

Council Meeting Minutes

December 10, 2024

Present:

Mayor Michael Hoops

Councilmember Jonathan Hankins

Councilmember Zach Cline

Councilmember David Fox

Councilmember Emily Davis

Councilmember Joe Beasley

Absent:

Vice Mayor Glenn Catron

Staff members present were Town Manager, LeeAnne Regon; Executive Assistant, Susan Reeves; Attorney, Brad Pyott; Police Chief, Stan Lampert; Fire Chief, John D. Thomas; Zoning and Property Maintenance Official, Chris Hurley; Clerk-Treasurer, Jessica Hayes.

Call to Order

The Tazewell Town Council met in an executive session at 7:00pm in the Town Hall Council Chambers

Executive Session

Motion was made by Councilmember Beasley to go into executive session. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Fox. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

RESOLUTION

Motion made by: Beasley

Resolution Number: ES241210

Motion Seconded by: Fox

Meeting Date: 24 December 10

Vote: All voted Aye

Purpose: Personnel Matters

CERTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, the Tazewell Town Council has convened an executive session on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, 2.1-344.1 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by this Council that such executive session was conducted in conformity with Virginia Law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Tazewell Town Council hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law were discussed in the executive session to which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the executive session were heard, discussed or considered by the Tazewell Town Council.

VOTE

Ayes: Hankins, Cline, Fox, Davis, Beasley

Nays: none

(For each nay vote, the substance of the departure from the requirements of the Act should be described.)

Absent during vote: Catron

Absent during meeting: Catron



Jessica Hayes, Clerk

Motion was made by Councilmember Beasley to come out of executive session. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Davis. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye, Councilmember Davis, aye, Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Mayor Hoops read the resolution for the Certification of Executive Session. On roll call vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye, Councilmember Davis, aye, Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Call to Order

Mayor Hoops called the public meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Manager Regon led the meeting in the invocation prayer.

Special presentations/Requests

(A) Swearing in of Mayor Hoops, Councilmember Beasley, Councilmember Fox, and Councilmember Willis by Tazewell County Clerk of Court Charity Hurst.

Tazewell County Clerk Hurst swore in the new appointed councilmembers. Councilmember Danny Willis, Councilmember Joe Beasley, Councilmember David Fox for service time January 2025 to December 2028.

Clerk Hurst swore in the Mayor Michael Hoops for the service time of January 2025 to December 2026.

(B) Imagination Library Program (Tazewell County Public Library Executive Director Erica Galloway)

Erica Galloway Executive Director of the Tazewell Public Library proposed to the Council that they assist the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to get started in the Tazewell County area. They are asking that the Council approve the funding for the children in Tazewell. Through January 1st 2029 the State of Virginia is matching half of those funds. The library is currently reaching out to all of the towns to see if they will help fund the children in their area. Councilmember Cline asked if there is a recycle program for the books. There is a program within the library for recycled books finding new uses or organizations that can utilize these books. Public comment. Offered an additional option for recycling books if families move from the area in which the post office will hold books that can be picked up for reuse to the community.

Erica Galloway will submit a draft MOU to the Council.

Councilmember Hankins made a motion for the Town to participate in the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Councilmember Davis seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye, Councilmember Davis, aye, Councilmember Beasley, aye.

(C) Historic Crab Orchard Museum Support Request

Manager Regon received a donation request from the Crab Orchard Museum. Councilmember Davis would like to see if they can work it in the budget to meet this request of \$6,500. Councilmember Beasley would like consider a budget of \$1,000 donation every year, he believes it can be more manageable and consistent. Councilmember Fox is open to planning for a \$3,500 donation in the budget. Councilmember Cline asked Manager Regon if the Crab Orchard representative would like to meet with the council at the next meeting to discuss this donation request before a decision is made to learn more about how they are funded.

(D) Upper Tennessee River Roundtable Support Request

Manager Regon said the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable requested support from us but did not specify the amount. We have not donated to them in the past 5 years. Councilmember Beasley requested that they come to the next meeting to explain what the funds would be used for and how it would benefit the Town before deciding on a possible donation.

Local Business Recognition-None scheduled

Approval of Minutes

Councilmember Beasley made a motion to approve minutes from November 12, 2024. Councilmember Fox seconded. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Approval of Financial Statements and Reports

Councilmember Cline made a motion to approve financial statements and financial reports for November 2024. Councilmember Hankins seconded. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Committee/Conference Updates

(A) Planning Commission Committee

Solar project with Elliot Energy, as of now there is a draft document being reviewed by the attorneys. There was a discussion regarding the Ramey Lot plat. This plat shows the separation of the parcel and road. The Planning Commission offered three suggestions for naming the street as part of this plat. The suggestions were Corner Stone, Foundation, and Tuck Street. Councilmember Fox believes that it would be a great way to honor our retired employee by naming it Tuck Street. This will be addressed in today's agenda. The Planning Commission also had discussions regarding a shipping container ordinance and definition change to address shipping containers used within the town limits. This could specify if they will be allowed permanent or temporary.

(B) Industrial/Economic Development Authority

Cara Spivey said that the I/EDA received a request from the Marinus family about acquiring a small plot to be purchased off of the mini park. The agreed upon price for the spot is \$2,000. The I/EDA agreed that they can purchase this to allow parking for their building. There is a stipulation in the agreement that the improvements to that property must be completed within one year. Failure to do so will result in the plot being placed back to the I/EDA. They were agreeable to these terms.

Manager Regon met with Thompson & Litton about the engineering drawings of the Farmer's Market. This project is moving forward at this time. There will be a submission for a grant with Tobacco Commission in February. Meetings will be held with Cara Spivey, Manager Regon, and Executive Assistant Reeves bi-monthly beginning in February to try get this project started off with strong momentum.

I/EDA hosted a training session at the American Legion in November. This event had a successful turn out. Justin from Peoples Inc. was able to offer valuable answers to vendors and potential entrepreneurs. They discussed hosting another training session for potential business owners in the town in March or April.

Unfinished Business

(A) Tazewell Cinemas & Entertainment, LLC. IRF Agreement

There has been discussion in the terms of this agreement such as the interest rates and repayment. The DHCD has requested for clarity on these terms. Councilmember Fox would like to move forward with 1.5% interest rate. Councilmember Davis suggested to move forward with two years interest only payments and 1.5%. Then payments would pay towards principal for the history of the loan. The goal is to help this business but also to keep this as a revolving loan so that there will be an option to help future businesses in the Town of Tazewell. Councilmember Cline made the motion for the terms of a two-year interest only payments at a 1.5% interest rate for the duration of the loan. The loan amount of up to \$399,000 for a 20-year term. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

New Business

(A) Discuss Vacancies and Reappointments for Board of Building Code of Appeals

Councilmember Hankins made a motion to re-appoint George Linkous and appoint Don Elswick to the Board of Building Code of Appeals. For the term January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2027. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

(B) Discuss Vacancies and Reappointments for Board of Zoning Appeals

Councilmember Fox motioned to request Leon O'quin to be appointed on the Board of Zoning Appeals for the term ending in December 31st, 2025. Councilmember Beasley seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Councilmember Beasley made a motion to reappoint Joe Bowan for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2026; Daniel Ingram for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2027; William Weeks for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2028; Benny Moore for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2029. Councilmember Davis seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

(C) Discuss Reappointments for Historic Review Board

Councilmember Davis made a motion to reappoint Bethany Karnes for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2027. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

(D) Discuss Vacancies and Reappointments for I/EDA

Councilmember Cline made a motion to reappoint Alisha Bales for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2028; appoint Scott Cole for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2028; appoint Tammy Smith for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2028. Councilmember Davis seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

(E) Discuss Reappointments for Planning Commission

Councilmember Cline made a motion to reappoint Gabriel de Courcy for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2028; Larry Lutz for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2028; Benny Moore for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2028; John Taylor for a term of January 1, 2025 to December 31st, 2028; Councilmember Beasley seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

(F) YMCA Board Member Appointment

Councilmember Beasley made a motion to appoint Emily Davis to the YMCA Board Member for the Town of Tazewell. Councilmember Fox seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

(G) Senior Citizen Tax Exemption

Councilmember Fox would like to raise the exemption income allowance. The qualifications as of now are that a resident has to be 65 years of age or older and the

household income must be no more than \$25,000. Councilmember Fox made a motion to increase the income allowance for the tax exemption to \$35,000. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. Councilmember Beasley recommended that we match the guidelines that the county is following since we are looking to raise the allowance. Councilmember Fox amended his motion to increase the income allowance for the tax exemption to \$40,000 to follow the County's guidelines. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

(H) Ramey Lot Plat Review and Street Names Recommendations from Planning Commission

Councilmember Davis motioned to accept the Ramey Lot plat once amendments are made up to date. Councilmember Beasley Seconded. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Three suggestions were given by the Planning Commission for street names to be considered; Corner Stone, Foundation, and Tuck Street. Councilmember Fox made a motion for Tuck Lane to be used for the street at the Ramey Lot. Motion did not carry. Councilmember Davis suggests Corner Stone Lane. Councilmember Beasley suggested Foundation Lane to honor all of our workers who are the foundation of the Town, past, present, and future. Councilmember Davis made a motion for the street to be named Foundation Lane. Councilmember Beasley seconded that motion. Councilmember Cline offered a suggestion to put a poll on Facebook to include the Town in the process of deciding the street name. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, no; Councilmember Fox, no; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

(I)Town Manager Updates

Rt 460 & Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade

The Town has been awarded a grant from the Virginia Coalfield Water Development Fund of \$92,255 to help towards the Rt 460 project. The parity review has been approved and the town can now move forward with the RT 460 project. The vendors have been notified. Spring is the goal for work to begin. We can accept the bid.

The WWTP upgrade will have to be rebid. Councilmember Cline would like USDA Rural Development to understand the penalties that are now going to cost our local taxpayers as direct result of the parity review that they required us to do. This caused a delay and now our project must be re-bid. He would like to see us bring these frustrations to their attention. Manage Regon expects the project be rebid in Spring of 2025. Councilmember Cline wants us to consider paying this "old debt" loan with Rural Development with recovery funds. The goal would be to avoid this in the future eliminate the risk of delayed projects. Manager Regon will find out if there are any penalties if this loan is paid off early.

Lead and Copper

We were mandated to have a record of line material for each property that we service in town. This was achieved by customer identification surveys or verification from Town of Tazewell employees. The Town met the deadline for this project and submitted the data required. The Town learned of a Grant opportunity for \$250,000 to reimburse time and equipment for this project. We were awarded this grant through the Department of Health Office of Drinking Water.

North Tazewell Revitalization

The Town of Tazewell was awarded \$50,000 for a planning grant for the North Tazewell Community. The bid for engineering services was awarded to Hill Studios. We have decided to concentrate our efforts in North Tazewell to the vicinity near the Train Station, Clinch Valley Community Action, down to Farm Bureau Mill. There will be a meeting held on December 17th and 18th at the Train Station. Hill Studio will meet with property and business owners to discuss possible exterior building improvements. The goal of this meeting is to prepare to apply for a Community Improvement Grant from DHCD for Downtown Business District Revitalization funding for the North Tazewell area.

Farmer's Market

Farmer's Market met with Thompson & Litton on December 3rd. The Town requested engineered drawings for this project. Upcoming grants in February require these drawings. Pam with Thompson & Litton said that Sarah Williams with the Tobacco Commission to inquire what is actually needed for this grant application. Sarah replied that we need a Preliminary Architectural Report. Thompson & Litton will do this for us and it will be ready before the grant is to be submitted in February.

EMS Congressional Directed Spending

While at a meeting with Thompson & Litton on Dec 3rd we discussed the matter regarding the EMS building. We asked if we could build from the ground up or if we should only remodel and update the existing building. The USDA sent an email to Mayor Hoops answering the question of if the project will still be eligible if used on a structure being built from the ground up. They responded the project would remain eligible as long as it will remain in the area that was it was originally planned for, such as the town limits of Tazewell.

Police Department Relocation

The Police Department is in the final stages of this relocation. The Grand opening will be the third week in February. Chief Lambert said that they are still waiting on signs to be installed before the main opening. It is fully operational at this time. Amanda Killen submitted a REAP Rural Energy for America grant

application on September 30, 2024. The request was for \$500,000 for energy efficient upgrades. We are not eligible for this grant because it is for farming purposes. There may be other grant opportunities to pursue.

Deed Transfer I/EDA-TOT

I/EDA voted to transfer a portion of the Ramey's lot to the Town for the purpose of relocating the Public Works Department to this lot. In exchange, Town Council has now voted to transfer 1616 Riverside Drive, currently in use by Public Works, to I/EDA. To proceed with this exchange, an agenda item was added to the agenda for tonight's meeting for Town Council to review and approve the new plat for the Ramey lot.

Warhawk Park

Warhawk Park released grant funds they are stipulated to install a basketball and pickleball court, shelter with bathrooms, and a grant for playground equipment. Clinch Valley Community Action received a grant for \$76,000 to install a small playground at the site, and this installation is in progress. First Baptist Church will donate the adjacent lot to the park property to Each One Teach One to be used for parking.

Recreational Planning Grant

There has been discussion about improving the fields at Lincolnshire Park and looking to expand our recreation offerings. Executive Assistant Reeves applied for a Recreation Economy for Rural Communities planning grant through the EPA. This was submitted on November 5, 2024, and we should be notified if we were awarded in the spring of 2025.

Solar

Attorney Pyott, Zoning Administrator Chris Hurley, and I met on December 4, 2024, with Jeff Gore. Mr. Gore reviewed the development and proposal from Elliot Energy. After reviewing we believe that Energy Revenue sharing will be the most beneficial way to move forward.

Lincolnshire Dam

The Town of Tazewell team met with Matt Whittaker of Marshall Miller and discussed Lincolnshire Dam. The dam must be inspected every two years, and it was time to perform an inspection. This has been completed, receiving a satisfactory result, and our permit will be up to date for another two years.

VDOT LAP Qualification

VDOT requires all localities to have a Locally Administered Project Manager(s). Public Works Director, Donny Pruitt; Executive Assistant, Susan Reeves; and Manager Regon will be taking classes and tests to become certified for VDOT Locally Administered Project Manager. This will take place in February.

FEMA-Hurricane Helene

We met with FEMA representatives and have been assigned a Program Manager to guide us through the application process. Our team has been gathering information regarding the calls responded to or work performed as a result of Hurricane Helene. Cost analysis is ongoing. We had a meeting with our project manager on December 9th that went very well. We made progress on our application.

Fire Department Grant for Swift Water Rescue

The Town of Tazewell Fire Department has applied for a \$30,000 grant with the Virginia Department of Fire Programs to obtain Swift Water Rescue equipment. We were not awarded this grant.

Sunnyside Project aka The Traveler

Executive Assistant Reeves is currently in the process of closing out this project as it is completed. She is preparing letters and documentation to show that work is completed. She will be submitting this information to Cumberland Plateau Planning District so they can close the project out as well. The Grand Opening for the Traveler should be in the Spring.

(J) Miscellaneous

Clinch Valley Community Action requested that the Town be a part of the Big Give. They This program assists members in the community asked that we make a donation of \$25, \$50, \$100, or more. They requested to receive the donation by December 31st. The ultimate goal is to raise \$5,000 for this program. Councilmember Hankins made a motion \$250 to the Big Give. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Shop with a Hero will be on Saturday. The Police Department has almost met the goal to allow 40 kids to participate with \$250 each for gifts. The shopping event begins at 7:30a.m. at Walmart in Claypool Hill. Subway has arranged to feed them.

“A Night To Shine” is an event being held at the YMCA on February 7th, 2025. This event is a Prom for special needs kids. They are requesting for any volunteers to help with this event. They also requested the use of the Ramey Lot to allow for parking. Please let Manager Regon know if you would like to volunteer.

Public Comments

Council Comments

Councilmember Fox had a concern from a citizen regarding the Christmas Parade. They requested that we allow parking on the street during the parade to the public. The councilmembers deliberated. Due to concern of activity in the street for parade participants as well as public on the streets to view the parade, the risk of an accident would be too great if we did not block the streets for vehicle traffic. It is a safety concern.

Councilmember Beasley likes that this parade gives the community as well as our emergency responders, town employees and elected officials recognition.

Councilmember Davis thanked the town employees for all of their help with the parade.

Councilmember Fox thanked the Fire Department and town employees for all of their hard work and dedication.

The Town Employee Christmas dinner will be at the VIP Room on December 13th at 6:30p.m.

Adjournment

Councilmember Beasley made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion, On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Meeting adjourned at 9:17p.m.