

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 06, 2023
CHINCOTEAGUE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Council Chambers

Council Members Present:

J. Arthur Leonard, 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:

Christopher D. Bott, Vice Mayor

Staff Present:

Mr. Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager
Mr. Robby Fisher, Chief of Police
Mr. Wes Parks, Public Works Director
Mr. E. Bryan Rush, Director of Emergency Services

Call to Order

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

Invocation

Councilman Taylor offered the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Leonard led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Mayor Leonard opened the floor for public comment.

- Ms. Connie Burford, 8128 Beebe Road, R71 Tom's Cove Campground, stated she would like to represent Chincoteague Island on the Accomack County School Board. She advised of the committees she was appointed to by the School Board. She feels that Chincoteague Schools Special Education Services are inadequate. She asked for Council's support in November.

Agenda Adoption

Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adopt the agenda as presented. All present were in favor and the motion was carried.

Ayes: Bowden, McComb, Richardson, Savage, Taylor

Nays: None

Absent: Bott

Staff Reports

General Government

Town Manager Tolbert reported on the Center's rentals, HVAC installation which is scheduled for May 22nd, and relocation of the high school graduation back to the high school gym. He explained that this was the week they scheduled the installation. He added that the high school will still be able to use the Center for the week of prom and setup, which is May 12th. He advised that graduation will be back at the Center next year. He continued with the financial report, meals and transient tax revenues, and tax collections. He congratulated staff on the collections of delinquent taxes. He also reported on the VPA grant and status. He advised of the 1st report of the Cigarette Tax. He reported on the Sunset Bay acquisition stating that the HOA attorneys have completed the review and comments on the draft. There have been no objections or deviations for the main parts of the deal. Town Manager Tolbert gave the Building and Zoning Report. He commented about the new building permit software on the Town's website.

Councilman Taylor asked if customers were still allowed to bring paper permit applications in.

Town Manager Tolbert advised that they would like to urge people to utilize the software. If it is brought into the office, someone has to type it into the software.

Councilwoman Bowden asked if the graduation is definitely at the high school.

Town Manager Tolbert advised as far as he knows it is. He explained that there is no other time to have the HVAC installed. He added that the equipment was supposed to be delivered in March, but it was delayed until May.

Police Department

Chief Fisher advised that SRO Officers Giminani and Carmondy attended an SRO class. All officers completed Narcan recertification training. Chief Fisher attended a radio meeting in Melfa. He reported that today, he, Mrs. Amy Lewis, and Director of Emergency Services Rush went to see the new radios. He added that they plan to get all fire companies and law enforcement agencies familiar with the new radios as well. This should be fully operational by the fall of next year.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Parks reported that in February they took down 8 dead pine trees on north Main Street, along with several trees on Hallie Whealton Smith. They are making progress on the Memorial Park boat ramp. They're pumping the water down and will start demolition of the extended ramp. The piles are in and they're moving along nicely. He also advised they are working on the Cropper Street water line; they have installed the entire line in 6 days. This is an average of 200 feet of water main per day. At the end of last week, they flushed the line and took bacteria samples today. Provided the samples are clean, they will install services and fire hydrants next. The following week they will install the storm drain on the south side of the street. The next step would be demolition of the sidewalks which should be completed by the end of this month. They will continue with vehicle and equipment maintenance. He added that they will prepare and receive bids for the sidewalk installation of Cropper Street along with milling, grading and paving.

Councilwoman Bowden asked what the plans were with the millings from Cropper Street.

Public Works Director Parks advised that the millings will have chunks. But he plans to contact Mr. Bunny Reese to work out the value of the millings to exchange for some processed millings.

Councilman Taylor stated that if they would have contracted the water line replacement with a firm, the cost would have been outrageous. He added that it's good to have a crew to do it in-house.

Emergency Services

Director of Emergency Services Rush gave a shout-out to 4 of his staff for a fabulous job. He reported that EMT Billy Reed, III, Paramedic Patty Drewer, Paramedic Ray Miles, and Paramedic Duane Reed had a call in the Oak Hall district for a cardiac arrest. He received feedback from the hospital, and they were able to save another cardiac arrest victim. He reported there were 5 calls less than last year, but still very busy. They had I-Gel training, which is another airway tool. Under Emergency Management they are monitoring the weather. He mentioned the Safe Station AED Grant and they are waiting to hear about the award. He reported that March 11th Rocket Lab will have a launch with a window between 6:00p.m. and 8:00p.m. Antares scheduled a launch on May 6th, which is the same day as the Seafood Festival. He reported that Northampton, Accomack, and Chincoteague are planning a tabletop POD exercise and refresher.

Director of Emergency Services Rush also reminded everyone to prepare now for emergency events. He reviewed the Covid stats adding that the Federal Health Emergency expires May 11th. He also stated that space flight tourism will be busy over the next couple of months.

Councilwoman Bowden asked what time the launch is scheduled for May 6th.

Director of Emergency Services Rush advised it is planned for 7:00a.m. He added that the beach will be closed.

Committee Reports:

Harbor Committee Meeting

Mayor Leonard reported that they have already discussed everything they addressed at the meeting; the VPA grant, the status of the boat ramp at Memorial Park, the possibility of allowing a specific permit to be used at Memorial Park for businesses which was not decided. He also advised they are waiting for the last of the floating piers for the Harbor.

Public Safety

Councilwoman Bowden advised they met on February 7th and discussed the Unified Surveillance camera system for the Town properties and buildings. Town Manager Tolbert will be getting prices from Cloud Server Techs. They went into executive session regarding security issues.

Ordinance Committee Meeting

Councilman Savage reported they discussed the Noise Ordinance which was passed at the Council Workshop meeting on February 16th.

Budget and Personnel Committee Meeting

Town Manager Tolbert stated they considered a revision to allow sick leave to be used by the employee for the care of parents that do not live in the same household. They discussed the budget and salaries, which will continue in the meeting next week.

Adoption of the Minutes of the February 6th and February 16th, 2023, Council Meetings
Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to adopt the minutes of the February 6th, and February 16th, 2023, Council meetings as presented. Unanimously approved.

Public Hearing for Lot Line Vacation

Mayor Leonard opened the public hearing at 7:37p.m.

- Town Manager Tolbert advised he received an email from Mr. Tom Ward who owns the property at 2930 Main Street. Mr. Ward was in opposition of the lot line vacation. He stated that it is unclear how the property will be used and listed the potential sewage/septic issues. He was concerned with the large septic that will have greater impact on the Channel and a greater negative impact on the environment. He requested that Council ask for detailed plans for future use. It will allow the developer and the Town to work together on this project.
- Mr. John Custis, attorney for Blue Marina Virginia, LLC, first commended Town Manager Tolbert for his hard work on the gift of the sewage treatment plant and transfer to HRSD. He also congratulated Council on this transaction. He stated that they plan to vacate the lot lines creating one large parcel to develop the marina, which is permitted by right. There are various stages of permitting and the Accomack County Wetlands Board unanimously approved this application. He stated that the redevelopment will add to the tax base, the economic development and enhance tourism. This project is wholly within the Town Code and within the guidelines of the Comprehensive Plan. He reviewed the Virginia State Code as well, adding that there is no harm at all to vacate the lot line. He respectfully requested approval of the vacation of the lot lines. He introduced Ms. Emily DeMarco with Blue Water Development who was also in attendance.

There being no further comments Mayor Leonard closed the public hearing at 7:44p.m.

Consider Line Vacation – Blue Marina

Councilwoman Bowden commented that there is no doubt that the south end of the Island has needed attention for a long time. She has reservations and fears that 10-20 years from now there will be a 3-story hotel there. She added that it is zoned that way and she can't deny it based on what could happen or on a gut feeling. This is a legal request, and they have to abide by the law. She hopes, down the line, when properties like this become available that the developer is respectful to the Island itself. She added that there are a lot of changes, some good and some bad. She added that this is within their legal right to do and she doesn't have the right to not approve it.

Mayor Leonard feels it will look nice.

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Richardson to approve the lot line vacation for Blue Marina. All present were in favor and the motion was carried.

Ayes: Bowden, McComb, Richardson, Savage, Taylor

Nays: None

Absent: Bott

Mayor and Council Comments

Councilwoman Richardson stated she has taken pictures at Captain Bob's and the Inlet. She's been here for 64 years and seen a lot of changes. She doesn't know Mr. Burbage but feels anything he does looks nice. She feels this will be beautiful and wished them the best.

Councilwoman Bowden stated that everything she has seen that Blue Water touches has looked very nice in the end. She also stated that it's tough to see your hometown change. It draws different clientele, and she doesn't want to push out clientele either. She would also like everyone and the general public to keep Public Works Director Parks and his family, who lost his father last week, in their prayers. She concluded that it's spring training, "Go Yankees!".

Councilman McComb echoed the condolences to Public Works Director Parks. He congratulated Blue Water Development. He added that change is hard sometimes but good most of the time. He stated that in the past they have brought value to the area. He stated that they're struggling within the budget to balance the EMS and Police protection. He added that the additional transient occupancy taxes, the additional real estate taxes will be welcomed in the budget over the next few years. He congratulated Blue Water and looks forward to see what they're going to do down there.

Councilman Taylor stated they should keep Public Works Director Parks in their prayers for a long time. He stated they should let each employee know that they are appreciated. They are blessed to have the employees the Town has. He stated that the Town staff works to keep things going but would leave for more money.

Councilman Savage also expressed condolences to Public Works Director Parks with continued prayers. He gave kudos to the EMS group and added they are in life-or-death situations, and they are the top on the shore and in the state of Virginia. He commended Public Works for the work being done and not missing a beat. He congratulated Town Manager Tolbert for taking care of the HRSD contract. He stated that he has done a great job.

Mayor Leonard stated that we're all blessed to live here. He added that change is hard, especially since your childhood. He compared Chincoteague to the towns down-the-county stating that the Town is vibrant, and all other towns used to be competitive and thrive. He added that their people are leaving, and the towns are becoming ghost towns. He stated that the Town of Chincoteague has done a great job of balancing. He stated that Blue Water has shown they are good developers and first class. He also mentioned the Beebe Ranch property that is for sale and hopes it won't be developed. He concluded with "Roll Tide!".

Adjourn

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden, and others to adjourn. All present were in favor and the motion was carried.

Ayes: Bowden, McComb, Richardson, Savage, Taylor

Nays: None

Absent: Bott

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor

Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager

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