

TOWN OF NEWLAND  
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING  
NOVEMBER 1st, 2022



Attending:

Mayor: Derek Roberts

Attorney: Gerald McKinney

Alderman: Kenny Caraway, Gail Haller, Christie Hughes, James C. Johnson,  
Lauren Turbyfill (via phone)

Guests: Alena Stair, David Wright, Nathan Gittner, Sanford Brill, Lily Kincaid

Staff: Public Works Supervisor Gary Lewis, Town Administrator Bill Bailey,  
Town Clerk Jennifer Beam, Finance Officer Jessica Buchanan, Police  
Chief Byron Clawson

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm, led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, and reminded everyone of ethics awareness.

Agenda:

The Mayor asked Bill to speak on the issue with the Fire Department. Bill stated he is trying to get on the fire department's board of directors' agenda after several citizens were concerned about Newland's fire chief's statements at last month's town meeting. Bill assured everyone that the fire department will fight fires and answer calls within Newland per the County's Chief Fire Official. The Mayor asked the board if they had any comments on the matter. They did not. The Mayor continued it's very important when it comes to the town and Volunteer Fire Department Services that we all kind of have this conversation. The Mayor stated he disagreed with the way the fire department handled the situation. In my defense of the board the follow-up of the minutes showed in fact you guys had not voted and the chief made that very clear that he thought we had. We in fact took it to budget. The Mayor said that he spoke with business owners in town about the fire department cleaning the streets and they had no problems with them doing so.

The Mayor asked Bill to give his suggestion to the board about the public works building on Sokassa Street. Bill said after getting several bids for completing the building, he started looking around for a cost-saving solution and came up with finishing the building as storage and adding a single-wide modular on

the property for the public works offices. +It won't happen this budget year, but Bill stated he wanted to bring it to the board so we could at least talk about it when we get to the budget cycle. The town is looking at revising the current bids for just doing the concrete floor, the doors, the openers and heat.

The Mayor asked Mr. McKinney to explain the annexation of Mountain Top Property. Mr. McKinney stated that the paperwork that will be brought to the board will need to be resubmitted. The clerk will have to make sure that the petition meets a number of statutory requirements. Then the board will host a public hearing concerning the petition. Christie asked why the board has not discussed the annexation. Bill explained that the discussion is technically to be held at the public hearing so that the petitioning company can be present to answer questions.

The Mayor asked what the town is going to ride in the Christmas Parade. Christie stated that would be up to the town employees, and she would be directing the parade. The Mayor asked if the town would have a contest for the best float. Christie said yes, and the winner will get \$100.00. The Mayor asked the date of the parade, Christie stated it is the first Saturday in December. The Mayor asked who would be judging the floats, Christie stated that the board members who watch the parade get to vote on the best.

The Mayor asked who put the flyer for the costume contest on social media and Christie stated that she did. The Mayor stated that the employees who worked Halloween did not have much information about the prizes for the contest. Jessica confirmed that a few kids asked her about the prize, and she did not know. Christie said she wasn't sure if the contest was combined with RadioShack or if we were offering our own prizes. The Mayor asked for suggestions for the communication to be better. Gail suggested that Christie communicated with Jennifer and asked if that is where the breakdown occurred. The Mayor stated that Jennifer did not know what the prize was either. Lauren suggested emailing a general email for everyone to stay informed. The Mayor said that he thought it was a really good Halloween, we had a great turnout. However, the Mayor stated that we need a way for everyone to stay informed. Alena Stair stated as a parent I was trying to figure out what was going on for Halloween, I saw it as two separate events. The town costume contest and the Radio Shack contest because it shows on the flyer for the town of Newland annual treat street costume contest at Newland Town Hall.

The Mayor asked Lauren to give the clerk access to social media. Lauren stated she would look into how to give access to someone.

The Mayor read and signed the resolution to make Journal Street a one-way street. The Mayor asked about doing some type of dedication for Mr. Rufus Henley who was an alderman years ago. James stated that the town had promised to name a bench, or something placed in the one of the parks or gardens after Mr. Henley and it has slipped through the cracks. Mr. Henley's son John came before the board a few years back. Kenny said that he did not see a problem with dedicating something to Mr. Henley. Bill suggested putting a plaque on a bench would not be difficult.

The Mayor stated if there's one name that keeps coming up when we talk about the Town of Newland, it is Mr. Sluder's name. Mr Sluder is the one that led the charge in getting the Coca-Cola sign redone and he is a key supporter of the town. Kenny stated he knew of a couple of citizens wanting to do something there Jake Owens as well. Kenny said for all that these men have done for the town, a bench would be a small gesture of gratitude. Gary suggested putting benches at Shumaker Park. Christie suggested getting newer benches for this project. Bill said we would get quotes on this project.

The Mayor asked Christie where she would like to put the dog park. Christie stated Shumaker park, but Gary and Bill might have a better idea for a location. Bill said he would get quotes on lights, fencing and obstacles and bring it back to the board.

