

**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 4, 2024  
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. E. Bryan Rush, Director of Emergency Services  
Mr. Tyler Greenley, Acting Chief of Police  
Mr. Wes Parks, Public Works Director

**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.

- Mr. David Landsberger, 5611 Amrien Circle, reported on the status of the gym project for the YMCA. He described the project, size, and amenities. He listed programs they will be able to reinstate and the uses such as pickleball, volleyball, badminton, basketball, etc. They hope to have the sitework completed within 3-4 weeks, and the building to be done by late fall.

There was brief discussion.

**District 1 Supervisor Report**

Supervisor Tarr stated that when you receive your County real estate tax bills in May there is an average increase in assessment of 24.3%, Chincoteague's increase is 29.3%. However, the Supervisors reduced the tax rate to offset the increase. He added that there is no change in personal property tax rates. He advised of a request for a letter of support from the Town. This is to get Rt.175 on the list to be widened. He advised that VDOT would only agree to widen from T's Corner to Royal Farms. They are trying to get on the Smart Scale funding. They asked why they weren't getting an approval on extending the widening along the Causeway in the past.

He was advised there aren't enough letters of support from other entities. Which is why they are going to the entities to get support. He hopes they'll approve 3 lanes and is in hope of more pull-offs along the Causeway. He stated that they also advised that they didn't include the Causeway because it hasn't finished settling.

Councilwoman Bowden commented on accidents on the Causeway. She advised that she is in favor of this, but it shows her just how unimportant the Town of Chincoteague is. She referred to the tax revenue that the Town brings in, she feels that the Town has to fight and call for every single thing. She further commented on the number of accidents and tragedies on the Causeway over the years, adding that the Town deserves better. She requested that in the letter of support there be a statement added that the Town needs help as well.

Supervisor Tarr stated that 3 or 4 years ago the Town bought a piece of equipment for the State Police. He added that he is with the Town and Chincoteague is easy to represent.

There were further comments about lower tax rates, conducting VDOT surveys during the busy seasons, and skipping Suffolk and going straight to Richmond for the Town's needs regarding VDOT and the Causeway.

### **Agenda Adoption**

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

### **Staff Reports**

#### **General Government**

Town Manager Tolbert gave the Chincoteague Center Report for February. He reported that the new 911 system project is underway which is a new work shed. He also reviewed the Water Technical Assistance Program which assists communities with applications for federal funding for water and sewer infrastructure projects. He plans to apply for funding for the new sewer system as well as the relocation of the wells from Wallops Flight Facility property. He met with the advisory team from the University of Maryland to review the plans.

Town Manager Tolbert reported that he submitted the formal application for the planned floating dock project at Robert Reed Park to the Virginia Port Authority. They should know by May if there will be an award. He then advised of the Septic Local Partners Program which provides funds for the repair or replacement of failing septic systems. The Town was awarded \$750,000 by the DEQ under this grant. The Septic Local Partners Program agreement was signed last Wednesday and returned to the DEQ. The program allows either 50% or 100% reimbursement for each project depending on the applicant's income. They are now working on the program application form and will get that posted as soon as it is finished. The program will require a committee to review and approve the applications and select projects for inclusion in the grant.

Town Manager Tolbert advised that the Local Assistance Division of VDOT operates a program entitled Ready Set Go. RSG is designed to provide localities with free planning support to develop eligible Transportation Alternative Program applications for a grant. The project submitted was for 1 mile of new sidewalk on South Main Street connecting the existing sidewalk

south of Beebe Road to Curtis Merritt Harbor. They were selected for this grant. They also applied for a grant through VMRC to remove derelict boats. The application was approved and when they sign the agreement with the contractor, they will begin to remove the boats. The projects include: the sailboat near the bridge, the old outriggers in the marsh across from the Coast Guard station, a boat on South Main Street, and a few smaller vessels in the creek behind the Harbor.

Town Manager Tolbert advised that Transportation Director King continues to do a great job. The Name the Trolley Survey will be completed on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Chincoteague Elementary School students were given 4 choices of names from famous Chincoteague Ponies. He reported that the Trolley Service will begin on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. They are preparing for the March 13<sup>th</sup> visit of the Virginia Tourism Commission Conference to be held at the Community Center. Transportation Director King obtained permission from DRPT to use the trolleys to transport the conference attendees to the various events that Center Director Leonard has scheduled for them. He proposed 3 new trolley stops for the 2024 season. They would be at Deep Hole and Hibiscus Drive, Seaweed Drive and Main Street, and Ridge Road at Beebe Ranch.

