



## **MINERAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**May 13, 2024 at 6:30 PM**

**312 Mineral Avenue Mineral Virginia 23117**

**Phone: 540-894-5100 | [townclerk@townofmineral.net](mailto:townclerk@townofmineral.net)**

---

### **Members Present**

Mayor Edwin Jarvis

Vice Mayor Ronald Chapman

Olivia McCarthy

Rebecca McGehee

Bernice Kube

Michelle Covert

Dave Hempstead

### **Others Present**

Town Manager, Nicole Washington

Town Treasurer, Kelly Singletary

Town Attorney, Catherine Lea

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

All in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Open Public Comment Period**

**JoAnna VonArb**, spoke regarding selection of a new council member. She feels as if Council had already made their decision, undermining the Democratic process. She states that a previous elected candidate, who was unable to serve due to health reasons but is now available, was disregarded by Council. She continues by stating that there is a lack of transparency between

citizens and the Council, causing distrust. She urges the Council to promptly enhance transparency.

**Blair Nipper**, has questions regarding the budget and the lack of revenue to cover the expenses of the health benefit. She also spoke on the need for a light ordinance. She indicates that there is a sign ordinance, but nothing regarding the lights that shine on the parking lots. She continues by stating that other counties have a checklist for zoning permits and the Town should impose a standard operating procedure. Her last concern is the Perpetual Care Fund. She states that using the funds for anything other than the cemetery is illegal.

**Lauren Ball, 940 Mineral Avenue**, spoke regarding the residential development that is underway on Mineral Avenue. Her family is excited for the new neighbors, however, she urges Council to hold the developer of the new construction responsible for trespassing as it relates to both her property and the Town's property. She states that she was disappointed in the construction crews behavior towards Town Officials.

**Rebecca McGehee**, addressed comments Vice Mayor Chapman gave regarding The Breeze article as it pertains to Miller's Market. She states that the previous Council did not vote against gas pumps and that Vice Mayor Chapman is not abreast of the lighting situation. She continues, saying that Vice Mayor Chapman has made several accusations including; previous votes against gas pumps, financial discrepancies, infrastructure neglect, and tax evasion as well as illegal hiring practices by a business owner. She challenges the Vice Mayor to provide proof of these claims.

**Olivia McCarthy, 2011 West Third Street**, asked the Council to send a Cease and Desist letter to two people who are not signed up as vendors at the farmer's market, as they do not have a business license from the Town. She states they have set up a table at the dentist's office.

Mayor Jarvis voiced concerns that the private property owner may have allowed these vendors to set up a table there.

**Tori Newton**, states that there are not enough portable bathrooms during the games at the ball field. She has observed people going across the street to the bushes and trees in the church parking lot to use the restroom. She is requesting additional portable bathrooms be made available.

Council member Covert would also like an update on the bathrooms as she thought was previously resolved.

**Debbie Moon**, sent in a written comment, with concerns about Vice Mayor Chapman's social media comments regarding Miller's Market.

Ms. Moon continues by stating that Commissioner Washington is not a resident of the Town and believes that anything Mrs. Washington has voted on must be re-opened for discussion.

**Nancy Thomas, 44 Louisa Avenue**, sent in a written comment, with thoughts of the Town purchasing the former Mineral School property and cleaning the debris around the property.

Public comment section closed at 7:01.

Mayor Jarvis reminded Council members that if they are giving their comments, whether on social media or to a reporter, Council members need to start by saying this is their personal thoughts and not speaking on behalf of Council.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Regarding the April 9, 2024 meeting minutes, Council members will meet with Nicole Washington to give their individual edits of the minutes. The approval of these minutes has been continued to the May hearing.

## **ACCOUNTS PAID**

Bills approved. Motioned by Chapman and second by McCarthy.

