

**Town of Grottoes  
Workshop Meeting**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The Town of Grottoes Town Council held a workshop meeting on Monday, March 11, 2019, at 5:30 p.m., with David Raynes presiding.

**ATTENDANCE:** Council Members present were: David Raynes, Jo Plaster, Mark Keeler, and Joshua Bailey. C.W. Stephenson and Emily Holloway arrived a little late.

**Other Town Officials present were:** Town Manager Nathan Garrison, Town Clerk Tara Morris, Town Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director A.J. Hummel, Tourism and Parks Director Ashley Collier, and Police Chief John Painter.

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that Zachary is a student from Spotswood High School and he would like to speak to Council. Nathan stated that he got the meeting times messed up and asked if they would be willing to hear his request now. Councilman David Raynes asked if he could give us about five to ten minutes and then they will hear his request.

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the first item on the agenda is the FY 2020 budget. He stated there are several changes administratively and the committees have been meeting to request items needed for the Town. He stated anytime you have a question to stop him and ask.

Admin

Town Manager Nathan Garrison started with admin revenue stating there is no proposed increase in tax rates for Real Estate, Personal Property, Meals Tax or Cigarette Tax. He stated that the Real Estate tax revenue is up because of the reassessment from Rockingham County but the budget has been adjusted to a more accurate figure. He stated that personal property is up looking back it was understated so he has included a more accurate number. He stated that the bank Stock tax was low but that is mainly due to the opening of two new banks. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the communication tax has been decreased \$6,000.00 based off of the budget verses actual. He stated that we are seeing an increase in development in Town and don't believe that will diminish this coming year. He asked if anyone had any questions on the revenue. Town Manager Nathan Garrison went over admin expenses pointing out that this budget does not reflect an employee raise. He stated salaries were adjusted down some because of

employee turnover with losing a Town Manager and two maintenance men and some police officers. He stated that also affects the social security and all those line items will go down as well. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that there is no change in the health care cost for this year. He stated that it was overstated last year, as well as a change to the allocations in totals each department is responsible for. This change was done so each department carries its own weight in health insurance. He stated you may see that Life Insurance was reallocated just like the health insurance. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the electric has been understated in the previous budget and looking at budget verses actual he increased the electrical budget to \$24,000.00. He stated that he left the M & R Building the same so that we can do some necessary improvements of the Town Hall. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated with these changes we are still looking at putting over \$32,000 in capital for future needs. He asked if anyone had any questions on admin expenses.

#### Police

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the salaries have increased due to the \$3,000.00 raise the Council gave the police in October 2018. He stated that we have not seen the budget number from the state for the 599 fund. He stated that gas and diesel allocations for police have come down. He stated they were paying 80% of the entire gas and now will be paying 50% of the bill. He stated that we need to purchase a new computer for Wes Baugher's office because he is having a lot of problems with his computer. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the big expense for the police is the computer reporting equipment for the police cruisers and office. He stated that this was voted upon last year and payment was deferred until July 2019 with a cost of \$55,000.00. He stated that going with the same number as last year for 599 funds we should still but a little over \$20,000.00 in capital. He asked if there were any questions on police.

#### Highway

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that salaries decreased due to new employees making less than prior employees and when we didn't rehire for Woody's position. He stated gas and diesel increased due to proportioning the expenses between departments. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that capital expenses for the maintenance department include a new utility truck with plow. He stated that the estimated cost is \$40,000.00. Also included is to the enclosing of a 4<sup>th</sup> Garage Bay in the maintenance shop with an estimated cost of \$10,000.00 and to install a vehicle lift inside bay 1 or 2 so our staff can do general maintenance on vehicles. He stated that this is estimated to

cost \$5,000.00. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the highway funds are funded by the state. He stated we use this money for emergencies or projects that arise in reference to street maintenance and at the end of the year we use the remaining amount that is left in the budget for contracted services (paving). The amount paid will balance out the budget. He asked if there were any questions on highway.

