



TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

21 Main Street

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, at 6:30 PM

MINUTES

AN OPEN MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF WARRENTON, VIRGINIA, WAS HELD ON APRIL 26TH, 2023, AT 6:30 PM

Special Meeting

PRESENT

Mr. Carter Nevill, Mayor; Ms. Heather Sutphin; Mr. Brett Hamby; Mr. James Hartman, Vice Mayor; Mr. Jay Heroux; Mr. William Semple Mr. Paul Mooney; Mr. David McGuire; Mr. Frank Cassidy, Interim Town Manager; Mr. Stephen Clough, Town Clerk

ABSENT

None

Special Meeting – 6:30 PM

Mayor Carter Nevill Called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM. A quorum was present, and business could be conducted.

1. Acquisition of Real Property- Horse Show Grounds

Tommy Cureton, Director of Parks and Recreation introduced the topic to the Council. His presentation included a recap of the history of the acquisition. As directed by Council, town staff explored options to purchase the horse show grounds from the Worton horse show association. This is a 9.57-acre historic lot. The Warrenton horse show grounds is the home to the country's oldest continuous continuously operating horse show. The parcel is currently zone to residential R10 with a maximum of thirty-seven lots. The property is within Warrenton's, Ward three. The association hosts two shows annually in May and September, typically bringing around four thousand plus visitors per year to Warrenton. In the early nineties, the association expressed an interest in partnering with the Town while continuing its tradition of two annual horse shows. Discussions stalled at that time. But there was obviously an interest from the Town to ensure that the historic nature of that property remained intact.

The discussion continued with highlights of the current fiscal impact, as discussed previously, purchase price for the parcel of land is approximately one point six million dollars. There is also a one hundred-thousand-dollar VOF grant that staff have applied for and been awarded, that has not yet been received at this time.

Mr. Cureton reviewed the engineering reports for the grandstands and potential future impacts of the site. The discussion transitioned into operating costs and potential future amenities and

additions to the park. He highlighted that the park was intended to be a passive park. Passive parks have a playground, pavilion, and trails. Active parks typically have multiple athletic fields, basketball courts, and things of that nature. He stated that there would be no plans at any time in the future to include ball fields or things of that nature.

Mr. Cureton addressed some outstanding questions from the Council regarding the use of the parks for special events and the potential use of the spaces for activities.

The Council suggested a review of application fees and liability insurance needs for the use of the site. and discussed potential changes or additions to the park and the requirements that would need to be discussed with the association at that time.

Mr. Cureton stated that the discussions had not occurred as there was no formal plan to add anything to the parcel as this time. Proposed improvements would be part of the CIP for the park and would be discussed with the association to not negatively impact the shows.

Councilmen McGuire inquired about the potential uses of the site and modifications to make it a gateway into the Town to showcase the heritage of the Town.

Mr. Cureton responded that the possibilities of the land and the potential uses for it were one of the things that he found most intriguing as a parks and recreation professional. He spoke of the potential for fall festivals, wineries and breweries events, bovine, equine, and other possibilities.

Councilmen Semple stated that after reviewing the sale agreement that his primary concern was the investment that the horse show would make back into the property. He requested details on the timelines for when and how the funds would be used on the property. He also asked for a list of owners of the horse show grounds to remain within compliance of the Town's Code of ethics, then spoke in favor of the purchase and maintaining the Town's history.

Discussions occurred on maintaining the horse show ring and the requirements of the VOF Grant.

The Council discussed the relationship of the partnership and what should be detailed and committed to in the purchase agreement to ensure both parties' interests are addressed.

Staff explained to the Council that the lease agreement they had received was a draft and that the legal council on both sides was still in discussion on the matter to bring a final agreement to the Council after the public hearing. They further explained that in addition to the agreement a Memorandum of Understanding would typically be in place to state the expectations of all parties.

Mayor Nevill inquired about the Town and residents' use of the horse show rungs when they were not being used for an event.

Staff responded that there would be no restrictions unless the horse show association was setting up the rings for the show.

