



MINUTES

WYTHEVILLE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2024 AT 5:00 PM
MUNICIPAL BUILDING - 150 EAST MONROE STREET
WYTHEVILLE, VA 24382

1. **RE: ATTENDANCE**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Beth Taylor, Vice-Mayor Cathy Pattison, Councilwoman Holly Atkins, Councilman Gary Gillman, Councilwoman Candice Johnson

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Town Manager Brian Freeman, Assistant Town Manager Elaine HOLETON, Chief Deputy Clerk Brandi Jones, Interim Town Attorney Paul Cassell, Computer Operations Manager Ron Jude, Police Chief Joel Hash, Police Officer Ernie Williams, Alma Watson, Jim Cohen, Robby Suthers, H.A. Suthers, Julie Kause

2. **RE: CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order.

3. **RE: ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM**

Mayor Taylor advised that a quorum of Council members was present.

4. **RE: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilwoman Johnson.

5. **RE: APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is the Approval of Agenda. She stated that Citizens Period is item number ten on the agenda and that there is at least one person attending the meeting who stated that they wished to address the Council during Citizens Period. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to amend the agenda to move Citizens Period from agenda item 10 to follow agenda item 8A.

Motion made by Vice-Mayor Pattison, Seconded by Councilman Gillman. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. Councilwoman Atkins inquired if citizens could still address the Council if they were to come in late to the meeting. Mayor Taylor stated that they will still be able to address the Council. Councilwoman Johnson stated that she would like to confirm that citizens still could speak to the Council if they are late, since the agenda was published to the media and made public. Mayor Taylor stated that is correct. There being no further discussion, the motion was approved with the following voting results, by roll call vote: Voting Yea: Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Atkins, Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Johnson.

6. **RE: 6:00 P.M. RECESS**

Mayor Taylor advised that for informational purposes, the agenda includes a 6:00 p.m. scheduled recess, if necessary.

7. **RE: CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Taylor presented the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the regular meeting of February 26, 2024. She inquired if there was a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 26, 2024, as presented.

Motion made by Councilman Gillman, Seconded by Vice-Mayor Pattison. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was

approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: Voting Yea: Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Johnson.

8. RE: PUBLIC HEARINGS, REQUESTS, RESOLUTIONS, COUNCIL DECISIONS

A. RE: STAFF REPORT - FISCAL YEAR 2023-24 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider appropriations to the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget. She stated that Town Manager Freeman will give a Staff Report/Presentation to the Council regarding this matter.

Town Manager Freeman stated that it was necessary for a budget amendment in the General Fund in the amount of \$732,500, due to the increase in the the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Street Maintenance Funds and donations that were made to the Fire and EMS Department. He noted that the remainder of the budget amendment is for the Wastewater Fund in the amount of \$60,886, due to an insurance recovery on a pump replacement at Pump Station 6 in Wytheville. Mayor Taylor inquired if the Council had any questions for Town Manager Freeman regarding the budget appropriations. There being none, she proceeded with the agenda.

RE: PUBLIC HEARING - FISCAL YEAR 2023-24 BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS

Mayor Taylor advised that the meeting constituted a public hearing (due notice having been given) to consider appropriations to the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget. She inquired if there were any citizens present who wished to address the Council during the public hearing. There being none, she declared the public hearing closed and proceeded with the agenda.

RE: BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024 BUDGET

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is the consideration by the Town Council to approve the budget appropriations to the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget. She inquired if there was a motion to amend and appropriate the 2023-2024 General Fund Budget in the amount of \$732,500 and the Wastewater Fund Budget in the amount of \$60,886.

Motion made by Councilman Gillman, Seconded by Vice-Mayor Pattison. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting results, by roll call vote: Voting Yea: Councilwoman Johnson, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Mayor Taylor, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman.

9. RE: CITIZENS' PERIOD

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is Citizens' Period. She stated that there is one citizen listed on the sign-in sheet who would like to address the Council during Citizens' Period. Mayor Taylor inquired if Mr. Robby Suthers would come to the podium and state his name and address for the recording of the minutes.

