

Council Minutes
Workshop Meeting
August 26, 2024 - 6:30 p.m. - 502 Front St. E, Coeburn, VA

Attendees:

Upon roll call, the following members of Council were present: Carles Collins, Deventae Mooney, Joe Still and Sharon Still. Jeff Kiser was absent. Jimmy Williams - Town Manager, Cathy Sharpe - Clerk/Treasurer, and William Sturgill - Town Attorney, were also present.

Call to Order:

Mayor Deventae Mooney called the meeting to order. Mr. Joe Still gave the invocation. The group remained standing for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. Mooney.

Public Expression:

Mr. Yusef Thornton, 743 Plum Avenue, voiced concern over comments made at the last meeting. Mr. Thornton feels that Ms. Still's comment to another town employee was abrasive, and he has been bothered by it enough to address it at this meeting. Mr. Thornton said the comment telling the coworker to do their job and they get paid by the hour was uncalled for along with the question of how much the employee is paid an hour. Mr. Thornton felt this was belittling. He said he approached Council in December about safety issues on the garbage truck, and reminded Council that the job places a great deal of stress on the body. Picking up trash is a job that goes on every day regardless of the heat, cold or inclement weather. Mr. Thornton said the crew does their job in all kinds of weather. He said he is also bothered by the fact that only three members of Council checked on him after his attack in Litchfield. Mr. Thornton feels that Council goes back on what they say publicly, citing that they were promised a closed session with Council in July, and July has come and gone with no meeting.

Mr. Thornton brought up Council's comments to Mr. Jeff Kiser about the proper chain of command when requesting action from town employees and mentioned that there was a call from a member of Council on a Friday regarding some trash that needed to be picked up after the ten-day grace period had passed mandating use of the green cans. Mr. Thornton said he feels Council doesn't understand today's economy. He said his father worked two jobs to raise a family and Mr. Thornton said that even in a two-income home today, it is a struggle. He said employees speaking at meetings is not an attack but an effort to get on the same page and reminded Council that it is a group effort to keep the town running. Mr. Thornton said it is a slap in the face that the town pays what it pays to the employees that are picking up trash and will spend \$15,000.00 on trash cans without blinking an eye. Mr. Thornton reminded Council that it's a tough job, it's tough being on call and missing events and that he likes his job. He said he has had the job for two years and doesn't have bad days on the job. He reminded Council that the town logo says, "the home of friendly people" and wishes Council would express that sentiment more, along with more compassion.

Sharon Still said that her comment was misunderstood and didn't mean for the employee to disclose his pay rate. Ms. Still was trying to articulate that the job pays by the hour, regardless of the time it takes to empty a trash can. Ms. Still said she did not mean for the comment to be ugly and apologized for how it came out. She did not remember saying "do your job" and apologized for the comment and the misunderstanding and did not mean to hurt anyone's feelings. Ms. Still said her husband, Mr. Joe Still, mentioned to her after the meeting that she was wrong in saying those things. Mr. Still made the call to check on Mr. Thornton after his incident and Ms. Still said she was there with him, and it was both of them checking on Mr. Thornton. Ms. Still reiterated that she apologizes and appreciates the work the crew does.

Mr. Jeffrey Proulex, 847 Laurel Avenue, attended the meeting to hear Council's response to the concern he voiced last week and to express concern that it appears no extra effort has been put into cleaning the town before the Guest River Rally. He said the streets still look dirty, and the sidewalks are not clean. Mr. Proulex is pleased that the flags are up but is concerned that there is little effort put into cleaning streets and sidewalks and the depot area doesn't look like it has been cleaned. Mr. Proulex said he does appreciate the work public works does for the town, but he feels like they are understaffed and need help. Mr. Proulex reminded the group that he is not there to point fingers at anyone but to work toward a common goal.

Mr. Jeff Collins, 202 Alfred Avenue, said he has not been to a meeting in a while, but said the last time he attended he asked for the town's website to have the ordinances, resolutions and zoning information on it, and they are still not on there for the public to access. Mr. Collins is also concerned about a house on his street that is in disrepair. Ms. Still said the house has a new owner. Mr. Collins said he has asked Council to drive by and see what he has to deal with. He said overgrowth from that property is scratching his vehicles and his boat. Mr. Collins asked Town Manager, Jimmy Williams, to work with the county to condemn the property. Mr. Collins said he understood the property had been condemned in the past. He feels like there is a problem with communication between the town and county to move forward to take care of these blighted properties. Mr. Collins suggested inviting the representative from the Board of Supervisors to the town meetings, so they are aware of the issues the town is facing. Mayor Mooney said that the Board of Supervisors are aware of the meeting dates. Mr. Collins said that the county gets funding that is not distributed to the towns and that needs to be looked into. He said money is tight everywhere and towns struggle just like families do. Mr. Collins said that the town website needs to be like the county's website and have access to ordinances so people can know what they say. Mr. Collins said the house situation needs to be taken care of.

Ms. Kaye Lawson, Sandy Ridge, owner of Kay J's Floral, 507 Front Street West, addressed Council and the audience and said that everyone needs to follow the trash crew and see what the job entails. Ms. Lawson sees them working three days a week and knows they work hard and do a good job.

Public Expression was closed.

Response to Public Expression:

Council responded to Public Expression from the August 12, 2024, meeting.

Mayor Mooney expressed his gratitude to the citizens who attended the last meeting and those who were present at the meeting. He said he agrees with Mr. Proulex that it does take a village, and everyone needs to contribute positively rather than just focusing on the negative. Mr. Mooney hopes all will bring that energy forward to make Coeburn all that it can be. Mr. Mooney and Ms. Still met with the Virginia Department of Energy last year to explore possible grant opportunities and assistance to the town. The cost of dredging the creek was astronomical and outside of the town's budget. In July of 2022, Mr. Mooney raised the same issue as Mr. Proulex regarding trash bags covering the windows of businesses on Front Street. At the time, Mr. Mooney was told the town couldn't dictate the appearance of windows due to an outdated ordinance. Mr. Mooney asked Mr. Jimmy Williams and Mr. William Sturgill what can be done about the businesses on Front Street. Ms. Still said that she thought there was an ordinance in place where windows could not be covered, allowing police to see into the storefronts as they patrol. Mr. Sturgill said there is an ordinance that says the windows can't be covered.

Mr. Mooney said that when he walked the streets a few weeks ago, the streets seemed pretty clean to him. He said he saw three streetlights out and forwarded a picture of them to Mr. Jeff Livingston for repair. Mr. Mooney said he knows that the town crew washed the stage area and the Farmer's Market area and started down Front Street. He said he had a complaint from a business owner about the mess on the windows from the pressure washing. The town does face a challenge with the streetlights because the original models are no longer manufactured. To replace a light will mean replacing all the lights along Front Street, and financial constraints have kept the town from moving forward with that project. The Farmer's Market has signs to notify people that it is not a drop off area for clothes, shoes, etc. and public works regularly disposes of items left there. A bench has been removed to prevent people from sleeping in that area. An ordinance about loitering was passed and Mr. Mooney encouraged people to notify the police department if they see someone breaking that ordinance.

Mr. Mooney said when he was voted in as Mayor, Council was bombarded with complaints and requests. Mr. Mooney feels that these were ongoing issues and needed attention and the frustration expressed was due to a change in leadership. Mr. Mooney said his goal is to have Coeburn return to a place where everyone feels safe and welcome. He said he agrees with comments when people say the town feels divided. Mr. Mooney said the Coeburn Improvement Association does a good job planning events, and he tries to attend all events if he can, but he cannot say the same for the group attending the events he organizes, the Back to School Bash and the Home for the Holidays events. Mr. Mooney said he is committed to helping the town move forward and has contacted Camp 18 and workers will be sent every Wednesday to assist with cleaning the town.

Mr. Mooney suggested that any requests for specific jobs be forwarded to Mr. Williams. He asked Mr. Williams to contact people in violation of the town ordinances and hold them accountable for the state of their properties. Mr. Mooney said that the ordinance concerning the covering of windows needs to be enforced. He urged Mr. Williams to prioritize grant deadlines and submit applications in a timely manner to secure funding for the town. Mr. Mooney needs Mr. Garry Taylor to give him a specific address of the property that he was concerned about in his neighborhood, before he can look into the matter he spoke about at the last meeting.

Ms. Still said Mr. Mooney covered almost everything on her list. She said it is always a good thing for citizens to come together to work towards the revitalization of the town. Ms. Still said it is not good to compare our town to others when all of them are facing the same problems. The police department is working to enforce laws and ordinances, and the Farmer's Market area has been posted and people are encouraged to take the items to the local clothes closet, or the town will dispose of the items. The storefront owners will need to be contacted and reminded of the ordinance to have their windows uncovered. Ms. Still said she will continue to ask for the downtown beautification grant and for Coeburn to be part of the Mainstreet VA program. She reminded everyone that there is a process to contact owners and have properties cleaned up. If the landowner does not comply, the property will be condemned, and another process begins to have the property demolished and cleaned up. The Department of Energy said that Coeburn was put on the list to have the creek cleaned out and the cost was in the neighborhood of \$85,000.00. The town is doing what it can with what money is available. Ms. Still said she is community-minded and wishes she had the answers to correct the issues the town is dealing with.