Town Manager Tolbert gave an update on the status of the sewer collection system. Davis, Bowen, and Friedel are now actively working on the collection system design for the initial public sewer system. Survey crews have been around Maddox Boulevard and Main Street. He reviewed the Meals and Transient Occupancy Tax collections for February. He also reviewed the Financial Report. He then gave the Building and Zoning report.

Councilman Taylor thanked Supervisor Tarr for adding the Town onto the 911 Project.

#### Police Department

Acting Chief Greenley reported in addition to the calls for service, SRO Carmody and SRO Geminiani attended an active shooter class in Hamton, VA. Acting Chief Greenley and Dispatcher Lewis attended a meeting with Deputy 911 Director Kilmon in reference to an active shooter class for dispatchers which has been scheduled for March 24<sup>th</sup>. Pfc. Stevens attended FTO certification training, and Investigator Barnes and SRO Geminiani attended an intoxilyzer recertification class in Virginia Beach. He added that all the vehicles are operational, in use, and assigned to personnel. He added that on February 21<sup>st</sup> he and Officer Butler listed the police officer position on Indeed and it has reached 4,349 people, 256 clicked on the posting, 45 people started an application, and 28 have applied. He will run an ad in the Eastern Shore Post.

#### Public Works Department

Public Works Director Parks reported that the Water Department installed 7 new services and attended 3 service leaks that were repaired/replaced. During the rainy days they utilized their time to perform routine maintenance, grease, and clean equipment. They built shelving for storage at the Brianna's Kindness Park restrooms and at the Center in the old boiler room. They moved several downed trees on the unpaved nature trail and installed additional wind screens at the tennis courts. He added that there are cracks in the tennis courts and plans to repair them. He reported on the plans for March which include: sending bid packages for the Spring Paving, completion of pier replacement at the Harbor and Reed Park, install the trail and exercise

equipment at the Brianna's Kindness Park, and continue routine maintenance of equipment and vehicles.

Councilwoman Bowden asked about cleaning pipes in the ditches, she mentioned Misty Meadows, Rosedale, and Highland Park and asked if they were on the list.

Public Works Director Parks advised that it is a priority with all of the rain.

Councilwoman Bowden also asked about the paving on Willow Street along with the line painting.

Public Works Director Parks advised that they plan to paint the sidewalk lines as well, but the temperatures have to be consistently 50 degrees and above, they would need to pressure wash as well in order for it to last.

There was discussion about the waterline on Willow Street and paving. There was also discussion about concrete grinders.

#### Emergency Services

Emergency Management Coordinator Rush advised they had 11 more calls than February of last year. He reported that the new ambulance arrived at the dealer in Yorktown, VA on February 20<sup>th</sup> with a bad air bag. There is a 10-day wait for the airbag. The ambulance should arrive in Chincoteague sometime in March. He advised that the new hires begin this Sunday. He also advised they will continue with weather monitoring. He reported that RocketLab has a launch scheduled for March 20<sup>th</sup> at around 2:00 a.m. There is also an A-PEP launch to coincide with the solar eclipse on April 8<sup>th</sup>. He stated they are participating in regional exercise workgroups with Virginia, Maryland and Delaware. He added that Maryland received a grant to do an evacuation exercise. They are working to get this up and running and to hold the exercise by September of 2025. He also stated that this week in Virginia is Severe Weather Week which makes a good time to know what severe weather impacts our area of Virginia. He reminded everyone to prepare now and get their disaster kits and supplies ready. He stated that you need to have supplies for 5 days. He also stated there will be a tornado drill, Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:45a.m. It's a good time to figure out emergency exits.

There was discussion regarding Virginia's evacuation route.

#### **Adoption of the Minutes**

**Councilman Savage motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adopt the minutes of the February 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Council meetings. Unanimously approved.**

#### **Chincoteague Island Library Report**

Mr. Bryce VanStavern, Board Member of the Chincoteague Island Library, gave the annual report. He advised of the Library's partnerships, events, along with the many programs they have. He showed pictures and talked about the Tales for Tots Program and computer use at the Library as well. He thanked Council for their support over the years.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Public Works Committee**

Councilwoman Richardson they met February 6<sup>th</sup>, and they discussed spring paving. She reviewed the list of paving projects.

There was discussion about Ocean Breeze roads as some of the roads have not been accepted into the VDOT Urban Roads Maintenance Program.

Town Manager Tolbert explained that as the Town received approval from VDOT and receives the money it will be added to the list for maintenance. It was never the plan to pave all the roads, but to do a road every now and then after it is adopted into the program. They plan to grade and put material in as needed.

