

Mount Jackson
Town Council Regular Meeting
December 12, 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; Officer Chazz Beaver; Mario Rosso, Finance Director; and Debbie Allen, Assistant Treasurer. David Moore from Cornerstone Technology was present to provide Zoom service. Saidee Begoon, CPA with Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates attended via Zoom. Visitors included Al Asbury, Judi Wakeman, Charles Jenkins, Charles & Robin Middleton, Karl Schaeffer, Clemmit Sigler, Brent Johnson from the Northern Virginia Daily, and Kim Cassford, CREW Executive Director.

Prayer: Mr. Clemmit Sigler, Grace & County Line Church, offered the invocation.

Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes: Mr. Shepherd asked for an addition under New Business for the appointment of Town Manager.

Hear from Visitors: None.

Opening Remarks From Mayor: Mayor Pifer stated that there was a press release regarding the passing of Town Manager Neil Showalter.

Presentations: Review of 2022-23 Audit – Saidee Begoon, CPA – Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates

Mr. Shepherd stated that Ms. Begoon has been working with the Town for some time now and always does a good job with the required annual audit. Mr. Shepherd stated that Council was provided with copies of the audit and Ms. Begoon would be presenting. Ms. Begoon introduced herself to the room; the audit was for the fiscal year ending 2023. Ms. Begoon reported they have issued an unmodified opinion on the financial statements, which is a clean opinion and it means that they feel the financial statements presented here are materially correct and they conform with generally accepted accounting principles.

Highlights of the FY23 included that the Town had an ending net position of \$23,363,000. Of that net position, the unrestricted portion was \$7.2 million. At the end of the year, the Town had cash and cash equivalents of about \$8 million, which was up about \$578,000 in comparison to last year. Ms. Begoon pointed out that as of June 30, 2023, the Town does have a significant amount of unearned revenue and that is almost exclusively the unspent portion of ARPA money, the federal grant that has been in play; this impacts governmental financial statements everywhere they go. Of the \$8 million of cash and equivalents, \$1.2 million of that is ARPA money to be spent in the coming year. Ms. Begoon moved to the Statement of Activities, which explained the change in net position for FY23 and indicated strong financial health for the Town. Water/sewer funds ended the year with a net position of about \$13.8 million, with \$2.7 million unrestricted, and a net operating income for the year of about \$813,000. Overall change in net position was \$1.1 million to the good. The general fund ended the year with approximately \$2.6 million, actual revenue at \$2.8 million, which is a positive budget variance on the revenue side at \$247,000; actual expenditures came in under budget by \$379,000.

Ms. Begoon reported that their audit is conducted in accordance with government auditing standards, which require that they look at the Town's internal controls and also compliance with laws, contracts, and general agreements. Any non-compliance that is material to the financial statements, or any significant deficiencies or material weakness in internal controls, they would need to communicate those to Council in their report. Ms. Begoon stated that she was happy to report that they did not identify any weaknesses in internal controls that they deem to be significant, significant deficiencies or material weaknesses, and also they reported no material

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non-compliance as a result of their audit. They performed the federal grant audit on the ARPA program and had no compliance findings or question costs under that grant program. Ms. Begoon stated that they provided seven adjusting journal entries to the Town, most of those were very routine in nature and not significant to the financial statements. Some suggestions to consider were provided to management as a result of the audit. Overall, the audit went very well.

Mr. Holtzman inquired if it was normal for a town of this size to have this much money in the bank. Ms. Begoon answered that if you look at all of the localities in Virginia, the Town is on the more positive side as far as a healthy financial condition. One reason for that could be that the Town has built up in preparation for maintaining the water and sewer system.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Good to ACCEPT the Town's Financial Report for the Year Ended June 30, 2023.

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			

Chief of Police Report: Chief Cowart reported for the month of November, there were 654 calls for service; year to date total being 8,479. Mutual aid/warrant services were 13. There was a report of a domestic assault that was closed by arrest; drunk in public closed by arrest; 2 larcenies reported, one closed by arrest (shoplifting), one closed with leads exhausted. There was a CPS referral for investigation of a child case, this was unfounded, made by an anonymous person to CPS, nothing was found during their investigation. There was a hit and run, inactive/closed, waiting on information from another state. There was one rape that was reported, closed due to Commonwealth Attorney denying prosecution. There was also a death within the town. At the onset of the cold case task, there were 261 active/inactive cases; there are now 80 active cases and this is holding steady. The Merry on Main was a great event, well received by the community as a whole. Congrats to Ms. Hilton on coordinating the event. New Commonwealth Attorney Elizabeth Cooper will take office on January 1, 2024. She has stopped by all the police departments and shared her intentions and discussed ongoing issues she hopes to address with her team once she is officially in office. All of the flock cameras are finally in position. One alert was given on a wanted person out of Texas for assault; Texas will not extradite from Virginia. On another alert, they assisted Department of Wildlife Resources with attempting to locate a suspect vehicle. Leads are being investigated by the DWR. Chief Cowart welcomed new officer Mr. Chazz Beaver, who comes from Rockingham County and brings experience with him.

Town Manager Report: Ms. Hilton reported that applications continue for the open Town positions. There are ongoing relationship building with local industries. Staff 1-on-1's will begin in January, meeting with every team member to touch base. The Town Office will be closed a half-day on December 22 and a full day on December 25 for the holidays. Ms. Hilton thanked the Hometown Partnership for their help with the Merry on Main and she is looking forward to 2024. Ms. Hilton added that Staff is very self-reliant and generous with their knowledge to her and one another and she is grateful for everything over the past several months. Ms. Hilton shared a bronze plaque for the Montvue wall that Triplett Tech students have been working on. The

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students will also be working on a LOVE sign this Spring; there is a \$1500 reimbursement grant thru Virginia Tourism Corp. that the Town will get to help fund this project. Ms. Hilton reported that there has been a lot of movement in the southern end of the county in terms of networking programs. The Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce has announced their award nominations; 2 of the 3 large businesses nominated are in Mount Jackson, Bowman Andros and Rt. 11 Chips, which is exciting. Voting will begin on December 13. Ms. Hilton stated that she has been nominated for Young Professional of the Year. Ms. Hilton deferred to Mayor Pifer who announced that there will be a Celebration of Life for Neil Showalter on December 20 from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. There will be a time for remembrances. Light refreshments will be provided.

Mr. Holtzman inquired if the design and location of the LOVE sign has been determined. Ms. Hilton answered that if Council is not in favor of the design chosen, it will be placed in front of Triplett Tech. Ideally, Council will be part of the design process. Ms. Hilton met with some of the department teachers and the thought is that each department will design one of the letters with some feedback. Ms. Hilton stated that she does not have a location in mind, so recommendations are welcome.

Committee Reports:

1. Finance Committee - Chairperson Rod Shepherd had no report.
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 gave the November Mount Jackson Rescue & Fire Report. Fire Report: 20 fire/crash related incidents in the month of November; 4 fire alarms, 3 structure fires, 8 vehicle crashes, 1 vehicle fire, 1 outside fire, 2 inside Hazmat, and 1 EMS assist. Total fire related calls for the month was 20; 9 calls in town, 11 calls in the county. Fire related call for the year are 237, which is the same number as calls at this time last year. Emergency Medical Services: Total EMS calls for the month of November was 83; 29 calls in the Town, 53 calls in the county; 1 call in Page County. 20 advanced life support staffed; 63 basic life support staffed. Reminder of Santa's ride thru Mount Jackson on the evening of December 23, beginning at 5:30 PM.
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 November 10, 2023 Regular Meeting

Councilmember Burner MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Fultz 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			

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OLD BUSINESS:

1. CREW Financial Support

Mr. Holtzman stated that at last month's Council meeting, Staff was given direction to find funds in the budget. This was also brought up at the Public Properties Committee Meeting, where there was a suggested motion for the Town to finalize and support a \$50,000 donation to CREW in the current fiscal year and the next fiscal year. It was also the Committee's intent to instruct Staff to include this donation in the budget on a recurring basis; even though future council's cannot be bound to this, it is their recommendation that a \$50,000 donation be given to support the community center. Ms. Good asked for clarification that Mr. Holtzman was requesting \$50,000 for 2023, \$50,000 for 2024, and a recommendation that this donation continue. Mr. Holtzman answered affirmatively. Ms. Freed stated that it was also mentioned in the meeting was to specify what those funds would be used for. Mayor Pifer stated that this was more of an "in general" detail.

Councilmember Holtzman MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Fultz to APPROVE a \$50,000 donation to CREW in the current fiscal year and the next fiscal year, and to instruct Staff to include this donation in the budget on a recurring basis.

