

Mount Jackson
Town Council Regular Meeting
March 9, 2021
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Mayor Pifer opened the public hearing at 7:00 PM in the council chambers at 5901 Main Street.

Public Hearing

Public comment regarding the adoption of:

1. Ordinance O-01-2021 – An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 54, Article VI – Motel Tax for Transients – of the Code of the Town of Mount Jackson.

There were no public comments and Mayor Pifer closed the public hearing.

Regular Meeting

The regular meeting of the Mount Jackson Town Council was called to order following the public hearing. Roll call was taken with Mayor Pifer, and Councilmembers Rod Shepherd and Roger Rudy in attendance. Councilmembers Judy Fultz, Dennis Andrick, Bonnie Good, and Whitney Miller attended electronically through Zoom.

Also, in attendance, Neil Showalter, Town Manager; Jeff Sterner, Police Chief; and Debbie Stover, Town Clerk. Mario Rosso, Finance Director and Dr. Don Hindman, representative for Rails to Trails, attended electronically through Zoom. Jim Hines and one other visitor were present. Kevin Estep from Cornerstone Technology was present to video record the meeting.

Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes: Mr. Showalter stated under New Business #1, Megan Capps will not be attending the meeting or making a presentation, but asks Council to consider Resolution R-02-2021 for Autism Awareness.

Hear from Visitors: None

Remarks & Recommendations from the Mayor: None

Remarks from Councilmembers: None

Presentations: None

Chief of Police Report: None

Town Manager Report: Mr. Showalter referred to the Town Manager report in the Council packets and stated he would like to follow up on a few items. Following Council approval of the appointment of Pennoni last month to aid in applying for transportation alternative set-aside funds, Town staff met with VDOT representatives Ed Carter and Matt Smith and reached an agreement. VDOT will approve a replacement bridge deck that would allow for sidewalks on the bridge. The Town in conjunction would apply for funds in its application that would include monies to extend the sidewalk from where it terminates now at Triplett Tech, to and on the bridge. Mr. Showalter stated for the safety of pedestrians the Town would also seek to lower the speed limit from 55 to 45 in that area. Mr. Showalter stated David Uhl has agreed to serve if appointed by the Council on the spot blight advisory committee. Mr. Uhl is an area real estate professional and also owns property in Town, and his nomination is under New Business tonight. Mr. Showalter stated after exhausting all possibilities in getting the shopping center property owners to grant an easement, a member of management has stepped forward and is aiding the Town. She sent language yesterday that was forwarded to the Town Attorney, who is redrafting the easement agreement to include that language. In addition the Town Attorney redrafted the easement that involves the landowner who currently resides in California, and that updated agreement and plat will be sent to California overnight tomorrow.

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Committee Reports:

1. Finance Committee Chairperson, Rod Shepherd stated the budget season is here, and the template the Town has used in prior years has worked well and he would like to continue it. The Council would introduce the budget at the April council meeting and set the public hearing for the May council meeting. Prior to the May council meeting the Finance Committee will meet to ask questions of staff. The public hearing will be held as part of the May regular council meeting and voted on at the June council meeting to be effective July 1. Mr. Shephard stated there have been a number of reports in the news recently regarding government officials misusing credit cards. Credit card purchases are a great convenience and the Town's procedure is to obtain a purchase order to use with the credit card purchase. The Finance Director assembles the purchase orders and credit card statements which Mr. Shepherd reviews prior to every council meeting. Mr. Shepherd stated this process works well for the Town and good staff work allows that to happen.

