

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia, held in the Council Chambers located at 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia, on Monday, March 20, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: L. Benjamin Green

Council Members: Wesley Gormus, Lloyette Wynn, Christopher Page, Carolyn Williams, Nathaniel Miller, Eric Nash, Jake Allman

Town Staff: Philip Vannoorbeeck, Town Manager; Jennifer Daniel, Town Clerk; Jackie Brown, Bookkeeper; Brittany Harris, Treasurer; Chastiddy Bryant, Community Development Specialist; Zac Beares, Deputy Fire Chief; Sam Murphy, Detective

Town Attorney:

Those Absent:

Mayor Green called the March Council Meeting to order.

Reverend Chris Hillman delivered the Invocation.

Mayor Green led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Green read the following for Women's Month:

*As many of you may know, March is women's history month. This is the month that we pay homage to women across the world for the amazing accomplishments they have done to make this world a better place. With so many contributions from women throughout the years and with women still making strides and being "firsts" in history, it is important to honor these accomplishments. This is not limited to inventors, trailblazers, and historians. We want to honor all women including mothers, business owners, and women that work day in and day out to provide for their families. These are the true unsung heroes of the world. Women have taken on roles in society that many years ago would not have been accepted. Some have taken on feats that many of us cannot imagine. We celebrate women's history month for three main reasons So little girls can feel empowered, so little boys can appreciate all that women do, and so, women's history is not erased. As former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who established the first National Women's History Week in 1980, proclaimed, "Too often, the women were unsung and sometimes their contributions went unnoticed." Here, in Blackstone Virginia we will not let the accomplishments of women go unnoticed and we appreciate all the hard work and dedication that women do each and every day. As a father, husband, and the Mayor of Blackstone I am honored to celebrate Women's History Month and would like to thank the women in my family, on this Council, in this office, in the Town of Blackstone and all over the world for everything you do.*

**MINUTES:**

*Councilman Miller made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented minutes from the Special Called Meetings on February 8, 2023 and February 17, 2023. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.*

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

**VISITORS:**

Councilman Miller said he attended Blackstone Primary School over the weekend. He said Mayor Green just read about women, and the people that conducted the program at the school were women. He said it was a wonderful program. He said we hear bad things in the newspaper about the School Board and youth, but this program showed a good part of the School Board. He tipped his hat to the group.

A person from the audience said they did a Motown Showdown in February, and the Fashion show was this past weekend.

Councilman Miller asked those that participated in the event this past weekend to stand. He said he was glad to see the parents supporting their kids, we like that in Nottoway County.

Pride of Blackstone GLOW – girls in attendance were Zahmoni Jones, Randy Raiford and Gabrielle Scott.

Councilman Miller recognized the Coaches; Ms. Ellen Eppes, Ms. Aerial Eppes, Ms. Cynthia Wilson Hayes, and Ms. Chastiddy Bryant.

*Ms. Beverly Ambs – Fourth Street*

Ms. Ambs said she would like to address some things from last month's Council Meeting that have been bothering her. She said she was surprised by the way the Public Hearing was handled. She said she could understand a three minute time limit for speaking, but to tell the audience not to come to the podium if they are going to repeat things already said, does not allow your constituents the opportunity to have their public opinions heard. She said one of the problems in Blackstone is the lack of confidence the public has about voicing their concerns or opinions with Council. She said the way last month's Public Hearing was handled, just reinforces those thoughts. She said the citizens of Blackstone are the people that put you in those seats and they are the people you need to listen to and answer to. She said they can take you out of those seats as well. She said they deserve value and since you chose to run for office to represent them, they deserve your respect and attention.

Ms. Ambs said the Juneteenth Celebration continues to come to Council and the business owners are just ignored. She said shutting down Main Street and putting vendors along the parking spaces in front of the sidewalks blocks the entrances to the businesses open on Saturdays. She said these businesses pay taxes to the Town and should have the courtesy of being able to have a normal weekend work day. She said there are other locations to hold this event without restricting the business owners. She said when a business owner came to Council about a side street that her business in on, not be closed, she was basically dismissed. She asked if Council valued one event over those businesses' that are open on weekends and pay their taxes.