The Mayor asked about streetlights. Bill stated he was looking for styles that resemble Banner Elk's streetlights. He is looking for quotes from Mountain Electric and VPC. Bill is also looking at the benefits of whether we should elevate the lights on a concrete pad so that salt does not corrode the base. Bill stated that public works dug out four bucket loads of debris from the road gutters. He would still like to work with the Fire Department to get them washed out. Bill mentioned he met with HCCOG and they have someone willing to do a Parks and Rec plan at no cost to the town. That will be brought back to the board at some point so that the process can get started. Once the town has that plan, the town can start applying for Parks and Rec grants. The Mayor asked about cleaning out the part of Shumaker Park that is overgrown. Bill stated as Gary has done research on that project, he did the research we found out it's actually a state-funded project that the town will need permission to get in there and clean out around the banks.

The Mayor asked about upgrading the town park through the HCCOG program. Bill stated yes, it would include upgrades at our current park or also, plans at potential park areas.

The Mayor asked for a motion to approve the October minutes. James made a motion; Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by show of hands and stating aye.

## **Public Comments:**

David Wright is a resident and business owner in the town. He came before the board very concerned about speeding on Shady Street in the neighborhood. He stated that traffic is outrageous, and speeding has gone up. The Mayor stated there have been some other issues like meters being taken out and now stop signs being taken out as well. The Mayor informed there was a long lengthy discussion and Avery County dispatch was involved because the address that has been posted on Facebook and other media for the coffee shop is an incorrect address leading traffic to Shady Street. The address that is supposed to be for the coffee shop is 322 Meadowbrook which would bring traffic in from the main highway. Bill stated the town is looking at installing a k-rail and then in front of that putting some Landscaping on the neighborhood side, so they don't have to look at it it'll buffer any noise from the park. Bill stated that the town does not want to install speed humps due to the challenge when it comes to snow plowing. Bill stated he is trying to resolve a discrepancy in the way the right of way shows the street. It currently shows that it's at the right of way and is at the edge of the right-of-way and over onto the property so he is trying to figure out what that really is I think there's some mapping errors in GIS, the town may have to hire a surveyor. James asked if we could put the digital speed limit sign out there and get extra patrol on Shady Street. The Chief said yes. Alena Stair said she knew of other citizens who wanted to come to the meeting but were not able to but one of the neighbors is an elderly lady that was standing on the side of her driveway speaking her daughter the other day in a big dually truck that comes in there in and out of every day and stays in the campground blew by so close to her and scared her to death. Alena continued there's been a lot of problems, another neighbor feels like she can't park there anymore she watched one of those campers break the meter box and the stop sign and they almost hit her car. Bill stated that the campers have also almost taken out a fire hydrant.

## **REPORTS:**

Jessica gave the finance report. She stated we had to pretty much freeze everything to switch over to Southern so there were not as many deposits this month. Also, someone obtained the town's general account information, but she was able to get it taken care of with United. The auditor will be at the December meeting.

Bill gave the administrator's report. He mentioned moving the dumpster from the town park for the town closer to town hall. He said they keep getting filled illegally and we would like them closer to keep a

better eye on them. Gary mentioned the vacant lot across from Shumaker might be a good spot to put them. Gail mentioned that it is a great idea. Gary stated we could put a gate around them if it appears to be an eyesore.

Chief Clawson gave the police report. There was a citizen in town that had their identity stolen. Chief Clawson mentioned another officer that would like to become a K9 officer.

He asked the board if he could apply for a grant for another K9. The board said that would be a great idea.

Gary gave the public works report. There are about 50 meters that are not electronic. The bigger problem is there's at least six of those that are two-inch meters, those are \$1,700 each. Two of those go to the Credit Union. There is a three-inch meter which I have no price for yet that goes to the Humane Society, the rest of them are standard size are \$415. Kenny asked if public works could check Mr. Church's meter. Gary stated we have checked it and it is reading that there is no leak. Kenny asked what Mr. Church's bill was last month. Jennifer answered we gave Mr. Church a credit in June or July of over \$400 dollars. Bill stated there are a series of events that have brought him where he is today with his bill.

#### **Council Comments:**

James stated he would like to say thank you to the employees. James suggested the town cater a meal for the employees to improve employee morale. All of the board agreed. James made a motion for the meal. Gail seconded the meal. All agreed by stating aye. Lauren asked if the meal would come out of the event budget. She suggested the town have a separate budget for meals.

The Mayor asked Mr. McKinney about progress on High Country Polaris taxes. He said it would be next week before he could start on it.

Bill mentioned the contract with Mr. Nelson was no longer on the table. Mr. Nelson stopped by town hall earlier in the day and stated he no longer wanted to deal with the town. If the town wanted to use his property, they could pay to use it. Lauren stated that this is where communication with each other is needed. She had spoken with Mike Nelson about vendors using the campground for festivals. Mike asked if each food truck vendor would need their own water and electric hookup and Lauren replied yes. Mike then thought he would need an extra \$5,000 per hookup. Lauren explained to the board that he would not need that; food trucks can run on generators and minimum necessities. She wishes she would have known before the meeting. Gail asked if the town would be able to use that area. The Mayor said yes, the town

will still be able to rent it. James asked if we had paid for anything yet. The Mayor stated no we have not made it through signing the contract yet. Kenny said he thinks the town missed a great opportunity with Mike. Bill state he wanted Gerald to add the part about the town logo on the stage that was mentioned in previous minutes and before Gerald could get that done, Mike came in and terminated the deal. Gail asked if he had done that today. Bill stated yes.

**Adjournment:**

James made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Gail seconded the motion. All agreed by stating aye.

**Meeting adjourned.**

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MAYOR DEREK ROBERTS

TOWN CLERK, JENNIFER S. BEAM