

## **Council Meeting Minutes**

**January 14, 2025**

Present:

Mayor Michael Hoops  
Councilmember Danny Willis  
Councilmember Jonathan Hankins  
Councilmember Zach Cline  
Councilmember David Fox  
Councilmember Emily Davis  
Councilmember Joe Beasley

Absent:

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

### **Call to Order**

The Tazewell Town Council met in an executive session at 6:45pm in the Town Hall Council Chambers.

### **Executive Session**

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

**RESOLUTION**

Motion made by: Cline

Resolution Number: ES250114

Motion Seconded by: Hankins

Meeting Date: 25 January 14

Vote: All voted Aye

Purpose: Prospective Business and  
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: Willis, 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.)

  
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Jessica Hayes, Clerk

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

### **Call to Order**

Mayor Hoops called the special called town council meeting to order at 7:35pm in the Town Hall Council Chambers

Pledge of Allegiance.

Pastor Nate Thomas led the meeting in the invocation prayer.

### **Special presentations/Requests**

#### **(A) Historic Crab Orchard Museum Support Request**

Cynthia Farmer, the Executive Director of the Crab Orchard Museum, presented to the council on behalf of their 501(c)(2) nonprofit corporation. This membership-owned organization is governed by a 15-member board of directors. Revenue is primarily derived from museum operations, generating 60% of their income with the Corn Maze being the largest event. The remaining 40% comes from memberships and donations. The organization hosts two free community events annually: Independence Day and Frontier Christmas. The top five revenue generators funding the museum include the Corn Maze, Fiddlers Convention, Pioneer Princess Camp, Pioneer School Tours, and General Admission. Additionally, they rent facilities for events. Previously, the Town had supported the organization financially, and they are requesting reconsideration for budget inclusion. Currently, the Town of Bluefield donates \$2,500, and Tazewell County remains one of their significant donors, although contributions have decreased over the past year. The organization employs four full-time and four part-time staff members, continuously striving to minimize costs while seeking necessary donations and support.

The recent hurricane caused damage, costing approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000, leading to numerous cancellations. Typically, the Corn Maze attracts around 2,500 children and 4,000 to 5,000 visitors on weekends. This event serves an educational purpose, aligning with the museum's mission. The Apprentice Camp engages about

80 children, with an additional group of around 30 younger participants. The Fiddler Convention attendance is estimated at 800, though precise tracking is challenging.

Councilmember Beasley made a motion to donate \$3,000. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion. Councilmember Fox opened a discussion to donate more. There was discussion on making this smaller donation more consistent. Over time this would surpass what has been donated in the past and provide consistent support for the museum moving forward. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye, Councilmember Davis, aye, Councilmember Beasley, aye.

**(B) Upper Tennessee River Roundtable Support Request**

Manager Regon stated that Carol Doss was unable to attend the meeting tonight. She provided a presentation and a request for the council, which Manager Regon read aloud on her behalf.

Training is conducted in the area. Councilmember Cline noted that the presentation was very extensive. He inquired about any specific projects planned for this area. Manager Regon will seek more detailed information. The matter will be tabled temporarily. The Council has requested that Carol Doss attend the next meeting.

**(C) Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Assistance**

The United States Small Business Administration is represented by a Public Affairs Specialist, accompanied by two co-workers, to provide information on disaster loan assistance. There are two declarations issued by the federal government. The first is West Virginia Declaration number 27068, which includes select counties in Virginia such as Bland, Giles, and Tazewell. The application process for this loan ends on February 7th. This declaration focuses on the Economic Injury Disaster Loan, aimed at providing working capital loans to small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, and private nonprofit organizations of all sizes, with a loan limit of up to two million dollars for businesses directly affected by the storm event.

The second declaration is Virginia Declaration number 20705, specific to Virginia. This declaration covers two types of business physical disaster loans, which address damage inside and outside the business premises, including equipment, and loans that can also assist renters, homeowners, etc. The application deadline for these loans is February 7th. Information regarding these loans, along with a business card, has been provided to council members. Assistance will be available until February 7th.

**(D) Special Recognition for Compassionate Policing Award for Sergeant Leighton, Officer Tyler Ruble, Officer Missy Woodard, Lieutenant Craig Menefee.**

Police Chief Lampert introduces new officers Caleb Pennington, an Academy graduate, and Officer Sam McCullen, who has recently joined the department.

Sean Hurd, our Accreditation Office Manager, has joined the committee for the **BALEY Act**, which trains agencies across Virginia. Officer Dave McConnell, with 26 years of service, is promoted to Uniform Investigator, and Lieutenant Craig Menefee becomes the Permanent Investigator. Officer Ben Leighton, with 14 years of service, is promoted to Sergeant. Officer Paul Little, with 28 years of service, is promoted to Lieutenant.

Chief Lampert acknowledged officers for their exceptional handling of a sensitive situation: Sergeant Ben Leighton, Officer Tyler Ruble, Officer Missy Woodard, and Lieutenant Craig Menefee received the Compassionate Policing Award.

Chief Lampert also recognized Officer Dave McConnell for his response to an accident and showing above and beyond compassion to those involved.

**(E) Bluefield Area Little League Support Request**

Manager Regon has received a request from Bluefield Area Little League in Bluefield, WV, for a donation to assist with their repair needs. Councilmember Fox would like us to prioritize support for our local little league.

**Local Business Recognition**

**Approval of Minutes**

Councilmember Beasley made a motion to approve minutes from December 10, 2024. Councilmember Hankins seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

**Approval of Financial Statements & Financial Report**

Councilmember Hankins made a motion to approve financial statements and financial reports for December 2024. Councilmember Willis seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye;

Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

## **Committee/Conference Updates**

### **(A) Planning Commission Committee**

Councilmember Davis. The Committee had a brief update on the health facilities. There was only a brief update on the facility going in beside Food Lion. They will have a full update at the next meeting. They did have a request to add a definition regarding shipping container ordinance amendment. The Planning Commission requested the council to set a date for the public hearing to add this shipping container ordinance amendment.

## **Unfinished Business**

## **New Business**

### **(A) Vice Mayor Appointment**

Councilmember Davis made a motion to appoint Councilmember Beasley as Vice Mayor. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, nay; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

### **(B) Reappoint Clerk Jessica Hayes**

Councilmember Davis made a motion to reappoint Jessica Hayes as Clerk. Councilmember Beasley seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

### **(C) Reappoint Fire Chief John Thomas**

Councilmember Fox made a motion to reappoint John Thomas as Fire Chief. Councilmember Davis seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

### **(D) Reappoint Town Attorney Brad Pyott**

Councilmember Fox made a motion to reappoint Brad Pyott as Town Attorney. Councilmember Cline seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

### **(E) Reappoint Town Manager Leeanne Regon**

Councilmember Davis made a motion to reappoint Leeanne Regon as Town Manager. Councilmember Beasley seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye;

Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

**(F) Mileage Extension Request**

Manager Regon requested an extension for a Town Manager to reside 5 miles outside of Town limits.

Councilmember Hankins proposed a motion to allow a Town Manager to reside no more than 5 miles outside of town limits. Councilmember Davis seconded the motion. Councilmember Cline discussed how other localities face similar issues and have had to extend their boundaries. Vice Mayor Beasley suggested reviewing further into the codes to determine if any changes need to be sent along with this change to the charter. Town Attorney Pyott will examine the language used by other localities to facilitate this change. Councilmember Hankins amended his motion to initiate the process, allowing a Town Manager to reside no more than 5 miles outside of town limits. Councilmember Davis seconded the amended motion.

This process must be completed by November 1, 2025, for presentation at the next General Assembly meeting in February of 2026.

On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

**(G) Set Public Hearing for Shipping Container Ordinance Amendment for Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 7:15pm**

Councilmember Hankins made a motion to set a public hearing for Shipping Container Ordinance Amendment for Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 7:15pm. Councilmember Fox seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

**(H) Set Public Hearing for Water and Sewer Bonds for Route 460 Project and Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Project for Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 7:00pm.**

Manager Regon state that Chris Kulp our bond council has stated that if we are ready to move on our Rt 460 Project and the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade that we can have a public hearing to begin the process of closing the loans and get the projects started. Councilmember Davis made a motion to set the date for the public hearing on February 11, 2025. Vice Mayor Beasley seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

## **Miscellaneous**

Building Official Hurley distributed a letter he received from Robert Ramey last Friday. On the second page, there is a map showing an area still owned by BNR Enterprise. This lot is adjacent to the Ramey Lot property owned by the town. Mr. Ramey has offered to sell the property to the town for \$1,500, with the condition that the town covers all legal fees. Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to consider the acquisition of the property pending the proposal, and Councilmember Davis seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

## **Public Comments**

None.

## **Council Comments**

Councilmember Fox expressed gratitude to the Fire Department and Fire Chief Thomas for their diligent work and service. Mayor Hoops also extended thanks for their efforts during the New Year's celebration.

Manager Regon provided an update on the EMS building project, noting that Thompson and Litton are currently developing plans and scopes of work to improve the existing EMS building. There has been a potential offer to purchase property adjacent to CVS and the New Police Department building as a relocation site for the EMS building. Councilmember Willis suggested considering another property behind Old Va Pharmacy on Fincastle, citing concerns about congestion at the proposed location once the medical facility is built. Manager Regon informed the council of an option for funding extension with this project and confirmed ongoing communication with Rural Development regarding the planning phase.

Councilmember Cline discussed the timeline and objectives outlined during the special meeting on January 7th. The Comprehensive Plan must be presented to the Planning Commission for approval. A preliminary draft of goals was created, and he urged the council to allocate available funds to support these initiatives. One key project is the Farmer's Market. Manager Regon reported that the MOU has been signed, and work has commenced. Engineering drawings will be ready in time to apply for the Farmers Market Grant with the Tobacco Commission by February 27th and the T-Mobile Grant by March 31st. She assured the council that additional grants would be pursued throughout the year. Councilmember Cline highlighted the importance of budgeting or allocating funds to meet grant match requirements, stressing the urgency of completing this project within the year rather than waiting two years for grant qualification.



In conclusion, Councilmember Fox acknowledged the dedication of the EMS team and conveyed his anticipation for the completion of the building project.

### **Adjournment**

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:51p.m.