

**Narrows Town Council Meeting  
June 10, 2024**

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

Staff members present were John Davis, Cindy Laws, Jimmy Joe McCroskey, Terry Nicholson, Roger Shepherd (arrived late), and Debbie Thomas.

Attorney Reid Broughton was present.

Mayor Tom Spangler gave the invocation.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Hearings**

Mayor Spangler opened the public hearing concerning the FY25 budget.

Councilman Hale said there was a note on the budget worksheet about John Davis's salary. Is the allocation for his salary done the same way other department head's salaries are done?

Terry Nicholson said yes. John Davis's salary had been split between Fund 10 and Fund 20 but for the VRA loan, Terry is moving his entire salary to Fund 10 so the enterprise fund would have a positive balance for the year. There is a transfer of \$35,000 from Fund 20 to Fund 10 that will be performed during the year but this is to cover things such as administrative costs.

Mayor Spangler asked if there were any other comments. Hearing no other comments he declared the public hearing closed.

Mayor Spangler opened the public hearing concerning water and sewer rate increases.

Councilman Hale said in looking at the water and sewer rates for in-town commercial accounts it seems that once they exceed 10,000 gallons of usage the rate per gallon appears to decrease fairly substantially.

Terry Nicholson said the initial 10,000 gallons is covering all of their infrastructure and costs for getting the water to them. If they use more than 10,000 gallons that would be a big water user so they are being given a break if they use over 10,000 gallons. There are only a couple of commercial accounts that use that much water.

Councilman Hale asked what the price-per-gallon for water was for the town.

Terry Nicholson said \$4.16/thousand gallons.

Councilman Hale asked if it was likely that a resident would ever go over 10,000 gallons of usage. He would want to offer the same benefit to a resident as he would to a commercial user.

Terry Nicholson said the town does not have any residential customers that come near that level of usage. That may happen if they are filling a swimming pool but there is a separate accounting system in place to figure the usage for that.

Councilman Conley said he has heard a lot of comments from people concerning the increase of water and sewer rates. Once they learned it was to improve the infrastructure of water and sewer lines they were pleased with that.

Mayor Spangler asked if there were any other comments. Hearing no other comments he declared the public hearing closed.

**Appointments/Reappointments**

**Councilman Conley made a motion to reappoint Terry Nicholson as Town Manager.  
Councilman Mills seconded the motion.  
Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Conley, and Mills  
Nays: None  
Motion Carried 4-0**

**Councilman Conley made a motion to reappoint Benji Ratcliffe as Chief of Police.  
Councilman Mills seconded the motion.  
Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Conley, and Mills  
Nays: None  
Motion Carried 4-0**

**Councilman Conley made a motion to reappoint Debbie Thomas as Treasurer/Clerk.  
Councilman Mills seconded the motion.  
Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Conley, and Mills  
Nays: None  
Motion Carried 4-0**

### **Approval of May 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes**

**Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the May 10<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Councilman Conley seconded the motion.  
Ayes: Bowles, Conley, and Mills  
Abstain: Hale  
Nays: None  
Motion Carried 3-0**

### **Consent Agenda**

#### *Library Report*

Councilman Conley said he was happy to see the number of books that had been checked out at the library.

Cindy Laws said people also come in to use the computers and they have a lot of children that come to the library to check out books.

Councilman Hale thanked Cindy Laws for all of the work she does including the summer reading program. He asked her if she was aware of any literacy initiatives where communities help improve literacy rates.

(Roger Shepherd arrived)

Cindy Laws said there is a GED program at King Johnston School in Pearisburg.

(Joe Goorskey arrived)

#### *Parks & Recreation Report*

Councilman Conley asked the cost to fund the dugouts at the Lurich Ballfield.

John Davis said they need 2 more dugouts and he is working with the county because they do a lot of work at Giles High School for their dugouts. The county is going to help with our scoreboards. He is then going to ask for help with the other 2 dugouts and the baseball fields. They hope to have this done by the next season.

Councilmember Bowles thanked John Davis for helping with the pickleball tournament. She understands the next tournament is almost full and will be held July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Councilman Mills said he noticed the registration fees for the TBall/Coach Pitch season was \$40 for in-town registrations and \$50 for out-of-town registrations. Is this a big enough gap?

Roger Shepherd said he believed it was.

Councilman Mills asked Roger Shepherd to take a close look at this next year.

Councilman Hale said he was glad to see the splash pad will be free this year because of some generous donations from area sponsors and that banners will be placed at the splash pad to show support for these sponsors. He would ask that when the signs are installed they are maintained and any signs that are up now need to be maintained. There is a sign at the park near the flagpole that has been turned backwards for 30-45 days so that should be looked at.

Terry Nicholson said they will check on that.

#### *Farmer's Market Report*

Councilman Mills said the Farmers Market Report has a nice list of vendors.

Terry Nicholson said events at the Farmers Market are well attended.

Mayor Spangler said the flowers in town look awesome.

Councilman Hale thanked Councilmember Sara Bowles and anyone else that helped with the flowers this year.

Councilmember Bowles said the self-watering containers have really helped this year.

#### *Police Report*

Councilman Conley asked Sergeant Jimmy Joe McCroskey to let Police Chief Ratcliffe know that council appreciates everything the Town of Narrows Police Department does.

#### *Financial Report/Treasurer's Report*

Councilman Conley said the interest on the funds at NBB for the WWTP Repair/Replacement Escrow-Sewer Account shows an amount of \$1,103.57. Where do those funds go?

Terry Nicholson said they will eventually roll into the CD itself but they only post it that way quarterly. That is why Debbie Thomas keeps track of it like that. The original CD is in the amount of \$40,000. Funds in the LGIP account are doing very well. The town borrowed money to do the sewer improvements and LGIP funds are around \$190,000. When the time comes when the town is paying more interest on the loan than they are earning on the LGIP funds they may want to pay that loan off with LGIP funds.

#### *Town Manager's Report*

Councilman Hale said there is a comment on the second bullet point concerning new flood maps and it taking a couple of years for them to become official. Will the town have to wait a couple of years to reap the benefits if it will be to the town's advantage?

Terry Nicholson said he does not know the answer to that yet but it will really benefit the town. The base flood elevation for the outfitter's building was eight feet. With the new maps it will be about eighteen inches. This means most of the downtown area will come out of the 100-year floodplain and means homeowners will not have to carry flood insurance if they do not want to. He is really excited about this. There are some residents up Poplar Street that will be added to the 100-year floodplain because Mill Creek flows behind their homes. That had not been considered in the past. The base elevation of New River is coming down everywhere in Giles County because more is being understood about the channels in the river and the depth of the channels.

Councilman Hale said the first bullet under 'Property Maintenance' says a final notice was sent to the registered agent for an LLC property owner who has not responded to prior contact attempts. Are there other actions that are pending in that regard relative to other properties? He was thinking concerning the BAD Building Initiative that some of these issues had been set aside until some things were resolved.

Terry Nicholson said some of them had been set aside but they are concerned about the safety of the structure of this particular building. There are some properties that are ugly and in need of repair and he is working with Habitat for Humanity on one of those but it is in an estate and there is a lien on the property so that is holding things up.

Councilman Hale asked how much time this particular property owner will have to respond to this.

Terry Nicholson said he gave them 30 days from the date they received the registered mail but it had not been picked up yet. This property owner has been hard to find. He spoke with them about a year and a half ago but has not been able to reach them since then.

Councilman Hale asked what action could be taken if the property owner did not respond to the certified mail.

Terry Nicholson said if they do not receive a response from them the next step would be to serve them with papers to take them to court that states either they fix the property or the town will fix it, which could mean tearing the building down. This would incur costs to the town that would probably never be recovered because the property is not worth what it would cost to tear it down. He will probably be presenting council with the cost to tear the building down.

Mayor Spangler asked if the building is torn down would the town then take ownership of that property.

Terry Nicholson said the town would place a lien on the property for the cost of the demolition.

Councilman Mills said he is happy with the water loss and is proud of the town employees that have been working on leaks to keep the water loss down.

Councilman Mills asked if the electrical problem at the WWTP was the same problem they voted on a change order for.

Terry Nicholson said yes. They had a meeting this past Friday with two engineers concerning this issue. The power went out when the windstorm came through so the WWTP was down for a day and a half because they could not run the generator because of this issue.

Councilman Mills said the town has done all they can do and this lack of productivity troubles him because they have been working on this for quite a while.

Terry Nicholson said it troubles him because this problem still exists. There are some complicating factors that they are not sure where they are coming from. For instance, if they leave the generator where it is sitting right now (it goes through the building and out to the aerators that blow air through the sludge pits) it bogs the generator down to where the voltage drops significantly and sometimes it will kick off. If they disconnect the generator and pull it around to the aerators and run a wire from the generator to the aerators it trips it. A longer line should be what is tripping it so this is baffling to him.

Mayor Spangler asked if the generator had been used in past years for this same purpose and it worked fine.

Terry Nicholson said yes.

Mayor Spangler asked what was different.

Terry Nicholson said that is what they are trying to figure out. Something has changed to cause the generator to do what it is doing but they cannot figure out what that is.

Mayor Spangler asked if the generator was acting as it should.

Terry Nicholson said yes.

John Davis said it was serviced two or three months ago and a load test was done on it.

Mayor Spangler asked if the aerators could be the problem.

John Davis said they are looking into that.