Ms. Ambs said in the past the Juneteenth Committee has placed food vendors in front of restaurants, thus causing those restaurants to close for the day or to close early. She asked if that was fair to the businesses who are consistently open and paying taxes. She said she was not against celebrating Juneteenth; it is just how it has been handled in the past. She said we should be able to work together and share this event. She said in the vision of equity, nobody should be entitled to cause businesses to shut down, just so another group can come in and celebrate a holiday. Ms. Ambs said the previous Mayor made the suggestion with little thought to the consequences of this act.

Ms. Ambs said again on Juneteenth, for three years the Committee has come to the Town and asked for \$5,000.00 for this event. She said she understood the seed money for the first year, but to continue to use Town funds to finance this event after the citizens have been told how successful it has been, how much the sponsorships were, they should be self-sufficient. She said if budgeted properly, that should not be a problem. She said the first two years the Committee told people, businesses and sponsors that they were tax exempt when they did not have a 501c3. She said now they say they have done the paperwork, but has anyone seen it. She asked if it was planned that the Juneteenth Committee will come to the Town every year for \$5,000.00, regardless of anything else. She said as a citizen of the Town, she saw better usage of funds to help the community in need. She said Juneteenth should already be established. She said Main Street is closed and restricts businesses, then the Town continues to financially support this event with little or no thought for needs of the whole community, what are we telling our constituents.

Ms. Ambs said Ms. Julie Krake and her Second Saturday Art Walk came to Council and requested the banner fees be waived for seven months. She said then she asked to not have to pay for use of the Town Square for those seven months as well. She said Council decided last summer to only allow non-profits to use the property for free. She said Councilman Page suggested Ms. Krake go to the non-profit, at that time the Chamber, and get them to use the property without payment. She said that offer should never have been made by a sitting councilman. She said both Councilman Page and Ms. Krake are sitting board members of the Chamber, and Ms. Krake is President of the Rotary. She said using their position with the non-profits for this property usage would show favoritism to specific businesses and members. She said remember this request is for seven months.

Mayor Green asked Ms. Ambs if she had something in writing she could leave, so he could address them between now and the next meeting.

Mayor Green said he did not tell anyone they could not speak, he suggested they not make the point twice, we had a very lengthy agenda. He said there is no way in the world this Mayor would ever tell someone they could not come up and speak. He said he suggested if someone made your point, let it stand at that. He disagreed with Ms. Ambs and said we respect our citizens and constituents. He said Mrs. Lashway was not ignored, staff reached out and tried to get a meeting, which he volunteered to attend, and there was no cooperation.

Councilman Page said if you go back and watch the meeting, he never once offered the Square or banner fees be waived for Ms. Krake. He said she had a funding request for Council to support the event, and he suggested it go through the Chamber, which she is a member of. Ms. Ambs said those requests should not have come from Councilman Page; she saw that as a conflict.

### **FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT:**

Deputy Chief Beares thanked Council for the floors, that was huge. He said all vehicles were back at the Fire Station. He thanked the Town for use of the Bus Shop while the floors were being painted.

Deputy Chief Beares said they would be doing a fundraiser at McDonald's on April 29, 2023 for their ribbon cutting. He said they would be having their Easter Egg Hunt on April 8, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.

Deputy Chief Beares said Firefighter Christopher Parrish passed his Firefighter II. He said the arrival for the Ladder Truck was still set for October 2023. He said Milton Lawson has 24 years of service, Ryan Nash has 21 years, and Captain Devin Foster and Timmothy Immekus both have 8 years of service.

Mayor Green asked Deputy Chief Beares what he needed from Council about their LED sign. Deputy Chief Beares said it is Town owned, and they want clarification on what can be put on the sign.

Mayor Green asked Manager Vannoorbeeck if we could reach out to Chief Tomer and bring a proposal to Council next month. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, sure. Deputy Chief Beares said he had been working on something and would send it to them.

**PAYMENT OF BILLS:**

Mayor Green stated the bills that have already been paid are in the amount of \$731,238.39.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bills that have already been paid in the amount of \$731,238.39. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Councilman Nash asked about Howerton Inspections in the amount of \$2,495.00, should that be reimbursed. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, it should be.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

Mayor Green stated the bills not yet approved, and to be paid, are in the amount of \$337,309.66.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve as presented, the bills not yet paid in the amount of \$337,309.66. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.***

Councilman Miller said the attorney fees in the amount of \$2,490.00 were outrageous.

Mayor Green said he was going to add a Closed Session for Personnel tonight as Council, and would discuss attorney fees then.

Councilman Nash asked about the invoice from NorthWest Hardware for culvert pipe for Workforce Housing, is that reimbursable. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, yes, it was put in at Broad and Hurt Street.

Councilman Nash asked about the Cemetery and Edmonds Waste Removal providing a port-o-potty. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the expense was worth it, as employees were extending breaks going back to the shop.

Councilman Nash asked about the LCCDC Building and Lorene Building Supply. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it was for commercial doors, but they sent the wrong size. He added Mr. Jason Stokes got prices.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

### **APPROPRIATIONS:**

Manager Vannoorbeeck said East End Phase II, we were obligated to do renovations on 11 homes, and to date 10 homes had been done. He said one applicant passed away. He said the obligations have been met, but there is one house in tough shape. He said all the funding was used, so we reached out to DHCD and they awarded the Town \$34,688.00 for renovations on this house. He said they also extended the time from May to August to get the work done, and increases the amount on the Agreement.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the Appropriation in the amount of \$34,688.00 as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.***

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**1. Fire & Water – met 3-7-23 – minutes included in March’s Council Packet**

Hydrant Testing

Councilman Allman said they discussed hydrant testing for proper flow in Town. He said they asked for a list of priority hydrants to be tested so they can be included in the Budget each year.

Landlord Certification Forms

Councilman Allman said Chief Tomer provided a sample form. Councilman Nash added, it mainly addresses smoke detectors.

***Councilman Allman made a motion to add a second page to the Landlord Certification Form for the tenant and landlord to sign. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.***

Councilman Page asked if this form would be provided when turning on electric service. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he did not know the administration of this yet, but it is intended for every tenant and landlord to sign this form.

Councilman Page asked what if this form is not signed. Councilman Nash replied, if the landlord signs it, they are agreeing, and will be a liability on the landlord.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

Water Meters

Councilman Allmans said they discussed the problems with the new water meters, and Manager Vannoorbeeck was stern with the vendor, because it was so expensive, we want to be sure to get accurate readings for our citizens. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Book 1 was completed. Treasurer Harris said Book 2 would be completed by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the meters are here, but we were not getting the service we felt we should be getting.

### Crewe Water Line

Councilman Allman said we spoke about this and options. He said he and Manager Vannoorbeeck met with some members of the County and members of Council from Crewe. He said they were working on a joint way to fix this, as long as it does not negatively impact the citizens of Blackstone.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said they told Crewe it was unlikely, if at all, that the Town of Blackstone would sell water to the Town of Crewe at less than it sells to the In Town residents of Blackstone. He said we explained that the Town's estimations were made on a 500,000 gallon a day customer, which is not a part time customer to Blackstone. He said they told Crewe they needed the State Facilities to get to the 500,00 gallons a day. He said they quoted \$11.47 per thousand gallons that was based on 500,000 gallons of usage.

### Fire Department – Bay Flooring

Councilman Allman said this was discussed and it performs great.

### Ladder Truck

Councilman Allman said the truck was still being worked on, and there would be a midway check to be sure everything was correct.

### Fire Training Grounds – Burn Building

Councilman Allman said a Policy for usage was being worked on.

## **2. Street & Light – met 3-7-23 – minutes included in March's Council Packet**

### 222 Forest Drive Ditch

Councilman Miller said during the Committee Meeting he made a motion to install two culverts, cut the ditch along Forest Drive to the entrance of 221 Forest Drive, and clean out ditches below 222 Forest Drive.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said these ditches are on public property. He believed this would take some of the water from 222 Forest Drive and discharge it at the pump station. He believed the property owner of 222 Forest Drive wanted the culvert that was installed to stay.

Councilman Gormus said the property owner wants the pipe, but wants it right.



Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. Divers was offered to install the culvert correctly, and he chose not to. Councilman Gormus asked who installed it. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town installed it, he was told he needed a drop inlet in the culvert, but Mr. Divers said he did not want to pay for it, and was satisfied with what he had when the pipe was put in.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said his recommendation was to remove the pipe all together because it serves no purpose, without a drop inlet. He said Council voted to install a box two doors down. He said as it stands right now, Mr. Divers has chosen an option that caused water to go under this house.

Councilman Gormus said it is not sloped and draining to where it belongs, so that is causing it to go under this house, from the land next door.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. Divers' claim is the water is coming off from across the street. He said this is what the Committee chose to do. He said if you want to do it correctly, we can do that, but the way it is right now is not correct, it is a train wreck.

Councilman Gormus said this is comparable to the address on South Main Street, where the driveway is being corrected, that was done by somebody else and the Town is going to correct, is that private property? Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, no it is on public property.

Councilman Gormus asked if the ditch and driveway at Mr. Divers' was on public property. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the ditch that goes adjacent and parallel to his house is on private property, and does need to be cleaned out.

Councilman Gormus asked if the pump station where the water will flow to, has issues already. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied no, the issues come from the Chinese Restaurant at the Food Lion Shopping Center, they dump grease in the sewer.

Councilman Allman said where the water comes under the street, the one across the street will be plugged so the water will run under the road and go down the street.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Pump Station on Forest Drive was relatively new, but the issues we have are grease and inflow and infiltration. Councilman Gormus asked Manager Vannoorbeeck if he had spoken to the restaurants. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, we have.

Mayor Green asked if there was a grease trap regulation. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the State Code has regulations, but there are multiple restaurants in Town that do not have grease traps.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said all the work being proposed on Forest Drive will be on public property.

***Councilman Miller made a motion to approve the Committee's recommendation. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.***

Manager Vannoorbeeck expected to use Town forces for this work, but may have to have B&B Consultants to help with grades and property lines.

Councilman Gormus said one part of this would include a culvert under a driveway. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes, on the east side.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

36 Ridge Road Ditch

***Councilman Allman made a motion to deny the request to clean out the ditch, as it is on private property. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Mayor Green asked if there was anything to do with Kenston to try to help. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he could talk to Bob Gunn. He said this is Rodman Wright's house, and Manager Palmore was going to do something over there previously because drawings had been prepared.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Kenston is out of Town limits, but the right of way goes just past Forest Drive.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Abstain

Councilman Gormus said he abstained because he was not familiar with the situation.

328 Brown Street Ditch

Councilman Miller said this is Shiloh Baptist Church. He said this was tabled until Manager Vannoorbeeck talked to Mr. Andre Hicks.

Mayor Green said this is tabled by Common Consent.

207 Bird Road Drop Inlets

Councilman Miller said the Committee looked at these drop inlets on private property, with the tenant.

***Councilman Page made a motion to contact the property owner to pay for this work in full. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.***

Councilman Nash asked if it was better and cheaper to have the homeowners contact someone.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

2 Hour Parking

Councilman Miller said the Committee felt there was no need to put the signs back up. He said the concern was only in one area, so why punish the whole Town for one area. He said when you come to the Planning Commission you tell us there is adequate parking for tenants. He said the Committee recommended not enforcing the two hour parking.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we may need to see where it is included in the Town Code. Councilman Nash said if there is an Ordinance, he would like to get it cleaner.

Councilman Allman said the discussion had, was as posted throughout Town, and if it is not posted then there is nothing to enforce. He said if we ever want to have two hour parking, it will still be on the books.

Councilman Gormus believed there was an issue with parking around back because of a vehicle that the plates and inspection sticker ran out three years ago, and in sight of the Police Station.

Detective Murphy said it had been addressed. Mayor Green asked to have Chief Kuzmiak let Council know when it is resolved.

Councilman Miller suggested leaving it on the books, but don't enforce it. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would research, and report back next month.

Culvert Installation Policy

Councilman Miller said the installation of culverts, except for new residential, is the responsibility of the property owner. He said Manager Vannoorbeeck told them the Policy used to be the property owner purchases the pipe and the Town would install it.

Mayor Green said keep the Policy, but augment with requiring Council to have two thirds majority vote.

***Councilman Allman made a motion to augment the Culvert Installation Policy to have two thirds vote for an appeal from citizens in order to spend the money. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Manager Vannoorbeeck clarified it would take 5 of the 7 members of Council to approve spending money on culverts.

Councilman Nash asked for clarification, that the current Policy, it is all paid for by the homeowner. Manager Vannoorbeeck said yes, public or private. He said with private property it requires Council approval, on public property if they meet the standards of the Policy, he can have a contractor do the work and bill the property owner.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

Traffic Calming

Councilman Miller said the Committee discussed and tabled. The Committee asked to provide the Policy to those requesting the traffic calming devices, and bring a petition to Council.

Councilman Gormus asked if the speed bumps on Pickett Court were still on the list. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes. Mayor Green said it would be done when East End paving starts.

Councilman Nash asked if a check was written for the current speed bumps. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied he did not think so, he would check on it.

**3. Buildings, Property & Cemetery – met 3-8-23 – minutes included in March’s Council Packet**

Town Flag

Chairwoman Williams said the prior Mayor, Billy Coleburn presented a Town Flag for Blackstone. She said the cost of the flag is \$200.00 and Mayor Coleburn would donate the first flag to the Town. She said his goal was to sell remaining flags from his business. She said Mayor Coleburn was going to donate the first flag, because apparently the surrounding towns have their own flag.

***Councilman Allman made a motion to adopt the drawing for the Town of Blackstone flag as presented by Mayor Coleburn. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

- Councilwoman Wynn - Aye
- Councilman Page - Aye
- Councilwoman Williams - Aye
- Councilman Miller - Aye
- Councilman Nash - Aye
- Councilman Allman - Aye
- Councilman Gormus - Aye

Museum App

Councilwoman Williams said Mrs. Green with DBi, presented the website for the museums at the Committee Meeting. She said it was impressive and their goal was to update it and add more features. She said the money for the website came from a grant.

Councilwoman Williams said the remainder of the items were just informational.

**4. Insurance – met 3-15-23 – minutes included in March’s Council Packet**

Health Insurance Renewal

Mayor Green said the Committee recommended renewing Health Insurance with Local Choice.

Councilman Gormus said there was no rate increase this year, and renews April 1, 2023.

***Councilman Gormus made a motion to renew Health Insurance with Local Choice. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.***

Councilman Page asked if the employees were happy with this program. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied the employees would like to keep their current carrier. He believed there would be some relief to them to know there is not going to be any changes.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

Councilman Miller said the Employment and Police Committee needs to have a meeting to discuss an issue.

### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

There were no Consent Agenda items.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

#### ***1. Real Estate Agent Proposals***

Manager Vannoorbeeck said 415 Oak Street has been demolished and was surrendered to the Town as a result of the Blight Policy. He said the Town has spent about \$21,000.00 in the demolition of this property. He said we solicited real estate agents for this property, and Southern Virginia Realty suggested \$22,450.00. He said to cover all costs the property needed to be listed at \$25,000.00, which includes 6% commission. He said Southern Virginia Realty was the only respondent to the Town's request for proposal.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to approve Southern Virginia Realty as the listing agent for 415 Oak Street at \$25,000.00, which includes the 6% commission. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.***

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

### 2. Human Resources Consulting Services

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there is no action, but he would be readvertising. He said it was on eVA and there were no responses.

Councilman Allman asked if anyone had talked to our insurance carrier about their recommendation. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had not. Councilman Allman said the lady from our insurance carrier expressed strong concerns at the VML Conference. Councilman Nash believed our insurance company may be able to help us out.

Councilman Page suggested putting an ad in the Richmond Times Dispatch.

### 3. Parking Lot Cameras

Manager Vannoorbeeck believed Councilman Page brought this up. He believed Council may be interested in installing cameras outside as a result of the vandalism to a Town vehicle. He said the estimate received was \$2,484.00, and is below procurement obligations.

Councilman Allman asked how many cameras this included. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed four. He said this would tie into what the Town already has. He said the cameras would face the parking lot and towards the railroad property, they would not face the Brew House.

Councilman Page said the quote includes 3 pages of terms and conditions, have we worked with them before. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, we do not pay anything up front, we set our own terms. Treasurer Harris added, we have our current camera system through this company, Johns Brothers Security.

Mayor Green said we just so happen to have four boxes on the monitor, so we do not have to upgrade equipment.

Manager Vannoorbeeck did not think a motion was needed because the amount is under \$5,000.00, as per the Town's Procurement Policy.

Council approved by Common Consent.

4. Town Code – Chapter 14 - Animals

***Councilman Page made a motion to authorize Mayor Green and Manager Vannoorbeeck to be in discussions with Nottoway County for the purpose of negotiating an Agreement that would allow the Town to act as an Animal Licensing Agent of the County. He further moved that the Council postpone voting on the sections of the advertised proposed Ordinance regarding Town Licensing and Town License Tax for 90 days, and that Mayor Green update Council on his efforts to obtain an Agreement with the County within 30 days. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.***

Councilman Allman asked what the legality was with changing the phrase from table to postponement. Councilman Page replied, tabling is Robert's Rules of Order for the same meeting. He said postponement is for a different time. He said tabling is the most misused motion.

Councilman Allman asked if this would still have to come before Council, or automatically be in effect. Councilman Page said this is postponing the vote 90 days, and would be brought back up. Councilman Allman just wanted to be clear that this would not automatically go into effect without discussion.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

***Councilman Page noted a proposal to repeal and replace the Town Ordinances in Chapter 14, Animals, was advertised and after a duly held Public Hearing on the matter, he motioned to repeal Chapter 14 of the Town of Blackstone Code of Ordinances and replace it with the new Chapter 14, labeled Animals, with the proposed amendments as presented here tonight in the Council Packet effective immediately upon the Mayor's signature. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.***

Councilman Allman said he did not remember discussing cats at all. Mayor Green said we are not taking up cats. Councilman Allman said it is in the Ordinance we are voting on now. Councilman Page said anything that was in there was removing the requirement to have a cat tag, which was in the original proposal.



Councilman Allman asked about the collar. Councilman Page said that is already law right now, and has been since 1995. He added, we kept the micro exception.

Councilman Allman asked about dogs at large, will this be discussed with the County, and are we willing to remove from the Town's Ordinance if the County is willing to add to theirs. Councilman Page said dogs at large started this conversation, and is now stiffer penalties, and a Class 4 is a ticket and nobody has to go to court. He said a second offense is a Class 3, and a third offense is a Class 2. He did not believe the County would have an at large law against the whole County.

Councilman Allman said the discussion was having the County making Blackstone a subdivision. Mayor Green said he hoped that was one of the items he was going to be able to negotiate. Councilman Allman asked if the County is willing to do that, can we remove from the Town's Ordinance later. Councilman Page said if the County does that, we can look at it.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

##### 5. *Armory – IRF Grant Agreement*

Manager Vannoorbeeck said enclosed is a Restriction and General Agreement with the Department of Housing and Community Development for acceptance of the Industrial Revitalization Fund Grant. He said the Restriction Agreement says upon receipt of \$1 Million, the Town has an obligation to keep this facility open for 10 years as a hospitality training center. He said it also includes the number of jobs and matching dollars, which is over \$2.8 Million, but we anticipate that being Virginia Economic Development Partnership money, ARPA Funds, and Tobacco Commission Funds.

***Councilman Nash made a motion authorizing Mayor Green and Manager Vannoorbeeck to execute both documents enclosed. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Councilman Page said the \$2.8 Million is committed by the guarantee and the funds shall be expended prior to the IRF Grant. Councilman Nash said the money is on hand waiting. Manager Vannoorbeeck said there is \$2.5 Million, minus what has been paid to engineers, in a money market account.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

6. Armory – Virginia State Agreements

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there were two documents included, one includes the roles and responsibilities of Virginia State University and the course work they would be offering for the Town of Blackstone. He said it also discusses the Town’s obligations for space for facilities. He did not see a dollar amount, but the Town will make a cooperative arrangement to provide the facility for Virginia State University.

Councilman Nash asked if there was going to be any reimbursement for utilities. Manager Vannoorbeeck said there was not. He said they met with Virginia Union University last week, and the expectation was there would not be a charge, initially for space.

Councilman Nash asked if the events held at the Armory would help with that. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that was the plan. He said it was better to pay a utility bill than a debt service.

Councilman Miller asked if there was a problem with housing. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed Virginia Union had some documentation, which is not included tonight, Attorney Bacon is reviewing, it included the Town would provide housing. He said we have asked them to take that portion out because we cannot commit to that. He said part of the discussions we are having about the old school buildings, with the reuse of one of those buildings could be housing and dormitory space for students in the hospitality program.

Councilman Nash said he loved the Armory being used, but we need to watch by getting in that deep, with providing housing. Manager Vannoorbeeck was not sure if the Town should be in the housing business, but maybe facilitate a way for a private individual to figure out how to make that work.

Community Development Specialist said she had been speaking to the housing department at Virginia Union about purchasing property here for their students.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there were two agreements included in the packet, and MOU and a Three Party Agreement between Kalyan, which is the umbrella company that owns the Inn at Blackstone. He said Virginia State wants the opportunity to do training and internships.

Councilman Page said the Memorandum of Understanding is just an Agreement, and asked if the Three Party Agreement solidifies this. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it has a lot of the same verbiage, but codifies that Kalyan will have a role in providing internships so students can do hands on training. He said we invited Mr. Raj Patel to participate in this project, and believed they were enthusiastic about it; they want to have a role. He believed long term it would be beneficial to the Town if students can find jobs.

***Councilman Page made a motion to accept both Agreements as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

### **ON-GOING PROJECTS:**

#### **1. Dilapidated Buildings**

There was nothing to report.

#### **2. Meals Tax / Lodging Tax**

Councilman Nash asked about Meals Tax, are they recent. Treasurer Harris replied, they are recent, and she had received one of the payments.

#### **3. Street Improvement Projects**

There was nothing to report.

#### **4. Wrigglesworth Sports Complex / TAP 21**

There was nothing to report.

5. East End Neighborhood Project

There was nothing to report.

6. Taylor Bottom Block Grant

There was nothing to report.

7. Armory

There was nothing to report.

8. Weatherization

Councilman Miller asked about the Certificate of Occupancy at 916 Falls Street. Manager Vannoorbeeck said they did the walk through today, and everything was approved. He said they moved the propane tank that was by the road, the can needs to be removed, and the driveway needs to be improved.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. DCJS – ARPA – Law Enforcement Equipment Grant

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Police Department had been notified they were eligible for a \$153,000.00 Grant from the Department of Criminal Justice Services. He said this is ARPA Funds for Capital Activities. He said they were still discussing if this would be for vehicles, but should not be used for ongoing things. He said we have three vehicles ordered now, and cannot get them. He said one of the vehicles we have already received a 55% grant from USDA. He said if Council chooses, the Town could buy the other two outright using this grant.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to authorize the Police Department to apply for the \$153,000.00 American Rescue Plan Act Grant Funds, with no match. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

### 2. Abandonment of Street

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there was a preliminary subdivision plat that was provided to the Town and County. He believed the property had already been subdivided into six lots, but after reviewing at the courthouse, the 8.102 acre plat that was signed last year when Rock River Homes purchased the property, it was never recorded. He said in the packet is what is being proposed, he said in the orange and yellow, that would be two lots and can use the existing stem. He said the pink parcel would require the purchase of 25' from an adjacent property owner, and is not in the Town's purview. He said he talked to Attorney Bacon, and she agreed Rock River could do their two lots.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there was no action required by Council to abandon, because it was never recorded.

### 3. Surplus – Trailer at Fire Training Grounds

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there is a 1972 Butler Trailer, and old tanker, located at the Fire Training Grounds. He said it was donated to the Fire Department by Southside Community College for training purposes. He said he spoke to Mr. Dunc Quicke and was told the Town owes them nothing.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked this be surplus and put on GovDeals.

Mayor Green asked where the funds would go. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, it would go in Reserves for the Vehicle Fund. He said currently we have two pick-up trucks ordered, one for the Electric Department and another crew cab truck.

***Councilman Nash made a motion to surplus the 1972 Butler Trailer and sell on GovDeals. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.***

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

4. USDA – Resolution of Governing Body – (2) Police Cars

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have put our name on three vehicles with State Bids, one being a pick-up truck and two police cruisers. He said these vehicles are taking over a year to get. He said he has reached out to USDA for any grants for 55%. He did not anticipate this being in this fiscal year.

***Councilman Page made a motion to authorize execution of the documents and adopt the Resolution as presented for 55% grant, 45% loan for two police vehicles through USDA. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Councilman Nash said being the same grant and currently on the books, and trying to get vehicles now, is there a certain time limit that we could lose grant funds. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied no, for example the fire truck, that was supposed to be delivered in the spring and now it is October.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

**COMMITTEE REFERRALS:**

Mayor Green said a Personnel issue was already referred to the Employment and Police Committee.

**MAYORS MINUTE:**

Mayor Green asked if Jan’s Home was in compliance. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Attorney Bacon was working on this, but last check in January they were not in compliance. Councilman Nash asked to expedite this.

Mayor Green asked about new microphones for the Chambers. Clerk Daniel said the mixer has to be replaced and the company is having a hard time with parts and delivery, but it is being worked on.

**POLICE REPORT:**

There were no comments.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

There were no comments.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711

1/ Personnel – Council / Mayor

***Councilman Nash made a motion to go into Closed Session for Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.***

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

**VOTE:**

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Aye
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye
Councilman Gormus	-	Aye

***Councilman Miller made a motion to certify that to the best of each member's knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened, were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.***

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:


VOTE:

Councilwoman Wynn	-	Certify
Councilman Page	-	Nay
Councilwoman Williams	-	Certify
Councilman Miller	-	Certify
Councilman Nash	-	Certify
Councilman Allman	-	Certify
Councilman Gormus	-	Certify

Councilman Page voted no, he said Council discussed attorney fees and other attorney related issues.

Mayor Green reminded the public there would be a Special Called Meeting on March 27, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. for two rezoning requests. He said minute approval would be on the Agenda as well.

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Green adjourned this meeting at 8:59 p.m.

  
MAYOR  
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

April 17, 2023 APPROVED AND ADOPTED

  
TOWN CLERK  
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA