

The regular meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Front Royal, Virginia was held on May 9, 2016, in the Warren County Government Center’s Board Meeting Room. Mayor Darr led Council and those attending in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and a Moment of Silence. The roll was called at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Timothy W. Darr
Councilman John P. Connolly
Councilman Bébhinn C. Egger
Councilman Bret W. Hrbek
Councilman Jacob L. Meza
Councilman Eugene R. Tewalt
Vice Mayor Hollis L. Tharpe
Town Attorney Douglas W. Napier
Town Manager Steven M. Burke, P.E.
Clerk of Council Jennifer E. Berry, CMC

(The above listed members represent the full body of Council as authorized in the Town Charter.)

Councilman Tewalt moved, seconded by Councilman Connolly that Council approve the Regular Council Meeting minutes of April 25, 2016 as presented.

Vote: Yes – Connolly, Egger, Hrbek, Meza, Tewalt and Tharpe
No – N/A
Abstain – N/A
Absent – N/A
(Mayor Darr did not vote as there was no tie to require his vote)

RECEIPT OF PETITIONS OR CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE PUBLIC

George Cline, of 86 Menefee Lane, noted that he was concerned and appalled at the comments made by certain members of Council recently. He noted that he was speaking as a husband of a member of the Police Department and in particular the comment that bothered him was when a member of Council saw two or more back up units at a traffic stop and asked, “Don’t those officers have anything else to do?” Mr. Cline noted that the comment was selfish and self-centered, and he invited said Councilmember to spend time at his home, where the phone rang at all hours of the night. He added that if Council believed that investigators only deal with felonies then their review of the research is seriously flawed.

Mr. Cline noted that by taking the cameras off of Main Street, Council has added man hours to the Police Department. He opined that the cameras were not an invasion of privacy, and Council was confused on the entire matter. He added that in order to have a perfect conviction, it takes perfect documentation – such as the cameras. He noted that he was very disappointed in the whole Council and the Town Administration that they would allow for matters to proceed in such a manner. He asked for the particular resignation of the one member of Council no later than Tuesday evening.

R. Wayne Sealock, of 731 Bass Avenue, stated that he was a concerned Town citizen and a retired law enforcement officer. He explained that he had concerns about what was printed in the paper. Mr. Sealock expressed displeasure in the comments of Councilman Egger, noting that he felt that she was anti-law enforcement. He added that there were reports of the Police Departments honesty and he suggested that such a matter could obviously be addressed privately rather than

out in the open. Mr. Sealock noted that the Town Charter states that it is the Town's responsibility to keep the citizens of Front Royal safe. He added that the Town Police Department is the first call made for safety matters. He stated that at times it takes 2-3 officers for a traffic stop and there is no longer a "normal" traffic stop as officers no longer know what they are stepping into. Mr. Sealock noted that the Council should back their Police Officers rather than publicly question their integrity.

Arlene Brooklyn Ballou, of Brooklyn's Market Place, commented that she had a petition to return the Gazebo cameras. She noted that it was not surveillance but rather a tool for the Police Department. She stated that there were over 100 signatures now and more signatures to come. Ms. Ballou added that they strongly supported the Police Department and their efforts and personally felt that Council owed the Police Department an apology based on the recent public comments during a worksession.

Keith Menefee, of 120 A E Main Street, thanked Council for the downtown Civil War Re-enactment held this weekend and Councilman Egger for her violin students who played at the Gazebo. He noted that he whole heartedly agree with previous speakers, adding that the cameras were a tool for the Police Department.

A.D. Carter III, of 230 W. 8th Street, remarked that the he was the President of the NAACP of Warren and Page County. He stated that Council should respect and care for the citizens of Front Royal. He cautioned that Council live together with the community respectfully, even when we disagree. Mr. Carter expressed his support to members of Council.

Linda J. Allen, of 416 Salem Avenue, noted that the budgets are to be comparative, dollar per dollar. She stated that changes arise at times for the Police Department and their budget and circumstances need to considered, such as drugs and at risk youth. She noted that child abuse, drug abuse, rape, gun issues and perpetrators are to be addressed and assisted by the Police Department. Ms. Allen noted that the Police Department had so many officers that are courteous and empathetic. She stated that Council would do well to learn to emulate the behavior and of the Police Department.

Ms. Allen noted that there are such bad rental units with bedbugs and roaches and these people need to be respected. She stated that she is very disturbed by the conditions of local rental units.

