



MINERAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

June 10, 2024 at 6:30 PM

312 Mineral Avenue Mineral Virginia 23117

Phone: 540-894-5100 | townclerk@townofmineral.net

Members Present

Vice Mayor Ronald Chapman

Olivia McCarthy

Bernice Kube

Dave Hempstead

Michelle Covert

Others Present

Town Manager, Nicole Washington

Town Attorney, Catherine Lea

Absent

Michelle Covert

Mayor Edwin Jarvis

Rebecca McGehee

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPT/ AMEND AGENDA

Section L amended to §2.2-3711(A)(1) from §2.2-3711(A)(8).

Motion from McCarthy second by Hempstead.

Olivia McCarthy - yes

Bernice Kube - yes
Dave Hempstead - yes
Michelle Covert - yes

Motion Passed 4-0-0

PUBLIC HEARING

Comprehensive Plan Update - Howard Seay accidentally signed up to comment on the Comprehensive Plan but actually wanted to make a public comment on water rates. He has been moved to that time slot.

Chairman Kube, Planning Commission, stated that the Planning Commission has worked with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission which provided resources and background information that addresses the Town's needs. The Comprehensive Plan must be done every 5 years. He hopes the plan improves upon the Town and makes it attractive for new businesses.

Public Comments closed.

Isabella O'Brien, from the Thomas Jefferson Planning Commission, presented the plan. The last plan was completed in April of 2018. The plan was based on 8 focus areas, 18 objectives, and 84 action items. This powerpoint presentation is available online for review.

Public Hearing for Comprehensive plan closed.

Olivia McCarthy - yes
Bernice Kube - yes
Dave Hempstead - yes
Michelle Covert - yes

Motion Passed 4-0-0

Water and Sewer Rate Increase

The Town Manager explained how she and the Town Treasurer determined that water rates need to be increased due to the County of Louisa increasing their rates. The Town of Mineral buys water from the County. The Town Manager proposed an increase of 31% of water rates to cover the cost of the increase as well as costs of repairing the infrastructure.

Howard Seay, 709 Piedmont Road, asked why the water rates were increasing.

The Town Maintenance Operator explained the condition of the water system. He explained how a prior contractor did not have the Town's best interest in mind when conducting a water main project and how that has contributed to the current infrastructure problems. He added that the Town has never increased water rates, when they should have been to cover the maintenance costs. He compared the water system to a vehicle, explaining that anything that is well maintained will have a longer use. He further stated that the town used to have several wells that have since dried out and detailed the process of getting a new commercial well dug. He offered to answer any questions that citizens may have.

Paul Snyder, Mineral Laundry Mat, described his recent repairs and revenue increases in the past 3 months and how he is now able to get business from the lake because his machines can handle bedding. His largest bill as a laundromat owner is the water bill, using over 90,000 gallons of water a month. Mr. Snyder mentioned that the Town has a 50% water loss and wants to know what the Town is doing to combat this problem. He would like to know the methodology behind the 31% increase. The last comment Mr. Snyder had is if the leakage rate were to decrease if the water rates would also decrease.

Sandra Puckett, 311 Virginia Avenue, wanted to know if the increase was completely to cover the price of the water or if there were any plans to repair the infrastructure. She exemplified how her son wanted to build a house on her property but there was not a sewage connection. She questioned what could be done to make the area more attractive for businesses.

Council member Humpstead mentioned all the work that Council member Covert has done investigating the problem and that the Town Maintenance Operator has a lot of valuable knowledge and could provide input on the problems. He further stated that the Town has had several studies of the systems but there has not been a follow through with the repairs. He wants the Town to use the information it has and to start moving forward. He mentioned the wells and how digging a new well is not guaranteed to find water. Council member Covert explains that first the Town needs to stop the loss then Virginia Rural Water will help with the Town's wells. Council member Humpstead would like to have a well to help alleviate the costs. Mr. Paul Snyder was highlighted as a good resource and could be involved in forming a solution.

Ray Payne, 602 East First Street, stated that he previously served on Council and was amazed that they are still experiencing the same problems. He questioned if the Town got approval regarding the sewage system for the 14 units that are being constructed. He further asked if the driveways would be sufficient for fire trucks and how the previous Town Manager had the ability to sell a third party the land that is currently being developed. He has several unanswered questions regarding the construction, including how is the Town going to provide water and

sewage to the development when some citizens on that side of town do not have enough water pressure to take a shower?

JoAnna VonArb, 9549 Fredericks Hall Road, disagrees with the development of 14 houses. She states that Council previously mentioned wanting to maintain Mineral's historic value but let this construction happen. She feels as if there is no transparency from the Council.

Mr. Payne challenged the Town Manager to provide minutes and the video recordings of prior meetings.

The Town Maintenance Operator explained that there are probably only three viable wells that may be able to produce water. He explained all the testing that is involved and replacements needed when a well is opened. He has discussed with the Town Manager if it is worth the investment in re-opening these wells because of all the additional costs associated with them.

Nancy Thomas, 44 Louisa Avenue, states that she does not have sewage based on how the system was built and that she is in a wetland. When planning, Tolarsville Road should be included so more citizens have access to sewage.

The Town Maintenance Operator explained that the Town would have to put in another pump station to service the road Ms. Thomas speaks of. He mentioned that it may be cheaper to pump the line through the alley way.

Public Hearing for Water and Sewage rates closed.

