

Council Budget Work Session Meeting Minutes

March 4, 2025

Present:

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

Absent:

Staff members present were Town Manager, Leeanne Regon; Executive Assistant, Susan Reeves; Attorney, Brad Pyott; Police Chief, Stan Lampert; Clerk-Treasurer, Jessica Hayes.

Call to Order

The Tazewell Town Council met in an executive session at 6:05pm in the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Councilmember Cline motioned to enter in executive session. Vice Mayor Beasley seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Executive Session

Vice Mayor Beasley motioned to leave executive session. Councilmember Cline seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Mayor Hoops read the certification of executive session. On roll call vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye, Councilmember Davis, aye, Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

RESOLUTION

Motion made by: Beasley

Resolution Number: ES250304

Motion Seconded by: Cline

Meeting Date: 25, March 4

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;

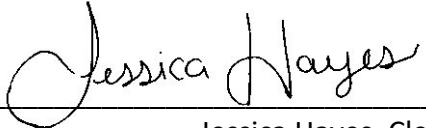
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Tazewell Town Council hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law were discussed in the executive session to which this certification resolution applies,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



Jessica Hayes, Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hoops called the budget work session meeting to order at 7:08pm

Pledge of Allegiance.

Pastor Nate Thomas led the meeting in the invocation prayer.

Water and Sewer Ordinance for Route 460 Water Line Project

Attorney Pyott read water and sewer ordinance for the Route 460 Water Line Project to the councilmembers.

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to pass the Water and Sewer Ordinance for Route 460 Water Line Project. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Councilmember Davis made a motion to make the ordinance effective immediately. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Budget Work Session

Manager Regon has prepared the upcoming water budget, sewer budget, and IEDA budget for council to review. She is still working on the general fund budget at this time. She is requesting for direction from the council regarding the general fund.

One of the areas Manager Regon would like to the council to review and consider is the amount of bank card transaction fees that are currently being paid by the town. Treasurer Hayes informed the council that we are currently paying over \$45,000 in transaction fees for payments we receive via phone or in-office by debit or credit cards annually. The surrounding localities either charge a convenience fee to offset this or use a third-party payment system that charges these fees directly to the customer. Treasurer Hayes recommends considering a minimum transaction fee of \$3.00 or 2.97% whichever is the greatest to be charged to customers using a debit or credit card for their transaction when paying in-office or over the phone. This fee will help to offset the bankcard fees the Town has to pay. It could potentially save over \$21,000. We do offer an alternative for our customers if they are unwilling to pay a convenience fee, such as ACH payment options, cash, and check. The council will hold a public hearing for this next week at the March 11th Council meeting and will hold a vote on this matter.

Nate Thomas-Tazewell Today

Nate Thomas, president of Tazewell Today's board, spoke on behalf of the Executive Director regarding the 2025 Work Plan and budget. The plan includes details of partnered events with the town, a revenue chart dating back to 2015, and fundraiser contributions. He highlighted a revenue increase due to fundraisers and grants, detailed

in the packet. Town-funded events, like fireworks, continue through the partnership. Tazewell Today is accredited for Virginia Main Streets Designation, which must be held by a nonprofit organization.

Councilmember Cline stated that financial reviews show that the ice-skating rink is a monetary loss. Mr. Thomas attributes this to the change in location of the rink, which was moved to increase traffic to Main Street. Total expenses for the operations of 2024 events were discussed. There was a question about whether regulations require a certain number of businesses on Main Street to qualify for accreditations. Alicia Bales said there is no standard or requirement for a certain number of businesses to qualify. Councilmember Fox inquired about efforts to improve entertainment for summer events. Nate Thomas confirmed that discussions are ongoing but no contracts have been signed yet. Planning is in progress, focusing on Main Street Moments with an aim to reduce street closures and cooperate with the Town's requests.

Alicia Bales elaborated on the expenses detailed in the packet and addressed planning concerns. She mentioned the difficulty of booking entertainment without knowing the budget, as their organization follows an annual year budget while the Town follows a fiscal year. This misalignment has caused planning challenges, and they are considering adjusting to align with the Town's fiscal year.

Councilmember Cline expressed the need for more accurate information on the number of new visitors attending events compared to the expenses. He suggested revisiting how to measure impact and requested DHCD to provide annual data. Manager Regon asked if updates could be provided at the next meeting.

Amanda Killen-Main Steet Marketing

Amanda Killen, speaking as a business owner, emphasized the importance of maintaining the Main Street designation, which helped the town secure a grant for Sunny Side Manor. She highlighted the need for better marketing support for businesses in the Town of Tazewell, noting that other Main Streets receive strong business support. She called for more support from the town and suggested that meetings funded by public money, such as Tazewell Today meetings, should be open to the public.

Alicia Bales responded to the comment about public meetings. She noted that there was a full turnover of the board of directors from early 2021 to 2022, leading to a new structure and her becoming president. She has resources from Virginia Main Street and mentioned that the bylaws did not mandate public meetings. She has since learned more about these requirements and is open to having public meetings.

Mayor Hoops expressed concern about the allocation of taxpayer money being focused solely on a specific section of Main Street. He emphasized that his businesses span

from one end of the corporate limits to the other, and he is worried that the funds and support are not being distributed equitably.

Councilmember Willis inquired whether collaboration was possible between the parties involved.

Both organizations believe that Tazewell's Main Street is a key destination and a major draw for the town. Historically, this area lacked businesses, but through concerted efforts, it has grown significantly.

Amanda Killen stated that the Main Street Merchants initiative was established to advocate for and promote the needs of local businesses. Nate Thomas responded affirmatively, indicating their willingness to collaborate to improve Tazewell, as they share common objectives.

Councilmember Willis reiterated the importance of cooperation between the groups, warning that failure to do so could jeopardize progress.

Manager Regon replied to Mrs. Killen's email, committing to better communication and emphasizing the need for collective efforts to achieve success. Amanda noted past achievements under previous management, particularly regarding social media promotion, which bolstered business growth. She stressed the importance of incorporating marketing efforts into the budget to prevent business decline.

Councilmember Fox proposed lowering the meals tax or providing incentives to rejuvenate both the town and Main Street. He advocated for appointing a representative dedicated to revitalizing local businesses and generating enthusiasm to attract visitors.

Councilmember Cline asserted that hope alone does not constitute a strategy. He expressed gratitude to both groups for voicing their concerns and acknowledged the ongoing challenge of effective social media engagement. He indicated that the council is deliberating on where to best allocate resources and efforts.

Water and Sewer Budget

The water rates have been previously approved by vote.

Manager Regon presented the proposed budget for water in detail.

It is advisable to establish an emergency or reserve fund, with a target amount of approximately \$500,000. Consider implementing a capital improvement fee or maintenance fee.

This fund would be beneficial for our auditors, funders, and to ensure we have available resources in case of unforeseen circumstances.

Manager Regon recommends incorporating contingency funds into the budget. She requests the council members to consider this proposal. This matter will be revisited during the next budget meeting.

Adjournment

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Cline 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 8:57p.m.