

Town of Lovettsville

Town Council Minutes of the June 4, 2015 Special Meeting and Public Hearing

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Mayor Michael Senate called the Special Meeting of the Lovettsville Town Council to order at 7:34 p.m. on June 4, 2015 at the Lovettsville Town Hall, 6 East Pennsylvania Avenue, Lovettsville, VA.

Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Mayor Senate led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council Members Present

- Vice Mayor Michael Senate
- Council Member Kimberly Allar
- Council Member Tiffany Carder
- Council Member Jennifer Jones

Council Members Absent

- Mayor Robert Zoldos II
- Council Member Rodney Gray
- Council Member James McIntyre

Staff Present

- Town Manager Laszlo Palko
- Town Clerk Harriet West

Comments from the Public

There were none.

Community Presentations

There were none.

Additions/Deletions/Modifications to the Agenda

There were none.

Town Commissions and Committee Reports

There were none.

Minutes

A. November 19, 2014 Planning Commission and Town Council Joint Public Hearing

Motion: I move to accept the minutes of the November 19, 2014 Planning Commission and Town Council Joint Public Hearing with the corrections made.

By: Councilwoman Carder

Second: Councilwoman Allar

Aye: Council Members Allar, Carder, Jones, and Senate

Nay: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Mayor Zoldos and Council Member Gray and McIntyre

Monthly Financial Report

There was none.

Staff Reports

There were none.

Action/Discussion Items

A. Public Hearing – FY 2016 Operating Budget, Capital Budget, Rates and Fees

Vice Mayor Senate opened the public hearing on the FY 2016 Operating Budget, Capital Budget, Rates and Fees at 7:40 p.m. He read a letter from Mayor Zoldos explaining why he and Councilman McIntyre and Councilman Gray were unable to attend the meeting (Attachment 1).

Councilwoman Carder read the rules for public comment.

Frank McDonough, 25 S. Loudoun Street, said that having reviewed both proposals and considering all of the consequences associated with both proposals, he strongly recommended Option 2. He stressed he had never supported a tax increase in his life. He added that, while any tax increase should be viewed extremely cautiously, he believes in providing basic services for a reasonable cost. The small tax increase in Proposal 2 to support Town services is fair, transparent, and equally distributed among the residents. Mr. McDonough said he is a firm believer that the water and sewer system should be completely fee based and not tax based. The increases proposed in Option 2 accomplish all a small town can want: water rates that are equal to or less than the surrounding communities; debt reduction rather than increase; and reserves to establish sustainability. He noted that Proposal 1 and Proposal 2 permit the Town to provide a part-time events coordinator to help streamline and standardize Town-sponsored events. He stated that collectively these events define the character of Lovettsville. He said the Council Members who chair these events would benefit from having some professional assistance coordinating resources, directing marketing, and being a day-time contact for these activities. Having seen the administration of these events from the inside, he is concerned that some of the Council Members could become burnt out by the fatigue from laboring to perfect each event year after year. He noted that Council Members Allar, Carder, and Jones are responsible for at least six of the Town's events. He has spent a lot of time talking to people and watching social media and he thinks he speaks for many informed residents in imploring the Council to vote for Option 2 as presented by the Town Manager.

Bobby Merhaut, 33 East Broad Way, said he also supports Option 2. The main reason he is here is because his wife saw on Facebook that the Town was going to start charging for trash.

Chris Hornbaker, 15 Black Forest Lane, said Facebook should no longer be people's source of information for what happens in the Town and it should no longer be the source in which their opinion about the Town gets heard, because they won't get heard. He noted that trash is no longer on the table. What is on the table is simple. He said either water and sewer consumption, which is something people can control, increases 16% (Option 1); or, the water and sewer increases 12% and the tax rate on property gets raised 7.15%. He noted that his property taxes increased 8.5% in 2014 and 11.5% in 2015, which is much higher than the average 4% for the Town. He said that housing assessments are on the rise. This is a growing town and they are going to have to pay somehow, but he would rather pay for the services that are needed, such as trash and utilities.

