

**Narrows Town Council Meeting
December 11, 2023**

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

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

Attorney Reid Broughton was present.

Councilman John Mills gave the invocation.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition

Mayor Spangler said he would like to take the opportunity to recognize Narrows Flower and Gift. The business was started around 1951 by Red and Georgiana Hall and Cindy Light's family purchased the business in 1971 and continue to operate it today. He thanked Cindy Light for the service she offers to the community and surrounding areas and presented her with a certificate of recognition.

Councilman Mills wished Cindy Light continued good business and good health.

Mayor Spangler also recognized Jeff Perdue. He retired on November 30th after working 28 years for the town. He thanked him for his service.

Councilman Mills said Jeff Perdue has been an invaluable employee for the town.

Audit Report (FY23)

Corbin Stone said the audit went very well and they did not run into any problems with the town's records. Debbie Thomas does a great job for the town. He is in constant contact with her throughout the year and she does call and ask questions so that makes the audit go very smoothly when his employees show up to the town. The general fund balance was up a little bit from last year and stood at \$155,130, which does not include unspent ARPA funds or corona virus funds. That does not show up in the fund balance until the town has incurred some obligation. The water and sewer net position was \$1,834,644 and that is a best estimate as to what the whole system is worth if it was to be sold. Debt per capita was \$481 and that is pretty low for a town. They would like for the fund balance to be higher than what it is right now but there is not a whole lot of debt. The town's pension liability is about \$370,000.

Councilman Mills asked how the town's per capita debt compares with comparable towns in southwestern Virginia.

Corbin Stone said he usually sees per capita debt around \$2,000 for a town the size of Narrows. The different sources of income for Fund 10 show that general property taxes are growing more than any other segment. Commonwealth revenues, which are usually grants for a specific purpose, have grown quite a bit. Federal revenues spiked in 2022, not as much in 2023, but there should still be some in 2024. Over the longer term, as the government gets their budget back in order, he doesn't believe there will be as many grants as there have been. Meals tax was up \$25,000, sales tax was up \$7,000, and businesses licenses were up \$18,000. The assessment of used cars has really gone up recently so personal property assessments for the town have significantly increased. It may be like that for the next year or two and then come back down. Real estate assessments have been relatively flat so by the next reassessment there may be a pretty significant increase. There is a letter titled 'Communication with Those Charged with Governance' and if there were any significant issues they would be contained in this letter. There are also assessments and assumptions they made during the audit. They had no issues with the audit and it went very well.

Councilman Mills thanked Corbin Stone for his presentation.

Approval of November 13th Meeting Minutes

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the November 13th meeting minutes.

Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

Ayes: Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Abstain: Lucas

Nays: None

Motion Carried 3-0

Consent Agenda

Library Report

Councilman Goorskey thanked Cindy Laws for working so hard.

Parks & Recreation Report

Councilman Mills said some people have mentioned to him some things Roger Shepherd has in his report. Councilman Mills spoke with the town manager and now everything is worked out concerning basketball.

Farmer's Market Report

Lindsey Thompson said 'A Very Narrows Christmas' and the Narrows Christmas Parade have been rescheduled to Sunday, December 17th.

Police Report

Councilman Mills said he would like to recognize the Narrows Police Department on the excellent job they do.

Financial Report/Treasurer's Report

Terry Nicholson said on the single-page Treasurer's Report there is a list showing the funds from the two cd's the town had at FNBP that are now closed. The town now has \$153,356.12 invested with LGIP (earning 5.5%) and has placed \$40,000 in a CD at NBB (earning 5.05%). The funds were moved December 1st and in one week the funds in LGIP had earned around \$230 interest. One of the closed CD's was for an escrow account for the WWTP and those funds will be kept separate and continue to be monitored.

Town Manager's Report

No comments.

Public Works Director's Report

Mayor Spangler said the water loss was 28% for November so they are moving in the right direction.

