

**MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 7, 2021
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:

None

Staff Present:

Mr. Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager
Mr. Robby Fisher, Police Chief
Mr. E. Bryan Rush, Emergency Management Coordinator
Mr. Harvey Spurlock, Public Works Director

1. Call to Order

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

2. Invocation

Councilman Taylor offered the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Leonard led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to allow Vice Mayor Bott to join the meeting by phone. Unanimously approved.

4. Public Comment

Mayor Leonard opened the floor for Public Comment.

- Mrs. Julie Brommer, Chincoteague Island Cats, advised they will hold a fall catch and release at the old fire house from Thursday, October 14 through Sunday, October 17th. She thanked the Town for allowing them to use one of the firehouse bays so they can hold the cats and monitor their recovery. They have an online registration so they can get a plan together.

5. Agenda Adoption

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

6. Council Recognition

Mayor Leonard read and presented a Certificate of Recognition for Mrs. Lillie Mae Birch on the occasion of her 100th birthday.



CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

PRESENTED TO

Mrs. Lillie Mae Birch

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lillie Mae Birch will be honored by relatives and friends on the occasion of her 100th birthday; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Birch was born on September 11, 1921, has been a long-time member of this Chincoteague community and is now its oldest living Citizen; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Birch married Arthur Birch and this union produced two children, 3 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren and 2 great-great grandchildren;

WHEREAS, during a long and productive lifetime, she has enjoyed being a member of Union Baptist Church and Island Baptist Church and worked in the churches at numerous jobs as well as received numerous awards for perfect attendance and still enjoys shopping, traveling and reading her Bible.

WHEREAS, her dedication to the welfare of others has earned the respect and affection of people from all walks of life and all ages;

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the Town of Chincoteague, I do hereby deem it an honor and pleasure to extend this tribute to Mrs. Lillie Mae Birch on the occasion of her 100th birthday, with sincere congratulations and best wishes for many more happy and productive years.

DATED this 7th day of September 2021.

Mayor John A. Leonard

Attest:

Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager

7. Introduction of New Employees

Emergency Management Coordinator Rush introduced the new EMS staff: Full-time Paramedic Duane Reade, Part-time EMT Josh Medina, Part-time Paramedic Chris Barrs, Part-time EMT Madison Savage, Part-time Paramedic Shelby Northam, Part-time Paramedic Sam Richardson, Part-time Paramedic Mike Rydberg, Part-time EMT Seth Jonczak, Part-time EMT Chris Cefaro, and Full-time Paramedic Tom Copenhaver.

Chief Fisher introduced his new staff: Dispatcher Michelle Adams, Dispatcher Savannah Stubbs, and Pfc. Luke Arnold.

8. Presentation of Awards

Chief Fisher advised on June 9th dispatch received a call from a brother requesting a welfare check on his sister. When officers arrived, they found a horrific scene. They provided 1st aid immediately and contacted EMS who responded. The EMS advised that the officers saved her life because they acted so quickly. He introduced Ms. Theresa Spedmin.

Ms. Theresa Spedmin expressed her sincere gratitude for the officers and EMS who instrumental in saving her life. She thanked her brother, being 2 hours away from home called to have someone check on her. Had he not made the call she would not have survived her injuries. Her deepest gratitude goes out to every person directly and indirectly as she was determined to die that day. She added that the responders and God had another plan. She stated that by them coming through locked doors and to her aid it was evident they cared about her wellbeing. They were at a pinpoint focus on a stressful situation, all the while helping and rendering medical aid that saved her life. She stated that there are no words she could say to adequately say to thank them for what they did for her. She came through this with a sense of self and started her life over. She advised that if it wasn't for the grace of God and the selflessness of those who helped she wouldn't be here today. She advised she is much better and with all her heart thanked everyone for saving her.

Chief Fisher read and presented the awards to: Cpl. Thomas Adams, Cpl. Cody Butler, Cpl. David Gladding, Pfc. Geno Geminiani, Pfc. Jeff Stevens and Dispatcher Benjy Holloway.

Emergency Management Coordinator Rush read and presented awards to: Paramedic Sam Richardson, EMT Joshua Madina and Paramedic Duane Reade.

9. Staff Reports

General Government

Town Manager Tolbert congratulated the Police and EMS staff, he is proud of them. He reported that they have rented another space in the old firehouse with another possible rental. The compressor has been ordered for the Fire Company and will be here within 45 days. He stated that the forensic accident unit has been ordered and should be here in 30 days. He advised that the Northampton Board of Supervisors have approved to pay for 1/3 along with Accomack County and the Town of Chincoteague. He reported on the 2020 Census adding that the Town population increased about 400 residents. NASA's filtration plant is operating nominally with testing protocol.

Town Manager Tolbert also reported they installed No Wake buoys which makes it 3 within the Memorial Park area. He reported that the finances are on schedule and should meet the budgeted revenues and expenditures. He reviewed the Meals and Transient Occupancy tax revenue. He reported that the Building and Zoning Department has been busy with 42 permits in August along with calls, CRS Rating requirements, office visits, etc. He added that the Town is thankful for Building and Zoning Administrator Bowden.

Town Manager Tolbert commented on the Brianna's Kindness Park advising that he took his grandsons there who liked this park the best. He thanked the Public Works Department adding that they should feel a sense of satisfaction for the work they've done and people will enjoy it for years. He added they have done an excellent job. He thanked the Public Works Department.

Police Department

Chief Fisher advised that in August they assisted the USF&W for traffic control and clearing the Refuge and beach for the ANTARES launch. He feels this was a good exercise as they were able to clear the beach in 2 – 2.5 hours. He also reported that Pfc. Stevens attended the Field Sobriety Test Instructor School. He stated that he wants 2 of his officers trained as Drug Recognition Experts as there are none on the Shore. Pfc. Carmody is training for the SRO position and is looking forward to working with the new principal at the High School. Cpl. Adams attended a DMV Selective Enforcement Grant workshop. He reminded everyone of the Poker Run this Saturday. They are getting auction items and he added that if anyone has anything to donate to stop them by. He gave the route of the Poker Run and stated there will be an auction at 3:00 p.m. and block party with the Front Page News band. They also plan to have a fire truck with the American flag in remembrance of 9/11.

Councilman Taylor asked if the officers were trained in Narcan.

Chief Fisher advised they have been trained but will make sure their certifications are current.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Spurlock reported they have been cutting grass, pumping millions of gallons of water and they have completed Brianna's Kindness Park playground. He stated that the small children's favorite piece of equipment is the adult exercise equipment. They still have to stripe the parking lot and they will be digging footers for the restrooms tomorrow. There is a holdup on materials which could delay completion. Public Works Director Spurlock also

advised they have installed a southern gateway for the radio read water meters and it is picking up 1,000 meters. He advised that there are roughly 200 meters not being read with most of them in the northern end of the Island and he gave a suggestion for a solution.

Councilwoman Bowden mentioned the swing set with a bent bar at the Memorial Park.

Public Works Director Spurlock responded that he has ordered a new swing set which is due to be delivered tomorrow.

Councilman Taylor asked about pirate ship safety regulations.

Public Works Director Spurlock advised that it does not comply with the safety regulations. He agrees that there is a void that needs to be filled there.

Emergency Services

Emergency Management Coordinator Rush advised of the monthly response numbers and compared them to prior years. He reported that they are always conducting shift training as staff wants to be ready. He advised that there is a temporary tide gauge at the Harbor. He explained they are working with the University Corporation of Atmospheric Research. The purpose is to test its ability with a good quality gauge. It is less expensive and could be used across the Caribbean in poor areas. He explained how it works. He reviewed the hurricane forecast and reported that September is Preparedness Month. The link to help prepare for emergencies is posted on the website and social media. He also gave COVID stats, vaccine stats and advised that masks are to be worn for indoor activities and events. He commented on the variants and boosters. He added that the peak hurricane season is September 10th and the season goes through November 30th. He reminded everyone to wash your hands, wear your masks, and watch your distance.

10. Committee Reports

Budget and Personnel

Vice Mayor Bott reported Council needs to vote for an increase in part-time hours and for a pay increase for a supervisor in the EMS Department. He added that they are working on Chief Fisher's request and will address it at the next Budget and Personnel Committee meeting.

Vice Mayor Bott motioned, seconded by Councilman Taylor to increase the part-time hours and increase in pay for a supervisor in the EMS Department. Unanimously approved.

Vice Mayor Bott also stated they discussed the allocation of the 1% Transient Occupancy Tax. They decided that the Public Safety Committee will control the expenditures of this fund.