Ms. Hilton recommended breaking up the motions a bit, to have one motion for a donation for the current fiscal year and then a motion for a donation for the coming year. Mr. Shepherd stated his agreement for this suggestion and referred to an email he sent to Council suggesting breaking the donation into two parts and involve the community in a matching program, which has had success in the past. Mr. Shepherd stated that his suggestion was to split the initial investment in half, donating \$25,000 right now and the other \$25,000 as a matching fund. Mr. Holtzman inquired as to who would do this work. Mr. Shepherd answered that previously, the receptive donor has given a monthly report of donations. This was just a suggestion to get the community involved and maybe get additional funds.

Ms. Freed asked for amount clarification. Ms. Hilton and Mr. Shepherd answered that the total amount then would be \$75,000; \$25,000 right now from the Town, \$25,000 in a pool for matching dollar for dollar from the community, with a potential total of \$50,000 combined. Ms. Burner inquired if a full donation would be needed right now, with the Town donating \$50,000 and asking the community for their support. Ms. Hilton stated that she felt the urgency for them getting funding now is there, so to have a \$50,000 donation pre-July 1 and another donation, matching or otherwise, in the next upcoming budget would give Staff time to organize that, but there is some urgency right now. She stated her approval for a matching donation program for next year.

Ms. Good stated that she didn't think CREW had programs identified at this time and asked if there could be a list made of intended programs and how donations would be spent. Kim Cassford, CREW Executive Director, gave a brief description of rooms and intentions. Discussion ensued on if funds could be earmarked and CREW's plans.

Councilman Shepherd amended the motion made by Councilman Holtzman to APPROVE a \$50,000 donation for the CREW Community Center this year and look at donations to CREW in the upcoming budget cycle, to begin in March, starting July 1, 2024. Councilman Holtzman accepted this amendment.

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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			

Councilmember Holtzman MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Good to APPROVE a \$50,000 donation to CREW in the next fiscal year, and to instruct Staff to include this donation in the budget on a recurring basis.

Ms. Hilton stated that technically during the budget process, this can get tricky as Council will have to accept the budget as a whole when it comes to this point, and suggested wording the motion “recommended for the FY2025 Budget” to make the budget process easier and Staff will put it in as a line item. Ms. Good stated that this is the intent.

Councilman Shepherd amended the motion made by Councilmember Holtzman to RECOMMEND that Council consider a \$50,000 donation in the budget for Fiscal Year 2025.

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. 160 Race Street Update

Ms. Hilton reported that she had forwarded an email from Town Attorney Jay Neal to Council. Mr. Neal stated that this is a dilapidated property that has been deemed unsafe and he is working to find descendants for the lien process. Most likely this property will be demolished in the Spring. Mr. Holtzman stated that he felt the recommendation from the attorney was that the property could be roped off, and if the Town chooses to do the demolition to the property, there could be some risk on the lien against the property later. Mr. Holtzman stated that his thought was if cones are placed around it, it would make a bad situation worse and it should just be torn down. Ms. Hilton read from Mr. Neal’s recommendation, “I believe the town can take such steps as needed to protect the public before any order is entered, but the complete tear down, which sure looks to be in order, should wait until the final order is entered.” Ms. Hilton stated that she believed Mr. Neal’s recommendation was to wait until at least the 50 day mark of the publication.

Mr. Holtzman requested Ms. Hilton to read Mr. Neal’s email, to which Ms. Hilton complied and read the email in its entirety. Mr. Holtzman thanked Ms. Hilton for reading the email and for her work on this project.

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3. LPDA Update

Ms. Hilton shared a slide presentation, which included a Master Park Plan timeline and a conceptual footprint for a base aquatic facility that would fall in the \$4-6 million range. Ms. Hilton stated that the stakeholders that met with LPDA requested some options. One option was a temporary dome to be placed seasonally over the current town pool, but there were some struggles with the pool's L-shape and the fact that the pool only has 5 lanes, which would not allow for any regional swim meets. The other option was an aquatics facility. LPDA has submitted the aquatics facility footprint, which was shown, and they are working on two conceptual sketches which should be available by the holidays. This would be for the Lions Park. Mid-January, LPDA will return to Mount Jackson for a site visit, getting some feedback from Council and meeting with CREW regarding the rear acreage. LPDA will work on the Master Park Plan in March with the feedback received from the site visit and combine the Connectivity and Pedestrian piece to the Plan. In April, Staff will work with LPDA to capture any additional feedback from the draft plan. May 2024 is the goal for the Final Master Park Plan, CREW Acreage Plan, and Park & Pedestrian Connectivity Plan to be submitted to the Town. Ms. Hilton stated that Staff is waiting on two conceptual pieces, which will include a secondary entrance to the park and alternate options for an aquatics facility. Mr. Holtzman inquired if the Public Properties Committee would be invited to the site meetings; Ms. Hilton answered affirmatively. Discussion ensued on the aquatics footprint.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Dominion Energy Right-of-Way