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

Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Rick Chitwood and Keli Ratcliffe spoke to council concerning a preliminary engineering report Thompson and Litton are working on with the town concerning the WWTP. Rick Chitwood said they are looking at several alternatives for the town comparing what it would cost to upgrade the existing facility versus Narrows working with Pearisburg to build a facility to serve both towns. He and Keli are in attendance tonight to see if there are any comments on this possible venture. They are trying to grab every grant dollar they can toward this project to offset the cost. One of

these projects is through DHCD and is block-grant money but the town is too wealthy to receive that. Sometimes that data is not exactly correct. Keli Ratcliffe and others have met with the New River Valley Regional Commission to see if Thompson and Litton can do an actual survey in Narrows. A lot of people do not like sharing financial information but if the information can be collected the towns could qualify and could receive up to \$700,000 per entity could total \$1.7 million to go toward the cost of the facility. Once the study is done, council will be kept updated on the process. There is a \$60,000 grant that could be obtained to get the study done and it may look at both communities. If Narrows should go into a partnership with Pearisburg, there needs to be some type of agreement that would involve legal counsel concerning what each entity would be responsible for.

Mayor Spangler asked if there was a specific number of people that had to be interviewed for this.

Keli Ratcliffe said NRVRC has coordinated with DHCD, which has very specific guidelines. They have random-generated software that will choose addresses and areas. Mailers will be sent to addresses and if the resident does not respond someone will knock on their door to try and obtain their information.

Councilman Mills said this is a big deal to him and is excited to see this happen.

Terry Nicholson said there are a few things council has to do tonight concerning this grant and he has prepared a PowerPoint presentation that details what will be happening.

The following are topics in the presentation:

Current Plant Conditions

- Built in 1940's, upgraded in 1960's.
- Improvements since then have been relatively minor.
- There are no major problems currently, but we recognize the age of the plant means higher maintenance costs. For instance:
 - We need to replace the Rotating Biological Contactors (RBC's) over the next three years, costing about \$300,000 each year. (\$900K total).
 - There are some cracks in the concrete basins that need repair. Cost has not yet been determined.
- The current site is not conducive to expansion.
- Surrounded by New River, Wolf Creek, NS Railroad, and Route 61.
- Site is in the floodplain.
- Because of I&I (Infiltration and Inflow), we exceed plant capacity during heavy rain events.
 - We are working to reduce I&I as part of the sewer improvement project with Peed and Bortz.
 - Without that I&I, our capacity is still reasonable for the foreseeable future, but development could push us closer to our capacity and make rain events more impactful.

Regional Sewer Plant Study

- Through the Giles County PSA, Narrows participated in a study that considered the possibility of combining all the town sewer systems into one larger system.
- Because of the terrain and the distance between the towns, the estimated cost of a regional system was extremely high. (\$54 to 94 Million)
- However, that study did identify opportunities for a regional approach for Narrows and Pearisburg.

One Study Already Underway

Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Incorporated (SERCAP) Funded

- Purpose is to study the current condition of the Narrows plant, and answer the following:

- What are the immediate needs to maintain the plant for continued use?
- What is the life expectancy of the existing plant with regular maintenance?
- What are the options available for the future?
 - How to handle growth of inflow?
 - What happens when the plant is beyond its expected life?
 - What are the options for a regional plant with Pearisburg?

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Possible Funding

- Through discussions with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), we are exploring the opportunities for grant funding (CDBG) for a regional wastewater system for Narrows and Pearisburg.
- DHCD has a Planning Grant that would fund a household income survey specific to our town(s) which would determine our eligibility for grants and/or favorable loan terms.
- The same planning grant could be used to define a legal framework for the towns to collaborate on the regional system (for example, through a memorandum of understanding or MOU).

CDBG Possible Funding

- Pearisburg's WWTP infrastructure is also beyond its reasonable life expectancy.
- That makes the timing of this study ideal for both towns.
- Pearisburg is holding a similar meeting tomorrow night at their Council meeting.

NRV Regional Commission

- The NRV Regional Commission has been helping us and Pearisburg apply for this grant and will build their costs into the grant.
- The funding is non-competitive, so we are likely to receive the funding.
- There is no match required for planning grant funds.
- We have an agenda item tonight to approve applying to DHCD with Pearisburg for this grant.
- The grant application is ready to go. Deadline is Friday.
- I have included my letter of support in your packets.

Councilman Goorskey made a motion to approve the letter of support for the WWTP Planning Grant and to approve pursuing grant funding. Councilman Mills seconded the motion.

Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Councilman Mills said the \$300,000/year concerns him. He asked Rick Chitwood if he thought the town could receive any help with that.

Rich Chitwood said a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) will identify some of these issues. If the construction of a new WWTP facility between Narrows and Pearisburg started tomorrow, it would take 3-4 years for it to be built. He commends the staff at the WWTP because they have kept it going past its life expectancy. Some questions are hard to answer.

Communications, Concerns and Requests from the Public

Audre Roberts said there is a tree on Princeton Lane that needs to be removed.

Mayor Spangler said that tree is on private property so the landowner would have to be contacted.

Audre Roberts said a few months ago council addressed a trailer that was going to be placed on Wolf Street. There is now a mobile home near the corner of Rocky Road and Memorial Boulevard. She has pictures of it.

Councilman Goorskey said the picture she has is of a camper.

Mayor Spangler said it can be parked there for storage purposes.

Communications from Mayor, Council, and Staff

Councilman Mills said he gave a PSA report at the last council meeting. They will have their next meeting on December 14th. He's sure they will be discussing the lead and copper testing issue.

Terry Nicholson said Joe McCroskey has a vacant lot between two residences his family owns that he would like to split to make the 2 lots.

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the lot-line revision for Joe McCroskey.

Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Terry Nicholson said they have been talking about the Parks & Recreation Commission creating a strategic plan since he began working for the town. He has been talking with the NRVRC about the possibility of doing that. NRVRC has some grant money that would allow them to contribute half of the cost of doing a strategic plan with the Parks & Recreation Commission. It would be very similar to how they did the town's comp plan update. They would meet with the Parks & Recreation Commission and staff and discuss what vision they have for facilities and programming. They would then put together a comprehensive plan for the town's park system and the programming there. The cost for the town would be \$5,000 and the NRVRC would match that with another \$5,000. They are doing the town a favor by splitting it over 2 fiscal years: \$2,500 for FY24 and \$2,500 for FY25. He can easily come up with that amount but needs council's approval to do that.

Councilman Goorskey asked when can council get involved in the process of developing a strategic plan by reviewing the actual stated purpose and how the Parks & Recreation Commission works and get some clarity because it seems a little ambiguous.

Terry Nicholson said he will ask for 2 council members to serve on the committees. Sara Bowles is already on the committee and Bobby Lucas has been involved, as well as Joe Goorskey. The Parks & Recreation Commission was formed by an ordinance from the town. The roles and responsibilities of the Parks & Recreation Commission need to be clarified in the strategic plan. Council will have input from the beginning.

Councilman Goorskey said this strategic plan is vital. The town's parks and rec director needs to know how they fit into this.

Councilman Goorskey made a motion to approve the task order from NRVRC for a Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan. Councilman Lucas seconded the motion.

Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

New Business

None.

Unfinished Business

None.

Matters for Consideration by Council

Terry Nicholson said council needs to approve accepting the deed for the Gallimore Property, the memorandum of lease, and the amendment to the real estate purchase agreement. Ed Gallimore

asked on behalf of Mac Gallimore that council approve the amendment to the real estate purchase agreement, which would allow Mac Gallimore to transfer the money he will receive from this purchase into another real estate deal and would protect him taxwise from having to pay capital gains on the money. Mike Bedsaul prepared the document. The approval of these three documents allows Terry Nicholson to sign and close on the purchase.

Councilman Goorskey made a motion to approve acceptance of Gallimore Property Deed, approve the memorandum of lease, and approve the amendment to the real estate purchase agreement. Councilman Mills seconded the motion.

Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Councilman Mills made a motion to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters (Sec. 2.2.3711.A.1). Councilman Lucas seconded the motion.

Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

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

Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

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 Mills seconded the motion.

Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Mayor Spangler read a letter from Councilman Bobby Lucas stating his resignation from Narrows Town Council as of January 9, 2024. He told Bobby Lucas he would be missed.

Councilman Mills made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Lucas seconded the motion.

Ayes: Lucas, Bowles, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Clerk, Debbie Thomas

Mayor, Tom Spangler