

**Narrows Town Council Meeting  
July 17, 2023**

Mayor Tom Spangler called the meeting to order. Council Members present were Bobby Lucas, Sara Bowles, George Conley, John Mills, and Joe Goorskey.

Staff members present were John Davis, Cindy Laws, Terry Nicholson, Benji Ratcliffe, and Debbie Thomas.

No attorney was present.

Mayor Tom Spangler gave the invocation.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approval of June 12<sup>th</sup> and June 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes**

**Councilman Conley made a motion to approve the June 12<sup>th</sup> and June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Councilman Lucas seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, and Goorskey**

**Abstain: Mills**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 4-0**

**Consent Agenda**

*Library Report*

Councilmember Bowles said she was glad to see the camp that was held at the Iris Brammer Public Library was a success.

*Parks & Recreation Report*

Councilmember Bowles said she would like to thank everyone that had a part in the July 4<sup>th</sup> festivities at the Narrows Town Park. This includes public works, law enforcement, Lindsey Caudill, Jennifer Clark, Jenny Wheeler, Terry Nicholson, Debbie Thomas, and others. It was a great day and there was a lot to do.

Terry Nicholson said there were over 1,800 people in attendance.

Mayor Spangler said he wanted to extend a huge ‘thank you’ to Clarity Eye Care and Celanese for their sponsorships.

Councilman Mills said it’s inspirational to know what the Town of Narrows pulled off on July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Terry Nicholson said Councilmember Sara Bowles didn’t include herself in the recognitions but needs to be thanked as well for her contribution.

Councilman Goorskey said he really enjoyed talking to people at the park and eating the delicious food that was there.

*Farmer’s Market Report*

Councilmember Bowles said she didn’t get to attend the last event at the farmer’s market but from pictures on Facebook it seemed well attended.

*Police Report*

Councilman Conley thanked Police Chief Ratcliffe for the felony arrests and Officer Stilley for his arrests. He understands the new police truck has arrived and he is excited about that. He is proud of the Town of Narrows Police Department.

*Financial Report/Treasurer’s Report*

Councilman Goorskey said it seems the transient lodging tax revenue line item is doing really well. Are there a lot more people coming to town?

Debbie Thomas said the Airbnb's that have opened in town have brought revenue in. There are also entities that owed delinquent transient lodging tax that have recently paid.

Councilman Goorskey asked what was driving up the revenue at Camp Success?

Terry Nicholson said there have been a number of people camping there this year. The Fourth of July weekend was very busy there.

#### *Town Manager's Report*

Councilman Goorskey asked Terry Nicholson how the final walkthrough went at the outfitter's building.

Terry Nicholson said it went really well. The only thing missing was the base molding but it should arrive in two weeks.

Councilman Conley asked Terry Nicholson if he had heard anything back from the Virginia Investment Pool.

Terry Nicholson said he spoke with Kyle Laux from Davenport and he recommended that the town also look at the Virginia Local Government Investment Pool. It's almost identical to the Virginia Investment Pool and there are more government entities that participate in the Virginia LGIP. He will bring back a recommendation to council.

Councilman Mills asked about the delinquent business licenses.

Terry Nicholson said he spoke with Mike Bedsaul about businesses not responding to letters that were sent concerning delinquent business licenses. Mike's response was to have Police Chief Ratcliffe visit these businesses to make sure they were still in business and let them know if they didn't pay for their business license within a week the town would be going to the magistrate to take action to shut their business down. This was very effective and all businesses he visited responded within 1-2 days. One or two of the businesses are closed now and one that had been paying for a business license is out of town limits so they don't need to purchase a business license.

Councilman Mills thanked Police Chief Ratcliffe and Terry Nicholson for getting this taken care of.

#### *Public Works Director's Report*

Councilman Goorskey said keeping the water loss in the 30% range is great. He told John Davis to keep up the good work.

Councilman Conley thanked Terry Nicholson for providing council with water and sewer disconnect policies and fees for surrounding entities. In looking at these, it seems Narrows is in line with them.

Terry Nicholson said he compared the information to the town's policy and fees and didn't see anything out of line.

Mayor Spangler said the town was discussing the water meter readings from the town being different than the water meter readings from the PSA.

Terry Nicholson said they are still tracking that and taking daily readings to compare to the PSA readings. It will take several months to get data that will be significant.

**Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey**

**Nays: None**

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## **Motion Carried 5-0**

### **Communications, Concerns and Requests from the Public**

Terry Nicholson said William Waddle wanted to be on the agenda. One of his concerns was the website not being updated in a while. There were some staff members that were no longer employed by the town that were on there and some that should have been there weren't. That information will be updated in town staff's spare time. The other concern was Mr. Waddle observing a police officer talking on his phone while driving a police vehicle. There is an exemption in the Virginia Code for emergency vehicles, first responders, and law enforcement officers to be able to use their cell phone while driving. They use their cell phones over the course of a day to communicate things they can't communicate over the radio. They wanted council to be aware of this.

### **Communications from Mayor, Council, and Staff**

Councilman Mills said the PSA has selected an engineering firm to pursue the lead water pipe funding. The successful engineers were Thompson and Litton. He voiced his criticism of the PSA staff because they waited too late to advertise the budget. He was upset with the fact that they had been told that there were PSA customers that owed bills and now he's received papers stating the PSA isn't in that bad of a shape financially. They had a public hearing and people were upset. He was ok with that because he thought he was doing what was right because people need to pay their bills. After that, the PSA board determined they needed to raise rates. He told the PSA staff that nobody was going to believe they need to raise the rates because the previous board hadn't raised rates in years. You can't run a business without a contingency fund because there has to be money there in case something happens. Councilman Mills voted to raise the PSA rates because it was necessary.

