reviewed, and if the cameras were working.

Town Manager Tolbert stated that the cameras are reviewed daily to ensure they are working and can store videos for several weeks. The Police Department uses the cameras to solve crimes. He added that a few more cameras are added in the upcoming budget.

Mayor Bowden asked if the restrooms were being locked nightly.

Town Manager Tolbert advised that they are being locked nightly and unlocked every morning by the Police Department.

### Emergency Services

Director of Emergency Services Rush reported that they had 70 calls in December, which was 8 less than December of 2023. He gave the annual number of calls, 1,103 responses, which were 51 more calls in 2024 than in 2023. He gave response and on scene times stats for 2024. He commended staff on the top EMS calls: Wilson with 199 calls, Stoa with 168 calls, Drewer with 159 calls, Miles with 147 calls and D. Reed with 141 calls for 2024. He gave an update on the Drug Kit Program. He reported that all staff had to undergo training on the different kits and how to check them in and out each day along with the appropriate paperwork. Each drug they receive had to go into a computer program for tracking. He stated that at 2:00p.m. on Monday afternoon they went live. He thanked Dr. Wolffe for all of his support as the OMD. He thanked staff members Mr. Jamie Wheatley who was a big help in this project, along with Mr. Steve Wilson, and Mr. Ray Miles. Director of Emergency Services Rush stated that they continue with weather monitoring. He also advised they were awarded the VDEM grant this year to offset the CodeRed Program and satellite phones along with training. 2025 is the year they will be doing a complete revision of the EOP. They will also begin revisions to the COOP and Hazard Mitigation Plans. He added that they’ve been blessed with the weather situation and reminded everyone to get prepared.

Mayor Bowden stated that Director of Emergency Services Rush has done an outstanding job. She advised that the hospitals no longer provide replacement drugs that are used on the ambulances. She added that Director of Emergency Services Rush and staff has stepped up and providing the drugs that are used. She added that this was a great job by staff.

## **Committee Reports**

### RCEC

Councilwoman Taylor advised they met on December 12<sup>th</sup> and discussed putting fill at the Memorial Park baseball field. They also talked about possibly using it as a multi-purpose field. They discussed using the remainder of the donated funds for handicapped accessibility at the Brianna's Kindness Park. They also talked about Committee members and terms. Councilman Taylor stated they agreed to ask the Accomack County Director of Parks and Recreation to come and give his expertise on the uses at the Memorial Park as well.

There were comments about the past nomination process on the committees.

Councilwoman Richardson agreed with Mayor Bowden on how the vote was taken for the Vice Mayor by asking if there were any other nominations.

Mayor Bowden asked about the Community Participation Form.

Town Manager Tolbert stated that a form has been put on the Town's website and Facebook page for those interested in participating on any of the Committees. He stated they can fill it out, email it or drop it off to the Town Office and the applications will be given to the Council.

There was brief discussion about the applications which will be reviewed at the Council meeting next week.

## **Adoption of Minutes of December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, Council Meeting**

**Councilman Savage motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adopt the minutes of the December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 Council meeting as presented. Unanimously approved.**

## **Mayor and Council Comments**

Councilman Howard thanked the public for giving him the opportunity to serve. He added that he will do the best he can.

Councilman McComb stated that he is praying for the folks in California battling with the fires. He added that with all the weather here he wanted everyone to stay safe. He concluded with "Happy New Year".

Councilman Taylor stated that he prays for God's continued blessings for this Town.

Councilman Savage reiterated Councilman McComb's sentiments for prayers of protection from the fire for those in California. He stated that the Public Works staff did a great job with how they handled the snow adding to keep up the good work.

Mayor Bowden thanked those in attendance and participating, adding that the government only works when people participate. She also thanked those watching on the internet. She stated that the Public Works Department does a fantastic job adding to keep up the good work. She commended Director of Emergency Services Rush and his staff on a great job along with the Police Department. She added that she can never say enough about the Town employees. She added that they are blessed. She also stated that last month Councilman Bott listed a few things that Council accomplished under Mayor Leonard's tenure. She wants to see Council capitalize on those items and to keep moving forward. She is looking for good things to keep happening to the Town. She stated that the public put her here and she will give it the best she can give. She reminded everyone to be safe.

**Closed Meeting in accordance with §2.2-3711 (A) (3) (7) for the consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public use and the briefing by staff pending litigation. Councilman Savage motioned, seconded Councilman McComb to go into a closed meeting in accordance with §2.2-3712 (A) (3)(7) of the Code of Virginia for the consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public use and the briefing by staff pending litigation. Unanimously approved.**

**Certification of Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3712 (D) of the Code of Virginia Councilman Savage motioned, seconded Councilman McComb to certify the Closed Meeting was in accordance with §2.2-3712 (D) of the Code of Virginia. Unanimously approved.**

**Adjourn**

**Councilman Savage motioned, seconded Councilman McComb to adjourn. Unanimously approved.**

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Denise P. Bowden, Mayor

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Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager