

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

February 20, 2024

The Clarksville Town Council and the Clarksville Planning Commission met special session on Tuesday, February 20th, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. to hold a joint public hearing. Council members present were Mayor Bruce Woerner, Vice-Mayor Danny Pittard, Rick Buchanan, Pat Charles, Robert Dennis, and Alexander Rawles. Council member Chris Clarke was absent. Staff Members present were Town Manager Jeff Jones, Treasurer Tara Murphy, Public Works Director Walter Terry, and Police Chief Ricky Wilkinson. Planning Commission members present were Todd Jones, Richard Burnett, Larry Chapman, Luke Lenhart, Leslie Tomlinson, Jeff Jones, and Alexander Rawles.

Call to Order

Mayor Bruce Woerner and Chairman Todd Jones called the joint meeting to order.

Town Manager Jones stated that Chris Jackson of Traffic Road, Chase City, VA, has submitted a request to amend the Town zoning ordinances to allow a pawn shop in a B2 district. He stated that Mr. Jackson has also submitted a special use permit request. He stated that Mr. Jackson has been working with the property owner at 600 Virginia Avenue to rent the property at the corner of 6th Street and Virginia Avenue. He stated that Mr. Jackson wants to open a pawn shop, jewelry repair and sales as well as sell sports memorabilia. Town Manager Jones stated that the Town received comments that were passed on to the Planning Commission and the Town Council.

Mr. Chris Jackson addressed Council regarding his request. He presented a petition with 100 names from people that don't have any issue with a pawn shop at 600 Virginia Avenue. He stated that the pawn industry has been around for 30 years. He stated that when he had a place in Clarksville in 2011, there was no issue. Mr. Jackson stated that a pawn shop is looked upon as having a bad repour. He stated that the name of the shop will be Lakeside Jewelry Repair and Loan. He stated there would be jewelry sales and repair. He stated that there will be a vendor in the shop to sell sports memorabilia. He stated that the shop will also offer collateralized loans for a 45-day term. He stated that this shop offers a place for people to sell items such as jewelry, instruments, electronics, etc. He stated that the business is highly regulated and he works closely with law enforcement. He stated that this shop will provide a vital service for people to sell unwanted items and make money or borrow small amounts of money for a short period of time. Mr. Jackson stated that he doesn't understand the issue because in the other towns, his shops were considered retail. He stated that he had a shop in downtown Farmville across from Greenfront Furniture store. Mayor Bruce Woerner questioned why the last shop closed. Mr. Jackson stated that his last shop was opened in South Hill in February 2020 and then the pandemic hit. He stated that the traffic was gone and no one was going into shops. He stated that the shop he had in Farmville was sold. Mayor Woerner thanked Mr. Jackson for his comments and stated that he would open the floor for public comment.

Public Hearing – Text Change & Special Use Permit

Mayor Woerner opened the public hearing on the text change and special use permit request.

Susan DeMarrais, owner of 600 Virginia Avenue, stated she supports a pawn shop being opened in her building and feels it is a great idea for Clarksville. She stated that people can use this place to resell merchandise rather than using Craigslist and save items from going to the landfill when thrown away. Glenn Edwards of Buffalo Junction stated that he has known Chris for many years and he is very respectful and feels the business will be tastefully done and keep from having another vacant building on Virginia Avenue. He stated that business is similar to a bank on a smaller scale. He feels this would be a better addition to the town rather than a VAPE shop. Rebecca Brooks of Clarksville asked Mr. Jackson if the business would have bars on the windows. Mr. Jackson stated that his businesses have never had bars on the windows.

Ms. Brooks does not support having a pawn shop on Virginia as it does not meet with the same trajectory that Clarksville has been going in with the grant funds for the Town. Randi Felts of 6th Street stated that she lives alone and does not feel comfortable with a pawn shop opening at the end of her street and does not support it. Dale Sturdiven of Merrifield stated that he stands with Mr. Jackson and supports him opening this business. He stated that he visited his businesses while working as a State Trooper and it was a good business. He stated that he stands with small business and the Town will have the special use permit and should support this opportunity. Annette Goard, Minister of the Clarksville Presbyterian Church asked Mr. Jackson if he would be selling guns and Mr. Jackson stated that he probably would sell some guns. Ms. Goard stated that she would be very uncomfortable with guns being sold right across the street from the church she serves. She stated that her church board sent in a letter opposing the pawn shop facility. Mr. Joe Mitchell of Clarksville Furniture stated that he is not opposed to a pawn shop being in Clarksville, he just does not agree with this location. Town Manager Jones stated that he received several letters opposing opening a pawn shop at this location. He read letters from Linda Pulliam, Linda Messier, Jerry Ramsey, Judith Irving, Annette Goard, Lynn Greene, and Carolyn Hite all opposing the pawn shop and granting the special use permit, and Malinda Cherry sent in a letter of support. Richard Burnett questioned the interest rate on the loans. Mr. Jackson stated that the interest rate is 17% on \$100. Mayor Woerner closed the public hearing.

