

TOWN OF NEWLAND  
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING  
May 3, 2022  
6:00 PM

PRESENT:

MAYOR: Derek Roberts

ATTORNEY: Dean Grindstaff (absent)

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

GUESTS: Ken Walker, Glenn Johnson, Lois B. Johnson, Dale Sleight, Dick Larson, Patricia Young, Colby Benfield, Kenan Foxx, Teresa Foxx, Dena Morris, Cindy Aldridge, Janet Johnson, John Millian, Gina Phenneger, Gary Lewis Jennifer Beam, David Beam, Nathan Gittner, Neal Falvery (Avery Journal)

STAFF: Captain Michael Fields, Sandy Lewis, James Clark, Jessica Buchanan

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

The Mayor stated the Town Attorney is absent from tonight's meeting due to having to be present at another meeting. He will be available by phone.

The Mayor read the rules of public comments to the audience. Public comments should be limited to three (3) minutes.

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Dick Larson with Feeding Avery Families came and spoke to the board about the new structure they are building behind the Board of Education and WAMY. This will be an enclosed, heated 10,000 square foot structure, which includes a covered drive-through area. They hope to be moved in by October 2022. The Mayor asked if a new access road was being put to the property. Mr. Larson stated yes. The trucks that cater them are normally large box trucks, so they are putting in a 20-foot-wide road. He has spoken with Phillip Barrier about the trucks coming in between the Emergency Management area and Mayland, and they are comfortable with that.

Mr. Glenn Johnson asked the board if we had hired anyone in the public works department. Sandy stated we received one resume today. Mr. Johnson asked if the Town had any money to fix potholes. James Clark stated the town does have a specific amount of money to fix them, and they were going to make a list of places to pave soon since it is getting warmer. Mr. Johnson stated he counted six storm drains that are stopped up and need to be cleaned out. James said they have tried unstopping them several times and they cannot keep them cleaned out. Mr. Johnson asked if the fire department could possibly wash them occasionally.

Mr. Johnson asked why the jake brakes sign was taken down. Lauren said she reached out to someone from Pittman Trucking, and he told her legally they did not have to be put up. They could just recommend they not be used within the Town. The Mayor stated we used to have signs up for and would look into having them put back up. Mr. Johnson believes we should adopt a clean-up day once a month for the Town. He asked that the alderman oversee it and tell the citizens which parts of Newland they would be responsible for cleaning up. James asked Mr. Johnson if he would be interested in chairing a committee for this. Mr. Johnson replied yes. James asked Mr. Johnson to let the town clerk know some good days for the once-a-month clean-up. Mr. Johnson asked if we were going to purchase new streetlights. Christie stated we would move the old streetlights to Shoemaker Bottom and purchase new streetlights for the town.

Nobody from PlumbFast was at the meeting to represent the company, however Ms. Morris said she had met with them, and they did the job for her. She would answer any questions the board had. At the last board meeting we agreed to waive the tap fee for Ms. Morris because she has had issues with her water and sewer for a long time. The guys from our public works department met with PlumbFast to show them where we were going to tap on. They were all going to meet on the 18<sup>th</sup>, however it was raining. PlumbFast showed up the next day and started digging up Ms. Morris' yard and disconnected her water. The guys from the town said they could not come that day, they would have to come out next week. PlumbFast went ahead and continued doing the work and tapped onto Ms. Morris' line. Nobody from the town's public works department was there when PlumbFast did this work. Ms. Morris said she didn't want any issues for PlumbFast because they did the job for her. The Mayor stated there wouldn't be any issues and they are taking care it.

Colby Benfield is representing Newland Fire Department. He stated he knows the budget is coming up, as well as the annual contract with the fire department. The Town of Newland gives them \$5,000 per year for fire support. In 2005, they started working with insurance departments to lower the fire tax rate. They have managed to lower that rate from a 9 to a 5, which is good for a rural area. 63% of their calls are within the town limits so they are asking for \$20,000. Elk Park gets \$10,000; Banner Elk gets \$60,000 and Linville gets \$350,000. James asked when the fire department stopped washing the streets. Colby said they haven't. The fire department will wash the streets for us if we ask them. We just need to make a list of the streets we want washed, send it to Colby, and they will wash them.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Janet Johnson spoke to the board about the traffic being terrible on Ashe Street. She said she was afraid she going to get hit because cars are going so fast. She asked if it was possible to put up speed bumps to slow people down. James asked the officers if they could patrol that street a little more.

John Millian followed up on Ms. Johnson's comment saying people speeding on Watauga Street is bad as well. Stop signs were put up for a little while at the bottom of Banner Hill/Watauga Street, but then taken back down. He suggested to address all streets that have been at risk for speeding and put up stop signs or speed bumps.

Ms. Lois Johnson thanked Chief Clawson and his officers. Mr. Johnson saw two cars racing through Newland. After talking to the Chief all of that stopped. Mr. Gittner told the officers they could use their parking lot to sit and watch for speeders.

Adoption of the agenda. Lauren added discussion of Newland Fire Department stipend to the agenda. The Mayor added occupancy tax and a dog park. Christie added new streetlights. The Mayor also added discussion of Dudley Greene's request of how much we want for our septic/sewage system. James made a motion to adopt the agenda. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

James made a motion to approve the minutes from the April meeting. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

James made a motion to move agenda item 11 to number 16 and start with the reports. Sandy gave the finance report. The American Rescue Plan funds were moved into a separate account. We have auditors here today and tomorrow. Sandy will send out some dates for workshop dates to discuss the budget. Sandy stated next year would be a yellow book audit which will be in more depth. We will continue with the same auditor for the next 3 years.

