

DAMASCUS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes for December 7, 2015

Regular Council Meeting

Council Members Present: Tim Williams, Mitchel Greer, Shirley Brand, Susan Seymore, Melissa Barrett, and Tom Hayes

Absent: None

Also Present: Jack McCrady, Mayor
Linda Rouse, Town Treasurer
Thomas Dene, Town Attorney
Tuesday Pope, Town Clerk
Roger Dowell, Police Chief
Gavin Blevins, Town Manager

7:00pm: Mayor McCrady called the meeting to order, led the Pledge of Allegiance and gave the invocation.

Mayor McCrady asked for approval of the November Minutes.

- Ms. Brand made a motion to approve the November 2nd Regular Council Meeting Minutes, as presented, 2nd by Mr. Hayes. The motion passed (6-0).

Mayor McCrady asked for approval of the agenda.

- Mr. Hayes made a motion to approve the agenda, as presented, 2nd by Ms. Brand. The motion passed (6-0).

Committee Reports

Budget, Finance and Administration:

Ms. Seymore deferred to the Town Treasurer, Linda Rouse, for the monthly Treasurer's report.

Ms. Rouse submitted the following report:

Taxes: Both personal & real estate taxes were due 11-20. Collection rate for 2015 real is 90.63% and 93.59% for all years. Personal for 2015 is 70.34% for 2015 and 83.03% for all years. I am also in the process of sending out notices on payments that were short due to prior balances.

Anthem Stock: Per resolution adopted 10-21-15, the 276 shares of Anthem stock in the name of Town of Damascus Police Dept. were sold @ 132.4692 per share less trading fees of 48.12-net proceeds were 36,613.38. These funds were deposited in new checking account @ BB&T designated Anthem Recovery Acct. These are restricted funds which can be used to offset insurance premiums paid by the Town for their police officers. I recommend we budget these as a contingency fund. The total funds in this account is 42,425.35.

The Council agreed to, in the upcoming budget workshops, apply these funds toward 2016-17 Police Department insurance expenses.

2015-2016 Audit: Owens CPA & Associates are in the process of completing our annual audit and will present the report @ our January 2016 Council Meeting. As part of the audit this year, we were required to complete an Understanding the Design and Implementation of Internal Control and Walkthrough of Internal Controls. This documents our procedures for revenue and

receivables and our detailed process for expenditures and accounts payable. This will insure we comply with segregation of duties and follow policies and procedures per our Municipal code.

Ms. Brand complimented Ms. Rouse on the collection of unpaid taxes, which hasn't been attempted for the past few years.

- Ms. Seymore made a motion to approve the annual employee Christmas bonus (Full time employees \$100, Part time employees \$50), 2nd by Mr. Williams. The motion passed (6-0).

Ms. Seymore reported that the financial outcome of the 2015 Crooked Road, Mountains of Music Homecoming event, which was held at the Rock School Auditorium on June 15th, resulted in a profit of \$17.83. The financial outcome of the Bike VA/2015 Official rest-stop, which was held in the Town Park on June 27th, resulted in a \$315.25 profit. For both events, many volunteers stepped up and gave a lot of their time and efforts into ensuring the events were memorable and enjoyable for the participants.

Streets, Lights and Maintenance:

Mr. Greer referred to a detailed report on the department's day-to-day operations for November, which was submitted by the Public Works Supervisor, Joe Fritts. He also reported the need for a dry storage shelter in the very near future to protect and house the Town's road salt.

- Mr. Williams made a motion to authorize the expenditure of up to \$2,000 for the construction of a storage shed that can be used to house road salt for the winter months as needed. Ms. Seymore 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Parks and Recreation:

Mr. Williams reported that the Public Works Dept. has also spent a considerable amount of time decorating the Town and the Park, and it will look great for the upcoming Christmas parade and festival later in the week.

Mr. Williams also commented that for a second year now, Mr. Scott Paterson should be credited for helping to encourage and motivate more Damascus residents to decorate the outside of their homes with his 'Damascus In Lights' holiday decorating contest.

The annual Christmas Parade will take place on Friday, December 11th at 6pm, and the next Trail Days meeting will be held on Jan. 11th at 6:30pm.

Events and Entertainment Committee Update – Ms. Barrett reminded everyone that the 2nd annual 'A Trail Town Christmas' Festival will be this Saturday, December 12th, from 11am until 3pm; and then the 1st annual 'Damascus Tour of Homes' will follow from 3-5pm.

Planning Commission:

Nothing to report at this time.

Police and Fire Advisory:

Mr. Hayes deferred to Chief Dowell, who submitted the following P.D. activity report for the month of November:

Operations:

In November 2015, Damascus Officers handled 100 calls for service, issued 10 citations, and 6 made criminal arrests.

Annual Statistics for 2015 are as follows: 1249 calls for service, 104 Arrests, 113 Offenses, and 220 Citations issued.

Traffic Enforcement Activities:

During November 2015, Officers responded to 1 motor vehicle accident in Town, issued 10 traffic summons, made 1 DUI arrest, and notified 2 subjects that they were suspended.