Todd Jones, Chairman of the Planning Commission asked the Planning Commission if there are any comments. Larry Chapman motioned that the request to amend the text of the Clarksville Zoning Ordinance to allow a pawn shop in a B2 district by right or special use permit be denied as a pawn shop does not fit within the desired uses in the historic downtown, seconded by Alexander Rawles. The motion carried with a vote of six in favor and one opposed (Luke Lenhart).

Vice-Mayor Pittard motioned to follow the Planning Commission's recommendation and deny the request to amend the text of the Clarksville Zoning Ordinance to allow a pawn shop as a permitted use in a B2 district by right or special use permit, seconded by Council member Buchanan, and approved by all.

Adjourn

The joint Town Council and Planning Commission meeting was adjourned.

Call to Order

Mayor Woerner called the Town Council meeting to order and provided the invocation.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 16th, 2024 meeting were approved with no additions, deletions, or corrections with a motion by Council member Buchanan, seconded by Council member Dennis, and approved by all.

Presentation of List of Vendors Paid

The list of vendors paid for January 2024 was presented to Council. Council member Dennis motioned to approve the list of vendors paid for January 2024, seconded by Vice-Mayor Pittard and approved by all.

Presentation of Financial Statements

The financial statements for December 2023 were presented to Council. Council member Rawles motioned to approve the financial statements for December 2023, seconded by Vice-Mayor Pittard, and approved by all.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Presentation of Town Operation Reports

The Town Operations report was presented to Council.

Public Works Director Walter Terry stated that the crew repaired water leaks on Virginia Avenue, 2nd Street, and Shiney Rock Road. He stated that the Town purchased a new 2024 Chevrolet K2500 Truck to replace the truck Clay Wootton was driving. He stated that the leaf pickup for this year will end February 29th, 2024, and any leaves will have to be bagged after that date. Mayor Woerner stated that the Council appreciates everything the crew does especially when it is a holiday. Public Works Director Terry stated that he doesn't mind coming in to work. Council member Buchanan asked if the issues were due to weather. Director Terry stated that some of the breaks are due to weather and some just from old transite pipe. He stated that Hwy 15 from Shiney Rock all the way to Hwy 58 is transite pipe that should be replaced due to the age of the pipe as well as 800' on Buffalo Road and some on Rose Hill Avenue and 5th Street. Town Manager Jones stated that Public Utilities Director William Leonard could not be here tonight. He stated that he had been training a new employee at the Waste Plant. He stated that they have had lift station repairs at Forest Hill Street and the 4th Street Station is repaired and operational. Town Manager Jones stated that William has been working on the lead and copper inventory and working with a software company for that.

Presentation of the Police Activity Report

The Police Activity Report was presented to Council.

Police Chief Wilkinson stated that Officer Wootton will be at in-service training from March 18-22 and Officer Dillon will have K9 Wax will be doing maintenance training also. He stated that K9 Wax has been deployed 6 times and is doing really well. Chief Wilkinson stated that Sergeant Jenkins plans the Eggcellent Adventure on March 23rd. He stated that there will be food and games and also a donation box at the door to contribute for next year's event. Town Manager Jones stated the he and Chief Wilkinson have been doing research about naming a bridge or road section to have a memorial in some way to remember Officer Glen Lawson that was lost in the line of duty on March 12th, 1985. He stated that they found out once a bridge is named, the name cannot change according to State stature. He stated that they are going to look at naming section of highway instead and the Chief needs to determine a section that he would like to name in honor of the officer. Town Manager Jones presented Council a packet of information of how the process will work. He stated that they will come back to Council with the plan and a resolution to VDOT from the Town regarding the matter. Mayor Woerner stated that he would help in any way.

