

The regular meeting of the Board of Aldermen was held on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 6:00 pm in the Assembly Hall of the Municipal Building.

The following members of the Governing Body were present:

Mayor: Danny Ritchie
Alderman: Dennis Anthony (joined the meeting by phone)
Alderman: Matt Johnson
Alderman: Rick Cline
Alderman: Terry Yount

Others present:

Town Manager: Sherri Bradshaw
Town Clerk: Sherry Dula
Attorney: Rod Willcox

Mayor Ritchie opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

Approval of Minutes: The Board of Aldermen voted unanimously to approve the April minutes by a motion from Alderman Yount, seconded by Alderman Johnson.

Zoning – Presentation of G.S. 160D Regulations - Ashley Kale, WPCOG, was present to present the G.S. 160D Revisions to the town's Zoning Ordinance. These revisions don't change the Town's Zoning Ordinance, it just cleans up the outdated language and consolidates county and local government ordinances for better clarity. Ashley explained that Chapter 160D requires that the town's zoning, subdivision, and other development regulations be updated to conform to the new law. She reviewed the legislative updates with the Board and explained that the revisions were mostly administrative and policy changes. A copy of the updates to the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance is attached as part of the minutes. The Planning and Zoning Board voted to recommend the Chapter 160D changes to the Board for approval. A public hearing is needed before the changes can be adopted. Mayor Ritchie called for a public hearing on the proposed changes for the June 1st Board Meeting. A motion was made by Alderman Yount, seconded by Alderman Johnson to call for a public hearing for the June 1st on the proposed Chapter 160D changes and the vote was unanimous.

Zoning – Chicken Keeping – Teresa Kinney, Planner, was present to review the proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinance regarding chicken keeping and the following are recommendations made by the Planning and Zoning Board:

- Minimum lot size for keeping chickens shall be changed from one acre to one-half acre.
- Pens shall be changed from a minimum of 100 feet to 75 feet from all adjoining residences.
- Pens shall be changed from a minimum of 50 feet to 40 feet from all property lines.
- Staff Addition – Require a Zoning Compliance Permit for all new chicken keeping activities.
- Teresa Kinney also suggested that the ordinance state that chicken keeping must be by property owners only and not allowed for rental properties.

Alderman Anthony suggested that a requirement be set for the size of the chicken pens. After some discussion by the Board, the decision was made to add another condition to the ordinance stating that chicken pens must be no larger than 5 x 6 feet. Mayor Ritchie called for a public hearing for the June 1st meeting. A motion was made by Alderman Cline, seconded by Alderman Johnson to call for a public hearing at the June 1st Board meeting on the proposed changes to the chicken keeping ordinance and the vote was unanimous. A copy of the proposed changes is attached as part of the minutes.

Budget Discussion for the proposed 2021-2022 Budget – Manager Bradshaw reminded the Board that one item from the proposed budget was tabled from the last meeting which is the request for a paid, part-time position in the fire department comprised of 4-5 individuals working 8 hour shifts for a 40 hour week. Mayor Ritchie started the discussion with a recommendation that the position be a part-time position only with 20 hours per week and the Town try to apply for the S.A.F.E.R Grant. Alderman Cline stated that he has mixed emotions about this request. He states that without supervision the employee might be slack on the job. He also mentioned that the fire department has always done ok in the past without this position. He also mentioned that the grant is just a one-time amount of \$50,000 and the town would have to pick up the funds after \$50,000 is used up. Mayor Ritchie asked the question about how much they would do and will do unsupervised, this is a volunteer department. Alderman Johnson stated that he can't get fully behind this request. He stated the younger generation doesn't seem to be as dedicated. He suggested that the Town should not take the 40 hour per week route at this time but maybe just 20 hours. Alderman Yount stated that he was not on board unless they have supervision. Manager Bradshaw suggested that the time be 24 hours if they decided that route just so they could work a 3 day week. Mayor Ritchie stated it would be hard for the chief to supervise since he works a full-time position along with part-time at the garage. Alderman Yount stated he was concerned about the statement that was made dealing with only one person leaving the station to respond to a fire. The department needs to have at least two firemen leaving the station for fire calls for safety. Alderman Anthony stated that he is not satisfied because there would be no supervision for the position. Mayor Ritchie is concerned that eventually the volunteers will start wanting pay or decide they don't want to do anything since they are not the one being paid. Alderman Anthony asked if other departments were doing this and Manager Bradshaw stated that other volunteer departments are doing this now. Manager Bradshaw mentioned that we don't have a very high call volume. Mayor Ritchie said unless our call volume goes up then he suggests that we table the request until the situation warrants us to take another look at the request. It was discussed that response time was much better years ago. Our volunteers don't seem to be as dedicated. Mayor Ritchie stated that the timing of this request is ill conceived based on the performances of the last fire calls. Manager Bradshaw suggested that we could apply for the grant and to fund the position for the next budget year then we could try out the position to see if it would work. The grant deadline has passed for this year. Mayor Ritchie stated that we could try the position experimentally if we get the grant but we would have to make sure they understand not to expect it to be yearly. A motion was made by Alderman Johnson, seconded by Alderman Yount to table the discussion until we can apply and get approved for the S.A.F.E.R. grant and proceed on an experimental basis and the vote was unanimous. Alderman Johnson asked if we have to use the grant all in one year and Manager Bradshaw stated that the grant was a one time payment and that the Board should be prepared to have budget funding if we keep the position past what the grant monies would cover.

*****Board asked for a 3 minute recess*****

Departmental Reports – The Council reviewed the financial and tax reports for April, 2021. A copy of each report is attached as part of the minutes.

Attorney Report – Attorney Willcox asked if the fire call that our department had slow response time to, was covered by other departments and the Board stated that yes it was covered by several departments that we have mutual aid agreements with. He mentioned if we would consider contracting with another department and Mayor Ritchie stated that we discussed this one other time years ago and the town citizens did not like it.

Recreation Department – A schedule of activities was submitted to the Board for upcoming games and events at the R.O. Huffman Center. A copy of this schedule is attached as part of the minutes.

Miscellaneous –

- Next Board Meeting June 1st.
- Alderman Cline just wanted to mention how excited he was that we have received the approval for the EPA Grant Funds for clean up of the Drexel Properties.
- Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Appalachian Medical is May 7th @ 3 pm.
- East Burke Middle and High School Jazz Band Concert is May 18th @ 7 pm.
- June 1st – Budget Presentation and call for Public Hearing for Budget.
- June 22, 2021 Public Hearing for 2021-2022 Proposed Budget and Budget Approval. This will serve as the July meeting. No July meeting.
- Scott Dula approached the Board for guidance on the 2021 Christmas Parade. A motion was made by Alderman Yount, seconded by Alderman Johnson to have the 2021 Christmas Parade on December 11th at 10 am and the vote was unanimous.

Adjournment – A motion was made by Alderman Yount, seconded by Alderman Johnson to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:05 p.m. and the vote was unanimous.

TOWN CLERK _____

MAYOR _____

ALDERMAN _____

ALDERMAN _____

ALDERMAN _____

ALDERMAN _____

