

June 13, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor LaWanda Tatum called the regular meeting of the Lawrenceville Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. on June 13, 2023.

ROLL CALL

Roll was called. Present: Mayor LaWanda Tatum; Council Members H. B. Brockwell, Jr., Dora Hardy, Robert F. Pecht, III, Nakai Peterson, Alice Talbert and Anne Williams.

Absent: Council Member Teya Whitehead and Town Attorney W. C. Outten, Jr.

Also present: Interim Town Manager, Randy Lynch, Town Clerk, Wanda Johnson, Special Projects Coordinator, Kimberly Martin, Police Chief, John Stith, Assistant Chief, Natasha Brown, Everette Gibson, Scott Martin, James Wesson, Angela Edmonds Taylor, Dr. Willard Bailey, Cyliene Montgomery, Leonard Rose, citizens and the press.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Tatum led the Pledge of Allegiance.

RECOGNITION OF SERVICE AND RETIREMENT – EVERETTE L. GIBSON, JR.

Mayor Tatum recognized Mr. Gibson for his service to the town and community and his retirement. He was presented with a plaque honoring his service as a Police Officer from September 8, 1988 to June 1995; Police Sergeant from June 1995 to January 31, 2003; Police Chief from February 1, 2009 to April 1, 2021; and Town Manager from April 1, 2021 to May 31, 2023.

PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED WATER/SEWER/GARBAGE RATE ADJUSTMENTS

As this time had been advertised for a public hearing on the proposed 20% water and sewer rate adjustments, Mayor Tatum opened the public hearing. Mr. Pecht stated we did not have a rate increase during the years of the pandemic. He reviewed the rates and minimum bills for in and out of town. Our rates are still well below average rates. There was no public comment. Ms. Williams asked if we are confident 20% is a maximum increase; if GEO closes, will we need to increase rates again. Mr. Pecht responded the increase would be more. Dominion usage is down and they are on standard out of town rates at this time. On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mr. Brockwell and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to close the public hearing.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Brockwell, seconded by Ms. Peterson and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on May 9, 2023, as received, suspend the reading and file.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mrs. Talbert and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to approve the agenda as presented.

RECOGNITION OF CITIZENS
CYLIENNE MONTGOMERY

Ms. Montgomery said she was saddened to come before Council regarding the community giveaway. She stated she has a disability and she went to the event to see if the event was accessible to those with handicaps or disabilities. She found that the bathroom was not wheelchair accessible. She stated this comes under ADA law and protections. She felt uncomfortable and felt there were other handicapped persons that were not accommodated. She stated that in the future, the Town needs to do its research to prepare for an event.

ANGELA EDMONDS-TAYLOR – BRUNSWICK 15 PROJECT

Ms. Edmonds-Taylor spoke to Council on behalf of The Brunswick 15 Initiative Committee. The committee is an all-volunteer committee with the mission to share the story of The Brunswick 15. The Brunswick 15 are fifteen courageous African American students who entered Brunswick High School in 1964, ten years after Brown v. Board of Education. Their names are Carolyn Burwell, Elvertha Cox, Vernal Cox, Barbara Evans, Sandra Goldman, Marvin Jones, Beatrice Malone, Queen Marks, Cecelia Mason, Yvonne Stewart, Florence Stith, Rosa Stith, Ashton Thurman, India Walker and Joyce Walker. There will be a celebration on September 9, 2023, at 2:00 PM at Brunswick High School to honor the Brunswick 15. Each Council Member was personally invited to attend the event. Ms. Edmonds-Taylor requested a letter of recognition from Town Council to be placed in the souvenir book. The deadline for the letter to be included in the book is July 15, 2023.

LEONARD ROSE

Leonard Rose said his birthday was last month. He shared that he received a degree in Christian education. He said his caregiver wants to write a book.

ANNE WILLIAMS

Ms. Williams addressed Council regarding the community giveaway on May 21st. She stated our founding fathers decided we have separation of church and state. Her concern is that the group that sponsored the giveaway event on municipal property is called God's Final Call & Warning. She thanked our police department and the sheriff's department for an outstanding job. She said there were citizens frightened by the traffic and fear of a possible fight. She said we should have an organized event. She said the concept was great but there should be no affiliation with a religious group on municipal property.

