

**Narrows Town Council Meeting
November 13, 2023**

Mayor Tom Spangler called the meeting to order. Council Members present were Sara Bowles, George Conley, John Mills and Joe Goorskey (attended remotely).

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

Attorney Reid Broughton was present.

Mayor Tom Spangler gave the invocation.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilman Goorskey said he was attending the meeting remotely from Lexington, Virginia, because he's out-of-town on a work assignment.

Planning Commission members present were John Mills, Dalton Smith, and John Hale Jr.

Kathleen Armstrong (Regional Planner II/Community Designer) from the New River Valley Regional Commission thanked Mayor and Council for letting her speak concerning the Town of Narrows Comprehensive Plan updates and adoption. Also, in attendance from the New River Valley Regional Commission were Aphi Fancon (Director of Community Development) and Dr. Hannah Schelthoff (Regional Cartographer/Geospatial Analyst).

Kathleen Armstrong said this has been a robust process from initial data collection and analysis through community and stakeholder sessions all the way to the final plan. The ultimate purpose of a comprehensive plan is to turn vision into action and to tell the story of Narrows past, present, and future. There were many residents involved in the planning process. They engaged digitally with 176 people and 80 community members participated in the survey. Participants identified the assets of Narrows as well as aspirations and goals to help shape the plan. Comments were recently received from VDOT which they incorporated into the final plan. They crafted language and added content to explain the corridor of statewide significance. They also added content to emphasize the consistency between the transportation element of the Narrows Comprehensive Plan and the state transportation plan and also added content concerning the six-year improvement program. They revised the functional classifications map that highlights the corridor of statewide significance. All of these elements are wrapped up in the comprehensive plan in its final form. This is a living document that will help inform and support continuing town efforts as well as community initiatives. She thanked Mayor and Council on behalf of NRVRC for the opportunity to support the Town of Narrows in their comprehensive planning process and really appreciates the help from town staff and everyone involved in this effort.

Councilman Mills said he's been involved in this process and is exceptionally pleased with NRVRC staff, especially Aphi Fancon, for their work on this project.

Public Hearing

Mayor Spangler opened the public hearing concerning public comment and approval of the revised comprehensive plan. Hearing no comments, the public hearing was closed. The planning commission will vote to recommend adoption of the comprehensive plan.

Councilman John Mills said there is a quorum present of the planning commission. They have faithfully and diligently carried out their charge and now they need a recommendation from the planning commission to adopt the revised comprehensive plan.

John Hale Jr. made a motion to approve adoption of the revised comprehensive plan and that it be sent to town council for appropriate action. Dalton Smith seconded the motion.

Ayes: Hale, Smith, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Approval of October 9th, October 16th, and October 30th Meeting Minutes

Councilman Conley made a motion to approve the October 9th and October 16th meeting minutes. Councilman Mills seconded the motion.

Ayes: Conley, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Councilman Conley made a motion to approve the October 30th meeting minutes. Councilman Mills seconded the motion.

Ayes: Conley, Mills, and Goorskey

Abstain: Bowles

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Consent Agenda

Library Report

Councilmember Bowles asked Cindy Laws how the first book club meeting went.

Cindy Laws said it was very well attended and they will continue to hold them the second Thursday of each month.

Parks & Recreation Report

Councilman Conley said he looked at the Parks & Recreation Report and the issue of the jerseys concerns him. He asked Roger Shepherd to explain the funding for the jerseys.

Roger Shepherd said the money for some of the jerseys was donated by one of the coaches and that was for tops and bottoms. The other set of jerseys were purchased by town rec funds and another set of jerseys was donated by a person that would like to stay anonymous.

Councilman Conley asked what the order form in his report was for.

Roger Shepherd said he was doing a fundraiser to purchase uniforms and is called 'Foul Shots for Uniform Fundraiser'. Someone can also simply donate to the fundraiser.

Councilman Conley said the print was so small concerning the fundraiser he could hardly see it, even with his glasses.

Roger Shepherd apologized for that.

Councilman Conley asked if this was a rec department project.

Roger Shepherd said yes.

Councilman Conley asked that council be kept updated on the fundraiser.

Councilman Goorskey said if the money comes in as a revenue line item does it have to be used in that season or can it be carried over into the next fiscal year.

Terry Nicholson said it could be accessed immediately.

Farmer's Market Report

Mayor Spangler said the trunk or treat was a big success.

Lindsey Caudill said she counted about 540 kids there but she's not sure if that's correct.

Councilman Conley asked when the skating rink would open.

Councilmember Bowles said the weekend after Thanksgiving. The parks and rec commission is also having a fundraiser on November 26th and that will go to purchase more skates.

Mayor Spangler said the pickleball courts are complete at this time.

Police Report

Councilman Mills said he continues to be impressed with the consistency and dedication of their police officers.

Financial Report/Treasurer's Report

No comments.

Town Manager's Report

No comments.

Public Works Director's Report

Councilman Mills said there was a reduction in water loss so they are going in the right direction.

Terry Nicholson said they fixed several large leaks last month.

Councilmember Bowles said she sent John Davis a message concerning the great job the public works department did for the fall festival. It was very much appreciated.

Councilman Mills said he was glad to see the list of trees that will be planted along the newly built trail.

Terry Nicholson said the NRVRC brought 100 copies of the 'Plant SWVA Natives' booklets. The town has collaborated with NRVRC for several years and they are funding the trees. There will be a 'planting day' in late February to plant the trees.

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Councilman Conley seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Conley, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Councilman Goorskey left the meeting.

Communications, Concerns and Requests from the Public

Pam Dunn approached council and discussed an email that had been sent concerning a conversation she had with someone. She submitted a FOIA to the town to obtain the document. She was also upset that we would not accept her check on a utility account that had been flagged to not accept payment by check.

Terry Nicholson stated that once three checks have been returned to the town for insufficient funds the utility account is flagged to not accept checks.

Mayor Spangler said procedures are put in place for a reason and the town isn't going to make exceptions for one person because if they did they would have to make an exception for everyone.

Communications from Mayor, Council, and Staff

Councilman Mills said at the last PSA meeting the main topic is the lead and copper rule revision. There has been confusion from day one and he knows where the confusion lies. There are certain members that continue to chase a rainbow and hope they can obtain

grant money. There is no one in Giles County that wants a grant for this testing more than John Mills but Narrows doesn't qualify for the grant and neither does Pearisburg or Glen Lyn. The median income for Narrows is too high. The director of the PSA was informed that Narrows was ready to move forward but some other members are holding on to what he believes to be a pipe dream. He is willing to be a team player until it adversely affects Narrows. By November 30th, each locality is supposed to say yes or no to moving forward with testing. He is confident that they will move forward with this.

Terry Nicholson said the town has been working with the PSA regarding the town's WWTP. John Mills and Terry Nicholson have been meeting with Thompson and Litton and Todd Meredith from Pearisburg and talking about the SERCAP grant the town received for studying Narrows' WWTP and looking at the idea of somehow regionalizing that plant. At their last meeting, they also met with Kathi Boatright who works with DHCD and discussed funding and opportunities for the WWTP. Kathi Boatright discussed some grant money that may be available to do actual construction at the site should they partner with Pearisburg on this venture. She also mentioned the opportunity of a planning grant, which is \$60,000. It's a non-competitive grant so if they apply for it they should get it. This grant would give Narrows the ability to do their own income study through the NRVRC and they could do samplings of households to look at their income to see if the town would meet DHCD's criteria and be entitled to grant forgiveness. Council will be asked to approve applying for the \$60,000 and there is no match from the town. It builds in administration of the grant through the NRVRC and the town has spoken with Eli Sharp and Kevin Byrd about this and they will put together a proposal for the town and for DHCD to help write the grant application.

Councilman Conley said he doesn't see a downside to this at all.

Terry Nicholson said council had been given a document from Xpert Foundations, Inc. The document is from Peed & Bortz LLC. The town found a leak in the salt house pump station and water was infiltrating the wet well. There are problems with sealing the pit that is under the salt house. They received a quote for \$6,850 for labor and materials for the repair to stop the infiltration. This will be paid for from money that is already encumbered for the sewer improvement project. There are still electrical improvements pending for that project. They can perform the repair from inside the salt house.