RCEC

Councilman Taylor mentioned the soft opening of the Brianna's Kindness Park. He stated that it started with the Leonard family who saved the property and offered it to the Town. Mr. Landsberger purchased the property with the same intention, to give it to the Town. He stated that the Lord blessed the Town with a beautiful park. He commented on the specialty equipment

for special needs. He added that Mr. Donald Leonard lived with this on his heart. He also stated that Mrs. Joanne Moore brought the idea of Civil War Trails for the Island. He doesn't feel this would be hard to do. He also commented that Mrs. Kathy Michaelian came before the Committee asking for more outdoor pickleball courts at the Donald Amrien Recreation Center and upgrades to the tennis courts at Memorial Park. She offered to give money to help with the upgrades to the tennis courts. She was advised that the requests would be done with ARPA funds. Councilman Taylor also feels that they should try to do something for the youth of the Island.

11. Adoption of the Minutes for the August 2nd and August 19th, 2021, Council Meetings.

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to adopt the minutes of the August 2nd and August 19th, Council Meetings as presented. Unanimously approved.

12. Mayor and Council Comments

Councilman Savage that this has been a heartfelt evening with the recognition of responders both EMS and Police going above and beyond the call of duty to save a life. He stated that they have done a fantastic job and he could see the humility. He feels everyone should be humble. They have done an exceptional job and he gave kudos to those who built the Brianna's Kindness Park. He offered prayers for Vice Mayor Bott along with prayers for those who were affected by the storm. Councilman Savage stated that they are blessed that they survived on the Island. He added that God has truly blessed us. He appreciates the Town of Chincoteague and what is going on with Meals and Transient Occupancy Taxes. It shows that people are here, and it benefits the Town.

Councilman Taylor stated that when he meets with the youth in the activities building, they pray for everyone. He stated we are blessed and should pray for everyone.

Councilman McComb wished Mrs. Lillie Birch a happy 100th birthday. He stated that what happened with the Hurricane Ida could have easily happened here. He asked if it was possible to make a plaque for the Brianna's Kindness Park listing the Public Works employees who helped build it. He also congratulated all those who participated in the life saving event.

Town Manager Tolbert advised he would.

Councilwoman Bowden stated that 23-24 years ago she was standing on top of the World Trade Center. She thinks everyone can look back knowing where they were when the news broke of 9/11. She stated that you can't understand how massive the structures were unless you've been there. She stated that she can't help but think of those who lost their lives. She is also very grateful and thankful. She added what incredible officers and EMS for being there to save someone's life. She stated that it is an incredible feeling. She is grateful they were there and that the young lady was able to get help. She also commented on Mrs. Lillie Birch being 100 years old and what she's seen in her lifetime. She added that it is amazing that someone lives 100 years and reflect on life good and bad. Councilwoman Bowden also stated that this community lost a great human being, Mr. Gary Mason, "Mr. Kiwanis". She stated that her heart

goes out to his family and the Kiwanis family. She stated that he will be missed. She expressed her disappointment that the Yankees are in a slump.

Mayor Leonard expressed how blessed they are to live here, and tonight proved it. He stated that with everything going on in the country you find out you live in a special place. He thanked Mr. David Landsberger for his generosity adding that the Brianna's Kindness Park wouldn't have come to fruition without this donation and many other donations to the Town. He also commented on Mrs. Lillie Birch's 100th birthday adding that the toll road was new when she was coming up. Mayor Leonard advised that Public Works Director Spurlock and Harbormaster Merritt assisted a sailboat that was stranded in the Inlet. They couldn't raise the Coast Guard by radio or phone, so they assisted getting the Coast Guard to them.

Town Manager Tolbert interjected that the call came into the Town office where the ladies in the front office called Harbormaster Merritt.

Councilwoman Bowden stated that the Causeway was completed in 1922. She feels they should have a special recognition in 2022.

Mayor Leonard concluded with "Roll Tide".

13. Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3711 (A) (1,3,5) of the Code of Virginia to discuss prospective business opportunities, and evaluation of staff.

Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman Savage 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 evaluation of staff. Unanimously approved.

14. Certification of Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3712 (D) of the Code of Virginia:

Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman Savage 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**
- (2) only such public business matters were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered. Unanimously approved.**

15. Adjourn

Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman Savage to adjourn. Unanimously approved.

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor

Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager