

TOWN OF NEWLAND
05/07/2024
MONTHLY BOARD MEETING



ATTENDING:

MAYOR: Derek Roberts

ALDERMAN: Kenan Foxx, James Johnson, Dave Calvert, Gail Haller, Christie Hughes

GUEST: Sandy Lewis, Drema Hayes, Susan Rash, Nancy Davis, Paul Isenhour, Jason Dewitt, Julie Banner, Vanessa Angresani, Angela Cole, Beverly Hoyle, Larry Hoyle, Faith Lacey, Theresa Foxx, Christopher Harrison, Nathan Gittner, Christian Gardner, Donetta Mckinney

STAFF: Town Administrator Bill Bailey, Finance Officer Jessica Buchanan, Police Chief Michael Fields, Police Captain Chris Clark, Public Works Director Gary Lewis, Town Attorney Gerald McKinney

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., reminded everyone of ethics awareness, and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Alderman Johnson motioned to approve the April minutes; Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Alderman Johnson motioned to approve the agenda after adding Alderman Calvert; Alderman Calvert seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

AGENDA

MAYORS REPORT

Mayor Roberts stated that the streetlights were going up and progressing smoothly.

JASON DEWITT – CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

Mr. Dewitt came to the board claiming he never received a vendor list, and he is worried they will not have enough vendors for the festival. Right now, they have six craft vendors and four food truck vendors. He stated they have formed an LLC and have nonprofit status with the IRS. He has spoken to Mayland Community Small Business Development, and they will offer grants and matching funds. The Elementary school principals will have Christmas tree decorating contests. The festival will be the same weekend as the Wolly Worm and Valle Crucis because there will be so much traffic coming into Town. Mayor Roberts asked Mr. Dewitt if he had spoken with the County yet, and he said yes. Mr. Dewitt asked the board to see what they could do to get that list of vendors for him. Mayor Roberts asked Alderman Hughes if she knew anything about the vendor list since she used to help Alderman Turbyfill with the events. She stated she did not know anything about the vendor list. Alderman Johnson stated some websites

will advertise and allow vendors to sign up for festivals. Mayor Roberts asked if Mr. Dewitt had received a warm welcome from the County about the festival. He stated he had only received positive feedback.

ALDERMAN CALVERT

Alderman Calvert stated some other restaurants in Town had approached him with concerns about food truck night. Calvert asked about food truck nights and other events hosted by the Town, who benefits from that. The citizens benefit. However, the Town does not benefit financially. He isn't asking to stop doing these things; however, when we think about these events, we should re-evaluate who it is helping and hurting. Another concern is our town roads. Newland is located within the County and IS the County seat. Alderman Calvert wants to speak to the County commissioners about them giving the town money for what we put back into the County.

EVERY COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The individuals from the museum were not there to represent themselves. Alderman Hughes touched on what they wanted to speak on. The museum is close to getting grant money from Over the Mountain. They want to paint the scenery on the side of our building. Christie said she would have her call Bill and talk more about the details.

LIQUOR BY THE DRINK – RESOLUTION

Bill stated this was the exact resolution he presented several months ago. The resolution says the board is not for or against it, but they are leaving it up to the citizens to vote for it, and they will support a referendum. The vote would occur in the next general election, which would be in November 2024. Alderman Foxx stated he would like to allow the citizens to choose and vote. Alderman Haller agreed. Alderman Calvert said it was their duty and responsibility to put it on the ballot and let the citizens decide. Sandy Lewis stated she had attended the high country ABC board. In 2022, each community received 33.3% of \$648,000. We would have gotten around \$138,000 or so. Alderman Foxx made a motion to pass the resolution. Alderman Calvert seconded the motion, which was held with a four-to-one vote.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Gary mentioned there had been an issue at Well Five last week. The Skada system showed the well was off when it wasn't and overflowed. The problem has been corrected. Gary said he would like a pump for well five on the shelf because it could take weeks to get one if it goes out. Alderman Hughes asked if it was something he wanted or needed to have. Lewis stated it was a critical spare. Gary said the cost would probably be between \$10-\$12,000. The restrooms at Shoemaker are ready to be opened, as are the park restrooms. There is a bad bearing at the wastewater treatment plant. According to Mike Tolson, we should be able to use some of the grant money to repair that. Iron Mountain will be here tomorrow to fix the two water leaks at Mountain Heritage and Banner Hill. Gary said the people who own the old Lowe's building will be moving River Street towards the bandstand.

Mayor Roberts stated we would lose the Family Dollar once their lease was up. Gary said the issue is they are getting ready to take up all our parking space for events. They will begin doing this sometime after July Fourth, and the street will be moved an average of four feet. Nancy Davis asked if this had ever been brought to the board for approval from the County. Mayor

Roberts stated it wasn't necessarily the County but governmental agencies involved who could receive large grants. Davis asked why it was coming to Newland. Alderman Calvert explained the building was sold by open option and anyone could have bought it. Davis recommended putting a moratorium on everything until the planning board completes their plans. Alderman Calvert said that wasn't a bad idea. Mayor Roberts asked Attorney McKinney if it was too late to stop the project. McKinney said the best thing to do would be to complete our zoning ordinance. We may have some leverage with water and sewer connections to the building. Alderman Calvert asked if we could make a resolution limiting the County to how much town property they can purchase. McKinney said they could hold a public hearing and create an ordinance. There was much discussion about how the plans have kept changing with the building. Donetta McKinney mentioned that the County owns Town Square. She said we needed to negotiate with the County to regain Town Square. Mayor Roberts asked why there would need to be any negotiating, and Donetta replied they wanted to control everything.

POLICE REPORT

Michael Fields provided the police report. Officers Stockton and Ruppard participated in a drug interdiction training class. Chief Fields is also in the process of hiring a new officer. Mayor Roberts asked if an officer works with the Sheriff's Office cert team. Fields said yes. Roberts asked how often they train together. Captain Chris Clark replied that it was once a month. Alderman Johnson asked how the dogs were doing. Chief Fields stated they were good, and both had been certified in narcotics.

FINANCE REPORT

Jessica informed the board they all had copies of her weekly reports. She's been busy helping Bill with the budget and entering revenues, expenses, and payrolls. She has also been looking at past-due taxes. Jessica presented the board with a utility bill for Ray Thompson, who had been deceased for a year. She asked the board for permission to release the utility bill for \$344. The meter is physically off; however, the account was never inactivated in the system. Alderman Johnson made a motion to release the \$344. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Jessica passed around the delinquent tax list and noted the list would be advertised in the paper this month.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Bill stated that Structall had bought the old IRC building. They have a second well on the property, which the Town obtains at no charge. In exchange, they would like their water bills to be zeroed out. We will need to do an easement and valuation of the well, and then we can credit their bill until the amount of that valuation is reached. Bill reported street lights have been going up with very minor issues. One light was hit near Wells Fargo, but an insurance claim was filed. A pre-bid meeting was held at Town Hall last week for the \$3.2 million project. Only one vendor showed up, and only one other vendor put a bid in, which went straight to the engineers. We have a mandatory seven-day re-advertisement if we have at most three vendors. Bill notified the board that Jamie from the tag office had resigned, and they needed to discuss advertising for the open position. Alderman Calvert asked about passports. Bill needs at least two people trained, and we will officially be a passport office. Alderman Johnson said to go ahead and advertise for the tag office position. Alderman Bill explained to the board we needed to perform a lead pipe assessment. Every meter, whether activated or not, will need to be checked. Once he hears from

the contractor about timetables, he will email everyone and let them know. The board agreed to revisit the County purchasing property discussion next month. Mayor Roberts said he was meeting with Phillip Barrier to discuss the Town Square.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Roberts recommended making Kenan Foxx Mayor Pro Tem. Alderman Johnson asked what the reasoning was. Mayor Roberts stated he needed a Mayor Pro Tem with whom he could communicate and communicate back to the board. Alderman Haller made a motion to move Alderman Foxx to Mayor Pro Tem because she believes Mayor Roberts does need someone he gets along with. Alderman Calvert seconded the motion. Alderman Hughes voted no, saying she believed Alderman Calvert would be better. Alderman Johnson also voted no. Mayor Roberts asked if he could break the tie. Alderman Calvert asked Alderman Foxx how he felt if he was to step up to Mayor Pro Tem. Mayor Roberts asked what problem he had with Alderman Foxx. Alderman Calvert stated there was no issue; he just wanted what was best for everyone and offered it after Alderman Hughes mentioned it. Attorney McKinney said the motion was still on the table for Alderman Foxx. Mayor Roberts broke the tie, making Alderman Foxx the new Mayor Pro Tem.

Alderman Calvert moved to go into a closed session for personnel. Alderman Foxx seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands, stating aye.

CLOSED SESSION

Alderman Johnson made a motion to go back into open session. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Attorney McKinney stated no business was conducted during the closed session. Alderman Johnson motioned to move Jessica Buchanan from full-time finance officer to full-time town clerk/part-time finance officer at the rate of \$25 per hour. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Alderman Johnson motioned to appoint Sandy Lewis as part-time finance hour at \$25 per hour, which was backdated to two weeks, at a maximum of 30 hours per week. Alderman Haller seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

ADJOURNMENT

Alderman Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which Alderman Hughes seconded. All agreed by a show of hands, stating aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 pm.

Town Clerk, Jessica Buchanan

Mayor, Derek Roberts

