

Town of Onancock – July 26, 2021 Town Council Meeting Minutes

Town of Onancock
Town Council Meeting
July 26, 2021
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 Robert Bloxom, Ray Burger, Thelma Gillespie, Joy Marino, Sarah Nock and Maphis Oswald were present. All members were present, and a quorum was established.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mayor Fosque introduced Councilmember Sarah to the Public.

Consideration and Approval of the Meeting Minutes from the June 28, 2021 Town Council Meeting:

Mayor Fosque asked for any changes, corrections, or additions to the minutes as presented.

Councilmember Bloxom stated that on page five the word “objectivity” should be changed to “subjectivity”.

Councilmember Oswald made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Councilmember Burger seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Public Business:

- a. Motion to Adopt – Town Code 2-27, Election Dates Terms: Mr. Spuck explained that Council already heard this proposed language at last month’s Public Hearing. This Code update is required since the Virginia Legislature changed the Town’s elections from May to November.

Councilmember Bloxom made a motion to revise the Town Code Sections 2-27, 2-104 and Section 5 to reflect the new election dates in November. Councilmember Gillespie seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

- b. Update on the Onancock Volunteer Fire Department (OVFD), Chief Adam James: Chief James gave Town Council an update on the Department, sharing the Department’s 2020 and 2021 year-to-date statistics for engine runs and EMS calls. The Department has also increased its roster this past year. OVFD recently purchased a new tanker which was approximately \$549,500. OVFD was also recently awarded a rescue assistance fund grant to help purchase three new ambulances. The grant does require an 80/20 match. OVFD was also able to purchase new defibrillators through a couple of other grants. And, through the Town’s Small Business Recovery Assistance Grant the Department was able to purchase a LUCAS device for hands free chest compressions. OVFD also recently replaced the air packs for five fire fighters which expired in March. Lastly, Chief James shared that they are always looking for new members.

Councilmember Marino shared that they could receive ARPA funds. Chief James shared that they were asking Accomack County for some of their ARPA funds.

Councilmember Oswald asked about their need for new members. Chief James shared that the roster ebbs and flows and the roster usually hovers around 30.

Council Discussion:

a. Property Blight

- a. Discussion About Building Blight Considering the Lost Grant Opportunity in the Northeast Neighborhood: Mayor Fosque shared that the Town was not approved for the grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for the Northeast Section of Town.

Councilmember Marino shared that she spoke with Mr. Eric Luchansky with the ANPDC who said the Town was denied the grant because the area surveyed was not below the income level required to obtain the grant. The leadership team handed out the grant surveys to everyone in the area, but not enough responses were submitted for them to qualify. Councilmember Gillespie asked why the leadership team was not notified that the responses were not sufficient enough to qualify for the grant.

Mayor Fosque stated that the Town is planning on applying again in the Fall. Mr. Spuck expanded by sharing that the Town has a copy of the scoring sheet and that based on the previous scores the Town can work to bring those scores up to the necessary levels.

Mayor Fosque asked Council if they wanted to attempt to address the derelict properties in the area now or wait until the Town reapplies for the grant. Does Council want to direct the Town Manager to come up with a plan to address the blighted properties in that area and does the Town want to spend its own money to address these issues?

Councilmember Oswald asked if the grant would be able to reimburse the Town if the Town bought the property before awarded the grant. Mr. Spuck said that they would not and that the purchase of these properties would be an investment on the Town. Councilmember Oswald asked what the Town would do with the properties once cleared. Mayor Fosque stated that the Town could wait until it reapplies for the grant before taking any action.

Councilmember Marino expressed concern that the Town has not properly shared this news with the residents of the Northeast Section.

Mayor Fosque cautioned Council about getting into the housing rehabilitation business.

Councilmember Marino stated that if the Town purchased these properties outside of the grant then it would need to reappropriate those dollars into another project for that area.

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Mr. Clinton Strand, Pine Street, mentioned the standing water on Cross and School Streets as well as ditch maintenance as a potential project for the grant. Mr. Strand also questioned the paperwork that made DHCD reject the grant. Mayor Fosque explained that the respondents of the survey did not meet the low-income qualifications of the grant.

Councilmember Marino suggested that the sidewalk replacements be a project for the grant as well as streetlights.

Councilmember Gillespie shared that the important part of the project is to get rid of the blighted structures in that area. Mayor Fosque asked if those properties were for sale. Mr. Spuck said that they are not and that currently there are six homes identified as blighted and that the owners are not delinquent on their real estate taxes.

Councilmember Nock suggested that the Town put the lot it owns at 9 Watson Street up for sale, once sold make a rolling fund for which the Town could use to purchase and clear blighted parcels.

Councilmember Oswald asked about the amount of blight in that area and if the removal of that blight would create an issue for the Town getting the next grant application approved.

Councilmember Gillespie said that she would like the Town to resubmit the grant proposal this Fall and that in the meantime the Town should tear down the blighted properties.

Councilmember Bloxom made a motion to list for the sale the Town's property in the Northeast Section, 9 Watson Street.

Mayor Fosque asked for public comment on the matter.

Mrs. Janet Fosque, Market Street, urged Council to make sure there are no unintended consequences to removing the blight when it comes to getting grant approval.

Mr. Spuck suggested that the Town make it a priority getting the grant proposal ready for resubmission.

Mayor Fosque suggested that in the meantime the Town still look into selling the property at 9 Watson Street.

Councilmember Oswald suggested that the Town get the word out about the grant proposal being rejected, maybe hold a Town Hall meeting regarding its status.

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Mayor Fosque asked for a second on Councilmember Bloxom's motion to sell the property at 9 Watson Street. Councilmember Nock seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

- b. **Personnel Committee Appointment:** Mayor Fosque shared that there is a vacancy on the Personnel Committee. Councilmember Marino stated that she noticed on the Town's website that Councilmember Gillespie was listed as a member. Councilmember Gillespie confirmed that she is a member of the Personnel Committee. Mayor Fosque shared that with Councilmember Gillespie's seat on the committee, there are no vacancies left for that committee.

Mayor Fosque asked Councilmember Marino to be the chair of the committee. Councilmember Marino agreed to the position.

Public Comment:

Margie Spangler, Northern Accomack Community Cats, wanted to share with Town Council and the public that their organization is in the area and here to assist with the spaying and neutering of outdoor cats. The organization gets the cats spayed or neutered as well as vaccinated for rabies and ear tipped, all for \$25.00. They want the community to know that they are here as well as ask the community for donations.

Mrs. Priscilla Hart, Market Street, shared her positive experience with Northern Accomack Community Cats and encouraged people to work with them.

Committee Reports:

- HRSD, Robert Bloxom: Councilmember Bloxom deferred to Town Manager Spuck. Mr. Spuck shared that they have been working diligently on getting the contract finalized with HRSD. In the previous Council meeting, Town Council authorized the Town Manager to sign the contract with HRSD, since then we have learned that when the USDA gave the Town money to upgrade the plant it was a mixture of grant and loan dollars. The USDA is suggesting that the grant dollars need to be refunded to them since the Town is transferring the plant to another entity. The bond counsel is working their way through this issue. Currently, the Town is still on track to transfer the plant and its sewer employees to HRSD on August 29th.
- Waterfront, Robert Bloxom: The Waterfront Committee met on July 13th. The marina is receiving positive feedback about the ramp being completed. The one area of concern is that that south side wall is made of concrete which could damage the boats if the owners are not careful while launching. The Harbormaster has ordered bumpers for the wall to help with this issue. T&W Block recently hired a new crane operator which will help reduce their weekend hours at the marina. T&W Block have also reported to the Town that Bundick Well and Pump will be on site soon to install the well to help with the dust mitigation. Councilmember Bloxom also shared that transient slip bookings are ahead of last year and that the marina is also receiving rave reviews about the longer marina hours and friendly staff.

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- Planning Commission, Robert Bloxom: The Planning Commission met on July 20th to discuss potential options for changing the short-term stay ordinance. Mr. Spuck is going to get together a list of the options discussed for the Commission to review at their August meeting.

Mr. Spuck added that he hopes to have a joint public hearing with Town Council and the Planning Commission to review the Comprehensive Plan rewrite.

- Personnel:
No report.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Fosque stated that Main Street had a wonderful event for the unveiling of the Town's new logo. Mayor Fosque also shared that he would be out of Town for two and a half weeks starting this Thursday.

Town Manager's Report:

Mr. Spuck shared the following items of interest with Town Council:

- The boat ramp is open and ready for use. There is an issue with the pitch of the ramp. T&W Block is going to put some gravel down to help with this issue until a more permanent solution is in place. Mr. Spuck shared that the issue is either with the contractor or the engineer but that he would be working with them both to get this resolved.
- The Town has new, sturdier, flag poles for the Welcome Sign and Town Gazebo. ANEC has agreed to help the Town with their installation.
- Mr. Spuck shared that he is working on another grant application for the Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) to help with the Virginia Port Authority match to replace the bulkhead
- Mr. Spuck shared that the Town has received its first tranche of ARAP funds which have been placed in a specially designated account. Mr. Spuck is currently working on getting a list of projects together for Council's review. Mayor Fosque suggested that they have a Work Session in September.

Council Comments:

Councilmember Nock thanked Council for her appointment.

Councilmember Bloxom thanked management for this year's mosquito spraying efforts. They have been consistent.

Councilmember Oswald stated that she does not want the dog park to get lost off Council's agenda. Mr. Spuck shared that he spoke with OBCA who has agreed to donate funds for the dog park. Mr. Spuck spoke with Accomack Fence regarding getting a quote. Once the dog park is up and running the Town will invite the public. Councilmember Oswald shared that there are a lot of events geared towards funding raising for dog parks and that the Town should get involved with those efforts.

Closed Session, if needed:

None was needed.

Adjourn:

Councilmember Bloxom made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Nock seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

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The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.



Fletcher Fosque, Mayor



Lisa Fiege, Deputy Clerk