

April 14, 2025

A regular session of the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, April 14, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Plaster called the regular session of April 14, 2025, Grottoes Town Council to order at 7:06 p.m. Mayor Plaster asked for a roll call.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present: Eddie Chittum, Joshua Bailey, Jim Justis, Mayor Jo Plaster, David Raynes, Maite Taylor. Council members not in attendance: Michael Kohl

Other Town Officials present: Attorney Michael Helm, Town Manager Kyle O'Brien, Assistant Town Manager Tara Morris, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Deputy Clerk Crystal Ortiz, Parks Director Austin Shank, Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

On a motion by Council member Raynes, seconded by Council member Taylor, and carried by a vote of 4-0-1, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – ABSTAINED; JUSTIS – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; TAYLOR – AYE; the Council approved the minutes for the meetings held on March 10, 2025.

### **RECESS OF REGULAR MEETING AT 7:07 PM**

Mayor Plaster called to order the Joint Public Hearing with the Planning Commission.

Jeremy Crute of the CSPDC presented the background and purpose of the Comprehensive Plan. He gave both an oral presentation as well a printed copy with printed PowerPoint slides to accompany.

No one present signed up to speak **FOR** the request.

Speaking **AGAINST** the request were:

1. Gleamer Sullivan thanked those who have worked on the plan. She has issue with lack of additional meetings, lack of strategies, problems with conditional use permits, and has a list of edits that need to be made. She asks the committee to disapprove the plan at this time.
2. Nadina Pupic agreed with everything Ms. Sullivan says but also that it is incorrect / incomplete. She asked the commission not to approve yet until more time can be used for feedback.

Town Manager O'Brien explained that it is not being voted on tonight, the public hearing is to get feedback from the citizens.

Commission member Haas acknowledged that there are comments/concerns that have been submitted but still not included in the plan.

Mayor Plaster adjourned the joint public hearing and turned the meeting over to the Planning Commission.

Chairman Nicley asked for a roll call.

ATTENDANCE: Planning Commission members present: Brandon Monnett, Brooke Haas, Rene Ehlenfeldt, Dylan Nicely, Darrell Baker, and Richard Muttai. Not in attendance: Michael Kohl.

All members present agreed that there is more work to be done, and Commission Member Ehlenfeldt motioned to table the comprehensive plan, seconded by Commission Member Baker. On a vote of 6-0 voting recorded as follows: MONNETT- AYE; HAAS – AYE; EHLENFELDT – AYE; NICELY – AYE; BAKER – AYE; MUTTAI – AYE; the plan was tabled.

## **RETURN TO REGULAR MEETING AT 7:30 PM**

### **PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND CLAIMS (PUBLIC COMMENT)**

Callie Bailey spoke of being a resident of Grottoes for 33 years. Feels that the Town has not kept up with the aging infrastructure and the March 22<sup>nd</sup> water outage was the result. She feels that it's a tired excuse that the Council inherited this problem. Stated Mayor knows about all the new construction and feels the public is not informed about budget and how/why funds are spent. She also expressed that maybe Grottoes should think of unincorporating.

Kyle Stauffer feels that the water is not safe and referred to previous Facebook comments. He again began personal attacks on Mayor Plaster and Council member Raynes interrupted to stop him.

Scott Sacra apologized to Town employees for his message on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. He wants his septic pumped. Asked how Council can be giving \$100,000+ to the pool. Feels the pool leak has not been fixed and that the money used for the pool should have been used to fix the water lines.

Tabitha Dean shared her opinion on a possible solution to the water issue. Stated that the Town purchased software and that Charlie Stickley should be hired as a Consultant and that the whole town did not need to be without water.

Mike Betts spoke about the Grand Caverns 5K Race Series in its 14<sup>th</sup> year and April 25<sup>th</sup> will be the last run. They have raised over \$47,000 over the years.

Sharon Reeves shared that due to the water issue, her apartment was flooded and wants to know who is paying the water & electric bills for the cleanup.

Nadina Pupic referred to the water issues. She stated that a lot of people are angry and feels that the town is not transparent enough, and that meetings should be live streamed. She wants better communication, feels that there is not an emergency preparedness plan in place, and is angry and confused.

Town Manager O'Brien addressed everyone about the recent water issue. He stated that the Town had determined 6<sup>th</sup> Street to be a priority, and that not even the engineers who put together the plan foresaw the problems to be what they were. He explained that we had 13 water line breaks in a single day, and the 12" line went into service 2 days later. Town Manager O'Brien assured all that the water crisis is over.

Mayor Plaster also closed out the comment period by sharing that over the last 7 years the Council has pushed hard to upgrade infrastructure and work to keep a proper balance. Mr. Kyle Stauffer interrupted her and again started personal attacks. Mr. Stauffer was escorted out of the meeting by Chief Sullivan.

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

**FINANCE** – On a motion by Council member Raynes, seconded by Council member Justis and carried by a vote of 5-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; RAYNES - AYE; TAYLOR - AYE, JUSTIS-AYE to approve the financial reports for the month of March 2025.

**WATER AND SEWER** – No report. Council member Bailey did thank those who were present for sharing their concerns and stated that there is still a lot of upgrading to be done.

**ORDINANCE, HEALTH, AND PROPERTY** – On a motion by Council member Raynes, seconded by Council member Taylor and carried by a vote of 5-0, voting as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; RAYNES - AYE; TAYLOR - AYE, JUSTIS-AYE to set a Joint Public Hearing for May 12, 2025 for two Conditional Use Permits.

**STREET AND STREET LIGHTS** – Council member Justis reported that a meeting was held with Dominion Energy to begin upgrading streetlights in town to LED, saving the town \$96,000+ over the next 10 years. The project should start within the next 4-6 weeks.

**PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES** – Council member Chittum stated that a Parks meeting will be held at a date not yet determined; he thanked everyone for their comments.

**SPECIAL EVENTS** – Council Member Maite Taylor spoke about Easter Egg Hunt at Grand Caverns on April 12<sup>th</sup> that hosted over 200 children. She asked for volunteers for any of the many upcoming events.

**PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION** – Mayor Plaster thanked the staff.

#### **STAFF REPORTS**

TOWN MANAGER. A written report was provided.

ATTORNEY. Nothing to report.

TREASURER. A written report was provided.

ASSISTANT TOWN MANAGER. A written report was provided.

POLICE CHIEF. A written report was provided

RECREATION AND TOURISM DIRECTOR. A written report was provided.

PUBLIC WORK DIRECTOR. A written report was provided.

**NEW BUSINESS**

No new business.

**OLD BUSINESS**

No old business.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Plaster declared the meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

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Mayor

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Deputy Clerk