

June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024

A work session of the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, June 10, 2024, at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Plaster called the work session of June 10, 2024, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 6:06 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, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

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

At 6:07 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)1 for discussion of individual personnel. 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 7:13 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) subparagraph 7 and section 2.2-3711(A)1 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.

At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Plaster adjourned the work session.

June 10, 2024

A regular session of the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, June 10, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Plaster called the regular session of June 10, 2024, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 7:18 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, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

On motion by Council member Raynes, seconded by Council member Justis, and carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; LEETH – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH - AYE the Council approved the minutes of the meetings on May 13, 2024.

At 7:20 pm the Regular Meeting of the Town Council was recessed by Mayor Plaster and the Public Hearing ensued.

### **Public Hearing**

Manager McAlister discussed the Shentel Franchise Agreement whereas Shentel would like to provide cable television in town across their fiber network that is already in place. One bid came in later than the advertised due date. After discussion it was advised by Mayor Plaster that the bid would need to be resubmitted.

### **ADJOURN PUBLIC HEARING AND RETURN TO REGULAR MEETING**

Mayor Plaster adjourned the public hearing and returned to the regular meeting at 7:25pm

### **PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND CLAIMS (public comment)**

Scott Sacra spoke regarding the FY 24/25 budget. He expressed his concerns about raising utility rates and the 5% increase for town employee salaries.

Nadina Pupic stated she has lived in Grottoes for 10 years. Last year when the town decided on demolition of the town pool, she and other community members began attending meetings and voicing their concerns. In November of 2023 they established a non-profit and formed the Grottoes Pool Preservation Foundation, in December 2023 they filed state corporation paperwork

and obtained an EIN, in order to obtain a classification of a 501c3 they had to pay a \$600 fee develop their mission and articles of incorporation. They completed all of this by March 2024. The IRS advised that the timeline for approval of this could take 6-9 months to obtain but would be dated retroactively back to March 2024. Since they did not want to wait that long to start fundraising, they have held 3 successful fundraisers in town totaling \$10,233.66. They also have received a pledge of \$10,500.00 from a local business owner. Since they do not want to wait in the IRS to approve their 501c3 and go after larger donations and corporate sponsorships, they have requested the help of The Community Foundation of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County and they have agreed to be their fiscal agent until their status with the IRS is complete. Their group meets every first Tuesday of the month at 6pm at Grottoes Town Hall.

Berkley Wentz spoke next, she is the Secretary of The Grottoes Pool Preservation Foundation. She wanted to thank everyone for the support they have been receiving over the last several months. Lots of local businesses and residents have donated such as Flowers by Rose, Wendy Filler Tax, Ye Olde Coffee House, The Long Acre Farm, Victoria Semeov Art, which are all businesses in Grottoes, Muddy Feet for their banner on Dogwood Ave., Ace Hardware for hosting their grill raffle and donating 20% of their proceeds to the foundation. She also thanked the residents of Grottoes for donations and support.

#### **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEE:**

**FINANCE** – Approval of Financial Reports: 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 May 2024.

Approval of FY24-25 Annual Budget and Fee Schedule: Council member Raynes, made a motion to approve the fiscal year 2024-2025 annual budget and fee schedule. Council member Justis seconded the motion.

Council member Bailey made a motion to amend that motion to reduce pay raises for employees from 5% and 15% for police officers to 3.5% for everyone, and to use the savings from that reduction to offset the amount of utility service rate increase. Council member Chittum seconded the motion and carried a vote of 4-2, voting recorded as follows: LEETH – NAY; KOHL – NAY; RAYNES – NAY; JUSTIS – NAY; BAILEY – AYE; CHITTUM – AYE; the motion failed.

There was a vote on the original motion and carried a vote of 3-3, Voting was recorded as follows: CHITTUM – NAY; BAILEY – NAY; LEETH – NAY; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; JUSTIS - AYE This was a tie. Mayor Plaster cast a vote to break the tie. MAYOR PLASTER – NAY; The motion failed.

Council member Leeth made a motion to reduce pay raises for employees from 5% and 15% for police officers to 3.5% and to leave utility service rate increases as presented. Council member Bailey seconded the motion.

Council member Kohl made a motion to amend that motion to a reduction in employee raises from 5% to 3.5% while keeping a 15% pay increase for police officers. The vote on the

amendment was 3-3 and recorded as follows: BAILEY – NAY; CHITTUM – NAY; RAYNES – NAY; LEETH – AYE; KOHL – AYE; JUSTIS - AYE. This was a tie. Mayor Plaster cast a vote to break the tie. MAYOR PLASTER – AYE. The motion to amend the motion was passed.

**WATER AND SEWER** – no report

**ORDINANCE, HEALTH, AND PROPERTY** – Council member Kohl made a motion to set the date for the joint public hearing for rezoning for July 8, 2024 seconded by Justis, voting was recorded as follows: KOHL – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; LEETH – AYE; RAYNES – AYE, vote carries 6-0.

**STREET AND STREET LIGHTS** – Council member Justis said they will be installing the 4-way stop signs on Forest Avenue around the 17<sup>th</sup> of June.

**PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES** – no report

**SPECIAL EVENTS** – Council member Leeth said the Memorial Day ceremony went well. He stated the Grottoes Party in the Park is this Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, there will be 3 food vendors along with several beer & wine vendors and bands. Grottoes Cardinals games have begun.

**PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION** – Mayor Plaster said interviews would be taking place in the coming weeks for the vacancies in the Public Work Department.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

TOWN MANAGER. Manager McAlister touched on her staff report regarding the WWTP study. She stated the 1<sup>st</sup> Lagoon has never been cleaned and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lagoon has not been cleaned in 22 years. An Engineering report was done by Mangrum, and they stated that sludge needs to be removed from the second lagoon this summer and that would cost around \$350,000. It would need to be done again in the summer of 2025 which would be an additional \$400,000. An engineer report along with a UV Disinfection System would be an additional \$35,000 & \$110,000 as stated by Mangrum. If we upgrade, DEQ regulations may change, which will end up costing more. Mangrum's report stated that the current WWTP could handle a maximum of 368 more connections before it was at capacity.

ATTORNEY. No report.

TREASURER. Treasurer Danner said she will finish the final requests for the 2021 audit by the end of the month.

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

## **NEW BUSINESS**

David Bradley is requesting to purchase the alley way behind his house located at 704 12<sup>th</sup> Street so he may put up a fence and connect it to the neighbor behind him. He stated the neighbor is in agreement and he would have 9 ft gates for access by Public Works. Council decided that statutory requirements would need to be checked and it needs to be researched further.

Council member Bailey asked to amend new business to include an email received from Shreckhise regarding the overpopulation of deer down around the area of Riverside Ave. and Shreckhise. Chief Sullivan stated he has been talking with DWR about this matter and stated that Shreckhise had applied for a Kill Permit today and stated he had spoken with conservation officers, and they recommended a Kill Permit for that area. Council member Bailey asked for it to be added to the next agenda so it can be discussed.

Mayor Plaster declared the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

June 17, 2024

A Special Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, June 17, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Plaster called the special meeting of June 17, 2024 of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m. Mayor Plaster requested roll call.

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

Other Town Officials present were: Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Clerk Tara Morris, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

On motion by Council member Leeth, seconded by Council member Justis, and carried by a vote of 6 to 0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE; the Council recessed the meeting from 6:01 p.m. to 6:35 p.m., for a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A) subparagraph 1 for matters relating to personnel and subparagraph 5 to discuss a prospective business or industry.

On motion by Council member Leeth, seconded by Council member Justis, and carried by a vote of 6 to 0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE; the council returned to open session.

Mayor Plaster read the certification of the closed session, to the best of your knowledge that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under section 2.2-3711(A)1 and section 2.2-3711(A)5 of the Code of Virginia, as only such public business matters that were identified in the motion by which a closed meeting called, were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting E. Chittum; so certified, J. Bailey; so certified, J. Justis; so certified, J. Plaster; so certified, D. Raynes; so certified, M. Kohl; so certified, and T. Leeth; so certified.

On a motion by Council member Leeth, seconded by Council member Raynes, carried by a vote of 6 to 0, voting recorded as follows: E. CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH- AYE; approved contracting with the Berkley Group to assist with the search for the next town manager.

On a motion by Council member Leeth, seconded by Council member Justis, carried by a vote of 6 to 0, voting recorded as follows: E. CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH- AYE; to approve the contract with Berkley Group for Interim Town Manager services. The Berkley Group advises that Joe Paxton will be assigned to this work.

On a motion by Council member Leeth, seconded by Council member Raynes, carried by a vote of 6 to 0, voting recorded as follows: E. CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; RAYNES – AYE;

KOHL – AYE; LEETH- AYE; to accept the utility agreement and reallocation of funds into an escrow account not to exceed \$323,400.00.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Plaster declared the meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.