

**WISE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2020; 7:00 P.M.
WISE MUNICIPAL BUILDING COUNCIL CHAMBERS
501 WEST MAIN STREET - WISE, VIRGINIA 24293**

Minutes

Members Present:

Jeffery Dotson, Mayor
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor
Billy Bartlett, Jr.* *(by remote electronic communication)*
Laura Taylor-Baugh
Caynor Smith, Jr.

Members Absent:

None

Pledge of Allegiance / Invocation:

Mayor Dotson led the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilwoman Teresa Adkins provided the invocation.

Approval of Request for Electronic Participation in Meeting by Billy Bartlett, Jr.:

Mayor Dotson stated that pursuant to Resolution #29, 2017, Councilman Billy Bartlett, Jr. had previously notified him that he would be unable to attend the Council meeting due to out-of-town work obligations. Mr. Bartlett requested, in writing, approval to participate in the Council meeting by electronic means from his remote location in Richmond, Virginia. There being no additional discussion, Laura Taylor-Baugh moved to approve Councilman Bartlett's request to participate in the meeting electronically from a remote location. Teresa Adkins seconded the motion that carried 5-0.

(Councilman Bartlett participated electronically through Zoom, which is a software for audio and video conferencing.)

Consent Calendar:

Caynor Smith, Jr. made a motion to approve the consent calendar, which included the minutes of the March 24, 2020 regular meeting, the March 2020 Treasurer's Financial Report, Police Report, and Water Plant Report, and the February – March 2020 Fire Department Reports. Laura Taylor-Baugh seconded the motion that passed 5-0.

Public Expression:

There being no one from the public audience wishing to comment, the public expression was closed.

Resolution #7, 2020:

Laura Roberts, Planner, advised that VDOT had advanced the funding for Phases III and IV of the Pedestrian Safety Improvements Project Along Norton Road so the construction bids could be combined to possibly reduce costs. Following the discussion, Laura Taylor-Baugh moved to adopt "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA ENTERING INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS FUNDS FOR THE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT ALONG NORTON ROAD-PHASE III". Teresa Adkins seconded the motion and the vote was recorded by roll call:

Jeffery Dotson, Mayor	"Aye"
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor	"Aye"
Laura Taylor-Baugh	"Aye"
Billy Bartlett, Jr.	"Aye"
Caynor Smith, Jr.	"Aye"

Resolution #8, 2020:

Following a brief discussion, Laura Taylor-Baugh moved to adopt "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA ENTERING INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS FUNDS FOR THE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT ALONG NORTON ROAD-PHASE IV". Teresa Adkins seconded the motion and the vote was recorded by roll call:

Jeffery Dotson, Mayor	"Aye"
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor	"Aye"
Laura Taylor-Baugh	"Aye"
Billy Bartlett, Jr.	"Aye"
Caynor Smith, Jr.	"Aye"

Resolution #9, 2020:

Police Chief Danny French stated that the resolution under discussion was an updated reciprocal agreement for mutual aid with agencies in Wise County, the City of Norton, and UVA's College at Wise Campus Police. Following the brief review, Laura Taylor-Baugh moved to adopt "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION OF A RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT PROVIDING MUTUAL AID THROUGH THE FURNISHINGS OF POLICE AND OTHER EMPLOYEES AND AGENTS TOGETHER WITH ALL NECESSARY EQUIPMENT IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY." Billy Bartlett, Jr. seconded the motion and the vote was recorded by roll call:

Jeffery Dotson, Mayor	"Aye"
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor	"Aye"
Laura Taylor-Baugh	"Aye"
Billy Bartlett, Jr.	"Aye"
Caynor Smith, Jr.	"Aye"

Resolution #10, 2020:

Police Chief French explained that the police department was awarded \$46,000 in September 2019, which had to be expended in the current fiscal year. Following the discussion, Laura Taylor-Baugh moved to adopt "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA AWARDED A CONTRACT TO VA-KY COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE PURCHASE OF TEN IN-CAR COMPUTERS USING FUNDS FROM A DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES GRANT AND TOWN OF WISE GENERAL EXPENSE FUNDS ALLOCATED TO THE WISE POLICE DEPARTMENT." Caynor Smith, Jr. seconded the motion and the vote was recorded by roll call:

Jeffery Dotson, Mayor	"Aye"
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor	"Aye"
Laura Taylor-Baugh	"Aye"
Billy Bartlett, Jr.	"Aye"
Caynor Smith, Jr.	"Aye"

Caynor Smith, Jr. asked if the new computers would replace the computers currently in the vehicles and when the current computers were installed. Chief French confirmed the new computers were replacements, but said he would have to research the date the ones being replaced were purchased and installed.

Resolution #11, 2020:

At the March meeting, Council directed the Treasurer and Town Attorney to draft a resolution to help Town businesses that may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and mandatory closures. There being no additional discussion, Caynor Smith, Jr. moved to adopt “A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA REGARDING ORDINANCE NO. 1996 (UNIFORM PROVISIONS FOR BUSINESS, PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL LICENSES) TO PROVIDE THAT THE TAX DUE DATE OF MAY 1, 2020 SHALL BE EXTENDED TO A DUE DATE OF AUGUST 1, 2020.” Laura Taylor-Baugh seconded the motion and the vote was recorded by roll call:

Jeffery Dotson, Mayor	“Aye”
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor	“Aye”
Laura Taylor-Baugh	“Aye”
Billy Bartlett, Jr.	“Aye”
Caynor Smith, Jr.	“Aye”

Resolution #12, 2020:

At the March meeting, Council directed the Treasurer and Town Attorney to draft a resolution to help Town residents who may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. There being no additional discussion, Laura Taylor-Baugh moved to adopt “A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA SUSPENDING WATER/SEWER DISCONNECTIONS UNTIL AUGUST 1, 2020.” Teresa Adkins seconded the motion and the vote was recorded by roll call:

Jeffery Dotson, Mayor	“Aye”
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor	“Aye”
Laura Taylor-Baugh	“Aye”
Billy Bartlett, Jr.	“Aye”
Caynor Smith, Jr.	“Aye”

Closed Meeting:

Caynor Smith, Jr. moved to convene into a closed meeting for the purpose of and including:

Acquisition or Disposition of Real Property – Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body, as permitted by Virginia Code §2.2-3711(A)(3);

AND

Personnel – Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body as permitted by Virginia Code §2.2-3711(A)(1).

Teresa Adkins seconded the motion that passed 5-0.

Regular Session:

Caynor Smith, Jr. made a motion to reconvene into the regular session. Laura Taylor-Baugh seconded the motion that carried 5-0.

Certification of Closed Meeting – CM Resolution #3, 2020:

Town Clerk/Treasurer Robin Meade, read Closed Meeting Resolution #3, 2020, “Resolving and certifying that to the best of each member’s knowledge (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applied, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Town Council of the Town of Wise,” and the vote was recorded by roll call:

Jeffery Dotson, Mayor	“Aye”
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor	“Aye”
Laura Taylor-Baugh	“Aye”
Billy Bartlett, Jr.	“Aye”
Caynor Smith, Jr.	“Aye”

Proclamation #1, 2020:

“A PROCLAMATION BY THE MAYOR OF THE TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA RECOGNIZING THE WEEK OF MAY 17 THROUGH MAY 23, 2020 AS EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES WEEK” was approved on a motion made by Laura Taylor-Baugh and seconded by Caynor Smith, Jr. The motion carried 5-0.

Proclamation #2, 2020:

“A PROCLAMATION BY THE MAYOR OF THE TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA RECOGNIZING THE WEEK OF MAY 3 THROUGH MAY 9, 2020 AS MUNICIPAL CLERKS WEEK” was approved on a motion made by Laura Taylor-Baugh and seconded by Teresa Adkins. The motion carried 5-0.