The Town Clerk noted that there were five written comments that had been received. Vice Mayor Senate and the Council Members read these comments into the public record (Attachment 2).

Vice Mayor Senate called for additional comments from the public.

Cameron Cuthriell, 23 Black Forest Lane, said he would much rather pay a 16% increase in the water rather than 12% and more on his property taxes. In the end he believed Option 1 would be less expensive for residents.

Stephanie Wolf, 49 Potterfield Drive, said she supports Option 1 because she believes that real fiscal responsibility begins with recognizing the real cost of a service, rather than having it obfuscated with subsidies from the general fund. She said she can control her water usage. She has the upmost respect for the volunteers and what the Council Members do for the events; however, she does not think an events planner is necessary at this juncture. She would rather see the budget balanced first. If Town events have gotten too big to handle with volunteers, then they should cut back.

Vice Mayor Senate asked the Council Members if they had any comments.

Councilwoman Carder said a lot of people were focusing on services and the events planner has been singled out but they are also discussing other positions as well to serve the citizenry better.

Councilwoman Jones said that based on the comments there is a lot of misunderstanding of facts. She said she wished more people would attend these meetings so they could see the hard work that has been put into the budget to make sure the Council is fiscally responsible and that capital projects in the future can be finished. She said this is not just about the events planner it's so they can pay off the Town's debt and also to make sure they have sidewalks and other services. She noted the Town staff works very hard and as the Town has been growing they have not grown in staff. She said the events coordinator is just a small part of this.

Councilwoman Allar said she agrees with what Councilwoman Carder and Councilwoman Jones said. She also stressed the importance of residents coming to the Town for the right information and not relying on Facebook. She noted that the Council Members all live in Town and the proposed increases will affect them also. She said the Town Manager has come up with a fantastic budget and stressed that this is so much more than the part-time events coordinator.

Vice Mayor Senate said the smallest things impacts everyone. The events used to be paid for by the Town and now they are self-supporting. He said the Council thinks of every penny residents will have to spend. He personally doesn't want to see anything go up. He said this is the best little town and all of the Council Members feel that way. He said the Council will take everyone's comments into consideration and that the meetings are always open to the public. He thanked everyone for coming tonight.

Vice Mayor Senate closed the public hearing at 8:08 p.m.

Information Items

There were none.

Comments from the Mayor and Council

There were none.

Closed Session

There was no closed session.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Harriet West, Town Clerk

Date Approved: March 10, 2016

Attachments:

1. Letter from Mayor Robert Zoldos II
2. Written Comments from Jeff Hood, Dana Preston, Mary Torres, Kristi Gray, Lori and Carl Miller

To be read at the beginning of the Lovettsville Town Council Budget Public Hearing, June 4, 2015

I have been asked to read this message from Mayor Zoldos prior to the start of this public hearing.

Good evening everyone, I want to first thank everyone who is here tonight for this important public hearing. This hearing is an important step in our budget process and our decisions are made easier when we have good public input on the hard issues.

It is rare for any of the Council to miss a meeting; however, as you can see, two of the council and I are absent for tonight's meeting. Councilmember Gray and Councilmember McIntyre are at the High School graduation of Jim's son. The graduation of a child is such an important event in one's life that I encouraged them to be there and to review the tape of this meeting later this week.

Last fall I was selected to attend Leadership Fairfax, an intensive senior leader training course. This training has been a valuable experience and has better equipped me for both my work with the Fire Department and my work as your Mayor. The graduation for this intensive course is tonight and I feel compelled to miss this meeting to attend because of the prestigious nature of this opportunity, especially since finding out last week that I was chosen as the Dux of the class. The Dux is a sort of Valedictorian chosen by the graduates from among their class. I will therefore be representing my class and speaking at tonight's graduation. I do apologize for my absence tonight but felt that I should not turn down this wonderful honor.

I, like Jim and Rodney, will review the tape of the meeting to gain a better understanding of the opinions of the citizens of this town concerning this budget. We will continue to discuss the budget options with the public, both individually, and together at our Budget Work Sessions on June 11 and June 18. No action will be taken until at least our June 18 meeting.

Thank you again for joining us tonight for this hearing and I hope that you can provide us some guidance as we move this difficult budget process to an end.

-Mayor Robert J. Zoldos II

Town of Lovettsville

Town Council Regular Meeting and Public Hearing
Thursday, June 4, 2015
Comments Received as of 7:00 PM on June 4, 2015

Written comments were received from the following persons regarding the public hearing on the proposed FY 2016 budget options:

- Jeff Hood, 55 East Broad Way
- Dana Preston
- Mary Torres
- Kristi Gray
- Lori and Carl Miller

clerk

From: jpaulhoody@gmail.com
Sent: Saturday, May 30, 2015 9:45 AM
To: Lovettsville Town Clerk
Subject: Input On Budget Options

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hi -- my name's Jeff Hood, and I live at 55 E Broad Way in Lovettsville. If I don't make the budget meeting, I wanted to share my opinion:

I support Option #2, primarily to support the addition of an events coordinator. All of our Lovettsville 'things' have grown to the limits of volunteerism. I know the budget options are not a-la-carte, but I'd support whatever tax/fee measures were necessary to add that position.

clerk

From: Dana Preston [danapreston@rocketmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, June 04, 2015 8:15 AM
To: Town of Lovettsville
Subject: Comments for tonight's meeting

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

I cannot attend but would like to submit the following comments;

1. It's obvious the last town manager was not managing our funds responsibly. Why wasn't this addressed when he was in office?
2. Why cut budget items and then hire an events planner? How could cuts be needed and yet another position be supported?
3. I'd rather pay higher water and sewer charges than higher property tax if given a choice. I would pay for trash service if needed.

Thanks!

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

clerk

From: clerk [clerk@lovettsvilleva.gov]
Sent: Thursday, June 04, 2015 3:01 PM
To: 'Town Manager'; jmcintyre@lovettsvilleva.gov; rgray@lovettsvilleva.gov; msenate@lovettsvilleva.gov; rzoldos@lovettsvilleva.gov; tcarder@lovettsvilleva.gov; kallar@lovettsvilleva.gov; jjones@lovettsvilleva.gov
Subject: FW: Email in support of event planner position

From: Mary Torres [<mailto:maryteresetorres@gmail.com>]
Sent: Thursday, June 04, 2015 2:34 PM
To: Town Clerk
Subject: Email in support of event planner position

I am unable to attend the town council meeting tonight due to previous engagements, but I wanted to take the time to write an email expressing my support for the creation of a position for an event planner/coordinator. I personally love the idea of a very part-time event planner. It would be wonderful to have somebody consolidate all the information on vendors, supplies, rental companies, volunteer pools and other pertinent information. As it is right now I believe everything is just kind of scattered all over the place. One would think that utilizing the same company for things like tent rental, inflatables, etc could result in a frequent flyer type of discount, resulting in substantial savings. I also feel that an event planner could be able to save money on events by picking up supplies on sale or discount and stockpiling them instead of running out and paying whatever inflated price they happen to be in season.

Having a single point of contact to work with for the various small events would save time and stress and ensure that things go smoothly.

I believe that town staff employees should reflect the number of people they serve. I moved here in 2008, and just since then i have seen a fair amount of growth in population. I feel that town events bring us all together as a community and I would love to see more annual and one-off events . We have a beautiful green and pavilion to use for concerts, small plays or even children's events such as puppet shows. In addition to events for entertainment value, I like the possibility of having someone coordinate charitable events, possibly even ones that have a direct benefit to citizens of our community who need a hand. Having someone on board with the town with fresh ideas, creativity, a solid network of contacts and most importantly the ability to focus their attention solely on events would be of great benefit to the town, and well worth a small investment. I am in full support of my funds being spent on this position.

