

TOWN OF NEWLAND
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING

March 1, 2022

5:45 PM

PRESENT:

MAYOR: Derek Roberts

ATTORNEY: Dean Grindstaff

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

GUESTS: Cindy Aldridge, Clara Dickson, Kenan Foxx, Teresa Foxx, Mike Henley, Neal Falvery (Avery Journal), Lee Buchanan, Nathan Gittner

STAFF: Chief Byron Clawson, Sandy Lewis, James Clark, Jessica Buchanan

The Mayor called to order a public hearing at 5:45 PM to discuss panhandling. The Mayor asked if the public had any questions or comments about the panhandling ordinance. No questions or comments are made. Public hearing is adjourned at 6:00 PM.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The Mayor then led the audience in the Pledge to the American Flag.

Sandy Lewis swore in Jessica Buchanan as the new town clerk.

Mike Henley spoke to the board about his objectives for running for sheriff. He wants to implement positive change, look at the things that are good and evaluate the deficiencies. He stated he was not coming into office to 'clean house'. Mr. Henley thanked the board for allowing him to come and speak.

James added the following items to the agenda: Pay scale review, contracts for rental space, Christmas lights, workshop for budget, check signing for the town and credit cards, and bonding the clerk. Lauren added events to the agenda. The Mayor added web design, concreting the shop, and discussion of a new Town Administrator.

James made a motion to adopt the revised agenda. Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

Gail made a motion to approve the minutes from the February meeting. Lauren seconded the motion. Christie stated when the Board voted on hiring the new town clerk, Kenny did not vote no, he abstained from voting. The clerk noted she would make that correction. All agreed to adopt February's meeting minutes by a show of hands and stating aye.

Chief Byron Clawson gave the police report. Chief Clawson went over notable calls. Chief Clawson stated the most notable event was an individual breaking the glass at the Cruz Thru. Chief Clawson said it had been a busy month.

James Clark gave the public works report. James stated they had been replacing a lot of signs that had gone missing and would be ordering more. They have also been cleaning the River Walk, working on the treatment plant, and preparing for inspection.

Sandy Lewis gave the finance report. January and February finances were presented to the board. Sandy stated the Town of Newland was given money from the American Rescue Plan Grant. A workshop needs to be scheduled to discuss the American Rescue Plan and how to spend the funds. Sandy stated we had missed the deadline for our financial audit for the 2021 fiscal year and our contract had ended. We will need to put out bids for a new contract. Sandy recommended holding off until the new fiscal year before entering data into the new Southern software. Sandy stated there is a company offering to send out a full color newsletter to the citizens of the town that would be paid for by advertising if we wanted to consider using that.

Sandy also gave the HR/Personnel report. Sandy stated she would advertise the public works supervisor on Indeed again. The new town clerk and license plate agent will be taking a notary class in March. Sandy also started taking a local government finance officer class online. Sandy recommended changing the "Grievance Leave" policy to "Bereavement Leave" to reflect the policy more correctly. James and Attorney Grindstaff said to do so, a public hearing would need to be held. Sandy will get the policy to the attorney to start the process. Sandy asked to upgrade James and Mark from an iPhone 6 and 7 to an iPhone 11 since the 6 and 7 would not be supported by Apple soon. Sandy also asked if she should get a phone for Roger. The board agreed to upgrade James and Mark's phone, as well as getting a phone for Roger.

The Mayor opened the floor for public comments. Nathan Gittner spoke to the board about leasing out the restaurant and he was happy to say there was no longer a for lease sign on the restaurant. Mr. Gittner thanked the Mayor and the board.

The Mayor opened the floor for the panhandling ordinance. James made a motion to accept the ordinance. Lauren seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Attorney Grindstaff stated the clerk will need to assign a section number to it.

Attorney Grindstaff stated he has nothing to report.

In Old Business:

- **Pay Scale Review**

James spoke with other towns throughout the state the same size of Newland conducting a payroll study. He stated that he had spoken with department heads who helped him gather payroll information. James reported he found a public works worker with 3 certifications who had not received the money promised for each of those. James said the money is in this year's budget to approve the pay raises right now. Kenny stated to keep good employees they should be paid a fair wage. Christie asked James Clark how often he had to re-certify, and he replied every year. The proposed pay scale includes the money for James Clark's certifications and Officer Fields handling K9 Lazlo. James thanked Officer Fields for everything he does. Christie asked if they could accept the payroll plan as is, and then come back to discuss in a workshop. Attorney Grindstaff said yes. After much discussion, James made a motion to accept the payroll scale. Christie seconded the motion. Kenny said yes. Gail and Lauren said no because

they wanted more time to review, have a workshop, and possibly raise pay more for some employees. Motion carried.