New Business

Karen Weber said she is Virginia DEQ's Brownfields Coordinator. She believes her discussion will tie into the town's comprehensive plan and other events going on in the community to keep things moving forward. A new program they have is called 'BAD' which stands for 'Brownfield, Abandoned, Dilapidated'. It is a West Virginia based program and is community driven. It has been highly successful. Over time, they have been able to provide enough information to their state legislature to leverage some demolition money for things such as houses that have been abandoned. She would like to get this program to work for Virginia. Until then, Virginia has their Brownfields program that can support commercial and industrial projects for mixed use and main street types of things. They will look at everything should Narrows decide to participate. This started with a pilot study in Smyth County and there were three communities there that decided to participate. Marion, Virginia, took this opportunity and created 'BAUD' which stands for 'Brownfield, Abandoned, Underutilized, Dilapidated' and she loves the addition of 'underutilized' space. She would like to utilize that when looking at areas in Narrows. This program is fully funded from the EPA to DEQ and if the town chooses to participate there would be no cost to the town. She gets to come in as DEQ to a space where DEQ usually comes in and leverages fines or does inspections. She will now get to come to Narrows and help with ideas, programs, and money. With the statewide program, they are hoping to implement an inventory program which will be boots on the ground and community driven. They will ask residents to participate. They will walk the streets, skip sensitive areas if need be, and use an app to take notes. They will look at a site and determine if it looks abandoned and take it back to find behind-the-scenes data. In the end, they end up with a list that may have some prioritization. They have tools to help with the inventory process and the town will have tools with decision making. The value to DEQ is that it keeps them engaged with their communities and find out what they need. This project would start and end with the town but DEQ and the Brownfield

Assistance Center will be there with assistance. The steps for the outcome of the program for Narrows are as follows:

- ❖ Integrate inventory data into decision making
- ❖ Include data and redevelopment plan in planning efforts (e.g., comprehensive training)
- ❖ Engage property owners
- ❖ Prevent blight, address sites early
- ❖ Identify legal options (e.g., code enforcement)
- ❖ Demolition, redevelopment, revitalization
- ❖ **Identify funding sources and leverage the inventory to obtain funding**

The program will first be implemented in Pound, Virginia. They will have a workshop day and have invited residents to meet on December 15th (they have also invited Virginia Energy and some non-profits). They will break up into groups and walk the town, take some notes, and come back and talk about what the community needs as far as redevelopment. They want this to have a benefit to the community. Code enforcement in some towns are complaint based so they couldn't go around and take notes and have any of that perceived as a complaint because that would trigger code action. As far as money for these projects, assessment and planning funds are up to \$50,000 and site remediation funds are up to \$500,000. She included these figures because there has also been discussion about asbestos and part of the Brownfields goal, and part of her job, is to identify barriers to redevelopment and find solutions to overcome those barriers. A lot of the time those barriers are asbestos. DEQ also has other money available as a grant from EPA that can be used for asbestos survey work but can't be used for remediation. She has spoken with Terry Nicholson about some sites in town that may contain asbestos, and lead-based paint, so they need to determine how much it will cost and how to get rid of it. This would be of no cost to the town but the effort DEQ makes could be part of the town's match. They may also identify sites but then not know what to do with them. DEQ also has funding for design. DEQ has provided a Brownfield Grant to Narrows which has been implemented and is on its way to being finished. If Narrows decides to implement this, there can be a workshop day and partner with Narrows, NRVRC, and others engaged in the community. The workshop day can be done in late January or early February. The funds for this have been used for this year but will be available again July 1, 2024.

Councilman Conley asked how they deal with abandoned properties and properties up for sale for taxes.

Karen Weber said they would just identify them as such but would not take any action on it. They would be tagged as priority sites that need attention.

Councilman Conley asked if the property owner would be contacted before demolition.

Karen Weber said there would be no demolition. There is a lot of value in having something that is tangible.

