



MINUTES

WYTHEVILLE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY, JANUARY 22, 2024 AT 5:11 PM
MUNICIPAL BUILDING - 150 EAST MONROE STREET
WYTHEVILLE, VA 24382

1. MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor 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 Holeyton, Chief Deputy Clerk Brandi Jones, Interim Town Attorney Paul Cassell, Computer Operations Manager Ron Jude, Fire and Rescue Chief Chris Slemp, Police Chief Joel Hash, Police Officer David Newman, Downtown Wytheville, Inc. Assistant Charlie Jones, Open Door Community Executive Director Jordan Stidham, Leithan Smelser, Melissa McWhirter, Bob McWhirter, Jim Cohen, Claudia Perry, Elisha Wolfe, Denise Davis, Glenda Crockett-Eans, Kerrington Crockett-Eans, Others

2. RE: CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order.

3. RE: ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

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

4. RE: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilman Gary Gillman.

5. RE: APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Taylor advised that the first item on the agenda is the Approval of Agenda. She inquired if there was a motion to approve the agenda 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 results, by roll call vote: Voting Yea: Councilman Gillman, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Mayor Taylor, Councilwoman Atkins, 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

A. Mayor Taylor presented the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the Council Work Session and the regular meeting of January 8, 2024. She inquired if there was a motion to approve the minutes of the Council Work Session and the regular meeting of January 8, 2024, as presented.

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.

8. RE: CITIZENS' PERIOD

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is Citizens' Period. She noted that there are several citizens on the sign-in sheet who would like to address the Council during Citizens' Period. Mayor Taylor inquired if the first person listed on the sign-in sheet, Mr. Jordan Stidham, would come to the podium and state his name and address for the recording of the minutes.

Mr. Jordan Stidham, Executive Director of Open Door Community, was recognized and stated that he resides at 680 West Main Street in Wytheville. Mr. Stidham addressed the Council regarding Open Door Community's motel-based emergency warming shelter and the struggles it is facing to afford rooms with the increase in homelessness. He stated that there is a need for assistance for the homeless that is beyond Open Door Community's capacity. Mr. Stidham noted that he hopes that funding needs for emergency shelter and long-term housing can be addressed with the Town and Wythe County in the near future. Mayor Taylor thanked Mr. Stidham for his comments.

Ms. Leithan Smelser was recognized and stated that she resides at 317 Sheffey School Road in Wythe County. Ms. Smelser addressed the Council regarding homelessness in town. She noted that she has taken it upon herself to create a GoFundMe page for people to contribute to the homeless, and that the local community has stepped up and contributed. Ms. Smelser inquired that she would like to ask the Town of Wytheville's elected Officials as to why our community does not have a warming shelter. Mayor Taylor thanked Ms. Smelser for her comments.

Mr. James Steiner was recognized and stated that he is homeless, and he has been living behind the dumpster at McDonald's in Wytheville. Mr. Steiner stated that he is a former Army Veteran and now he is a homeless man in Virginia. He commented that he would like to ask the Town of Wytheville to be a hero. Mr. Steiner noted that having concerns for someone else's needs is what being a hero is about. He stated that he is asking for the Town's help with the homeless problem. Mayor Taylor thanked Mr. Steiner for his comments.

Ms. Denise Davis was recognized and stated that she resides at 375 Loretto Drive in Wytheville. Ms. Davis advised that she wanted to address the Council regarding a shelter for those in the town who are homeless. She stated that she wants to ask the Town to step up and donate money to Open Door Community to contribute to helping the homeless problem around town. Mayor Taylor thanked Ms. Davis for her comments.

