

Mount Jackson  
Town Council Public Hearing and Regular Meeting  
August 8, 2023

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Public Hearing

Mayor Pifer opened the public hearing at 7:00 PM in the council chambers at 5901 Main Street to hear public comment regarding the 370 Bryce Boulevard proposed purchase. Mayor Pifer stated that Council's intentions are to use this property to extend the town park as it joins the park.

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

Regular Meeting

Mayor Pifer called the regular meeting of the Mount Jackson Town Council to order at 7:01 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 Keith Cowart, Police Chief; and Barbara Riggleman, Town Clerk. Visitors included Charles Middleton, Judi Wakeman, Brenda Foley, Tommy & Dale Hepner, Kathleen Murray, and Jim Hines.

Prayer: The Very Reverend Kathleen Murray, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, offered the invocation.

Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes: None

Hear from Visitors: Judi Wakeman stated that she was speaking on behalf of the Open Door Food Pantry. The Open Door Pantry was established in 1992 to ease the food insecurity throughout the central Shenandoah Valley. They provide baked goods, fresh produce, meats, eggs, canned goods, and other foods. Anyone needing food can receive food, subject to availability. No one is turned away. Some food is only available to people who meet USDA qualifications, and they can help you know if you qualify. Food is distributed the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month between 1:00 and 6:00 PM. The Pantry is a drive-thru pantry located at 11278 Old Valley Pike, north of Mount Jackson on Rt. 11. Clients will pull into the Pantry drive way, remain in their car, and a volunteer will greet and assist them. If the Pantry is closed due to weather, they will open, weather permitting, the next day – Friday from 1:00-6:00 PM. The Pantry receives food from various organizations, such as the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, USDA, Food Lion and other grocery outlets, churches, community organizations, and individuals. The Pantry also purchases selected nutritious food thanks to financial support from local people. Donations to the Pantry are tax deductible as they are a 501(c)(3) organization. Your check can be mailed to Open Door Food Pantry, PO Box 292, Mount Jackson, VA 22842. Checks should be made payable to Open Door Food Pantry, Mount Jackson. Food donations can be dropped off in the tub located in front of the Pantry by the double doors. Weather can compromise food safety, so when you leave food there or have food that requires refrigeration, you can call Wanda Shoemaker. The Pantry is in need of more volunteers, especially on distribution days. Ms. Wakeman stated that was the reason she was here on behalf of the Pantry. The Pantry currently has approx. 60 volunteers that give their time back to the community. There is even a husband and wife who are clients, but because of the help they receive, they also volunteer to give back as they are grateful for what the Pantry does for them. For 6 days a week, multiple volunteers pick up donations from Food Lion. The Blue Ridge Food Bank truck delivers food on the Monday before distribution; this is unloaded in preparation of distribution on the following Thursday. The Wednesday before distribution, volunteers prepare bags of bread items, cakes, cookies, and desserts that have all been donated. Last month there were 90 clients served. The number has slowly been increasing. Several months ago, the Pantry was serving between 55-60 clients. If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity, please contact Wanda and she can arrange for you to be trained by another volunteer. You can opt to work half a shift of either 1:00-3:30

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or 3:30-6:00, or the entire shift of 1:00-6:00. Ms. Wakeman asked Council if the need for volunteers could be placed in the Town's newsletter and thanked Council for the opportunity to speak.

Opening Remarks From Mayor: Mayor Pifer stated that the Police Department's National Night Out was great and there was a big crowd. Chief Cowart would speak on this during his report. Mayor Pifer also mentioned the Hometown Partnership's Farmers Market, which has been growing and is a success.