Council discussed other suggestions for the use of the ring and the space.

Mayor Nevill stated that per the advice of Mr. Crim he would be seeking a motion to direct staff to proceed with the advertisement of the Public Hearing so that Council may take action on the item.

Motion put forth by Councilmen Hamby was to direct staff to advertise for the public hearing on the Purchase of the Horse Show Grounds

Seconded by Councilwoman Sutphin.

The vote was as follows:

Ayes: *Ms. Heather Sutphin; Mr. William Semple; Mr. Brett Hamby; Mr. James Hartman, Vice Mayor; Mr. Jay Heroux; Mr. David McGuire, Mr. Paul Mooney.*

Nays:

Abstention:

Absent:

The motion passed unanimously; staff was directed to advertise the public hearing for the May agenda.

Council directed staff to have the draft sales agreement available for review by the Council as soon as possible.

2. Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget Work Session

Frank Cassidy, Interim Town Manager, introduced the item to the Council. He reminded Council of the focus of the targeted goals of Human Capital, infrastructure, employee retention, succession planning, and establishment of a multiyear planning mechanism through the CIP which aligns the goals with Plan Warrenton 2040.

Mr. Cassidy assured Council that staff remain keyed on the high level of customer service that we've established and that customers are our residents, businesses, and visitors expect from our staff at every level. The focus in prepping the budget was maintaining those high standers as staff addressed the complex effects of government budgeting. Staff has been developing a proactive approach to preserving the greatness of this town while improving our efficiency at every level. He stated that he appreciated the questions and discussions from Council and that the responses to all of the Council's questions would be forthcoming.

Mr. Cassidy outlined the discussion for the evening stating that it would specifically look at personal property tax and the requested new positions. Other questions from Council would be addressed as they arise, and several staff were available to answer any questions. He invited Council to come in and discuss any questions with the staff as they needed. He highlighted that these discussions were not for actions this evening.

Ms. Stephanie Miller, Director of Finance, began with a presentation to Council. The presentation began with a review of the personal property tax rate and how it was calculated. She reviewed the PPTRA Revenue and its impact on the Town. She added that the Town was nearing the point of having to adjust the percentage of relief granted in the next few years.

Council discussed what was taxed as personal property and the way it was calculated and the potential impact of getting rid of the vehicle license fee.

Ms. Miller spoke to working with the Commissioner of the Revenue to establish potential scenarios and see how the proposals would impact the budget and the taxpayers. Discussion ensued around the scenarios.

Ms. Miller noted that feedback from the Council would be imperative as the Public Hearing for the tax rates was scheduled for the May meeting.

Council discussed the needs to preserve the Businesses and not put unnecessary burden on them with the tax rates. They also discussed additional classes of personal property tax and how to implement the various classes with the example of data center personal property taxes being higher than vehicles.

Councilmen Heroux discussed the difference of the value of the dollar due to inflation and other factors from 2014 to the current day and the impact that would play on the purchasing power and budget.

Ms. Miller reflected on the question from Mr. Heroux and the balance of the revenue streams for the Town.

Mayor Nevill spoke to the efforts of former Interim Town Manager Christopher E. Martino and the impact that he has had reflected in this budget tying the directives back to the Plan Warrenton 2040 and the longer-term planning. He expressed his appreciation for the work and effort made with this budget.

Discussion returned to the impact of the tax rate on vehicles and the impact of the Vehicle licensing fee.

Council provided direction to the staff to proceed with the advertisement of the \$1.50 tax rate for PPT and adding the inclusion of a separation and division of classifications separating vehicles, machinery, and tools, and business personal property so that businesses are eased the burden of this offset trying to make this as revenue neutral as possible.

Councilmen Semple inquired as to the reduction of one revenue stream if there was a need to address other revenue streams to offset the impact to the budget.

Ms. Miller said that the difficulty would be that since the revenue stream has not yet been advertised the adjustment would need to be readvertised for a future meeting.