Fiscal Year 25 Budget

The Town Manager gave a presentation on the Fiscal Year 25 Budget including capital repairs and water rates. She explained the impact of the price of water and how that correlates to the percentage increase. The proposed budget is included in the agenda packet.

Operating expenses include salaries, retirement and health plan. The prior Town Manager suggested a 50% coverage for Family Health Benefit but the Town has now moved to 25%.

The Town has adopted a capital improvement budget to help with improvements to the water system. Every new water hook up, the Town previously had to pay Louisa County Water Authority \$1,000. The price has increased to \$1,800.

The Town is looking into grants for maintenance.

The Town needs to start saving money for any capital improvements that may be needed in the future, currently the most critical need is water and sewer repairs. It is proposed that \$50,000 be allocated from the general fund for this capital improvement project.

Public Hearing for Fiscal Year 25 budget closed.

Council member Humpstead asked if the Town is losing 50% of its water due to leaks. Council member Covert explained that 10% is excellent, but it is estimated to be a 50% loss. The Town Manager explained how the capital improvement can be used to address and fix this issue instead of constantly making small repairs. She continued to explain how the Town is keeping track of where repairs are being made.

The Town Maintenance Operator explained a drop in water pressure then a sudden increase in pressure will cause the part holding the pipes together to fall and cause the water to blow.

Council member Covert expressed gratitude to the Town Manager for finding funds for capital improvements, however, she does not believe that it is enough.

Motion to continue the budget for approval/ adoption from Kube and seconded by McCarthy until June 18, 2024.

Olivia McCarthy - yes

Bernice Kube - yes

Dave Hempstead - yes

Michelle Covert - yes

Motion Passed 4-0-0

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ray Payne, 602 East First Street, believes that Council needs to have an understanding of what is happening in town. He wants members of Council to be more accessible and accountable. He does not think that citizens were considered when the development of the 14 houses was approved. He also wants Council to get microphones.

Shirley Seay, 709 Piedmont Road, agrees with Mr. Payne. She does believe that the Town is no longer beautiful because people have littered their yards and the new development may bring additional problems.

Howard Seay, 709 Piedmont Road, no longer wanted to comment.

Robbie Britt, 1659 Kennon Road, is not happy about the water set up but is more concerned about the new development construction. She wants the Town to beautify. There is a house that she would like to have a house torn down. She is embarrassed about some of the comments that she has been receiving about the housing project. She hopes that Council is more aware of things that are happening in the Town. She wants Mineral to remain a quaint, small time. She believes the development is an eye sore.

Ed Kube, 90 Mineral Avenue, who is not speaking on behalf of the Planning Commission, is concerned about the development. He wants to know how this got approved because there is not enough space for the 14 houses. He mentions ordinances that have not been met. He states that the code required new development would have to come to the Planning Commission and they were not consulted.

JoAnna VonArb, 9549 Fredericks Hall Road, wants to know why public comments are not addressed and would like for comments to either be addressed in the minutes or in the next meeting. The Town Manager is working on getting videos uploaded to the website, but faces problems with the software. There have also been some issues with the software regarding certain videos and their existence. She also explained that there is a backlog of minutes that need to be approved by Council before even being posted.

Tony Williams, one of the reasons he moved to Mineral was due to the historic value. He believes something illegal happened in the approval of the development. He wants to know about the water hook up fees and who is paying for it. He also shares the same concerns about the roads as Ed Kube.

Sandra Puckett, 311 Virginia Avenue, echoes the same concerns as the other public speakers regarding the new construction. She asks that the Town files an injunction and if there were criminal actions pertaining to the development, that they should be prosecuted.

Howard Seay, 709 Piedmont Road, asked about additional development and wants a no trespass issued on the 1 house development until the Town decides how to move forward.

Mr. Whitlock wants to know if the Historical Foundation is investigating the new construction. The Town Manager has an email from the Historical Foundation and since it is not on the Federal level, there is nothing they can do about the development.

Council member Covert suggests that they share the documents they do have regarding the development with the citizens.

A member of the audience is concerned about the development of townhouses. They acknowledge that the previous main line construction used a 4 inch water pipe instead of 6. They have concerns about the run-off as well as parking spaces. They would like answers from the Council and more transparency.

Public comments have been closed.

Council took a 5 minute break.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 21, 204 minutes approved. Motion by Kube and second my Hemptstead.

Olivia McCarthy - yes

Bernice Kube - yes

Dave Hempstead - yes

Michelle Covert - yes

Motion Passed 4-0-0

ACCOUNTS PAID

April 2023 bills approved. Motioned by Covert and second by Kube.

Olivia McCarthy - yes

Bernice Kube - yes

Dave Hempstead - yes

Michelle Covert - yes

Motion Passed 4-0-0

REPORTS AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Discussion of a part time employee benefits as well as paid time off. Council clarifies benefits and what the requirements should be. Council considered including health, retirement, and paid time off benefits to part time employees.

Attorney Report - The Town attorney will be providing FOIA/ COIA training on Wednesday at 6:30.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Little League - There is a need for them to fix the restrooms. It is believed that at least one of the restrooms needs to be fixed as well as removing the portable bathrooms.

CLOSED SESSION

Council went into closed session in accordance with §2.2-3711(A)(8) to deliberate zoning matters. Motioned by McCarthy and second by Covert.

BACK IN SESSION

All members of Council voted to certify the closed session and to go back into session.

Mayor Jarvis was not present due to a pre-planned arrangement.

ADJOURNED