Michael Fields gave the police report. Captain Fields went over notable calls. New officer, David Beam, is just waiting for his paperwork to come back and to be sworn in. The DAV Chapter filed for a parade permit on Memorial Day weekend. The Shriners Club filed for a permit the weekend before that.

James Clark gave the Public Works Department report. James stated they had been doing a lot of general maintenance. They have also been doing some mowing that did not get on the contract. James asked which properties did not get on the contract. James Clark replied the well on Buds, beside the fire department, two big fields by the Riverwalk, and below Shoemaker. James mentioned the Greenway might be a good place for the dog park. James Clark mentioned the Lee Shirley property may be good as well.

Sandy gave the administrator report. National police week and public works week is during the month of May. Christie asked if we needed to do a resolution recognizing this. Sandy stated we could do a proclamation. Jamie made a motion to buy everyone at town hall lunch that Friday. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. The Board thanked the police officers and public works department.

Sandy met briefly with Bob Barr to discuss the old Lowes grocery store property and the building complex. Water quality labs assured that our current water and sewer infrastructure would be able to suffice the apartment complex. Lauren asked Sandy if she had heard anything else about the Town using the Riverwalk for festivals and events. Sandy stated we have permission to use it for the July 4<sup>th</sup> event but that is all. Lauren asked who she could reach out to for further information and Sandy said Mr. Barr. Sandy reassured that the board did agree to use some of the ARP funds for the grinder. The Mayor stated we should send half the bill to the County for the grinder. Gail asked if there was a grinder at the Sheriff's department. The Mayor said no, they had a bar screen, but it was taken out. James said no motion was needed to talk to Phillip Barrier about the County paying for half of it. The grinder will cost \$83,000 and take 8 weeks to arrive. James made a motion to purchase the grinder. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

Lauren agrees to give the fire department more money. The fire department only got \$10,000 from ARP. The fire allocation gives \$64,000. Lauren made a motion to change the contract to \$20,000 for 2022-2023. James stated we did not need to vote on it, we will just fit it into next year's budget.

The occupancy tax would affect the entire County. Mr. Gittner asked how much it was. The Mayor stated they could charge up to 6%. If we do not sign off on this, then we do not benefit from getting money back. Newland is one of the only towns who have not signed off on this. Mr. Gittner said this would affect him and his family personally. James explained you would pass the occupancy tax down to the customer. Jamie made a motion to accept the occupancy tax. Kenny seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. The Clerk will type out a resolution.

The Mayor stated he needed to know an amount to send to Dudley Greene requesting funds from the state, which is available through a water/sewer grant. The former public works director asked for \$2,000,000 but did not get any. After much discussion the Mayor suggested to request \$1.9 million to pay off the USDA loan, replace pipes, etc. Gail made a motion. James seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

62 streetlights need to be replaced throughout town. James said we need to get a price on streetlights and put that in next year's budget. Kenny stated to look at durability in streetlights and some that are easily accessible for the public works guys as well. The Mayor requested the public works department start taking down some of the lights down that are not working and take them to Shoemaker Bottom.

The Board moved to closed session.

Christie made a motion to take a 5-minute recess. Lauren seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

After returning the Mayor declared they were back in open session. James made a motion to move Jessica to full time finance officer, effective June 1<sup>st</sup>. And she can help interim now, effective immediately. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

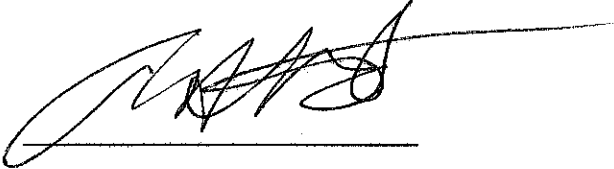
James made a motion to appoint Jennifer Beam full time clerk / tax collector for a probationary period. Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

The Mayor asked if there was anyone else they needed to deal with. Sandy stated there will be nobody else to deal with at this time.

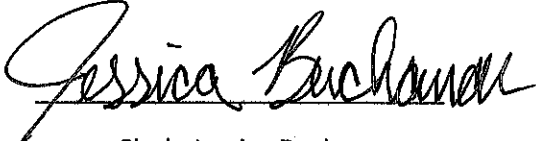
PlumbFast does not have anyone here to represent themselves. The attorney is not here either. Kenny stated he does not think Sandy should write a check one way or the other, until the Board approves it. The Mayor said PlumbFast was shown where to tap on to the system. Kenny stated they may have been shown where but never had permission from the Town. PlumbFast is charging twice as much as our sewer tap. Kenny said PlumbFast did not have the authority to tap into Ms. Morris' line. The Mayor stated they disconnected Ms. Morris' line after anticipating the town was going to take care of the tap. Sandy stated she spoke with the public works department and neither guy working that week, gave PlumbFast permission to tap on because James was on vacation that week. PlumbFast did what they thought was necessary. Kenny said we needed to wait for the attorney to be present. Gary Lewis suggested paying PlumbFast our tap in fee to suffice. Sandy stated our ordinances nobody else is allowed to tap into the town's system. Gail made a motion to let the Mayor go negotiate the price with PlumbFast and bring it back to the board for a price at the next meeting. Lauren seconded the motion. James agreed. Kenny and Christie said no. Once a price is negotiated with PlumbFast, the Mayor will bring the price back to the board. The attorney will give advice about paying the bill.

Kenny made a motion to adjourn. Christie seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

Meeting adjourns at 8:08

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mayor, Derek Roberts

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Buchanan" in a cursive style.

Clerk, Jessica Buchanan