Olivia McCarthy - yes

Bernice Kube - yes

Dave Hempstead - yes

Michelle Covert - yes

Ronald Chapman - yes

Motion Passed 5-0-0

## **REPORTS**

**Utility Committee** reports that the Town is going to have to raise water rates because the County of Louisa has raised their rates to 24%. The Town's increase will need to be higher than the County's to cover infrastructure repairs. Water expenses include leaks as well as water given to the Town of Mineral Volunteer Fire Department. Virginia Rural Water Association is calculating

the water loss. These expenses will be spread among the residents and businesses of the Town. There will be a Public Hearing held in June for the rate increase.

Utility Committee reports that the Department of Health has approved the Town for a non-repayable grant. The Town is working on creating a bid to hire a contractor to determine the amount of lead in the water and any other possible unknowns. The Town has \$100,000 for these repairs. Council member McGehee thanked Council Member Covert for her hard work on obtaining this grant.

Council debated on if they needed a motion to authorize a third party to authorize a bid for the Town. Town Manager Nicole Washington asked if the Town could issue its own RFP.

Council went into closed session in accordance with §2.2-3711(A)(1) and §2.2-3711(A)(8).

In an attempt to come back into session, McCarthy, Chapman, Covert and Hempstead did not certify that the closed session was lawfully exempt from meeting minutes as it was based on personal feelings and opinions.

Town Attorney Catherine Lea clarified for the record that the purpose of closed session was to confer with Counsel and session expanded beyond those statements and additional discussions regarding feelings of what was being discussed. Council member McCarthy added that the Town Attorney was not able to give her legal advice without being interrupted. Council members objected because they did not feel as if issues were resolved in closed session. Town Attorney clarified that the closed session meeting discussions centered around the matters in which legal counsel was conferred and no other matters were discussed beyond that. All members of Council voted to certify the closed session and to go back into session.

Olivia McCarthy - yes

Bernice Kube - yes

Dave Hempstead - yes

Michelle Covert - yes

Ronald Chapman - yes

Motion Passed 5-0-0

Council Member Covert added that the Town received a lead service line request from Virginia Department of Health, Office of Water, which is a necessary step to receive funding.

**Attorney Report** -The Attorney provided her annual report as of April 30, 2024.

**Town Manager Report** - Reported that the 14 houses are in the process of being developed and has received several communications. The Town is monitoring to make sure that the development is doing everything correctly.

Clayton Home confirms that the houses are modulars and not double-wide trailers.

**Fire** - Louisa County Volunteer Fire Department is celebrating 100 years. The Mineral Fire department is helping coordinate the celebration. The celebration will be held at the Louisa Fair Grounds on June 8th, 2024, starting at 11 a.m.

**Cemetery** - several people have reached out to obtain plots.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Historic Foundation - Items have not been removed from the old town hall. Mayor Jarvis explained his thoughts on what Council should be doing regarding the Foundation. Council member McGehee asked the Town Manager if the Foundation had paid their bill, which the Town Manager and Town Treasurer confirmed it had not been paid. McGehee asked why the bill had not yet been paid and Chapman responded that they still have time left on the lease.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Town Manager presented the budget for fiscal year 2025. If approved, a public hearing would have to be held in May or June for the budget to go into effect in July. The Town Manager discussed that not every employee will opt in to the health care benefit, but it still needs to be budgeted. The water rate was budgeted at 31% increase. Included in the packet was a page for real estate taxes to determine if there should be an increase. A work session will be held on May 21, 2024 at 6:30 p.m to correct the budget.

Town Attorney wants to schedule a FOIA/ COIA workshop for the members of both Council and Planning Commission. This training will take place on June 12, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

Council Member Covert asks that we leave a field at the cemetery so the bees have a place to pollinate.

## **CLOSED SESSION**

Council went into closed session in accordance with §2.2-3711(A)(1) and §2.2-3711(A)(8) to discuss personnel matters.

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

Motion Passed 5-0-0

## **BACK IN SESSION**

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

Council member McGehee questions Vice Mayor Chapman about his interview with The Breeze, as previously mentioned in the Open Public Comment section. Chapman explained that the Town is hiring a forensic accountant to look into the discrepancies.

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

Motion Passed 5-0-0

## **ADJOURNED**

Motioned by McCarthy and seconded by Hempstead.