



TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES

Tuesday, February 16th, 2021 at 6:30 PM
Town Hall Conference Room

The following minutes are a summary of items on the agenda. This meeting may be viewed in its entirety by accessing the video of the same date online via the Town's website at www.frontroyalva.com.

Closed Meeting – Personnel, Actual Litigation and Consultation with Legal Counsel

Vice Mayor Cockrell moved, seconded by Councilman Gillispie, that Town Council go into Closed Meeting pursuant to Va. Code Sections 2.2- 3711., in the following subsections indicated of that Code Section, to discuss the following matters:

(1) The disposition of publicly held real property, specifically the Afton Inn property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body; and consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. (A.3., A.8.)

(2) Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual litigation, specifically, a lawsuit regarding Sections 6 .D. and 47 of the Town Charter, against the Town and a member of Town Council, and regarding a decision of Town Council denying a rezoning matter, where such consultation or briefing in Open Meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body.(A.7.)

(3) the purpose of assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, discipling, or resignation of specific, public officers, appointees or employees of a public body, specific to Boards and Commissions, pursuant to Section 2.2.3711.A.1. of the Code of Virginia

Vote: Yes – Councilmen Cockrell, Gillispie, Lloyd & McFadden

No – N/A

Abstain – N/A

Absent – Councilmen Meza & Thompson

ROLL CALL

Councilman Meza joined the Closed Meeting at 6:57 P.M., followed by Councilman Thompson at 7:01 P.M.

Vice Mayor Cockrell moved, seconded by Councilman Meza, that Council certify that to the best of each member's knowledge, as recognized by each Council member's affirmative vote, that only such public business matters lawfully exempted from Open Meeting requirements under the Virginia

Freedom of Information Act as were identified in the motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the Closed Meeting by Council, and that the vote of each individual member of Council be taken by roll call and recorded and included in the minutes of the meeting of Town Council.

Vote: Yes – Mayor Holloway, Councilmen Cockrell, Gillispie, Lloyd, McFadden, Meza & Thompson

No – N/A

Abstain – N/A

Absent – N/A

ROLL CALL

Advertisement of 2021 Real Estate & Personal Property Tax Rate – Finance Director, BJ Wilson, explained that the next fiscal year budget was built with no tax rate increase included. He noted that Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes can always be decreased from the advertised rates, but not increased. Councilman Meza wondered how long the Town had gone without an increase and recommended Town Staff include those statistics in the advertisement. Council all agreed to advertise both Real Estate and Personal Property taxes at the current rate.

Utility Bill Presentation – Customer Service Specialist, Tori Pugh, presented a Utility Bill Overview. It focused on the Town's billing procedures, most recent rate increases, explanation of why utility consumption could be higher than normal and what citizens can do when faced with high bills. Council requested Town Staff advertise the Town's Budget Plan.

Rezoning Application for 2 Acres on Jefferson Avenue – Planning and Community Development Director, Tim Wilson, brought forth a request from Rockledge Development to rezone a 2.1-acre parcel from R-1 Residential to R-3 Residential. If accepted the applicant would have the ability to construct duplex style homes on the property. Councilman Gillispie asked how many duplexes would be built. Mr. Wilson explained that the applicant had not yet decided on a specific development plan, but wanted to create affordable housing units to sell, not rent. Since the Planning Commission had already approved the application, Council agreed to move forward with the request.

Proposed Amendment to Liaison Committee Policy – Council all agreed to the proposed policy amendments as written.

Pedestrian Crossing Signal at Warren Memorial Hospital – Energy Services Director, David Jenkins, explained that he had been contacted by Valley Health, requesting the installation of a Pedestrian Crossing Signal at North Shenandoah Avenue and West 10th Street. Valley Health would purchase the device, which would be installed by the Energy Services Department and then become property of the Town of Front Royal. Councilman McFadden suggested the installation of additional signage to notify drivers of the upcoming crossing. Council gave Mr. Jenkins permission to move forward with the installation.

Joint Towing Advisory Board Update – Chief Magalis noted that Captain Ryman had filled a vacant position on the Joint Towing Advisory Board but required an official appointment from Council. Council all agreed to appoint Captain Ryman to the Board.

Proposed Mask Ordinance – Councilman Lloyd provided Council with a potential ordinance that would clarify the Governor's Executive Order regarding masks. He explained that there was a lot of confusion in the community and that the adoption of an ordinance would benefit town citizens and employees.

Councilman Thompson stated she found the ordinance to be redundant and that Council should not interfere with the rights of business owners.

Councilman McFadden asked how Council could prevent the violation of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Councilman Thompson pointed out that most businesses offer alternative services such as curbside pick up and delivery. Councilman McFadden added that the adoption of an ordinance on the local level would be an opportunity to simplify and clarify the Executive Order. Councilman Lloyd agreed, adding that some businesses are clear on what is expected of them while others are not.

Councilman Meza asked Town Attorney Napier if it should be an ordinance or a resolution. Mr. Napier noted that the intent seemed 'more informative than punitive' and therefore would be best represented in the form of a resolution. Councilman Lloyd stated he would take Council's feedback and draft a resolution for Mr. Napier to review.

Discussion Pertaining to a Proposed Medical Freedom Ordinance – Councilman Lloyd noted that medical freedom in relation to the COVID-19 Vaccine was an 'area that the law had yet to articulate' and his hope was to 'get ahead of the trend' and be proactive. Councilman Thompson stated that she contacted the major local employers and none of them were requiring vaccination. Councilman Meza added his belief that local government should intervene as little as possible.

Proposed COVID Seating Restrictions – Councilman Lloyd explained that there had been criticism from members of the community that they were going beyond the requirements of the Executive Order when it comes to seating restrictions during Council Meetings and Work Sessions. He cited a recent Board of Supervisors Meeting that had social distancing inside the Board Room, yet the hallway was packed with people. Councilman Thompson suggested allowing families to sit together but still requiring some sort of spacing. Councilman Meza wondered if the intent was to open meetings completely or provide better guidelines that would allow for more seating capacity. He asked Mr. Napier if Council Meeting were exempt from the Executive Order completely. Mr. Napier stated that they were. He suggested the Town ask the County about removing the tape on the Board Room seats as a courtesy. Town Manager Hicks stated that he would discuss it with Interim Warren County Administrator, Ed Daley.

Open Discussion - Councilman McFadden stated he had been approached by citizens about the use of Solar Power, as well as the idea to implement a "Round Up Program" where utility payments could be rounded up and used as a donation for those in need.

Mayor adjourned the work session at 9:53 P.M.

PRESENT: Mayor Holloway, Vice Mayor Cockrell, Councilmen Gillispie, Lloyd, McFadden, Meza, and Thompson, Town Manager Steven Hicks, Town Attorney Doug Napier, Deputy Clerk of Council Mary Ellen Lynn, Finance Director BJ Wilson, Purchasing Manager Alisa Scott, Information Technology Director Todd Jones, members of the public and press.

Approved by Town Council

Date: March 22, 2021