

REGULAR WORK SESSION OF THE FARMVILLE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON DECEMBER 1, 2021

At the regular work session of the Farmville Town Council held on Wednesday, December 1, 2021, at 11:00 a.m., in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall, 116 North Main Street, Farmville, Virginia, there were present Mayor David E. Whitus, presiding, and Council members A.D. Reid, D.E. Dwyer, D.L. Hunter, G.C. Cole, S.O. Amos, B.R. Vincent.

Staff present were Town Manager C. Scott Davis, IT Support Ashley Atkins, and Deputy Clerk Jackie Vaughan.

Mayor Whitus called the work session to order.

Mayor Whitus announced that former Mayor Syd Newman passed away last night and noted Mayor Newman served with distinction for almost 38 years as a Town Councilman (1976-1998), and Mayor (1998-2014). From his love of flying and the Farmville Airport, Council had renamed the Farmville Airport to what is now known as “Newman Field”. A moment of silence was given in honor of Mayor Newman’s memory. Prayers are with his family during this time.

The Clerk called the roll, noting Council member T.M. Pairet as absent, however arrived late to the meeting.

RECOGNITION OF EMPLOYEE 25th ANNIVERSARY – BOBBY WISE

The Town Manager recognized Bobby Wise for his 25-year service to the Town of Farmville and reported the Town recognizes at a public meeting each employee who has served 25 years with the Town and a gift is provided in appreciation of their service. Mr. Wise was presented with a Town of Farmville watch for his service in the Public Works department. He began employment in May 1996 as a Laborer I, worked as a Laborer II and a Meter Reader, and in 2008 advanced to Supply Room Technician where he is today.

REQUEST FOR STREET CLOSURE

On a motion by Mr. Hunter, seconded by Mr. Vincent, and with all members voting “aye”, Council approved the request for the street closure.

BACKGROUND: The Town Manager reviewed the request from the Farmville United Methodist Church for a street closure of Buffalo Street, between High Street and St. George Street, on Sunday, December 5, between 4:30 PM-6:30 PM. The reason for the request is for a community gathering for Christmas carols and hot chocolate. This street is not a major thoroughfare especially at that time of day.

**DISCUSSION OF PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT AND POLICE DEPARTMENT
SALARIES AND WAGES**

The Town Manager has talked for several months about the ability to recruit and retain certain positions in Public Works and the Police Department. A proposal is brought for discussion today for Council's consideration at next week's meeting to draft some type of resolution since being in the middle of a budget year of how some funds would be changed around. A formal agreement is not being requested today.

To be competitive with other areas our size and in our geographic area, an adjustment of the starting pay of only the Police Officer position to \$45,000. is being proposed. Only existing employees that make under \$45,000 in that specific position will receive the increase. Town Manager provided Council with the information prior to this meeting. It was noted the state provides annual 599 funding for Public Safety which is used towards salaries. This year the state provided an additional allotment of 599 funds, \$17,482, to be used by March 2023 but reserved it for retention, recruitment, and training only. Being recommended is changing the Officer pay with most of those employees getting an increase and use the \$17,482 under the retention piece of the funding for a one-time \$1000 retention payment for each additional sworn employee in the police department and we would be in compliance with the funding.

The Town Manager advised there is a need in the Public Works department of filling the Laborer I position primarily, as well as the Laborer II position. Council previously talked about how to get these two positions to the \$15/hr. and 16/hr. mark. There just is not a way to do that in the middle of a budget year. The Town should look at incrementally adjusting those pay levels every year to the desired levels for example over a five-year period. A starting pay of \$11.73/hr. for Laborer I has proven to be difficult to attract quality applicants. It is being suggested to move that rate to \$12.50/hr. and then also move the Laborer II rate of \$13.56/hr. to \$14.56/hr. These increases would cost approximately \$61,000. As we move into this next budget year, we will need to look at how wages could be increased. With making future increases to \$15/hr. and \$16/hr. there will be the need to look at employees in other more skilled positions and to look at the organization as a whole and gradually change the wages so staff can be retained but also recruit more quality applicants. This suggestion is what is affordable in the middle of a budget year using General Fund Contingency Funds while not depleting the fund in case of an emergency.

To receive further clarification, Council members discussed the proposed salary increase with the Town Manager. Mr. Davis advised his recommendation is if an Officer is under the \$45,000 new minimum, then they would get the percent of increase. The current starting salary is \$38,250. The percent of difference is 17.7% when you go to \$45,011.20 which is what is being recommended. Anyone who is under the minimum would get the 17.7% increase. Anyone who is already over \$45,000, would not get that increase. Mrs. Amos expressed her concern if a seasoned officer could be making less than a new officer coming in. Mr. Davis advised a new officer is going to get \$45,000, and whatever the officer is making now they will get a 17.7% increase. If someone makes \$40,000 right now, they are going to make \$47,000. The new person will earn \$45,000.

