

February 4, 2025

A retreat of Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Tuesday February 4, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Plaster called the retreat of February 4, 2025, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 5:31 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE:** Council Members present: Jim Justis, Maite Taylor, David Raynes, Eddie Chittum, Joshua Bailey, and Michael Kohl.

Other Town Officials present were Town Manager Kyle O'Brien, Attorney Michael Helm, Assistant Town Manager Tara Morris, Clerk Jennifer Whetzel, Parks/Tourism Director Austin Shank, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

Town Manager O'Brien presented a slide show regarding the Vision/Mission Statement/Strategic Plan.

**The Towns Mission Statement is** *“The Town of Grottoes shall provide excellence in government services and will therefore be a safe, well-planned economically viable community, with equal opportunity for all.”*

**The Towns Vision Statement is:** *“In partnership with the community, the Town of Grottoes will protect, enrich and enhance the quality of life of its citizens by providing a high level of governmental service in an efficient, equitable and responsive manner, and will create opportunities for the Town to thrive and prosper.”*

The first thing discussed is the need to maintain and improve infrastructure facilities. The suggestion was to have a Capital Improvement Plan: Manager O'Brien stated that the town doesn't currently have one but will start on it after the budget year begins July 1, 2025.

Town Manager O'Brien discussed the need to create defined areas in town for business and that the land development ordinance needs to be updated to improve contradictions of interpretation and create regulatory consistency. He also suggested that the Town Code needs to be updated to align with the State Code. He stated the corridors are a mix of residential and business.

The third topic Manager O'Brien touched on was Economic Development/Community Connection/Beautification-Historic Preservation. He proposed that the town needs to preserve some historic properties and spoke of the new signs that are currently being constructed on all roads coming into the town.

Next on the agenda was the Parks Strategic Plan-Pool (review)

Parks and Tourism Director Austin Shank spoke on the Critical Capital Improvements that need to be made at the pool. The pool house roof repair was of great discussion. Costing the town approx. \$13,775.00, which included removal of the sky lights and closing them up. Discussion was had regarding if it is worth replacing the roof if the pool house will eventually be torn down. Parks and Tourism Director Shank recommended the caulking between the deck and the pool be replaced before the pool opens. Which is estimated to cost \$5200.00. The Grottoes Pool Preservation Foundation member Nadina Pupic stated that a \$10,000 grant was received from Rockingham County and that they currently have \$31,000 in their account to go towards improvements. This she states does not count the money they will raise during their May fundraiser.

Parks and Tourism Director Shank had a total Fiscal Year 2025 w/Pool Decking total coming in at \$136,164.49 to include operational expenditure and critical capital improvements.

On a motion made by Council Member Justis, seconded by Council Member Taylor and carried by a vote of 4-2. Voting was recorded as follows: JUSTIS-AYE; KOHL-AYE; TAYLOR-AYE; RAYNES-AYE; CHITTUM-NAY; BAILEY-NAY; the council approved to replace the pool decking for the 2025 pool season.

Town Manager O'Brien next spoke about current projects underway.

Infrastructure projects to include 6<sup>th</sup> Street waterline replacement project starting mid-February. Lagoon Dredging beginning Spring 2025. Entranceway signs and wayfinding signs, septic tank pumping are currently happening. The brush pile clean-up is nearly completed. Public Works is working on water meter replacements upgrading to radio read meters. The First Responders Memorial and the Bill Davies Resolution/Dedication projects will begin within the coming weeks. The dedication of the Davies Stage at Painter Park will be during the first Friday's Bluegrass which is scheduled for July 11, 2025.

Mayor Plaster said next, we will go through the committees to see if there was anything any committee member would like to discuss.

**Personnel, Fire and Police** – Mayor Plaster mentioned that besides the current COLA raise given, that they may propose a potential merit raise on top of that.

**Special Events** – Several topics were discussed by the Special Events Committee. Mayor Plaster stated that the First Responders Memorial would be dedicated on October 18, 2025. That the stage at Painter Park would be renamed to honor fallen former Police Chief William "Bill" Davies, during the First Friday of the Roger "Pee Wee" Randall concert series in the park.

**Ordinance, Health, and Property** – Nothing to report

**Finance**-Town Treasurer Rhonda Danner stated that the 2021 Audit is nearly finished and once we complete that, we will move forward with a new auditing company.

**Water and Sewer** – Council member Bailey said we needed to stay focused on the issues of water and sewer lines and their upgrades. He hopes we are soon able to apply for grants and be able to repair lines, etc. Council member Kohl stated that we needed to see what the rates need to be in order to qualify for grants. Town Manager O’Brien stated that we should wait until Radio Read meters are completed before raising the utility rates.

**Streets and Street Lights** – Assistant Town Manager stated that a new streetlight needs installed on Dogwood Avenue where its meets 21<sup>st</sup> Street. She also stated that 340, 256, 6<sup>th</sup> St and Dogwood are all getting new LED lights. The lights need to be added to the agenda under old business for the February 10, 2025, Council Meeting.

**Parks, Recreation and Public Facilities** – Dominion is currently investigating to see about updates for the power supply. The Grand Caverns Cave typically uses 2400 volts for cave lighting.

Next Town Manager O’Brien stated that the VML Conference is October 12<sup>th</sup> 2025 and FOIA/COIA training/recertifications would be forthcoming as well.

Finally, Manager O’Brien touched on the 1<sup>st</sup> 100 days of his time with the town and was happy with the progress that is being made and the future of the town.

Mayor Plaster adjourned the retreat at 7:35 p.m.

Attest

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Mayor

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Clerk