

Town of Onancock
Town Council Meeting – Virtually (AMENDED)
November 23, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order and Roll Call:

Mayor Fosque called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and roll was called. Mayor Fletcher Fosque and Councilmembers Catherine Krause, Joy Marino, Ray Burger, Maphis Oswald and Thelma Gillespie were present. Councilmember Robert Bloxom was absent. A majority of members were present, and a quorum was established.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Consideration and Approval of the October 26, 2020 Town Council Meeting Minutes:

Mayor Fosque asked for a motion to discuss the minutes. Councilmember Oswald made a motion to approve the minutes. Councilmember Krause seconded the motion. Mayor Fosque asked for any changes, corrections, or additions to minutes as submitted.

Councilmember Oswald stated that the discussion on page five regarding allowing boaters to tie up in empty slips for free for four hours reads like the town will require that they physically leave a credit card behind to utilize a slip for this purpose which is not the case. Mr. Spuck clarified that they will be required to give the wharf staff a credit card number which will then be entered into the town's marina management software, but the physical card will stay with the boater. Mr. Spuck suggested that the sentence be adjusted that say, "Mr. Spuck explained that after four hours we would charge the published hourly rate to rent a slip."

Councilmember Oswald also expressed concern with how Councilmember Gillespie's comment on page six is stated. Councilmember Oswald clarified that Councilmember Gillespie's commented on the need future lighting of the newly planted bushes is because of potential health and safety issues behind the grown bushes but the sentiment of the minutes read that her concern was due to the ascetics of having the bushes lit.

Councilmember Oswald also stated that during the public comment section, the minutes need to reflect that the town was in error and should not have disconnected on the wrong date. Mr. Spuck stated that he would be happy make the appropriate adjustment so that it is clearer, suggesting that it be changed to reflect that while 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 a town mistake and staff and council apologize to the customer.

The corrected minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote.

Public Business:

- a. Public Hearing: Regarding Town of Onancock consideration of USDA lending and grant possibilities for the purchase of police vehicles and equipment: Mayor Fosque opened the public hearing at 7:07 p.m. Mr. Spuck shared that Town Council adopted a resolution of intent to pursue funding as stated above. The town is required to have a Public Hearing so that residents can comment on the intent to pursue USDA-Rural Development funds by either loan

or grant. Mayor Fosque asked for public comment. None was received. The public hearing was closed at 7:09 p.m.

- b. Motion to approve revised appropriation of CARES Act funds: *Councilmember Oswald made a motion to approve the revised appropriation of CARES Act funds. Councilmember Krause seconded the motion.*

Mr. Spuck explained that he is asking Town Council to repurpose how the town spends its CARES Act allocation. Initially, it was recommended that council appropriate \$25,000 for FFCRA, which is what the town could use to cover the hourly wages of employee required quarantine. Since town staff have not been required to quarantine, those funds are not being used. Mr. Spuck recommended that council appropriate those funds for the following:

- A grant for businesses that were not open in 2019. Unfortunately, businesses that were not open in 2019 did not qualify for the last small business grant that council appropriated. This would give those businesses an opportunity for some additional financial support. Mr. Spuck is asked council to appropriate \$10,000 for this purpose.
- Mr. Spuck also requested the following utility subsidies for low-income residents who have been negatively affected by COVID-19:
 - o Utility Subsidy 1: this subsidy would be for those people currently on a payment plan for a past due water bill.
 - o Utility Subsidy 2: this subsidy is for anyone whose gross income falls at or below 138% of the federal poverty guidelines and has been negatively impacted by COVID-19.

Mayor Fosque asked, what if someone is affected by COVID-19 but does not meet the federal poverty guidelines. Mr. Spuck stressed that clear guidelines need to be in place and if not enough people qualify under these guidelines then he may come back to council and ask for the funds to be repurposed.

Councilmember Oswald asked if Mr. Spuck was asking for discretion on how best to expend the funds. Mr. Spuck stated that he is not and that applicants for the subsidies need to meet the guidelines and have express need of the funds due to COVID-19.

Councilmember Marino asked how the businesses and residents will find out about the program. Mr. Spuck shared that businesses will not qualify for the utility subsidies and that for the business grant the town will reach out to them individually. The funds for the new business grant will be distributed equally among those that qualify. Mr. Spuck also shared that for the utility subsidy the town will be reaching out to the local churches and team captains (from the NE Revitalization Project) to hopefully get this information out as quickly as possible.

Councilmember Gillespie asked if the town would write a letter that could be passed out. Mr. Spuck shared that town staff will create a flyer to be distributed as well as a notice on Facebook and the town's website.

With out any further discussion, the motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Council Discussion:

- a. Onancock Wharf & Marina: 3-Year Plan: Mr. Spuck explained that there is no need for council action at this meeting. Mr. Spuck asked council what they feel is the goal of the wharf. Is it to make money or break even? The assumptions that Mr. Spuck outlined assumed a 10% return to the town's general fund and an investment of 10% for future capital improvements and deferred maintenance costs. Ideally, the wharf would be staffed from 7:30 a.m. to sundown during the boating season which consists of 21 weeks. This will help the transient boating guests and locals. When calculating the number of slips (13) by the number of weeks in a season, the town has 1,911 slip nights available for rent which would generate \$114,700 for the season. There is also a key metric on gas income/expenses, as prices fluctuate. The margin is income less expense. Wages are also critical, especially if we staff from sunup to sundown. What hourly wage is appropriate for part-time staff and how can we manage that staff better? We also need to make sure that the Harbormaster has the staff in place so that he can manage his time and vacations better. Mr. Spuck also explained that the town will no longer be charging a credit card fee, there will no longer be a cash discount on fuel. The credit card fees will be absorbed by the town, as the cost of doing business. Advertising costs have also been amped up over the three-year outlook which is reflective of inflationary costs. Mr. Spuck stressed that the town will not see a 10% return immediately.

Councilmember Oswald asked for information on how the town's marina compares to others. Harbormaster Tanner said that there are a bunch of free publications that are brought to the wharf and that we seem to be trend.

Councilmember Marino thanked Harbormaster Tanner for doing an excellent job at the wharf. Councilmember Marino also asked if it is reasonable to project a maximum of \$87,500 in revenue when the potential is \$114,700. Mr. Spuck explained that the research is challenging but that using a 30ft boat as the average boat size to factor into the equation was on the conservative side.

Councilmember Krause thanked Mr. Tanner for working with the kids that have been playing in the trees at the Kayak Landing, stating that he did a good job getting them to relocate.

- b. Update on boat ramp renovation permits and project: Mr. T. Lee Byrd gave an update on the project. Mr. Byrd explained that the Accomack County Wetlands Board heard the application request for the ramp project, it was approved unanimously. With the assistance of J.W. Salm, Engineer, Virginia Marine Resource Commission (VMRC) is expected to grant the permit within the next month. If all goes well, time wise, the contractor, Murtech Inc., should be able to complete the project before the next boating season.
- c. Discuss meeting electronically: Mr. Spuck explained the procedures for public participation while council meets electronically due to COVID-19, stating that to actively participate the viewer must be a part of the Zoom meeting. If someone is only interested in viewing the

meeting, they may continue to do so through the town's YouTube channel. Also, people may participate in the Zoom meeting either by video and audio or by audio only.

- d. Discuss changing the date of the December 28, 2020 Town Council Meeting to December 21, 2020: Mayor Fosque asked for a motion to open the floor up for discussion on this item. *Councilmember Gillespie made a motion to change the December 28, 2020 meeting to December 21, 2020. Councilmember Krause seconded the motion.*

Councilmember Oswald asked why this was up for discussion. Mr. Spuck explained that the currently scheduled meeting falls between Christmas and New Year's, stating that people may be unavailable at that time due to holiday travel.

With no further discussion, the motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

- e. ITEM NOT ON THE AGENDA – Northeast Section Project: Mr. Spuck explained that the town will be responsible for 5% of the total grant value for this project. The town can apply for up to \$1.4 million dollars for infrastructure needs as well as housing rehabilitation, therefore the town could potentially need to pay out up to \$70,000 plus \$3,000 for a preliminary engineering report. Mr. Spuck shared that the town can also look for alternate funding sources for help with the \$70,000.

Councilmember Marino made a motion to approve the \$3,000 for the preliminary engineering report. Councilmember Gillespie seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Public Comment:

Mr. Bill Burnham, OBCA President, shared the Christmas activity schedule with Town Council. The OBCA Christmas Homes Tour has been replaced by a driving tour which will be held on December 12th from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Participating homes will be decorated with the Believe! theme in mind. The tour will begin at the Old Onancock High School. Also, there will be a tree lighting at Ker Place on December 4th, 2020. Twenty have been purchased and decorated by local businesses which will be on display at Ker Place.

Councilmember Oswald asked if Mr. Burnham had heard about what North Street Playhouse was planning on for the Christmas season. Mr. Burnham shared that they have a press release available online and that it appears that they will be hosting a virtual variety show.

Mrs. Carol Vaughn, Eastern Shore Post, shared that the details on the variety show were in the November 20th edition of the Post.

Committee Reports:

- a. HRSD, Robert Bloxom: No report.
- b. Waterfront Committee, Robert Bloxom: Mr. Byrd shared his thanks for Harbormaster Craig Tanner and Mr. Bill Burnham, sharing that they did a great job this past boating season. Mr. Byrd also thanked Mr. Spuck for working towards getting a courtesy car and golf carts for the

wharf guests. Mr. Byrd also mentioned that the committee is working on an off-season rate and if anyone is interested in tying up at the wharf during the off-season that they should contact Mr. Tanner.

- c. Planning Commission, Robert Bloxom: No meeting.
- d. Personnel Committee, Catherine Krause: No meeting.
- e. Strategic Planning, Fletcher Fosque: No meeting although he did share that the committee has broken the town into seven sections which will be reviewed individually over the coming months so that the committee can present a thoughtful comprehensive strategic plan to Town Council.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Fosque thanked OBCA for getting the driving holiday tour together. Mayor Fosque shared that the Christmas lights in town will be turned on the Wednesday (November 23), stating that due to the increase of COVID-19 cases the public tree lighting which was scheduled for November 26th has been cancelled.

Town Manager's Report:

Mr. Spuck highlighted the following items from his report:

- Mr. Spuck shared that he is now a commissioner on the Eastern Shore Tourism Commission.
- Mr. Spuck gave an update on the recodification project, stating that the company has sent him an electronic final version of the code which council will be voting on, hopefully, in the January council meeting.
- Mr. Spuck shared that council will be having a Public Hearing on Monday, November 30, to hear public comment on the CDBG Small Business Recovery Assistance program which will begin at 5:30 p.m.
- Mr. Spuck shared that HRSD plans to visit the town to review planning, staffing, costs, etc. Mr. Spuck shared that there has been a little back and forth with HRSD in terms of staffing – Mr. Spuck has informally requested HRSD's policies for absorbing the staff of facilities they take over and what happens with the accrued vacation and sick time our employees have banked.

Councilmember Marino complimented Mr. Spuck on the street repair update as well as asked if he would consider adding Warren Street to the list of town roads to be repaired. Councilmember Marino shared her concern with public health and safety with the current state of Warren Street – citing large potholes with collected water could become a mosquito breeding ground. Councilmember Oswald also expressed concern with the trash collection for those residents that put their cans on Warren Street. Mr. Spuck explained that the garbage truck is too big to travel down Warren Street and per Davis Disposal's request, the town has asked those residents to take their cans to Meadville Drive so that the truck can easily handle their garbage. Notices were hand-delivered to those residents on Meadville Drive that were placing their cans on Warren Street. Mr. Spuck also shared that he plans on looking into getting Warren Street tar and chipped which will work better for maintaining the integrity of the street

than crush and run.

Council Comments:

Mayor Fosque thanked the town staff for getting the Christmas decorations up.

Councilmember Krause updated council on Onancock Main Street, stating that they are working with a marketing company on rebranding the town. The cost of the rebrand has been paid for through a \$7,000 grant that the Onancock Main Street has received. Councilmember Krause shared that they hope deliverables in early 2021.

Closed Session, if needed:

None.

Adjourn:

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.



Fletcher Fosque, Mayor



Lisa Fiege, Deputy Clerk