

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, August 21, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: L. Benjamin Green

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

Town Staff: Philip Vannoorbeeck, Town Manager; Jennifer Daniel, Town Clerk; Nicholas Kuzmiak, Police Chief; Dion Tomer, Fire Chief

Town Attorney:

Those Absent: Nathaniel Miller

Mayor Green called the August Council Meeting to order.

Councilman Nash delivered the Invocation.

Mayor Green led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES:

Councilman Nash made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented minutes from the Regular Council Meetings on June 26, 2023 and July 17, 2023, and the Continued Meeting on June 28, 2023. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Mayor Green said he would be moving Item #3 from New Business to the Visitors portion of the meeting.

VISITORS:

Ms. Deborah Rose – Blackstone Chamber – Arts & Crafts

Ms. Rose said they were requesting use of the Town Square on September 9, 2023 in conjunction with Arts and Crafts. She said the military would be having recruitment there, to include a climbing wall and other military equipment. Mayor Green said this would be handled with DBi, and no action was needed by Council.

Ms. Rose asked that the Noise Ordinance be waived for September 9th and 10th. She said they would not be closing Main Street. She said they are also requesting use of the Town Bus between downtown and the Inn.

Mayor Green asked Manager Vannoorbeeck if he was agreeable to this. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked about the banner. Ms. Rose did not believe there was a banner. Ms. Beverly Ambs said there is one previously. She asked to waive the banner fee, if the banner is found.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the Arts and Crafts requests, that include waiving the Noise Ordinance for the weekend, use of the Town Bus, and waive the Banner Fee. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

NEW BUSINESS:

3. Metal Detecting Request – Mr. Larry Barrett – Old Shore Road

Mr. Barrett said he submitted an original request to metal detect through an email to Manager Vannoorbeeck, and was approved. He said the Policy set forth does not work, he said you have to submit an application and list the days you want to metal detect, then it may be you can't go that day. He said he would like to see this Policy changed.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said having a blanket permit for a year would be fine. Councilman Nash said previous Council’s concern was not allowing metal detecting at Schwartz Tavern. Mr. Barrett said directives can be on the form, list places you can and cannot detect.

Councilman Page asked what happens to the items found. Mr. Barrett said he keeps them and shares with his grandsons, and the history.

Councilman Nash said he would not want metal detecting at Schwartz Tavern or the Carriage Museum, that block. He said the Armory was allowed.

Councilman Nash made a motion to grant metal detecting to Mr. Barrett from August 2023 – August 30, 2024 for all town properties, excluding Schwartz Tavern and the Carriage Museum, that block. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Councilman Page asked if historical town items would be documented at Town Hall. Mr. Barrett replied of course, he said he was interested in coins and jewelry.

Mr. Barrett asked for clarification on which properties, such as sidewalk strips.

Councilman Nash said we will say Town owned properties, not right of ways. Manager Vannoorbeeck said people will not want metal detecting in their yards.

Councilman Nash amended his motion to exclude town right of ways as well. Councilman Gormus seconded the motion.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Clerk Daniel asked for clarification on every request being brought to Council. Council agreed.

FIRE CHIEF’S REPORT:

Chief Tomer said the Radio System was still at a holding point. He said the Committee met with the three vendors, but no prices were discussed.

Chief Tomer said Tower 9 was supposed to hit production last week. He said they hoped Santa would be riding on the Ladder Truck during the Christmas Parade.

Chief Tomer said they were requesting the normal street closures for the Fire Department Boot Drive. He said they would be on the streets at 7:00 a.m. on Saturday September 9, 2023 through 2:00 p.m. He asked to use the traffic calming devices on some of the main roads. He said at Dinwiddie and Epes Street people come through there fast.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the Fire Department Boot Drive in the normal locations, and use of temporary speed bumps for the safety of the Firefighters. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Nash made a motion for the Town to purchase up to three more sets of temporary speed bumps to be used at the Boot Drive locations. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Chief Tomer said one of their probationary members passed away, Mr. Hunter Byers. He was employed, and working for the Nottoway Emergency Squad at the time of his death. He said the Fire Department voted to grant him life membership recognition. He said he was thankful to a previous council’s agreement for having life insurance on members, plus they have a Line of Duty Policy. He said this provided assistance to the family for the burial. Mayor Green said on behalf of Council and the citizens of Blackstone, he offered sincere condolences.

Chief Tomer thanked Council for allowing Cow Pie Bingo, he hoped it would be an annual event. He said this year was a good turnout, but also a learning process.

Chief Tomer said it had been five years since they got their SCBA Packs, and normally have a 15 year life expectancy on the bottles. He said every five years they have to get every bottle inspected. He said this was a \$250,000.00 purchase. He said in 15 years, they scrap old stuff and NFPA comes up with new items.

Councilman Nash asked to show depreciation for this line item in the Budget for the next 10 years.

Councilman Gormus asked if there were companies these items could be leased from, that would maintain them. Chief Tomer said he had not heard of anyone leasing SCBAs.

Chief Tomer said Farmville Fire Department recently donated all their expired Turn Out Gear to some agencies in Honduras. He said they were hoping to donate their expired gear, which is ten years, they would clean it, give to Farmville and they would send it to Honduras.

Chief Tomer said their Blood Drive would be on September 19, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Chief Tomer said Longbranch would be having another Rodeo on October 21, 2023, and the Fire Department would be a vendor again.

Chief Tomer said the County recently approved the Operational Medical Director as Dr. Egglestone at the Blackstone Family Practice Center. He said this person oversees all emergency medical services in the County. He did not believe Burkeville partnered with this; they utilize their own. He said this is a paid position by the County. He said they could not be an EMS Agency without physician oversight.

Chief Tomer said Captain Cody Lewis with the Blackstone Fire Department had been promoted to Assistant Chief at Ft. Barfoot. He announced the years of service within the Fire Department. Mayor Green asked for a round of applause for Mr. Walter Mac Osborne for 49 years of service.

Councilman Nash asked when the Image Trend invoice would stop being billed to the Town, since the upgrade. Chief Tomer believed within 60 days, he said they were still trying to input data from Image Trend to the new data system.

NEW BUSINESS:

4. Fire Prevention Week Banner

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve waiving the banner fee and hang the Fire Prevention Week Banner at the Post Office for the week of October 9, 2023. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Mayor Green said there had been development at the County, and he would be adding a Closed Session for Personnel tonight.

PAYMENT OF BILLS:

Mayor Green stated the bills that have already been paid are in the amount of \$522,222.01.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said QMB Construction is reimbursable as part of the Workforce Housing Project.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bills that have already been paid in the amount of \$522,222.01. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Councilman Nash asked about the VMEA bill at \$209,000.00, is that on par. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the VMEA bill this month is \$392,000.00, which includes the new rates and part of the True-Up.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Mayor Green stated the bills not yet approved, and to be paid, are in the amount of \$376,911.58.

Councilman Gormus made a motion to approve as presented, the bills not yet paid in the amount of \$376,911.58. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Councilman Page asked about the cleaning bills marked July and August, and they are included several times throughout the bills. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed this was for the two months being invoiced. Councilman Nash thought this was divvied up amongst all departments. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would check into this.

Mayor Green asked what was Guardian Score under the Police Department from March through June. Chief Kuzmiak said this was recommended by VRSA, it is a citizen survey card that they participated in. He said during traffic stops, and going to complaints, the officers handed out cards on a volunteer basis to rate their performance. He said this was done for eight months, with four months being paid by VRSA, and four months paid by Town.

Manager Vannoorbeeck pointed out the Burkeville Body Shop amount of \$2,928.20, he did not think that was for the high school t-shirt ad.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

APPROPRIATIONS:

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there would be an appropriation at a Continued Meeting to close out FY23.

Mayor Green suggested September 6, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. for a Continued Meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

STREET & LIGHT – MET 7-24-23 – MIINUTES INCLUDED IN AUGUST’S COUNCIL PACKET

Irvin Street Drainage

Manager Vannoorbeeck said during the rain event there were several complaints about drainage at the intersection of Harris and Irvin Streets. He said where the curb and gutter was installed it has created a bowl between the duplex and the house next door. He said there we may need to cut an access for the water to get to the drop inlet.

Pickett Court Alleys

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. David Flippen owns the property adjacent to Pickett Court, and before he can open the area up, he needs an easement. He said he had not heard back from Mr. Flippen yet, but would press the matter.

Driveway Repair – 1012 S. Main Street

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this work was completed and the invoice was in the bills this month.

Traffic Calming Request – Center Street

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Committee looked at this area.

Handicap Parking Spot in Pickett Court – 26 Pickett Court

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Committee discussed this, but also wanted to include Councilman Gormus, as this is his Ward. He said it had been controversial about parking in Pickett Court. He invited Councilman Gormus to the next Committee Meeting.

Speed Limits – S. Main Street

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he was waiting on Ms. Diana Bryant with VDOT. He said he submitted in writing a request for the step down, so when you hit Town limits on S. Main Street, the speed limit would be 25 MPH.

Update on 222 Forest Drive Ditch

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he met with B&B Consultants to do the survey and would provide an update once he heard back from them. He said he had to hold off on projects for a little while, but engineering was authorized.

Paving Amelia Avenue across the Bridge

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the patching of the utility cuts was done when the pavers were here two weeks ago.

Update on Shiloh Baptist Church – Ditch

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this ditch was railroad property and holding water. He said trees needed to be dug out to open it up. He said he would talk to Andre and see if he could do this work.

Councilman Nash asked if the railroad would clean it out. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. Thomas Payne got the railroad to clean something out, so he would contact Mr. Payne.

Seventh Street Alleyway – between Lunenburg & Brunswick Avenues – 415 Sixth Street

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is a private alleyway that serves a culvert under Seventh Street. He said the Committee recommended allowing Town staff to enter the property to open it up, but the receiving ditch is on private property.

Councilman Page made a motion to allow Town staff to enter private property at 415 Sixth Street to clean out the ditch. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Councilman Allman recommended postponing out of fairness for Councilman Miller.

Councilman Nash believed the Committee discussed an agreement if the Town goes on private property. Councilman Allman said there was discussion, but believed this would be a precedent, and would affect private property ditches. He did not believe Council was ready for this, which is why he wanted to postpone until Councilman Miller was here.

Councilman Page said this property owner is dealing with flooding, and the way it runs, it is not just affecting one home. He added, Councilman Miller voted yes to do this work, and it is our water coming from the street.

Councilman Allman said if this project was done, he would like to discuss an easement, and change some Ordinances regarding maintenance. He said he was not comfortable going on private property cleaning out ditches, but doesn't mean he wasn't open to getting easements so we can maintain ditches the right way.

Councilman Page amended his motion to include obtaining an easement. Councilwoman Wynn seconded.

Councilman Nash said once we get an easement it is the Town's baby permanently. He said the goal is to limit the responsibility to the Town. He said he would rather have a partnership with property owners.

Councilman Allman said he would like to postpone until a Work Session, because this precedent could cost taxpayers thousands of dollars. He said he would like to get this right before voting.

Mayor Green said he did not see the necessity to rush. He believed the Town would have to do more ditches in the future, let's take our time and get it right.

Councilwoman Williams agreed with Councilman Allman, and said let's not rush this. She said she called about Luke Street, and the ditches overflowing there. She said it is not just one ditch, there are multiple.

Manager Vannoorbeeck believed Mr. Wallace Akers had opened some of the ditches up on Luke Street.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Mayor Green asked if the vote was 3-3, Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes. Mayor Green said he would have vetoed it because he wants to always be crystal clear where we are going. He shared Councilman Allman's fear of opening a can of worms before we are ready to fish.

Mayor Green vote Nay, and said the motion fails 4-3.