Councilmen Semple highlighted that the offset would then have to be found through reductions in the budget.

Ms. Miller continued her presentation with discussions shifting to the seven new positions requested in the budget: communications manager, network engineer, human capital generalist, deputy Town Manager, economic development manager, building official, and fitness supervisor.

Mayor Nevill spoke to the asset that Mr. Cureton was as the Deputy Town manager but would recommend eliminating the deputy town manager position and economic development manager the in favor of a balanced budget. He spoke in favor of the communications manager.

Councilmen McGuire agreed with the mayor's suggestions and requested the rational of a fitness supervisor position.

Mr. Cureton explained the use of the fitness supervisor as someone who could grow the impact of the department outside of a WARF-centric philosophy and potentially generate revenue to coordinate with the instructors and the roles and responsibilities of the position.

Council discussed the role and its potential impact on the Town.

Mr. Semple added some general questions regarding roles. He inquired as to how the Town has functioned without the requested new roles and what has changed to necessitate their addition, especially with the number of residents has remained static.

Mr. Cassidy responded that the positions requested today had been requested in the past but due to things like the pandemic they had ben cut. Positions like the building official were eliminated and due to the pandemic were readjusted to one individual wearing a lot of hats. He added that these requests were to realign from a functional standpoint to get back on track and provide the high level of customer services that have been provided in the past.

Mr. Cassidy addressed the positions stating that the deputy town manager role could be eliminated and that the needs of some departments have expanded over time like the demands on IT infrastructure and security. He added that some requests have been to address positions neglected for years like the Human capital generalist. He added that some positions wear several different hats and that some have been ineffective or inefficient in the past and due to the consistent external challenges, some roles need to be addressed. He continued stating that several of the roles had been picked up by members of staff but that it was unsustainable and it's time to have these discussions now.

Mr. Jonathan Stewart, director of information and technology, addressed the requested position of network engineer. He explained that when he began with the Town the IT department was not funded and there was only a part time individual who worked with the police department. He added that the department was about ten years behind and has been playing catch up while others are getting ahead and implementing standards. He explained that currently, he was the network engineer and the roles he was in charge of in addition to his other roles.

Mr. Stewart responded to questions from the Council on how to express the needs of his role and the advancements being made within the department. He expressed potential vulnerabilities, lost efficiencies, and demands of the infrastructure. He described the impact of the responsibility of his department on the overall needs of the Town.

Council discussed that the vulnerabilities expressed were results of the depth of bench not of the actions of Mr. Stewart and his department commending him for the efforts made to protect the Town. Discussion moved to the age of the Town's IT infrastructure and the impacts of the department and the efficiencies that could come as a result of the team.

Councilmen Mooney asked Mr. Stewart about the need for a dedicated cybersecurity individual within the Town as well as the projected growth of his department over the next three years.

Mr. Stewart responded that a holistic department review and plan was currently in the works for the Council.

Mr. Heroux spoke in favor of this position.

Mr. Heroux inquired as to the history of the building inspector and asked Mr. Walton to provide a background of the role.

Rob Walton, Director of Community Development, described the role. He stated that if a jurisdiction has a building division than they're required to have a building official. The Town's last Building official was Mr. Cassidy. Mr. Cassidy left the position a few years ago when he took over as director of public works and utilities. The Town had not backfilled the role. Mr. Cassidy was wearing another hat overseeing that need. With the building official position, Mr. Hunter Diggs is the provisional building official, fire inspector, property maintenance official and fire official. He added that by creating the building official position, once Mr. Diggs passed his requirement test he could slide into that role which would open up an inspector position which he currently occupies. Mr. Walton explained that this would allow for greater enforcement and faster addressing of violations.

Councilmen Heroux asked if this position would help enforcement against habitual violators.

Mr. Walton explained the process of violation and appeal and that an additional person able to do inspections and enforcement would allow additional time for diligence.

Councilmen Heroux spoke in favor of the position.

Councilmen Hamby requested the Town Manager provide a full list of complete Full Time Equivalent Staff members for both full time and part time staff and to see how many vacancies that the Town currently has.