Mayor Taylor stated that she thinks she can speak for all the Council when she states that there will be future dialogue regarding a warming shelter. Councilwoman Atkins advised that she is in favor of a warming shelter in town. Councilwoman Johnson stated that she, also, is in favor of a warming shelter in town. She commented that it was brought to her attention that she was one of the individuals who was against a warming shelter. Councilwoman Johnson noted that she wanted to clarify that she is for the shelter and not against it. She stated that a Work Session should be scheduled to further discuss the homeless issues in the community. Mayor Taylor inquired if anyone could give her information regarding the church that was previously interested in holding the warming shelter at their location. Mr. Stidham stated that Open Door Community had been working on opening the basement of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. He noted that the problem that they faced was not having enough sponsors to provide volunteers regularly for the warming shelter. Discussion continued regarding the problem of not having enough volunteers for the hours of a potential warming shelter and how it made more sense for Open Door Community to switch to a hotel-based shelter. Councilwoman Atkins inquired if there was a way that the Council could donate money to go toward a certain amount of hotel rooms. Town Manager Freeman stated that the Town Council does have that ability, however, currently, there is no money in the budget for such a donation.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Atkins and seconded by Councilwoman Johnson to authorize Town Manager Freeman to spend up to \$6,000 to donate to Open Door Community for the motel-based shelter program. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. Councilwoman Johnson inquired as to how the funds will be dispersed to Open Door Community. Mr. Stidham stated that there was a portal that could be used to disperse the funds, or the funds could be dispersed through a check. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any further discussion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting results, by roll call vote: Voting Yea: Councilwoman Johnson, Councilwoman Atkins, Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilman Gillman.

Mr. Stidham thanked the Town Council for their decision.

Ms. Glenda Crockett-Eans was recognized and stated that she resides at 50 Lee Circle in Wytheville. She thanked the Town Council for their donation of funds to Open Door Community to use for the motel-based shelter for the homeless. She stated that she would like to ask that the Council allocate money for a warming shelter during the Town's next budget cycle. Ms. Crockett-Eans continued to address the Council regarding the homeless problem in town. Mayor Taylor thanked Ms. Crockett-Eans for her comments.

Mayor Taylor inquired if there were any other citizens who wished to address the Council during Citizens' Period. There being none, she proceeded with the agenda.

9. RE: PRESENTATIONS TO TOWN COUNCIL

A. RE: PRESENTATION REGARDING THE 2023 WYTHEVILLE FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is a presentation by Fire Chief Chris Slemm regarding the 2023 Wytheville Fire and Rescue Department's Annual Report. Fire Chief Slemm presented the 2023 Wytheville Fire and Rescue Department's Annual Report, which included the Department's Mission Statement, Vision, the highlights of 2023, grants for fire equipment, the goals and opportunities for 2024, etc. Vice-Mayor Pattison inquired of Chief Slemm about his thoughts of bringing back a volunteer program. Chief Slemm noted that bringing back volunteers is something that has been discussed, however, the concern is whether anyone would volunteer. He stated that volunteerism is declining in every aspect, nationwide. Vice-Mayor Pattison inquired of Chief Slemm regarding Ladies Auxiliaries, and, if the wives of the Fire and Rescue Department employees could be included in any programs. Chief Slemm stated that several wives of the Town's Fire and Rescue Department employees are career Fire and EMS providers doing similar jobs. Councilwoman Johnson inquired of Chief Slemm regarding a grant to apply for self-contained breathing apparatuses, and how many apparatuses it will cover. Chief Slemm advised that the Town has a very good chance of receiving around 75 percent of the cost of the apparatuses through the grant. He stated that he has also been working with Town Manager Freeman regarding a plan to replace the 12 expiring apparatuses if the Town does not receive the grant money. A brief discussion ensued regarding funding for future Fire and Rescue equipment. Councilwoman Atkins inquired of Chief Slemm regarding the student Ride-Along Program. Chief Slemm stated that students' background checks are completed by their institution, and that they will complete paperwork at the Town's Fire and Rescue Department building before beginning the program. Vice-Mayor Pattison inquired of Chief Slemm regarding firemen under contracts at other locations wanting to work for the Town, and whether those contracts have been bought out. Chief Slemm advised that he has not encountered a situation like that with the Town. He noted that, if this kind of situation occurred, he would talk with Town Management before moving forward. Chief Slemm thanked the Town Council for their time.

