

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

April 25, 2023

The regular meeting of the Montross Town Council was held April 25, 2023, and was called to order at 7:31 p.m., at Town Hall, 15869 Kings Highway, Montross, VA.

Council Members Present: Terry Cosgrove, Carolyn Carlson, Aaron Hooks, Joseph P. King, Clinton A. Watson, Jr., Kathryn S. Wittman

Council Members Absent: Bobby D. Greene

Town Manager: Francine G. Taylor

REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Cosgrove called the Council meeting to order at 7:31 p.m.

MOMENT OF SILENCE AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The pledge of allegiance was recited, and a moment of silence was observed.

APPROVAL PRIOR MINUTES

Mayor Cosgrove asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the March 28, 2023 meeting. Hearing none, Mr. King, seconded by Mrs. Wittman, made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 28, 2023 meeting. The motion unanimously carried.

APPROVAL FINANCIAL REPORTS

Mayor Cosgrove asked if there were any additions or corrections to the financial reports for March, 2023. Mr. King, seconded by Mrs. Carlson, made a motion to approve the March 28, 2023 financial reports as presented. The motion unanimously carried. Mrs. Taylor mentioned that there are a number of old outstanding checks that have been carried forward for several years that she will work to delete.

REPORTS

TOWN MANAGER

Mrs. Taylor reported that she has met with the Northern Neck Master Gardeners group for consultation and planning of beds for the new town park. They collected soil samples that were analyzed by Virginia Tech, with recommendations of soil amendments needed for successful plantings. The group has made suggestions of potential flowers/shrubs with recommended planting schedules for the greatest chance for survival. The Town Manager also inquired about finding a scout troop or Eagle Scout who might be looking for a project and would consider the park.

Mrs. Taylor shared that she participated on VA Dept. of Health webinar related to potential funding opportunities. Much of the presentation did not pertain to our local situation, but she did have an opportunity to ask questions, and invited any of the presenters to reach out directly to Montross should they be aware of possible sources for funding. That conversation resulted in several VDH representatives having a video conference call with the Town Manager and Mayor Cosgrove to discuss upcoming grant/loan programs that could be of benefit. Unfortunately, most had a very short window to apply, though potential sources could still be available in the near future.

Residents still express concern regarding the trash service's unpredictable schedule and what they are willing and not willing to pick up. The office has continued to log all complaint history and has notified Doggett Disposal of repeated customers not receiving service.

OLD BUSINESS

Mayor Cosgrove provided an update on the various projects:

- Pickleball courts - this segment is still on the drawing board, but other projects require more immediate attention
- Parking lot – the process is nearing completion, with only a final easement language revision being handled by Attorney Hutt. We have two bids for paving, but will address this topic once the purchase is finalized
- Park –
 - Picnic tables – Northern Neck Technical Center has made it a priority to build four tables for the park before the end of the school year.
 - Mayor Cosgrove has negotiated with Dominion to drop power service to the park at no cost to the Town.
 - The water line will be installed in the near future
 - The plan is to have a official park opening the first week of July and have the First Friday held in that area.
 - Contributions stand at \$29, 295
- Waterline project –
 - The project has continued to run smoothly, with the last easement being resolved and handled by the Town Manager. The Mayor complimented the work crew on the find job of cleaning up after their work, and residents are pleased with their efforts.
 - Four bid packages were received for the electronic meter installation, and those have been turned over to the project engineers for review. .

NEW BUSINESS

A First Friday organization meeting was held and attended by the Mayor and Town Manager. It was agreed that the events in May and June would continue to be held in the green space adjacent to the new brewery, and that it would move to the new park in July. Entertainment has been scheduled for each event and vendors and volunteers are being enlisted.

A revised resolution to approve the 2023 Northern Neck Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan was presented after receiving a date alteration request from the Northern Neck Planning District Commission. A copy of the full plan was provided to Town Council members in advance. Mr. King, seconded by Mrs. Carlson moved to approve the revised resolution. The motion unanimously carried.

