

**DAMASCUS TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes for September 6, 2016 7:00pm**  
**Regular Council Meeting**

**Council Members Present:** Susan Seymore, Melissa Barrett, Tom Hayes, Tim Williams, Vicky Van de Vuurst

**Absent:** Mitchel Greer

**Also Present:** Jack McCrady, Mayor  
Gavin Blevins, Town Manager  
Thomas Dene, Legal Counsel

Tuesday Pope, Town Clerk  
Linda Rouse, Town Treasurer

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 August Minutes:

- Ms. Seymore made a motion to approve the August 1, 2016 Regular Called Council Meeting Minutes as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms. Van de Vuurst. The motion passed (4-0-1, with Mr. Williams abstaining).
- Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the August 16, 2016 Special Called Council Meeting Minutes as presented, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms. Seymore. The motion passed (4-0-1, with Ms. Van de Vuurst abstaining).

Mayor McCrady asked for approval of the agenda, with one adjustment, to move the Attorney's Report up due to Mr. Dene needing to leave the meeting soon.

- Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the agenda, with one adjustment as suggested, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms Barrett. The motion passed (5-0).

<b>Attorney Report</b>
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Mr. Dene updated the Council on the cable franchise situation in Town, including the possible interest of two companies who have sent representatives to look at the set-up. Info is being gathered about the Town gaining ownership of the existing equipment and control of the lines that are already on existing poles. Then the Town could consider various options, including to sublease the purchase and then contract the service out to a cable company.

Mr. Dene submitted a draft of a proposed ordinance to prohibit burning within the corporate limits, and the Council discussed the terms they would like to include and exclude. The proposed ordinance will be revised and modified and prepared for a public hearing, which will be held during the October Council meeting. Before a public hearing can be held, it must first be advertised.

- Mr. Williams made a motion to authorize Mr. Dene to prepare an ad for the paper and publish the hearing scheduled on October 3rd, at 7:05pm. Ms. Seymore 2nd the motion, which passed (5-0).

Mr. Dene brought a copy of the current, outdated Code section that pertains to license fees and taxes for conducting business in Town. The Council discussed changes and updates to the ordinance, and included approval to refund money to one business for being overcharged. The revised ordinance will be presented to Council for approval during the October 3rd meeting.

Also, the current zoning ordinance needs to go before the Planning Commission for specific provisions and modifications before being presented to Council with recommended changes and updates. Once the Council and Planning Commission are in agreement on the proposed updates, a draft will be prepared for Council approval, and public hearing scheduled and advertised.

Mr. Dene reported the following item for closed session discussion:

- I. Discussion and consideration of personnel matters, per VA Code Sec. 2.2-3711 (A)(1).

(At this time, Mr. Dene excused himself from the meeting.)

## **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:** *Our tax collection rates continue to improve with Real for 2016 up 1.91% to 90.98% & all years @ 95.05%. 1999 taxes are 100%! "Pink" past due notices were sent to taxpayers with promissory notes that were not current with their monthly payment. Notices will go out this week to all other taxpayers past due on real property tax. Personal property collection rate also improved slightly to 85.72%.*

**AUDITS:** *Al McIntosh with Albano & Assoc. completed the pre-audit in August and fiscal year closing entries were posted for 6-30-16. Owens CPA & Associates Engagement Letter was approved & signed and is scheduled to do final audit the first week of October.*

**BUSINESS LICENSES:** *We have issued 84 business licenses for this year and only have 3 remaining that have not renewed. Letters have been delivered via police or I have contacted directly.*

### **Streets, Lights and Maintenance:**

Mayor McCrady referred to the following report on the department's operations for the month of August, which was submitted by the Public Works supervisor, Joe Fritts:

*We have completed some concrete work at the pool. This week we will replace both winter tarps and finish winterizing the pool plumbing. Today we poured concrete for the small maintenance building extension also.*

*Mowing and trimming continues and we've also had to deal with repair issues on our Exmark mower. The power generator on our bucket truck has been out also. We've repaired it*

*and should begin removing the street banners tomorrow. Brush pick-up averages about a dump truck load per week. We also continue daily improvements to our maintenance lot.*

### **Parks and Recreation:**

Mr. Williams reported that the next 2017 Trail Days meeting is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 12th, at 6:30 pm.

