

Mount Jackson
Town Council Regular Meeting

January 9, 2024

-1-

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; Keith Cowart, Police Chief; and Barbara Riggelman, Town Clerk. Visitors included Kim Cassford, CREW Executive Director; Brent Johnson, reporter for the Northern Virginia Daily; and Todd Bowman.

Prayer: Mayor Pifer offered the invocation.

Agenda Additions/Deletions/Changes: None.

Hear from Visitors: None.

Opening Remarks From Mayor: Mayor Pifer stated his appreciation to Chief Cowart and the police department. Mayor Pifer also welcomed new councilmember Al Asbury.

Presentations: None.

Chief of Police Report: Chief Cowart reported for the month of December 2023, there were 464 calls for service; 2023 total being 8,943. Mutual aid/warrant services were 16 and 3 warrants served for other agencies. Cold Cases: there are 80 active cases from the past 20 years or so; these will be discussed with the new Commonwealth Attorney, Ms. Elizabeth Cooper, for further disposition. There were 3 reports of hit and run; 1 was closed, no leads or suspects; 1 is inactive, waiting for information from other states; 1 active that is a multi-agency incident that happened in Mount Jackson, in the County, and in the Town of New Market, all by the same suspect which has been identified and warrants have been obtained. There was 1 fraud, waiting on information from Verizon to connect the accounts. There was 1 counterfeiting, attempting to use movie prop money to buy cigarettes; case closed, unable to identify suspect who was an I-81 traveler. There was 1 vandalism; closed, leads exhausted, no cameras in the area to assist. Highlights of the Year: 2 officers were promoted – Sgt. Johnson and Investigator Whorton; 2 officers resigned; 2 officers were hired; Sgt. Johnson was the first Silver Valor Award nominee for the Town of Mount Jackson. New equipment was purchased mostly using the ARPA grant with no cost to the Town. Events & Incidents - the National Night Out, which is their biggest event, had over 500 participants; JP's Toy Drive, which was a new event, 9 families (11 children) were assisted and provided toys to 2 daycare centers in town; for the 2 Drug Take Back events for the year, a total of 117 lbs. of unused and expired medications were collected; the Night to Shine is a special needs prom-type of event, a worldwide event by the Tim Tebow Foundation. Chief Cowart encouraged everyone to come out to the Shenandoah Caverns on February 9, 2024 to witness the huge smiles. To recap on the shooting incident, that was the first homicide in town in 26 years.

Town Manager Report: Ms. Hilton reported that since the last Council meeting, the zoning approval for removing the burned home at 248 Nelson Street has been completed and the home removed. Signage has been approved for the new Circle K/old Hottle's facility. Coffee & Cream, our newest coffee shop, is now open downtown and Ms. Hilton encouraged everyone to visit them. Ms. Hilton reported that she recently met with church leadership that will be moving into the old bank building beside Town Hall. Ms. Hilton reported that the Public Utilities team has shifted to 24 hour coverage to balance the facility with the recent rain. An update was sent in saying that the river has risen about 1.5 feet. January 10, 2024 Staff will be interviewing some

Mount Jackson
Town Council Regular Meeting
January 9, 2024
-2-

Triplett Tech students for the spring co-op. Planning Commission met yesterday and the Ordinance Committee met prior to tonight's meeting. Council Work Session will be on January 23, 2024.

Committee Reports:

1. Finance Committee - Chairperson Rod Shepherd reported that a four-page report was included in the council information packet of the finances for the first 6 months of the year. Everything is in good order.
2. Ordinance Committee - Chairperson Evelyn Burner reported that the committee met today at 5:30 PM to discuss possible ordinance changes. A work session will be held on January 23, 2024 at 6:00 PM; anyone that has suggestions is encouraged to attend.
3. Personnel Committee - Chairperson Todd Holtzman reported that the committee held interviews for the Assistant Town Manager position and is awaiting recommendation from the Town Manager.
4. Public Safety Committee - Chairperson Al Asbury gave the December 2023 & 2023 Year End Mount Jackson Rescue & Fire Report. Fire Report: 19 fire calls in the month of December; 6 calls in town, 13 calls in the county. Total Fire Calls Year Ending 12/31/23 were 256; 72 calls in town, 182 in the county, 2 calls out of county. 256 total fire calls in 2023; 263 total fire calls in 2022. Rescue Report: 89 rescue calls in the month of December; 36 calls in town, 53 in the county; 27 advanced life support staffed, 62 basic life support staffed. Total Rescue Calls Year Ending 12/31/23 were 934; 393 calls in town, 538 calls in the county, 3 calls out of county. Mark your calendars – Annual Ham & Oyster Dinner on February 24, 2024.
5. Public Services Committee - Chairperson Bonnie Good was absent.
6. Public Properties Committee - Chairperson Judy Fultz reported that the committee discussed concepts 1 & 2 for the town park. There were several discussions with a consensus to keep the baseball field in the current location. A secondary entrance off of Rt. 263 is being discussed. There were also several projects that were discussed that will be completed in the spring.

Consent Agenda: Approval – Minutes of December 12, 2023 Regular Meeting

Councilmember Burner MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Holtzman to APPROVE the Consent Agenda items 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:

Mount Jackson
Town Council Regular Meeting
January 9, 2024
-3-

1. ShenGO Transit Local Match Contribution

Ms. Hilton stated that the Town has previously not been a big partner in the program, so part of this discussion would be how involved the Town would like to be. Ms. Hilton shared the southbound ShenGO route and discussed potential stops. ShenGo has requested a FY24 prorated contribution of \$7,450 and FY25 contribution of \$10,495. Background on the funding – previously was 80% funded by the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) and Dept. of Rail & Public Transportation (DRPT), localities covering 20%. This has shifted with grant funding with localities now splitting 32%, FTA covering 50%, and DRPT covering 18%. Ms. Hilton stated that the Town’s 12% of the 32% comes out at \$10,000, so localities are covering about \$175,000 annually in cost, with the majority being the County covering 50%, Woodstock and Strasburg covering a large portion, and smaller communities covering 8-15%.

Mr. Holtzman inquired into the total budget for the program. Ms. Hilton answered that 32% would be \$175,000. Mr. Holtzman figured up that a rough monthly cost for localities would be \$32/person to ride, which he stated was a lot of money for low ridership. Discussion ensued on ridership and costs. It was noted that this is ShenGO’s 3rd year of service.

Mr. Shepherd asked Mayor Pifer if the executives of this program have any gut-feelings about continued funding from the state and federal level, and if that level of funding were to be removed, if localities would need to make up the difference. Ms. Hilton stated that she believed this new funding estimate came out of that fear, and that regardless ShenGO will continue to service the area. Mr. Shepherd inquired if the Town would have more control of stops if a contribution was made. Ms. Hilton answered that the Town could add more stops with participation. Mr. Holtzman inquired how many and where the stops are currently. Ms. Riggleman answered that there are 3 designated stops - Medical Drive and on both sides of Main Street at Holtzman’s, but if they are ahead of schedule they add stops. Ms. Hilton stated that she could get more information if Council would like for consideration in the next budget cycle. Mr. Holtzman inquired what the Town’s contribution was last year. Mr. Shepherd stated that the Town has not contributed yet. Ms. Hilton reiterated that ShenGO was asking for a prorated \$7,500 from October ’23 to June ’24 as there was an indication that the Town would be interested in supporting, but at this time the Town has not paid anything. This cost would be sent to the other towns to cover if Mount Jackson does not contribute. Ridership, stops, and fees were discussed.

Mr. Shepherd suggested Council revisit this request closer to budget season. Ms. Hilton inquired as to what information would help Council in reaching a decision. Mr. Shepherd stated that ridership numbers, what the trend has been, if it is building or falling, and a gut-feeling about on-going financial support from outside agencies would be good. Councilmembers present were in agreement.

2. Reaffirmation of Trustees to the Union Church

Mayor Pifer read the background for this agenda item. In early December 2023, Staff was notified by the Deputy Clerk of the Shenandoah County Circuit Court that the motion to nominate Mr. Wayne Clark as Trustee to the Union Church at the August 8, 2023 Town Council Meeting was not worded quite correctly. A correct nomination has not been submitted to the Circuit Court since December 2006. Their recommendation was to reaffirm the trustees in the correct format for their records. Staff will then forward the motion from the January 2024 Council Meeting minutes to the Circuit Court for their records.

Staff recommendation is for wording similar to: Wayne Clark, representing St. Andrews Episcopal Church, was appointed to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Mount Jackson Union Church to replace Randy Bailey due to his resignation, and to serve with Marcia Brownfield who represents the Mount Jackson Garden

Mount Jackson
Town Council Regular Meeting
January 9, 2024

-4-

Club, Howard Hackenbracht representing Mount Jackson United Methodist Church, and William B. Holtzman representing Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church.

Mr. Shepherd stated that the Union Church is a valuable historical asset to the Town of Mount Jackson and is almost 200 years old. Mr. Shepherd also applauded the Town Clerk for her diligence in getting this issue straightened out.

Councilmember Shepherd MOVED, seconded by Councilmember Fultz to APPOINT Wayne Clark, representing St. Andrews Episcopal Church, to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Mount Jackson Union Church and RECONFIRM Marcia Brownfield who represents the Mount Jackson Garden Club, RECONFIRM Howard Hackenbracht, representing Mount Jackson United Methodist Church, and RECONFIRM Mr. William B. Holtzman, representing Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church.

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. LPDA Introduction

Ms. Hilton stated that LPDA will be on site on January 25, 2024 to meet with stakeholders, Council, CREW leadership and to view the spaces in town. Ms. Hilton encouraged council members to bring their thoughts to the meeting or send them to her. Ms. Burner inquired what time the meeting would be. Ms. Hilton stated that LPDA will be in town all day; she would estimate 10:00 AM at Town Hall but will let Council know a definite time once scheduled.

Closing Remarks by Council Members, Mayor: None.

Motion made by Councilmember Shepherd, seconded by Councilmember Fultz, to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 PM.

Barbara Riggelman, Clerk

Donald "Donnie" I. Pifer, Mayor