

Minutes

Town Council Meeting

July 10, 2023

The Town Council held its monthly meeting on Monday, July 10, 2023, in the council room of the Town Hall. Those joining the assembly were: Brian Laine, Mayor; Oscar E. Parker, III, Council President; Michael Kessinger, Dennis Mason, Darlene Whiting, Frances Chambers, Council Members; Pat Bowden, Fire Chief; Robyn Croft, Treasurer; Bonita Meyers, Clerk.

Call to order: The mayor called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm leading all those present in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Roll Call and Adoption of Agenda: The clerk called the roll; all members were present except Brian Wills. Mr. Kessinger moved to adopt the agenda as presented, Mrs. Whiting seconded; Council voted unanimously by raised hands to accept the motion.

Announcements: None

Minutes: Mr. Mason moved to dispense with the reading of the June minutes and to approve them as presented, and Mr. Parker seconded; Council voted unanimously to accept the motion.

Treasurer's Report: Mrs. Croft presented the treasurer's report as follows:

Balance on hand in the General Fund as of June 30, 2023 - \$249,191.18

Bills presented for payment as of June 30, 2023 - \$18,563.27

Mr. Kessinger made a motion to accept the treasurer's report as presented, Mr. Parker seconded the motion, and the council voted unanimously by raising hands in favor of the motion.

Citizen Statements:

Sheriff Giles submitted a letter to address the matter of public safety in Wakefield. He highlighted two main concerns; the surge in breaking and entering crimes and the increased traffic on primary and secondary roads. Sheriff Giles weighed the pros and cons of both options and explained how they could benefit the town. After a thorough discussion, Mr. Parker motioned to accept option 1, which entails hiring an additional full-time deputy to cover Wakefield during the daytime hours. Mrs. Chambers seconded the motion, and the council approved the action by raised hands. Mr. Kessinger abstained from voting due to his role as Captain of the Sheriff's Department, while Mrs. Whiting did not cast her vote.

Next to address the council was Mrs. Rebecca Birtcher. She expressed her concerns with other property owners about their mutual neighbor's actions. Their neighbor at 507 W Main St was reportedly converting their land into a quail preserve. They are currently tilling the soil and planting wildflower seeds that could grow up to six feet tall to attract quail. However, their biggest worry is the potential attraction of dangerous animals like snakes, rodents, and bobcats.

Committee Reports:

Fire Department: None

Sussex Service Authority: None

Airport: An airport committee meeting was scheduled for Monday, July 17, 2023, at 7 pm.

Ballpark/Recreation: The Sussex/Southampton little league team has made it to the All-Star League and will be traveling out of state for the next round of playoffs. During the council meeting, Mr. Kessinger proposed a

motion to donate \$500.00 to the Wakefield Little League. Mrs. Chambers seconded this motion, and the council voted unanimously in favor of the donation by raising their hands.

Budget/Finance: None

Cemetery: None

Emergency Services/Safety: None

Personnel: None

Planning Commission: Mrs. Chambers reported that the Berkeley Group was sent a request for proposal (RFP) to revise the Comprehensive Plan.

Property Maintenance: The mayor announced that the grass on the property located at the corner of Wilson Avenue and Church Street had been trimmed. Additionally, a letter has been forwarded to the mortgage company to inquire about demolishing the garage.

Streets/Beautification: None

Utilities: None

Vehicle Maintenance: None

Zoning: None

Events: None

Legal: None

Old Business: None

New Business:

Debt Setoff Parameters: Mrs. Meyers informed the council that we have yet to establish a procedure for collecting unpaid utility bills. She surveyed some of the VEMA coop members and found they were using the Integrated Revenue Management System (IRMS). Some were satisfied with collecting 80% of the outstanding debt, while others collected the total amount owed. Mrs. Meyers requested permission from the council to initiate the IRMS process and asked for their input on the debt collection parameters. After some discussion, Mr. Kessinger proposed collecting the total amount owed, which Mrs. Chambers seconded. The motion was unanimously approved by the council members, who raised their hands to indicate their support.

Personnel Manual: The mayor announced that Juneteenth was added as an official holiday in the personnel manual. Mr. Kessinger proposed that all full-time and part-time employees receive an additional day off in the 2023 calendar year to compensate for the missed day. Mr. Parker seconded the motion, and the council voted unanimously in favor of the action by raising their hands.

Executive Session: None

Adjourn: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Brain M. Laine, Mayor

Bonita JC Meyers

Bonita Meyers, Clerk