

MINUTES OF THE APRIL 5, 2021
CHINCOTEAGUE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Council Chambers

Council Members Present:

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor
Christopher D. Bott, Vice Mayor
Denise P. Bowden, Councilwoman
William T. McComb, Jr., Councilman
Ellen W. Richardson, Councilwoman
K. Jay Savage, Councilman
Gene W. Taylor, Councilman

Council Members Absent:

Staff Present:

Mr. Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager
Mr. Robby Fisher, Police Chief
Mr. Harvey Spurlock, Public Works Director

1. Call to Order

Mayor Leonard called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Invocation

Councilman Taylor offered the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Leonard led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Public Comment

Mayor Leonard opened the floor for Public Comment.

- Mrs. Patricia Farley, 3243 Lisa's Lane, stated that it is good to see all of Council. She is impressed with the way Council and Town Manager Tolbert has handled the budget by juggling and prioritizing to keep it in balance. She also discussed the amount that Congress Luria's office informed her the Town would receive from the Federal Government for the American Rescue Plan. She advised that the use is loose in law. She listed some of the allowable funding. She feels that Island non-profit organizations should be included. She listed some other ideas for the money adding that the Chamber of Commerce should also be included as they are the reason, they have the revenues they do.

- Mrs. Julie Brommer, Chincoteague Island Community Cats Organization, advised of another cat round-up for the spay/neuter program. This will begin Thursday, April 29th through Saturday, May 1st at the Firehouse. She reminded residents to keep their cats indoors during this time. She added that they have an area they would like to target, and the goal is 50 cats.

Councilwoman Bowden asked where they plan to trap.

Mrs. Brommer responded they would like to trap in the central part of the Island.

Councilman Taylor thanked her.

Councilwoman Bowden expressed the great job they do.

Mrs. Brommer thanked Council for allowing them to use the firehouse.

5. Agenda Adoption

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to adopt the agenda as presented. Unanimously approved.

6. District 1 Supervisor Report

Accomack County Supervisor, Mr. Billy Joe Tarr reported that the state has sent a sizable amount of money in support of their teachers. The Board of Supervisors approved the \$64 million budget on March 29, 2021. There will be no tax increase. He added that they have set aside another \$50,000 for the Inlet Study, which brings the amount up to \$200,000. He explained that this is a 3-year study with a cost of \$3 million. Nothing will be done by the Army Corp of Engineers until the study is done. He has a Waterways meeting on April 15th and will confirm if it is still approved. They also budgeted a donation of \$25,000 for the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce. He reported that on July 1st, 2021 the Board of Supervisors approved a revision to the Waterway Ordinance to permit all users to display a parking permit on their vehicle when using the County facility. He added that if you are a boat owner and assessed personal property taxes on the boat you will receive a free sticker. Queen Sound boat launch is exempt which is an agreement with VDOT. The fees are \$7 per day or \$40 per year.

Supervisor Tarr stated that Accomack County will receive \$6.2 million for the American Rescue Plan. The Town's figures have changed a few times and there aren't many rules. He advised that County Administrator, Mr. Mike Mason with the County will hold a Town Hall meeting to receive proposals from residents for the funds.

Councilman Taylor asked if Supervisor Tarr would request a donation for Brianna's Kindness Park.

Supervisor Tarr stated they have all received his letter and they have intentions to make a donation, it's just not the time.

There was further discussion.

Mayor Leonard mentioned the Wallops plan to dredge so that rocket parts could be brought to the Harbor. He asked if there was a way the put those 2 things together to get more money or have the Inlet Study done.

Supervisor Tarr thought so and would look into it further.

7. Staff Reports

General Government

Town Manager Tolbert reported the Water Filtration Plant is not in operation as of yet. The permit is in hand; however, NASA is changing the operation contractors which is causing a delay. He reported on Brianna's Kindness Park; sitework to begin next week and they will receive the 1st delivery of some of the equipment later this month. He advised that he is in the process of putting the firehouse on the Virginia Landmark Register and the National Registry of Historic Places. The process takes time and is involved. He is getting help from Councilwoman Richardson. He explained that if the firehouse is in both registries, he understands that it will not prevent anything including tearing it down. He added that the only way to protect the building from being torn down or modified is to get a grant easement from the State of Virginia that specifies the building will not be modified or torn down.

Town Manager Tolbert also reported that the American Rescue Plan Act was passed in mid-March. The Secretary of Treasury has 60 days to produce regulations of the use of the funds. There are general guidelines of which he listed a few. The amount the Town will receive has changed over the last few weeks. The County will receive \$6 million. He added that the Town will get the money from the state which has 30 days to get it to the Town. The Town has to submit a certification of need to the state to receive the funds. He offered to keep Council informed.

There were further discussions about guidelines and potential expenses.

Town Manager Tolbert also advised they have until the end of 2024 to spend the money. He also informed Council that he will have news within a few days about the Inlet Study. He then reviewed the Financial Report along with the Meals Tax and Transient Occupancy Tax current revenues and trends over the past several years. He reported that under Building Permits, the average has been 43 building permits in the month of March and this year for March they have 82 building permits. He added that Building and Zoning Administrator Bowden is doing a great job. He is seeing people, answering phone calls, conducting inspections daily and still able to complete his job.

Police Department

Chief Fisher reported that they had the Flag Football Tournament that was postponed from Thanksgiving weekend. They raised \$1,833 from admission, donations, and team entry fees. They will add more to this when they tally the hat sales. He advised that on March 24th they held the Annual Senior Luncheon where they served 250 meals. He expressed his appreciation to Emergency Management Coordinator Rush and his wife Arla for delivering 30 meals. He added that their daughter Ms. Linda Sue Rush was excited about this. They felt that they should fulfill her wish to do this for the seniors of the Island.

Chief Fisher also stated that the new dispatch system is up and running. All dispatchers have certification for the new radio system. He reported that it is working and going well. Captain Greenley completed a grant application to the DCJS for a School Resource Officer. He explained that the grant can be for up to 4 years. They should hear something in May or June. He added that they have been approved for the grant for new body-cameras.

There was brief discussion about the new body cameras and what they will do with the old body cameras.

Chief Fisher announced that Al's Pals team won the tournament and belt. He added that they would like to make this an annual event. The next event will be in November. He asked for prayers for the young man who sustained injuries during the tournament.

Councilman Taylor commented on such respect and good sportsmanship.

Public Works

Public Works Director Spurlock updated Council on the progress of the Sarbanes Grant Project. He advised of what is left with sidewalks along with the costs leaving a balance of \$18,000. This will not cover the bike path from Eel Creek to Famous'. He suggested lighting on the traffic circle to use the rest of the funds. He also advised they are working on drainage adding that the excavator is being used to clean ditches. He mentioned the Cleveland Street drainage experiment which was a huge success. He also stated that there was a failed drain on South Main Street by the Carnival which was fixed earlier in the day.

8. Committee Reports

Budget & Personnel Committee

Vice Mayor Bott reported on changes in the Personnel Policy Handbook that clarified, annual leave, sick leave, and jury duty.

Vice Mayor Bott motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to approve the changes in the Personnel Policy Handbook clarifying annual leave, sick leave, and jury duty. Unanimously approved.

Ordinance Committee

Councilman Savage advised they met on March 11th to discuss drainage and review of the Drainage Ordinance. They discussed issues with those filling less than 10,000 square feet on their property and not requiring a permit. He advised that Town Manager Tolbert suggested they forward this to the Planning Commission. This will eliminate large costs in the Storm Water Management Plan. They want to use the talent the Town has in-house to keep this from getting out-of-hand before it is too late. He added that Town Manager Tolbert felt it would be remedied within a few of months.

RCEC

Councilman Taylor reported they discussed fund raising for Brianna's Kindness Park. He thanked everyone for all their fundraising efforts. He also advised that the Pickleball Association requested to use the gym and as the Governor lifted some of the restrictions, they were able to allow one use per day in the gym.

9. Adoption of the Minutes for the March 1st and March 18th, 2021 Council Meetings. Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adopt the minutes of the March 1st, and March 18th, 2021 Council meeting as presented. Unanimously approved.

10. Consider Rental of Old Firehouse

Councilman Taylor stated that putting the firehouse on the National Registry could take 2 years. He would like to rent the 3-bay section for \$600 per month, the 2-bay section for \$500 per month, and offices for \$400 per month. He feels this will show if it works. He suggested making a decision and renting it as soon as possible.

Councilman McComb asked about the condition of the building.

Town Manager Tolbert advised it is clean but exactly like it was when the Fire Company moved out. He added that there is nothing to prevent it from being rented.

There was discussion regarding air-conditioning, lease agreements, insurance and hold harmless forms.

11. Consider Vacation of Lot Line for Anthony and Cheryl Simione

Town Manager Tolbert explained that the 3 adjacent lots are on the southern side of Ocean Boulevard. They would like to vacate 2 lot lines creating one larger lot to build a single-family dwelling.

Councilwoman Richardson motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to approve the vacation of lot lines on Ocean Boulevard for Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Simione. Unanimously approved.

12. Mayor and Council Announcements/Comments

Councilwoman Richardson thanked everyone for their prayers, cards, visits, and encouragement. She stated that it is by the Grace of God she is able to be at the meeting. She commended Council on a splendid job.

Councilwoman Bowden stated she is glad Councilwoman Richardson is back. She thanked Chief Fisher adding he is doing a great job with his department. She appreciates all they do. She included Town Manager Tolbert and Public Works Director Spurlock as well. She stated that the longer she is on Council the more she learns, and hopes she continues. There is a different feel and outlook. She added that the Town has great employees, and she appreciates them.

Vice Mayor Bott stated he is glad to see Councilwoman Richardson back.

Councilman McComb also stated it is good to have everyone here. He thanked Supervisor Tarr for his update. He also thanked Public Works Director Spurlock about the sidewalks, adding this was a great job.

Councilman Taylor welcomed Councilwoman Richardson back. He commented that the reason families like to come to Chincoteague is because it is safe, they feel welcomed and blessed with a wonderful place to fish and crab. He feels this is why the Transient Occupancy Taxes are paying the way. He commented on the boat ramp fees. He feels this will be another good year.

Councilman Savage told Councilwoman Richardson it was good to have her back. He stated that Emergency Management Coordinator Rush and his wife Arla are still in his prayers. He thanked Supervisor Tarr for the update. He commended Chief Fisher for doing great job. He added that in these times of turmoil with law enforcement, this shows it's all about unity. He also feels Public Works Director Spurlock is doing a good job. He added that staff is resilience with leadership and added to press on.

Mayor Leonard thanked everyone for the outpouring during the loss of his brother Carlton. This makes him think about the Island and how blessed we are. He stated he is thankful.

13. Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3711 (A) (5) of the Code of Virginia to Discuss a Prospective Business:

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to go into a closed meeting in accordance with §2.2-3711 (A) (5) of the Code of Virginia to discuss a prospective business. Unanimously approved.

14. Certification of Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3712 (D) of the Code of Virginia:

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to go into a closed meeting in accordance with §2.2-3712 (D) of the Code of Virginia. Unanimously approved.

15. Adjourn

Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adjourn. Unanimously approved.

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor

Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager