

May 13, 2024

A work session of the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, May 13, 2024, at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Plaster called the work session of May 13, 2024, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present: Mayor Jo Plaster, David Raynes, Joshua Bailey, Eddie Chittum, Tim Leeth, Jim Justis, and Michael Kohl.

Other Town Officials present were: Town Attorney Michael Helm, Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Deputy Clerk Jennifer Whetzel, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

Mayor Plaster stated that a motion would need to be made to go into closed session.

At 6:01 pm Council member Leeth made a motion to go into Closed Session per Closed Session pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)7 for consultation with legal counsel and 2.2-3711(A)5 for discussion of prospective business where no previous announcement has been made of the business for interest in locating in the community. Motion was seconded by Council member Justis and carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH– AYE; JUSTIS – AYE, to go into closed session.

At 6:38 p.m. a motion was made by Council member Leeth to adjourn from closed session, seconded by Council member Justis, and carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH– AYE; JUSTIS – AYE.

Mayor Plaster reopened the meeting and read the following certification of the closed session “to the best of our knowledge that only public business matter lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under section 2.2-3711(A)7 and section 2.2-3711(A)5 of the Code of Virginia, as only public business matters that were identified in the motion by which a closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting”. Deputy Clerk Whetzel takes roll call, E. Chittum; so certified, J. Bailey; so certified, J. Justis; so certified, J. Plaster; so certified, D. Raynes; so certified, T. Leeth; so certified, M. Kohl, so certified.

Mayor Plaster said the next discussion is the FY25 Proposed Annual Budget.

Manager McAlister stated she has a presentation to be given at the Council Meeting tonight and asked if there were any questions or comments she could answer before the public hearing.

Council member Bailey stated that in order to keep up with inflation, he suggests that the town base raises on a 3% across the board and the remaining 2% based on merit. Council member Chittum asked “How do we get to that point?” Council member Justis stated that they need to set a deadline to do something regarding this. He stated possibly October. Manager McAlister stated that the Personnel Committee had been asked to schedule a time to discuss this for next year’s budget. Mayor Plaster suggested setting a meeting for late June. Council member Raynes and Kohl suggested a retreat for discussion. Manager McAlister told the council that in her opinion, raises for Town Employees would become stagnant over the next few years as revenue is not projected to increase. Council member Kohl said he doesn’t believe that merit-based raises will work.

Mayor Plaster adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

May 13, 2024

A regular session of the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, May 13, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Plaster called the regular session of May 13, 2024, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Plaster asked for a roll call.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present: Eddie Chittum, Joshua Bailey, Jim Justis, Mayor Jo Plaster, David Raynes, Michael Kohl, and Tim Leeth.

Other Town Officials present: Attorney Michael Helm, Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Deputy Clerk Jennifer Whetzel, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director A.J. Hummel, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion by Council member Raynes, seconded by Council member Leeth, and carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; Leeth - AYE the Council approved the minutes of the meetings on April 8, 2024.

At 7:01 pm the Regular Meeting of the Town Council was recessed by Mayor Plaster and the Public Hearing ensued.

Public Hearing

Manager Stafanie McAlister gave a presentation on the FY 24-25 Annual Budget and Proposed Fee Schedule. There were no comments from the council. At 7:21 pm Mayor Plaster adjourned the public hearing and returned to the regular meeting.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND CLAIMS (public comment)

Charlie Lawhorne addresses the council regarding Kid's Fish Day. He pointed out that although it was a gloomy day, it was a good turnout. He stated that Chief Sullivan let him take the 'Deuce' down to the park and that it ran like never before. He said that Kid's Fish Day was a tremendous success, he thanked Chief Sullivan for having everything in order. He said the parks never looked better and thanked the maintenance department for having the "Deuce" running great. He wanted to thank the council, the Chief and the Town for making the 29th Kid's Fish Day a success.

Gleamer Sullivan spoke next and wanted to give huge accolades for the new town calendar on our website. She stated she had no idea so many things were going on in our town and wanted to thank the town for the calendar.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEE:

FINANCE – Council member Raynes made a motion, seconded by Council member Leeth and carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS- AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE, to approve the financial reports for the month of April 2024.

WATER AND SEWER – no report

ORDINANCE, HEALTH, AND PROPERTY – Council member Kohl move to adopt the resolution to amend Chapter 144, Section 64 of the Grottoes Code pertaining to the levy rate imposed on the sale of cigarettes as more fully set forth in the Ordinance to Amend Chapter 144. Seconded by council member Chittum and carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS- AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE.

Council member Kohl moved to adopt the resolution to amend Chapter A171 of the Grottoes Code to repeal the previously adopted fees set forth therein, to be replaced with the updated schedule of fees which have been set and established by Council, as more fully set forth in the Ordinance to Amend Chapter A171. Seconded by council member Justis and carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS- AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE.

STREET AND STREET LIGHTS – Council member Justis said they will be installing the 4-way stop signs on Forest Avenue the 1st week in June.

PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES – no report

SPECIAL EVENTS – Council member Leeth said the Memorial Day ceremony will be held on Memorial Day at 11:30 am with guest speaker Jason Cotton with the Living Waters Program. He stated the Grottoes Blue Grass Festival will be May 16-18th and Party in the Park is June 15th, there will be 3 food vendors along with several beer & wine vendors and bands. Grottoes Cardinals games will begin in the next few weeks so be on the lookout for their schedule. Mayor Plaster commented on the donations received for Party in the Park and stated they will go towards funding the event.

PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION – Mayor Plaster said she would be scheduling a committee meeting for personnel in the coming month. She also gave a special thanks to Public Works Director, AJ Hummel for his service to the town and wished him good luck in his future journey.

STAFF REPORTS

TOWN MANAGER. Manager McAlister touched on her staff report regarding remote participation. She said the code states before a public body allows this, they must adopt a policy. Manager McAlister also stated that the Comprehensive Plan survey has received over 230 responses and that on May 16th, there would be an open house from 5-7pm at Town Hall. Next, she said that the chicken shack at Painter Park has a structural issue and that new footers would be needed to reinforce it. Lastly, she stated that Mangrum Engineering is working on the Well Engineering and WWTP evaluation report.

ATTORNEY. No report.

TREASURER. Treasurer Danner said she is working on the final requests for the 2021 audit.

ASSISTANT TO TOWN MANAGER. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

POLICE CHIEF. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

PUBLIC WORKS. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

RECREATION AND TOURISM DIRECTOR. Parks and Tourism Director Austin Shank wanted to point out item #3 on his staff report. He wanted the council to hear from him that over the past 3 years, they have been working a lot on quality and improving processes and adding new revenue streams. He also wanted to point out the budget shortfall of roughly \$56,000, \$35,000 of which was during the 23 days the Caverns were closed for renovations and repairs inside Grand Caverns and the remaining 2.4% was general and not specific. He stated that they are poised and equipped to capture more business than before, just need to find a way to drive back business to Grand Caverns. Early in the next fiscal year he will be bringing up a proposal to the Parks Committee and Council that will seek to drive more business to Grand Caverns. The proposal will focus on branding and advertising strategy.

NEW BUSINESS

Council member Justis made a motion to adopt the Remote Participation Policy. Seconded by Council member Leeth and carried by a vote of 6-0 voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS- AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE.

Mayor Plaster declared the meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.