Ms. Barrett reported the Events & Entertainment Committee is getting ready to start on the 'Trail Town Christmas' festival preparations.

### **Police and Fire Advisory:**

Mr. Hayes deferred to the following P.D. activity report for the month of August, as presented by Chief Hounshell:

#### **Operations:**

*In August 2016, Damascus Officers handled 102 calls for service, and made 6 criminal arrests. We have taken 12 investigative reports for the month.*

#### **Traffic Enforcement Activities:**

*During August 2016, we issued 6 citations. One of those being a DUI. I have asked Lt. Turner to run radar on Laurel Avenue and pay close attention to the crosswalks.*

#### **Speeding complaint areas include:**

*Laurel Ave with special attention to tractor trailers speeding and not stopping at cross-walks. I contacted a couple of the trucking companies, W&L and Maymead to try to get the word out about the downtown area. I plan to contact more this week.*

#### **Special Report:**

*I have went to the Seniors Citizens meeting twice this past month and offered a senior check program where we check on the elderly periodically. No one was interested yet. I also spoke to them about the problems and dangers of identity theft with the elderly.*

*We interviewed four people for the two open slots and have narrowed our selection to two (Derek Breedlove and Donald Wagner). I am close to having the new policy manual complete and hope to have it ready by the next council meeting for approval.*

*\* Mayor McCrady stated that they will discuss the candidates for hire in executive session.*

#### **Special Notes:**

##### **VDOT Work Crew:**

*I will be contacting them to start back up the program.*

##### **Police Vehicles:**

*The explorer had a thermostat housing replaced.*

##### **Auxiliary:**

*We are in the process of scheduling a training class for all auxiliary officers to get there training completed.*

Mayor McCrady thanked Chief Hounshell for all of his efforts, and Ms. Van de Vuurst also thanked him on behalf of the business owners in Town.

Mayor McCrady read the following Fire Dept. report, as submitted by DVFD Chief Kermit Turner:

*During the month of August 2016, the Damascus Volunteer Fire Dept. responded to a total of 14 calls, and resulting in the use of 105 man hours, including: motor vehicle accidents (3); Creeper Trail accidents/missing (5); fire alarms (2); residential fires (2); Ground search (1); and DVRS assistance (1). The Fire Dept. has a total of 26 senior members and 5 junior members. Regular business meetings are conducted on the first Thursday of each month at 7:30pm, and training meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7pm.*

\* Ms. Seymore responded, and Mayor and Council agreed, that it is very nice to have a report from the Fire Dept. during the Council meeting.

### **Manager's Report**

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

#### **Beaverdam Creek Trail**

*Last documents requested by the Army Corps are being gathered and submitted. Once that is approved, Washington County will approve the Erosion and Sediment Control Plan. With the approved E&S Plans, I can finish the environment review process while Hill Studio submits the revised package to VDOT.*

#### **Regional Planning Grant/ Mount Rogers Regional Initiative**

*Still awaiting final documentation for project closeout (contract termination 6-30-2016) from DHCD.*

#### **ARC Grant Application** (the 'Waterfront Initiative')

*No new information.*

#### **CDBG Grant**

*Contract negotiations with A/E services for the project have been on-going.*

\* The review appraisal is underway and we are awaiting the results. Once received, we can begin drawing funds to purchase the property which will eventually house the Appalachian Trail Center.

