

Mount Jackson
Town Council Regular Meeting
November 14, 2023

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Regular Meeting

Mayor Pifer called the regular meeting of the Mount Jackson Town Council to order at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers at 5901 Main Street. Roll call was taken with Councilmembers Evelyn Burner, Brandi Freed, Judy Fultz, Bonnie Good, Todd Holtzman, and Rod Shepherd in attendance. Also in attendance were Olivia Hilton, Assistant Town Manager; Keith Cowart, Police Chief; and Barbara Riggelman, Town Clerk. David Ferguson and Randy Doyle with CREW were guests. Visitors were Larry Rinard, Karen Costie, Judi Wakeman, Jim Hines, and Suzanne Ross.

Prayer: Pastor Larry Rinard, Brighter Days Bible Church, offered the invocation.

Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes: None

Hear from Visitors: Suzanne Ross stated that she had heard that years ago that Sonny Bowman had donated land to the Town for elderly housing and she was inquiring if this was true. Mayor Pifer stated that he was not sure about this. There was a time that Mr. Bowman wanted to donate land to the Town but this was where the Bowman Shannon Cultural Center was located. Councilmembers present also stated that they were not aware of any other land being donated. Ms. Ross stated that this is the only town that doesn't have something for the elderly and there was a need for this. Mayor Pifer stated that there is a housing development being planned on the south end of town, but he did not know if this would necessarily include the elderly, but could ask about this. Ms. Ross stated she also had other questions and stated she did not know where to access the Town's laws. Ms. Good and Mr. Shepherd stated that the Town Code is on the Town's website. Ms. Ross stated that she did not have access to the internet. Ms. Hilton introduced herself to Ms. Ross as the Assistant Town Manager and stated she and Chief Cowart would be happy to meet with Ms. Ross to go over the Town Code and help answer her questions. Ms. Hilton provided her business card to Ms. Ross and encouraged Ms. Ross to call her with any questions she may have.

Opening Remarks From Mayor: Mayor Pifer stated that he had no opening remarks.

Chief of Police Report: Chief Cowart reported for the month of October, there were 475 calls for service; year to date total being 7,825. Criminal offenses reported included 2 assaults, 1 closed by arrest with 6 charges, the other one the Commonwealth's Attorney declined to prosecute; 1 drunk in public; 6 larceny cases, 3 closed by arrest with 19 charges, 2 are waiting for information from other states, 1 is waiting on lab results; there was an arrest for inhaling (this is like inhaling a can of air for dusting keyboards, which is a chargeable offense), due to the inhalation of toxic fumes, officers had to sit with him in the hospital for 20 hours while he was under arrest, after which he was taken to jail; there was 1 alcohol/assault, closed by arrest (2) was on the alcohol violation for being underage, Commonwealth again declined to prosecute on the assault; 1 hit and run was closed, leads exhausted; 1 rape that is still active, suspect identified, waiting on lab results; 1 animal case/destruction of property, inactive but will be changed to resolved as animals have been relocated. The cold cases which had been worked on, there was no action on these in October due to new cases and incidents arising and taking priority. The DEA National Drug Takeback Initiative collected 61 lbs. between the police department and the pharmacy. Trick or Treating drew a large crowd and went well. New developments in the Flock safety cameras – VDOT and Flock Safety are arguing over boundary lines, so this is on hold. There are 3 cameras up, active, and have already given them alerts. Mr. Holtzman inquired why VDOT would not give permission for the cameras. Chief Cowart answered that VDOT will not allow anything on their property and they are adamant about that statewide.

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Presentations: Community Resources for Education and Wellness Inc. (CREW)

Randy Doyle introduced himself as the President of the CREW Board. Mr. Doyle stated that it was about this time last year that he and David Ferguson had approached Council about their plans for the old Triplett School. Since last year, they now have a board with 10 members and friends of CREW to put together a plan to build community support, convert the idle historic school into a productive community center, and so they were here tonight to give some details about this project.

Mr. Ferguson gave a brief presentation on CREW, including the reasons for needing this project in this area, how this project evolved from the initial YMCA proposal to now being CREW, the proposed plans for the facilities at the old school, and some of the groups that are already using the facilities, or have inquired into using the facilities. Mr. Ferguson stated that the Board had met earlier today and will be making an offer to an individual to be the Executive Director and run the operation; previously, board members have been doing the legwork but now they will have paid staff. Mr. Ferguson stated that they had received a \$100,000 contribution to pay for the staff. The Edinburg VFW has given them a \$50,000 donation. CREW has the building, which they are leasing for \$1/year for 10 years, which in itself is a huge contribution. They have partners committed on a long-term basis to continue to help them grow. They are also seeking a line of credit from a local bank for \$500,000, which Mr. Ferguson stated he had no reason to believe that they would not receive. CREW is in need of another partner and Mr. Ferguson stated that they see the Town of Mount Jackson as a partner. Mr. Ferguson shared the Town of Mount Jackson's Vision Statement and how CREW can help, as their Vision Statement is almost identical. Together, CREW and the Town of Mount Jackson can make this happen.

Mr. Ferguson stated that the CREW Board of Director's request was for \$50,000 per year for 5 years, starting in 2023 to assist with startup funding for operations and improvements. Ms. Freed inquired if CREW had reached out to working with Parks & Rec, as they had been looking for another facility in the southern campus to hold classes like in Woodstock. Mr. Ferguson answered that from day one, Parks & Rec had been on their task force and CREW still wants to partner with them, though there has been a side-track as Parks & Rec had bought a facility in Woodstock, but this is still being discussed and CREW would like them to use this facility as well for their programs on this end of the county. They would also like to partner with the school system and other nonprofit organizations to offer space for programs.

Mr. Shepherd stated that the Town of Mount Jackson's fiscal year begins on July 1 and runs thru June 30. The Town is about halfway thru the 2023 budget year, so if Council chooses to partner with CREW, next year's budget will become live on July 1, 2024. Mr. Shepherd inquired if Mr. Ferguson was looking for support this year. Mr. Ferguson answered that he would prefer assistance this year to help refurbish the facility to start offering space for programs. Mr. Holtzman stated that when the Fire Department moved, the Town had talks about a community center and this would really fill a need here and in the community. CREW is doing a lot of heavy lifting by providing the volunteers and facilitating this project moving forward; if the Town were to facilitate this type of project, the cost would be much higher. There are now some local organizations giving assistance and if the Town were to sign on, it would be meaningful in many ways as it is not just the money, but the credibility of having a Town-backed effort. Mr. Holtzman stated that this is a huge asset to the town and would make Mount Jackson a destination. Mr. Holtzman referred back to Mr. Shepherd's inquiry and stated that the need is for right now and he would be in favor of \$50,000 for this year, if the funds could be found, and direct Staff to make this a budget item for continuous support. Mr. Shepherd stated he would work with Mario Rosso to do a budget amendment. Mr. Shepherd informed Mr. Ferguson that he could have an answer for him at the December Council meeting. Mr. Holtzman inquired if action could be taken on this item at this meeting, to which Mayor Pifer stated that it was on the agenda under New Business. Mr. Shepherd stated that he believe

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indication from Council was to support this project, but cautioned sticking with protocol and looking at the budget. Ms. Freed inquired if this was something that could be voted on for 2024 and moving forward. Mr. Shepherd answered that there are two items – one is consideration for the upcoming budget, which will begin July 1, 2024 but CREW is also asking for money right now. If the indication is that Council wants to take action now and not wait until July 2024, then we will need to see where things are and there may need to be a budget amendment.

Mr. Ferguson stated that he would like to be able to say that CREW did have the support of the Town. Ms. Good stated that the sooner the better with providing support, but it would behoove Council to check with Finance to see where the money could come from, as most funds are budgeted and this will need to be looked at first. Council has shown interest in wanting to help, but it will need to come from somewhere. Mr. Holtzman inquired if Council could at least make a motion later in the agenda to include CREW in the 2024 budget and to direct Staff to review the possibility of extra support in this fiscal year if there is a way in the budget. Mr. Shepherd stated that this was his line of thinking as well.

Town Manager Report: Ms. Hilton reported that the first quarter financials were given to Council. This includes revenues and expenditures for the General Fund and Enterprise Fund. Revenues look the way they do due to property tax and real estate tax having just gone out, so the reds will turn to blacks soon. Ms. Hilton thanked Staff for Halloween efforts and the Veterans banners being up. The Merry on Main event is around the corner and thanked the Hometown Partnership for this as well as the veterans program. Eddie Edwards is working on a design for the civic organization signs on both ends of town and the one at the Industrial Park. CREW will have a nonprofit sign on the civic board. Ms. Hilton stated she would be checking with Council to make sure no civic organizations have been left out. Staff has met with the designer and project manager for the website redo and that should be good to go for the spring. This will be a slow moving process with new content added. Staff has been pretty successful in collecting some delinquent taxes, both on lodging/water and meals tax. Staff is redesigning the River Access to the proposed site at the water treatment plant space; this should be available by the December Council meeting. There is a Women's Leadership Symposium hosted by Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce on Friday, November 17 at Bryce Resort; 4 staff members and 1 councilwoman will be attending. This program is sold out, so it is exciting that Mount Jackson has a good showing of Staff and Council. Ms. Hilton announced Thanksgiving holiday closures for the Town Office will be a half day on Wednesday, November 22 and closed all day on Thursday and Friday, November 23-24. Ms. Hilton showed a slide with September & October zoning approvals.

Committee Reports:

1. Finance Committee - Chairperson Rod Shepherd stated that Sadiee Begoon will be giving a zoom presentation at the December Council meeting regarding the audit; a hardcopy of the audit will be done very soon and will be given to Council. All reports are good from the audit; auditors were only here for 2 days vs 3-5 days as in previous years. Staff put together the year to date expenditures budget. Mr. Shepherd drew attention to the Enterprise Fund – for the first 3 months of the year, 25% of the budget has come in on collections fees, which is really good work and foresight on Staff.
2. Ordinance Committee - Chairperson Evelyn Burner had no report.
3. Personnel Committee - Chairperson Todd Holtzman had no report.
4. Public Safety Committee - Chairperson Judy Fultz had no report.

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5. Public Services Committee - Chairperson Bonnie Good had no report.

6. Public Properties Committee - Chairperson Brandi Freed had no report.

Consent Agenda: Approval – Minutes of October 10, 2023 Regular Meeting & October 24, 2023 Work Session

Councilmember Good MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Burner to APPROVE the Consent Agenda items above.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Burner			
Councilmember Freed			
Councilmember Fultz			
Councilmember Good			
Councilmember Holtzman			
Councilmember Shepherd			
6 AYES, motion carried			

OLD BUSINESS:

Avondale Tree Planting

Rod Shepherd stated that some people from Avondale have called him and they are very pleased with the tree planting. Citizens expressed the desire to be at tonight's meeting but they are under the weather; they wanted to make sure that the work was noticed and are very thankful.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. CREW – Triplett School Community Center

Mr. Shepherd stated that he felt that Council wanted to support this project and he would like to have the Finance Director take a look at the numbers and see what amount of support can be found for this current fiscal year. He would like to instruct Mr. Rosso to have a report and motion for Council for the December council meeting. Then when we start doing the budgeting process, Council can look forward to the next few years. Mayor Pifer stated that CREW would like an official motion to demonstrate Council's support for the project.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Good to INSTRUCT the Finance Committee to find a \$50,000 donation, to be confirmed at the December council meeting.

Mr. Shepherd inquired if this would help Mr. Ferguson, to which Mr. Ferguson stated that it would. Mr. Holtzman inquired if there needed to be an additional motion made to direct Staff to include this project in the future budgets. Mr. Shepherd stated this will be part of the budget process, which is to introduce the budget in April, have the official public hearing in May, and then vote to adopt the budget in June. This will be for Fiscal Year '25; we are looking at making this an extra grant during Fiscal Year '24, so they will need to look at the numbers and pass a resolution at the next council meeting. Mayor Pifer stated that he believed the support was obviously there from the Town and all the partners that CREW has as groups and individuals, there will be a lot of support in this area for this exciting project and he appreciates the work they are doing.

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ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Burner			
Councilmember Freed			
Councilmember Fultz			
Councilmember Good			
Councilmember Holtzman			
Councilmember Shepherd			
6 AYES, motion carried			

2. LPDA Update

Ms. Hilton stated that this was discussed during the Work Session. Mr. Holtzman inquired if Ms. Hilton had received a revised proposal with the reduction, to which Ms. Hilton replied that she had. Ms. Hilton reported that LPDA has been approved to design the Master Park Plan. Staff had discussed a park and pedestrian connectivity plan which would connect the green spaces in town; it had been discussed in the Work Session to put this plan on hold. The quote for this plan was about \$15,300. Staff went back to LPDA to get a supplemental proposal for designing the 4.2 acres behind the CREW Community Center, to which LPDA has submitted another proposal of \$17,000, which would be \$32,000 for both projects. Because landscape designers and architects had already come out, this would need to be done over again instead of swapping acreage like Council and Staff had thought was possible, it is more of a second project piece. After speaking with them, Staff inquired that if this were all be done at one time, would there be some cost savings, to which LPDA agreed there would be. Ms. Hilton stated that instead of putting the connectivity plan potentially on hold, if it were combined throughout town, which would connect the river access point, the Mayors Park, the main park, and the community center, as well as designing the 4 acres behind the community center, it would knock off \$5,000 to \$6,500 which would bring the total down to around \$27,000. Mr. Holtzman asked for clarification. Ms. Hilton stated that the original quote of \$32,000 would drop to about \$25-27,000 if it were done at the same time. Ms. Hilton stated that there was a feeling from Council about looking down the road to do the connectivity plan, but it would be more fiscally responsible to do all of the planning at one time, especially if the feeling was to do it within the next few years. Ms. Hilton stated that she wanted to give this data to Council for their consideration. Ideally, Staff would like to have a contract in place with LPDA by the beginning of December to ensure there are no price changes in 2024. The Master Park Plan is safe and LPDA is already forging ahead on that and creating a conceptual plan for the aquatic facility; including the community center in plans does open up the potential for placement.

Mr. Holtzman reported that LPDA is merging with another large firm. Mr. Mechnick, the principal, and the staff will be staying on; they will be expanding their services, which could potentially be a good thing. Their work is all up and down the Valley, of which Marshall and Woodstock are great examples. The ability to look at the whole town park plan and the connectivity, Mr. Holtzman stated that he could certainly get behind. The 4 acres behind the Triplett School, while he was initially hoping would be traded, still requires the same steps as the park with surveying and all of those things, so less acreage doesn't mean less cost. The Triplett School facility was owned by the Town for many years, was sold, and now it's making its way to being a community center. Mr. Holtzman stated that he believed that the CREW Board, if the Town would provide the study and the Town decides to move forward and include the property behind the school as part of the park system, then it would make sense for the Town to buy that property back. \$50,000 was what was earmarked for the back park; the whole parcel was \$250,000. Mr. Holtzman stated that it would not be a big investment to buy it back, but with LPDA's expertise, they could look at all the acreage and say what would be the best options. Mr. Holtzman

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stated that he is very much in favor of doing the entire study at one time. There is some urgency due to LPDA's change in ownership and it would be great to tie this project together and get it on the board.

Councilmember Holtzman MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Burner to MOVE FORWARD with Part B and Part C to take advantage of the cost savings for doing all in one shot and allowing LPDA to do a Master Park Plan Survey that would cover both properties and the Connectivity Plan.

Mr. Shepherd asked for clarification on the dollar amounts and if some of this has already been spent. Ms. Hilton stated that this is new and would be between \$25-27,000 to include the acreage behind Triplett and the Connectivity Plan, aside from the funding for the Master Park Plan. Mr. Shepherd inquired again what the total price tag would be. Mr. Holtzman stated that it was \$26,000, which had previously been voted on. Mr. Holtzman asked Ms. Hilton for the new totals. Ms. Hilton answered that one piece was \$15,323 and the other was \$17,313. Mr. Holtzman stated that was a total of \$32,636, and if they've committed to a discount of \$5,000 to 6,500, say \$5,000 for safety, the total would be \$27,636, which would be the motion. Mr. Shepherd stated that this was close to where they are at anyway. Mr. Holtzman stated that this new total would be doubling the previous amount. Ms. Hilton stated that the Master Park Plan is \$26,000; Mr. Holtzman stated that this is for the existing 12 acres on the hill and the aquatics facility. This plan would add \$17,000 for the master plan at Triplett School and the property in the back and \$15,300 for the park's connectivity plan, so it would be adding an additional \$27,000 to the study. Ms. Good inquired if this was needed right now. Mr. Holtzman answered that it is not needed right now, but if it can be done under current administration, that is where the \$5,000 discount comes in and allows the best overall comprehensive plan instead of going back after the fact. Mr. Holtzman stated that he had made the motion, and the dollar figure for Mr. Shepherd was \$27,636.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Burner			
Councilmember Freed			
Councilmember Fultz			
Councilmember Good			
Councilmember Holtzman			
Councilmember Shepherd			
6 AYES, motion carried			

Mr. Holtzman expressed his appreciation for seeing this project coming to fruition.

Closing Remarks by Council Members, Mayor: Mayor Pifer stated that the Veterans Day celebration that the Hometown Partnership sponsored was very nice. Judi Wakeman spoke regarding the celebration and appreciated those who came out. The Market on November 4 was held at CREW's Social Hall (cafeteria) and had a total of 15 vendors. It was a packed house and everyone enjoyed it. A lot of the vendors are coming back on December 2, though some have already committed to Mountain View's craft show on the same day. CREW will once again be allowing the Hometown Partnership to utilize the Social Hall, which worked out perfectly. Ms. Wakeman thanked CREW and the Town for allowing them to do that and are looking forward to another big year next year. Mayor Pifer stated that the Partnership is doing a great job.

Motion made by Councilmember Good, seconded by Councilmember Fultz, to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 PM.