



TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL WORK SESSION MINUTES

Monday, March 6, 2023

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.

ROLL CALL BY CLERK OF COUNCIL

PRESENT: Mayor Lori A. Cockrell
Councilwoman Melissa DeDomenico-Payne
Councilman Joshua L. Ingram
Councilwoman Amber F. Morris
Councilman H. Bruce Rappaport
Councilman Duane R. "Skip" Rogers
Vice Mayor R. Wayne Sealock

OTHERS PRESENT: Clerk of Council Tina L. Presley
Town Manager Joseph E. Waltz
Town Attorney George M. Sonnett, Jr.
Various member of Staff

Mayor Cockrell welcomed Director of Information Technology Charles Hutchings

PRESENTATION: AVTEX CONSERVANCY TRAIL PLAN BY WARREN COUNTY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – Jorie Martin and Scott Jenkins of the Warren County Economic Development Authority gave a brief overview of the Avtex Conservancy Strategic Plan. She explained that this presentation was first given to the Board of Supervisors as they were the ones who would take over the transfer of the property since it would be maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department. She gave a brief history of the Avtex Fiber's Manufacturing Plant. The presentation included an explanation of the following: covenants & restrictions of the 240-acre site; the 2000 Conservancy Master Plan; the stakeholders of the Master Plan, ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds of \$92,000 to be used for the site noting a deadline of 12/31/23 to use the funds; benefits of businesses locating next to this site (community green space) and gave examples of such use; and proposed timeline of the project.

Mayor Cockrell reminded Council that there was no financial commitment from the Town. There were various questions from Council, and it was confirmed that no motorized vehicles would be allowed on the property unless they were for emergency purposes. Warren County Director of Economic Development Joe Petty confirmed that the trails were the existing gravel road width currently on the site and that the trail along the river was a mulch path. He noted that there would be a security fence installed to deter anyone from entering the site unauthorized. Mr. Jenkins advised that part of the plan was to install information booths that would have a history of the property including the cleanup. Mr. Petty ensured the Council that grants would continue to be researched for use on the property and that FMC oversees the property. Mr. Jenkins advised that the \$92,000 ARPA funds was enough to get started on the site. There was concern

whether the Warren County Parks and Recreation could maintain another park. Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Petty advised that the Board of Supervisors was enthusiastic and supportive noting health and safety were everyone's number one priority.

FLEET MAINTENANCE BUILDING PROJECT PROCUREMENT AWARD, FINANCING, & BUDGET AMENDMENT

– Director of Finance BJ Wilson gave an overview of the Fleet Maintenance Building Project with Lantz Construction being the lowest bid. He expressed to Council that the rates for the financing were lower than expected and that the Town had been budgeting for this project the last few years. He went over the fees and contingency and the process to approve the procurement, budget amendment and financing.

Mayor Cockrell advised that this has been on Council's "radar" for a while and would save the Town money when completed.

Councilman Ingram confirmed that it would take approximately 450 days to build and questioned the change orders. Town Manager Joe Waltz advised that Lantz Construction built the Electric Department and there were not many during that time.

Councilman Rappaport questioned the disparity in bid amounts. Mr. Wilson advised that he had a recommendation from the engineer for Lantz.

Councilwoman Morris voiced excitement about the project and hoped it would help retain employees.

Vice Mayor Sealock confirmed that everything would fit inside the new building and that it would be climate control.

Council agreed to advertise for a public hearing.

FUTURE DIRECTION OF TOURISM – Community Development and Tourism Manager Lizi Lewis gave a brief overview of the current "happenings" at the Visitor Center that included: new staff that began last week and received training; updated logistical items for staff; high back chairs for staff; replaced some literature; updating signage, reviewing placing inventory back on shelves for sale. She expressed hope to re-engage the volunteers [aka as Ambassadors] and the trail hikers with various items and projects. She noted getting back to community basics by opening seven days a week by the end of the month and eventually being open 9:00am – 5:00pm.

Mayor Cockrell opened the discussion to Council and gave each one an opportunity to discuss what they see for tourism.

Councilman Rogers acknowledged his mistake in his vote last Monday night and expressed hope that Council could salvage their relationship with Discover Front Royal. He noted that he had discussed issues with Chairman Kerry Barnhart who intended to resign on Tuesday [next day] and that Discover Front Royal would be dissolving. He urged Council to protect the value of the hard work of the Board and re-engage with the County to re-establish funding.

Councilman Rappaport thanked Ms. Lewis on her presentation. He noted that tourism was bigger than just the Visitor Center and that it required specialization and collaboration between Town and Warren County. He urged Council to find a way to work together. He suggested a Tourism Director professional to be funded between the two entities.

Councilwoman DeDomenico-Payne suggested starting with basics and for Discover Front Royal to continue with their professional skills and make the agreement a better structure and vision.

Councilwoman Morris questioned the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that was mentioned at the February 27th meeting. She admitted that she had issues with the agreement and that there was a lack of vision and no other plan from Council Monday night when agreement was terminated. She referenced the little “t” and the big “T”, and that tourism was a bigger job than what local government can handle. She voiced concern holding future boards accountable and the redundancy in advertising for both entities. She suggested that Council work effectively with someone who had knowledge and skills. She urged Council to move forward and remedy the situation quickly.

Councilman Ingram suggested a better agreement with the County and reminded Council that this was not a “turndown” for Discover Front Royal. He urged Council to leave the meeting tonight with direction for staff to continue.

Vice Mayor Sealock admitted that he made a wrong vote on Monday night due to not having enough information but stressed the Visitor Center should be under control of the Town because it was owned by the Town. He suggested working with Warren County to keep Discover Front Royal.

Mayor Cockrell reiterated that Council did not have enough information at the last meeting and there were levels they did not understand. She confirmed with Council that the direction for staff was to review and work on a new agreement with the County and Discover Front Royal.

ITEMS SLATED FOR PUBLIC HEARING –

Special Use Permit for a Commercial Outdoor Recreation Facility at 1847 N. Royal Avenue – Director of Planning Lauren Kopishke gave a brief overview of the application and showed the proposed site to Council. Council noted that the applicant was passionate about this project and that the area was a Shenandoah Rail Trail head. Councilman Rappaport voiced concern of the traffic at 14th Street and N. Royal Avenue. Council agreed to a public hearing on March 27, 2023.

Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 4 of Town Code to Add an Additional Work Session – There was no discussion on this item and Council agreed to a public hearing on March 27, 2023.

DISCUSSION OF FUTURE USE OF THE TOWN-OWNED CABOOSE – Town Manager Joe Waltz advised Council that he walked through the caboose recently and noted that it needed a lot of work, but it was possible to utilize. There was some discussion on community involvement such as an eagle scout project especially the ADA compliance with a ramp. Council agreed to move forward and directed Mr. Waltz to place on a future work session within 60 days.

LIAISON COMMITTEE POLICY AMENDMENTS – Town Attorney George Sonnett advised Council that revising the policy to include both boards (Council and Board of Supervisors) would change the definition from a committee to a meeting that would include agenda, minutes, quorum, etc. It was agreed to have Clerk of Council send this information to Vicky Cooke, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors to place on the next Liaison Committee Agenda for further discussion.

OPEN DISCUSSION – Councilwoman Morris gave an update on the Transportation Subcommittee that she attended. She noted that Ms Kopishke and the Deputy Administrator Taryn Logan would be working