#### Water

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated on the water revenue we will have the 1.9% increase on the 1,000 gallon above the base rate. He stated that we are in the middle of getting the online payment system set up. He stated that they have everything that they need. He stated this budget will also include the expenses for setting this system up. Nathan stated that we have decided to charge the \$1.00 convenience fee to help offset the \$3,000.00 yearly cost of providing online payments. Nathan stated that the \$3,000.00 fee is split between water and sewer. Town Manager Nathan Garrison went over water expenses stating that salaries decreased some. Electric increased due to budget verses actual. He stated that the gas and diesel decreased by \$350.00 due to splitting this more accurately between the services. Nathan stated he increased the maintenance and repair budget due to the amount of leaks we have had and the age of some of our lines. He stated that he added a new line item for fire hydrants. He stated that we would like to replace two fire hydrants per year. He stated that the one we replaced last year had been there since the 1940s. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that we are proposing replacing a two inch line with an eight inch line as well as extending the line. He stated this project would start at Aspen and head south, go around the corner and end at the entrance of Caverns Apartments. He stated that we also plan to install two fire hydrants along the way and this would provide much needed fire protection in that area. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated we have a quote on materials for \$37,000.00 and a cost of labor for \$14,000.00 for a total project cost of \$51,000.00. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that this line item also includes our water tank maintenance contract. He stated after all that we are still looking to put almost \$23,000.00 in capital reserves for future needs. He asked if there were any questions on water.

#### Sewer

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated on the sewer revenue we will have the 1.9% increase on the 1,000 gallon above the base rate. Nathan stated that there will be a convenience fee to help offset the \$3,000.00 yearly cost of providing online payments. He stated this is

split 50/50 with water. Town Manager Nathan Garrison went over water expenses stating that salaries decreased some. Electric increased due to budget verses actual. He stated this was a big increase and if it's too much we will adjust it back next year. He stated this was mainly due to all the rain we have received which increased the work at the waste water treatment plant. He stated that the gas and diesel increased by \$650.00 due to splitting this more accurately between the services. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that under the maintenance and repair equipment, the UV lamps have to be replaced every two years and that should cost \$900.00. He stated that we try to keep a spare aerator pump on hand but we had to use our spare this past year, so to purchase another spare will cost \$1,100.00. Town Manager Nathan Garrison said the committee felt that we need to purchase an auto dialer. He stated that if the plant loses power it will let us know by calling the operator. He stated that the cost for the auto dialer is \$450.00. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that we would like to purchase a sewer camera so we can better determine issues in our lines and use it for preventative maintenance. He stated this would be a capital expense and would cost around \$11,000.00. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated the estimated going into capital would be a little over \$24,000.00. He asked if there were any questions on sewer.

#### Parks

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the total revenue in parks is \$537,000.00. He stated that this is understated because we cannot determine the market for next year. He stated any money that comes in over that will go into the park savings. He stated that you will also see that the pool revenue is at zero since the pool will not be open this year. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that under the park expenses you will see the salaries went down slightly. He said gas and diesel increased by \$650.00 with splitting them between the funds. Supplies and materials increased to include two new computers and to include a new point of sale system for the gift shop. He stated that the gift shop resale increased to purchase additional inventory and to begin stocking Fountain Cave Adventure Tours merchandise. Nathan stated that the advertising budget increased by two percent to keep up inflation of current advertising. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the service contract line item increased to be proportionally weighted with other departments on our Riddleberger service contract for our heating and air units. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated with using the projected lower income figure we are still looking to put over \$32,000.00 in savings for future needs. He stated that this

number will most likely be extremely higher. He asked if there were any questions on parks.

#### Refuse

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that we haven't changed anything on refuse. He stated everything looks to be on track but stated that we will be watching it throughout the spring. Nathan asked if anyone had any questions.

Mayor Holloway asked if we get cigarette tax on the vape stuff or if it's just on cigarettes. Chief Painter stated just on cigarettes but he will check into seeing if we can tax the vape cartridges.