Hugh Henry, of 175 Hugh Henry Lane, stated that he was member of the Planning Commission member as well. He noted that cameras help promote justice, and the Town needed justice. He added that the Gazebo cameras are a tool for the Police Department and if one crime is solved in ten years than the cameras should remain on site. He stated that perhaps Councilman Egger was misinformed regarding the Police Department, as having many officers on the scene at a traffic stop is very safe and many times the proper course of action as there is safety in numbers.

Holland Daniels, of 122 W. 1st Street, commented that one year ago the neighbors in his area submitted a petition for the safety of 1st Street. He noted that he would like Council aware that Town Manager Burke is no longer returning his phone calls and stated that hopefully Council received a letter he sent to Mr. Burke. Mr. Daniels noted that in said letter he had requested some information; he stated that he did not receive a response. He stated that the area residents are being disrespected and ignored.

Phil Compton, of 108 Virginia Avenue, stated that corners of his street are a danger. He asked that the traffic needs to be maintained, reduced and controlled. He noted that the traffic has grown and now if the proposed street is added then more traffic would be increased as well. Mr. Compton stated that the cars accelerate in the area and throughout the night and day and he would like it addressed.

Albert Gunn, of 16 Massie Street, noted that he had witnessed the high volume of traffic and speeding vehicles in the area. He asked that Council devise a solution to deter the issues regarding traffic.

REPORT OF THE MAYOR, COUNCIL & STAFF

Town Manager Steve Burke noted that:

- Tim Smith, the Tourism Coordinator for the Town, Patrick Farris, with the Warren Heritage Society, Chief Norman Shiflett with the Front Royal Police Department, and Doug Bechtel with the 8th Virginia Infantry re-enactors, are due thanks for planning & coordinating the Battle of Front Royal Living History Event this past Saturday. Also, thanks to Bébhinn Egger and her violin students and the Tuscarora Brass Band for providing musical entertainment. The event was a great success and we look forward to hosting it again next year.
- The Royal Trolley will begin service to the Appalachian Trail head beginning May 15th. The service will include one trip in the morning and one in the afternoon to assist Trail hikers visiting Front Royal. For more information, please visit the Town's website frontroyalva.com.
- The Town's Departments of Energy and Environmental Service will continue the enhancement of pedestrian access through Front Royal with the installation of pedestrian signalization at the Commerce Avenue intersections with Water Street and with Laura Virginia Hale Place. Please be aware of lane closures in the work area as this work progresses.
- The Town Real Estate and Personal Property Tax bills have been mailed. They are due June 5.
- The County of Warren will be celebrating Building Safety month at the Gazebo on Friday May 13th at 11am.
- Taste of Town will be Friday May 20th at 7:00 PM on Main Street. The Wine & Craft Festival Saturday May 21st at 10am on Main and Chester Streets.

Mr. Burke, to answer Council's questions, stated that VDOT has noted that the Westminster sidewalk project requires an abbreviated environmental study and that is the short delay.

Interim Finance Director, BJ Wilson, noted his personal background information and then provided the Town's finance report. He stated that Finance has been busy preparing tax bills, and working with the updated financial software. Mr. Wilson explained that the Town's auditors, Mitchell & Company, will be returning in June for the annual Town audit.

Councilman Hrbek asked that the First Street and Massie issue be on an upcoming worksession.

Councilman Hrbek noted that he supported removing the cameras because they were hidden, they were not authorized by Council, and they had never assisted with solving any crime. He

stated that he was willing to discuss the matter. He added that other than Mr. Parker, Councilman Egger had been the most thorough in reviewing the Town's budget and with the substantial increase for the Police Department overtime, her questions and backup had been appropriate.

Councilman Hrbek stated that there was no need for an apology from the Council, as the questions arose because of the large amount of overtime listed in the budget.

Councilman Tewalt asked when the camera matter will be on the agenda for worksession. Mr. Burke stated that it was next Monday.

Councilman Connolly noted that he was saddened by the rhetoric. He stated that it was the job of government to protect our citizens and when he reviews the questions before Council he needs to look at what is necessary to make informed decisions. He added that the Police Department had an excellent chief, who is a man of integrity. Mr. Connolly stated that in his opinion, the increase in overtime is a sign that the Department is understaffed, not a sign of gross negligence.

