

**MINUTES OF A TOWN COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
TOWN OF LURAY, VIRGINIA
Tuesday, February 27, 2018
5:30pm**

The Luray Town Council met in a work session on Tuesday, February 27, 2018 at 5:30 p.m. in the Luray Town Council Chambers located at 45 East Main Street, Luray, Virginia at which time there were present the following:

Presiding: Mayor Barry Presgraves

Council Present: Ron Vickers
Jerry Dofflemyer
Jerry Schiro
Leroy Lancaster
Joseph Sours

Council Absent: Leah Pence

Others Present: Bryan Chrisman, Acting Town Manager
Steven Burke, Town Manager Appointee (Present After Roll Call)
Danielle Babb, Deputy Clerk Treasurer

Mayor Presgraves led members in the United States Pledge of Allegiance. The roll was called with Councilwoman Pence absent.

UPDATES & DISCUSSION ITEMS

Bridge Construction Work Site-New Layout

Acting Town Manager, Bryan Chrisman, updated Council members on the bridge construction work zone and noted that the staging area has been moved to the north side of the bridge. He added that the contractor, designer, and VDOT staff prefer this location.

Mr. Chrisman noted that initially his concern was with traffic in the area due to the Page One warehouse. But, since this time Page One has acquired the Bank Street location and will be utilizing this area for its warehouse and food pantry. Mr. Chrisman said the staging location could still prove to be a challenge seasonally with the Darkwood Manor parking. Mr. Chrisman is also working with the owners of Fairview Apartments to temporarily remove the flower bed island behind the building to provide two additional parking spaces and to relocate the trash dumpster.

Mr. Chrisman described the work area and crane location. He said that the main reason for the change of location is that the contract team does not want to risk the sewer mains that are on the south side of the creek bed. Council members were provided with a work site map in their Council packets. Mr. Chrisman said that he plans to put together a “meet and greet” event at the Mimslyn Inn to allow all contracted parties the opportunity to meet with members of Council and to brief the public again with new maps and information.

Councilman Sours asked about the impact on Ruffner Plaza during construction. Mr. Chrisman explained that with the change of staging to the north end, the Plaza should remain open and in use for the summer concerts. Members discussed the time frame for road closure and Mr. Chrisman estimates July 2018. He noted that Orders Construction estimates it may be earlier, but he feels more confident in a July closure.

VCI Grant Pre-Application Status

Acting Town Manager, Bryan Chrisman, updated Council members on the status of the VCI Grant Pre-application Status. The Town has received a letter from DHCD and will not be receiving any grant funds this cycle, but the agency feels the project is promising. Mr. Chrisman discussed a debriefing phone call to discuss planning options and further grant assistance that the Town will be eligible for. Mr. Chrisman said that the Town needs to notify its partners of the DHCD decision for his funding cycle. He said that the Town’s partners in this project will likely want to know if there are plans to pursue additional planning to create a successful application for next cycle. Mr. Chrisman said that Ms. Levinson is awaiting the confirmation of a date for the debriefing meeting and he will get back to Council with more information.

Draft Budget Version#1- Balanced/FY 2019 Budget Schedule

Mr. Chrisman presented Council members with the first draft of the budget and reviewed the budget highlights sheet provided in the packets. Mr. Chrisman said this document reviews several important features regarding the FY2019 balanced first draft of the Town’s budget. He added that this highlights included in the budget draft but equally as important what items are not included. He explained that the first draft contains no increase in tax rates or utility fees. He said that no sewer project funding has been included at this time due to more information that is needed from USDA.

Councilman Schiro noted the importance of having the new Town Manager, Mr. Burke, involved in the budget process. Mr. Chrisman said that he plans to have the next draft available for review at the March 27th work session with budget advertisement approval at the April 9th meeting. Mr. Chrisman said the Town has already met the deadline for a balanced budget draft by April 1st. Mayor Presgraves added that Mr. Burke was extended an invitation to attend this evening meeting.

Mr. Chrisman noted that state funding appears to be stable for the coming year. Overall, Town staff focused on paying down short term debt in lieu of some capital purchases. Councilman Schiro questioned if the Town should defer capital improvements to pay down the debt when the interest on these notes is so low. Mr. Chrisman responded that the Town is carrying a lot of short term debt. He

noted that water and sewer capital improvements were not cut. Mr. Chrisman noted the ever present need to upgrade town vehicles, especially those that carry high maintenance costs.

