DAMASCUS TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes for July 1, 2019
7:00pm Regular Council Meeting

Council Members Present: Tim Williams, Mitchel Greer, Vicky Van de Vuurst, Susan Seymore, Sean Albro and Tom Hayes
Absent: None

Also Present: Jack McCrady, Mayor
Linda Ruse, Town Treasurer
Gavin Blevins, Town Manager
Brittany Helton, Admin. Assistant
Kermit Turner, Police Captain

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 June 3rd, 2019 Regular Called Council Meeting Minutes. Discussion followed to make corrections on Council attendance, Ms. Van de Vuurst was present at the last council meeting, and the motion to give $2,000 to the DVFD out of the Trail Days Revenue passed (6-0).

- Mr. Williams made motion to approve the June 3, 2019 Regular Called Council Meeting Minutes as presented with corrections, 2nd by Ms. Seymore. The motion passed (6-0)

Mayor McCrady asked for approval of the agenda.

- Ms. Van de Vuurst made a motion to approve the agenda, as presented. Ms. Seymore 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Committee Reports

Budget, Finance, and Administration:

Ms. Seymore deferred to the Town Treasurer, Linda Rouse, who submitted the following report for the previous month:

**TAXES:** Our collection rate on real property tax for 2019 improved 4.19% to 92.62% and all years improved to 97.50%. Personal property collection rate is 87.64%.

**VIRGINIA INVESTMENT POOL:** The current balance in the General Reserve Fund is $52,896.06, the Sewer Fund CD balance is $25,713.44, and the Anthem Recovery balance is $42,975.50. The total reserve fund balance is $121,585.00 and the current interest yield is 2.44%.

**VRSA- SAFETY GRANT:** Our grant application for 2019-2020 is due August 1st. The new amount is $500.

Mayor McCrady thanked Ms. Rouse for the wonderful work she does for the Town.

Streets, Lights and Maintenance:

Mr. Greer presented the following monthly report, as submitted by the Public Works supervisor, Joe Fritts:
A continued abundance of rain assures that we must mow and trim daily. We try to cover all issues, but manpower shortage prevents us from dividing labor to deal with more issues. An example would be that it requires a driver and an operator to install street flags (for the 4th). Almost immediately upon taking them down, we will have to install C-TREC banners. For Memorial Day, we were able to work in a group (to supervise inmates) and mow and trim as we installed and removed flags.

We are keeping brush picked-up and to this point, covering mowing and trimming, but being short a crew member has prevented us from covering all issues. We have done some brush clearing on the 91 portion of the Creeper trail and between the caboose and Food City, but still have the lower section to the Sewer plant to clear. Several projects are planned as time allows.

Parks and Recreation:
Mr. Williams discussed putting up signs and cones to direct traffic for our Independence Day Celebration, as well as blocking the road off with cones so the ambulances can have efficient access to enter/exit. This temporary rerouting of the road will help get everyone out of the park in a fast and efficient manner.

Mr. Williams thanked Ms. Helton for her help with the Independence Day celebration event, and Mayor McCrady thanked Mr. Williams for all that he does for the Town.

Planning Commission:
Mr. Blevins presented a Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Damascus and the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission to update the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. This contract for a complete update of the comprehensive plan will cover a period from July 1, 2019 thru Dec. 31, 2020, at a cost of $10,000.

Mayor McCrady asked if the Town was required by law to review the Comp. Plan.

Mr. Blevins stated that we are required by law to review and update the Plan at least once every 5 years, but due to all of the redevelopment that has been done as part of the overall revitalization strategies that are in effect, the Planning Commission has determined that the Comprehensive Plan needs a complete update to remain in compliance and ahead of the trends.

• Mr. Williams made a motion to approve execution of the MOU with the MRPDC as presented for a complete review and update of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Albro 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

The MOU follows:
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Between the
Town of Damascus
and the
MOUNT ROGERS PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION

1. WHEREAS, the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission is authorized by
   Chapter 42 of Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended, to assist local
   government units in planning their development; and

2. WHEREAS, the Town of Damascus has a need to rewrite its current Comprehensive
   Plan to comply with provisions of the Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended; and

3. WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan provides guidance for the Town regarding its
   future growth and development; and

4. WHEREAS, the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission is willing and able to
   help update the Town’s Comprehensive Plan in cooperation with the Damascus
   Planning Commission and the Town staff for submission to the Town Council.

5. NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mount Rogers Planning District
   Commission staff will assist the Town in developing its Comprehensive Plan Update
   in the following ways:

   - Complete the background research to provide the most recent data and
     accompanying narrative of the existing conditions in the Town.
   - Prepare graphics and presentation materials for public input meetings for the
     development of the Comprehensive Plan Update.
   - Work with the Town staff to update the current Comprehensive Plan maps and
     generate new maps if required.
   - Assist the Planning Commission in reviewing the goals and objectives and
     formulating strategies for the future development of the Town.
   - Incorporate all new data and desired changes into the structure of the existing
     Comprehensive Plan
   - As needed, assist the Planning Commission and the Town Council with the
     final review and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.
   - Provide an electronic copy of the plan, maps, and data generated in the update
     of the Comprehensive Plan for future use by the Town.

6. CONTRACT PERIOD – The contract will be from July 1st 2019 through December
   31st 2020, unless otherwise amended.

7. COST OF SERVICES – The cost of providing staff assistance for the Comprehensive
   Plan for the Town of Damascus based upon the outlined Scope of Work will not
   exceed $10,000.00.

8. PAYMENT TERMS – The total contract amount not to exceed $10,000.00 will be
   divided between two payments. $5,000 due at contract signing and the remaining
   amount due at adoption of the completed plan by Town Council.

ACCEPTED BY THE TOWN OF DAMASCUS
Police and Fire Advisory:

Mr. Hayes deferred to the following P.D. activity report for the previous month, as presented by Captain Turner:

![July 2019 Council Meeting]

**Operations:**

June 2019, Damascus Officers handled 81 calls and made 4 criminal arrest. We have taken 17 investigative reports.

**Traffic Enforcement Activities:**

We issued 10 citations along with 6 warnings.

**Speeding complaint areas include:**

South Beaver Dam

**Special Report:**

Attached to this report is a new traffic pattern we are trying to help alleviate some of the congestion trying to leave the park.

We feel making some of the side streets one way and closing the alleys to through traffic along with dictating which way cars turn will help us get traffic moving faster.

I have requested a couple deputies to assist with patrols in the park itself and the Fire Department has agreed to assist with traffic control before and after the event.

**Special Notes:**

**K9:**

Officer Farley is currently working the new K-9 and will attend a couple weeks of certification in July at the regional jail. We also plan for him to attend some interdiction training.

**VDOT Work Crew:**

No contact

**Police Vehicles:**

All vehicles are ok.

**Auxiliary:**

No Change

**WCC Grant:**
Immediate release regarding traffic pattern for July 3rd fireworks.

Due to the amount of traffic and congestion experienced last year during the festivities at the park, the following changes will be implemented.

Bolen Street will be one way traffic entering off of South Beaver Dam and exit only on Clifton Street. There will be no entry off South Beaver Dam onto Clifton.

Mock Ave will be one way only entering off of South Beaver Dam and exiting on Appalachian Trail Drive. No entry off of South Beaver Dam on Appalachian Trail Drive.

Several small alley ways will blocked to THRU TRAFFIC. Residents may still use these to access their property.

The following streets are closed to THRU TRAFFIC during the event.
- Gazebo
- Narrow Gage
- Appalachian Trail at intersection of Mock Ave
- Rutledge Street

Parking will be provided at the Town Park and Library. Immediately after the event: all traffic in the park will be directed to go left on North Beaver Dam/Rt. 58. You may turn at Food City if needed to come back East bound.

All traffic leaving South Shady Ave will be directed to go right only. You may use Damascus Drive/91 to Vales Mill or Rhea Valley or turn where possible.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation. Please be courteous and don’t block driveways.

Chief Mike Hounshell
Damascus Fire Department
Damascus, VA
This report was generated on 6/28/2019 4:19:55 PM

Average Number of Responding Personnel per Hour for Date Range
Start Date: 06/01/2019 | End Date: 06/28/2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUR</th>
<th>AVG. # PERSONNEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00 - 10:59</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00 - 15:59</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:00 - 17:59</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:00 - 18:59</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:00 - 21:59</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breakdown by Major Incident Types for Date Range
Zone(s): All Zones | Start Date: 06/01/2019 | End Date: 06/28/2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE</th>
<th># INCIDENTS</th>
<th>% of TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fires</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescue &amp; Emergency Medical Service</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Intent Call</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Mayor and Council members expressed how proud they are of Chief Turner’s commitment to the community.

Special Committees

Damascus Business Group -- Ms. Albro discusses local businesses getting with local ministries before next year to talk about ways we can all work together to make sure everyone benefits from Trail Days. Thanked Mr. Blevins for being a guest speaker and giving them updates on the town advancements.

Mayor McCrady thanked Ms. Albro and Mr. Blevins.
Ms. Van de Vuurst reported a very good turnout at the last Damascus Business Group meeting,

Manager’s Report

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

ARC – Damascus Waterfront Development Initiative

- Designs for the Laurel Creek Park and bathroom, along with the Shady Ave section of the trail, are essentially complete. Designs for the section of trail connecting to Creep Trail along Reynolds Street are drafted and entering the permitting phase.

CDBG – Downtown Revitalization

- I have been working with the attorney to get all the necessary easement documents provided to STORE Capital for review prior to payment and execution of the easement. No addition surveyor work has been necessary to this point.
- Materials for the remaining facades are still being collected prior to completion of work.

ARC POWER Initiative – Trail Center

- Preparations are being made for re-bidding the building for construction after edits to the Invitation to Bid and the specifications of the building materials and construction type and methods – these changes are in the architect’s court now; however, they have been pursuing additional payment.
- I would recommend contracting with an owner representative on this project moving forward, this would be an outside construction manager who would shadow the Town to makes sure that the Town’s best interests are maintained through negotiating a contract for construction and through the construction phase.

