

Town of Onancock  
Town Council Meeting - AMENDED  
October 26, 2020  
7:00 P.M.

Call to Order and Roll Call:

Vice-Mayor Robert Bloxom called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. and roll was called. Vice-Mayor Robert Bloxom and Councilmembers Catherine Krause, Maphis Oswald, Ray Burger, Joy Marino and Thelma Gillespie were present. Mayor Fletcher Fosque was absent. A majority of members were present, and a quorum was established.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Consideration and Approval of the September 28, 2020 Regular Town Council Meeting:

Vice-Mayor Bloxom asked if there were any changes, substitutions or corrections to the minutes as submitted. Councilmember Marino asked for clarification on page six, "...must then run for reelection", stating that it should be "may run". Mrs. Fiege explained that per Town Code, an appointed seat must run for election.

*Councilmember Krause made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Councilmember Gillespie seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.*

Public Business:

- a. Public Hearing – Establishment of Town Code Section 2-28 which will allow Town Council Members to Attend Meetings Remotely: Vice-Mayor Bloxom opened the public hearing at 7:08 p.m. Mr. Spuck shared that allowing council members to participate remotely requires a change in the Town Code which requires a public hearing. This item was already reviewed by council at a previous meeting.

Vice-Mayor Bloxom opened the floor to public comment. Mr. Larry Frey, Justis Street, shared that council should approve the change so that it is easier for members to participate.

Mr. Spuck outlined the proposed language for the public's benefit.

Councilmember Marino asked for clarification on the language stating that the remote location of the council member need not be open to the public but that the location must be recorded in the minutes, stating that it seems contradictory. Mr. Spuck explained that the location must be noted in the minutes but that the actual location does not need to be publicly accessible. Mr. Spuck further explained that council will be voting on this issue in the November meeting. Councilmember Oswald asked why they would wait a month to vote on this item? Mr. Spuck stated that council can vote on this item tonight but that procedurally he has mapped on these types changes to happen over a three to four-month time span.

Vice-Mayor Bloxom asked if there was any further public comment. *With none, Vice-Mayor Bloxom stating that he would entertain a motion to approve this item. Councilmember Oswald*

*stated, "so moved". Councilmember Krause seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.*

- b. Public Hearing – Establishment of Town Code Section 12-1 which will allow the Town of Onancock to Declare a Local State of Emergency: Mr. Spuck explained that this proposed language would allow the town to declare a local state of emergency which will allow the town to apply for FEMA funding. This language will also give Onancock the opportunity to manage it's local state of emergency how it wants. Mr. Spuck stressed that this code change does not supplement or overwrite what Accomack County does while declaring, managing and operating the areas local state of emergency.

Vice-Mayor Bloxom asked for public comment. *With none, Vice-Mayor Bloxom stated that he would entertain a motion to approve the creation of this Town Code. Councilmember Oswald stated, "so moved". Councilmember Marino seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.*

- c. Public Hearing Regarding the Sale of Town Property at Tax Map# 85A2-A-158: Mr. Spuck explained that the town owns a parcel of land on Justis Street, which was where the old water tower was located. Currently, it is used for storage of items such as benches and platforms which are typically used during parades. The neighboring property has an easement to use the driveway, 7 Justis Street. Mr. Spuck shared that he needs council's approval to negotiate with the prospective buyer. Mr. Spuck stated that the required resolution is in the agenda packet.

Councilmember Oswald asked if the town was required to offer the property sale up publicly before selling privately. Mr. Spuck stated that the town is not required to do that. Vice-Mayor Bloxom asked what Mr. Spuck thought the property was valued at. Mr. Spuck stated that he projected that the parcel is worth \$30,000, this amount is comparable to what the carnival ground lots are going for.

Vice-Mayor Bloxom asked for public comment. Ms. Stocker, 7 Justis Street, shared that she is not concerned about the land being sold by the town.

- d. Resolution to Grant Town Manager the Authority to Proceed with the Sale of Property at Tax Map# 85A2-A-158 with the Execution of Deeds and Instruments to Follow Town Code Section 2-3, Execution of Deeds and Instruments, Signing Checks: Vice-Mayor Bloxom read the resolution aloud.

*Councilmember Krause made a motion to adopt the resolution. Councilmember Gillespie seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.*

- e. Motion to Accept Written Bid from Murtech, Inc. for the Wharf Ramp Project: Vice-Mayor Bloxom explained that Murtech, Inc. was the successful bidder from the request for proposals the town put out in September. Mr. Spuck gave an overview of the project, the bidding process and the proposal from Murtech, Inc. Murtech, Inc. was the only engineering company to bid on

the project and they meet the qualifications to satisfactorily complete the project. Mr. Spuck shared that there are two projects included in the bid, he asked council to approve one aspect of the bid but not the other. Vice-Mayor Bloxom shared that the acceptance of this bid comes with the endorsement of the Waterfront Committee. Councilmember Oswald asked if there was any penalty for them not completing the project on time. Mr. Spuck stated that the Performance Bond that the town is requiring will speak to that matter. Councilmember Oswald asked if the bond was being paid for by the contactor. Mr. Spuck confirmed that it is.