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

A. RE: ORDINANCE NO. 1428 - HOUSING REHABILITATION ZONE

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider amending and reenacting Ordinance No. 1428 to include two properties in the Housing Rehabilitation Zone. She stated that Assistant Town Manager Holeton would now discuss this ordinance with the Council.

Assistant Town Manager Holeton stated that the Housing Rehabilitation Zone Selection Committee met recently, and they recommend that the Town Council approve including the Fairview Townhomes and the Monroe North Apartments into the Housing Rehabilitation Zone. She gave a brief overview of the Fairview Townhomes Project and the Monroe North Apartments Project to the Council. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 1428, an ordinance amended and reenacted to add the following two properties in the Housing Rehabilitation Zone: A.) the Fairview Townhomes Project located on Fairview Road (Tax Map Parcel #25-11-2); and, B.) the apartments located at 810 West Monroe Street (Tax Map Parcel #41A-7-8-16) in the Town of Wytheville, Virginia, on first and

final reading. Motion made by Councilwoman Johnson, Seconded by Councilwoman Atkins. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. Mr. Stidham with Open Door Community reviewed figures for the Council to support the Virginia Housing Funding and why including their projects in the Housing Rehabilitation Zone is beneficial. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any further discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting results, by roll call vote: Voting Yea: Councilman Gillman, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Mayor Taylor, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilwoman Johnson.

B. RE: WALL OF HONOR - REAPPOINTMENT

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider the reappointment of Mr. Michael Melton to the Wall of Honor Committee for a four-year term (term expires February 1, 2024). Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to reappoint Mr. Michael Mitchell to the Wall of Honor Committee for a four-year term (new term expires February 1, 2028).

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.

C. RE: WALL OF HONOR - REAPPOINTMENT

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider the reappointment of Ms. Maelene Watson to the Wall of Honor Committee for a four-year term (term expires February 1, 2024). She inquired if there was a motion to reappoint Ms. Maelene Watson to the Wall of Honor Committee for a four-year term (new term expires February 1, 2028).

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 and there being no opposition: Voting Yea: Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Johnson.

D. RE: WYTHEVILLE BUILDING CODE APPEALS BOARD - APPOINTMENT

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is to consider an appointment to the Wytheville Building Code Appeals Board for a new alternate member to the board (new term expires July 26, 2028). Town Manager Freeman stated that the Building Code Appeals Board needs one additional alternate member. He noted that the Council has two applications in their package to consider for appointment. Mayor Taylor inquired if the Council would like to appoint one of the two applicants to the Board, or if they would like to schedule a Work Session to hold Meet-and-Greet Sessions with the applicants.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Johnson and seconded by Councilwoman Atkins to schedule a Work Session for Monday, February 12, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., to hold a Meet-and-Greet Session with the applicants to be considered as a new alternate member to the Wytheville Building Code Appeals Board. 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: BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENT

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is the consideration of appointments to the Budget and Finance Committee and the Public Works Committee. Town Manager Freeman stated that he would recommend that the Town Council reorganize the Budget and Finance Committee and the Public Works Committee to help improve how the Town functions and operates. He advised that he recommends that the Town Council appoint Councilwoman Johnson and Vice-Mayor Pattison to the Budget and Finance Committee and Councilman Gillman and Councilwoman

Atkins to the Public Works Committee. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was a motion to appoint Councilwoman Johnson and Vice-Mayor Pattison to the Budget and Finance Committee and Councilman Gillman and Councilwoman Atkins to the Public Works Committee.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Johnson and seconded by Councilman Gillman to appoint Councilwoman Johnson and Vice-Mayor Pattison to the Budget and Finance Committee and Councilman Gillman and Councilwoman Atkins to the Public Works Committee. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion. Councilwoman Atkins stated that she would like to note that she is fine with the Committee appointments at this time. She advised, however, she would like to make a motion that the next time there is a reorganization of the Budget and Finance and Public Works Committees, she would like for a discussion to be held by the Town Council and the appointments to be made by the Town Council. Mayor Taylor commented that this is a good idea, and she feels like the reorganization may have got off track when the State changed the voting for towns. She remarked that she agrees that it is a good idea for the Council to discuss how it would like to proceed in the future regarding the reorganization. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any further discussion.

