

February 7, 2023

A retreat of Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Tuesday, February 7, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Plaster called the retreat of February 7, 2023 of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 5:02 p.m.

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

Planning Commission members present: René Ehlenfeldt, Eddie Chittum and Gleamer Sullivan.

Other Town Officials present were: Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Attorney Nathan Miller, Clerk Tara Morris, Parks/Tourism Director Austin Shank, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, Crew Leader Tyler Breeden, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

Strategic Plan Review, Validation, Update

Manager McAlister gave a presentation regarding the Council's Strategic Plan adopted in March 2022, and process made on its goals and initiatives. She asked Council if we need to make any changes to the Vision Statement or Mission Statement that was adopted at the last workshop. Attorney Miller suggested defining community. Council did not feel anything needed to be changed.

Manager McAlister moved onto the strategic plan prioritized goals that were voted on by the Council and staff. She said within those 6 top goals several things have been accomplished. She went through the goals and the actions that have occurred or are planned to take place. Manager McAlister said we have been working on these top six goals and asked if the council felt it necessary to rework or re-prioritize any of the other goals or to continue working on these. No comments were made. Manager McAlister asked Council to look at the other goals to consider if any should be re-prioritized and we can discuss this topic next week at the work session.

Finances

Manager McAlister said the next topic is Finances. She went over each fund and what was budgeted and what has been spent year-to-date. Manager McAlister said we over estimated the number of water and sewer connections for the year basing it off of the number of houses in the next phase of Shady Creek, in which construction has now stopped. She said we estimated 71 connections and year-to-date we have had 23 water connections and 24 sewer connections. Manager McAlister said we have a shortfall of \$216,500.00 in the water fund and \$205,500.00 in

the sewer fund. She explained that we are able to make up this difference from the capital improvement/reserve line item, which reduced the amount going to that line item to \$36,812.00. She stated that this will not affect the overall water fund budget and current projects. Manager McAlister said for the sewer fund \$220,173.00 will be saved out of the capital reserve, chemicals, engineering fees, and capital outlay line items. She said this will leave \$14,673.00 in capital reserve.

Manager McAlister said next she wanted to go over the ARPA funds and what has been spent and future projects. She said there was \$820,419.76 allocated to the Administration/ General Fund and \$342,464.06 have been used. Manager McAlister said we need to discuss how we want to proceed with the remaining \$477,955.70. She said one item she would like Council to consider is bringing the third well into the system. Other suggestions were renovations at the Town Hall, upgrade the restrooms at the parks, business district/economic development plan, and a pocket park at the corner of 6th Street and Dogwood Avenue. Manager McAlister said Council allocated One million dollars to the Water Fund. She said \$770,000.00 was for water line replacement projects and \$230,000.00 for radio read meters. Manager McAlister said \$158,046.90 has been spent on water pipe, valves, and hydrants leaving \$841,953.10 for the water projects. Manager McAlister said \$40,000.00 is allocated for the sewer fund and \$400,000.00 is allocated for the parks fund but no money has been expended from these funds. Manager McAlister said the desired project for the park fund is the replacement of the electrical system in Grand Caverns.

Development and Services

Manager McAlister said the next item for discussion is Development and Services. She said from January 2021 to December 2022 there have been 152 new dwellings built in town. During this same period there has been limited retail business growth. She compared real estate and personal property taxes with another town (of our size) within Rockingham County and the income was very comparable. She stated she then compared meals tax were we collected \$330,000.00 and the other locality collected \$1.2 million. She said this is why business growth is important and need in town to help elevate some of the expenses off the residents.