Proclamation #3, 2020:

“A PROCLAMATION BY THE MAYOR OF THE TOWN OF WISE, VIRGINIA RECOGNIZING THE WEEK OF MAY 10-16 AS POLICE WEEK” was approved on a motion made by Laura Taylor-Baugh. Teresa Adkins seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Discussion of Town’s Response to COVID-19 Business Support:

Laura Roberts, Planner, provided an update on how local businesses had been affected by the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19. She provided a list of suggestions from other localities of ways of supporting businesses. In addition to the list of suggestions, she informed that Impressions was selling 2020 graduate t-shirts that could be purchased and distributed as a goodwill gesture to the students who would miss their high school graduation. She advised that there were 150 graduating seniors from Central High School. Roberts stated that funding could come from the Cultural Enrichment line item, since many of the events would be canceled and there would be approximately \$5,000 to work with.

Mayor Dotson noted that he had reached out to approximately 75% of the Town’s brick and mortar businesses to encourage them to apply for the small business loans available to those impacted by the pandemic. He added that the Town of Wise would encourage supporting the businesses and residents by any legal means possible such as the action taken earlier in the meeting of extending the Business License due date and utility disconnections.

Following the discussion, Teresa Adkins made a motion authorizing the expenditure of up to \$2,500 from the Cultural Enrichment line item to purchase t-shirts for the Central High School Senior Class and purchase gift cards for a “Business Bingo” and “Restaurant Race”, which were two of the suggestions to support local businesses. Laura Taylor-Baugh seconded the motion. The vote was recorded by roll call:

Jeffery Dotson, Mayor	“Aye”
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor	“Aye”
Laura Taylor-Baugh	“Aye”
Billy Bartlett, Jr.	“Aye”
Caynor Smith, Jr.	“Aye”

Mayor Dotson suggested a letter be sent to each graduate with their t-shirt.

Discussion of Town's Special Events and Summer Programs for the 2020 Season:

Laura Roberts, Planner, briefly reviewed the summer events scheduled for Big Glades, the Farmer's Market, and opening of the Wise Municipal Pool. Councilman Smith suggested that all June events be cancelled since Governor Northam's stay-at-home order was not currently scheduled to expire until June 10th and he felt that events after this date would not be well attended. Town Attorney Leonard Rogers suggested that the first two events in June be cancelled and the remaining events be discussed further at the May Council meeting. Council members concurred with Rogers recommendation and added that the Wise Farmer's Market, Municipal Pool, and Chillin' & Grillin' events would also be discussed in May.

Discussion of Guard Rail Request at Jessee Home on Masonic Street:

Town Manager Beverly Owens briefly reported on the status of the guard rail request at the Jessee home on Masonic Street that was discussed during Council's March meeting. She summarized her conversation with the Bristol District Administrator, Donny Necessary, who advised against the installation of guard rail at the location on Masonic Street. She stated that Necessary was confident the Town could not meet the minimum standards required for a legally installed guard rail; however, did offer alternatives to guard rail. Mayor Dotson stated that he had spoken to the Jessee's and had made them aware of the Town's limitations in regard to the guard rail installation. Mayor Dotson suggested that no action be taken. Council concurred with the suggestion.

Discussion of Virtual Meetings:

Robin Meade, Town Clerk/Treasurer, provided Council with a detailed written report of various options to accommodate the remote participation in meetings by Council members as she was instructed after the January meeting. Meade stated that following the governor's declaration of a state of emergency due to the coronavirus, there was also discussion of the possibility of Council being required to hold virtual meetings without a physical quorum of Council members present due to social distancing requirements. She added that her research had shown that options for virtual meetings were endless and selecting the appropriate platform depended largely on the amount of money and time Council wished to invest. Mayor Dotson thanked Meade for her time in researching and compiling the information.

Discussion of FY 2020-2021 Budget:

Councilman Smith requested that a budget workshop be held at a later date. Following a brief discussion, it was decided the budget would be reviewed during the continued meeting on May 6th.