4H Construction Ditch Request

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this would be at the rear of a house proposed to be built, across from the Inn at Blackstone, at the intersection of Amelia and Fourth Street. He said the property owner asked if the creek would be piped in, and he told them no. He said the Committee recommended contributing \$2,500.00 towards buying the pipe, but the vote was not unanimous.

Councilman Nash asked how far back behind this home is the existing creek. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it would be even with the back of the house when it comes out of the culvert under the road.

Councilman Page made a motion that the Town contribute \$2,500.00 towards this creek work. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Councilman Nash said he was going to abstain because he maintains the property.

Councilman Page said this person is building new homes and asking for some help in that area, and believed \$2,500.00 was a reasonable request, and could prevent flooding issues. Manager Vannoorbeeck added, the contractor paid half of the curb and gutter, and drop inlet structure installed.

Councilman Allman said it's not that we shouldn't help people investing in Blackstone, but we are essentially making the lot usable for him. He said the problem was there when the lot was purchased.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town would not pay this amount until the pipe is installed.

Councilman Nash asked when the Town installed the curb and gutter, did that create the issue. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied no, it is the same amount of water.

Sixth Street Ditch – 507 Sixth Street – Full Council Vote to Clean out the Ditch

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is a sewer, drainage and electric issue. He said the property owner has an electric line on the back of his property that serves his home, and you cannot see it for the trees grown up. He said we need to move the pole closer to the house. He said there is a main sewer line that runs down the creek area, with three big pine trees on top of that, so he would talk to Mr. Dan Martin about what they can do. He said there is also a ditch that is full, and runs between Councilman Page and Mr. Banks. He said there is an easement, but the trees were allowed to grow up.

Councilman Nash said we have an easement and it was not maintained. Manager Vannoorbeeck did not believe the Town had a drainage easement, but thought there was a sewer easement. Councilman Nash asked to get estimates, he did not believe we could vote without a cost. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it would be around \$10,000.00 to get the trees down, so he will bid it out.

Mayor Green said he did not see a problem with Councilman Page voting on this item.

Manager Vannoorbeeck talked about cleaning out the ditch when the trees are removed. Councilman Allman believed the ditch would have to be cleaned once the trees are removed.

Councilman Allman made a motion to authorize seeking bids for the tree removals, and pursue the option of removing the trees from the electric and sewer lines, but postpone talks about cleaning the ditch. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Councilman Page asked if this included replacing the electric with a new pole. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that was just maintenance.

Councilman Nash asked Manger Vannoorbeeck to research the easement and present with the prices he receives. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the easement is from the 1900s, but a standard easement is 20’.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Manager Vannoorbeeck believed we could assume there is a prescriptive easement, because it has been used for many years.

307 Third Street Ditch

Manager Vannoorbeeck believed this was a result of the big flooding on Academy Avenue. He said the creek behind Mr. Jimmy Johnson's house, the drainage area starts at the back of the Nottoway House, with a bad ditch over there. He believed some of the downstream piping was too small. He said this was a comprehensive project that needed to be done. He said the ditch was on private property, and in bad shape. He said he would like to take this on as a study and done in phases.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there is underground under Sixth Street and proceeds 60', then there is a headwall near Mr. Johnson's house, then it's an open ditch, then piped in again across Fifth Street, open again, piped in under Fourth Street, and open ditch from there.

Councilman Gormus said the car dragging at 1012 S. Main Street cost \$15,775.00, but we have water causing damage to homes, he did not understand that. He said the driveway was done to specs by VDOT.

Mayor Green said there is a request to do the house next door because their camper is dragging in the driveway. Councilman Nash said he knew this was done by VDOT specs, but our inspector needs to look closer at these things.

Councilman Page agreed with Councilman Gormus, the Town spent \$15,000.00 on a driveway done by specs, but we cannot have Town crews and equipment to help move water that is flooding homes.

Councilman Allman said we were trying to do something better, but ended up worse, and cost the Town \$15,000.00.