### **Budget and Personnel Committee**

Vice Mayor Bott advised the report is in the packet.

## **Consider Letter of Support and Resolution – Accomack County**

Councilwoman Bowden asked to add a statement to add the Causeway work as soon as possible.

Vice Mayor Bott asked about the Transportation Board and possibly asking our representative to help the Town.

Town Manager Tolbert advised that the reason this didn't go through before was because there wasn't enough letters of support, which is why this is here tonight.

Councilman Savage remembered Mr. Garry Pinkston who came to Council about this.

**Councilwoman Richardson motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to approve the letter of support for Route 175 Improvements Accomack County's 2025 Smart Scale Application adding a statement to add the Chincoteague Causeway work as well. Unanimously approved.**

**Councilwoman Bowden motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adopt the Resolution of Support for Route 175 Improvements, Accomack County's 2025 Smart Scale Application. Unanimously approved.**



**Resolution of Support for Route 175 Improvements  
Accomack County's 2025 Smart Scale Application**

**WHEREAS**, the Smart Scale application cycle is open in 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, Route 175 is a critical road to the Town of Chincoteague and Accomack County;

and

**WHEREAS**, Route 175 is the only road providing access to Chincoteague Island and its 3,400 fulltime residents and tens of thousands of part time residents; and

**WHEREAS**, Route 175 provides the only access to the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and Assateague National Seashore and its over 1 million annual visitors; and

**WHEREAS**, Route 175 in its current 2-lane, 2-way traffic configuration presents a substantial safety issue to the traveling public; and

**WHEREAS**, Route 175 in its current 2-lane configuration does not support fast and efficient access by emergency vehicles; and

**WHEREAS**, Route 175 in its current 2-lane configuration severely hinders the growth of an area in which billions of taxpayer dollars have been and continue to be invested;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Chincoteague Town Council fully supports Accomack County's Smart Scale Project to expand Route 175 to 3 lanes thereby increasing its safety, capacity and efficiency.

Approved this 4<sup>th</sup> day of March 2024 by the Chincoteague Town Council.

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John Arthur Leonard, Mayor

**Consider Community Support Policy**

Councilwoman Bowden advised she has read through it, and it looks good. She added that it has everything in there that the Town needs to do. She stated that funds are limited and it is basically first come first serve.

Town Manager Tolbert advised they can approve in a budget a specific amount and it can be increased or decreased the next year. He suggested that once the funds are appropriated, not to commit the funds immediately and leave a little for reserve.

They discussed the deadline.

**Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to approve the Community Support Policy as presented. Unanimously approved.**

### **Council Comments**

Councilwoman Bowden thanked staff for answering her questions, and for everyone coming out on a nasty night. She also stated that since football is over, “Go Yankees!”. She advised that one of our homegrown Chincoteague girls, Miss Emma Jackson is #1 in the whole United States for college softball hits. She plays for East Carolina and she’s also #1 in doubles. She informed Council that she is still on fire and made the Dean’s List. Councilwoman Bowden advised purchased ESPN+ so she could watch her and added that she is amazing.

Councilman Taylor commented on the community organizations. He feels a donation is a show of support. He feels they need to donate because they have the Town’s backs. He appreciates the organizations for making the community what it is.

Councilman Savage agreed with Councilman Taylor and the community organizations and volunteers help the Town tremendously. He appreciates Acting Chief Greenley and the work the Police Department is doing. He can see a lot of good things happening in that department now. He stated to “keep on keeping on”.

Mayor Leonard stated that time is flying and before we know it will be Pony Penning. He reminded everyone to start planning.

**Closed Meeting – In accordance with §2.2-3711(A) (1) of the Code of Virginia that the Council convene a closed session for the purpose of discussion and review of appointment and assignment of specific personnel.**

**Councilman Savage motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to go into a closed meeting in accordance with §2.2-3712 (A) (3) of the Code of Virginia that the Council convene a closed session for the purpose of discussion and review of appointment and assignment of specific personnel. All present were in favor and the motion was carried.**

**Ayes: Bott, Bowden, McComb, Richardson, Savage, Taylor**

**Nays: None**

**Absent: None**

**Certification of Closed Meeting in Accordance with §2.2-3712 (D) of the Code of Virginia Councilman Savage motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to certify that to the best of each member’s knowledge:**

- 1. Only public business lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements was discussed and**
- 2. Only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed, or considered.**

**All present were in favor and the motion was carried.**

**Ayes: Bott, Bowden, McComb, Richardson, Savage, Taylor**

**Nays: None**

**Absent: None**

**Adjourn**

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

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J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor

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Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager

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