Presentations: None

Chief of Police Report: Chief Cowart reported for the month of July, there were 647 calls for service; year to date total being 6,474. There were 21 mutual aids with other agencies and 5 warrants served for other agencies, inside the county and outside the county. There was a report of a sex offense that the investigator closed by arrest with 5 charges; 3 reports of larceny, unable to identify suspects at this time; a report of a hit and run at the truck stop, leads were exhausted, DOT could not provide any information on the truck. There were 2 reports of shoplifting; 1 closed by arrest for a local, the other is still pending with thoughts that the suspect got back on I-81. There was a report of a child welfare case that was turned over to another agency. There was a counterfeiting case that was closed by arrest, and a report of vandalism is still being worked on. There was a report of trespassing/larceny that is inactive until more information is obtained. National Night Out was a huge success, there was a good crowd. Chief Cowart was not able to get on top of the truck for an overview, but from everyone he talked to, it was bigger and better than last year, and an estimated 500 attended. The Department is looking to expand in the near future to the Town Park, with the goal to make this event bigger. Chief Cowart reported that cold cases will be listed on the report to Council. Investigator Whorton is going back through and following up on some things and getting them squared away. These will be updated each month until they have all been reviewed; this goes back from when the Department first started keeping records, not anything recent. The three new vehicles purchased with the ARPA Grant have been equipped and issued to the officers. There is one that still needs graphics; scheduling with that will be next week. The Flock camera system – they are still working on mapping due to issues with VDOT.

Town Manager Report: None

Committee Reports:

1. Finance Committee Chairperson, Rod Shepherd had no report.
2. Ordinance Committee Chairperson, Evelyn Burner had no report. There are some items being worked on.
3. Personnel Committee Chairperson, Todd Holtzman had no report.
4. Public Safety Committee Chairperson, Judy Fultz had no report.
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 July 11, 2023 Regular Meeting

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

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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

Old Business: None

New Business:

1. 370 Bryce Boulevard Proposed Purchase – Eligible for Action

Mayor Pifer stated that this purchase would extend the town park with the hope to one day double, possibly triple the size of the current park and have the best one in the county. The subject property is located at 370 Bryce Boulevard, 1.911 acres, more or less, a portion of Tax Map #91-A-9, as shown on a recent plat. As shown in Council documents, the motion would be to accept and ratify the contract to purchase a certain tract of unimproved real property located in Shenandoah County, Virginia, on Bryce Boulevard, Mount Jackson, Virginia, containing approximately 1.911 acres, more or less, a portion of Shenandoah County Tax Map number 91-A-9, as shown on a plat prepared by Randall K. Newman, Land Surveyor, dated June 15, 2023 for the price of \$95,000 on the terms as stated in the contract.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Burner to ENGAGE in the aforementioned contract to purchase this piece of property to add to the town park.

Mr. Shepherd inquired if the contract had been corrected as advised by the Town’s attorney. Mayor Pifer answered that it had.

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			

5 AYES, 1 ABSTAIN, motion carried

2. Appointment of Assistant Town Manager and Acting Zoning Administrator in the Absence of the Town Manager

Mr. Holtzman reported that the search for an Assistant Town Manager was recently conducted and the Personnel Committee is very excited that Olivia Hilton will be joining Staff very soon. She will be starting around August 15.

Councilmember Holtzman MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Burner to APPOINT Olivia Hilton as Assistant Town Manager and Acting Zoning Administrator in the absence of the Town Manager.

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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			

3. LPDA Town Park Master Plan

Ms. Freed reported that the Public Properties Committee reached out to LPDA. This is the company that put together a master plan for the Woodstock park. Ms. Freed stated that the Committee is pushing toward the direction of Mount Jackson having the nicest park in Shenandoah County. The goal is working with LPDA, who will be putting together a base map with an idea of how to update our park and improve our park for the future, including some of the property like the 370 Bryce Boulevard property previously mentioned added on to the park. This will also include areas to expand, like potentially putting in an aquatics center, or something along those lines to set Mount Jackson apart from the rest of the county. The Committee would like to work with LPDA to get a cost for future ideas and work with the Comprehensive Plan to improve our community here in Mount Jackson.

Councilmember Freed MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Fultz to ACCEPT LPDA's Scope Proposal and Contract Agreement, quoted at \$25,688, and empower the mayor to sign the contract.

Mr. Shepherd stated that there was a lot of work to get the pool house built and it was his hope that the pool house could be incorporated into that design. The pool house is a relatively new building, but the pool may need some renovations. Ms. Freed stated that she believes there are a few directions being looked into, with the need for public restrooms, not port-a-Johns, a major concern, especially when the pool is closed.