Councilman Egger thanked those that came and spoke this evening. She voiced that she is not anti-law enforcement, adding that some items are reported in the paper and other things are not. She explained that the job of Council is to spend tax money wisely, and the Police Department is the largest department so she spends a lot of time reviewing their budget. She added that Council had been given documents that were misleading, such as stating that their budget had never been cut. Ms. Egger noted that the data given to Council did not add up. Councilman Egger stated that she requested further information in order to determine if the Department needed the additional funding. She added that she has spoken with the Chief and it was her intention to get to the bottom of how funds are spent.

Councilman Egger noted that as for the cameras; they were installed without an elected body discussing the matter. She stated that the Police Department solves crimes and some feel it is the Town's job keep people safe, though it is not. Ms. Egger noted that tough questions arise during budget time and she will continue to ask tough questions.

Mayor Darr noted that Civil War Re-Enactment was very well done and an event enjoyed by many.

Mayor Darr stated that he was honored to attend the Chamber of Commerce's Annual Meeting and he congratulated the following citizens, businesses and organizations who were honored: including Craig Laird, Entrepreneur of the Year; The Warren County Backpack Program, Non-Profit of the Year; Jim Wells, Educational Contributor of the Year; Southern States, Business of the Year; Charlie Sackett, Citizen of the Year; and The Humane Society; Community Impact Award.

Mayor Darr congratulated each winner, noting that they are well known in the community for their efforts and outreach. He added that he was thankful to attend the United Way's Annual Dinner and the United Way Day of Caring has been rescheduled to Friday May 20th. Mayor Darr encouraged those in the community that are able to help to contact the United way.

Mayor Darr noted that he would speak with Mr. Burke tomorrow regarding First Street.

Mayor Darr stated that there are many comments and debate currently, and he tries to remember at times it is not the questions that are asked but rather how we ask the questions. He added that he did not feel that the Police Department was being dishonest with Council.

Mayor Darr asked if there were any proposals for additions or deletions to the agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. COUNCIL APPROVAL – Bid – Bucket Truck for Energy Services Department
- B. COUNCIL APPROVAL – Master Police Officer (MPO) Program Changes

Councilman Tewalt moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Tharpe that Council adopt the Consent Agenda as presented.

Vote: Yes – Connolly, Egger, Hrbek, Meza, Tewalt and Tharpe
 No – N/A
 Abstain – N/A
 Absent – N/A
 (Mayor Darr did not vote as there was no tie to require his vote)
 (By Roll Call)

COUNCIL APPROVAL – Budget Amendment to Accept Downtown Revitalization Grant and Pay Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission

Summary: On March 23, 2015, Council approved an application for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) offered through the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for the initial phase of the development of a downtown revitalization plan in cooperation with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC), to move towards a façade improvements program that would provide funding assistance to downtown property owners that wish to restore the exterior of their building. The Town has received \$5,000.00 from the Commonwealth of Virginia to begin the initial phase. Council is requested to approve a Budget Amendment in the amount of \$5,000.00 and also approve the payment of \$5,000.00 to the NSVRC who will begin the process.

Councilman Hrbek moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Hrbek that Council approve a Budget Amendment in the amount of \$5,000 for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for Downton Revitalization; and approve the payment of \$5,000.00 to the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission (NSVRC) who will begin the initial phase of the development of a downtown revitalization plan.

Vote: Yes – Connolly, Egger, Hrbek, Meza, Tewalt and Tharpe
 No – N/A
 Abstain – N/A
 Absent – N/A
 (Mayor Darr did not vote as there was no tie to require his vote)
 (By Roll Call)

COUNCIL APPROVAL – Budget Amendment to Accept a Byrne Justice Assistance Grant for the Police Department

Summary: Council is requested to approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$1,847.00 for a Byrne Justice Assistance Grant. The Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services has awarded the Town \$1,847.00 in federal funds with matching funds of \$205.00, with total award being \$2,052.00 to be used by the Police Department to update the patrol division’s aging radar unit in the amount of \$1,895.00. The remaining \$157.00 would be expended at a later date and prior to the end of the allotted grant period.

Councilman Connolly moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Tharpe moved that Council approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$1,847.00 for a Byrne Justice Assistance Grant from the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services contingent upon matching funds of \$205.00, with total award being \$2,052.00 to be used by the Police Department to update the patrol division’s aging radar unit.

Vote: Yes – Connolly, Egger, Hrbek, Meza, Tewalt and Tharpe
No – N/A
Abstain – N/A
Absent – N/A
(Mayor Darr did not vote as there was no tie to require his vote)
(By Roll Call)

There being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

APPROVED:

Jennifer E. Berry
Clerk of Council