To further clarify Mrs. Amos' question, Mr. Cole gave an example of the proposed increase. Mr. Davis reported according to his records, there is only one person that will not get an increase due to that person already earning the maximum highest salary.

Mr. Reid made an inquiry as to that maximum highest salary. Mr. Davis reported the employee earns \$57,000.

Mr. Davis reported on his recommendation, and he plans to bring a resolution next week to make the salary increase effective after the first of the year. If Council has any adjustments, it will be deferred longer to review the figures to see how any changes affect the budget.

Mr. Vincent noted the budget adjustment in the middle of the year and working within certain confines, and that some forward progress is good.

Mr. Hunter advised there needs to be an adjustment of the pay scale.

Mayor clarified with Mr. Davis that he will come back with a resolution for Council next week.

DISCUSSION OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Mr. Reid brought up his concern if Council Standing Committees are still needed. After committees meet, the committee members still come back to Council as a whole. It is suggested each committee could meet as a whole as the item will be discussed anyway. He checked with other localities and most of them do not have standing committees to discuss what is going on instead of meeting as a committee and bringing the item back to Council.

Mr. Dwyer reported liking the idea of all Council members being in on the discussion of items. With it being difficult sometimes to attend all the different committee meetings in a month

and maybe if there was a combined meeting for all committees, he would be more knowledgeable on broad topics that are now committee discussions. He supports the elimination of committees.

Mr. Vincent followed Mr. Dwyer with it being sometimes difficult to fit the multiple committee meetings into his schedule. His focus is on transparency and accountability and having one meeting that is broadcasted and made available to the public. Mr. Vincent would like those committee discussions broadcast to the public. The idea was placed on his Council Facebook page. He reported people were very receptive of the idea being able to tune in and have that accessibility.

Mr. Hunter reported no heartburn the way it is being done but reports to be careful as you might get what you ask for.

Mr. Cole reported smaller committees delve into subjects that may not necessarily need full Council approval. Committees try to be designed so that those with certain skills or knowledge provide some counsel to staff. Mr. Cole reports not being in favor of committees as a whole.

Mr. Reid reported he believes the whole Council would like to know what is going on in the committee meetings.

Mr. Cole reported everyone is welcome to attend. The meetings are not closed so if Council wants to come to the Finance Committee meeting, they can do so. Council members receive the notices, agendas, and the minutes are provided to them.

Mr. Hunter reported being able to call in if you want to listen to the meeting and be part of the meeting.

Mr. Vincent inquired if the Town Manager's office could be wired for live-feed of committee meetings.

Mayor reported previously providing his comments on this topic. The elimination of Council Standing Committees could vastly impact the Town. A lot of work is done within committees. If committees are taken away, you will not have that level of knowledge and understanding. There will be no Chairman, no person to see that those areas are tended to. Mayor encourages keeping at least the Finance and Public Safety Committees.

Mr. Reid reported that Council needs to think as one.

Mayor advised for Council to think about it. The matter can be voted on next week. There is transparency. Committees are open and can meet in council chambers and be televised.

Mr. Pairet inquired if the Finance Committee has ever gone into a closed session in the meeting to where those closed session minutes would not be relayed to us as a group. He also inquired of Mr. Cole if he had to guess the number of times in closed session in the last seven years.

Mr. Cole reported very rarely has the Finance Committee gone into closed meeting and everything that is done in the Finance committee, recommendations are brought back to Council and recorded in the minutes. Mr. Cole noted being glad to answer questions on the minutes and reported having a closed meeting less than five times to discuss selling or disposing of assets or counsel of attorney for accounts that were delinquent.

Mr. Reid inquired of the purpose of the Personnel Committee. Mayor advised primarily it is to hire the Town Manager and screen applicants for appointments for open positions on committees and make recommendations to Council. If the Town Manager chooses to use the Personnel committee for any disciplinary action, this would be a recommendation back to Council.

COMMENTS BY TOWN MANAGER AND STAFF

Mr. Davis reminded everyone of the Christmas Parade to be held on Sunday, December 5th, 2021, the first Sunday in December.

ANY OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY COME BEFORE THE COUNCIL

There being no other business, on a motion by Mr. Hunter, seconded by Mr. Vincent, and with all Council members voting “aye,” the meeting adjourned at 11:44 a.m.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

David E. Whitus, Mayor

Mary H. McKay, Clerk of Council