

MINUTES OF THE STRASBURG TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024 AT 7 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE STRASBURG TOWN HALL.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Boies, Vice Mayor McCornyn, and Council Members Carter, Hooser, Kimmons, Lowder, Monahan, and Stover.

Call to Order –Mayor Brandy Boies

Introduction and Recognition of Visitors and Guests:

Mayor Boies welcomed **Dan McCermott** who recently started an online news service, Route 11 News.

Citizen Comments on non-agenda items:

Discussion Items/Updates:

1.) Presentation of the FY2023 Financials – Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates

Director of Finance Fletcher introduced **James Kelley** of Robinson, Farmer, and Cox, the auditors for the town. He pointed out some highlights of the audit report. He encouraged all to look at the Management Discussion which can be found on pages 10-22 of the report. Issued an unmodified audit opinion which is the highest they are allowed to issue. Slides of the presentation are attached here-to.

Town Manager Coggsdale said it will be on a future agenda to accept the audit. It is an acceptance of the audit and not an approval of it.

Council Member Stover thanked all on the financial side for their work. He is glad we are finally charging the appropriate amounts for the trash collection.

This will be added to the regular agenda for the January 9, 2024 meeting.

2.) Project Updates

Town Manager Coggsdale reported the following:

- *115 W. King Street:* A virtual meeting was held before the holidays with Dewberry, the project engineers, regarding the “Needs Analysis” and a meeting is being scheduled in the next week to go over “programming” for the building.
- *Borden Mowery Drive:* Awaiting delivery of Preliminary Title Report from Stantec (consultant); this is the last attachment needed to finalize the offer packet to the property owner. At VDOT’s request, the engineer is working on new budget and timelines for the project.
- *Queen Street Sewer Line:* Thrasher Engineering, project engineer, is working with staff on property easements. USDA has approved the project for funding.
- *Sandy Hook Waterline Replacement:* Pennoni Engineering (project engineer) is working with staff on property easements.

Asst. Town Manager Shipe reported on the following projects:

- *Town Run and Riverwalk*: A meeting is scheduled for Friday, January 5, to talk about the grant and other aspects of the projects. “Key Players” in the project have been invited.
- *July 4th Fireworks*: A call has been made to schedule an informal meeting with Mark Hensell.
- *Park Bathrooms*: Met with a contractor to look at the current structure. The contractor said there was a good shell structure and should just be remodeled.

Council Member Monahan asked about the Riverwalk and if it is part of the Dupont Grant. **Asst. Town Manager Shipe** said this is included in the Town Run and Riverwalk meeting. The same team players are involved in both projects so the meeting will be combined.

Council Member Lowder asked about a timeline for the Riverwalk project. **Asst. Town Manager Shipe** said we have until March 15 to remove certain trees because of some endangered bats that will have to be relocated.

3.) Water Cut-off Policy

Director of Planning and Public Services Otis said staff is coming forward with this change to Town Code so that we would be compliant with State Code regarding the timing of water cutoffs for non-payment. It must be identified if a public hearing is required; if none is required, this can be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Town Manager Coggsdale said the key change is that it would be consistent with what State Code allows. We can no longer cut off water after 30 days; it will be 60 days with a 10 day notice being given before cut-off. Internally, conversations will be needed to make the changes to our bills, etc.

Staff will confer with Town Attorney Helm to see if a public hearing is necessary.

Committee of the Whole (listed Areas of Focus will be discussed):

Council Member Comments:

Council Member Kimmons asked for an update on the policy for allowing water/sewer extension outside town limits. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said there will be a meeting with a developer which will help finalize the policy. This will be channeled through the proper liaison to get to Council. This will help with the bigger projects.

Council Member Lowder said he has talked to **Director of Planning and Public Services Otis** about some of the issues he has been working on. Jalisco’s was on the list. He reached out about the status of the property. **Director of Planning and Public Services Otis** said they were sent the final notice in mid-December, and we could go to court for the abatement.

Mayor Boies said the property has been cleaned up; it looks good. It is hoped they will find buyers for the property.

Director of Planning and Public Services Otis said he has reached out several times to

the owners but could not get a response.

Council Member Monahan asked if the town is prohibited from reaching out to the realtors when you can't find an owner and **Director of Planning and Public Services Otis** can do this, but then the property was worked on, so he did not take that step.

Council Member Kimmons asked for any updates on the cost savings on eliminating the personal property taxes. **Town Manager Coggsdale** said he read an article that said **Governor Youngkin** wants to do away with personal property taxes.

Town Manager Coggsdale said there are three areas where we get money in our budget from personal property taxes: the revenue, the late fees, and what the state gives us. If you take away the personal property tax, the real estate tax would have to go up. When we get into budget, there might be some other options to look at. He would like them to look at "the math" to keep us revenue neutral. He thinks it would be hard to give up the state money. He will capture the numbers and send them to all in an email.

Council Member Kimmons said personal property tax is the most unpopular tax across the town, county, and state. He thought this would make people happy and it could be lumped into the real estate taxes. He had not thought of the amount of tax we receive from the state.

Town Manager Coggsdale said **Governor Youngkin** is trying to come up with ways to still be able to give the money to localities. He agreed, personal property taxes are very unpopular.

Council Member Kimmons said he spoke to **Council Member Monahan** about something Winchester recently approved. It would be a fee on the impermeable land on your property. It is to set up a fund for infrastructure or the I and I. **Council Member Monahan** said it would encourage people to use things that are permeable and more environmentally friendly. The City of Winchester expects to raise \$3.8 million for infrastructure.

Being no other business, the work session adjourned at 7:44 p.m.