Mr. Robby Suthers was recognized and stated that he resides at 990 South 14th Street in Wytheville. Mr. Suthers stated that he had just heard about some of the updates regarding the 20th Street Bridge and the surrounding area. He then addressed the Council regarding the 20th Street Bridge, West Railroad Avenue, West Madison Street and the concerns that he and his neighbors in that area have. Mr. Suthers noted that he is asking the Council to solve the issue, and he commented whether it is the 18th Street Crossing or the 20th Street Bridge that solves it. Councilwoman Johnson stated that Mr. Suthers' concerns are not unheard. She noted that Town Staff and others are working toward a solution to this problem. Town Manager Freeman commented that the completion of Madison Street is strictly to give citizens in that area a secondary outlet, and that it is not just an alternative option. Discussion continued regarding the completion of Madison Street as a secondary outlet for citizens around the 20th Street Bridge area of town. Councilwoman Atkins inquired if the message board is still located on Route 21, notifying drivers of the reduced speed. Mr. Suthers stated that he believes it is still there. Councilwoman Atkins inquired if the pothole under the bridge on Route 21 could be fixed. Town Manager Freeman stated that it has been patched and that the road will be paved in the next couple of months.

Councilwoman Johnson advised that she would like to note, for the record, that she did not want to speak for the other Council members regarding this topic, and in her earlier comments, she was speaking on behalf of herself. The Council thanked Mr. Suthers for his comments.

10. RE: PUBLIC HEARINGS, REQUESTS, RESOLUTIONS, COUNCIL DECISIONS (CONTINUED)

A. RE: WYTHEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZATION REQUEST

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider authorizing the Wytheville Police Department to issue a purchase order for two police vehicles with the understanding that the funds will be appropriated in the Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget. She stated that Town Manager Freeman will give the Council more information regarding this matter.

Town Manager Freeman explained that Staff are asking that the Council approve authorizing the Police Department to issue a purchase order, which will be necessary to order two new police vehicles through a state contract. He noted that the funds for the two vehicles will not be issued until after July 1, 2024. A brief discussion continued regarding the authorization of a purchase order for two new police vehicles and the process of replacing old police vehicles with new ones. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to authorize the Wytheville Police Department to issue a purchase order for two police vehicles with the understanding that the funds will be appropriated in the Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget.

Motion made by Councilwoman Johnson, Seconded by Councilman Gillman. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting results, by roll call vote: Voting Yea: Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Atkins, Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Johnson.

B. RE: PROPOSED BUDGET ADOPTION CALENDAR FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 AND SCHEDULING WORK SESSIONS

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider scheduling a Council Work Session for Monday, March 25, 2024, and Monday, April 8, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers before the regularly scheduled Town Council meeting to discuss the development of the budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25; and, consider adopting the proposed budget adoption calendar for Fiscal Year 2024-25. She stated that Town Manager Freeman will give the Council more information regarding this topic.

Town Manager Freeman advised that he would now review the proposed budget adoption calendar for Fiscal Year 2024-25. He noted that he is proposing that the first reading of the budget be considered at the Monday, April 22, 2024, meeting, the seconded reading, as well as the public hearing be conducted, at the Monday, May 13, 2024, meeting of the Council, and the final reading and adoption of the budget be held at the Tuesday, May 28, 2024, meeting. Town Manager Freeman stated that the State Code requires the adoption of a budget calendar. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to approve scheduling the two Council Work Sessions, as well as to adopt the budget adoption calendar for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

Motion made by Vice-Mayor Pattison, Seconded by Councilwoman Johnson. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: Voting Yea: Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Johnson.

C. RE: AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY - WAIVER OF FEES REQUEST

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider the request of the American Cancer Society for a Waiver of Fees for the use of Withers Park on Saturday, May 4, 2024, for the Relay for Life of Wythe County event. She stated that Assistant Town Manager Holeton will give the Council more information on this matter.

Assistant Town Manager Holeton noted that the value of the rental fee is \$350, and that this request to waive the rental fee has been approved by the Council in past years. Councilwoman Atkins inquired if the Town would be considered as a sponsor for the Relay for Life event. Assistant Town Manager Holeton noted that she was not sure if the Town is considered a sponsor, however, Staff will advise the American Cancer Society that the Council is approving the Waiver of Fees with the stipulation that the Town be listed as a sponsor of the event. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to approve the request of the American Cancer Society for a Waiver of Fees for the use of Withers Park on Saturday, May 4, 2024, for the Relay for Life of Wythe County event, with the stipulation that the Town be listed as a sponsor.

Motion made by Councilwoman Johnson, Seconded by Councilwoman Atkins. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: Voting Yea: Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Johnson.

D. RE: ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN - WYTHEVILLE BRANCH – RAFFLE PERMIT REQUEST

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider the request of the Wytheville Branch of American Association of University Women for the issuance of a raffle permit for calendar year 2024. She inquired if there was a motion to approve the request of the Wytheville Branch of American Association of University Women for the issuance of a raffle permit for calendar year 2024.

Motion made by Councilwoman Johnson, Seconded by Vice-Mayor Pattison. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: Voting Yea: Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Johnson.

