

**Narrows Town Council Meeting
February 10, 2020**

Vice Mayor Tom Garrett called the meeting to order. Council members present were Clyde Turner, Jonathan Creger, Tom Garrett, Sarah Thwaites, and Joe Goorskey.

Mayor John Davis was absent.

Staff members present were Lindsey Caudill, Susan Kidd, Benji Ratcliffe, Dakota Shrader, and Debbie Thomas.

The attorney present was Mike Bedsaul.

Vice Mayor Garrett requested a moment of silence.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of January 13th Meeting Minutes

Councilmember Thwaites made a motion to approve the January 13th meeting minutes. Councilman Turner seconded the motion.

Ayes: Goorskey, Thwaites, Garrett, Creger, and Turner

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Consent Agenda

Susan Kidd said Buddy Kast stated the water loss for January was 35% but they are looking into it. The library checked out 75 books and had 21 computer users. They also have a new bench out front from the collection of plastic bags.

Councilman Creger said he had a question about the last page of the budget. The current expenditures based on prior expenditures looks like we are overspending and underearning. Will it balance out more as we get a little further into the year?

Susan Kidd said we receive quarterly payments from local and state entities so those may be a little behind.

Vice Mayor Garrett said right now our year-to-date revenue is far above our year-to-date expenditures.

Vice Mayor Garrett asked if there was any significant flood damage with the recent rains?

Susan Kidd said there was nothing significant.

Councilman Goorskey asked if the bathroom at the rec dept has been fixed?

Dakota Shrader said yes.

Councilman Goorskey made a motion to accept the consent agenda. Councilman Creger seconded the motion.

Ayes: Turner, Creger, Garrett, Thwaites, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Communications, Concerns and Requests from the Public

Austin Hatfield said he would like to have his 2019 personal property taxes abated. He moved to Rich Creek in December 2018 so he should not owe them.

Councilman Creger made a motion to abate the 2019 personal property taxes for Austin Hatfield because the situs of the property was in the county as of January 1, 2020. Councilman Goorskey seconded the motion.

Ayes: Turner, Creger, Garrett, Thwaites, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Tom Spangler said his water was turned off this morning for nonpayment and he is present to ask to have his \$75 water-reconnect fee refunded to him. The town places high-usage notices on resident's doors so they may want to place notices on doors when the water is set to be cut off.

Susan Kidd said his utility bill was received by the wrong customer and they came in and paid it. The utility billing clerk found the mistake and applied the credit to the correct account, which left Mr. Spangler owing a bill. The utility billing clerk tried to call Mr. Spangler (the number did not work) and sent a letter to him letting him know of the mistake. He did not receive the letter by the 10th of the month, which is water cutoff day.

Councilman Creger made a motion to refund the \$75 to Tom Spangler.

Councilmember Thwaites seconded the motion.

Ayes: Goorskey, Thwaites, Garrett, Creger, and Turner

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Jon Bowman said he also had his water turned off this morning and had to pay the \$75 reconnect fee. He did fail to pay all of his water bill but paid most of it. He forgot to pay \$30. Because of this he had his water cut off and this really upset him. Because he did not pay \$36 he had his water cut off. It would not have been so bad but his little seven-year-old girl was at home sick and could not use the bathroom so he had to siphon water from his water tank to flush the commode. His bill said the billing date was the 4th and they received it in the mail on the 5th. He contacted the SEC about it because he wanted to know what the rule was and they said the customer has to receive a bill 10 days before it is due. He feels like he is a criminal.

Vice Mayor Garrett said the bill is sent at the beginning of the month and you have until the end of the month to pay it. You receive a second bill for the following month which shows the past-due amount, if there is one. Town council has decided that there are a number of good people who, for various reasons, occasionally miss paying their water bill. Council decided they would not place the burden on the utility billing clerk as to who they would and would not make an exception for. They cannot simply say, as a general rule, they are going to let past-due water bills go or they will not be paid. This is because there are a small percentage of residents that will take advantage of the situation.

Jon Bowman said he understands that but there has to be a little bit better communication.

Councilman Goorskey asked how we know residents are receiving ten-day notice on past-due bills?

Susan Kidd said once the post office receives the bills we have no control.

Mike Bedsaul said he believes the ten-day notice includes the day it was mailed, not his receipt of it.

Councilman Creger said the process council has in place now works but the \$75 reconnect fee can be refunded to Jon Bowman if that is what he is asking.

Councilman Goorskey said in the short time he has been on council there have been several people stating they have not received their notices in a timely manner or not at all. He does not like leaning on that process.

Susan Kidd said they can choose to have their utility bill emailed to them.

**Councilmember Thwaites made a motion to refund the \$75 reconnect fee to Jon Bowman due to his good payment history. Councilman Creger seconded the motion. Ayes: Goorskey, Thwaites, Garrett, Creger, and Turner
Nays: None
Motion Carried 5-0**

Communication from Mayor and Council

Vice Mayor Garrett said there has been no PSA meeting since the last council meeting.

