

TOWN OF NEWLAND
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING

JANUARY 4, 2021

6:00 PM

AGENDA

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PROPOSED AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

PUBLIC COMMENTS

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

(ROCK WALL ON RIVERWALK)

TOWN OF NEWLAND
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 7, 2021
6:00 PM

PRESENT:

MAYOR: Derek Roberts

ATTORNEY: Joe Seegers (absent)

ALDERMAN: Kenny Caraway, James C. Johnson(absent) Lauren Turbyfill, Christie Hughes, Gail Haller

GUESTS: Maria Roberts, Jeremy Huffman, Little Charlie, Kyler Johnson, Tatum Hall, Isaac Hall,
Sandy Lewis, Anne Wiakelman, Robin Morgan, Lee Buchanan, Nathan Gittner, Dave
Calvert, Christy Ray, Gerald Mckinney, Donetta Mckinney, Vicki Caraway,
Roxanna Robertson, Clara Dickson

STAFF: Jeremy Gerrish, Chief Byron Clawson, Michael Fields, Colby Benfield, Tammy Gardner

Jeremy Gerrish brought the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The Clerk then swore the new Mayor Derek Roberts into office. The Clerk then swore into office the Alderman Lauren Turbyfill and Gail Haller. The Mayor called the meeting to order.

Kenny made a motion to accept the proposed agenda. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating I.

Lauren made a motion to accept the November minutes. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating I.

In public comments: Lee Buchanan announced he would be running for Avery County sheriff. Mr. Buchanan stated he was the only one who has filed so far, and the election will be March 8th.

Dave Calvert spoke to the board about putting more money into the Town. He also spoke with the county commissioners, at their meeting concerning this. Dave asked the board why we use Mountain Electric to put up the snowflakes at Christmas. Dave stated that a few years ago they received a grant to put in beautiful sidewalks and lights on streets, but the town failed to keep the bulbs in them. He stated they failed to clean the sidewalks and maintain them. Dave stated he asked the county the same thing and why they subsidize the tag office, but no one had any answers only that it helps the county. Dave stated he wanted them to subsidize some of the police department expense, so it would leave money to fix up the town. Dave stated a wall near on the riverwalk needs to be repaired before it causes an accident, and someone gets hurt. The Mayor stated that's why he wanted to be mayor to help get the town fixed back and thanked Dave for coming.

Chief Byron Clawson gave the police report. The Chief stated it had been a busy month. The Chief went over the notable calls. The Chief asked for a commendation for Officers Fields and Ahroman to be placed in their files. Lauren made a motion to place commendation letters in the officer's personnel files. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating I. Chief Clawson told the board about a grant he will receive to fund his project, the Newland Safety Equipment. Christie stated that Ruth Shirley was impressed and thanked the police officers for the way they handled a situation.

Colby Benfield gave the public works report. Colby stated it had been a busy month. Colby stated all the Christmas decorations were up. Colby stated they have started building the new maintenance building. Colby stated Iron Mountain would be here next week to fix a leak. Colby stated he has interviewed a few applicants. The mayor asked if the concrete had been poured yet. Colby stated no because the way the proposed it in the budget was to get the shell and next budget the concrete. The Mayor asked when the next budget was, and the board stated July. Kenny stated on a major thing like this they budget it out instead of doing it all at once in case other things come up. Kenny asked about the truck for sale. Colby stated it was on Govdeals and would be on till next Monday. Colby stated they had a lot of hits and should get good money for it. Colby hoped it would help with cost on the building.

Jeremy Gerrish gave the administrator report. Jeremy stated he made packets for everybody. Jeremy stated they were seeking three updated quotes for the bathrooms. Jeremy went over the error in pay for the last payroll. Jeremy stated ADP recognized their error and paid all the employees back. Jeremy stated original cost was \$150.00 per cycle but since the amount of personnel and adding the clock in it will cost \$112.00 per cycle. Jeremy stated bonuses were distributed before the Thanksgiving Holiday. Jeremy stated he was still trying to familiar himself with employees and financials. Jeremy stated he was working in the finance office to get things caught up. Jeremy stated that after review, he could report to the board that revenue is fine, daily deposits are being put into the bank, check registers are fine, what's not fine is the financial reports. Revenue has not been put into the system but trying to get that in. All money is in the bank. Jeremy stated next, he wanted to work on employee files and get them up to date. Jeremy stated he would be scheduling mandatory ethnics training in February. Jeremy went over the financials with the board. Kenny asked about the new software. Jeremy stated he would be talking to a rep from there in the next week. Lauren stated she would like to recognize Chief Byron Clawson and commend him for what he does in the police department. All gave a handclap for the chief. Christie asked where we are on the carpet deal. Jeremy stated in the last town meeting he was asked to investigate and how to move forward. Jeremy stated a scheduled date for December was made and half the carpet has been paid. The mayor asked if it could be moved to January to wait on legal counsel. Christie stated there was a mix up on legal council he will be here next meeting. Jeremy asked if Mr. Seegers would be here, Christie stated no, Mr. Grindstaff will be here. Jeremy stated Mr. Seegers is the town attorney. Christie stated right now, but they will be moving in a different direction. Christie stated she would be bringing a vote in the next meeting. Jeremy stated Mr. Grindstaff came to his office and asked if Mr. Seegers was retiring and asked if there were agenda items to remove him from that position, and was concerned that there was an undercurrent or under the desk personnel vendetta against Mr. Seegers and stated he wanted no part of it. Jeremy stated he was unaware of any of this. Kenny stated he talked with Mr. Seegers and gave him a heads up and an opportunity to decide and not be embarrassed in the meeting. Jeremy stated he was the one embarrassed when the attorney came in and he had no ideal about it. Jeremy stated the lack of communication can cause problems. The mayor stated that he was going to put a stop to all the lack of communication. The mayor stated he was not

here for any of that. The mayor stated if the board wishes to remove the attorney, they all need to talk about it. The mayor stated he did not realize Jeremy did not know. The mayor stated they need to go to Jeremy and follow the chain of command. Kenny asked Jeremy his schedule for work with all his health problems, if someone need to see him, when could they expect to do that. Jeremy stated when the town hall is open. The mayor asked Jeremy if he was pretty clear from his health right now. Jeremy stated no sir. The Mayor asked if he still has issues going on, which Jeremy stated yes sir. The mayor stated we have to close this carpet deal and where does it stand. The mayor stated that someone from our town representing themselves rightfully or not, there has been carpet cut and ready to install since September. The mayor stated it was ridiculous it has taken this long to settle this. The mayor stated it was embarrassing and disappointing. Lauren stated that in a special meeting James asked where we are on this carpet deal and stated we need to get started on that. Lauren stated employees knew about it and was asking. Lauren stated her mom, being the good person she is, said if that's what they want to do then we will do it. Lauren stated that is how it got started. Lauren stated the previous mayor was trying to do a roll she was not prepared for. Lauren stated she was trying to do from the goodness of her heart but in turn was made out to be a criminal, but she is not. Derek stated he had a problem with the former mayor of 16 years not calling Jones's carpet right here in town. The mayor stated the second problem that a part time employee is listed on the invoice and does not have a right to do it without asking the board. The mayor stated they talked with the town attorney and if some of the board want it investigated by someone else then go to the sheriff's office, the mayor stated it won't by our police office. The mayor stated, Derek Roberts the new mayor wants to move forward. The mayor stated the carpet is coming whether it's the 18th or January. The Mayor stated he respected Kenny and asked for a genuine conversation about it. Kenny stated the way this thing happened was we had a meeting here to look at applications to hire an administrator. Kenny stated that Jamie Johnson stated they wanted carpet in here, Kenny stated at a special meeting you can only discuss what the meeting is for. Kenny stated it needed to be brought up in a regular meeting. The meeting was cancelled for September since no one could be there. Kenny stated the carpet was ordered the 7th of September, and looking at the invoice, the part time employee with her personnel number ordered this carpet and invoice showed check for \$5200.52 for a down payment. Kenny stated that a budget of \$500.00 had been set in place for department heads to spend without asking the board, but over that they had to approve it by the board. Kenny stated it needed to be took care of now. Kenny stated the mistake need to be rectified through legal counsel. Kenny stated he did not see that we needed carpet. The mayor stated it was a done deal and the check has already been written. The mayor asked Kenny what he wanted because if they did not go ahead and get the carpet, they would lose the money already spent. The Mayor stated he was not going to tell the residents in Newland that \$5000.00 was just spent in Tennessee for nothing. Lauren asked Kenny it was for the betterment of the town in any way to make a big deal out of it, or was it better for the employees to just get the carpet. Jeremy stated from a standpoint, he's a carpet guy and he has a contract with have of it paid and the people renig, I'm going to sue. Jeremy stated his council to the board is to move forward with the carpet. Jeremy stated he was not forgiving the past wrongs, Jeremy stated he happened before he took the job and has no dogs in this fight. Jeremy stated his advice is you open yourself up to legal problems by not following through with the carpet. Jeremy stated he spoke with Mr. Seegers. Lauren asked what advice Mr. Seegers gave him. Jeremy stated Mr. Seegers told him to share responsibility in a contract. The mayor stated it was a contract. Lauren made a motion to continue on with the installation of the carpet and pay the remainder to the carpet company. Gail Haller seconded the motion. Kenny Carraway and Christie Hughes opposed he motion. The mayor stated

he wanted to move on. The mayor broke the tie and stated he wanted to move forward. Jeremy stated that December 7th was not nearly enough time to close the books and get financials ready and asked if the board would want to change the meeting date. Kenny stated what does the charter say. Kenny stated they had always did it on first Tuesday of the month at 6:00 according to the charter.

The mayor asked for old business. There was no old business.

The mayor asked for new business.

The mayor stated he wanted to talk about the police department. The Mayor stated they have to get the numbers in line with everyone else in the county. The mayor stated paying part time people \$10.00 dollars an hour is ridiculous. The mayor stated he had spoken with Kenny, Jeremy and Christie and the Chief about coming up to par since they are the lowest paid in the town. The Mayor stated he wanted to start putting the offenders' names in the paper. The mayor stated he would be working on getting them more money and a sixth officer. The mayor read a letter from a resident talking about how the town is falling apart. The mayor stated he would meet with Colby about ways to get the town cleaned up. Colby stated the things holding him back was budget and help. The mayor stated the pay for maintenance needed to be addressed. The mayor asked Colby to find places to put Christmas trees to decorate the town. Kenny stated back to pay and going to Bojangles for 15 dollars an hour, the town gives a retirement package on top of their salary and health insurance. Kenny stated we are in a town and trying to look after the citizens without going up on their taxes. The mayor stated he was not going up on the taxes, he wanted to look at the budget and find a way there instead of paying \$13.00 an hour when Bojangles pays \$15.00 an hour.

Nathan Gittner from the audience spoke. Mr. Gittner stated the Shadylawn will pay for the Chief's expense for the Chief's Association. Mr. Gittner stated he would be carrying on the tradition of the Shadylawn. The Mayor thanked Mr. Gittner.

Lauren stated she put an event together at the Rock gym on Saturday, December 11 from 3:00 till 7:00, and will have a lot of vendors.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.

Mayor, Derek Roberts

Clerk, Tammy Gardner