E. RE: WYTHEVILLE FARMERS' MARKET LEASE AGREEMENT RENEWAL AND PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to review the second draft of the Wytheville Farmers' Market Lease Agreement and consider scheduling a public hearing for the Town Council meeting on Monday, March 25, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as possible, in the Council Chambers to consider the renewal of a lease of Town property for the Wytheville Farmers' Market located at 210 West Spring Street. She stated that Assistant Town Manager Holeton will give the Council more information regarding the Agreement.

Assistant Town Manager Holeton stated that the Council does not have to decide on the Lease Agreement at this meeting. She noted that, however, a public hearing and the final decision regarding the Farmers' Market Lease Agreement can be scheduled for the next Town Council meeting. Assistant Town Manager Holeton reviewed the second draft of the Lease Agreement with the Town Council. Councilwoman Johnson inquired if the Farmers' Market Board agreed with the draft agreement. Assistant Town Manager Holeton stated that they agree with the language of the draft Lease Agreement. A brief discussion was held regarding the language of the Farmers' Market Lease Agreement and the utility fees of the Farmers' Market building. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to schedule a public hearing for the Town Council meeting on Monday, March 25, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., or as soon thereafter as possible, in the Council Chambers to consider the renewal of a lease of Town property for the Wytheville Farmers' Market located at 210 West Spring Street.

Motion made by Councilman Gillman, Seconded by Councilwoman Johnson. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: Voting Yea: Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Johnson.

11. RE: PRESENTATIONS TO TOWN COUNCIL

A. RE: WYTHEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S 2023 ANNUAL REPORT PRESENTATION

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is a presentation by Police Chief Joel Hash regarding the 2023 Wytheville Police Department's Annual Report. She stated that Police Chief Joel Hash will now give the Council more information regarding the Police Department's Annual Report.

Police Chief Joel Hash presented the 2023 Wytheville Police Department's Annual Report, which included the highlights of 2023, Department staffing, local crime statistics, Kids' Summer Camp, public school presentations, etc. Councilwoman Atkins inquired of Police Chief Hash regarding the one-week Kids' Summer Camp, and if there was any way it could be extended to a two-week camp to include more kids. Police Chief Hash stated that the Wytheville Fire Department helps with the Summer Camp and that they would start working on how to extend the time and/or include more kids in the Kids' Summer Camp. Police Chief Hash thanked Town Manager Freeman, the Town Council and the community for supporting the Wytheville Police Department.

12. **RE: REPORTS**

A. **RE: BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT - EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE RENEWAL**

Vice-Mayor Pattison reported for the Budget and Finance Committee. The Budget and Finance Committee Report was entered into the record, as follows:

1. 2024-25 EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE RENEWAL: The Town of Wytheville offers its employees insurance through The Local Choice, a state health benefits program established by the General Assembly in 1989. The Local Choice serves Wytheville, along with many other local governments and public-school systems across the state. Each year, participating entities are evaluated, and new rates for the upcoming year are established. The rate for each locality is established based on their usage of the policy through the year, as well as the combined rate with all other agencies across Virginia. The revised rates are then provided to each entity for their consideration during the insurance renewal period. This year, there was a 10.5 percent increase. By April 1, 2024, it will be necessary for the Town of Wytheville to initiate the renewal and declare the percentage of the plan offerings being covered by the Town and employee respectively. After careful consideration, it is the recommendation of the Budget and Finance Committee that the Town renew with The Local Choice with the same plans and continue to pay the 92.7 percent blended rate for employee only insurance plans with an additional \$350 monthly contribution to the "Plus 1" or Family plans. Councilwoman Atkins inquired if there will be an increase in the rates from last year to this year. Vice-Mayor Pattison stated that the only increase is the additional \$100 contribution to the "Plus 1" or Family plans.

Motion made by Vice-Mayor Pattison, Seconded by Councilwoman Johnson. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting results, by roll call vote: Voting Yea: Councilwoman Johnson, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Mayor Taylor, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman.

B. **RE: STAFF REPORT(S)**

Town Manager Freeman presented his Staff Report, as follows:

BUDGET PREPARATION: Town Manager Freeman advised that the only item he has to report on at this meeting is a reminder that this is a critical time of year regarding the budget preparation process for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

C. **RE: UPCOMING MEETINGS**

Chief Deputy Clerk Jones presented the upcoming meetings, as follows:

1. The Wytheville Planning Commission meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 14, 2024, has been canceled.
2. The Homestead Museum Advisory Board will meet on Friday, March 15, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., at the Jackson House.

3. Downtown Wytheville, Incorporated (DTW) will meet on Monday, March 18, 2024, at 5:30 p.m., at the DTW office

4. The Wytheville Redevelopment and Housing Authority will meet on Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at 12:00 p.m., at the Housing Authority Office.