#### **Community Pathways Project**

*The most recent batch of 293 bricks delivered has been installed. The concrete platform adjacent the section in front of the Blue Blaze Bike & Shuttle Service still needs to be remedied.*

#### **ARC POWER Initiative**

*MySWVA submitted the pre-application for POWER funds on August 19, and if the funds are allocated and matched with Tobacco Commission funds, the Town could be looking at another \$1 million.*

\* This will be used to build the AT Center. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy will not pay for the construction of the center, but they will pay to staff it once completed.

Mayor McCrady advised that a real estate attorney should soon be on retainer in order to ensure the Town's best interests.

- Mr. Williams made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to secure a real estate attorney to use for such projects, 2nd by Ms. Seymore. The motion passed (5-0).

### **VTC Market Leverage Program**

*I met with the Damascus Business Group last month to discuss initial planning for the 2016 VTC application. No final criteria have been set yet for our FY2017 marketing design. The application opens on September 13 and closes on November 30, so I will fill in the year-to-year information while assisting the Town and its partners to develop the marketing design.*

Mr. Blevins presented a zoning permit application for approval pertaining to the upcoming Fall festival hosted by The Damascus Brewery in Town Park. The fees have been paid, and the required insurance coverage has been submitted by the business owner.

- Ms. Van de Vuurst made a motion to approve the festival, as requested, 2nd by Mr. Williams. The motion passed (5-0).

<b>Old Business</b>
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Nothing to report at this time.

<b>New Business</b>
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Nothing to report at this time.

<b>Council Members Reports</b>
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Mayor McCrady welcomed Ms. Van de Vuurst to her first meeting as an appointed member of Town Council.

Ms. Seymore mentioned that her water/sewer bills have increased quite a bit, as well as other Town residents'. Upon inquiry, the Washington County Service Authority claims that the discounted rate for Town residents (following the transfer of the sewer plant from the Town to WCSA in 2012) has now ran out.

Mr. Williams reported that he and Mr. Greer have been looking at Town owned properties to determine the best location for the construction of a basketball court and skate park. They plan to continue narrowing down the most feasible options, and will report back to the Council.

Mayor McCrady advised that a few properties which have been previously reported for being overgrown, and have already been addressed by the Town Manager, are now needing to be readdressed for the same reasons.

<b>Citizens Comments</b>
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None at this time.

## Announcements

- \* Town Hall will be CLOSED on September 5<sup>th</sup>, in observance of Labor Day.
- \* Iron Mountain Trail Run – Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>
- \* St. Jude Bike-A-Thon – Sept 17<sup>th</sup>
- \* ATC’s Family Hiking Day – Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>
- \* Veterans Memorial Car Show – Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>
- \* Fall...Down in Damascus Festival – Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>

## Consent Agenda

- Ms. Seymore made a motion to pay the bills for invoices exceeding \$500, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Williams;  
the motion passed (5-0).
- Mr. Williams made a motion to pay the bills, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms. Barrett; the motion passed (5-0).
- Mr. Williams made a motion to recess into Closed Session for consideration of the matters previously identified by Legal Counsel, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms. Seymore; the motion passed (5-0).
  - \* The Clerk and one Derek Breedlove (a candidate for employment with the Police Dept.) were asked to remain.
- Mr. Williams made a motion to return to Open Session, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms. Van de Vuurst. The motion passed (5-0).
- Ms. Seymore made a motion to certify, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mr. Williams. The motion passed (5-0).
- Mr. Hayes made a motion to hire Derek Breedlove as an Officer for the Damascus Police Department, beginning as soon as possible, at an hourly wage of \$14.25. Mr. Williams 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion, which passed (5-0).
- Ms. Seymore made a motion to hire Donald Wagner as an Officer for the Damascus Police Department, beginning as soon as possible, at an hourly wage of \$13.25. Mr. Williams 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion, which passed (5-0).
- Mr. Williams made a motion to adjourn, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ms. Van de Vuurst. The motion passed (5-0).

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**Jack McCrady, Mayor**

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**Tuesday Pope, Clerk**