*Vice-Mayor Bloxom stating that he would entertain a motion to approve the contract with Murtech, Inc. Councilmember Krause stated, "so moved". Councilmember Oswald seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.*

Council Discussion:

Police Department: 3-Year Plan: Mr. Spuck reviewed the proposed three-year budget plan in council's packet. Mr. Spuck shared the largest expense in the Police Department budget is salaries and that any potential revenue produced by the Department is minimal. Mr. Spuck shared that Police Chief, Eric Williams, researched comps for local departments on the Eastern Shore. The goal Mr. Spuck set was to make sure our officers are paid within the top third of all local agency officers. For example, the comps for Police Chiefs range from \$64,000 - \$86,000, currently, Chief Williams is on the lower end of these comps. Councilmember Oswald shared that when she was attending a VML Conference, the guest speaker who was a Police Chief, helped put things into perspective when it comes to making sure the salaries are comparable when hiring officers, asking if someone would like to run into a dark alley after a person with a gun for \$25,000 a year.

Mr. Spuck continued by sharing the need for increased expenditures in the following categories.

- Training - Currently, our officers do enough to maintain certifications but that the town should also step-up and provide better trainings. There are several courses that teach a wide range of topics, topics we should want our officers to be trained on.
- Vehicle Repair – vehicles need to be safe and always street worthy. Deferred maintenance is to the detriment of our officers.
- Uniforms - Uniforms wear out and can be costly. This proposal asks that each officer be given a stipend of \$50.00 a month for replacement uniforms.
- Vehicle Replacement – Each officer needs a vehicle and they should be replaced every five years or every 120,000 miles. Currently, the Crown Vic has no working odometer and the Dodge Charger is unreliable. Mr. Spuck shared that the USDA – Rural Development gives grant/loan dollars out to help with purchasing vehicles. Their current interest rate is under 2%. Mr. Spuck then gave his ten-year replacement strategy for the Police Department vehicles.

Mr. Spuck explained that the current operating budget for the Police Department is \$292,000 but that with the changes he outlined for council he anticipates their operating budget to be approximately \$451,000 in three-years.

Councilmember Marino asked if all officers needed their own vehicles. Chief Williams explained that they do, it is a morale issue. Chief Williams asked council to image if their they to share a desk at work, it is the same concept. Councilmember Marino asked if the town had enough officers. Chief Williams stated that an additional officer would be nice considering that between vacation and sick leave

sometimes the department is spread too thin. Councilmember Marino asked if diversity drives the department's new hires. Chief Williams explained that it is a goal but that it is more important that the department hires the right person to fit in with the community and the department.

- i. Resolution to State Town Intent to Apply for USDA Loans and Grants to Purchase Two Police Vehicles: Mr. Spuck shared that he needs the resolution in the packet to be adopted so that he can apply to the USDA for loan/grant dollars for new police vehicles.

*Vice-Mayor Bloxom read the resolution aloud. Vice-Mayor Bloxom asked for a motion to adopt this resolution. Councilmember Marino stated, "so moved". Councilmember Krause seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.*

- a. Discuss Town Code Sections 34-10, Trash Collection Fee; Utility Billing; Disconnection, Private Usage, and 34-176, Water and Sewer Adjustments: Mr. Spuck shared that the next items will require a code change. Mrs. Fiege and Mr. Spuck came up with the proposed language change. Mr. Spuck shared that these changes align the Town Code with current practices as well as more clearly outlines policies and procedures for the residents.

Mr. Spuck shared that he has created a First Responders rate in the proposed language. As council learned last year, per the bond documents, all water users are to be billed. Currently, the Onancock Volunteer Fire Department is not being metered or billed for their water service. This proposal gives them a minimal rate to use our services. There was some council discussion regarding the Armory and whether or not they would receive this rate as well.

Mr. Spuck also shared that he is proposing a Senior and Disabled Rate. Mr. Spuck explained that Accomack County manages a senior/disability tax relief program, Mr. Spuck's proposal piggybacks off their work to allow those that qualify in town to pay a reduced water and sewer rate for those services.

Mr. Spuck outlined the proposed language for the town's leak adjustment policy. Mr. Spuck highlighted the process for leak detections as well as how an adjustment would be calculated. Mr. Spuck stated that the town should not get benefit financially off someone's disaster.

Councilmember Oswald asked about creating a rate structure for those renting town owned buildings. Mr. Spuck shared that this issue may be part of a much larger conversation. Councilmember Oswald stated that it needs to be a uniform policy for all renters of town owned properties.

- b. Discuss Town Code Article III, Vehicle Licenses: Mr. Spuck reviewed the proposed policy which will eliminate physical decals that are currently required on vehicles in town. The cost of the decal would be placed on the personal property tax bills as a "vehicle license fee". Mr. Spuck shared that Accomack County did this a while back. Mr. Spuck explained that putting the fee on the tax bills will likely be a revenue booster for the town. Vice-Mayor Bloxom asked if trailer

decal fees would also be moved to the tax bills. Mrs. Fiege stated that they would not be but that trailer decals for the wharf may be not be required in the future. Mr. Spuck explained that Accomack County is looking into a mirror hanger for Accomack County residents to display at local boat ramps which would grant them free parking to access the ramp for boat launches. The town could use their mirror hanger as a way of acknowledging those that can use the parking lot for free to launch their boats.