5. The New River Regional Water Authority will meet on Thursday, March 21, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., at the Water Plant in Wytheville.

6. The District III Board will meet on Thursday, March 21, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., at the Marion Office.

7. The next Council Work Session will be held at 4:00 p.m., on Monday, March 25, 2024, prior to the regularly scheduled Wytheville Town Council meeting at 5:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

13. RE: OTHER BUSINESS

A. RE: COUNCIL MEMBER TIME

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is Council Member Time. She inquired if Councilman Gillman had anything to discuss during Council Member Time. Councilman Gillman stated that he did not have anything to discuss at this time.

Mayor Taylor inquired if Councilwoman Atkins had anything she would like to discuss during Council Member Time. Councilwoman Atkins inquired about the status of the delineators for the Public Works Department vehicles. Town Manager Freeman stated that he will check the status of this matter.

Councilwoman Atkins inquired about a new policy to adjust water bills for citizens who encounter water leak issues. She noted that she would like to see the policy updated. Town Manager Freeman noted that he would look into this matter.

Councilwoman Atkins stated that she would like for televisions, displaying information for Town employees, to be placed in Town breakrooms. She advised that she has spoken with Town Manager Freeman, previously, about this and he was looking into it, but she would like for the televisions to be installed for the employees.

Councilwoman Atkins inquired about the status of adopting a resolution for Devoted to You, "Wytheville's A Christmas to Remember" event, that was discussed at a previous meeting. Chief Deputy Clerk Jones stated that the resolution will be placed on an agenda for a future Council meeting.

Councilwoman Atkins inquired about the new Human Resources software and its recordkeeping and timekeeping capabilities, and if she could receive more information regarding the software. Town Manager Freeman stated that he would contact Councilwoman Atkins regarding this matter.

Councilwoman Atkins inquired about Town employees serving the community as a Town representative during work hours and not having to use their vacation or compensation time, if there is adequate recordkeeping, and they provide a service to the community. A brief discussion was held regarding Town employees serving the community during work hours. Town Manager Freeman stated that he will look into this topic.

Mayor Taylor stated that she did not have anything to discuss during Council Member Time.

Mayor Taylor inquired if Vice-Mayor Pattison had anything she would like to discuss during Council Member Time. Vice-Mayor Pattison stated that she did not have anything to discuss at this time.

Mayor Taylor inquired if Councilwoman Johnson had anything she would like to discuss during Council Member Time. Councilwoman Johnson inquired about the Mountain View Drive traffic calming study. Town Manager Freeman stated that Planning Director John Woods is currently working on this matter. He noted that

Planning Director Woods is looking to present his study to the Council at an April Town Council meeting.

Mayor Taylor advised that a citizen has reached out to her regarding the Council members reserving the right to discuss items later in the meeting and citizens having to wait during a Closed Meeting, because of this statement. She stated that it is frustrating to them if they stay only to find out nothing else is being discussed. Mayor Taylor noted that that the citizen is requesting that all Council members discuss everything they need to prior to going into a Closed Meeting, so that citizens do not have to wait for no reason. She inquired if any of the Council members had anything else they would like to discuss during Council Member Time. There being none, she proceeded with the agenda.

14. RE: CLOSED MEETING

- A.** Mayor Taylor advised that it would now be necessary for the Council to go into a Closed Meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A.) (7.) Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to probable litigation. She inquired if there was a motion to go into a Closed Meeting.

Motion made by Councilman Gillman, Seconded by Vice-Mayor Pattison. She inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: Voting Yea: Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Johnson. (6:00 p.m.)

B. RE: CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

Mayor Taylor advised that it would now be necessary to certify the Closed Meeting. She noted that it was also necessary to reconvene into open session. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to certify the Closed Meeting held pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A.) (7.) Consultation with legal counsel pertaining to probable litigation and that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the Closed Meeting to which this certification applies, and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the Closed Meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Council.

Motion made by Vice-Mayor Pattison, Seconded by Councilwoman Atkins. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting results, by roll call vote: Voting Yea: Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Atkins, Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Mayor Taylor, Councilwoman Johnson. (6:27 p.m.)

15. RE: ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be discussed a motion was made, seconded and carried to adjourn the meeting. (6:28 p.m.)

Beth A. Taylor, Mayor

Brandi N. Jones, Chief Deputy Clerk

**STAFF REPORT
MARCH 11, 2024**

BUDGET PREPARATION: Town Manager Freeman advised that the only item he has to report on at this meeting is a reminder that this is a critical time of year regarding the budget preparation process for Fiscal Year 2024-25.