Mr. Joe Still said that when he contacted the Department of Energy to clean the creek, his purpose was twofold. One reason was the benefit of controlling flooding, and the other was to have an alternate water source for fighting fires. Mr. Still said his contact at the Department of Energy put Coeburn on the list, and it's still there as far as he knows. He said the department is more concerned about cleaning up gob piles and mine reclamation. Mr. Still said Mr. Mooney did meet and discuss having the creeks cleaned and having the banks reinforced. He said that he and Ms. Still were acquainted with a group of citizens from St. Paul that were working to improve their town and met twice a month, and it has been beneficial to the town. Mr. Still said he is community minded and worked in the town in the past. He said he appreciates all the work that the public works department does and appreciates their participation in the Council meetings.

Mr. Proulex said that he and his wife discussed instilling pride and how to go about that. Mr. Proulex said that maybe working with the children and schools and involving them in the community will help to lay the foundation for pride in the town and being part of the community.

Ms. Still said there are all kinds of grants available, and all grants need to have a plan ready for the application process to begin.

Ms. Kaye Lawson expressed concern about an area being used as a dumping ground and the flood hazards it is causing. Council is aware and the problem has been reported.

Approval of the Agenda:

Sharon Still made a motion to add New Business (A.) John Perry - Spearhead Trails to the agenda. Mr. Carles Collins seconded the motion, which resulted in all Ayes.

Sharon Still made a motion to move New Business (A.) John Perry - Spearhead Trails to before reports. Joe Still seconded the motion, which resulted in all Ayes.

Deventae Mooney made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Sharon Still seconded the motion, which resulted in all Ayes.

New Business:

- A. John Perry-Spearhead Trails - Mr. Perry said he has been with the agency for about three days, so he's not sure the last time a representative was present was at a Council meeting. Mr. Perry has reached out to discuss the renewal of the ATV roadway permit. VDOT copied Spearhead on the renewal notice. Mr. Perry presented Council with an informational map, with routes color coded. The section of the map that is coded with an orange line includes the area in and around Dale Ridge. There are two ponds on that property that the town allows people to fish in. Spearhead Trails focuses on economic development of the areas they operate in. Mr. Perry said he supports the town's renewal of the VDOT permit and said Spearhead will purchase the needed signage with money received from a grant. Mr. Perry said if the permit is not renewed, people will not be able to ride from the trailhead to the businesses in town. The yellow route needs to be looked into further and includes businesses that can't be accessed with the current roads available. The route does include some roadways that are in the county. The development of new trails in the Dale Ridge area, or into town will be something that will be looked into as well. Ms. Still said it would be good to look into picnic areas and fishing permits in the Dale Ridge area.

Mr. Williams will need to apply to renew the permit as it is expiring this month. The original permit needs to have updated verbiage due to speed limits changing from 25 miles per hour to 35 miles per hour in some areas. The town ordinance dealing with the purchase of permits needs to be clarified to specify that the permit is not to be used as a primary mode of transportation, but a permit is specifically for people riding on the trail and to and from gas stations, restaurants, etc. The town ordinance needs to specify that a Spearhead Trails permit is needed and the wording about purchasing a permit at town hall needs to be removed. Also, the section regarding residents of town traveling to and from trailheads is covered as long as they are driving to and from their residence to a trailhead to avoid trailering their ATV the short distance to an approved road. Mr. Perry said Pocahontas has turned into an ATV town, and it is structured like this, residents and renters can ride to and from trailheads from their homes or rental properties as long as they have the Spearhead Trails permit and are not just riding around town. Mr. Perry said this is a selling point to businesses to know accessibility is available. Ms. Still said the ordinance will need to address areas where the speed limits on the roads traveling to the trails are higher than 35 miles per hour and specify the permit is for people to use the trailheads. Spearhead Trails would like to make every county uniform so the trailheads can be utilized with similar rules across the counties.

Reports:

Fire Department

There was no representative from the fire department present.

Police Department

Mr. Travis Mullins, Police Chief, stated that much of what he had to discuss was just covered while speaking with Mr. Perry. He said the department is working with community service workers for town cleanup. Chief Mullins will be going to Bristol to sign for the funding the department was awarded. The business checks can be done faster with SOMA and will have time stamps as they are completed. Some of the items that have been left at the park and farmers market have been left by well-meaning individuals and Mr. Mullins has spoken with the church to see if they will take the items left so they are not wasted or thrown away. He said some of the items come from the church and people take what they want and leave the rest. Work is ongoing to correct this problem. Word is spreading about the loitering ordinance, and it seems to be helping the situation.

Water Plant

There was no representative from the water plant present. Mr. Jimmy Williams, Town Manager, informed Council that the pump is going out in the Powerstown water pump station. He advised Boggs Municipal feels it needs to be replaced. There is not an exact quote, but it may be around \$8,000.00. Ms. Still said she doesn't understand why the pump is worn out and would like a second opinion. Mr. Williams would like to have Buchanan Pump look at the pump. Mr. Mooney asked about the pump in Maytown. Mr. Williams said that the Maytown pump station has one pump that is down, and it has been removed and the other pump is having issues. The pump station has not worked well since May of 2023. Mr. Willard Boggs, Boggs Municipal, is contacting the manufacturer regarding replacement parts and suggestions about how to get that up and running. The bladder that is inside the pump station is supposed to be filled with air and is filling with water and the pump is displaying low voltage warnings. Mr. Williams said Boggs Municipal can't give a timeline but will make it a priority. He said he will talk to The Lane Group to see if there is a way to bypass the pump. Mr. Williams said Boggs Municipal will get it fixed.

Town Manager

Mr. Jimmy Williams, Town Manager, said one of the pumps had to be pulled at the sewer pump station in Sheffield. The pump was bogged down by mop strings and not able to function, which affected the other pump, and neither could run. The blades on the bottom of the pumps are only about two inches. Mr. Williams and Council discussed choppers and grinders. Mr. Joe Still suggested that a chopper would allow the mops to pass. Mr. Williams said he saw a video of a chopper that Buchanan Pump has that would be a better fit. Mr. Williams will speak to Buchanan Pump about a chopper.

Mr. Williams reported that the meter tester could be used at a location with the meter in the ground without having to pull the meter and take the meter into the shop to test. This could determine if the water meters are reading correctly. The meter tester would be used if there is a question of whether the meter is reading incorrectly. There would be a fee if nothing is found to be wrong with the meter.

Mr. Mooney would like to check on ordinances concerning the covering of the windows and have letters sent to those businesses in violation of the ordinance. He said it is not permissible to live in the front of the business. Mr. Williams spoke with a person thought to be living in the store front. The person said they are not living in the store front but have an apartment in the back or upstairs. Mr. Mooney asked if the police chief or town manager could go in and see if people were living in the store fronts. Chief Mullins said that the uncovered windows would most likely take care of that. Mr. Still asked about the dogs living in the store front. Mr. Mullins said there is only an issue if the dogs are reported to be living in unfit conditions or are out in violation of the leash law. Mr. Mooney said that the ordinance needs to state that any business on Front Street zoned commercial must have the window uncovered.

Mr. Mooney asked about the letters Mr. Williams sent out to properties that need cleaned up. Mr. Williams said the property on Laurel is in the process of being cleaned and has had a structure removed and the grass cut. The people are in the process of removing the trash. The property on May Avenue that Mr. Taylor was concerned about is owned by a company in Florida and they are in the process of evicting the people living on the property. Mr. Williams is still working on the Seventh Street property. Chief Mullins is working with Building and Zoning and the Health Department to see if they can be of any assistance.

Ms. Still asked about the paving in the town. Mr. Williams said that the town's paver is in bad shape and the whole exhaust system needs to be replaced. Mr. David Collins can make a pipe to fit the paver, or the paver also has the option of using a propane heater to keep the asphalt hot. Mr. Williams said that the town's paver is so large there is no trailer the town owns that will haul it and a trailer would need to be purchased to haul it. Ms. Still asked if a trailer could be rented to haul the paver as needed. Mr. Williams said that Boyd Construction will charge \$200.00 a ton to lay the pavement down. He said the town's roller is usable but doesn't have brakes and can only be used on flat ground. Ms. Still said that those can be rented at Southwest Tool Rental. Mr. Mooney would like to have proposals about someone else doing the paving or the town doing repairs and the paving. He said the asphalt plant will be closing soon. The road to the track needs to be paved. Mr. Williams said that having Boyd Construction do the paving would have them there with all the equipment needed to do the job.

Public Works

Mr. Jeff Livingston, Public Works Supervisor, reported that the pump was pulled at Sheffield and cleaned, setters were repaired on May Avenue and Cranes Nest Road, and leaks were repaired on Prospect, Trent, Chalet, and Valleyview. Public works has completed 145 work orders since the last meeting.

Mr. Joe Still asked how much more pipe at Sheffield needs to be replaced. Mr. Livingston said it is replaced as it breaks. Mr. Williams said the pipe is laid on hard rock and the movement of the water caused it to vibrate against the rock.

Mr. Still thanked Mr. Livingston and his department for all the work they do for the town.

Mr. Williams asked Mr. Livingston about the Consolidated Pipe order about the \$7,600.00. Mr. Livingston said it is for restocking the town's supplies.

The Lane Group

There was no representative present from The Lane Group present.

Treasurer Report

Ms. Cathy Sharpe, Clerk/Treasurer, reported a posted cash balance of \$203,225.11 as of 8/22/2024. She reported \$93,110.32 in outstanding checks, accounts payable due in the amount of \$1,779.00 and interim accounts payable in the amount of \$84,290.07. After deducting the accounts payable due and outstanding checks, the reconciled cash balance was \$108,335.79.

Ms. Sharpe informed Council the minutes from the August 12, 2024, public hearing meeting and August 12, 2024, regular meeting will be distributed in the September 9, 2024, council packets.

Ms. Sharpe reported three additional deposits since reports had been presented for the meeting. Thursday's deposit was \$456.39, Friday's deposit was \$4,148.17 and today's deposit was \$1,154.99, making the combined cash availability of \$114,095.34.

Attorney Report

Mr. William Sturgill, Town Attorney, said he has taken notes on the changes to the ATV ordinance and will work with Chief Mullins and Council to make those changes. Mr. Sturgill will also be working on the proposed changes to the ordinance regarding store fronts.

Old Business:

There was no old business to discuss.

Closed Session:

There was no need to enter into Closed Session.

Council Comments and Concerns:

Carles Collins - Mr. Collins had no comments or concerns.

Joe Still - Mr. Still thanked everyone who is involved in the operations of this town. He said those people are the heart of the town and the reason the town functions. Mr. Still said the Guest River Rally is approaching and he always looks forward to that event and knows it does require additional work. Mr. Still appreciates Mr. Proulx coming to the meeting and reminded him of the work the group in St. Paul does to secure grants. Mr. Still is interested in working together to make improvements in the town. He told Mr. Jimmy Williams he wouldn't have his job for anything. Mr. Still knows the number of calls Mr. Williams gets regarding problems in the town. He said

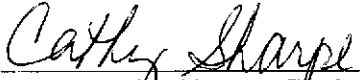
that he knows a town has to have four things: good water coming in, bad water going out, trash collection, and law enforcement. If any of those things fail, there are problems. Mr. Williams is over all that in a sense and hears all the complaints along with all of the other issues. Mr. Still thanked Mr. Williams, and thanked Mr. Sturgill for keeping the town legal.

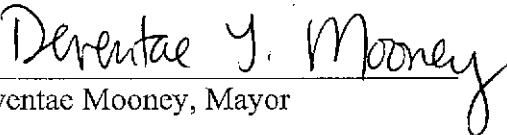
Sharon Still - Ms. Still apologized again for her comments made during the last meeting. She said to come up for a slushy at the pool and she is deeply sorry and did not mean for the comments to come out the way it was taken. Ms. Still thanked public works for all the work they do. She said she was listening in on the call when Mr. Still called to check on Mr. Thornton. Ms. Still said public works are the ones keeping the water on and the town clean and she understands what a difficult and necessary job that is. She also thanked Mr. William Sturgill and Ms. Cathy Sharpe for the work they do for the town. Ms. Still thanked Mr. Carles Collins and Mr. Jimmy Williams for all they do for the town as well. She said when she goes out on a job, she is not checking up on someone but is checking in on a citizen's complaint so she can see what the issue is and what is going on. Ms. Still also appreciates Mr. Mooney.

Deventae Mooney - Mr. Mooney is thankful for the town and appreciates everyone and all the work they do.

Adjournment:

Mr. Deventae Mooney made a motion to adjourn this meeting. Ms. Sharon Still seconded the motion, which resulted in all Ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Attest: Cathy Sharpe, Clerk


Deventae Mooney, Mayor