Terry Nicholson has spoken with Karen Weber concerning asbestos studies being performed on buildings owned by Ronnie Brookman, Allen Neely, and Kevin Simmons. Reports would then be available for the town and the property owners. This could also be done for the fire department, old town hall, old bank building, Wheeler building, and Carl Mosser's building.

Karen Weber said they can do sitework on privately owned properties.

Councilman Mills asked Karen Weber what she needed from council to get this project started.

Karen Weber said she just needs an email that states the town would like to participate. They will then ask who should be on the planning team, have a few phone calls, and determine how this will be marketed to get the word out.

Councilmember Bowles said the Achilles heel for downtown development has been the floodplain. Can any of these funds be used for that.

Karen Weber said if it exists from an environmental standpoint it can be but it's a really hard sell. She is tempted to say probably not. They cannot fund demolition unless there is asbestos and demolition is the only way for it to be removed.

Terry Nicholson told Councilmember Bowles there are other pots of money that could be used concerning the floodplain.

Karen Weber said if the flood impact were such that it could come in contact with petroleum storage or some other solvent material and wash back out and create a risk that could affect people or the ecology those funds may be able to be used for that.

Councilman Mills made a motion to pursue with the DEQ funding for the BAD program and pursuing lead and asbestos testing in buildings around the Gallimore site and the downtown IRF study area. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Unfinished Business

None.

Matters for Consideration by Council

Councilman Conley said he emailed Terry Nicholson and Mike Bedsaul about outside wood stoves. The way he understands it from Terry Nicholson, the new EPA regulations will be coming out January 1, 2024, concerning catalytic conversion for these stoves.

Terry Nicholson said the Virginia Building Code will be adopting the EPA's guidelines on this. After January 1, 2024, any wood hydronic heater will have to meet EPA's standards, which includes catalytic conversion.

Councilman Conley said he believed the ones being built now have catalytic conversion. There is a catalytic insert in these stoves similar to the converter on a car. You would need to replace them every 10 years and they turn wood smoke into water vapor which has no scent or pollution. They are supposed to be more efficient than gas heat. The town needs to stay on top of this.

Councilmember Bowles said Allen Neely asked if the lights that were going to be installed under the trestle could be added to the town grid. There would be 2-3 LED lights.

Terry Nicholson said John Davis was checking to see if the connection that was there was a town, AEP, or Norfolk Southern connection. He believed it would be a very small cost to do that.

Council directed Terry Nicholson to proceed with making that connection.

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the ordinance to accept the comprehensive plan as presented. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Terry Nicholson said he would be meeting tomorrow with the president and vice president of the National Bank of Blacksburg to talk about the new account the town would be opening with them for the loan for the purchase of the property. They have asked the town to open an account with at least \$25,000 in it and maintain the account there. They will take one of the CD's the town has at the First National Bank of Peterstown that is earning $\frac{3}{4}$ of a percent and he will ask NBB what type of account that could earn more interest. They have some CD's that earn around 5% interest so that is one possibility. He needs guidance from council on how much they would like to invest

in the CD. The one he would recommend transferring is around \$59,700 which was set aside for the WWTP. There will be a small penalty for removing this money because the CD was renewed in September. They will also place money in the Virginia LGIP (Local Government Investment Pool).

Councilman Conley said he would suggest placing \$40,000 with NBB and the remainder in LGIP.

Councilman Conley made a motion to remove all money in CD's from FNBP and move \$40,000 to NBB and invest the remainder in the Virginia LGIP. Councilman Mills seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the sewage wet well repair in the amount of \$6,850. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Councilman Mills made a motion to move forward with the grant application for the WWTP low/moderate income study. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Councilman Conley made a motion to go into executive session to discuss employee performance (Sec. 2.2.3711.A.1). Councilman Mills seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Councilman Mills made a motion to return to open session. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

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 Mills made a motion to accept the certification. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Councilman Mills made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Conley seconded the motion.
Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills
Nays: None
Motion Carried 3-0

Clerk, Debbie Thomas

Mayor, Tom Spangler