

Mount Jackson
Town Council Regular Meeting

April 9, 2024

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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 Al Asbury, Evelyn Burner, Judy Fultz, Todd Holtzman, and Rod Shepherd in attendance. Councilmember Bonnie Good was absent. Also in attendance were Olivia Hilton, Town Manager; Greg A. Beam, Assistant Town Manager; Mario Rosso, Finance Director; Barbara Riggleman, Town Clerk; Keith Cowart, Police Chief; Sergeant Mark Johnson; and Investigator Christina Whorton. Judi Wakeman, Larry Rinard, Seth Jones, and Jim Hines were visitors.

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

Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes: None.

Hear from Visitors: Seth Jones stated that there has been a record of council minutes posted on the website previously but that has not been the case in the last month. Mr. Jones stated that there was no agenda available for the public to review prior to the council meeting tonight, nor any record of last month's proceedings made available, and inquired if this was an oversight or if something has changed. Mayor Pifer asked Ms. Hilton where the public could find agendas and minutes. Ms. Hilton answered that once Council receives the agenda, it is also posted on the website, typically 5 days prior to the meeting. It is very open and transparent on the website for public access. Mayor Pifer inquired when the minutes of the previous meeting would be posted. Ms. Hilton answered that they are posted within 24 hours. Mr. Jones stated that this is true as he has kept track of that, but he was curious as to why that changed this past month. Mayor Pifer stated that he didn't believe there have been any changes in reporting. Mr. Jones stated that there was no agenda posted for tonight's meeting, nor last month's council meeting. Ms. Riggleman answered that the previous month's minutes are not posted until Council approves them, so the minutes from last month will be posted on the website after Council approves them tonight. The agenda for tonight's meeting should have been posted but there are some issues with the current website, so it was just an oversight that they weren't available. This issue should be corrected with the new website that should be up and running later this year.

Opening Remarks from Mayor: Mayor Pifer had no opening remarks.

Presentations: None.

Chief of Police Report: Chief Cowart reported for the month of March 2024, there were 768 calls for service; 2,071 year to date. There were 5 motor vehicle crashes and 23 mutual aid/warrant services with 6 warrants served for other agencies. Cold cases are still on hold with 20 cases remaining; conversations are being continued with the Commonwealth Attorney. There were 3 reports of larceny, active pending identification of suspect on video footage; 1 auto larceny, still trying to identify the suspect that drove the vehicle; 2 domestic assaults closed by arrest; 2 frauds, 1 active and 1 has been turned over to federal agencies due to crossing state lines; 1 sex offense that is active, warrants being obtained; 1 shoplifting closed by arrest; 1 drunk in public closed by arrest; and 1 hit and run that is active, pending further investigation. The Neighborhood Watch Meeting was held on March 21 with 14 attendees. The topic was frauds and scams. There is a possible future date in May. The Basic Handgun Safety Class was on April 6 with 41 attendees. By their recollection, that was the largest class that has been held in the county in quite a few years. DEA Drug Take Back Initiative will be on April 27 at two locations - the Police Department and the Mount Jackson Drug Store. There was a LinX audit (Law Enforcement Information Exchange); results came back that the MJPD achieved 100%.

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Town Manager Report: Ms. Hilton stated that RevUp ShenCo, a small business boot camp that Staff has been working on with other towns and the County for several months, will be happening on Monday, April 15. This will be an all-day workshop with four \$5,000 grants eligible for businesses who attend. Over 60 businesses in the county have signed up, with over 17 from Mount Jackson. Last year there were none. Mr. Beam partnered with John Fogle from Shenandoah County Economic Development to canvas and inform the small businesses in town about the RevUp event.

Committee Reports:

1. Finance Committee - Chairperson Rod Shepherd stated he would speak under New Business. Mr. Shepherd complimented Staff on preparing what has been a more challenging budget.
2. Ordinance Committee - Chairperson Evelyn Burner had no report.
3. Personnel Committee - Chairperson Todd Holtzman had no report.
4. Public Safety Committee - Chairperson Al Asbury gave the March 2024 Mount Jackson EMS Report. There were 74 total calls in March; 27 calls in town, 47 in the county. 3 cardiac emergencies, 7 difficult breathing, 1 seizure, 2 cardiac arrests, 5 falls, 2 unresponsive, 1 overdose, 6 lift assists, 4 diabetic emergencies, 2 strokes, 1 structure fire, 3 outside fires, 15 general illnesses, 9 motor vehicle crashes, 4 altered mental, 4 traumatic injuries, 2 public service, and 3 ALS requests. Of the calls that were run, 36 calls were staffed with Advanced Life Support personnel and 38 calls were staffed with Basic Life Support personnel. March 2024 Fire Report: There were 32 total calls in March; 14 calls in town, 18 in the county. 6 fire alarms, 1 structure fire, 4 motor vehicle crashes, 1 vehicle fire, 13 outside fires, 1 outside hazmat, 1 wires down, 3 EMS assists, 1 smoke/odor investigation, and 1 other.
5. Public Services Committee - Chairperson Bonnie Good was absent.
6. Public Properties Committee - Chairperson Judy Fultz had no report.

Consent Agenda: **Approval** – Minutes of March 12, 2024 Regular Meeting

Councilmember Holtzman MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Fultz, to APPROVE the Consent Agenda item above.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Asbury			
Councilmember Burner			
Councilmember Fultz			
			Councilmember Good
Councilmember Holtzman			
Councilmember Shepherd			

5 AYES, 1 ABSENT, motion carried

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **Ordinance O-07-24** – Adopting Budgets for the General Fund, Utilities Funds, Capital Projects, and Equipment Replacement Funds; Establishing Real and Personal Tax Rates, Establishing Compensation

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Amounts/Rates, Setting Fees for Water, Sewer, Refuse Services, Auto License Tax, and Other Fees, Charges, Penalties, and Taxes, and Establishing Annual and Specific Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2025 – Introduction and Set for Public Hearing

Mr. Shepherd stated that this was an introduction of the budget for the coming fiscal year. Staff has put a lot of work into preparation for establishing the budget. As state law requires, the budget is introduced in April and then a public hearing is held in May. Council is not allowed to vote on the budget on the same night as the public hearing, so Council will vote on the budget at the June council meeting, to take affect on July 1, 2024. The budget will be discussed in more detail at the upcoming work sessions.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Holtzman, to SET a Public Hearing for Ordinance O-07-24 on May 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM and Schedule a Special Council Meeting Budget Work Session on May 14, 2024 at 6:00 PM.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Asbury			
Councilmember Burner			
Councilmember Fultz			
			Councilmember Good
Councilmember Holtzman			
Councilmember Shepherd			
5 AYES, 1 ABSENT, motion carried			

2. Resolution R-02-2024 – Resolution of the Mayor and Council for the Town of Mount Jackson Amending FY24 Annual Budget – Introduction and Set for Public Hearing

Mr. Shepherd stated that making an adjustment in the budget is rarely done, but it is necessary with some new changes taking place this year. This will be for some minor tweaks to the current budget, which Mr. Shepherd stated Staff will go over at the Budget Work Session on May 14.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Holtzman, to SET a Public Hearing for Resolution R-02-24 on May 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Asbury			
Councilmember Burner			
Councilmember Fultz			
			Councilmember Good
Councilmember Holtzman			
Councilmember Shepherd			
5 AYES, 1 ABSENT, motion carried			

3. Mount Jackson Police Department Staffing Proposal

Chief Cowart stated that he had sent a proposal to Council in their informational packets. Calls for service and visitors have been increasing, which is increasing response time. Another officer would be of great benefit and increase proper training as well as cutting down the overtime budget as well.

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Councilmember Holtzman MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Fultz, to ACCEPT the Staffing Proposal from the Mount Jackson Police Department.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Asbury Councilmember Burner Councilmember Fultz			Councilmember Good
Councilmember Holtzman Councilmember Shepherd			

5 AYES, 1 ABSENT, motion carried

4. Zoning Text Amendment – Proposal to Change Section 66-32. – Dimensional Standards. Dimensional standards for base zoning districts. Dimensional standards within each zoning district shall apply as provided in Table 1, except as otherwise provided in this section. Table 1: Dimensional Standards for Base Zoning Districts – Introduction and Set for Public Hearing

Ms. Hilton stated that this proposal is to remove the minimum business standard for lot size. The surrounding towns have removed this standard and the County recommends removal as well. The current standard limits some downtown growth and removing it would increase flexibility.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Burner, to SET a public hearing for May 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM for the proposed Zoning Text Amendment.

Mr. Holtzman asked Ms. Hilton how a change like this comes about, specifically this particular one. Ms. Hilton answered that this came about with the historic Nelson Theater and dividing the space into multi-uses and potentially multi-ownership of the space. The site is 10,000 sq ft total, so dividing it in half would equal 5,000 sq ft per piece and the current minimum is 6,000 sq ft. This would limit the ability of dividing the building. Mr. Holtzman clarified that this is just a housekeeping item where Town Staff needs the ability to adapt to the current needs of the community. Ms. Hilton answered affirmatively.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Asbury Councilmember Burner Councilmember Fultz			Councilmember Good
Councilmember Holtzman Councilmember Shepherd			

5 AYES, 1 ABSENT, motion carried

Closing Remarks by Council Members. Mayor: Mayor Pifer asked Ms. Wakeman if she had a Hometown Partnership update. Ms. Wakeman discussed the Big Band Bash 2024 on May 11. Bands have been lined up and they are working on vendors. The event will be from 12:00 to 6:00 PM. Ms. Wakeman expressed appreciation to the Town Staff and the community for their support. The next Partnership meeting will be on Tuesday, April 11 at Coffee to Grow at 10:00 AM. They are always looking for volunteers. There will be a Market on the first Saturday of the month from June thru December. The last Saturday of the month from June thru August will be Gazebo Gatherings, which used to be the downtown music. This will feature bands and food trucks. Ms. Hilton mentioned the non-profit council. Ms. Wakeman answered that the Chamber of

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Commerce is doing their 2nd Annual Community Connect and Serve at the fairgrounds on April 11 from 5:00-7:00 pm; the public is invited to attend. The exhibit building will feature non-profits throughout the county who are Chamber members. This is an interesting and educational event. Discussion ensued on this event.

Mr. Holtzman stated his appreciation for the Town of Mount Jackson and the Hometown Partnership working together so closely to do some good things. Ms. Wakeman also expressed her appreciation for the support. Mr. Holtzman thanked Town Staff for their support as there has not always been convergence between the two groups. This is something to be very proud of.

Ms. Wakeman stated that the Hometown Partnership will be doing a Memorial Day service on Sunday, May 26 at 3:00 PM at the Union Church, honoring two veterans. At the conclusion of this event, they will take the two veterans up to the town park for the Police Department's social gathering and picnic, which will be from 4:00-8:00 PM. Chief Cowart stated that they will be working in conjunction to make sure all the veterans and attendees get up to the park.

Mayor Pifer addressed Mr. Jones, thanking him for coming, and encouraged him to contact the Town Staff with any additional questions he may have.

Ms. Hilton thanked Mr. Beam for his social media efforts, both with Facebook and the Town's previously inactive Instagram. Instagram has 542 followers, up 6% and Facebook is just shy of 4,000 followers, which is up 72%. The highest communities that have been engaged are of course Mount Jackson, then Woodstock as well as Edinburg. Engagements alone, which is reactions, comments, and shares, in the month of March was 14,500, which is huge and exciting. The post reach, which is how many people saw the page, based on how many shares we had, was 62,000 people for the month of March. The most popular was obviously the Women of Mount Jackson social media campaign; the hiring of Mr. Beam and Ms. Frye had a 20,000 reach, and then the RFQ for Cleaning. Ms. Hilton stated that each month she would give a social media update. Tomorrow will be the roll out of the Spud Squad campaign, a volunteer group for the Tater Fest. The first interest meeting will be April 24 in the evening and will judge the interest in morning vs. evening meetings. Ms. Hilton discussed the Spud Squad initiative and sponsors. Mayor Pifer expressed his appreciation for the Women's History campaign and that he had gotten lots of positive comments. Mr. Beam discussed some plans for next year's campaign.

Ms. Burner thanked Council and the Town for making April Autism Awareness Month.

Motion made by Councilmember Shepherd, seconded by Councilmember Burner, to adjourn the meeting at 7:31 PM.

Barbara Riggelman, Clerk

Donald "Donnie" I. Pifer, Mayor