- c. Discuss Town Code 38-206, Permitted Use of Wharf Facilities: Mr. Spuck explained that this item was fleshed out in the Waterfront Committee. Mr. Spuck continued, stating that the wharf is a resource for the community and as such needs to be available to local boat owners. This language allows a local boater to tie up in an empty slip for a maximum of four-hours free of charge. Mr. Spuck shared he was looking for council comment on this topic before having the public hearing. Councilmember Oswald expressed concern over the boater needing to give the wharf a credit card while utilizing the free spot. Mr. Spuck explained that after four-hours we would charge the published hourly rate to rent a slip. Vice-Mayor Bloxom shared that he did not see an issue with getting a credit card number from the boater while the boater was parked in a free slip especially since the slip will be unusable for others until the boater returns. Councilmember Burger shared that this is similar to what hotels require when you book a room.

Public Comment:

Mrs. Theresa West-Kellam, Cross Street, expressed concern that the town disconnected water services today but the delinquent letter stated that customers had until October 27. Mrs. Fiege explained that the town attempted to notify all recipients of the error in the date of the delinquency notices, the town failed to contact this customer and should not have disconnected services for that reason. It was indeed the a town mistake and staff and council apologize to the customer.

Committee Reports:

HSRD, Robert Bloxom: Vice-Mayor Bloxom stated that there have been no meetings to report on. Mr. Spuck shared that he has been speaking with Mr. Ted Henifin with HRSD and that negotiations have started.

Waterfront Committee, Robert Bloxom: Vice-Mayor Bloxom shared that they met on October 13<sup>th</sup> and all items on their agenda have already been shared with council except for the three-year budget plan which will be coming up soon on council's agenda.

Planning Commission, Robert Bloxom: Vice-Mayor Bloxom shared that there was no meeting due to a lack of quorum.

Personnel Committee, Catherine Krause: No meeting,

Strategic Planning, Fletcher Fosque: Mr. Spuck shared that they had their first meeting. The committee broke the town into seven areas in an effort to make one long-term plan. This will help when looking for a vision that will be supported by financials, models and grants.

Mayor's Report: Vice-Mayor Bloxom has nothing to report.

Town Manager’s Report: Mr. Spuck explained that the written report is in the agenda packet. Mr. Spuck highlighted a few items to share loud with council.

- Ramp project update: The town’s permit request to Accomack County will go before their Wetlands Committee in November which will help to secure approval from the Army Corp of Engineers.
- Mr. Spuck shared that he has a meeting set with the state regarding the Department of Housing and Community Development for the \$450,000 grant which will be distributed to local businesses. Onancock’s Main Street program will be partnering with the town to help administer the grant. The town and Main Street will be eligible to receive some of the funds for the administration of the grant.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Oswald shared that OBCA’s Christmas Homes Tour will look different this year because of COVID-19. This year it will be a driving tour which will start at the school and go through Mt. Prospect. Five different homes will have Christmas scenes in their yards. Councilmember Oswald shared that they are also looking for volunteers and to please let her know if you are interested in doing so. Councilmember Oswald also shared that the name of the tour is “Believe”.

Councilmember Marino asked if Mr. Spuck would look into getting a senior rate in place for senior citizens who only ever have one bag of garbage. Mr. Spuck stated that it may be difficult for Davis Disposal to determine if there is only one bag in the container. Mr. Spuck continued to say that he has renegotiated the Davis Disposal contract which will be at a lower rate to the town.

Councilmember Gillespie shared that the new plantings at the Samuel Outlaw Blacksmith Shop are beautiful. Although, Councilmember Gillespie expressed her concern about proper lighting of the new bushes once they become larger, stating that nefarious acts could take place behind the bushes and lighting them may help reduce that risk.

Closed Session, if needed:

*Councilmember Krause made a motion for council to enter closed session of Town Council pursuant to §2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia to discuss a personnel matter for a former employee. Councilmember Oswald seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.*

Town Council entered into Closed Session at 8:54 p.m.

Councilmember Krause made a motion to end Closed Session of this regular meeting of the Onancock Town Council and certify by roll call vote that the items discussed in closed session align with the purpose stated in the motion made in public session. Councilmember Gillespie seconded the motion and a roll call vote was taken.

Catherine Krause		NO	Maphis Oswald		NO
Ray Burger		NO	Joy Marino		NO
Robert Bloxom		NO	Thelma Gillespie		NO

Town Council reconvened Open Session at 9:00 p.m.

Adjourn:

*Councilmember Krause made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Oswald seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.*

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 p.m.



---

Robert Bloxom, Vice-Mayor



---

Lisa Fiege, Deputy Clerk