DR. WILLARD BAILEY – CENTRAL INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE, WAVERLY, VA

Dr. Bailey stated he was coming back to Lawrenceville after spending time here from 2004 to 2011, when he was hired by Dr. Waddell at Saint Paul's College. Dr. Bailey said the idea for a college in Waverly has been well received. He shared a brochure on Central International College. It is a private, church-related co-educational institution with a Christian heritage. He hopes to have a Lawrenceville division of the college. He stated there will be opportunities for onsite and online education. He said they are moving from a Chesterfield campus to a Waverly campus.

LAWRENCEVILLE EDA

Mr. Brockwell advised due to a conflict; tonight's regular LEDA meeting will be rescheduled to another date.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Tatum reported on the May 21st community giveaway. She said she has always been told there are two sides to every story and if you are looking for something you will find it whether it be negative or positive. She said on May 21st we had the opportunity to bless several of our citizens. She thanked all of those who came out to support the event. Our police department showed up and diligently worked that day. She said as far as she knows, the police worked zero events in the crowd. They were there to serve and protect and assist citizens. She saw the community working together; council members, special events coordinator, both town managers, and community members standing together and working together to bless citizens in an impoverished community. Everyone could not get what they wanted, but for those who came, they were blessed. She stands firm and proud to do whatever she can for this community. She said yes, we learned some lessons and if there is an opportunity, we will do things differently next time. Mayor Tatum thanked everyone for participating and is proud of those who worked for Lawrenceville on that day.

RECOGNITION OF KIMBERLY MARTIN

Mayor Tatum stated she had a special recognition tonight. She said we are looking for a way to honor our citizens and our town staff. People in this town work very hard. No one ever knows the work, commitment and dedication that our town staff put in to serving this community. Tonight Mayor Tatum honors a young lady on her volunteerism here, because before she became an employee, she volunteered here. She presented a gift to Mrs. Martin in appreciation for her service.

REPORT OF TOWN ATTORNEY

There was no report.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

CONSIDERATION OF ACCOUNTS

Mrs. Johnson reported the bills total \$112,582.60. On a motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Ms. Hardy and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to pay the bills in the amount of \$112,582.60 and post to the proper accounts.

ART BANK REQUEST FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT

Mrs. Johnson reported that Michele Bergsma, with The ArtBank of Southside Virginia, asked her to present a request to Town Council on behalf of The ArtBank to designate the local support of \$500.00 for the 2023-2024 Series. She understands the deadline for the VCA grant application has passed and won't be available until 2024-2025. COVID interrupted the normal ArtBank program schedule and FY2019-2020 was the most recent year of art grant activity. On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mrs. Talbert and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to support The ArtBank in the amount of \$500.00 for the 2023-2024 Series.

REPORT OF INTERIM TOWN MANAGER

WATER TANK PROPERTY CONVEYANCE UPDATE

Mr. Lynch reported that the original conveyance to the School Board uncovered a second parcel of land, .01 acres, owned by the Town, which will require an additional public hearing to convey that parcel to the School Board as well. On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mr. Brockwell and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to advertise for a public hearing to be held at the Town Council meeting on July 11, 2023, for the conveyance of an additional .01 acre parcel to the Brunswick County School Board.

FOOD LION WATER TANK EASEMENT UPDATE

Dominion has received the easement from the County and the project is on schedule with installation occurring today and tomorrow.

THT TRAIL HEAD RAMP PROJECT RESOLUTION

There is a resolution in the packet to authorize an application to the Southside Development Program of the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission for the amount of \$232,287.52 to assist with costs related to the THT Trail Head Ramp Project. The additional grant funding is to cover additional costs due to inflation since the project conception. On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mr. Brockwell and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to authorize the Mayor to sign the resolution applying for additional grant funds.

TOWN OF LAWRENCEVILLE MURAL ESTIMATE

The cost estimate for the mural is \$15,724.00. A copy is in the packet. It is too late to apply for a 50/50 grant this year. Town Council agreed to delay the mural project until next year and apply for a 50/50 grant at that time. Mr. Lynch will check for the availability of another grant.

BRODNAX SUPPORT LETTER FOR THE TRAIN DEPOT RENOVATIONS

A copy of a letter of support signed and submitted by Mr. Lynch for a Brodnax project is in the packet. The letter supports an application by Brodnax to fund renovations of the Brodnax Train Depot.

LOBBY WINDOW INSTALLATION

The installation of the lobby service window was recently completed. Yesterday during a VRSA meeting we learned that a safety grant of \$2,000 is available to apply to the cost of that project.

FOIA TRAINING

There will be a required virtual FOIA Training on Wednesday, June 21, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. in the meeting room. Training is required for all elected officials and staff. If you cannot attend this training session, please make arrangements to participate in an alternate training session.

A brief water/wastewater committee meeting is needed following the adjournment of the regular meeting tonight.

Ms. Williams addressed Mr. Lynch on several topics. Regarding the Peebles Building, Ms. Williams stated Mr. Staats should have closed on that purchase within thirty days. She said in the future we should include the requirement that the closing occur within thirty days.

Ms. Williams stated she had given Mr. Gibson several names to contact regarding the repair of the caboose. She would like for Mr. Lynch to follow up on that.

Ms. Williams stated she previously requested a policies and procedures manual, not just a handbook. She thinks the town needs this because most people don't understand the transition from one town manager to another. She gave procurement procedures and meeting requirements as examples. Ms. Williams stated she is willing to work with staff on the guidelines. Mr. Brockwell said we follow state codes that pertain to the examples she has given.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

ADOPTION OF THE FY2023-2024 BUDGET

The FY 2023-2024 Budget has been properly advertised and a public hearing was held. A line was added to include \$4,500 for repairs to the firehouse/generator. On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mr. Brockwell and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to approve and adopt the FY2023-2024 Budget as presented.

ADOPTION OF WATER/SEWER RATE ADJUSTMENTS

Mr. Pecht reviewed the proposed 20% rate increase as listed in the packet. The proposed minimum rate for in town would be \$14.40 per month for water and \$14.40 per month for sewer. The proposed minimum out of town rates would be \$25.20 per month for water and \$25.20 per month for sewer. If adopted, the increase would be effective on the August 1, 2023 utility bills. On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Ms. Williams and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to adopt the water and sewer rates as presented.

AUTHORIZATION FOR SIGNATURES ON BANK ACCOUNTS

On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mrs. Talbert and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to update all bank account signature cards at Benchmark Community Bank and First Citizens Bank as follows. Remove former Town Manager Everette Gibson and former Mayor Scott Martin from all accounts. Update the approved signers on all bank accounts to be Treasurer/Clerk Wanda E. Johnson, Interim Town Manager Randall W. Lynch, and Mayor LaWanda V. Tatum. The First Citizens Bank Visa Credit Card ending #2293, in the name of Everette Gibson, should be changed to Randall Lynch.

ACCEPT FY2021-2022 AUDIT REPORT

Mr. Pecht reported that the final FY2021-2022 audit was received. Mr. Pecht encouraged everyone to read the first three pages, the manager's discussion and analysis. It walks you through what is behind the numbers. We increased our net position by \$256,084. If you strip out the grants, we basically broke even. The last page, page 93, is a summary of results. It was an unmodified, clean opinion audit with no material weaknesses. He thanked Mrs. Johnson and staff for their outstanding work that often goes unappreciated. We have had these since Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Talbert before her. They are doing an excellent job. Mr. Pecht recommended the audit be accepted. On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mrs. Talbert and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to accept the FY2021-2022 audit as presented. Ms. Williams questioned that nothing is said about reserves and asked if the Town has a minimum reserve when setting a budget. Mr. Pecht said there is not in generally accepted accounting principles a set thing. Ms. Williams asked if we could establish that. Mr. Pecht referred to page 84 in the audit that shows the tax base has not changed for ten years. We are not growing a tax base. Our water and wastewater revenues are over 75% of our total revenues. He said it would be good but right now to get above where we are it would be difficult without a lot of increases. Unfortunately, our two top users are down in usage.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

The May fire report is in the packet. The fire department responded to 11 calls in May. Of the 11, 2 were in the town limits and 9 were outside the town limits. Also, 10 were in the LVFD First Due area, with 1 being mutual aid to other agencies. Approximately 65 man hours were expended. James Wesson reported the FD had its first golf tournament in May and a boot drive on Memorial Day. Boot drives are

planned for 4th of July and Labor Day. The LVFD will assist with the Red, White and Blue Parade, Fireworks and Jazz on the Square festival.

POLICE

The police report is in the packet. Chief Stith reported that on June 3rd, the LPD participated in the City of Emporia second annual law enforcement youth festival. There were nine agencies there. Chief Stith shared a flyer with information on the BCSO Public Safety Discovery Camp to be held at the Alberta Volunteer Fire Department on July 10 – 14, 2023, from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., for ages 9 -13. The Sheriff's Department and EMS agencies will provide a camp for kids. They have 40 applicants. He said he is community oriented. The department is finally at full staff. The LPD has been awarded an ARPA grant in the amount of \$261,000. It will bring the department into the 21st century. It will be used to purchase vehicles, apparatus, and firearm simulators. He thanked everyone for having confidence in him. Mr. Brockwell commented that the visible presence in town is being noticed.

PERSONNEL

Mr. Brockwell reported there is a report in the packet. The personnel situation is looking better; we have had some applicants come in. We need licensed water and wastewater operators.

PROPERTY & EQUIPMENT

Mr. Brockwell reported the cost of equipment is up. We are fortunate to have found the chief operators we have now that have made a difference in operations.

STREETS, LIGHTS & CEMETERY

There was no report.

TOWN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Brockwell reported this council is promoting and recognizing the community. The LEDA is looking to do some things as well. Some of this will also be through the modified Main Street Program. The project list is in the packet.

WATER/WASTEWATER

There will be a committee meeting following the council meeting tonight. Mr. Brockwell reported water and wastewater meetings are set up with the County. The County might set up a specific task force to look at this.

HOUSING CODE ENFORCEMENT

Grass notices have not been sent out yet. Mr. Lynch will check on the status of the carport collapse at the old Barkley house.

PARKS/RECREATION

Mr. Brockwell reported practice games are being held at the ballpark. Next year there will be coach pitch, minor league and ozone tournaments held here.

WELLNESS

There was no report.

FARMER'S MARKET

There was no report.

LAWRENCEVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION

There was no report.

CORRESPONDENCE/ANNOUNCEMENTS

FY 2023-2024 Meeting Dates List in Packet

FOIA Training Webinar, Meeting Room, Wednesday, June 21, 2023, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Red, White & Blue Storefront Decorating Contest, Judging, Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Art in the Park Paint Party Sessions Saturday, June 24, 2023, 12:30 p.m. & 2:30 p.m.

Red, White & Blue Parade, Saturday, June 24, 2023, 6:00 p.m.

Sparks in the Ballpark Spectacular, Saturday, June 24, 2023, 7:00 – 10:00 p.m.

National Night Out, Tuesday, August 1, 2023, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Mrs. Martin reviewed the schedule of event times for the Red, White & Blue events on Saturday, June 24, 2023.

APPOINTMENT OF TOWN ATTORNEY

On motion by Mr. Pecht, seconded by Mrs. Talbert and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to appoint W. Curtis Outten, Jr. as Town Attorney for the term July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024.

APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK/TREASURER

On motion by Mrs. Talbert, seconded by Mr. Pecht and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to appoint Wanda Johnson as Town Clerk/Treasurer for the term July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025.

APPOINTMENT OF TOWN SERGEANT

On motion by Mrs. Talbert, seconded by Ms. Hardy and carried by all ayes, Town Council voted to appoint Police Chief John Stith as Town Sergeant for the term July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2025.

Chief Stith commented on the lobby window installation. He said now our executives are in a contactless area and the public can no longer intrude into their workspace and violate their personal space. He said he is proud this has been accomplished and the office staff is safe.

Mrs. Johnson thanked Chief Stith for initiating the project and seeing it through. The office staff feels much more safe and secure now and we appreciate his efforts.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before Council, Mayor Tatum adjourned the meeting.

LaWanda Tatum, Mayor

Wanda Johnson, Clerk