

Town of Onancock  
Town Council  
March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
7:00 PM

Call to order and Roll Call:

Mayor Jones called the meeting to order and roll was called. Mayor Russell Jones and all Councilmembers were present, a quorum was established.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Consideration and Approval of Minutes from the regular meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016:

Mayor Jones asked if there were any changes, corrections or additions to the meeting minutes as submitted. With none, Councilmember Fosque makes a motion to approve the minutes as submitted, Councilmember Fox seconds the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Public Business:

- a. Presentation: Accomack County Registrar's Office, Patty White. The number one reason for concern and wanting to move the polling place from our town office is the amount of space. The law requires that all polling locations are accessible to all voters in the county, especially handy cap. There is new equipment that takes up more space, and the room does not flow as it should. Mrs. White explains that they are in need of more space, to make voting easier and more private for the voters. This coming November they are expecting more than normal, and will need more voting booths to accommodate. There are some voters who stay in their car, while a voting official attends to them curbside. District 701 which is the entire Onancock area, the entire area has 1,992 voters, town residence make up 1,032 of that number. The town elections will still be held in this building. Patty explains that the two biggest issues are parking and the size of the room. The two locations up for consideration are Nandua Middle School and Nandua High School. Councilmember Fosque asks if Onley voters will be going there to vote as well, the answer is yes. He also asks if this will save money, Mrs. White explains that it will in the long run. Councilmember Fox asks if schools will close for elections now, Patty White says yes they will close. Accomack County Public Schools are always closed for November elections. Councilmember Krause questions who made this decision, The Chief of Elections and her board went to each voting location and took into consideration the size and flow of the rooms. The Board of Supervisors make the ultimate decision. The chief of elections, Nancy Stephens explains that because of the small size of the room, when people stop to talk and graze, it really creates a problem to stay organized. Election official Judith Greer also comments, if it rains, there is nowhere to stand if the line is out the door. Patty also explains that the size of the door may also be an issue if it is not large enough for a wheelchair. Councilmember Byrd asks if this has taken in other parts of the state, and how it affects the voting. Mrs. White explains that they send out

notices, advertise in the paper and post signs at the old polling place on election days. She does not think it affects voting. She explains there is also an election website that shows the change. Councilmember Fox asks, will this eventually happen. They say yes. Mayor Jones asks if the new voter cards specify where you go to vote. The voter card will identify where you vote for municipal and for larger elections. Jay Davenport asks what the complaints were, she explains that most of the complaints were legal complaints, parking and the size of the room. Patty White says the goal is to make this change by the November 2016 elections.

- b. Eastern Shore Tourism Report by Kerry Allison. Kerry Allison presented a power point that showed us the regional data for Northampton and Accomack Counties. In 2014 Virginia was the fastest growing tourism for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row. Since 2009 tourism and seasonal jobs are up by 9%. The growth lodging tax is up by 43% for 2009-2014. The tourism website has had many new views with a 696% increase. The new consumers want simplified trip planning, they are working to give them authenticity. Kerry explains how being on Trip Adviser, Yelp and Google can really increase their business. The new consumer will be using their smart phones to find local eateries and activities. Councilmember Byrd questions how google and trip advisor works. Kerry explains that it's the business owner's responsibility to take control of their accounts online. Once they have set it up, visitors will rate and review their trips. Jay Davenport comments that the locals should also make reviews on our local restaurants to help visitors see which restaurants are rated the highest. Councilmember Fosque shows his concern for all the closed businesses on google, he says it can be confusing for visitors. Kerry explains that it's the business owners responsibility to take the account down once they are no longer in business. Mr. Rick Turner asks if the tourism group has anything specifically for boaters. She explains they did a special run on the marinas and shared links from the Chesapeake Boater group. Mayor Jones explains that we are working on collaborations with Cape Charles.
- c. Presentation of the FY2017 Budget Recommendations. Interim Town Manager Mr. Bill Whitley presents his recommendations for 2017. Mr. Whitley starts his presentation explaining the budget is balanced, he is not proposing any tax or fee increase. Accomack County conducted a general reassessment of real property that became effective on January 1, 2016. The assessed value of real property in the Town of Onancock was included in this new assessment. Real property values decreased by an average of slightly under 2% due to this reassessment. Due to the reassessment, the tax rate needed to equalize the amount of funds received in the current budget is 27 cents, 2 cents higher than the current rate. This is the rate proposed to support this budget. This means that the real estate tax bills for residents will be identical in the proposed budget as they are currently, assuming their assessments did not change. The General Fund revenues have increased by 9% in this proposal. Increases are seen in personal property tax collections, utility and cellular tax collections, and the business license tax as well as law enforcement revenues received from the state. There will be a 3% pay increase for the town employees. Mr. Whitley has suggested as a cost reduction measure, eliminating the current position of Maintenance Supervisor. I feel the 2 employees in your maintenance department can report directly to

the Town Manager with no reduction in service delivery. This decision will save \$64,216 for the town. Mr. Whitley also explains that the revenue from the Wharf operation exceeds the expenditures by a little less than \$10,000; a very positive sign. Interim Town Manager continues explain the 2017 Budget "I have included \$139,700 in the Water and Sewer budget from the General Fund to balance this budget. This was necessary because, as you know, you do not generate sufficient revenues from water and sewer rates to balance this budget. I do expect this situation to improve next year once the hospital opens.

Expenditures in the General Fund increase by 6% in this recommendation. Major items affecting General Fund expenditures include salary increases (3%), the transfer to the Water and Sewer Funds ( \$139,700) and the purchase of a new police vehicle ( our portion - \$15,000.) I have included the requested funds for the Welcome Banners. I have added funds to the Community Promotions line items to better reflect actual expenditures. I have added funds to pay for an existing loan repayment for police vehicles. The total budget is a little under 1.3 million dollars. Councilmember Byrd comments on the receptor, Boggs and others will bring us a percent of solids based on the fluids we have to offer. He thinks the hospital will be very helpful. Councilmember Fosque asks what the difference is for the collection of Transient and Occupancy tax, what we collected versus what is expected. Interim Town Manager Bill Whitley explains that this is based on estimates thus far in the year.

Councilmember Krause, request to change the Christmas fund to Holiday. She also asks for an increase of the Holiday budget to \$8,000. The Holiday committee is on a three year plan. Kathy Boyd questions the amount for the tree board, and asks for an increase. Bill Whitley explains that the recommended amount for the tree board is an increase.

- d. Discussion of the Bi-Monthly Utility Billing by Interim Town Manager Bill Whitley. Mr. Whitley explains how some bills can be extremely high for the three month period. If we broke the billing down to bi-monthly, the bills would be more manageable for our residents. This change can be done some without any extra cost to the town. It will help make collections more efficient especially with rental properties. The utility ordinance will need to be changed by the April meeting. We have hopes to make this change by July 1, 2016. Councilmember Krause also suggests letting customers paying online to help be more efficient. Councilmember Byrd makes a motion, Councilmember Krause seconds the motion. All in favor.
- e. Discussion of Delinquent Real Estate Tax Collections presented by Interim Town Manager Bill Whitley. Mr. Whitley encourages us to work with Mr. James Elliot. He has worked with him in the past, and his program is very effective. There is no extra cost to the town. Councilmember Byrd asks if Mr. Whitley has talked with local towns to check the collection rate, he has not. Mayor Jones explains that this program is very effective with no ties to the public. The town attorney has received a copy of the contract to review.
- f. Supplemental Appropriation VML, Safety Grant – This grant will be spent on stand up safety lights to be used by the police department. Councilmember Krause makes a motion to approve, Councilmember Byrd seconds the motion. All in favor.

- g. Amendment to the Personnel Policy. Martin Luther King Day and Presidents day will be added to office calendar as paid holidays. Councilmember Fox makes a motion to include these 2 holidays, Councilmember Bundick seconds the motion. All in Favor.

Public Comment:

Kathy Boyd from the marketing committee thanks Nancy James for all her hard work on the St. Patrick's Day parade. It was a huge success this year. Mrs. Boyd also expresses her concern for the town's website and questions when we will be able to make the payments online. Mayor Jones explains we have all the problems ironed out and we should be taking payments very soon. Her third concern is the harbormaster. This topic will be covered in the waterfront report. Councilmember Morgan gives his thanks to Nancy James and Kathy Boyd for the St. Patrick's Day Parade Plaques. Rick Turner compliments the town on small details which make a huge impact on the towns look. He then questions if the town has an ordinance for how many people live in a residence. This is a state ordinance; the only thing the town can do is work with the landlord.

Planning Commission:

No Report.

Marketing Committee:

Report was covered during the public comment.

Personnel Report:

Closed Session.

Waterfront Committee:

Councilmember Byrd reports that port authority if approved will help with advertisements for slip rentals. The new Harbormaster will be Ruth Melcher. Her background is impressive with retail, delegation and teaching. The four Harbormaster Assistants will be Emma Hollandsworth and Alana Pruitt. These girls will be returning from last year. We have added two young gentleman, Jack Schrieber and Ben Farlow. The community board at the wharf will be used to advertise 2<sup>nd</sup> Fridays. We would also like to hand out goodie bags with information on all businesses in town; we have asked OBCA to help with these. The water way guide online will have Onancock Wharf as a featured marina.

Holiday Committee:

Already covered.

Mayor's Report:

No report.

Town Manager's Report:

The town manager position applications will close March 31<sup>st</sup>. We currently have 40+ applications.

Mayor and Town Council Comments:

Councilmember Krause reports that the Geo Marker in the mosaic at the kayak landing is broken.

Closed Session:

Councilmember Morgan made a motion that Town Council convene a Closed Meeting for the purpose of holding a discussion of the personnel, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended. Councilmember Fox seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

The meeting went into closed session at 9:03pm.

Councilmember Bundick made a motion that Town Council reconvene in Open Meeting, and that a roll call vote be taken and recorded on this motion so that each member who votes in favor shall, thereby, certify compliance with all of the matters identified in Section 2.2-3712(D) of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended. Councilmember Fosque seconded it.

T. Lee Byrd             Yes  No  
John Morgan          Yes  No  
Joshua Bundick      Yes  No

Catherine Krause    Yes  No  
Sandra Fox            Yes  No  
Fletcher Fosque      Yes  No

Adjourn:

Councilmember Byrd made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Fox seconded the motion. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Russell Jones, Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Allison Hart, Deputy Clerk