

**Narrows Town Council Meeting  
April 13, 2020**

Mayor John Davis called the meeting to order. Council members present were Clyde Turner, Jonathan Creger, Tom Garrett, and Sarah Thwaites. Councilman Joe Goorskey was absent. (The following persons attended electronically: John Davis, Clyde Turner, Jonathan Creger, Mike Bedsaul, and Sarah Thwaites)

Staff members present were Susan Kidd and Debbie Thomas.

The attorney present was Mike Bedsaul.

Councilman Jonathan Creger gave the invocation.

All attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of March 9<sup>th</sup> and March 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting Minutes**

**Councilman Garrett made a motion to approve the March 9<sup>th</sup> and March 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting minutes. Councilman Turner seconded the motion.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 4-0**

**Consent Agenda**

Susan Kidd said she and Debbie Thomas are the only department heads in attendance but if council had questions for the other department heads they would make sure they received the message.

Councilman Garrett said we are at 51% for cigarette tax revenue. Do we know if that is going to pick up significantly?

Susan Kidd said 2 rolls of cigarette stamps have been sold since the revenue and expenditure report was ran so that would be an extra \$3,000. She believes this will be down from what was budgeted.

Mayor Davis said he has spoken with several of the public works guys and they really like working the three twelve-hour days. He believes they like the time off also.

**Councilman Creger made a motion to accept the consent agenda. Councilmember Thwaites seconded the motion.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 4-0**

### **Matters for Consideration by Council**

Mayor Davis said they need to schedule dates for budget work sessions and budget public hearings. They also need to consider what platform they are going to use to conduct future meetings. He believes Zoom is about the best platform to use for electronic meetings.

Councilman Creger said he agrees that Zoom is the best platform to use. It has worked very well for him in the past.

Councilman Garrett said he did hear on one of the news stations where they were beginning to raise the question about the security of the Zoom software. We need to keep that in mind.

Susan Kidd said we also need to think about how we are going to let the public interact with Zoom.

Mike Bedsaul said concerning the security issue what has happened is that Zoom is such a popular platform for meeting both in the public sector and the private sector there have been a lot of hackers that will hack into the meeting and they will post a backdrop of pornography or some other type of inappropriate material. They had a private client that had that happen but they have not had that happen to any public entities. The public needs to have a way to watch the meeting and also a way to give comments for the public hearing process. Localities can have the public either call, email, or write their comments. In the notice of the public hearing you can list different ways comments can be submitted and also a due date when they need to be received by. He has seen localities state that the comments need to be received by noon on the day of the meeting.

Mayor Davis said the first budget work session will be held Monday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. This meeting will be held with Zoom.

Susan Kidd asked if any department heads need to be available for the meeting?

Mayor Davis said probably not for the first one.

Councilmember Thwaites said they can be in attendance if they want to.

Mike Bedsaul said he would like to explain all of the different notice requirements they may have to factor in the dates they schedule their public hearings and meetings as part of the budget and tax-rate process. For the budget process (the budget itself) they have to advertise the notice of the public hearing on the budget at least seven days prior to the actual public hearing. They cannot approve the budget until a minimum of seven days after the public hearing is held. Council had talked about doing the new water fee as a part of the budget process, or at that same time. If that is still the plan, that new fee would

have to be done by ordinance and because it is a new fee they would have to advertise a notice of their intent to adopt this new fee and this new ordinance once a week for two successive weeks with at least one week between the first and the second publication prior to holding the meeting to actually adopt that ordinance.

Councilman Garrett said this was the new fee for messing with water meters.

Mike Bedsaul said this is correct. There was a reassessment this year and under Virginia Code section 58.1-3321 it provides that if the result of your reassessment results in an increase of 1% or more of the total real property tax levy they are required to reduce their tax rate to offset the effect of the reassessment to bring it within that 1% threshold. If you want to increase your tax rate in a reassessment year you can do that but you are required to give a specialized notice, which he has sent Susan an example of earlier today, and advertise that notice at least 30 days prior to the public hearing. That hearing is required by the statute to be held separate from the annual budget hearing. If council intends to reduce its tax rate to offset the 1% increase that has resulted from the reassessment they are not required to hold another public hearing and they are not required to give the specialized notice. After speaking with Susan Kidd, the reassessment has resulted in an increase of 4% in the total real property tax levy compared to last year. This is something council will need to consider if they are going to reduce the tax rate because even if they leave the tax rate the same it will still result in a tax increase and a specialized notice and public hearing will have to take place.

Councilman Garrett said he would like to suggest that before next Monday Susan Kidd put together a calendar with option 1 (putting it back to within 1%) and option 2 (they do not put it back to within 1%). They have to approve the budget by the last day of June so she can work back and tell them what their deadlines are. They will know by Monday what constraints they will be working in.

Mike Bedsaul said he will email these requirements to Susan Kidd.

Councilman Garrett said the \$80,000 shortfall in the budget was assuming the full increase at the current tax rate.

Susan Kidd said that is correct.

Councilman Garrett said that scares him a little. They need to look at that closer and get it back down.

Councilmember Thwaites asked if there had been any feedback on the gift card program through the county and did we contribute to that?

Susan Kidd said the town sent \$2,000 and to date she believes they have collected ~\$40,000.

Mayor Davis said he does not know what they have received for Anna's Restaurant but the last he heard the county had collected around \$44,000.

Councilmember Thwaites said her place of employment has split off into teams. She knows the public works department for the town has done that but have they considered doing something like that in the office?

Susan Kidd said people in the office are not trained in different things enough to do that right now. There is only one person on payroll and one person on water and she is training the other person.

Councilman Turner said he has had several people ask him about how to pay their water bills since the office was closed to the public. He told them to put them in the drop box and he believes if that is put in the Virginian Leader that will help a lot of people.

Councilman Garrett asked how they have open-to-the-public Zoom meetings and an executive session?

Mike Bedsaul said some localities set up a separate Zoom meeting for closed session. The other option would be to hold the regular meeting by Zoom and then hold executive session with a conference call.

**Councilman Turner made a motion to recess this meeting until April 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. Councilman Creger seconded the motion.**

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

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 4-0**

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Clerk, Debbie Thomas

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Mayor, John G. Davis