Ms. Hilton stated that Dominion Energy is requesting to install a transformer on Town property on King Street. Staff has been working with them on a location that will not be an eyesore. Ms. Hilton referred to a map provided to Council. Ms. Hilton stated that she was requesting Council's feedback before submitting information to Jay Neal. This would mean that 3 of the existing power poles will be removed and lines placed underground. Mr. Holtzman inquired if there were any plans for the Town's property on King Street; there had been talks at one time regarding a small park there. Ms. Hilton stated that previous Planning & Zoning Director Erick Moore had gotten pretty far along in a Get Outdoors grant for the space. Basically, this would be up to \$25,000 for a pocket park and increasing outdoor access. The grant funding requested some feedback notes on some changes to the planned park and this was where the plan stopped. Ms. Hilton stated that she would be working with Tyler Hinkle to tweak the design and bring it back to life as the Town was close to getting a grant for it. It would mostly be a part of the Connectivity Plan. LPDA has received the original blueprint that Mr. Moore made to give them an idea. Originally, the plans included a dog park and benches, so this has been given to LPDA as an option. There were also some stalls for a farmer's market and some planter boxes. Mr. Holtzman inquired if a transformer would interfere with these plans; Ms. Hilton answered that it would not.

Mr. Shepherd inquired into the size of the proposed transformer. Ms. Hilton answered that it would be about 6 x 6', possibly 8 x 8 she believed; she was told it would fit under a 10 x 10 canopy. Mr. Shepherd inquired that it would not be a big substation-style thing like in the Industrial Park. Ms. Hilton answered negatively. Mr. Shepherd cautioned being careful as this area is in the Historical District and near the Union Church. Ms. Hilton stated that if it is an eyesore, it will be required to have a pretty gate. Mr. Holtzman inquired if it could be confirmed how many poles would be taken down because it would be nice to know long-term; in the Historic District, fewer poles would be a nice feature, but once you are committed, the right-of-way is forever. Ms. Hilton answered that there would be at least 2 or 3 depending on an easement with Mr. Funkhouser across the street. Two of the poles are on Town property. Mr. Holtzman suggested confirming this before signing. Ms. Hilton stated that she did discuss future electric access for lighting.

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Ms. Hilton stated that the Town will need to install another transformer to finish the light poles on Main Street. Randy Lonas has been speaking with her and the hope is to try and barter services. Mr. Holtzman suggested revisiting this additional transformer with Dominion. Ms. Hilton inquired if Council would be okay with her sending the agreement from Dominion Energy to Jay Neal for review. Councilmembers present were in agreement.

2. Appointment of Town Manager by Town Council

Mr. Shepherd stated that it was a sad occasion, losing Neil Showalter, but there still needs to be governance in the Town.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Burner to APPOINT Olivia Hilton as the Town of Mount Jackson Town Manager.

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			

Closing Remarks by Council Members. Mayor: Mayor Pifer stated that this would be the last Council meeting with Brandi Freed and thanked her for her service. Mayor Pifer invited the Middleton's to speak about their store. Charles Middleton stated that they had meetings with John & Laura Boor and Olivia Hilton, and hope to be open in January. Things are coming along well. His wife, Robin, will be going to Penn State's food science program for ice cream; the plan is to have coffee and ice cream and a few things to start, expanding later in sections. Ms. Freed expressed her appreciation for having ice cream in town. Mr. Holtzman inquired into store hours; Mr. Middleton stated that they are planning 6 days/week from 6:00 AM to 2:00 PM, with plans to change as they are able to expand. Mayor Pifer inquired if Ms. Wakeman had a report. Ms. Wakeman stated that this had been a great year. They have an upcoming meeting with Ms. Hilton and are looking forward to more exciting things and working together. Ms. Wakeman discussed the December Market. Ms. Wakeman expressed thanks to the Town and Council for their help in these events. The Merry on Main event was discussed. Ms. Wakeman stated that it was a great success and thanked everyone involved.

Motion made by Councilmember Good, seconded by Councilmember Fultz, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM.

Barbara Riggelman, Clerk

Donald "Donnie" I. Pifer, Mayor