Manager McAlister said looking forward to possible development we have 63 houses planned in an R7 zoned area between 13th – 17th Streets, Town houses planned along Aspen Avenue in the same area which could be 40-50 units. She said there is a potential of 154 dwellings in Shady Creek. Manager McAlister said we have 28 townhouses going in on 12th Street and 33 townhouses on 21st Street, both plans have already been approved. She said there is a possibility of 298 houses built within the next 5 years. Manager McAlister said this bring up concerns about infrastructure. She said this would be about 750,000 gallons of water per month which could cause our output to be more than our current license allows by the Virginia Department of Health. She said this would also mean approximately 250 more septic tanks that will need to be maintained. Manager McAlister said connection fees will help with some expenses for water and sewer but upgrades to these facilities will also be required. She said this would increase the

town's population by approximately 750 people. Manager McAlister said with all the growth the town is experiencing we will need to look at increasing staff. She said we will need to increase our police staff by two officers to handle larger coverage area and scheduling conflicts. Manager McAlister said we would need to look at restructuring positions and adding additional positions such as: code enforcement official, Economic Development/ Tourism Specialist, Facilities and Maintenance Technician and Public Works staffing including septic tank technicians. Manager McAlister said with the growth in the town and staffing needs we will need additional office space for town staff. She said she knows this is a lot of information to process and suggested everyone look over the information and bring back any feedback or questions to the work session.

Mayor Plaster adjourned the workshop at 8:04 p.m.

February 13, 2023

A work session of Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, February 13, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Plaster called the work session of February 13, 2023, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m.

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

Other Town Officials present were: Town Attorney Nathan Miller, Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Clerk Tara Morris, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, Parks Director Austin Shank and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

Mayor Plaster said the first thing on the agenda was a pool update. Manager McAlister stated that she has received a quote from National Pools to repair the expansion joint for a little over \$21,000.00. She said they could schedule the repair work for the fall of 2023. Manager McAlister gave an update on the water loss at the pool. She said that it is currently losing around 12,000 gallons of water a day. She said the main fill line to the pool broke, so they are having to fill it with a garden hose. Director Shank gave council the water loss since the Spring 2022 which has been 932,000 gallons. He felt before the pool could be opened again that we would need to do another geophysical study. Council member Kohl said that the repair is much cheaper than we thought it would be and would like to us fix the pool. Council member Bailey said we have already spent too much money and the maintenance cost keeps going up, so we are losing more and more. Council member Sterling said he doesn't think that we should keep putting money into the pool. Council member Justis asked if we knew how many residents use the pool. Director Shank said an abbreviated pool season last year put the number of residential passes sold at less than 30. Council member Leeth said that he feels we need to stop dumping money into the pool and any money we can save use it in the park for improvements. Council member Bailey asked if we could earmark the money that we would have used for staffing toward a future facility/pool. Manager McAlister stated that she hates that we have are having to deal with this type of decision but if they pool were to close, she would like to see those budgeted funds go toward improvements to other areas in the parks. Council member Bailey moved to demolish the current pool and fill it in and maintain the concession stand depending on what we want to do with that. Council member Leeth seconded the motion. Council member Kohl stated that he feels this is premature to demolish the pool and feels that we should do more research before we make a final decision. By a vote of 4-2 and recorded as follows: JUSTIS – NAY; BAILEY – AYE; STERLING – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – NAY, LEETH – AYE. Council member Leeth asked for this to be included in the next newsletter, so citizens are aware.

Mayor Plaster said the next item on the agenda is the Strategic Plan. Manager McAlister asked council if the priorities that were set in 2022 are still the ones that need the most attention or if there should be some changes. While discussing this the council agreed to move forward with a thorough comprehensive plan and follow up with an action plan. Manager McAlister said that a comprehensive plan would cost around \$50,000.00 which could be spread across two budget years.

Mayor Plaster said the next item on the agenda is other business and said we had spoke about Roberts Rules of Order. She said we have purchased a new edition of the Roberts Rules of Order for anyone who wants to look over them.

Mayor Plaster adjourned the work session at 6:47 p.m.

February 13, 2023

A regular session of Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, February 13, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Plaster called the regular session of February 13, 2023, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 7:01 p.m. Mayor Plaster asked for a roll call.

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

Other Town Officials present: Attorney Michael Helms, Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Clerk Tara Morris, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director A.J. Hummel, Park Director Austin Shank, 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: JUSTIS – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; STERLING – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE, LEETH – AYE; the Council approved the minutes of the January 9, 2023 meetings as presented.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND CLAIMS (public comment)

Colleen Mullen addressed the council and asked if the town has a plan on how to respond if a train derailed in our town. She said there has been several train derailments and wanted to know if we have any type of plan in place for such an event. Council member Bailey said the town does have a plan in place for such events. He said the town is part of the adopted Emergency Management Plan with Rockingham County which includes resources from the State. Council member Bailey said there is training for these types of events, so responders are prepared if something would happen.

Eddie Chittum addressed the council and said he was thinking about the solid tanks and thought maybe increasing the staff's pay on the day or days they are working on the septic truck pumping tanks. He said he knows its not a pleasant job, but it may help if they got a little extra pay.

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: JUSTIS – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; STERLING – AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE, to approve the financial reports for the month of January.

WATER AND SEWER – no report

ORDINANCE, HEALTH, AND PROPERTY – no report

STREET AND STREET LIGHTS – no report

PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES – no report

SPECIAL EVENTS – no report

PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION – Mayor Plaster said she attended the Grottoes Rescue Squad’s appreciation banquet. She said it was very humbled and she got to meet the people that were involved in a motorcycle accident right beside her house.

STAFF REPORTS

TOWN MANAGER. Manager McAlister said that we received a congratulatory letter from FEMA regarding the adoption of our updated floodplain ordinance. She informed the council that the bid is out for the Aspen Avenue waterline replacement project and that all bids are due by 2:00 p.m. on February 28, 2023 at which time they will be opened and read aloud.

ATTORNEY.

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

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. Director Shank stated that they have lost five employees to competitive jobs with higher pay and are struggling to attract desirable candidates for employment.

NEW BUSINESS – Mayor Plaster asked for a staff update for the U-1 Resolution. Clerk Morris stated that this resolution is for the addition of streets into our maintenance payment program with VDOT. She said the street has to be up to constructed and up to state standards for a year before we can add it into our system. Mayor Plaster asked for a motion to accept the resolution. Council member Bailey replied so moved. Council member Leeth seconded the motion. The vote carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: JUSTIS – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; STERLING – AYE; RAYNES - AYE; KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE.

**RESOLUTION
20230213-01**

WHEREAS, due to construction of certain streets within the town limits of Grottoes, there is additional street mileage which is eligible for maintenance payments as follows:

Collector/ Local streets which meet the requirements of Section 33.1-41.1 of the Code of Virginia that are eligible for maintenance payments totaling 0.60 lane miles are listed on VDOT form U-1 and shown in yellow on the attached town map.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Town of Grottoes respectfully requests the Virginia Department of Transportation to make maintenance payments effective July 1, 2023

CLOSED SESSION - On motion by Council member Leeth, seconded by Council member Raynes, and carried by a vote of 6 to 0, voting recorded as follows: JUSTIS – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; STERLING – AYE; LEETH – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; KOHL – AYE; the Council recessed the meeting from 7:18 p.m. to 7:26 p.m., for a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)5 of the Code of Virginia for the discussion concerning a prospective business where no previous announcement has been made of the business.

On motion by Council member Leeth, seconded by Council member Raynes, and carried by a vote of 6 to 0, voting recorded as follows: BAILEY – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; STERLING – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; LEETH – AYE; KOHL – 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)5 of the Code of Virginia, as only such public business matters that were identified in the motion by which a closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting”. Clerk Morris took a roll call. J. Justis; so certified, J. Bailey; so certified, M. Sterling; so certified, J. Plaster; so certified, D. Raynes; so certified, T. Leeth; so certified, M. Kohl, so certified.

Council member Justis stated that we will be out of the state for a medical procedure during the March council meeting and would like to participate electronically. Mayor Plaster asked council if anyone objected, no one objected, and Mr. Justis will be able to participate in the March meeting electronically.

Mayor Plaster declared the meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.