BUILDINGS, PROPERTY & CEMETERY – MET 7-26-23 – MINUTES INCLUDED IN AUGUST'S COUNCIL PACKET

Armory

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this project is back out for bid and currently due September 12 2023. He said there would be a Pre-Bid Meeting tomorrow. He said two contractors had contacted him saying the bids were due on the same day as the Animal Shelter bids. He said they would discuss putting this off at the Pre-Bid Meeting.

Schwartz Tavern

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the roof replacement was also out for bid. He said the roof would be a cedar shingle replacement.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Committee discussed changing the locks because there had been concern about people coming and going, so they want to start controlling access. He said there would be three keys, one for DBi, one for the Schwartz Tavern Authority and one for the Town.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve changing the locks at Schwartz Tavern. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Councilman Nash did not know if it only needed to be three keys, but just so we know where to start. Mayor Green asked the key distribution be left to the Town Manager.

Councilman Page said he was going to vote no, because he felt it was already in the Town Manager's purview to do this, he did not want to micromanage.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Medical Center Lease

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he and the Mayor would begin the process of meeting with Bon Secours. He said it was an original ten year lease on the Medical Center, and expired in 2019, and is paid off. He said this also included two additional five year periods. He said we are currently in the fourth year of the first five year term.

School Properties

Mayor Green said he attended the Board of Supervisors Meeting, and it was a unanimous vote, so the Town of Blackstone is the owner of all the school property. He said the lease is now terminated. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed a deed still needed to be recorded.

Mayor Green said the only caveat he offered was what Council authorized, which in the event the County wanted to use temporary buildings, the Town would offer the tap fees and electric hook up.

Memorial Dedications

This was not discussed.

Lakeview Cemetery

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the headwall had been installed to fix some erosion issues. He said he may need to have more backfill, where it had settled.

Bus Shelters

Manager Vannoorbeeck said six bus shelter pads were poured today. He said the Town would install the actual shelters.

PARKS & RECREATION – MET 8-9-23 – MINUTES INCLUDED IN AUGUST’S COUNCIL PACKET

Wrigglesworth Sports Complex

Councilman Nash said Community Development Specialist Bryant found a grant to acquire property for a playground. He said it was a 50/50 Grant, with the Town’s portion being \$25,000.00, and too short of notice to apply. He said the Committee recommended 3-0, not to apply for the grant because it could only be used to purchase land, not playground equipment.

Councilman Nash made a motion that the Town not apply for the grant presented for the purchase of land. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town did receive the \$50,000.00 from the County for the football field improvements.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the County also provided \$40,000.00 for Weatherization.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said use of ballfields would be in a Capital Improvement Plan, since we own more property. He said there were some concerns about the t-ball field and the football field.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had been contacted by some parents and coaches of the girls (Ponytails) that just won the World Series. He believed there would be some kind of recognition ceremony forthcoming.

Mayor Green asked that Community Development Specialist Bryant organize this. Councilman Nash asked that it be sooner rather than later.

Councilman Nash said we want to utilize every field on this property. He believed the goal was to not tear up the fields there but utilize them, along with providing a football field.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there was a set of bleachers at the Airfield, and he wanted to make request to the County if they own them, and have them given to the Town for football.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Culvert Installation Policy

Manager Vannoorbeeck and Council discussed the 2/3 vote. Manager Vannoorbeeck said this would go back to Attorney Bacon for further review.

Mayor Green asked to have this on the September 6, 2023 Agenda.

2. Airport Lighting – Grant Agreement

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town applied for, and received up to \$100,000.00 in grant funds. He said the project was bid out with the low bid being \$92,000.00. He said the Agreement says the Town is responsible for 20% of the construction costs, plus engineering. He said this money would come from the Airport Fund.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town sold over 22,000 gallons of gas this past weekend.

Councilman Allman made a motion to accept the Grant Agreement for Taxiway and Apron Lighting through the Department of Aviation, not to exceed \$100,000.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Councilman Page asked if the match would come from fuel sales. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes, 100%.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Nash made a motion to award the low bid to Pyramid Electrical Contractors for the Taxiway and Apron lighting in the amount of \$92,000.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Talbert & Bright, the Town's Airport Engineers made a recommendation to award the bid to Pyramid Electrical.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

3. VDOT – Revenue Share Resolution

Mayor Green said there was a Resolution included that would confirm the Town's willingness to provide its share to complete the widening and sidewalk construction along S. Main Street.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is a 50/50 Grant, with the Town providing 50% and the State providing 50%. He said the total cost is \$3,550,000.00. He said this would not be until fiscal year 27/28. He said the Town's share would be \$1,736,146.00.

Councilman Page asked if we could find other grant money for the Town's portion. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he could try.

Mayor Green asked if Council approves this Resolution, are we committing to the \$1.7 Million. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied no.

Mr. Michael Bagley, Blackstone, VA

Mr. Bagley said he mentioned a year ago, are we going to throw good money on the wrong side of the street, or are we going to do the right thing, and put the money on side of the street that is needed for the public. He said he understood it was cheaper going on the right side, but people walking, use the left side of the street. He said he would hate to see the Town spend money for a new sidewalk, and still see people walking on the left side of the road.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said it would cost twice as much on the other side of the street, and utilities would have to be pushed back closer to the houses.

Mr. Bagley said his personal opinion was, he would rather do nothing going that way, if people are still going to walk on the left side of the street. Councilman Nash said he has cameras at his new place, and it shows a tremendous amount of traffic on the west side. Councilman Page said walkers like to walk towards the traffic.

Councilman Page asked if there would be crosswalks. Mayor Green replied there would be two crosswalks.

Councilman Nash said his goal has just been to have a safe walking path for somebody.

Mayor Green asked if the Town was limited to that amount of money. Manager Vannoorbeeck said VDOT was limiting their portion, any overages or change orders will be to the Town.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we can withdraw from this at any time, but if you draw any money from this, the Town will have to pay that back.

Councilman Allman made a motion to adopt the Resolution at presented for S. Main Street Sidewalk Phase II-C. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Nash advised he does own property that this pertains to.

ON-GOING PROJECTS:

1. Dilapidated Buildings

Manager Vannoorbeeck said at next month's meeting there would be a Public Hearing and Resolution for imminent domain at 114 S. Main Street.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town was struggling to find a solution for 301 N. High Street.

Councilman Page asked if there had been any further dialogue with the property owner of 114 S. Main Street. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he received a letter, that declined to accept the appraised figure the Town offered.

2. Meals Tax / Lodging Tax

Clerk Daniel said Treasurer Morgan received a file from Air B&B today, and everyone was paid up. She added Treasurer Morgan said the two additional Meals Tax were paid today as well.

Mayor Green said we have been in Closed Session about probable litigation previously, do we need to discuss again tonight, or are things status quo. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we could go into Closed Session tonight under Probably Litigation, and he would report on TACS.

3. Street Improvement Projects

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have finished our paving this year in the East End. He said Whitehurst Paving would be here Wednesday and would tar and gravel Hurt, portions of Dillard, Oak, Lester Street, those portions of Town.

Councilman Nash said the next phase of paving in Cole Harbor would start tomorrow.

4. Wrigglesworth Sports Complex

There was nothing to report.

5. East End Neighborhood Project

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the final home renovation was underway.

6. Taylor Bottom Block Grant

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there was a community meeting, and Councilwoman Wynn and Mayor Green attended. He said this would be a long process, and the Planning Grant would be submitted once surveys were completed.

Mayor Green said he was impressed with staff, Mr. Earl Howerton and Ms. Earlene Powell.

7. Armory

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the lead based paint should be completed by the end of this week. He believed the windows would be sealed up by the end of week.

8. Weatherization

There was nothing to report.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Mercy Outreach Fellowship – Mercy Fest 2023

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mercy Outreach was requesting a street closure from Church to Second Street on Brunswick Avenue, to waive the Noise Ordinance and banner fee. He said the event would be Saturday, September 23, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Councilman Allman made a motion to approve the requests as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

2. Harris/Fitzgerald Annual Neighborhood Block Reunion

Manager Vannoorbeeck said neighborhood people are requesting to close Fitzgerald Street from Harris to Dillard Streets. He said this would be for their annual Block Reunion on Saturday, October 7, 2023 from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the street closure and waive the Noise Ordinance for the Reunion on Saturday, October 7, 2023 from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

3. Metal Detecting Request

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

4. Fire Prevention Week Banner

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

5. The Inn at Blackstone – Wedding – Waive Noise Ordinance

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is a request to waive the Noise Ordinance for the Inn at Blackstone for a wedding on November 4, 2023 until 11:00 p.m. He believed the police were called to the last wedding.

Councilman Page made a motion to waive the Noise Ordinance at the Inn at Blackstone on November 4, 2023 until 11:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Councilman Nash said he seconded until we hear any complaints from neighbors. He said if we hear complaints, we can revisit.

Councilwoman Williams asked why we were having to vote on this, since it is a private event. Manager Vannoorbeeck said if you can hear it off the property then it is a violation. Councilwoman Williams said that is everywhere.

Councilman Nash asked that Clerk Daniel send Noise Ordinance waivers to the Police Department.

Councilman Allman asked Manager Vannoorbeeck to speak with someone from the Inn. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would speak with Mr. Perry.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

COMMITTEE REFERRALS:

Mayor Green referred the hiring process of the next Police Chief to the Employment & Police Committee.

MAYORS MINUTE:

Mayor Green said he and Manager Vannoorbeeck have a meeting scheduled with the new County Treasurer on September 18, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. He said they would be discussing the Town issuing County Dog Tags.

Mayor Green said we have been talking about having a Retreat. He said Manager Vannoorbeeck would like to brief Council about all the projects going on. He said he would also like Council to tour FASTC. He asked that a date be set at the September 6th Meeting.

POLICE REPORT:

Councilman Nash questioned only having one charge for speeding in the Town this month. Chief Kuzmiak said what you are seeing is charges, but doesn't mean 50 other people were not stopped. He did agree that was lower than normal.

Councilman Nash said if we want people to slow down, people need to see them getting a ticket.

Mayor Green said he was starting to see the same alarming behavior on Brunswick and Lunenburg Avenues.

Councilwoman Williams said she likes warnings versus ticketing, because that means the police are working with the community. She said she called 911 for a dog that chased her while she was walking, she said nobody came. Chief Kuzmiak said they like working with the community, and their warning ratio is much higher than their summonses.

Councilwoman Wynn said she recently saw local police helping a funeral procession, and was pleased to see it, but asked how that gets approved. Chief Kuzmiak said they work closely with funeral homes for escorts.

Councilman Gormus said there were 16 noise complaints, and citizen complaints do not result in tickets, a policeman has to witness it. Chief Kuzmiak said a policeman has to witness it, unless the citizens want to see a magistrate, and file their own charge.

Councilman Page asked if most of the noise complaints were music or trucks. Chief Kuzmiak said he would have to look at each call. Councilman Page asked Chief Kuzmiak if he would look at July's report and let Council know.

Councilman Allman asked Chief Kuzmiak if they would be doing the cookouts this year. Chief Kuzmiak replied yes, he believed Detective Murphy picked the third week in September, and they may do them all in the same week.

Chief Kuzmiak said the National Night Out was a nice event, and the first time all the agencies got together to do something. He said this year it was in Crewe, and next year it will be in Blackstone.

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Mrs. Tyler Scott – 811 Brunswick Avenue

Mrs. Scott said she did not consider Brunswick Avenue safe anymore, due to speeders and people running stop signs.

Mr. Michael Bagley

Mr. Bagley said maybe at the completion of the Taylor Bottom project, there could be sidewalks on N. Main Street from Ms. Williams to Southside Transmission, on both sides of the street. Manager Vannoorbeeck said there had been previous talks from Division Street to High Street. He said he and Councilwoman Wynn had talked previously about sidewalks on N. Main Street. He said the Town wrote a TAP 21 Grant many years ago to put sidewalk on N. Main Street. He said this could be done in sections, but would not be part of the Taylor Bottom project. He said the logical side would be the east side.

Councilman Page pointed out the manhole on Brunswick Avenue.

Mrs. Tuckie Kile commented on the speeders on Tenth Street.

Councilman Page said there was a Resolution in the informational portion of the Council Packet for Mr. Richard Eaton, who served on Council, and recently passed away. He said the Resolution recognizes his service, and this had been done in the past for others. He said he and Councilman Nash were contacted by a citizen, and he spoke to Manager Vannoorbeeck about this, who asked Mayor Coleburn to write it.

Councilman Page made a motion to adopt the Resolution for Mr. Richard Eaton as presented.

Mayor Green said in the future at the beginning of meetings when he asks for additional Agenda items, he would prefer them be added then. He said he would let Councilman Page bring this up. Councilman Page apologized, and said he thought it was going to be handled under the Mayors Minute.

The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Councilman Gormus asked how many years Mr. Eaton served. Mayor Green replied, 4 years.

Councilwoman Wynn asked about people who served longer. Mayor Green said he had the privilege to sit next to her mother, who was a pioneer, and one of the original black ladies to serve. Councilwoman Wynn said that is why she is sitting here today, her mother served 28 years.

Mayor Green said the late great Mr. Jerry Wilson served 52 years, and was a pioneer in everything he did.

Councilman Gormus asked if there was an criteria to be met for a memoriam.

Councilman Page said it does not stop us from adopting others, we just did one in June for Mr. John Neal. Mayor Green said we did not do a Resolution, a bench with a plaque was installed out front of Town Hall. He said Mr. Neal was a pioneer as well, and got the Ward System in place. He said he did not remember passing a Resolution for the passing of former council members, and he served with four that have passed.

Councilman Page said he did not know Mr. Eaton, but it was brought to his attention. He said he asked Manager Vannoorbeeck, who thought it was a fair request.

Councilman Allman asked about the bridge for Mrs. Thompson. Mayor Green said we were going to do that bridge since his first time on Council. He said that was Barbara's Bridge since 2004.

Councilman Allman said for the sake of not starting something, he would rather recognize somebody for something they have worked on. He suggested revisiting this with a plaque for the Armory, and from what he heard, he thought that would mean more.

Councilman Nash believed this stemmed from not having any Town representation at Mr. Eaton's memorial service. He did not like debating whether someone is worthy or not. He said he did like the Armory Plaque idea.

Councilman Allman said if he were to pass from a tragedy, he had not done anything to deserve a Resolution yet, but everything he had heard about Mr. Eatton, he believed a plaque in the Armory would be fair.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Allman said he would like to revisit this for the plaque.

Councilman Allman said he would like the Armory Committee to be a part of this. Councilman Gormus and Councilwoman Wynn agreed.

Councilman Page made a motion to provide a plaque at the Armory for Mr. Eaton at the grand opening, and work with the Armory Committee. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Mayor Green said we will now have a recess, then come back for a Closed Session.

CLOSED SESSION:

Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711

- 1/ Personnel – Town Council
- 7/ Legal Matters – Probable Litigation

Councilman Gormus 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 and Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Mayor Green asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Nash 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:

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

Councilman Nash made a motion that Council allow Manager Vannoorbeeck be a 90 interim County Administrator for Nottoway County, while still working at Town Hall, and provide detailed time spent during Town time for the Town to bill the County, and every 30 days a report would be made by Manager Vannoorbeeck. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.


Mayor Green asked this be under Informational in the Council Packet every month, and the option to speak in Open or Closed Session.

Mayor Green asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Green adjourned this meeting at 10:01 p.m.



MAYOR
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

September 18, 2023 APPROVED AND ADOPTED



TOWN CLERK
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA