

Mount Jackson
Public Hearing and Special Town Council Meeting

January 13, 2020

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Public Hearing

Public comment regarding the adoption of:

Resolution R-01-2020 – Resolution of the Mayor and Council of the Town of Mount Jackson, Virginia declaring the Town of Mount Jackson as a “Second Amendment (U.S. Constitution) and Article I, Section 13 (Constitution of Virginia) Sanctuary”.

Approximately 15 persons spoke in favor of the Resolution. The speakers included Jeremy Hilliard, Gary Morris, Wayne Dinges, Barbara Salisbury, John Massoud, Don Shirley, David Cave, Jim Arnold, Lewis Clements, Paul Delaughter, Narveen Aryaputri, Timothy King, Dale Stewart, Patrick Henry, and one un-named gentleman. There were no speakers against the Resolution.

Mayor Pifer closed the public hearing.

Special Meeting

A special meeting of the Mount Jackson Town Council was held January 13, 2020, following the public hearing, at 7:00 PM in the council chambers at 5901 Main Street. Roll call was taken with the following in attendance; Mayor Donnie Pifer; Councilmembers Judy Fultz, Whitney Miller, Rod Shepherd, Roger Rudy, and Bonnie Good. Councilmember Dennis Andrick was absent. Also, in attendance Neil Showalter, Town Manager; Matt Akers, Town Attorney; Debbie Stover, Town Clerk; and approximately 120 visitors.

Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes:

Police Chief Jeff Sterner read a prepared statement from Councilmember Andrick, who could not attend the special meeting.

“To the Mount Jackson Town Council and the people who reside in the Town of Mount Jackson, I am sorry I’m not able to attend this meeting especially since I brought the subject up that the town become a gun sanctuary. I unfortunately had a family issue come up and had to go out of town. As the Town Council knows, I am for our Town becoming a sanctuary. I’ve talked to quite a few of the people that reside in our Town and we are all very favorable of our Town becoming a sanctuary. I feel our Town Council does an excellent job of listening to the voice of our residents and there’s no doubt in my mind that we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

Councilmember Dennis Andrick.”

New Business:

Resolution R-01-2020 – Resolution of the Mayor and Council of the Town of Mount Jackson, Virginia declaring the Town of Mount Jackson as a “Second Amendment (U.S. Constitution) and Article I, Section 13 (Constitution of Virginia) Sanctuary”.

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Councilmember Good MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Miller to CONSIDER Resolution R-01-2020, with further discussion.

Councilmember Miller stated she had a correction to the Resolution, on the back page, the third paragraph refers to a sanctuary "county", and needs correcting to refer to a sanctuary "town".

Councilmember Rudy stated he is in the minority on this issue, but wonders if people are aware that Article 16, has since been withdrawn and replaced by another Article, and the summary, which has been provided to the Council by Chief Sterner, indicates that the new Article specifically targets and addresses possession of assault weapons. He stated he has heard many speakers this evening talk about some very dramatic issues, but his understanding is this Article does not state people cannot own and carry a handgun. He feels that the new Article is restricting the use, sale, rental, and transfer of assault weapons only. Councilmember Rudy stated he has talked to several people regarding this, and is not convinced that an assault weapon is necessary to be in the public domain. He understands the importance of assault weapons in the military and law enforcement, but believes everyone needs to recognize, that what needs to be addressed is the mental issues of people instead. When asked by a visitor to define assault weapons, he replied he would welcome guidance as to what assault weapons are, but doesn't feel a gun capable of firing multiple rounds in several seconds is necessary for the general public to have. He stated the other problem he has with this Resolution is the fact that it takes away from the Council any ability or responsibility to evaluate any potential new laws that address gun safety. Councilmember Rudy stated he doesn't consider it a violation of his oath to be able to speak his mind and think for himself.

Councilmember Good stated a part of this Resolution says the Town of Mount Jackson Town Council acknowledges that the judicial system will ultimately resolve the matters of law. She stated she lost a 15 year old brother as a result of gun violence, and has her own weapons, and in support of this Resolution. She stated it should also be recognized there may be new laws regarding safety coming, and she hopes everyone will respect those laws.

Councilmember Rudy added he wanted to clarify that his particular issue is with assault weapons only. He stated he doesn't own a gun currently, but glad he could obtain one legally if needed. A visitor responded these proposed bills will not just ban magazines that exceed 10 rounds, but ban guns that can access a magazine that exceeds 10 rounds, which means the very basic pistol will be illegal. The visitor stated in regards to assault weapons he would encourage everyone to read and research the background of the Second Amendment very closely. He stated the townspeople are not asking the Town Council to override laws, only to protect them for now.

Mayor Pifer stated personally he feels it is not about assault weapons, but about us upholding the Constitution, and also not to spend Town funds to enforce something the council feels is unconstitutional.

Councilmember Fultz added this bill does not state weapons will be taken away, that you can still obtain them with a permit.

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ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYE

NAY

ABSTAIN

ABSENT

Councilmember Miller

Councilmember Fultz

Councilmember Andrick

Councilmember Shepherd

Councilmember Rudy

Councilmember Good

3 AYES, 2 NAYS, 1 ABSENT; motion carried

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Debbie A. Stover, Clerk

Donald I. "Donnie" Pifer, Mayor