- **Contracts for Rental Spaces**

James asked if the contracts were present. Sandy stated she did not know they were needed and did not know where they were. The contracts are not available, so they were not discussed.

- **Christmas Lights**

James asked if anyone had spoken to Mountain Electric about taking down the Christmas lights. James Clark responded no but he would see what he could do.

- **Workshops for Budgets**

Lauren asked Sandy when she needed a budget from them. Sandy stated the middle of May. Sandy also asked to plan for the American Rescue Plan workshop at the same time.

- **Events**

Lauren told everyone she was at a standstill when vendors asked her about events. She wanted in statement and carried in motion that she oversee events. James asked if a booth rental fee would be charged. Lauren said yes but prefer to keep it under \$30. Kenny stated they needed to be aware of how much of the budget was being spent on the events (fireworks, the band, etc.,). James asked if \$20 per spot would be fair, \$25 per spot with electric. Lauren said yes that would be fair. Sandy offered to send out a spreadsheet at the end of each event showing how much was spent, and what the funds were spent on. Kenny asked if we had an insurance policy covering if someone got hurt at the event. Sandy said she would reach out to Fortner and ask them. Gail made a motion to make Lauren events chairperson. James seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

- **Web Design**

The company who manages the town website now, no longer wants to do it. The Mayor stated that we have two proposals. One from a local gentleman, Jereme Daniels. A second from a company located in Boone. James made a motion to accept the proposal from Jereme Daniels. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

- **Concrete Floor at the Shop**

The Mayor and James Clark measured the shop and just for the concrete the cost would be roughly \$9,000. James stated they had sold two trucks for \$14,500. Christie said there had been no permits pulled for the building. Kenny said we needed to go to the County to see what we needed to do to get the permit and to be compliant. The Mayor tabled the concrete floor discussion for now.

In New Business:

- **Mowing Contract**

The Mayor said we needed to decide whether we were going to put a bid out for the mowing contract or let our guys do it. James made a motion to put a bid out for the contract. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. The clerk will put an ad out in the paper.

- **Town Administrator**

The Mayor recommended to move Sandy Lewis over to town administrator. James made a motion to move Sandy to the interim town administrator/finance officer. Sandy stated she would do what the Town of Newland needed her to do. Lauren asked if Sandy felt as if she was already fulfilling the job as the administrator. Sandy stated yes and she was not going to leave anything un-done. Sandy said we need to be diligent about finding a finance officer. Preferably someone with local government and financial/accounting experience. Sandy agreed to take the interim administrator/finance officer position, as long as we are diligently seeking a new finance officer. James made a motion to make Sandy interim town administrator/finance officer. Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

- **Bonding for the Clerk**

The bonds for the town are through Fortner insurance. They are written for the finance officer, the clerk, and the town. Sandy will check into this and email out more information.

- **Check Signing and Town Credit Cards**

Sandy stated we have three credit cards for employees, two who are no longer with us. Sandy has contacted the bank for an application to apply for a credit card. Sandy stated the check signers for the drug fund accounts are, Chief Clawson, Officer Fields, the Mayor, and Sandy. Check signers for the other accounts are Sandy, the Mayor, and town clerk. Kenny asked if the check signers are included in the bond. Sandy stated yes.

- **Town Hall Hours**

James asked when town hours changed. The Mayor said when we had one person in the tag office and the town clerk. James asked who authorized to change the hours. The Mayor said he told them to go at 1:00 so everyone could get a lunch. Christie asked Jessica if you would rather be open 8-4:30 with a 30-minute lunch, or 8-5:00 with a 1-hour lunch. She replied 8-4:30. The Mayor stated the girls in the tag office has too much going on to cross train in the clerk's office. Everyone decided the tag office does not need to close since there are two people. Sandy will cover the clerk's office when she goes to lunch.


- **Council Comments**

Gail asked if Newland has a code of ethics for the board members and the Mayor. At the moments we do not have a code of ethics, however several board members mentioned looking into it.

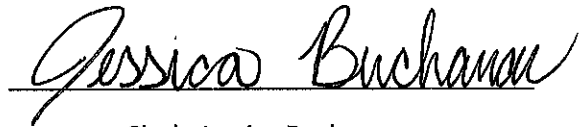
The Mayor asked about ethics training. Newly elected officials, even if you are returning, must renew their training after each election. Sandy will find out more information and email everyone.

James made a motion to make last meeting's closed minutes and recordings open to the public. Attorney Grindstaff asked to table that until the next meeting. James agreed.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.



Mayor, Derek Roberts



Clerk, Jessica Buchanan