Interim Town Attorney Cassell advised that Mayor Taylor needs to call for a vote on the initial motion. He explained to Councilwoman Atkins that after the initial motion has been voted on, she can certainly make another motion, however, she cannot make a motion during discussions. Chief Deputy Clerk Jones restated the original motion made by Councilwoman Johnson and seconded by Councilman Gillman which was to appoint Councilwoman Johnson and Vice-Mayor Pattison to the Budget and Finance Committee and Councilman Gillman and Councilwoman Atkins to the Public Works Committee. There being no further discussion, 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.

F. RE: BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE – FUTURE REORGANIZATION OF COUNCIL

Interim Town Attorney Cassell advised Councilwoman Atkins that if she would like to make her other motion, she may now do so. A motion was made by Councilwoman Atkins for the Budget and Finance and Public Works Committees to require a motion, discussion and vote to be held by the Town Council during the next scheduled reorganization. Councilwoman Johnson inquired if Councilwoman Atkins was talking about a Council Work Session. Councilwoman Atkins stated that she was not. Discussion was held regarding how this relates to the Town Code about appointments to Town Committees, including the Budget and Finance and Public Works Committees, and how the appointments have been made in the past. Discussion ensued regarding Committee appointments in the future. Interim Town Attorney Cassell explained that he was not aware that this would be an issue at this meeting, therefore, he would need to do some research regarding appointments. He advised that the motion that is on the floor is to have the Council approve the Committee appointments. He stated that if it turns out that this is in violation of the Code, then he would certainly be able to advise the Town Council, and they can deal with it later. Interim Town Attorney Cassell reiterated that he was not aware of this issue, and he does not know about the provision in the Code. He stated that he will research it, but he is unsure at this time. Councilwoman Johnson inquired of Mr. Cassell if the Council could amend this motion if needed. Mr. Cassell stated that is correct. Mayor Taylor inquired if Chief Deputy Clerk Jones would restate the motion. Chief Deputy Clerk Jones restated the motion made by Councilwoman Atkins which was for the Budget and Finance and Public Works Committees to require a motion, discussion and vote to be held by the Town Council during the next scheduled reorganization. Interim Town Attorney Cassell stated that is correct. Mayor Taylor inquired if this is to schedule a Work Session. Discussion ensued regarding Town Staff and the Town Attorney researching the topic before conducting a Work Session or taking a policy position on the issue. Interim Town Attorney Cassell advised that he recommends the Council allow him to research the issue and report back to the Council at a later meeting. Discussion ensued regarding the appointments made for Committees by the Council. Councilwoman Johnson inquired if Mr. Cassell could clarify the vote that was just taken regarding the appointments to the Budget and

Finance and Public Works Committees. Interim Town Attorney Cassell advised that the Council has already had a motion to adjust those two Committees, and that motion passed, therefore, it is in effect. He explained that what is being discussed now is for him to research this for insurance in the future that appointments are codified or placed correctly into the Town Code for reference. He noted that he is asking for time to research this more, and then he will report back to the Town Council. Mayor Taylor stated that there is a motion on the floor by Councilwoman Atkins for the Budget and Finance and Public Works Committees to require a motion, discussion and vote to be held by the Town Council during the next scheduled reorganization. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Johnson. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion. Councilwoman Atkins inquired if she could withdraw her request to allow Mr. Cassell to research the issue. Mr. Cassell advised that Councilwoman Atkins would need to vote down the existing motion, if she does not mind pulling it and enact that now and wait for his advice, however, she could enact it now by passing the motion. Discussion continued regarding Mr. Cassell researching the topic. Mr. Cassell advised that the Council needed to proceed with the vote, and if they would like him to research the topic more, they would need to vote the motion down by voting no. He commented that he would come back to the next meeting with his research. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any further discussion on the motion. There being none, the motion was denied with the following voting results, by roll call vote: Voting Yea: Councilwoman Johnson. Voting Nay: Councilwoman Atkins, Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilman Gillman.