Economic Development Update

Town Manager Jones stated that Economic Development Coordinator Tara Tuck is out sick. He stated that the marketing materials, the postcards and note cards are moving well in the retail stores and she is still working on the t-shirts/hats design. He stated that the new tourism website, visitclarksvilleva.com is live. He stated that she met with the mural artist and Mecklenburg County Tourism regarding the installation of the mural on the 4th Street side of the Cottage Barn that will be done in time for the summer tourism season. Town Manager Jones stated that the Johnny Cash tribute band will be playing at the Clarksville Fine Arts Center this weekend and there are only 50 tickets left. He stated that Clarksville now has a presence in the 2024 Virginia Travel Guide and presented Council with a copy. He stated that with the Main Street program, about \$800K in private investment has been spent between 2nd and 8th Street and this is needed in order to remain a part of the Main Street Program. He stated that several properties/buildings have begun work under the façade improvement grant. He stated that she is working with the consulting firm on mapping the area and determining the best placement for signage in and around Town.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Marina Building Update

He stated that the staff had a pre-bid meeting Feb. 1st at 10 a.m. and there was a lot of interest at the meeting. He stated that the bids are due back on February 27th at 2 p.m.

Sewer Plant Improvement Project Update

Town Manager Jones stated that the contractors submitted the correct bond documents and they have submitted and the Rural Development financing is secured. He stated the WACO and Harman Saunders Construction have received the notice to proceed. He stated that Harman Saunders Construction began work yesterday, and they anticipate completion in October 2024. He stated that WACO will begin work the first week of March at the Waste Plant and anticipate completion in January 2025.

Update Water Plant Expansion & Distribution System Upgrades

Town Manager Jones stated that Dewberry, the Utilities Committee, Microsoft, and Mecklenburg County continue to work on the engineering and plans for the water plant expansion and the water and sewer line replacement projects that include pump station upgrades and the construction of the water tank farms. He stated that the design for Lakeside and Boyd's corner pump stations is complete and they are still working to finalize the easement with 7Eleven and the property owners at Boyd's Corner. He stated that Mecklenburg County awarded the bid to WACO, Inc and construction is scheduled to start in March 2024. Town Manager Jones stated that the bid was awarded to Phoenix Fabricators & Erectors, LLC for the elevated tanks and the tank farm with construction to begin in March 2024. He stated that the bids for the ground storage tanks are due back March 5th. He stated that Dewberry is waiting final approval from VDOT and the Corps of Engineers for the design for the Hwy 58 Bridge utilities and the construction will be in the summer of 2024. He stated that the water plant expansion design is in process.

Financial Software Implementation Update

Town Manager Jones stated that the software is working well and Treasurer Murphy stated that the finance module is working well, there just wasn't enough time to complete everything due to sickness.

VA Brownfield – Site Assessment & Planning Grant Update

Town Manager Jones stated that he has to sign an agreement with the firm conducting the site assessment because they are going to work directly with the Town and not through Southside Planning District Commission.

Planters Warehouse Update

Town Manager Jones stated that the contractor continues to make progress on the construction with the roof and putting in windows. He stated that the estimated completion is summer 2024.

Cove Project - Update

Town Manager Jones stated that he met with the team at a kick-off meeting last week. He stated that they are working on surveying and the preliminary design to have that completed by August of 2024. He stated that Dewberry has Tyler Hackett on the project and he is experienced in this field.

Calendar of Events & Tentative Road Closure Schedule

Town Manager Jones presented a list of the upcoming events and the road closure schedule. He stated that Lake Fest will be a two-day event this year again, but the vendors will come on Friday and Saturday.

Mayor Woerner thanked Pat Charles for agreeing to serve on the Town Council.

NEW BUSINESS

Rails to Trails

Town Manager Jones stated that he and Rick Buchanan sat in on a Rails to Trails meeting last month and he agrees to be the Town's representative on the Roanoke River Rails-to-Trials, Inc. He stated that the Council has to pass a resolution designating Council member Rick Buchanan as the Town's representative for the Roanoke River Rails-to-Trials for 2024. Vice-Mayor Pittard motioned to approve the resolution designating Council member Rick Buchanan as the Town of Clarksville's representative on the Roanoke River Rails-to-Trials, Inc. for 2024, seconded by Council member Dennis, and approved by all.

Committee Assignments

Mayor Woerner presented the new committee assignments to Council and stated that he tried to place each one where their expertise would fit.

Planning Commission

Town Manager Jones stated that the Planning Commission had the annual administrative meeting and Todd Jones was appointed as the Chairman, Larry Chapman was appointed the Vice-Chair, and Leslie Tomlinson was appointed as the Secretary. He stated that the commission set some goals to work on such as short-term rentals issues and the comprehensive plan update.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Bruce F. Woerner, Mayor

Tara Murphy, Treasurer/Clerk