

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD AT THE STRASBURG TOWN HALL ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2021 AT 7 P.M.

FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Council Member Nicholson (Chair), Hooser, Massoud, and Weaver.

Other Council Members Present: Mayor Boies and Council Members Monahan, Reynolds, and Ricard.

Council Member Nicholson called the meeting to order.

Citizen Comments:

Action Item:

- *Approval of Minutes:* **The minutes of the April 15, 2021**

The minutes of the April 15, 2021 Finance and Personnel Committee meeting were approved as presented.

Discussion Items:

1. Boards and Commissions Appointments

Description: *Consideration of appointments to the Architectural Review Board and the Board of Zoning Appeals.*

Chairperson Nicholson said it had been discussed previously how to move forward with the appointments. In the past, if someone's appointment is ending, if they want to continue to serve, we will continue with the appointment unless there is a reason not to such as non-attendance.

Council Member Massoud thinks it is better that every seat should be up as they come up. He thinks it is fairer to do it this way.

Council Member Weaver thinks it is always a good position to have the positions open as they end as this promotes participation.

Council Member Hooser agreed with all comments.

Town Manager Coggsdale said you also want to keep the continuity. We can look at the list of applicants we have and go from there. The incumbent might still be the best person for the position. If you know you are going to keep the incumbent, you should not tease other applicants. Sometimes the process is being in the process even though you might not be the chosen person.

Council Member Massoud said you don't want to chase someone out, but there might be someone with more talent.

Council Member Hooser asked what the town utilizes for getting the word out for getting applicants. He suggested adding a radio ad – PSA. Coggsdale said we could put posters in the Town Hall, posts on Facebook, ads in the newspaper, and advertise in our newsletter

It was felt that we need to do intense recruitment to get additional applicants.

Consensus was that people currently serving will be asked to reapply at the same time as others are applying and choose from the pool of all applicants.

2. Employee Personnel Policies Manual Holiday Schedule Review

Description: Review of employee holiday schedule

Town Manager Coggsdale said eight specific holidays are observed and staff then gets six floater days to use whenever they want throughout the year. The State holiday schedule was shown, as well as comparisons with other localities in the area. Shenandoah County and Woodstock follow the state holidays. Days off range from 13 holidays to 17 holidays; Strasburg has 14 holidays. He reviewed the holidays other localities observe.

The question is if this is something Council wants to change. A day was added last year so is this the norm now or how do we want to change.

Chairperson Nicholson said Juneteenth was what was added last year. She is passionate about Veterans Day and would like it not to be a floater day.

Council Member Hooser thinks it makes sense to go with the State holiday schedule. He likes the Indigenous Day. He has talked to some employees though and they like the floater days.

Town Manager Coggsdale said if we were to go with the State holidays, that is more days we would be closed to the public. He said there should be days that we are closed. Discretion on when they can take time off is more important to the employees.

Council Member Weaver said in working in a locality, he understands why front office people might want the state holidays off, but he sees the benefit of allowing those that are in the other departments the flexibility since they will have to work holidays anyway. This is the type of benefit that helps us compete with other municipalities in the area. He is flexible on this. He understands the Veterans Day, but he also likes to have days you can use at your discretion. However, he questioned having three days off in November.

Town Manager Coggsdale said when people have gotten accustomed to taking the day after Thanksgiving off, it would be hard to change that.

Council Member Massoud said we have to consider the taxpayers and not give away the farm.

Council Member Nicholson would like to continue with what we have and add Veterans Day. She doesn't want to take away anything staff has now.

Consensus was to add Veterans Day and leave everything else as is.

3. Lodging Tax Amendment for Short Term Rentals

Description: Consideration of a Code amendment for taxes on the gross proceeds arising from short-term rental property

Town Manager Coggsdale said he put the State Code section in the packet by error. We are considering the amendment written by the NSVRC. It is running parallel with the zoning side of this amendment. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing tomorrow and the Town Council will hold a public hearing on October 5.

This could be added to the Work Session for full Council to deliberate. Until the zoning side is

passed, we do not need to follow up on this.

This will be discussed with Council at a later date.

Old or Unfinished Business:

1.) Round-up Program:

Chairperson Nicholson said this was brought up by the Outreach Committee by a citizen who was trying to come up with a way to assist others in our own community. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said he has done some research on this. Customers would have to opt into this. He is not sure how or if our accounting system is going to be able to do this. It can be beneficial to people, but there is a lot of work.

Chairperson Nicholson would like add this topic to a Work Session for a discussion by full Council.

Council Member Weaver thinks there is wide support on Council for a program such as this but it should be done as easy as possible. He uses this all the time with other utilities. He thinks the best way to start this is through electronic payments.

How do we decide who would qualify as a hardship? **Town Manager Coggsdale** would want to have a third party decide who gets the money. **Chairperson Nicholson** said she believes that **former Town Manager Pearson** was going to talk to the Alliance for Shelter.

This will be moved from the committee and go to the Work Session.

Information will be gotten for the ratio of on-line versus in-person payments.

2.) Arts and Tourism Façade Program

Town Manager Coggsdale said he needs help on this. He said there was a program and asked if there was any funding for revamping this program.

Council Member Massoud said this is a controversial program, you either love it or hate it.

This is a program that “dressed up” buildings. **Council Member Hooser** said he thinks there are many buildings that could use this. He has heard more complaints about the mural program. **Council Member Massoud** said the art came across as not being in touch with the town and we were told we would have to like it.

Council Member Weaver said it is important to view public art installation in a different light than business front improvements. They are completely different things. He would like to see what other localities do as a pass-through agent for the façade program. His first thought is to separate out some of the endeavors. He doesn't think they are close to being the same thing.

Chairperson Nicholson said she is not sure why it is on our agenda, but it is on the Project's List.

Town Manager Coggsdale said it is an incentive to get a new business in town. It is a way to recruit.

Council Member Hooser said Woodstock made it so easy to get the façade done on his mom's business.

This will be looked at during the next budget work.

- 3.) Equal Pay
- 4.) Smart Meters Update

Town Manager Coggsdale said he thinks the Equal Pay and the Smart Meters go along. With electric bills, you have six months of higher usage and with our new meters, he is hoping they will help make it equal pay.

Council Member Massoud said it will make it more equal. There are people who think they are already paying too much. If you flatten it out somehow, they could budget it out.

Town Manager Coggsdale said in rounding to the thousands, we shouldn't have the larger bills every few months. He added that anyone with an older meter will see an increase. The older the meter, the slower they work, just like people. The new meter will more accurately register the water usage.

Council Member Massoud said whatever happens, someone will get upset.

Chairperson Nicholson said it seems like you get a higher bill every quarter. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said this is how our readings are done now. He explained how this works as far as the billing. With the new meters, we could bill to the gallon.

Council Member Massoud said he thinks we could do this now. He said the more you use, the more you pay.

Council Member Weaver asked if we would have some choice in billing to the ten gallons or one gallon. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said we should be able, and this is in the RFP --- how low can we go to the gallon. **Council Member Weaver** said we should strive to pay for the utility in the amount of what is consumed. We need to be uniform in how the meters work.

Town Manager Coggsdale said if we are heading for the new meters, the equal pay is gone. You should see a more even bill unless you have an issue. You will be paying for what you use.

Chairperson Nicholson said the new subdivision on Route 55, smart meters were put in so it would be interesting to see how this is working.

New Business:

Closed Meeting:

Chairperson Nicholson moved to enter into a closed meeting pursuant to Code of Virginia § 2.2-3711(A)(1) for discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body. The subject of the closed meeting is for discussion of various town positions; second by Council Member Massoud.

With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously and the committee entered into a closed meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Reconvened at 8:36 p.m.

Chairperson Nicholson said, “The Strasburg Town Council Finance and Personnel Committee of the Town of Strasburg hereby certifies by Roll Call vote that to the best of each member’s knowledge (1)only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies and (2)only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Council of the Town of Strasburg.”

Council Member Hooser	I so certify
Council Member Massoud	I so certify
Council Member Weaver	I so certify
Chairperson Nicholson	I so certify

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.