Councilmen Hamby discussed the position change for the building official and the budgeting for the role. He inquired about the history of the role and how the budget had historically been

presented with this particular role. He requested a list of authorized positions within the Town and the total number of vacancies.

Councilmen Hamby also requested the status of current vacancies with the Town.

Ms. Kasey Braun, Human Capital Manager, addressed the Council and expounded on how vacancies were calculated within the Town. She also addressed how the vacancies and budgets amount were calculated. She continued on with discussions around the average time to hire an employee and the resources required to do so. With the trends her department is seeing she noted that experience required for the roles and salary were key factors in the hiring process.

Councilmen Semple inquired how the new hires would be incorporated into the base increase that was proposed before the Council in this budget cycle.

Ms. Braun commented that the new hires would be based on the proposed new pay scale which would accommodate the increase. She added that the salary scale was based on the Class and Comp study and targeted to be in the 50th percentile for the region. She discussed the history of compression studies and internal compression as well as how the staff plan to build in the step system based on performance to address these issues.

Ms. Braun addressed the question about the total number of FTE staff and how the Council would like that question answered.

Councilmen Mooney suggested taking a 20,000-foot view on the positions and disagreed with the mayor stating that the economic development manager and IT personnel were the most important positions. He addressed the need of the Council to review the positions and the proposed 10% increase. He gave credit to previous Councils as they have allowed a surplus but noted that if spending remained at this level there would be no more cash remaining. He requested a review of the personnel cost and the impact it would have on the taxpayers. Mr. Mooney also requested a breakdown of the IT outfitting cost for a new employee.

Mr. Cassidy confirmed the directions that he was receiving from the Council that staff was to look for ways to compensate for the change in property tax of the three hundred and eighty thousand dollars and to look at the positions suggested first.

Mayor Nevill confirmed Mr. Cassidy's summary and requested that staff proposed a top three positions to maintain within the request.

Mr. Cassidy said that staff's top three request was stated in order of the presentation.

Mayor Nevill suggested that in the discussions with staff that the Council and each other they suggest their top three.

Mr. Mooney confirmed that three did not need to be chosen and that the Council could choose to fund all or none of the positions.

Mayor Nevill confirmed.

Mr. Cassidy added for clarity that when Council returned on May 9th, that the staff will present to Council for a vote on that property tax as that must be passed on the ninth as the option of which was presented by Ms. Miller and her staff on the dollar fifty for the vehicles and the dollar for business.

Mr. Cassidy requested specific topics for the May 9th, budget discussion.

Council responded with a request for discussion on personal property, residential tax rates, Water and Sewer Rates with a discussion from NewGen and Davenport and the CIP.

Councilmen Semple requested a discussion around the contingency plan for a potential shortfall. He requested to see actual numbers from the current year for meals tax to get an idea for the accuracy of the revenue projections.

Council requested additional discussions of the streets and a paving schedule for the upcoming projects.

Mr. John Ward addressed the Council regarding ongoing paving projects through the town and projects that VDOT has underway as well. He also addressed questions from the Council regarding the pipes and sewer conditions in Town.

Mr. Cassidy confirmed that the CIP discussion would include the paving projects and be discussed at the May 9th meeting as well as the use of ARPA funds. He also requested that Council send a list of available dates to the Clerk if an additional budget meeting was necessary.

Council requested an update from the Town Manager on the transferring of property from the County to the Town for a new Public Works facility and the requirements of a public hearing surrounding that.

Mayor Nevill thanked the Council and Staff for a productive evening, adding that he appreciated the questions put forth and hoped that the Council gave good direction to staff.

ADJOURNMENT.

With no further business, this meeting was adjourned at 9:21 PM on Wednesday April 26th, 2023.

I hereby certify that this is a true and exact record of actions taken by the Town Council of the Town of Warrenton on April 26th, 2023.

Stephen M. Clough, CMC
Town Recorder

Attachments:

None

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