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

Councilman Conley said the sidewalk in front of Mike Stewart's house on Northview Street looked good.

Councilmember Bowles asked John Davis to thank the public works employees for the help with the flowers.

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

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

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 5-0**

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

None.

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

Councilman Mills said the next PSA meeting will be June 13<sup>th</sup>.

Terry Nicholson said when he was hired to work for the town there were security cameras being installed in various buildings and various parts of town. They are all installed and several instances have happened near those cameras and no footage could be obtained from the cameras either because they were offline or they needed to be rebooted. He along with John Davis and Lindsey Thompson began investigating some other systems. They spoke with a company called Verkada which produces camera systems and installs them as well. They are more expensive than the cameras the town currently has. We are now paying a little under \$500/month for the current cameras but there is really no benefit in having them. The camera system they proposed has a total of eighteen cameras which covers the park, farmers market, town offices, the drop box in front of the police department, the recreation department, and the town shop. He feels it is a much better system but it is costly. The cost for eighteen cameras and licensing for each camera would be around \$1,900/month. After five years the town would own the cameras and would only have to pay the licensing fee.

Councilman Conley asked where the information would be stored and for how long.

Terry Nicholson said it would be stored in the cloud and would be stored indefinitely.

Councilman Conley asked if the company would be behind the footage that would be captured if it had to be admissible in court.

Terry Nicholson said he can ask that question but he would say yes.

Mayor Spangler said when council approved money for the last cameras they thought they were the best. He asked if there was any doubt in Terry Nicholson's mind that these cameras will work like they are supposed to.

Terry Nicholson said he believed this was a much better camera system than the one in place now and would work like they are supposed to.

Councilmember Bowles said on page four of the quote it states 'one year labor warranty labor and materials. \*Normal conditions. Act of God, Weather, Fire, Storm, Undetermined Hazardous, or Vandalisms'. Would none of that be covered?

Councilman Hale said they seem to be exclusions. He believes Councilmember Bowles is trying to say these cameras could be subject to vandalism in certain circumstances.

John Davis said if someone does vandalize them the information will already be stored and there will be footage to look at. Someone would be able to see who did the vandalism.

Terry Nicholson said the installation of these cameras is different in that they would either be mounted high enough so that vandalism would be really hard to do or on light poles. They will add a 360° camera at the corner of Monroe Street and Main Street which will detect motion and pan to wherever the motion is.

Mayor Spangler asked where the people were that would do the installation.

Terry Nicholson said Roanoke. The manufacturing company is out of California and a representative of the company came from California to meet with representatives of the town.

Councilman Hale agrees the town needs functional cameras and if more money needs to be spent he believes they need to do that. He asked Terry Nicholson if he had contacted any local businesses that use these cameras now and if there was anything like this that was offered on a state contract.

Terry Nicholson said he does not know about the state contract but Verkada said they do have some clients in this area of Virginia. He will get council a copy of the list but he has not spoken with any of them.

Councilman Conley asked if this system was expandable.

Terry Nicholson said yes. They also offer access control where someone would need to swipe a badge to be able to enter a building. This would be great for the town office building. They have several other options as well. Police Chief Ratcliffe is interested in looking at locations for other cameras. This is a cellular system so they do not rely on Wi-Fi. If the cellular connection goes down, it still records and holds the data until the cellular connection is restored and then everything will be uploaded.

Councilman Conley said some cameras may need to be installed on the other side of New River.

Councilman Mills said it sounds like the town is wasting \$6,000 on the system they have now.

Terry Nicholson said Verkada loaned the town a camera that is installed in the lobby of the town office. This is being monitored and the town is very pleased with the clarity of the camera.

Mayor Spangler said since RJ Young prepared the quote for the camera system they are probably who the town will be dealing with concerning the camera system with warranty issues.

Terry Nicholson said yes.

Councilman Hale said it would seem to him that where warranty issues are concerned the town would be better off dealing with the manufacturer of the cameras rather than the dealer.

Mayor Spangler said the manufacturer probably leaves the warranty issues up to the dealer and does not get involved with that aspect of it.

Councilman Hale said when he is speaking of a warranty, for example, if you purchased a warranty for your vehicle you could purchase it from the manufacturer or from a third party. He always feels better if he buys it from the manufacturer.

Councilman Mills said this is a lot of money for cameras but if they can catch one criminal it would be worth it.

Councilman Conley asked if there was any public funding for security camera systems.



Terry Nicholson said there is a VRSA safety grant given each year the town could apply for to help pay on the cameras. There could be some DOJ money that would help with this but those funds may only cover cameras on streets.

Councilman Mills said he would like to see the town's team investigate this further and see if there is any financial help that could be obtained.