2. Ordinance Committee Chairperson, Dennis Andrick had no report.

3. Personnel Committee Chairperson, Roger Rudy had no report.

4. Public Safety Committee Chairperson, Judy Fultz reported February Police Department calls were 747, down 179 from January. There were 12 criminal offenses, 5 closed leads exhausted, 4 closed cleared by arrest, and 3 under investigation. They conducted 589 extra patrols/property checks, and located 5 open doors/windows at 3 different locations. The February Fire and Rescue Department reported 57 total responses, 43 EMS/14 Fire, the total number of Mount Jackson calls were 19, and 14 volunteers took calls. Beginning March 6, 2021, Mount Jackson Fire and Rescue Department will be staffed 24/7 by two Shenandoah County fire and rescue career staff. The volunteers will continue to run calls and actively participate.

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

6. Public Properties & Facilities Committee Chairperson, Whitney Miller stated she will speak under New Business.

Consent Agenda: Approval – Minutes of February 9, 2021 Regular Meeting

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

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Fultz			
Councilmember Miller			
Councilmember Andrick			
Councilmember Shepherd			
Councilmember Rudy			
Councilmember Good			
6 AYES, motion carried			

Old Business:

1. Ordinance O-01-2021 – An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 54, Article VI – Motel Tax for Transients – of the Code of the Town of Mount Jackson. Eligible for Action.

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Mr. Showalter stated short-term rentals are becoming a larger part of travel, and currently the Town is not including those in lodging taxes. The ordinance amendment would permit the Town to assess lodging tax on short-term rental units. Mr. Showalter stated there were no comments from the public therefore staff recommends Council approve this ordinance.

Councilmember Andrick MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Good to APPROVE Ordinance O-01-2021.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Fultz			
Councilmember Miller			
Councilmember Andrick			
Councilmember Shepherd			
Councilmember Rudy			
Councilmember Good			
6 AYES, motion carried			

New Business:

1. Resolution R-02-2021 Establishing April 2021 as National Autism Awareness Month.

Mr. Showalter stated Ms. Capps has asked the Council to please endorse this resolution, as they have done in prior years, for the Town to recognize and make its citizens aware April 2021 is National Autism Awareness Month.

Councilmember Fultz MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Rudy to APPROVE Resolution R-02-2021.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Fultz			
Councilmember Miller			
Councilmember Andrick			
Councilmember Shepherd			
Councilmember Rudy			
Councilmember Good			
6 AYES, motion carried			

2. Resolution R-01-2021 A Resolution to Support the Acquisition and Conversion of Out-of-Service Railroad Right-of-Way to a Trail for Alternative Transportation and Recreation.

Dr. Don Hindman stated this trail began in Shenandoah County, but in 2018 Rockingham County joined, and this past summer Warren County joined as well. This is a 50-mile trail that starts at Heritage Park in downtown Broadway, and ends at VFW Park in Front Royal on the east side of the south fork of the Shenandoah River. It crosses the north fork of the Shenandoah River three times and the south fork once in Front Royal, and is an amazingly beautiful corridor. For the last 5 years a committee has worked on this project, meeting every month. Dr. Hindman stated there has been amazing progress this past year, in that Norfolk Southern, who originally was not interested, now is interested in selling a corridor. The Rails to Trails committee has consulted with Trust for Public Land, who will negotiate with Norfolk Southern for a price. The tourism and economic impact on every town will help pay for this project, and this trail should attract many

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people from the beltway, especially on weekends. In Farmville, they had an economic impact of 6-8 million dollars for their 31-mile trail that opened in 2012. Dr. Hindman stated an economic impact study estimates 15 million dollars increased annually in Shenandoah and Rockingham counties (Warren was not included in this study). There is a feasibility study due November 1 that was passed by the general assembly this past fall and signed by the governor. Dr. Hindman stated this study is being done by the state parks, which is the end goal, to form a new state park. The next step is to get VDOT more technically involved because they have the expertise in evaluating bridges which are the most expensive part of this project. Dr. Hindman stated this is a three part project, 1) a public health project in regards to health care, 2) a traffic litigation project working with VDOT to help reduce traffic on major roads such as Interstates 81 and 66, and Routes 11 and 55, allowing people to commute to work/school and enjoy the trail, and 3) an economic development project, which will revolutionize Shenandoah Valley. Dr. Hindman stated this will be a multi-use trail, for walking, biking, roller blading, horseback riding, etc. These trails are usually 12 feet wide with a stripe down the middle. Some larger trails are up to 20 feet wide, but this corridor is not large enough for 20 feet. The estimated cost for the trail in Shenandoah and Rockingham counties is 14 million dollars, and constructions bids will go out. The High Bridge Trail in Farmville had VDOT and DCR combine energies and expertise, to build their 31-mile trail with over 4000 feet of bridges, for just over 12 million dollars. Dr. Hindman stated the money to pay for this trail would come from several sources; some local money used for things like picnic tables and bike racks, and the larger portion from Federal and State agencies. Dr. Hindman stated they are looking at several different grant options, but have not applied for any yet, because the design is not complete. These trails generally take 10-20 years for completion, and this one is 5 years in, and ahead of schedule. The Rails to Trails project committee is acquiring resolutions from all 16 of their current partners, and at the annual meeting in May, anticipate Warren County and Front Royal will request to join the partnership, bringing it to 18. These 18 affiliations will have tremendous influence and impact in Richmond and Washington, DC.

Mr. Shepherd thanked Dr. Hindman for his hard work on this project. He stated looking down through the valley there is a strong economic in Frederick County/Winchester and Rockingham County/Harrisonburg, and this trail would be a huge tourism gain for Shenandoah County as well.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Rudy to APPROVE Resolution R-01-2021.

Mr. Shepherd added he encourages everyone to visit the Farmville High Bridge Trail, which is an exact replica of this intended trail. He stated the last figure he is aware of was a 5 million dollar per year economic impact in Farmville. Dr. Hindman stated in 2018 he believes it was a 6.5 million–8 million dollar impact, up from the estimated report in 2004 of a 1 million dollar impact. Farmville has opened two new hotels in 2018, and have offered to help us in any way they can.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Fultz			
Councilmember Miller			
Councilmember Andrick			
Councilmember Shepherd			
Councilmember Rudy			
Councilmember Good			
6 AYES, motion carried			

Mr. Shepherd asked Dr. Hindman to email him the link for the YouTube video and the PowerPoint presentation to forward to Councilmembers. Mr. Showalter stated he has both links, and will do so.

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3. Establishing Emph Memorial.

Ms. Miller stated at the last meeting it was discussed a way to honor individuals in Town with a memorial. The key factor is the family would pay for the memorial, not the Town. The Town Attorney suggested googling the internet to find standardization for this, but most policies she found were for large memorials such as trees and benches. Ms. Miller stated she and Ms. Good brainstormed, and spoke with Rinker and Frye, who would make these memorials for a reasonable price. Councilmembers Miller and Good propose a form available at the Town Office for people to purchase a granite stone memorial, much like the ones for the mayors at Mayor's Park. They can choose from specific message options, and it will be placed under a tree in Mayor's Park. The assumption is there will not be too many requests and Mayor's Park should be large enough to handle these requests.

Councilmember Miller MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Good to APPROVE the Town offering an option for families to purchase a memorial stone to be placed in Mayor's Park.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Fultz			
Councilmember Miller			
Councilmember Andrick			
Councilmember Shepherd			
Councilmember Rudy			
Councilmember Good			
6 AYES, motion carried			

4. Appointment to Spot Blight Abatement Advisory Committee Member.

Councilmember Andrick MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Rudy to APPROVE the recommendation of David Uhl to be on the Spot Blight Advisory Committee.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>	<u>ABSTAIN</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Councilmember Fultz			
Councilmember Miller			
Councilmember Andrick			
Councilmember Shepherd			
Councilmember Rudy			
Councilmember Good			
6 AYES, motion carried			

Motion made by Councilmember Shepherd, seconded by Councilmember Good, to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 PM.

Debbie A. Stover, Clerk

Donald "Donnie" I. Pifer, Mayor