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			

4. Montvue Stone Wall Pavers

Mr. Holtzman stated that there is a concrete wall on both sides of Montvue Avenue, along Main Street, pretty close to the Historic District downtown. The wall was constructed a number of years ago to create a sidewalk where there wasn't one. The wall is functional but not attractive. The Public Properties Committee asked to explore a stone facing to give a look of a more traditional stone wall that was built in town many years ago. Mr. Holtzman stated that this would be a good opportunity for the town to partner with Triplett Tech, with their masonry department doing the installation. Estimated cost is around \$20,000 in materials; the Committee is still working to finalize the details of the color and style of the wall. This would not serve a

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safety purpose, but it would be another step towards the beautification of Mount Jackson. There would be a compensation to the school for the materials they would use, along with a \$2,000 donation to the masonry program at Triplett Tech. Ms. Burner stated that she received a phone call from a citizen opposed to this project as it would raise the wall 2 ft. and inquired if this is true. Mr. Holtzman stated that the change would be inches; there would be a facing on the top and on the front, and pointed to a sample of stone provided for a visual comparison. Mr. Holtzman stated that the difference may be an inch, but would not be raising the wall.

Ms. Burner stated that citizens living in Montvue have mentioned the difficulty in seeing traffic around the wall, and inquired if there could be any safety feature that could be done to improve visibility when turning onto Main Street. Mr. Holtzman stated that there had been some discussion in the Public Properties meeting earlier about installing a convex mirror to improve visibility at this intersection. The wall is what it is, and one inch top and front would not adversely affect view, but a mirror was discussed for safety. Mayor Pifer suggested Council ride through Montvue to understand the visibility issue. Ms. Burner stated that she had done so; she was also concerned for kids on the sidewalk when vehicles are approaching the intersection. Mr. Holtzman stated that he was not sure if VDOT approval would be needed, as Valley Fertilizer would allow the installation of a pole across the street if the Town would want to do this. Mayor Pifer stated that this may be one of VDOT's projects. Ms. Burner stated that if VDOT gave the approval, it may be better for the Town to do the installation. Mr. Holtzman stated that if it is off the right of way, you would not have to ask VDOT.

Councilmember Holtzman MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Freed to APPROVE up to \$25,000 for expenses to apply stone facing to the wall at Montvue Avenue.

Ms. Good inquired what the extra \$5,000 was for, as the introductory memo had asked Council for \$20,000. Mr. Holtzman stated that the Committee is expecting \$20,000; the stone quote is between \$17,500 and \$18,500, additional costs include mortar and whatever masonry supplies the school has, plus a \$2,000 donation. Mr. Holtzman stated that he would guess the final cost at \$20,000-21,000, but if costs are higher, Council authorizing \$25,000 would not necessitate another meeting to approve additional funding.

Mr. Holtzman stated that this would be a great project for the Town and Triplett Tech. He was sure the students would feel pride whenever they drive by the wall, remembering their work in the Fall of 2023. This is a nice community project that we can do together in conjunction with the school.

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			

5. Appointment of Trustee to the Union Church for St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

Mayor Pifer stated that Rev. Murray sent a letter to Council recommending Wayne Clark.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Burner to APPROVE the nomination of Wayne Clark as St. Andrew's representative trustee to the Union Church.

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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			

6. Canoe Launching Sites

Mr. Shepherd stated that DuPont Chemical, for decades, dumped all kinds of toxins into the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. They were caught, significantly fined, and there is a large pool of money for river access, river environmental projects, etc. The Town has the opportunity to have up to \$100,000 for a canoe launching site. A number of folks from the Department of Natural Resources, Friends of the North Fork, have looked at a couple of sites in Mount Jackson. Mr. Shepherd stated that there are two being looked at very closely. One is by the Town's sewer plant, at the bend in the river - a triangular piece of land that belongs to the Town of Mount Jackson. Discussion is to put in a parking area along with a boat ramp. The boat ramp would resemble the canoe launching boat ramps at Seven Bends Park. Mr. Shepherd stated that there is money available for trees, retention of soils. Mr. Shepherd stated that tonight was not the night to make a decision, but rather to introduce the idea to Council. The other site is down by the new bridge. Once the old bridge is taken out, there will be lots of space there for a parking area. There again, space is available for a canoe/kayak launching ramp going down to the Shenandoah. Some preliminary drawings and sketches have been done. Mr. Shepherd stated that the old iron bridge site would probably be run by the County; the site in Mount Jackson overseen by the Town. This would probably be two separate pools of money. Mr. Shepherd suggested inviting Tyler Hinkle from Shenandoah County to the September council meeting to speak about the proposals, perhaps even someone from the Division of Natural Resources. There have been extensive meetings along both of these sites; both agencies are excited about the possibility. Mr. Shepherd stated that it was time for the Town to get involved and see what our thoughts are.

Ms. Good stated that there had been discussion about this project previously, with pictures of what it could look like, but there was some pushback from the landowners along the old iron bridge. The landowners have so much trash left on their property; they were adamant that this was a poor idea, unless someone would be maintaining this on a regular basis. Trash left behind blows into their farmland. Ms. Good stated that she liked the idea of this being on Town property across from the water and sewer plant. Mr. Shepherd stated that this was not to be a party zone. This would be a site to park your car and launch your canoe, or take your canoe out of the river. Unfortunately, what was happening at the iron bridge was that it was a weekend party zone. Mr. Shepherd charged Chief Cowart with poling his chief colleagues from other towns in the valley with canoe launching sites, to see what kind of issues they have had with nuisances, trespassing, or other troubles. These launching sites are closed from dusk to dawn; there is no overnight parking or camping. Mr. Shepherd reiterated that this would just be to park your car, launch your canoe, and then get out down the stream. There will probably be more information at the September Council Meeting.

Ms. Freed asked Mr. Shepherd to check with Neil Showalter, as she believed they were in the works with putting one down by the bridge already with VDOT. Mr. Shepherd stated that there have been big discussions all along about this; the original plan was to use the old road bed for a parking area on the south side, but

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VDOT said this could not be done as it is a floodplain. VDOT has ripped up the asphalt that could have been used for a parking lot. Mr. Freed stated that she believed there was a map showing what it could look like at the old bridge, with funding as well for that. Mr. Shepherd answered that this was the same project he was presenting. Mr. Shepherd stated that the drawings have changed because things change; clearly the parking lot can not be on the south side of the river, it must be on higher ground on the north side.

Ms. Burner inquired if there was any foreseeable way to do both sites. Mr. Shepherd answered affirmatively, that probably the bridge site would be managed by Shenandoah County, as it would be primarily on county property; the site at the water treatment plant would be managed or overseen by the Town.

Ms. Freed stated that she remembered seeing an area sketched as an educational space that Triplett could utilize. Mr. Shepherd agreed; in preliminary ideas and sketching, they were thinking about doing this, but now it is time to move forward with some more firm plans and ideas. Mayor Pifer asked Ms. Rigglesman to contact Tyler Hinkle and extend an invitation to the September council meeting.

Closing Remarks by Council Members, Mayor: Mayor Pifer asked the Hometown Partnership if they wanted to give a brief report. Ms. Wakeman reported that they had 9 vendors at the August 5 market, including Martin's Burgers Galore. They were 2 vendors short from the July market, but there were 5 vendors that were unable to come to the August market. The Partnership is very happy and is looking forward to increasing; several people are still reaching out to them. The Downtown Music with Larry & Kathy Rinard was moved to the Brighter Days venue due to the heat. It wasn't as well attended as Ms. Wakeman had hoped, but there were many other events in the area going on the same day. Brighter Days opened up their soft serve ice cream, so this was available, along with Beards & Broads pizza. Ms. Wakeman estimated attendance at 40 people.

Motion made by Councilmember Shepherd, seconded by Councilmember Fultz, to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 PM.

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Barbara Rigglesman, Clerk

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Donald "Donnie" I. Pifer, Mayor