

**Narrows Town Council Meeting  
Budget Work Session #2  
April 28, 2021**

Vice Mayor Goorskey called the recessed meeting to order. Council members present were Sara Bowles, George Conley, Joe Goorskey, Sarah Thwaites, and Clyde Turner.

Staff members present were Susan Kidd and Debbie Thomas.

Vice Mayor Goorskey gave the invocation.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Discussion of FY22 Fiscal Budget**

Vice Mayor Goorskey said the meeting is open to discussion of the FY22 budget.

Councilman Conley asked who came up with the 3% on salary increases?

Susan Kidd said she did.

Councilman Conley said the cost-of-living increase was only 1.3% this year.

Susan Kidd said no one received a raise last year either.

Councilman Conley said employees received a waylacious bonus at Christmas.

Susan Kidd said she does not believe it was a waylacious bonus, it was a nice bonus. Giles County is giving a 5% raise and the Town of Pearisburg is giving a 3% raise.

Councilman Conley said we are not the Town of Pearisburg and we are not Giles County.

Susan Kidd said she understands that, but we also compete with them for employees.

Councilman Conley asked if these raises were coming up July 1<sup>st</sup>?

Susan Kidd said yes.

Councilman Conley said there were 6 employees that would be receiving raises in May. Is that correct?

Susan Kidd said no. All full-time employees make at least \$9.50/hour now.

Councilman Conley said everyone is making minimum wage now.

Susan Kidd said yes. They have been hiring new employees in at \$9.50/hour for about a year.

Councilman Conley said he still believes a 2% raise is more realistic.

Councilmember Thwaites said to retain the people they have, a one-time bonus is not a pay increase, she feels they have to go with 3%. They will still have 6 employees that will have to be raised to \$11.00/hour in January 2022.

Councilman Conley said under parks and recreation there was an increase due to the hiring of an assistant. Did Wayne Gautier not have an assistant?

Susan Kidd said there was money there for an assistant but Wayne Gautier never hired one, so they pulled that money out. He had an assistant in 2013 and 2014 but they quit, and Wayne Gautier never hired another one.

Councilmember Thwaites asked how many open positions the town had now?

Susan Kidd said 1 full time and 2 seasonal. They have taken applications from 3 people and they have been drug tested. Two of them never showed up and they are waiting on the third one. Hopefully, he will show up tomorrow. They will be able to get some summer program help from the school but not until June.

Councilmember Bowles asked when the last time was that employees received a raise?

Susan Kidd said 2 years ago. Salaried employees received a 2% raise and hourly employees received a 3% raise.

Councilman Conley said he still likes the idea of going with an across-the-board dollar amount. Take the highest salary, cut it in half, take 2% of that, figure the dollar amount, and give it to everyone. That way they are all equal.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said that is extremely unequal.

Councilman Conley asked why?

Vice Mayor Goorskey said if he makes \$20/hour and Councilman Conley is making \$10/hour they both get a \$1/hour raise. What percentage of his pay went up compared to what percentage of Councilman Conley's pay did? Councilman Conley would receive a much larger percentage raise than he did.

Councilman Conley said it would not be a percentage raise, it would be an across-the-board raise.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said the percentage of his pay that went up compared to the percentage of the other person's pay that went up would be half of what their pay did.

Councilman Conley said if Vice Mayor Goorskey is making \$30,000 and he makes \$10,000 and they get a 3% raise, 3% of \$30,000 is a whole lot more than 3% of \$10,000.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said that would encourage him to stay with the company longer so that he grows his percentage raise.

Councilman Conley said that is the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said if an employee stays there long enough their salary will grow and their percentage raise gets larger each time.

Councilman Conley said he would never catch up to what Vice Mayor Goorskey was making.

Susan Kidd said some employees should not. The janitor should not be making what the waste treatment operator is making.

Councilman Conley said he still believes they should give a dollar amount across-the-board raise. They would all get the same each year.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said you would not catch up to their pay that way either.

Councilman Turner said if the insurance goes up and you give one person a \$1/hour raise and another person a \$2/hour raise the person that received the \$1/hour raise will be paying more for insurance. He believes the raise should be 3% across the board.

Councilmember Thwaites said she cannot think of a more equitable way to do it. Every company she has ever worked for has done increases by percentage.

Councilman Conley said they did it at Celanese all the time.

Councilmember Thwaites said the town has an incredible amount of people that are at minimum wage only. In January there will be 6 people that will have to be raised to the new minimum wage of \$11/hour.

Councilman Conley said if they want to keep the raise at 3% that is great, but he believes it should be lowered to 2%.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said he is comfortable with the 3% raise.

Councilmember Thwaites said she is as well, especially since there was no increase last year.