Appointee Reports (Informational Purposes Only) – Acknowledgement of Receipt:

Caynor Smith, Jr. made a motion acknowledging receipt of the Cumberland Airport Commission report from the regular meeting held April 16, 2020. Teresa Adkins seconded the motion that carried 5-0.

Council Comment:

Laura Taylor-Baugh voiced her sadness over the possibility of canceling summer events as a result of COVID-19.

Teresa Adkins thanked people in the workforce and emergency fields and encouraged everyone to practice safety measures.

Mayor Dotson hoped the Town's businesses could overcome the struggles resulting from the pandemic.

Staff/Manager Comment:

Leonard Rogers thanked everyone who reached out to his family during the loss of his mother.

Beverly Owens mentioned that due to the pending retirement of one employee and various internal

personnel transfers, there were job openings in the Water Distribution and Street Departments. She asked if Council intended to freeze all hiring decisions until the budget could be evaluated. Councilwoman Teresa Adkins stated it was her opinion that regular open positions needed to be filled. Councilwoman Laura Taylor-Baugh questioned why the Town had the positions if they did not need to be filled. Mayor Dotson stated that it was he who had mentioned his budget concerns with filling vacated positions to the Town Manager. Councilman Caynor Smith, Jr. suggested the decision of whether to fill job openings be left to the discretion of the Town Manager.

Manager Owens reminded that prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Town had issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for engineering services for the design and construction oversight of the new Town of Wise Public Works Shop. She wanted to know if it was the consensus of Council that the Town would not be moving forward anytime in the near future, so that notification letters could be mailed to the respondents. Laura Taylor-Baugh opined that the project should be postponed, which was the consensus of most members of Council. Teresa Adkins stated that she held a different, more positive opinion of the project. Mayor Dotson stated that a new public works facility was on his list of priorities he wanted to see completed. He noted that although the first draft of the budget did not include funding for the project, the budget could always be amended if situations changed. Dotson added that funding could also be included in fiscal year 2021-2022.

Owens stated that in anticipation of the reopening of the Wise Municipal Building once the governor's orders were lifted, the safety of the town's front-line staff had been discussed. She emphasized that although the orders might be lifted the threat of exposure to the coronavirus would still exist. Owens explained that quotes were being obtained for the installation of tempered glass (not bullet proof or bullet resistant) as a security partition in the front office of the building. She requested authorization to transfer the \$15,000 appropriated in the current year's budget for interior door replacement and repairs to the front desk area. Mayor Dotson suggested that Thompson & Litton be hired to develop a plan for the security glass. He added that he did not feel the glass needed to go from desk to ceiling. Following a brief discussion, Laura Taylor-Baugh made a motion authorizing the Town Manager to transfer \$15,000 in the current year budget to make improvements to the front service desk area. Teresa Adkins seconded the motion. The vote was recorded by roll call:

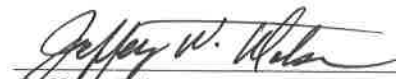
Jeffery Dotson, Mayor	"Aye"
Teresa Adkins, Vice-Mayor	"Aye"
Laura Taylor-Baugh	"Aye"
Billy Bartlett, Jr.	"Aye"
Caynor Smith, Jr.	"Aye"

Beverly Owens informed that restrooms at Arrowhead and Dotson Parks were not open even though people were using the parks. She added there was an ongoing issue with people defecating in front of the restroom doors. Owens, on behalf of Jerry Kilgore, asked if Council wanted the park restrooms opened and cleaned daily. Councilman Smith suggested that the matter be discussed in May.

Continuance:

There being no additional business to come before the governing body, the meeting was continued until May 6, 2020 at 7 p.m. on a motion made by Laura Taylor-Baugh and a second by Caynor Smith, Jr. The motion carried 5-0.


Robin R. Meade, Clerk of Council


Jeffery W. Dotson, Mayor