

MINUTES OF THE APRIL 21, 2022
CHINCOTEAGUE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Council Chambers

Council Members Present:

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor
Christopher D. Bott, Vice Mayor
Denise P. Bowden, Councilwoman
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. Robby Fisher, Chief of Police

Call to Order

Mayor Leonard called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Invocation

Councilman McComb offered the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Leonard led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Agenda Adoption

Councilwoman Richardson motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to adopt the agenda as presented. Unanimously approved.

Review of FY23 Tax Rates

Town Manager Tolbert reviewed and explained the reassessment which showed an average increase of 19.2%. He advised that the Code of Virginia does not allow a locality to benefit from an increase in its total levy as a result of a reassessment requiring the locality instead to either lower the existing tax rate to maintain its levy to less than 1% increase or to proceed with the process of a formal increase in tax rates. He also advised that a lower tax rate of \$0.059 would produce a total levy with less than 1% increase over the previous year and would keep the Town within the boundaries set by the Code of Virginia. Accomack County recently reduced its tax rate from \$0.61 to \$0.595 which is an effective tax increase of \$0.03/\$100 and they have to go through a public hearing for the increase.

Town Manager Tolbert reported that the used vehicle values have increased by approximately 35%. This is not addressed by the State Code and Council is under no obligation to reduce

personal property tax rates. He explained that the financial system is able to separate the classes to reduce specific personal property classes. He stated that the County has reduced their personal property tax rate from \$3.72 to \$2.99 (20%) to reduce the impact of the taxes on the increased values of these types of vehicles. He reminded that although the current higher values are unprecedented, this is expected to be a temporary situation with the used vehicle market eventually returning to an annual depreciation of unit values which would require an increase of personal property tax rates in the future.

There was discussion about being fair to all especially coming out of a pandemic, recession, and inflation.

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to lower the real estate tax rate to \$0.059/\$100 and reduce the personal property tax rate across the board to compensate the increase in value, to have less than a 1% increase in personal property taxes. Unanimously approved.

Consider Approval of Tennis, Basketball, and Pickleball Court Rehab Project

Town Manager Tolbert advised that Public Works Director Spurlock received pricing for the rehab of the Memorial Park tennis and basketball courts as well as the pickleball courts and parking lot at the Amrien Recreational Center. The total cost is \$96,444. He stated that the RCEC recommended the project go to the ARPA Committee who tabled the request. He added that due to the nature of the materials used, this project must be done in moderately warm weather and the contractor is booking up. The RCEC would also like to get the project accomplished prior to the summer season when the facilities get their heaviest use. He suggested the immediate funding would come from the Beach/Recreation/Tourism reserve account which could be replaced with the excess of FY22 funds.

There was brief discussion and Council concurred and stated they want the excess funds of FY22 to be put back into the Beach/Recreation/Tourism reserve.

Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to approve the funding of the Court Rehab Project from the Beach/Recreation/Tourism Reserve account, and replacing it with the excess of FY22 funds. Unanimously approved.

Discussion of 2 New CPD Positions

Town Manager Tolbert stated that at the Budget and Personnel Committee meeting on March 8th the Committee approved the positions and to fund the 1 position from the General Fund and the Public Safety Committee approved to fund the 2nd position from the Public Safety Reserve. He reviewed the initial cost and annual cost.

Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to approve the 2 new police officer positions. Unanimously approved.

Discussion of Downtown Improvements

Mayor Leonard stated that there are buildings in the downtown area that need attention. He suggested giving property owners incentives to fix up the properties and buildings.

There was brief discussion.

Mayor Leonard stated that he wants to make the downtown a destination worth visiting. He asked Council to think on this matter and they will discuss it again at a later time or at a Budget and Personnel Committee meeting.

There was further discussion regarding forming a committee. They also discussed obstacles.

Mayor and Council Comments

Councilwoman Richardson advised she spoke with a lady who expressed her gratitude to the EMS, Police Department, and the Fire Department, for what they did when her daughter lost her life in the Causeway accident nearly a year ago. She stated that she wanted to come to a meeting but couldn't drive across the Causeway. She wanted everyone to know that it meant a lot to her.

Councilman Savage stated that the Town lost a valuable citizen of the Island community, Miss Diane. He would like to pay homage to her memory.

Councilwoman Bowden stated she would love for this Council to have something or name something after her. She added that she touched more lives in this Town, more so than anyone she's ever known. She also advised that she received a text to have, Mr. Donnie Thornton, plant a beautiful garden somewhere in the Town in her name as she made our children grow like flowers.

Mayor Leonard commented that it was amazing to see all those at her service who stood up that she taught throughout the years.

Councilman Taylor also thanked Council for approving the funding for the courts project. He stated that they should consider adding in the next year funding for the Amrien Center as well.

Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3711 (A) (1 & 5) of the Code of Virginia to discuss specific personnel issues and prospective business opportunities.

Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to go into a closed meeting in accordance with §2.2-3711 (A) (1 & 5) of the Code of Virginia to discuss perspective business opportunities and personnel matters. Unanimously approved.

Ayes: Bott, Bowden, McComb, Richardson, Savage, Taylor

Nays: None

Absent: None

Certification of Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3712 (D) of the Code of Virginia: Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb in accordance with §2.2-372 (D) of the Code of Virginia that the Council certify that to the best of each Council Member's knowledge.

(1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from opening meeting requirements under this chapter and only such public business matters were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered. Unanimously approved.

Ayes: Bott, Bowden, McComb, Richardson, Savage, Taylor

Nays: None

Absent: None

Adjourn

Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adjourn.

Unanimously approved.

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor

Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager