

January 10, 2022

A work session of Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, January 10, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Plaster called the work session of January 10, 2022, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present: Jim Justis, Tim Leeth, David Raynes, Michael Kohl, and Mark Sterling. ABSENT: Joshua Bailey.

Other Town Officials present were: Town Attorney Nathan Miller, Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Town Clerk Tara Morris, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Parks/Tourism Director Austin Shank, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

Mayor Plaster said the first item on the agenda is the 2021 end of the year summary. Town Manager McAlister this has been a busy year for the Town and even with the amount of turn over the town has seen; staff has continued working together to get a lot of projects done. She said everyone has a copy of the summary they can review. Manager McAlister said there has been some problems with filling vacancies in the police department. She said other localities are having the same issues and now are offering sign on bonuses or assistance with family health insurance plans and asked if council wants to consider any type of recruitment incentives.

Mayor Plaster said the next item of the agenda is the February Council Meeting date. Manager McAlister said we have heard some feedback saying that we should hold this meeting on Valentine's Day so that people can come and express their views on chickens. Council decided to move the meeting to Tuesday, February 15, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Fire Department. Clerk Morris confirmed the date change with the Planning Commission.

Mayor Plaster said the next item on the agenda is Planning Commission applications received. Manager McAlister said we have received two applications and feels that we need to give more time since the newsletter recently went out. Council decided to review this again in March.

Mayor Plaster said next item on the agenda is a draft of the strategic plan. Manager McAlister handed council a draft copy of the strategic plan and asked them to review it before the next retreat, so everyone is prepared to move forward with goals and planning.

Mayor Plaster adjourned the work session at 6:47 p.m.

January 10, 2022

A regular session of Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, January 10, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Plaster called the regular session of January 10, 2022, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. Mayor Plaster asked Clerk Morris for a roll call.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present: Jim Justis, Mark Sterling, David Raynes, Michael Kohl, and Tim Leeth. ABSENT: Joshua Bailey.

Other Town Officials present: Attorney Nathan Miller, Clerk Tara Morris, Town Manager Stefanie McAlister, Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director A.J. Hummel, Parks/Tourism Director Austin Shank, and Police Chief Jason Sullivan.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion by Council member Raynes, seconded by Council member Leeth, and carried by a vote of 5-0, voting recorded as follows: RAYNES – AYE; STERLING – AYE; LEETH – AYE; KOHL – AYE, JUSTIS – AYE; the Council approved the minutes of the December 13, 2021 meetings with one correction. Council member Mark Sterling was absent and was recorded as voting.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND CLAIMS (public comment)

Bucky Berry addressed the Council and thanked Chief Sullivan and the Council for their support to the Brent Berry Food Drive. Mr. Berry said this is the best year they have ever had. He said they collected five county bus loads in Bridgewater. Mr. Berry said Broadway Police helped work the food drive and that he really appreciates everything that everyone does to support this event. He said they collected enough food this year for a two-year supply. Mr. Berry presented Chief Sullivan with a plaque for participating in the food drive. He said this is the second year that the Grottoes Police Department has participated.

Scott Sacra addressed the Council with a safety concern. He said there are some streetlights out and asked how the town goes about getting them fixed. Chief Sullivan said that each month he has a nighttime officer go around town and then a list is submitted to Dominion Virginia Energy. He said once they are submitted it's a matter of when Dominion can get out here to get them fixed. Mr. Sacra said there's a light out on Forest Avenue, but the biggest concern is the streetlight at Lil' Gus's is out, and it makes it hard to see people crossing the street. He asked if

the Town is going to put lighting on the opposite side of Dogwood for the parking area and Mayor Plaster replied that we are still looking at what needs to be done in that area.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEE:

FINANCE – Council member Raynes made a motion, seconded by Council member Justis, and carried by a vote of 5-0, voting recorded as follows: RAYNES – AYE; STERLING – AYE; LEETH – AYE; KOHL – AYE, JUSTIS – AYE; to approve the financial reports for the month of December.

WATER AND SEWER – no report

ORDINANCE, HEALTH AND PROPERTY – no report

STREET AND STREET LIGHTS – no report

PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES – no report

SPECIAL EVENTS – no report

PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION – Thanked the staff for all their hard work during the recent snowstorm.

STAFF REPORTS

TOWN MANAGER. A written report was provided. Manager McAlister said the personal property tax bills has been very troublesome since the county changed to a new software company. She explained that the data file provided by the county did not match up to our software data format. If we had our software company write a data conversion it was going to cost \$9,500.00. She said she didn't feel comfortable with doing that since the county was having data problems too. Manager McAlister said that Rhonda has been going through each bill and manually making the appropriate changes. She said entering the bill payments into our system will be another challenge that we are working on solutions for. Manager McAlister said this was in her staff report but she wanted to explain it more thoroughly now, to give council a better understanding.

ATTORNEY. Mr. Miller informed the Council that the Charter change is moving along in the General Assembly and should be on the docket this session. He also informed them that he has a title company researching ownership of railroad alley back to 1896 so that we can proceed with taking that alley. Mr. Miller said that we have collected previous taxes from two delinquent parcels in town. He stated it wasn't much money, but they are back on the books and we should start collecting each year for those parcels.

TREASURER. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

ASSISTANT TO TOWN MANAGER. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

POLICE CHIEF. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

PUBLIC WORKS. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

RECREATION AND TOURISM DIRECTOR. A written report was provided. There were no additional comments from staff and no questions or comments from Council members.

NEW BUSINESS –

ELECTION OF VICE MAYOR.

Mayor Plaster advised Council member Raynes currently serves as Vice Mayor and asked if anyone would like to make a nomination for Vice Mayor.

Council member Leeth nominated David Raynes for Vice Mayor, seconded by Council member Sterling.

Voting to affirm Council member Raynes as Vice Mayor – Council member Kohl, Council member Leeth, Council member Sterling; – Council member Justis, Abstaining from the vote – Council member Raynes.

SETTING OF DATE AND TIME OF MEETING.

On motion by Council member Justis, seconded by Council member Leeth, and carried by a vote of 5 to 0, voting recorded as follows: KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; STERLING – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE, the Council approved Resolution #20220110-01 pertaining to the Meeting Date and Times for 2022 and Inclement Weather Policy

RESOLUTION

#20220110-01

ORDINANCE AND RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH THE DATES AND TIMES OF THE WORK SESSIONS AND REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF GROTTUES, VIRGINIA, FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2022

WHEREAS the Charter of the Town of Grottoes, Virginia (the “Town”) requires the Town Council (the “Council”) of the Town approve an ordinance to set forth the regular meeting times of the Council; and

WHEREAS Va. Code § 15.2-1416 requires the Council to pass a resolution establishing such regular meeting times at the organizational meeting of the Council following the election of the new members thereof.

THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF GROTTUES, VIRGINIA, to-wit:

1. A) Meeting Date and Times for 2022. In accordance with the Town Charter, beginning January 10, 2022, and the second Monday of each month thereafter, the meeting of the Council shall commence with a work session at 6:00 p.m., followed at 7:00 p.m. by the regular meeting, with the following exception: the meeting in February shall be held on Tuesday, February 15, 2022, beginning at 6:00 p.m., and the meeting in October shall be held on Wednesday, October 12, 2022, beginning at 6:00 p.m.

B) Inclement Weather Policy for Council Meetings for 2022. If a meeting cannot be held due to inclement weather or for any reason as determined by the mayor, of the Vice-Mayor if the Mayor is not available, the meeting will be held at the scheduled time on the following Monday, unless otherwise determined by the Council.

2021 COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS.

Mayor Plaster asked if anyone had any comments on the proposed committee assignments for 2022.

With no changes being made, a motion by Council member Kohl, seconded by Council member Raynes, and carried by a vote of 5 to 0, voting recorded as follows: KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; STERLING – AYE; JUSTIS - AYE, the Council approved the following committees for 2022:

2022 Committee Assignments

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chair: David Raynes
Jo Plaster
Tim Leeth

PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION COMMITTEE

Chair: Jo Plaster
Mark Sterling
Michael Kohl

ORDINANCE, HEALTH AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Chair: Michael Kohl - Planning Commission Liaison
Joshua Bailey
Mark Sterling

SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE

Chair: Tim Leeth
James Justis
Jo Plaster

WATER & SEWER COMMITTEE

Chair: Joshua Bailey
David Raynes
Tim Leeth

PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Chair: Mark Sterling
James Justis
Michael Kohl

STREETS AND STREET LIGHTS COMMITTEE

Chair: James Justis
Joshua Bailey
David Raynes

CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS.

On motion by Council member Justis, seconded by Council member Leeth, and carried by a vote of 5 to 0, voting recorded as follows: KOHL – AYE; LEETH – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; STERLING – AYE; JUSTIS - AYE, the Council approved Resolution #20220110-02 reaffirming and readopting a Code of Conduct and Ethics for the Members of the Grottoes Town Council, as follows:

**RESOLUTION
20220110-02**

**A RESOLUTION TO REAFFIRM AND ADOPT A CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS
FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE GROTTUES TOWN COUNCIL**

WHEREAS, the Town of Grottoes Council has previously determined that the adoption of a Code of Conduct and Ethics is important to emphasize the imperatives of integrity, fairness, and accountability in local government.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Grottoes Town Council this 10th day of January 2022, the following Code of Conduct and Ethics, including Conduct and Ethical Standards, are hereby reaffirmed, and adopted:

GROTTOES TOWN COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS

PREAMBLE.

The citizens of Grottoes are entitled to fair, ethical, accountable, and effective local government. Such a government requires that public officials:

- Comply with both the letter and the spirit of the laws, ordinances. and policies affecting government.
- Be independent, impartial, and fair in their judgment and actions.
- Use their public office for the public good, not for personal gain.
- Conduct public deliberations and processes openly.
- Act with respect and civility.

To this end, the Grottoes Town Council has adopted this Code of Conduct and Ethics to emphasize the imperatives of integrity, fairness, and accountability in local government.

1. Act in the Public Interest

Recognizing that stewardship of the public interest must be their primary concern, Council Members shall work for the common good of the people of Grottoes and not for any private or personal interest. They will treat all persons, claims, and transactions in a fair and equitable manner.

2. Conduct of Members

Council Members shall at all times restrain from abusive conduct, personal charges, or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of the Town Council, boards, commissions, committees, staff, or the public.

3. Respect for Process

Council Member duties shall be performed in accordance with the processes and rules established by the Town Council. A Council Member shall respect a decision once it has been made by the majority of Council.

4. Communication

It is the responsibility of Council Members to share substantive information that is relevant to a matter under consideration that they have received from sources outside of the decision-making process with all other Council Members.

Council Members shall interact with one another honestly, forthrightly, and respectfully. Discussions shall focus on issues, policies, and other substantive matters relating to the function of Town government.

5. Confidential Information

Council Members shall respect and preserve the confidentiality of information provided to them concerning the matters of the Town. They shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization nor use such information to advance their personal, financial, or private interests.

6. Advocacy

To the best of their ability, Council Members shall represent the official policies and positions of the Town Council. When presenting their personal opinions or positions, members shall explicitly state that they do not represent the Council or the Town.

7. Positive Work Environment

Council Members shall support and maintain a positive and constructive environment for residents, businesses, Town employees, and others involved in Town activities.

8. Compliance

The Grottoes Town Council Code of Conduct and Ethics expresses standards of ethical conduct expected of Members of the Grottoes Town Council.

Members of the Council have the primary responsibility to ensure that ethical standards are understood and met, and that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of the Town Council.

TOWN OF GROTTUES, VIRGINIA

Conduct and Ethical Standards

Guidelines and Suggestions to Maintain Good Working Relationships

1. Relationships with other Council Members

A Council Member wants to be a success in getting certain policies approved and carried out. The most important factor in determining whether this will happen is the attitude of other Council Members. They are a crucial audience.

Questions you need to ask yourself:

- Do you act in a way that suggests you are concerned primarily with your own benefit (or a select group)? Or does your behavior convince your colleagues that you are acting in the best interest of the entire town?
- Do you help your colleagues obtain the information they need to participate effectively? Or do you try to look good at their expense?
- Do you try to get everyone to agree on an issue? Or are you satisfied once you know the majority is achieved?
- In short: Do you compete or cooperate?

A Council Member will be respected by colleagues if the Member behaves in a way that is seen as fair as well as effective. Knowing and understanding your colleagues is central to establishing, building, and maintaining effective relationships.

Keys to working well together:

- Be willing to listen to others.
- Respect others' skills and attitudes.
- Keep an open mind.
- Disclose yourself to others openly and freely. Express your opinion and let colleagues learn why you think the way you do on issues.
- Make a conscientious effort to be well prepared for each meeting.
- Offer criticism of colleagues only in private meetings with appropriate individuals or in closed meeting.
- **ADHERE TO THE ESTABLISHED CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS**

2. Remember the Rule of Four!

When it comes to adopting policy, or getting any item approved in our community, you need to remember the Rule of Four. A simple question you need to ask is, "How many citizens does it take to get any policy or action item approved?" The answer is four. The point is the three additional citizens you convince have to currently share a position with you on the Council or one of them be the Mayor. Obviously, your own mind is made up on an issue, if

you persuade three other Council Members or two and the Mayor (in case of ties) in your favor, then the motion will pass. So, although the citizens are very important in what we do, when it comes to approving policy and items at hand, you need to convince your colleagues. It is easier to accomplish this by working with them instead of alienating them.

3. Management of Conflict

Council Members who don't think and act as part of a team, who are difficult to get along with, most often become ineffective. They are left out of the decision-making process, which is a loss to the entire Council. Disagreements among Council Members are inevitable, and a normal part of any decision-making process. It is important that disagreements do not interfere with cooperative processes. The most serious paralysis a Council can have is the inability of Members to work with one another. This inability becomes visible to the community and reduces the Council's political authority within the community. The interests of individual Members become personal and apparently more important than the interests of other citizens. To manage conflict constructively may require that ground rules be established, so that an atmosphere can be created where differences can be raised, and respectful dialogue can occur.

4. Relationships with Town Staff

Staff bashing is tempting for a Council Member who wants to look good to those who are complaining. But the local government pays a heavy price for such behavior. The morale of town employees is likely to decline if the Council expects the laws to be enforced, but then publicly jumps on those responsible for enforcement. Therefore, Council Members should be careful about how they deal with specific complaints about staff expressed at a public meeting.

Things to remember about staff relationships:

- Treat all employees with courtesy and respect.
- Avoid publicly criticizing any employee in any way that reflects on the competence and integrity of the employee.
- Don't try to resolve controversies during a public meeting.
- Make clear to a citizen that the complaint will be addressed and ask the Town Manager to appoint a staff member to contact the citizen.
- Don't let the staff be blamed for major policies, since those are the responsibility of the Council.
- Remember that the success of every policy depends on its implementation by an effective staff.
- If there is a problem with a staff person, resolve it in private rather than at a public meeting (or the press). Raise concerns about employees with the Town Manager, and concerns about the Town Manager with the Mayor.

Town Manager- Council Relationships

- Council Members must understand that their role is to develop policy, not get involved in administration. Such activity can erode the manager's authority with staff members and often lead to morale and productivity problems within the staff.
- Council Members should maintain consistent positions in both their public declarations and their private discussions with the Town Manager. Our actions can increase or minimize the quality of work by our Town Manager and Staff.
- All dealings with town staff should be handled via the Town Manager, unless he or she prescribes otherwise.

5. Relationships with the Media (Print, Radio, TV, Websites)

- When talking with the media, avoid attacking others, even if they attacked you. Don't let an aggressive reporter or citizen lure you into battle. Fighting with a citizen, staff member, or fellow Council person can make you look small minded and divert attention from what you were elected to do. Resist the urge to be vindictive.
- While Facebook, blogs, wikis and other forms of online discourse are individual interactions, please remember that to our citizens, you are always a representative of the Town of Grottoes. We have an official Town website and Face book page for our town and that content is controlled by Town Staff
- Please refrain from conducting any town related business on personal websites. If you receive questions via personal websites, please direct people to our official Town website or Facebook page to find information and/or post comments.

6. Relations with the Public (Citizens)

- Avoid a private lifestyle that casts public doubt upon the integrity and competence of the town government
- Pay all taxes due to the county, state, or national government.
- Work to create a positive environment in public meetings where citizens will feel comfortable in their roles as observers or participants.
- Be tolerant. Allow citizens, employees, or colleagues sufficient opportunity to present their views.
- Be respectful and attentive. Avoid comments, body language or distracting activity that conveys a message of disrespect for the presentations from citizens, personnel or colleagues.

- When making comments, make sure you clarify when you are speaking individually and not for the Council as a whole.
- There will be times when we are asked to speak at public meetings, with the media, post comments on websites, etc. If you are sharing your personal thoughts and/or opinions, you need to make this clear to your audience by stating your comments do not represent the Council as a whole.
- Reflect on your comments before you speak to make sure they cannot be misinterpreted. Comments based on fact and forethought will hopefully eliminate any possible misunderstandings.
- Serious issues should be discussed as a whole (Council and Staff) before public comments are made.
- Remember that even though you are an individual, in the eyes of the public and media, you represent the Council and our community. Choose your words wisely and make decisions appropriately.

OLD BUSINESS – none

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Plaster declared the meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m