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that Zachary Crump is a Spotswood High School student who is here now, he got the times messed up, and Nathan asked Council if he could go ahead and present his request. Zachary Crump stated that he is here on behalf of Spotswood High Schools Youth and Government Club. He stated that Ms. Holloway should have received a letter from Mr. Sheahan requesting \$375.00 to assist with their participation in this year's Model General Assembly in Richmond from March 21st to March 23rd. He stated that they are presenting a bill to help establish a needy family scholarship for students who are intending to go to a community college to seek higher education but lack financial resources to do so. He asked if anyone had any questions. Mayor Holloway stated that in the past we have supported this educational trip and typically we ask if someone would come back and present to us how their experience went. Councilman Mark Keeler made a motion to support the Model General Assembly. Councilwoman Jo Plaster seconded the motion. Council members David Raynes, Joshua Bailey, Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, and C.W. Stephenson voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Mayor Holloway stated that the personnel committee has continued to meet looking at the personnel handbook for the Town and stated that a draft should be out in the next two weeks. She asked that everyone come prepared to the April workshop to discuss the handbook. She said if we see that we need more time for discussion we may have to hold a workshop meeting on a separate night.

Councilman C.W. Stephenson stated that the parks committee is looking into an erosion problem at the entrance of the cave. He stated that a couple of trees will have to come out and they are seeking an engineer to give us some guidance on what we need to do and when we hear from them we will report back.

Councilman Joshua Bailey stated that Nathan covered everything that the water and sewer committee has going on with discussing the budget with the exception of the capital improvement plan. He stated that Nathan is looking at a form to get them on the plan.

Councilman Mark Keeler stated that the Planning Commission met to discuss zoning changes. He stated that they will most likely have a recommendation to Council at the April meeting.

Councilwoman Jo Plaster stated that nothing has changed since the last streets and street lights committee meeting. She stated that we have not received the allocations for the state money for this year's budget but doesn't anticipate it changing much if at all. Mayor Holloway stated that she has noticed and has been getting phone calls about how rough and wavy Dogwood Avenue is as you approach 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that it is an issue. He said that VDOT was here in February and he showed them this and asked about the best way to fix it. He said they told him it would have to be completely cut out and a new base would have to be installed. Nathan stated that we are planning to fix this but we have not gotten any quotes to fix it yet.

With no further business to discuss Councilman David Raynes adjourned the meeting.

Mayor Holloway called the March 11, 2019 meeting of the Grottoes Town Council to order and welcomed citizens. Town Clerk Tara Morris called the roll. Mark Keeler, Joshua Bailey, Jo Plaster, Emily Holloway, David Raynes, and C.W. Stephenson were present. Also present were Town Clerk Tara Morris, Attorney Burns Earle, Town Manager Nathan Garrison, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, Tourism and Parks Director Ashley Collier, and Police Chief John Painter.

Councilman David Raynes made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held on February 11, 2019. Councilwoman Jo Plaster seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Joshua Bailey, Jo Plaster, David Raynes, and C.W. Stephenson voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

#### **FINANCE**

Councilman David Raynes made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report and to pay the bills as of March 11, 2019 totaling \$57,096.60 and the remaining bills in February 2019 totaling \$53,443.07 for a total of \$110,539.67. Councilman Mark Keeler seconded the motion. Mayor Holloway asked if anyone had any questions on the Treasurer's report or bills to be paid. Council members Mark Keeler, Joshua Bailey, Jo Plaster, David Raynes, and C.W. Stephenson voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Councilman David Raynes stated that the next item is the request to sell the utility van. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that back in the summer the utility van had a major engine failure and it was discovered that the costs to repair the van would be more than the van is worth so we are requesting to sell it to get it out of the way. He stated that he will put the van on the govdeals.com site with a low reserve to see what we can get for it. Councilman David Raynes made a motion to sell the utility van. Councilwoman Jo Plaster seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Joshua Bailey, Jo Plaster, David Raynes, and C.W. Stephenson voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Councilman David Raynes stated that he would like to present the Grottoes Fire Department and Grottoes Rescue Squad with checks. He stated that this is an annual donation along

with the reimbursement of their water bill. Councilman David Raynes presented Jodi Johnson and Donald Simmons with the checks and thanked them for their service to our Town. Mayor Holloway thanked the Grottoes Rescue Squad and Fire Department for all that they do for the community.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS**

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that Roger Randall has requested to have a small bluegrass festival at Grand Caverns for a Friday and Saturday in September. He stated that Roger is the one that does the bluegrass on Friday nights in July at Mountain View Park. He stated that these have been a great success. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the Park staff has experience with working these types of events and doesn't feel that this will be a problem. He stated that Roger doesn't want to charge for the first year and would like to pass the hat to cover his expenses for the bands. He stated that he wanted to present this to Council to see if they were comfortable with this event and to decide if they wanted to charge Roger for this event or not. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that Roger has really put on a good event with the Friday night bluegrass and feels that we could give him a shot this year to see how it does. Mayor Holloway asked about how the liability would work since they are not paying like the previous festival. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that he would check with our insurance to see if this would fall under our insurance. He stated that the previous festival did charge entry fee and provided us with a certificate of liability insurance. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that we would provide him with guidelines to follow just as we did the last bluegrass festival. Mayor Holloway agreed that he has done a terrific job with the Friday Night Bluegrass but she is a little concerned with allowing him free use of the park and where do we draw the line. Councilman Mark Keeler stated pending the insurance outcome he made a motion to support Roger Randall's request for bluegrass at Grand Caverns for no charge for the first year. Councilman Joshua Bailey seconded the motion. Councilman Mark Keeler stated that he appreciated Mayor Holloway's comment because he said we do have to watch and not set precedence but he feels that with all Roger has done for the community it would only be right to allow him to try the first year knowing that he will be charged

next year. Council members Mark Keeler, Joshua Bailey, Jo Plaster, David Raynes, and C.W. Stephenson voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

#### **PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION**

Mayor Holloway stated that she will need a motion to accept the resignation from Rebecca Holloway from the Planning Commission. She stated that she is resigning due to time restraints with her job and stated that she has enjoyed her time serving on the Planning Commission. Councilman Mark Keeler moved to accept the resignation from Rebecca Holloway from the Planning Commission. Councilman C.W. Stephenson seconded the motion. Councilman Mark Keeler stated that he would like to publicly state that Rebecca has been a tremendous asset to the Planning Commission and it was not without some pain having to accept her resignation and hopes that she gets involved with local government when she can. He also stated that he couldn't be more proud of her knowing that one of our own is the General Manager of the Rockingham County Fair. Council members Mark Keeler, Joshua Bailey, Jo Plaster, David Raynes, and C.W. Stephenson voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

#### **PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND CLAIMS**

Deana Nutty addressed the Council with concerns about the sewer rate and how it is charged. She asked if it is based on the water usage or if it was a flat rate. Mayor Holloway stated that it is based on usage. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that you are charged a water rate and a sewer rate based on the amount of water used in the billing cycle. Ms. Nutty said the next part of her question is why she has to pay the same amount for trash being a single person verses a family. She asked have we ever thought about having a rate for a single person. Mayor Holloway stated that we contracted with Waste Management a price per household in Town and not according to how many people are in the house. Ms. Nutty asked if we can start identifying the new police officers. She stated that she thinks it would be good to be able to know who they are. Mayor Holloway stated that we do put all new hires in the newsletter by name, but we do not put a picture of them in the newsletter. She asked if there was a reason why we didn't. Mayor Holloway stated that nobody has ever asked. She stated there used to be a group picture on the

website and they could look into putting pictures of the officers on the website. Ms. Nutty said she has a question about the trail at Mountain View Park. She asked if we are allowed to ride bicycles on the trail. She stated that some people have told her that you can and some have told her you cannot. Chief Painter explained that bicycles are allowed on the trail and that nothing motorized is allowed. Ms. Nutty stated that she has a concern with a neighbor about her dogs always being in the street or in her yard and doing their business in her yard. She asked if there was any way that we can control this. Chief Painter answered by suggesting that she call them. Ms. Nutty said every neighbor around has called and the dogs are still running around and don't we have an ordinance against dogs running at large. He stated that we do and not everyone obeys that law but they have to be caught breaking the law. He said an officer can't take the neighbors word that the dog was running loose. She said not only are the dogs running loose but there are also three little kids playing in the road and she doesn't want to see anyone get hurt. Ms. Nutty asked if they could check on that too.

With no further business to discuss Mayor Holloway adjourned the meeting.