Mrs. Taylor reminded Council of the invitation attend and support the Westmoreland Volunteer Fire Department's 75th anniversary celebration on May 6th from 10am-2pm.

Mayor Cosgrove laid out the funding situation for the waterline project. Costs for the four segments – waterline, meters, new well, tank painting – are projected to come in at \$3.626M, leaving a shortfall of \$426,000 after the VDH grant of \$3.2M. The Mayor believes the Town has sufficient funds within to cover this overage without the need to borrow funds. He indicated the Town was gifted with the VDH grant which has allowed the Town water rates to remain low.

Vice-Mayor King reminded Council that the purpose for setting aside those funds several years ago was for such a time as this. After discussion of the various funds, Mr. King moved, and Mrs. Carlson seconded to close the CD account for Well #2 which holds \$94,186, with the remaining needed funds to come from the Water system infrastructure, which currently stands at \$400,361. Mayor Cosgrove asked for a roll call vote: Mrs. Carlson, aye; Mr. Watson, aye; Mr. King, aye; Mrs. Wittman, aye; Mr. Hooks, aye; Mr. Cosgrove, aye. The motion unanimously carried. Mr. King urged that efforts to building the water infrastructure fund up be considered in future years.

Mayor Cosgrove discussed the funding needs for the extension of the waterline project further out Route 3, with the estimated costs nearing \$560,000. After discussions with various funding groups within VDH – Office of Drinking Water, there could be grants available for engineering studies to help with this project. The VDH reps also discussed possible funds for lead pipe remediation which will be required at some point in the near future. The Town will look into these additional funding opportunities as time permits. Mr. King shared that his opinion is our current engineers should have some obligations in the omitted Town sections from the original engineering plan.

Mayor Cosgrove shared that with the effort being expended on the waterline projects, it has caused the budgeting process to be a bit behind schedule. He proposed that the May Council meeting be used as the budget work session, and then make the publicized notice a week in advance of the June 27th Council meeting. The public hearing could be held at 5pm on June 27th, with the vote to approve held afterwards, knowing that if some changed was needed, the approval could be done with the change caveat. All agreed this was a good strategy. The mayor urged Council to review the financials and send any thoughts or ideas for changes or updates to the Town Manager.

Mayor Cosgrove discussed the path forward for the Fall Festival and the Town's involvement. Mr. King offered a bit of history in that the Town seems to get in the same situation annually with the brunt of the work falling to the Town administration to carry the load. He shared that former Mayor Odell threatened to cancel the event for this reason, and volunteers stepped forward. However, over time it has gradually fallen back on the shoulders of the Town Manager. In other communities, events are handled by groups such as the Chamber of Commerce or Main Street organization. Mayor Cosgrove shared that the ideal group to take on this event is the Greater Montross Partnership for Revitalization. That is a possibility as long as the funds and volunteers flowed along to this group. He indicated he intends to be protective of our Town Manager and will hold a festival meeting to share the Town's desire for someone to take over leadership of this event.

The Town has a lot going on, with the waterline system demanding much of the day-today efforts, as it is the largest capital investment project since the sewer upgrades years ago, all while the Town Manger is learning new responsibilities.

Mr. King felt we should let the group know what involvement the Town is willing to assume – usage of Town Hall, needed permits, road closure coordination. Mrs. Wittman shared that if various volunteers would step up to chair various components of the events and find their own committee volunteers, it would not fall to one volunteer chairperson to do it all. Mr. King said it is important to not let it slip back to the Town's responsibility, but allow it to stand or fail on its own. He indicated it is the collective desire of Council to allow the great group of volunteers to assume leadership if they wish to keep this long-standing event ongoing. He urged Council members to attend any planning events to support this stance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Francine Taylor
Town Manager

Terry A. Cosgrove
Mayor