11. **RE: REPORTS**

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

Town Manager Freeman presented his Staff Report, as follows:

LAW ENFORCEMENT RECOGNITION DAY: Town Manager Freeman stated that January 9, 2024, was Law Enforcement Recognition Day. He noted that at the last Town Council meeting held on January 8, 2024, he did not realize this. Town Manager Freeman stated that he wanted to thank Police Chief Joel Hash, the Wytheville Police Department, Virginia State Police, Wythe County Sheriff's Office, Rural Retreat Police Department and all those who work with the Town. He commented that he would like to apologize for not getting ahead of that recognition at the last Town Council meeting.

B. **RE: UPCOMING MEETINGS**

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

1. The Homestead Museum Advisory Board will meet on Friday, January 26, 2024, at 10:00 a.m., at the Jackson Property.
2. The Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County will meet on Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 3:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.
3. The Wytheville Planning Commission will meet on Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.
4. The Tree Advisory Committee will meet on Thursday, February 8, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., in Conference Room A.
5. The next Council Work Session will be held at 4:00 p.m., on Monday, February 12, 2024, prior to the regularly scheduled Town Council meeting at 5:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

12. **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 during this 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 would like to give a shoutout to all Town employees. She commented that they have done an excellent job during the inclement weather events over the past few weeks.

Mayor Taylor inquired if Councilwoman Atkins had anything to discuss during Council Member Time. She stated that she would like to thank the Public Works, Fire and Rescue and the Police Departments for their hard work during the recent inclement weather events.

Mayor Taylor inquired if Councilwoman Johnson had anything to discuss during Council Member Time. Councilwoman Johnson stated that she would like to thank the Town's Public Works Department for their hard work. She noted that she also wanted to thank the Police Department for National Policeman Day and the Town's Fire and Rescue Department for their hard work during the recent inclement weather events.

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

B. RE: MISCELLANEOUS

Mayor Taylor advised that the next item on the agenda is miscellaneous items. She inquired if the Council had any Council Committee Reports. There being none, she proceeded with the agenda.

13. RE: CLOSED MEETING

Mayor Taylor advised that it will 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 Vice-Mayor Pattison, 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 in favor and there being no opposition: Voting Yea: Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilwoman Atkins, Councilman Gillman, Councilwoman Johnson. (7:03 p.m.)

RE: CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING

Mayor Taylor advised that it would 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 Councilman Gillman, 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: Councilwoman Johnson, Councilwoman Atkins, Mayor Taylor, Vice-Mayor Pattison, Councilman Gillman. (7:30 p.m.)

14. RE: ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be discussed a motion was made, seconded and carried to adjourn the meeting. (7:31 p.m.)

Beth A. Taylor, Mayor

Brandi N. Jones, Chief Deputy Clerk

STAFF REPORT
JANUARY 22, 2024

LAW ENFORCEMENT RECOGNITION DAY: Town Manager Freeman stated that January 9, 2024, was Law Enforcement Recognition Day. He noted that at the last Town Council meeting held on January 8, 2024, he did not realize this. Town Manager Freeman stated that he wanted to thank Police Chief Joel Hash, the Wytheville Police Department, Virginia State Police, Wythe County Sheriff's Office, Rural Retreat Police Department and all those who work with the Town. He commented that he would like to apologize for not getting ahead of that recognition at the last Town Council meeting.