Councilman Creger said there are blue signs that say “gas, food, lodging” on Route 460. We do not have a gas station in town so can the “gas” portion be covered up?

Susan Kidd said those are state signs.

Councilman Creger said he is pretty sure there was a tractor trailer from West Virginia that thought they could get gas in town. Once there they found out they could not. They were not very happy about it.

Susan Kidd said the sign says “gas” but there is nothing saying there is a gas station.

Councilman Creger asked if we could ask the state to cover it because we do not offer gas?

Police Chief Ratcliffe said all of those signs say that and if there are any retailers that have gas, food, or lodging their placards are placed below that.

Susan Kidd said they can ask the state to take them down.

Councilman Creger asked when there is a position open within the town can we offer it to a town resident?

Susan Kidd said if we have a qualified candidate.

Councilman Creger said of course they would have to be qualified but can they put in the job posting they would prefer to have a town resident?

Mike Bedsaul said he believes you can but localities do advertise job openings and that is only a requirement of the state.

Susan Kidd said our policy is to offer internal jobs to people already working for the town.

Councilmember Thwaites said she appreciates Mr. Spangler and Mr. Bowman coming forward. She has been in their shoes and understands how they feel. She would love to have the staffing to be able to call each person that has a delinquent account and tell them their bill is due.

New Business

None.

Unfinished Business

Susan Kidd said she spoke with Jim Golden concerning offering insurance to cover utility lines to water customers. The names would be gathered either with help from the town or they could do it on their own. They are endorsed by the Virginia Municipal League.

Vice Mayor Garrett said this company is wanting to sell insurance on utility lines and they are asking the town for a list of customers so you can receive an extra piece of mail to see if you want the insurance.

Tom Spangler said he receives a similar piece of mail from AEP every other month.

Debbie Thomas said she also receives the same offer from Columbia Gas.

Matters for Consideration by Council

Susan Kidd said the utility clerk asked her to present the next item on the agenda. Last month when water cutoffs were done on water cutoff day three residents cut their water back on and one resident cut the lock off of the meter. The guys had to be sent back out and sometimes they have to pull the water meter. Tasha Riddle received information from the county on how they handle these situations and that is what has been presented to council tonight.

Mike Bedsaul said the administrative fee that would be charged should be reasonably related to the cost of sending the staff person out to correct whatever the issue is. After talking to Susan Kidd they thought the cost should be around \$200-\$250. These are not parts of staff's normal duties.

Vice Mayor Garrett asked if we bill the people for water used during the time it was supposed to be off? Do we get paid?

Susan Kidd said it is billed and sometimes it gets paid.

Councilman Goorskey asked if they are already not paying their bill and their water is turned back on how will they pay for the fine? How will this be collected?

Mike Bedsaul said the fees that remain unpaid can be collected in the same manner as real estate taxes. If the property was ever sold those fees would have to be paid.

Councilman Goorskey asked what if the resident only rents and does not own the property?

Mike Bedsaul said in that case there is usually a provision in the lease and that is between the tenant and the landlord. All the town can do is try to pursue it against the occupant if they want their water turned back on. There can be a lien placed against the property.

Susan Kidd said she believes Tasha Riddle and the utility guys are just wanting to know if there is a way to stop people from tampering with the meters.

Mike Bedsaul said if they cut the lock off the town can pursue a criminal charge against them.

Vice Mayor Garrett said he would be fine with bringing back to the next council meeting a copy of our policy with recommendations. Is this a policy or an ordinance?

Mike Bedsaul asked if the town has a fee ordinance where they adopt all of their fees on a yearly basis? This could be added to the fee ordinance. This would probably also need to be advertised.

Tom Spangler said recently a tree cutting service cut some trees down on Southview Avenue and there is an ash tree near there that needs to be cut down because if it falls it will take the power line down to the water tank.

Susan Kidd said she would let Buddy Kast know.

Councilman Creger made a motion to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters (Sec. 2.2-3711.A.1). Councilmember Thwaites seconded the motion.

Ayes: Goorskey, Thwaites, Garrett, Creger, and Turner

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Councilman Turner made a motion to return to open session. Councilmember Thwaites seconded the motion.

Ayes: Goorskey, Thwaites, Garrett, Creger, and Turner

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Certification

WHEREAS, the Town of Narrows, has convened an executive meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative-recorded vote and in accordance with the provision of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act: and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification of the Town Council that such executive meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia Law:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE Town of Narrows hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law were discussed in the executive meeting to which this certification resolution applies: and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the executive meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Town Council.

ATTEST: _____

Councilmember Thwaites made a motion to accept the certification. Councilman Turner seconded the motion.

Ayes: Turner, Creger, Garrett, Thwaites, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Mike Bedsaul said the town would have to hold a public hearing to impose or increase a fee.

Councilmember Thwaites made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Turner seconded the motion.

Ayes: Goorksey, Thwaites, Garrett, Creger, and Turner

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Clerk, Debbie Thomas

Mayor, John G. Davis