Mary Torres

clerk

From: support@lovettsvilleva.gov
Sent: Thursday, June 04, 2015 3:15 PM
To: clerk@lovettsvilleva.gov
Subject: Form Submission

A user has filled in the Contact Us form on your website at 6/4/2015 3:15:05 PM

E-mail	tolula74@yahoo.com
Name	Kristi Gray
Phone Number	5408229262
Message	<p>I am not able to attend the meeting tonight, but would like to give my input regarding the budget. I option #1. I do not think it is fiscally responsible to hire an event planner. Our town has had events for many years without needing this position. We do not have a surplus. If the town needs to scale back on events and activities to have a balanced budget then I think that is a more responsible way to treat the citizen's money. Council members gave themselves a raise, with the promise that they would do the extra work that goes along with that raise. There are many volunteers in town willing to give numerous hours to events (especially when they are actually acknowledged and thanked). Our town can function without this position. I believe some people are in support of it because they would like to apply for the position. It sounds great to get paid for what they used to volunteer for.</p>

clerk

From: support@lovettsvilleva.gov
Sent: Thursday, June 04, 2015 5:38 PM
To: clerk@lovettsvilleva.gov
Subject: Form Submission

A user has filled in the Contact Us form on your website at 6/4/2015 5:38:14 PM

E-mail	cass94sco@aol.com
Name	Lori and Carl Miller
Phone Number	
Message	To Whom It May Concern: We want the council to know that we are against raising the water rates and/or property taxes. We are taxed enough already and would like the council to know that tax payers are not the government's personal ATM. We would also be interested in hearing a response to the comment below that was posted in the Leesburg Today paper. "Curious if this shortfall would be an issue if the Council had simply required residents who did not pay their bills for several years (even via payment plan if lump sum were hardship). Just seems unfair the politically connected elite got that tax break and now all Town residents have to pay more."

clerk

From: James McIntyre [jmcintyre@lovettsvilleva.gov]
Sent: Thursday, June 04, 2015 10:19 PM
To: Councilman Gray; Councilman Senate; Councilwoman Carder; Councilwoman Allar; Jennifer Jones; Mayor Zoldos
Cc: Town Clerk; Laszlo Paiko
Subject: Fwd: Town Event Planner

Below is an email about the budget that I received from a Town resident. Thanks!

Jim McIntyre
Town Councilman
Oktoberfest Chairman
Town of Lovettsville
(540)454-2306

Sent from my iPhone---please excuse my clumsy thumbs

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lisa Tobias <ewaterman1@icloud.com>
Date: June 4, 2015 at 8:39:11 PM EDT
To: James McIntyre <jmcintyre@lovettsvilleva.gov>
Subject: Re: Town Event Planner

I hope you did. :)

On Jun 04, 2015, at 03:59 PM, James McIntyre <jmcintyre@lovettsvilleva.gov> wrote:

Thank you for your comments on the budget, and for you very encouraging words about the town events. Is it ok if I pass this on to the rest of the Council?

Jim McIntyre
Town Councilman
Oktoberfest Chairman
Town of Lovettsville
(540)454-2306

Sent from my iPhone---please excuse my clumsy thumbs

On Jun 4, 2015, at 3:41 PM, Lisa Tobias <ewaterman1@icloud.com> wrote:

Hi Jim,

Paul and I will not be at the meeting this evening. Our belief is that the town is doing very well, on its own, in planning community events...the past 3 years have been the best in the 13 we have lived

here. Let's not add extra cost to our plate, especially since many of us have been substantially hurt by the recession.

Thank you for your dedication to the community.

God's blessings,

Lisa and Paul Tobias