

**Onley Town Council  
Special Meeting  
Minutes of June 27, 2022  
Onley Town Office, 25308 Lankford Highway, Onley VA**

Council Members Present: Matt Hart, Mayor  
Rose Pierson, Vice-Mayor  
Brian Corbin  
Billye D. Custis  
Bill Ferguson  
Claudia Harmon  
Woody Zember

Staff Present: Carl Bundick, Town Attorney  
Lt. E. J. Long, Onley Police Dept.  
Jamye Salazar, Clerk/Treasurer

**Call to Order**

Mayor Hart called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

**Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance**

The invocation was given by Councilman Ferguson and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilwoman Harmon.

**Adoption of Agenda**

**Motion: To adopt the agenda by Brian Corbin and seconded by Bill Ferguson. Roll Call Vote:** Corbin-yes; Custis-yes; Ferguson- yes; Harmon – yes; Pierson – yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

**Closed Session**

**Motion: To go into Closed Session (6:01pm) in accordance with Section 2.2-3711(A) of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended for the purpose of Paragraph 1: Discussion or Consideration of Personnel Matters (Administration) pertaining to hiring Town Manager/Appointing Interim Town Manager by Billye D. Custis and seconded by Bill Ferguson. Roll Call Vote:** Corbin- yes; Custis-yes; Ferguson- yes; Harmon – yes; Pierson – yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

**Open Session & Certification of Closed Session**

**Motion: To return to Open Session (6:29pm) by Billye D. Custis and seconded by Bill Ferguson. Roll Call Vote:** Corbin- yes; Custis-yes; Ferguson- yes; Harmon – yes; Pierson – yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

A roll call vote was taken after reconvening in Open Session, at which time each member certified by his/her vote whether only the matters previously disclosed were discussed during Closed Session: **Roll Call Vote:** Hart – yes; Corbin- yes; Custis-yes; Ferguson- yes; Harmon – yes; Pierson – yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

**Appoint Interim Town Manager**

**Motion: To appoint Jamye Salazar to the position of Interim Town Manager with a salary of \$60,000.00 per year for the period that we are actively searching for a permanent Town Manager by**

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**Brian Corbin and seconded by Rose Pierson. Roll Call Vote:** Corbin- yes; Custis-yes; Ferguson- yes; Harmon – yes; Pierson – yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

**Lighthouse Ministries Donation**

Ms. Harmon stated that she would like to donate to Lighthouse Ministries out of the current budget since there are funds remaining for the current fiscal year.

**Motion: To donate \$4,500.00 to Lighthouse Ministries by Claudia Harmon and seconded by Rose Pierson. Roll Call Vote:** Corbin- yes; Custis-yes; Ferguson- yes; Harmon – yes; Pierson – yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

**Town Office Hours**

**Motion: To change the Town Office hours to 9:00am-5:00pm by Brian Corbin and seconded by Bill Ferguson. Roll Call Vote:** Corbin- yes; Custis-yes; Ferguson- yes; Harmon – yes; Pierson – absent; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

**Discussion of the recent behavior of an elected official serving on the Elected Governing Body of the Town of Onley**

Mayor Hart asked that each Council Member keep their comments to three minutes and added that there will be no public comment. Ms. Custis asked Ms. Salazar to state the first three Council Members that called for the meeting. Ms. Salazar stated that Council Members Corbin, Zember, and Pierson were the first that requested the meeting.

Ms. Custis stated that she has issue with the Council Members not being allowed to contact the Town Attorney without the Mayor's approval. She added that the VML Local Government handbook stated that the Town attorney is the Council's counsel. She has issue with emails not being sent to all members of the Council. She stated that employees have been instructed not to speak with Council members. She does not think that hiring and firing should happen without Council's input. The Council meeting should be run by the mayor using Council's rules (according to the handbook). Mayor Hart responded that Council agreed a long time ago that Mayor approval was necessary to contact the attorney due to the high costs associated with legal fees. He added that he has never denied a Council person contacting the attorney. He said that in the matter of the emails, he makes mistakes and leaves someone off occasionally, but it is just a mistake. He added that other Council members have done the same. He said he does not tell town employees not to speak to Council members but there is a chain of command within the police department. As far as hiring and firing, the mayor stated that he follows the charter.

Mr. Corbin said he has issues with some things that were put on Facebook by Mayor Hart. He said that the mayor said some disparaging things about some residents. He said that while he believes in free speech, he wants it known that the mayor does not speak for him, or the Council and he feels it casts a bad light on the whole town. Mayor Hart asked what he said. Mr. Corbin said you lied and stated that Ned Finney spent \$117,000.00 on a set of building plans. Mr. Corbin said that Mr. Finney did not have the authority to spend that amount of money, Council voted and spent the money and Mayor Hart was on Council at that time. Mayor Hart started that he did not vote for it.

Mr. Zember agreed with Ms. Custis about the email problem mentioned. He stated that his issue with Mayor Hart involves the way he runs the meeting. He feels that there is too much audience participation allowed especially for certain people. He asked that Mayor Hart better enforce the three-minute rule and only allow public comments during the scheduled time. He said he feels this is the reason the meetings are so long, and people don't want to attend. He also would like everyone to behave like adults. He also does not approve of the way Mayor Hart uses social media. Mayor Hart responded that

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he feels that if the public has something to say that is pertinent to the topic, he is going to allow it. He offered to cut off public comment if Council wishes. Council does not want that. They stated that they want to hear from the public but feel it should be at the appropriate time during the meeting.

Mr. Ferguson said that he hopes we can put a lot of this stuff behind us with the addition of a Town Manager. He asked that Mayor Hart use caution with Facebook.

Ms. Harmon said that she agrees with many things said already. She especially agreed with the need for Council members to contact the attorney without the mayor's approval. She also has issue with the email problem and stated that she feels that when sending emails, everyone on Council needs to be in the loop. She stated that the hiring practices should reflect Council's need to know who is hired as well as their salary. She asked to see the voting record on the building funds that were mentioned earlier.

Mayor Hart stated in the matter of the emails, Ms. Salazar has always reminded us to not use the "reply all" option as this could be considered an unadvertised meeting. Ms. Salazar agreed that it's not best practice and reminded everyone that emails are covered under FOIA. In the matter of hiring practices, Mayor Hart said that he needs to keep things confidential until the person is hired. This protects their anonymity with their current employer.

Ms. Pierson asked that Mayor Hart make her aware of personnel changes in the future. She added that she was not aware that Lt. Long and Sgt. Coulter had changed places. Mayor Hart apologized and stated that she was out of town when it happened.

**Adjourn**

**Motion: To adjourn at 6:53pm by Rose Pierson and seconded by Woody Zember.**

**Roll Call Vote:** Corbin- yes; Custis-yes; Ferguson- yes; Harmon – yes; Pierson – yes; Zember - yes.

MOTION PASSED

Respectfully Submitted,



Jamye Salazar, Interim Town Manager

Matthew D. Hart, Mayor