

Onley Town Council
Public Hearing & Regular Monthly Meeting
Minutes of November 4, 2024
Onley Town Office, 25308 Lankford Highway, Onley, VA

Council Members Present: Ned Finney, Mayor
Bill Ferguson, Vice-Mayor
Daniel Bloxom
Brian Corbin
Rodney Lang
Woody Zember

Council Members Absent: Kate Hill

Staff Present: Carl Bundick, Town Attorney
E. J. Long, Chief of Police, OPD
Susan Rillo, Town Manager
Jamye Salazar, Clerk/Treasurer

Call to Order

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

Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance

Vice-Mayor Ferguson gave the invocation. Councilman Corbin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Adoption of Agenda

Motion: To adopt the agenda by Daniel Bloxom and seconded by Bill Ferguson. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Public Hearing on Proposed Town Office Construction Budget Re-appropriation

Mayor Finney called the public hearing to order at 6:01 pm. He stated (for the record) that we do have a quorum.

Ms. Salazar read the Rules for Public Participation.

Ms. Salazar gave the following explanation for the purpose of the hearing: *At a Public Hearing on June 3, 2024, the Onley Town Council voted to re-appropriate \$666,847.05 for the purpose of building a new Town Hall. At a Regular Council Meeting on October 7, 2024, Council made a motion to re-allocate \$75,000.00 from the \$666,847.05 for the purpose of completing the Public Works Garage.* This hearing is to hear public comments on the matter.

Billye D. Custis said that you say that you are here tonight to hear from members of the public, but Council made a motion to re-allocate the funds at the last meeting, so she really doesn't see why the public is here to give their opinion. She added that she thought the amount set was "up to" \$75,000.00". She said that her opinion (which she last stated around budget time) is that you don't start a project like this without a general idea of total cost as well as where the money is coming from to complete it. Toni Nelson signed up to speak but did not wish to at this time.

Motion: To adjourn the public hearing at 6:05pm by Brian Corbin and seconded by Daniel Bloxom. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Regular Monthly Meeting (cont'd)

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Onley Recreation Association

Joseph Cuba, President of the Onley Recreation Association, gave an update on the state of affairs at the ORA. He said that he is here tonight because they are getting ready to kick off next season's pricing. He thanked the town for its previous donations and provided some examples of how the money is being used to benefit the town and the surrounding communities. He fielded several questions about the condition of the pool from Councilman Lang. Ms. Salazar added that they are hoping to have an answer to whether the town wants to continue their mutual relationship which provides discounted memberships for town citizens through a yearly donation from the town. Mr. Cuba agreed, adding that they would like to have that information out to prospective members in December. Once a decision is made, Ms. Salazar will notify Mr. Cuba. Council thanked Mr. Cuba for attending the meeting and the very informative update.

Commission/Committee Reports

Planning Commission – Mr. Corbin stated that a couple of meetings ago, Council was provided a draft copy of the Comprehensive Plan. At the last Planning Commission meeting, he asked Ms. Bliss to send him the same document without the edits. Ms. Bliss has provided the copy, but Ms. Salazar has since pointed out (to Mr. Corbin) that the draft watermark will need to be removed, and Ms. Bliss is the only one that can do that since she created the document. Ms. Salazar clarified Mr. Corbin's statement by saying the document should remain in draft format until it is adopted by the Council. Once the document is adopted, the watermark will then need to be removed (by Ms. Bliss). Mr. Corbin would like Council to adopt the Comprehensive Plan as currently written and once the new Council and Planning Commission are seated in January, he would like them to continue to review and make the late entry changes that have just been introduced within the last few months.

Motion: To adopt the Comprehensive Plan as written by Brian Corbin and seconded by Woody Zember. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes.
MOTION PASSED

Ms. Rillo stated that she received an email from Deborah Bliss dated September 16, 2024, notifying her and Council of Ms. Bliss' resignation from the Planning Commission effective December 31, 2024.

Motion: To accept Deborah Bliss' resignation from the Planning Commission effective December 31, 2024, by Rodney Lang and seconded by Daniel Bloxom. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Public Works Garage Committee – Ms. Rillo reported that the building probably will not be delivered until mid to late December so she would like to disburse payment to Boss Buildings before the end of the year. She is waiting for a call back from them with the final amount. Mayor Finney asked about the possibility of ramps or a 4' apron on the front of the building. Ms. Rillo stated that we did not include them because they were very expensive.

Procurement Policy Committee – Ms. Rillo reported that the next meeting will be November 6, 2024, at 6:00pm. Ms. Salazar added that at last meeting, it was suggested that we reach out to VML or VRSA to see if they have a Procurement Policy template. She stated that she did that, and they do not have one. Their recommendation was to do what we have done – reach out to other towns and use those for a guideline.

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At this time, Billye D. Custis stated that she was under the impression that the ARPA money just needs to be allocated by the end of the year, for example a purchase order issued. She added that she does not believe in giving people money when there is nothing to show for it. Ms. Rillo responded that everything that she has read states that the money must be spent by December 31, 2024. Mr. Lang asked for Mr. Bundick's opinion. Mr. Bundick stated that we must follow the ARPA rules to a tee but with respect to handing money over and not having the product in hand, it is a gamble. He suggested that Ms. Rillo have further discussions with the company for assurances. Mr. Lang said that he wants to make sure that before they leave the area after construction, someone inspects the building and makes sure that everything has been done properly. He suggested that Mr. Pitt act as our inspector. Ms. Rillo agreed.