Councilmember Bowles said she believes that since there was no increase last year, and the bonus was not outlandish at any value, 3% is where they need to be.

Councilmember Thwaites said the jobs they were speaking of where their job may not be as difficult, or they may not have as many responsibilities as someone else, there should be opportunities in the future to be able to move up if they so choose. Some people may decide to stay where they are. There will be different pay scales so that the treasurer is not making the same as someone on the grounds crew. They may not maintain the good employees they have if they do not come through with the 3% increase. There are many places and many opportunities out there and she believes the employees have a good bit of loyalty to the town. They could already have gone to other places and made more money.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said salary increases are people. Have they let anyone go this year for performance reasons?

Susan Kidd said no but they have in the past.

Vice Mayor Goorskey asked if any employee that is up for the 3% raise has been reprimanded or told they could do their job better?

Susan Kidd said no.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said he believes they have some good employees and management does what needs to be done when the time comes. Do they compare salaries and wages to equivalent positions in other areas?

Susan Kidd said she and Debbie Thomas have done the comprehensive review through Weldon Cooper and none of our salaries come near what the lowest salaries are on there.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said there are a lot of employees they have invested time in. They do have some turnover by people choosing to leave but they have some people that have been with the town a long time. He knows the Town of Narrows is not another locality, but they still compete with all those areas for employees at a time when everyone is looking for an employee. If they have the money in the budget to do it, they need to retain the employees they have because one day they may be sitting there wishing they had employees and wishing they had people to do these jobs they are underpaying them for.

Susan Kidd said the town does not even receive applications anymore. The county is having the same problem. The summer work program through the county has received the lowest number of applications they have ever had.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said the way he is seeing it go right now companies are having to offer starting wages he never believed he would have to start people at.

Susan Kidd said they cannot compete with these wages.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said they need to show their employees they appreciate them. He does not see a problem with the 3% raise and does not see where it is hurting the town.

Councilman Conley said if they watched the news, right now is a bad time for the workforce because people are making more on unemployment than they are working with the bonuses and subsidies they are receiving from the government.

Councilmember Bowles said that is another reason they should value the employees they have.

Councilman Conley said he does value them.

Councilmember Thwaites asked if they had heard anything about rules for spending the recovery act funds?

Susan Kidd said not yet.

Councilmember Thwaites asked Susan Kidd if she had heard back from anyone in the county on cigarette tax?

Susan Kidd said Glen Lyn and Rich Creek plan to raise theirs to .15¢/pack. Pearisburg and Pembroke are considering going to .25¢/pack.

Vice Mayor Goorskey asked if there was anyone on council opposed to the recommendations that have been made on how to get this budget balanced and how to move forward? This includes the recommendations of paying off the police cameras in FY21, paying off the three trucks in FY21, waiting to purchase a buildings & grounds truck in FY23, increasing cigarette tax in FY22, and showing a general fund transfer of \$63,271 in FY22.

Councilman Conley said he is opposed to raising the cigarette tax to .25¢/pack. He has said that all along. They need to leave it at .10¢/pack. It looks like they are robbing Peter to pay Paul anyway.

Councilmember Thwaites said she has no issues.

Vice Mayor Goorskey said he was including Tom Garrett and if he sees anything that he could give advice on they would appreciate it.

Tom Garrett said he was concerned about one income line item but could not remember what it was.

Susan Kidd said it was meals tax and she bumped that up a little bit.

Councilmember Bowles said she believes that could bring in an extra \$10,000.

Susan Kidd said they have the barbecue food truck that sells across the river and she has heard he may be purchasing the building where he sets up and open a restaurant there.

**Vice Mayor Goorskey made a motion to schedule a public hearing for the FY22 budget at the June 14<sup>th</sup> council meeting. Councilmember Thwaites seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Turner, Bowles, Thwaites, and Goorskey**

**Nays: Conley**

**Motion Carried 4-1**

**Vice Mayor Goorskey made a motion to schedule a public hearing for an increase in cigarette tax to .25¢/pack at the June 14<sup>th</sup> council meeting. Councilmember Thwaites seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Turner, Bowles, Thwaites, and Goorskey**

**Nays: Conley**

**Motion Carried 4-1**

**Vice Mayor Goorskey made a motion to approve paying off the police cameras and the three trucks up to the payoff amounts. Councilmember Thwaites seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Turner, Bowles, Conley, Thwaites, and Goorskey**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 5-0**

**Councilman Turner made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Thwaites seconded the motion.**  
**Ayes: Turner, Bowles, Conley, Thwaites, and Goorskey**  
**Nays: None**  
**Motion Carried 5-0**

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Clerk, Debbie Thomas

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Vice Mayor, Joe Goorskey