Speeding complaint areas include:

South Shady Avenue, Douglas Drive, Damascus Drive, and Beaverdam Ave. with special attention being placed on crosswalk areas.

Investigations Report:

Damascus Police Department assisted the Washington County Sheriff's Office with a traffic stop on Widener Valley Rd., where a wanted fugitive was arrested and drugs were recovered, as well as two other subjects being issued summons for drug violations.

Damascus Police Department pursued a short vehicle chase, which resulted in a suspended driver being arrested for improper tags, eluding police, and possession of Meth.

Damascus Police Department assisted the Washington County Sheriff's Office and Virginia Game Wardens, which resulted in two subjects being charged for using spot lights and hunting illegally. Damascus Police Department, Washington County Sheriff's Office, the US Marshalls Service, and Russell County Sheriff, worked together to locate a lost and possibly endangered juvenile that had been missing for 4 days when we were notified. She was located in less than 20 hours after our notification, with the combined services of all agencies present and working together.

The Damascus Police Department, Washington County Sheriff's Office and Grayson County Sheriff's Office have been assisting to look for a missing male subject from Grayson County. The subject is still missing, and we are still actively assisting with both agencies.

Special Notes:

K9: Chris Hogston has returned from West Virginia after training with K9 Luna, and they seem to be working very well together

Officers: Patrolman Michael Reid is still attending the academy.

VDOT Work Crew:

The VDOT work crew was used this past month to pick up trash.

Police Vehicles:

The Chilhowie Police Department has a 2009 Dodge Charger that they are willing to trade.

Auxiliary:

Currently reviewing applications and looking to hire an additional 3 to 4 Auxiliary Officers.

Chief Dowell recommended evenly trading the PD's 2010 Explorer for Chilhowie's 2009 Charger.

- Ms. Brand made a motion to authorize the Explorer/Charger vehicle trade with Chilhowie, as requested. Mr. Williams 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Chief Dowell also requested to use the remaining \$2,600 from this years 599 grant funds to purchase a vehicle that doesn't look like a police vehicle to be used undercover, and suggested selling one of the department's older model Crown Vics to offset any additional costs.

- Ms. Brand made a motion to authorize the remaining \$2,600 grant funds go towards the purchase of an additional vehicle for the Police Department, as requested; 2nd by Mr. Greer. The motion passed (6-0).

Chief Dowell reminded the Council that the Department's annual Christmas dinner and awards ceremony will be held on Dec. 8th from 6-9pm, at the One Way Ministries building, and will be catered by Mojo's Trailside Café.

Special Committees:

VISTA report from Jay Prevatt:

Mr. Prevatt (Damascus VISTA volunteer), Mr. Blevins (Damascus Town Manager), and Anne Maio (MRATC) attended the Appalachian Trail Community summit on Nov. 2-4 at the National Conservation Training Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

Mr. Prevatt is currently helping to build a new website for the Mt Rogers A.T. Club (MRATC); and has cataloged pictures of every brick that has been installed in the Community Pathway Project, due to frequent requests from purchasers for a photo to be emailed to them. More brick sales are coming in, and the brick manufacturer will soon be sending a replacement for the chipped brick in front of the bank.

Manager's Report

Mr. Blevins submitted the following Town Manager's Report:

Beaverdam Creek Trail

- The Tennessee Valley Authority has cleared the project to proceed, as of 11/17/2015.
- Erosion & Sediment Control plan is out of date with new regulations and will require updating before completion of the Environmental Review process. Hill Studios will get back to us with an estimate for updating this.

Rally Damascus

- The Rally Tour last week, marking substantial completion of the project, was a great success as local government members of both Cleveland and Dungannon visited Damascus. Several businesses participated, including Mojo's and the Damascus Brewery.
- The displays for the kiosks are still incomplete, however; we are working to have these completed and ready for the printer ASAP.

Regional Planning Grant/ Mount Rogers Regional Initiative

- The Mount Rogers PDC and consultant (Arnett Muldrow & Associates) are working to schedule input sessions throughout the project region, and are expected to be in Damascus on Jan. 13 and 14.

Virginia Tourism Grant

- We are still in the process of creating a new Town brochure and updated tear-off maps to be printed.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

- As the Town progresses through our 90 day contract negotiation period, there are several documents required for the use of federal funds – 5 such documents are hereby presented for adoption, or re-adoption as follows:
 - Section 504 Grievance Procedure
 - Ms. Seymore made a motion to adopt the procedure, as presented; 2nd by Ms. Brand. The motion passed (6-0).
 - Section 3 Local Business and Employment Plan
 - Ms. Seymore made a motion to adopt the plan, as presented; 2nd by Ms. Brand. The motion passed (6-0).
 - Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Plan
 - Ms. Seymore made a motion to adopt the plan, as presented; 2nd by Ms. Brand. The motion passed (6-0).
 - Nondiscrimination Policy
 - Ms. Seymore made a motion to adopt the policy, as presented; 2nd by Ms. Brand. The motion passed (6-0).
 - Fair Housing Certification
 - Ms. Seymore made a motion to adopt the certification, as presented; 2nd by Ms. Brand. The motion passed (6-0).