Old Business

Ms. Salazar stated that Council has now heard public comment on the matter discussed earlier at the public hearing and it is now time for Council to decide how they want to proceed with the re-appropriation of the funds.

Motion: To re-allocate \$75,000.00 from the balance of \$666,847.05 from the Town Office Budget to the Public Works Garage budget by Bill Ferguson and seconded by Daniel Bloxom. Roll Call Vote:

Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Ms. Salazar said we did receive one bid for the installation of holiday decorations, but a company representative called Ms. Rillo last week and pulled the bid, so at this time, we have no bids to consider. Mr. Lang suggested that we rent a lift and do the installation ourselves. Council was not in favor of that citing the liability. On the recommendation of Mr. Bundick, Council authorized Ms. Rillo to hire a company to do the installation. Mr. Lang said that before next year, we need to buy a bucket truck and have the Public Works department handle this.

Motion: To authorize Susan Rillo to hire a company (spending up to \$12,500.00) to install the holiday decorations by Bill Ferguson and seconded by Daniel Bloxom. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

New Business

Ms. Salazar asked Council to make a motion allowing her to write off the tax bills that are under \$2.00 and cannot be combined with other bills. She said that we have 40 bills totaling \$38.07.

Motion: To write off 40 tax bills totaling \$38.07 because they are under \$2.00 and cannot be combined with other bills by Bill Ferguson and seconded by Daniel Bloxom. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom - yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Ms. Salazar explained that in the past, we have given the ORA a donation and asked that they use the donation to cover the cost of half off pool memberships for town citizens. She added that we enter into a written agreement with them spelling out all the terms. Mr. Ferguson asked if Council is eligible for the discount. Ms. Salazar said that an inquiry to that effect was made to VML, and they determined that Council is eligible for the discount. There is no conflict of interest.

Motion: To donate \$5,000.00 to the ORA with the same terms as previous years for the benefit of town citizens by Bill Ferguson and seconded by Daniel Bloxom. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Department Reports

Police Report

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Chief Long presented his written report to Council noting a “dip” in the officer’s ticket numbers. He said that he has spoken with them about that without crossing any lines concerning quotas. He reported that the speed sign has been moved to Coastal Blvd. He has ordered another battery for the speed sign because the solar panels are not keeping them charged. He is planning to ship the unit on Pennsylvania Avenue back to the company for a diagnostic test to see why the batteries are not working properly. The in-car computers are expected to be shipped on November 6th. Once they arrive, they will be taken (along with the new patrol car) to Mr. Nottingham. The in-car cameras are set to be installed on November 6th & 7th. The Tasley Fire Company is letting us use one of their bays for installation. The E-summons software has been ordered. Lastly, he stated that there was a breach in his email account, and he is working with Cloud Server to get the matter resolved.

Ms. Salazar asked Chief Long if he ordered the yearly subscription fee along with the E-summons software. Chief Long said that he did. Ms. Salazar recommended that he get Council to approve that expenditure since the motion made last month was only for the cost of the software in the amount of \$21,110.00. She said that the annual fee is \$12,977.00 and has not been approved by Council. Mr. Corbin asked Chief Long why his tickets are not in the monthly report. Chief Long stated that he has not written any tickets since he does not have an outfitted patrol car. Mr. Corbin stated that we have four outfitted vehicles, and he does not understand why Chief Long can’t drive one of those vehicles. He added that we have had the new vehicle for over three months and the fact that it has not been outfitted yet is unacceptable. He asked Chief Long what the reason is for allowing officers to drive their cars home. Chief Long said that if there is an incident, they can respond to the call from their home using lights and sirens. Mr. Corbin stated that there is no point in Chief Long driving the new vehicle home every day when he cannot respond to events with lights and sirens since it is not outfitted with the proper equipment.

Motion: To have one officer (Chief Long’s choice) leave their vehicle at the office for Chief Long to drive when he is on shift starting tomorrow by Brian Corbin and seconded by Woody Zember. Roll Call

Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Mr. Corbin said that last month, he asked for the speed sign report to be cut down to two pages and that has not happened. He suggested it again. Chief Long did not remember that but said he will take care of it moving forward.

Mr. Lang asked Chief Long when all the patrol cars will be outfitted with everything that they need. Chief Long said it will be by the end of the year. Mr. Lang suggested that in the future we ask about the time frame for work. He said that he might be in favor of paying a little more if we could have the work done sooner. He agreed with Mr. Corbin that outfitting the new car has taken too long. Mayor Finney asked Chief Long why he can’t leave the car at Mr. Nottingham’s and have him start the installation of the equipment that he does have and install the computer once it arrives. Council asked Chief Long to make that request of Mr. Nottingham and deliver the car to him tomorrow.

Motion: To pay the annual fee for the E-Summons software system in the amount of \$12,977.00 by Daniel Bloxom and seconded by Rodney Lang. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Treasurer’s Report

Ms. Salazar reported that the auditors were here from October 16 – 18 and both FY23 and FY24 were audited. She reported that verbally they reported that everything looked great, and they will be in touch within the next couple of months with closing entries and written reports for everyone to review. She is not sure that they will come back and present the report, but she will check with them about options.

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She has submitted for the ATL grant and received notification that it has been received. If there are no issues, the grant should be sent to us on December 20th and Council can distribute it at the January 2025 meeting. She reported that 2024 tax bills have been mailed and payments are coming in already. She has an issue with a business that is almost three months delinquent with meals tax, and she would like Council's permission to meet with Mr. Bundick about collection options. Council agreed.

There were no questions about her financial report.

Motion: To pay the October 2024 payables by Daniel Bloxom and seconded by Bill Ferguson. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Ms. Salazar asked for permission to transfer \$50,000.00 from the PNC money market account to the PNC regular checking account to cover checks and maintain a small cushion in the account. Mr. Corbin asked if it's normal to have to continually transfer money. Ms. Salazar said that is has not been the norm, but we are spending a lot of money right now and basically, we are spending more than we are taking in at the moment. She further explained that the ARPA funds also are funneled through the regular checking account, and we have spent most of that at this time. She said that she believes that we will "right ourselves" but currently expenses are greater than revenue, adding that revenue will increase as we progress further into the fiscal year. Mr. Corbin asked if we are spending within the guidelines of the budget line items. Ms. Salazar said we are spending within our budget line-item guidelines.

Motion: To transfer \$50,000.00 from the PNC money market account to the PNC regular checking account by Daniel Bloxom and seconded by Bill Ferguson. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Ms. Salazar told Council that the interest rate on the money market account at Atlantic Union has dropped to .50% while the PNC Bank money market is earning 4.5%. She was planning to ask Council's permission to move the funds, but she was contacted today by a representative from Atlantic Union, and they are offering the following rates: 4.80% for 90 days and 4.43% for 180 days. Ms. Salazar said that in anticipation of rates dropping, she would like to lock down the 4.43% rate for 180 days if Council agrees.

Motion: To transfer \$750,000.00 from the Atlantic Union money market account to an Atlantic Union CD with a rate of 4.43% by Brian Corbin and seconded by Rodney Lang. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Town Manager's Report

Ms. Rillo reported that we had a very good Trunk or Treat event. She said that she and Ms. Salazar made 376 treat bags, and she and Mayor Finney gave out every bag by 7:20. She would like to have more participants next year. The Veterans Day Celebration picnic will be Saturday, November 9th at 12:00pm. She would like everyone to attend.

Attorney's Report

Mr. Bundick reported that it has been a quiet month.

Consideration of Minutes

Motion: To adopt the minutes of the October 7, 2024, Regular Monthly Meeting by Bill Ferguson and seconded by Rodney Lang. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Motion: To adopt the minutes of the October 21, 2024, Special Meeting by Rodney Lang and seconded by Bill Ferguson. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom -yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

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Public Comments

Billye D. Custis reiterated what Ms. Salazar said earlier in the night in reference to the operating budget. She told Mr. Corbin that things are not bad, it just looks that way since the ARPA funds are coming out of the operating budget, but the revenue side was not put in there. Ms. Salazar agreed that things are not bad but added that the ARPA expenses are not coming out of the operating budget, however, they are funneled through the same regular checking account which is why there has been a need to transfer funds. She said that the budget versus actual report (in the monthly packet) is a good representation of the actual revenue and expenses, however it does not include ARPA expenses. Toni Nelson signed up to speak but did not wish to at this time.

Council Comments

Mr. Lang thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He said that he is hoping to be re-elected tomorrow. Lastly, he said that Council needs to be more frugal with money, especially when working on big projects.

Mr. Bloxom thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He reminded everyone to vote, adding that it's a privilege as a citizen of this country. He said it has been his privilege to serve on Council and he hopes to serve another two years.

Mr. Corbin agreed with Mr. Lang, and he said he understands what Ms. Custis is saying but he gets nervous when we are spending more than we are taking in on the revenue side. He said that next year there are no ARPA funds so it's going to be a different year. He agreed with Ms. Salazar that we have spent a lot of money outside of ARPA. He thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Mr. Zember thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He said he would like to cut back on spending, adding that we have spent a lot, and it hasn't all been APRA funds. He would like to continue to pursue building a new town office or purchasing a building for that purpose.

Mr. Ferguson thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He thanked the employees for their hard work. He said it has been a pleasure serving on Council and he hopes to continue into next term.


Mayor Finney wished everyone good luck tomorrow. He said he thinks things are being done well and he appreciates that there is not a lot of bickering among the Council. He thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn (7:15pm) by Bill Ferguson and seconded by Daniel Bloxom. Roll Call Vote: Bloxom - yes; Corbin- yes; Ferguson- yes; Hill – absent; Lang– yes; Zember - yes. MOTION PASSED

Respectfully submitted,


Jamye L. Salazar, Clerk/Treasurer


Henry E. Finney, Mayor