Police Chief Ratcliffe said Equitrans Midstream Corporation has contacted him concerning security coverage at their lot in the Town of Narrows. He asked members of the Narrows Police Department if it was something they wanted to do, because it would take all of them, and they said yes. He spoke with three other officers that used to work for the town, Tommy Gautier, John Kelly and Melvin Dalton, and they are all interested as well. All 8 of them would work no more than one shift a week and would be compensated accordingly. Equitrans Midstream Corporation will pay very well and there will also be some money left over for the town. Each police officer will be making at least their overtime rate.

**Councilman Mills made a motion to accept the proposal between the Town of Narrows and Equitrans Midstream Corporation and to approve Town Manager Terry Nicholson to sign the proposal on behalf of the Town of Narrows. Councilman Lucas seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 5-0**

Police Chief Ratcliffe said there is a couple at the campground that has been there for 2 weeks and their time was up yesterday. They're homeless and have nowhere to go. He told them today they had to leave and they weren't very happy. They asked if Police Chief Ratcliffe could ask council to approve for them to stay one more week.

Councilman Mills said if they aren't causing any problems he has no problem with letting them stay one more week.

Councilman Conley said he spoke with Becky Navarro concerning this. There is a homeless problem in Giles County. He believes they should give Town Manager Terry Nicholson and Police Chief Ratcliffe the authority to make these decisions. Many homeless people are veterans and that is a shame.

Terry Nicholson introduced John Eustis from the New River Land Trust.

Ralph Robertson said Lewis Webb is agreeing to sell some land and has spoken with John Eustis about this.

John Eustis said he knows the town has worked with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation concerning Mill Creek. He has been there and has really enjoyed it. The property that Lewis Webb is selling adjoins the Mill Creek property. The Virginia Outdoors Foundation has grant funding coming up and could be used for the purchase of the property. The property could be given to the Town of Narrows to be added to Mill Creek.

Councilman Mills asked if the cave is on Lewis Webb's property.

Ralph Robertson said it is. The property he wants to sell is 107 acres and he's asking \$1,500/acre. This property is where the trails are and he's afraid if someone else purchases the property they may shut the trails down.

Councilman Mills said he respects and trusts Ralph Robertson.

John Eustis said there's no guarantee they will get the property. The New River Land Trust would prepare the application and the town would be the applicant. The application will be due on August 7<sup>th</sup> and if the funding is awarded it will come to the town. This will incur some staff time, i.e. the town attorney, but his goal is to get all of the funding for the purchase price and for all the staff time. He has spoken with another entity that is interested in this funding.

Councilman Conley asked if Lewis Webb had been approached about this.

John Eustis said he spoke with Lewis Webb last week. The only stipulations he had was that the land can't be clear cut and the cave can't be turned into a commercial venture. Those things will probably be prohibited in the grant funding.

Councilman Conley asked what types of restrictions there would be concerning the use of the property.

John Eustis said it would be used for public access like Mill Creek Park is now. The Virginia Outdoors Foundation would place restrictions on the property.

Terry Nicholson said the Virginia Outdoors Foundation placed restrictions on the Mill Creek Park property.

Councilman Conley said he believes this is worth pursuing.

**Councilman Conley made a motion to pursue the grant opportunity with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. Councilman Mills seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 5-0**

Mayor Spangler thanked Ralph Robertson and John Eustis for their presentation.

John Eustis said this grant is very competitive and they may not receive it the first go round but there will be another round of funding in the spring.

Councilman Mills said he wanted to thank everyone for the consideration that was shown to him and his family during a very difficult time. He has made a beautiful life in Narrows and the people of Giles County are remarkable.

### **New Business**

None.

### **Unfinished Business**

None.

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

None.

**Councilmember Bowles said she would like to add Personnel Matters (Sec. 2.2.3711.A.1) discussion of interviews to the executive session. Councilman Lucas seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 5-0**

**Councilman Conley made a motion to go into executive session to discuss the Gallimore project (Sec. 2.2.3711.A.3), to discuss the outfitter proposal (Sec. 2.2.3711.A.3), to discuss an employee contract (Sec. 2.2.3711.A.1), to discuss the update on a court case (Sec. 2.2.3711.A.7), to discuss the provision of legal advice (Sec. 2.2.3711.A.8), and to discuss interviews (Sec. 2.2.3711.A.1). Councilman Mills seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 5-0**

**Councilman Conley made a motion to return to open session. Councilman Mills seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey**

**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:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Councilman Goorskey made a motion to accept the certification. Councilman Lucas seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 5-0**

**Councilman Goorskey made a motion to approve the increased stipend for the Giles County PSA representatives that are on the Narrows Town Council. The pay for alternates will increase from \$50 to \$100 and for full-time staff from \$100 to \$200. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, and Conley**

**Abstain: Mills and Goorskey**

**Motion Carried 3-0**

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

**Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the contract for the outfitter building and to give Town Manager Terry Nicholson the authority to sign the contract. Councilman Conley seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey**

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**Nays: None**  
**Motion Carried 5-0**

**Councilman Conley made a motion to approve an increase in Town Manager Terry Nicholson’s vacation time from one week at the end of his twelve-month anniversary to add an additional one week and three personal days. Councilman Goorskey seconded the motion.**  
**Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey**  
**Nays: None**  
**Motion Carried 5-0**

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

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Clerk, Debbie Thomas

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Mayor, Tom Spangler