Council members also discussed Greenway Expansion plans. Councilman Vickers said that Pat O'Brien and Ken Beyer are planning to ask for easements for the expansion route. Councilman Vickers asked if there was any potential for grant funding. Mr. Chrisman said that the only funds currently available are Land and Grant Conservation Funds which come with many permanent restrictions. Councilman Vickers said that the foundation is very eager to fundraise. Councilman Dofflemyer asked if the foundation needs some direction from Council. Council and Staff discussed foundation donations and how they are allocated. Councilman Schiro advised that donations should be spent as the donor intends and should therefore be managed by the foundation. Mayor Presgraves recalled assisting with the setup of the foundation and said that they are a tax exempt nonprofit and should be able to make purchases that are tax exempt. Mayor Presgraves also reminded that with the expansion, also comes upkeep. He noted that more parks mean more maintenance and that this burden is on the taxpayers. Councilman Vickers inquired about any plans for tennis courts. Mr. Chrisman reminded that the American Legion Tennis Courts are owned by the Park Board. Members discussed improving the existing courts versus the high cost of new ones. Mayor Presgraves said that minimal improvements could be made by the Town to keep the courts usable. Members added that the infrastructure, fencing, and lighting are all in place and that some rehab to the courts could be done at a reasonable cost. Council and Staff continued to discuss the Greenway Expansion land easements. Mr. Chrisman said that he does not wish for Mr. O'Brien or Ms. McCoy to take part in any of these talks with landowners. He believes this is not a good idea and should be left to Foundation members. Mr. Chrisman agreed with the issue of maintenance costs of the current Greenway and said that it requires a great deal of work with its many flower beds and gardens. Councilman Dofflemyer stated that the Foundation is focused on the extension project at this time.

Councilman Sours asked about bringing Brooke Downing on staff full-time. Mr. Chrisman said that she came on staff during a fairly slow time but that things are picking up. Mr. Chrisman said that he is not aware of Mr. Burke's level of experience with Planning & Zoning. He added that Brooke will be picking up additional duties including pursuing some grant funding. The position would be full time with benefits. Councilman Schiro stated his concerns about her experience and background, he noted that titling her as "Town Planner" would not be accurate. Mr. Schiro expressed concerns about if the Town were to become in a situation with future development; we would be lacking expertise. Mr. Chrisman explained that we can either continue with training the individual we have, or try to hire someone. But, he advised that hiring an actual Planner would come at a much higher cost. Councilman Schiro said that Mr. Webb already had several years' experience and credentials when he came on board. Mr. Chrisman explained that Ms. Downing would proceed with her zoning certification first. He felt that if the Town gets into a development issue then having those certified skills would be helpful. Mr. Chrisman said that we will need to determine what Planning and Zoning skills Mr. Burke has and added that it may take him a while to come up to speed on the Town's Zoning. Mr. Chrisman said that he prefers to build on the position we already have. Councilman Schiro discussed outsourcing if needed in more complex situations. *(Mr. Burke, Town Manager Appointee, arrived.)*

Councilman Sours inquired about seeing a fiscal prior year to date column on the budget worksheets. Mr. Chrisman said that he would have to talk with Ms. Broyles and see if she could incorporate this. Councilman Sours felt the prior year to date would provide a good comparison to the December 31st figures to see if we are on track so far. Mr. Burke asked if the concern is with the growth rates in the water fund. Mr. Burke directed Councilman Sours to Page 3 of the 3 of the FY 2018-2019 Detail Revenues and discussed several factors there. Acting Manager, Bryan Chrisman, said that there is no provision at this time for an increase in water and sewer rates in the upcoming budget. Councilman Dofflemyer recalled studies that had advised a 1% annual rate increase in order to keep current. Mr. Chrisman referred to the *Carl Brown Rate Study* that the town completed previously, which looked at rates and facility fees for water and sewer. Councilman Dofflemyer said that he would prefer to keep with the 1% rate increase than to face a 4-5% increase at a later time. Mayor Presgraves advised that the single largest complaint we receive is the town's water rate. Councilman Vickers said that refuse rates are a great bargain and reminded that the Town offers recycling free of charge. Members and staff continued to discuss water and sewer rates, minimum bills, and disconnects incurred.

Mr. Chrisman said that he will bring back the proposed changes soon. He plans to have this ready for the March 27th meeting, but if possible can provide Council a copy of the revisions beforehand. Council complimented staff for providing a balanced draft. Mr. Chrisman said that all departments worked well in providing their needs, he noted that the Town is confident in the estimated amounts for VML and Anthem Insurances. All Council Members were in agreement with the budget schedule provided.

Adjourn

With no further business, Mayor Presgraves adjourned the special meeting of the Luray Town Council at approximately 7:15 p.m.

Mayor, Barry Presgraves

Deputy Clerk, Danielle Babb