Miscellaneous

- Laurel Avenue Sidewalks – Arthur Construction is in the region now working on the ADA ramps identified, replacing 14. Estimates are ready for acceptance regarding replacement of the sidewalks. The trees are already being removed by Adams Tree Service, but the stumps are still due to be ground up once the sidewalks have been removed (prior to reconstruction). The public forum on the Damascus Street Trees went smoothly, turnout was poor, but we have made progress toward selections for replacement trees (Recommendations: Red Maple, Thornless Honeylocust, American Sweetgum, and one other depending on location).
- Beaverdam Creek Trail – landscaping arrangements are delayed until after Public Works staffing is back to normal or I can get an outside naturalist group to compete the work if provided the plants and materials (or this could be contracted out if priority).
- Newsletter – The newsletter layout and content are still in development, and with the delays, we will have to work on this internally – administration is also understaffed at this time.
- Walk Your Bike Initiative – I have replaced and installed 22 new signs along Laurel Avenue and both the Chief and I are under the opinion, based on our observations, that these signs have reduced the number of violations on the sidewalks.
- WCSA Waterline Replacements – the project should be out for contract and construction in the Summer of 2019.
- **Laurel Avenue Paving** – W&L Construction has the contract from VDOT and has already taken a core sample from the street to determine its depth. Paving should be completed mid-to-late Summer 2019.
- **New Grants** – Currently working on a Drug-free Community grant, due July 8th, up to $125k per year for 5 years – need authorization to sign necessary certifications and submit.

  * It was the consensus of the Council to pursue this grant application process next year.

  * Also, submitting a Planning Grant application to DHCD for a housing assessment so that we can apply next March for housing rehabilitation funds – need authorization to submit application.

  * Ms. Seymore made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to submit the Planning Grant application to DHCD, as requested. Mr. Greer 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

### Old Business

Mayor McCrady discussed the prospect of turning Creeper Way and Bank Street into one-way streets, as well as Cemetery Ridge Road (which is a VDOT road). This has been sent to the Town’s VDOT contact person for reviewing because of accidents on that road.

Mr. Blevins has not yet heard from VDOT on an assessment of what they plan to do with that street. Depending on what VDOT does with it would determine how functional a one way would be on Cemetery Ridge/Red Hill.

Mr. Blevins stated that once he is notified by VDOT of their determination, he will need to confer with Chief Hounshell on developing a plan before pursuing it.

### New Business

Deposition of Property – Consideration of vacating property at North Railroad Avenue from First Street to an undeveloped alley (known as “Old White Street”). The vacated property has been proposed to be distributed to adjacent landowners. The Council came to a consensus to move forward with obtaining the necessary information prior to scheduling a Public Hearing.

### Council Members Reports

Ms. Van de Vuurst discussed Sunday morning traffic in front of the churches on Laurel Ave. Drivers are not abiding by the law to stop and let pedestrians cross at the crosswalks, and partly because the vehicles parked along Laurel Ave. are blocking the view of the people waiting to cross. Chief Turner agreed come out Sunday morning to observe the crosswalk situation.

Ms. Albro mentioned the National Night Out, Community Watch Program. Chief Turner responded that there used to be a Neighborhood Watch group in Damascus, but a lot of the people who were part of the group eventually lost interest. The Council discussed organizing this for next year.

Ms. Seymore discussed an ongoing situation with a local vagrant littering around a certain area of the Creeper Trail. Captain Turner said they would have to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the person mentioned is the one littering, so will look at placing a surveillance camera near the area.
Ms. Seymore also discussed trees growing through rocks on the Creeper Trail and asked Public Works could come (the problem area is behind Richard Smith’s house). Mr. Greer agreed to have them go by and look at the situation.

Mayor McCrady mentioned that Mr. Blevins and Chief Hounshell have found a noise ordinance that has been adopted and tested in court (and accompanied with a $300 fine if violated) by the Town of Abingdon, and the Town of Damascus needs to do the same. Mr. Blevins replied that he will contact the Town Attorney about pursuing an amended noise ordinance.

Citizens Comments

Nothing at this time.

Announcements

UPCOMING EVENTS & OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

➢ July 3rd, 2019 Independence Day Celebration
➢ Town Hall and offices will be closed on July 4th and 5th, to observe the statewide holiday.

For information on upcoming events, visit our website www.visitdamascus.org

Consent Agenda

• Mr. Hayes made a motion to pay the bills for invoices exceeding $500, 2nd by Ms. Van de Vuurst; the motion passed (6-0).

• Mr. Greer made a motion to pay the bills, 2nd by Ms. Albro; the motion passed (6-0).

• Mr. Greer made a motion to go into Closed Session for personnel matters, per VA Code section 2.2-3711(A)(1). Ms. Seymore 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

• Mr. Williams made a motion to return to open session, 2nd by Ms. Van de Vuurst. The motion passed (6-0).

• Mr. Hayes made a motion to certify, 2nd by Ms. Van de Vuurst The motion passed (6-0).

• Ms. Van de Vuurst made a motion to adjourn, 2nd by Ms. Albro. The motion passed (6-0).

____________________ ____________________ ________________________________
Jack McCrady, Mayor Tuesday Pope, Clerk