ARC Grant Application

- The grant application has been submitted and the full application is available for viewing at Town Hall – the Town awaits approval by DHCD and ARC.

VML Safety Grant

- Work will begin soon to obtain funding through VML to update equipment in the park – preliminary scope will be toward replacement of the safety mats.
- This grant cycle is December/January.

* Ms. Seymore also reported an upcoming grant opportunity for the Creeper Trail.

Attorney Report

Mr. Dene reported that the 2014-15 audit is currently underway, and this will be the first year in many years that the Town does not have to report a VRS issue as a possible contingency for the Town.

Also, as an update on the election date/ordinance changes to the Town's Charter. Mr. Dene stated that the Legislature will allow Damascus to fall under a small town exemption, which applies to towns that have less than 3,500 residents, and is expected to pass it on through. Mr. Dene sent the following letter of request to Delegate O'Quinn and Senator Carrico:

DENE & DENE, P.C.

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138 COURT STREET, N.E.
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ABINGDON, VIRGINIA 24210
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LOUIS DENE
THOMAS DENE

TELEPHONE 276.628.8644
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November 25, 2015

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL
AND FIRST CLASS MAIL**

The Honorable Israel O'Quinn
P.O. Box 16325
Bristol, Virginia 24209

The Honorable Charles W. Carrico, Sr.
P.O. Box 1100
Galax, Virginia 24333

Re: Town of Damascus
Request for Amendment of Va. Code § 24.2-222.1(A)

Dear Senator Carrico and Delegate O'Quinn:

We represent the Town of Damascus. The Town Council has directed that I contact you to request an amendment to Section 24.2-222.1(A) of the 1950 *Code of Virginia*, as amended. Earlier in the year the Town Council adopted an ordinance pursuant to this Code Section to provide for election of the mayor and members of the Town Council at the November general election. However, the Town's charter provides for such elections at the May general election. While we believe it was intent of the General Assembly to provide cities and towns with a relatively easy option to change election dates without the General Assembly amending a charter in each case, neither Code Section 24.2-222.1 nor Code Section 24.222 expressly provide for an override of charters mandating May elections.

Accordingly, the Town is requesting that Code Section 24.2-222.1(A) be amended as follows, with additions indicated by underline and deletions by strikethrough:

Notwithstanding any the ~~contrary~~ provisions of ~~§24.2-222 of law,~~
general or special, the council of a city or town may provide by
ordinance that the mayor, if an elected mayor is provided for by
charter, and council shall be elected at the November general

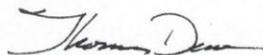
The Honorable Charles W. Carrico, Sr.
The Honorable Israel O'Quinn
November 25, 2015
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for

election date of any cycle as designated in the ordinance, for
terms to commence January 1. No such ordinance shall be
adopted between January 1 and the May general election date of
the year in which city or town elections regularly are scheduled
to be held therein.

We thank you for your kind consideration, and with best regards, we remain

Very truly yours,



Thomas Dene

cc: Mr. Jack McCradv. Mayor

Mr. Williams added that he had corresponded with the offices of Carrico and O'Quinn before they received the letter from Mr. Dene, and ensured the change to the Charter was underway.

New Business

Nothing at this time.

Old Business

Nothing at this time.

Council Members Reports

1. Ms. Brand reported that one of the previously reported nuisance properties that had been brought to the Council's attention, now has a tenant who is working to make several improvements to the home, and can be removed from the nuisance list. As for the other properties, still no improvements have been made.

Mayor McCrady reported an address on Imboden St. to be included in the list of nuisance properties, and Chief Dowell reported two others located on Orchard Hill Rd.

2. Mayor McCrady said that he has been notified that there are currently 17 street lights in Town that are out or not working properly.
The reports that come in to the Town Hall are reported to the power company in a timely manner thru their online reporting system, but we don't receive status updates on the lights that have reported.
3. Mayor McCrady reported contacting VDOT personnel about changing the direction of the parking spaces along Reynolds St., and they have agreed that doing so will provide additional parking as well as improve pedestrian and traffic safety along that street.
The Mayor also suggested enforcing a 2 hr. time limit on the parking spaces in front of businesses along Laurel Ave.

Citizens Comments

None at this time.

Announcements

- * Town Hall will be CLOSED on the following days in December:
 - 24th and 25th – Christmas Holiday
- * Town Hall will also be CLOSED on January 1st – New Years Day

Consent Agenda

- Ms. Brand made a motion to pay the bills for invoices exceeding \$500, 2nd by Mr. Williams; The motion passed (6-0).
- Ms. Seymore made a motion to pay the bills, 2nd by Ms. Brand; the motion passed (6-0).
- Mr. Hayes made a motion was to adjourn, 2nd by Mr. Williams; the motion passed (6-0).

Jack McCrady, Mayor

Tuesday Pope, Clerk