Councilman Hale asked Terry Nicholson to interview businesses that already have these security cameras and how pleased they are with them. He would also like to know what other alternatives may be out there. Is the current system not functional at all? If so they need to be cut off. That money could be used for part of the down payment.

Terry Nicholson said portions of the current system are still functional and the town still owes the company around \$1,000 for the cameras.

Mayor Spangler said since the town owns most of the cameras they now have would RJ Young be willing to give the town credit on the new cameras.

Terry Nicholson said he did not know if they would do that but they may be able to be sold to someone else.

Mayor Spangler said it states on page 5 'taxes, shipping, handling and other fees may apply. We reserve the right to cancel orders arising from pricing or other errors'. That seems a little vague to him. There needs to be a definite price without that clause being in the quote.

Councilman Goorskey asked what the difference would be in leasing the cameras vs. purchasing them. What happens if the cameras are being leased and one of them stops functioning.

Terry Nicholson said they would replace those. The cost of the cameras is being spread out and they would be replaced if they stop working.

Councilman Goorskey said it does not make sense that there is no information about a warranty with Verkada. Maybe RJ Young did not provide that information.

Terry Nicholson said he only gave council a portion of the quote. There are twenty-two pages and he only gave them six.

Councilman Goorskey said when the town is looking at purchasing technology items they need to look at where it is manufactured, availability of the parts, and how long the parts will be available.

Terry Nicholson said a part of their sales pitch was if a camera stopped functioning or became obsolete within five years they would replace it. They also stated that even after the cameras were purchased they would still provide firmware updates at no cost to the town.

Terry Nicholson said he made an executive decision because public works was having trouble with their radio system. He spoke with the town's U.S. Cellular representative concerning the town's yearly review and they mentioned push-to-talk technology that is cellular. The town received information and they ordered sixteen push-to-talk radios and the cost will be around \$400.00/month which includes licensing. They have been in use for about a week and the guys seem to love them because they are so much clearer. John Davis was in Radford this morning and because of the cellular capability he was able to talk to the guys in Narrows. Cases were also ordered for the radios. The old radios will be utilized by parks and recreation and the only cost is to maintain the FCC license which is \$300.00 for ten years. U. S. Cellular gave the town the radios for free and we will only pay the monthly usage fee.

Mayor Spangler said Giles County placed fourth out of 116 participants statewide in the TechnoSphere competition.

Tim Brown said Narrows Elementary School did an outstanding job in this competition.

Councilmember Bowles said a few years ago the town recognized outstanding accomplishments in extracurricular activities. She would like to again show recognition for different sports and the MACC team.

Terry Nicholson said this can be done anytime.

Councilman Mills said they could let Terry Nicholson figure out when to hold this.

Councilmember Bowles said Jane Garrett reached out to her concerning holding a fundraiser for new flagpoles that are rotating and new flags to go on the bridge. Could that be done in the next couple of weeks so the flags could be up for July 4<sup>th</sup>?

John Davis said yes but just for the bridge.

Councilmember Bowles said they need to purchase fourteen flags and flagpoles.

Terry Nicholson said the flags that were on the bridge for Memorial Day were shredded in the windstorm.

Councilmember Bowles said two residents on the corner of Kimberling Street and Memorial Boulevard reached out to her concerning placing stop signs on Kimberling Street.

John Davis said that was presented to council once before. They are placing stop bars at that intersection as well as other intersections. He personally does not agree with a four-way stop at the intersection of Kimberling Street and Memorial Boulevard.

Councilmember Bowles asked if the radar speed signs could be installed at that intersection once the stop bars are installed.

Terry Nicholson said yes.

Councilman Hale thanked John Davis and the public works employees for fixing the stop sign at the Marathon gas station. He also thanked John Davis and Roger Shepherd for painting the sign at the stop light on Route 460.

Councilmember Bowles said a couple of town employees reached out to her concerning council approving town employees to have July 5<sup>th</sup> as a holiday to go along with July 4<sup>th</sup> since it is on a Thursday. She said she is in support of that.

Councilman Conley said he agrees with Councilmember Bowles. He does not believe there is anything pressing that the town needs to do on July 5<sup>th</sup>.

Councilman Hale said he would like to support this but Giles County has pending, awaiting a decision by the Governor, to just take off July 4<sup>th</sup>. He is concerned about the inconsistency with the town having July 5<sup>th</sup> off so he does not believe he can support that.

Terry Nicholson said the county is not going to work with Narrows on the July 4<sup>th</sup> event. In the personnel policy it says if the Governor adds a state holiday the town manager can authorize offering staff that day off. The Governor has not done that yet but council can vote to give employees July 5<sup>th</sup> off.

**Councilman Conley made a motion to approve allowing July 5<sup>th</sup> to be given to town employees as a holiday this year. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.**

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

**Nays: Hale**

**Motion Carried 4-1**

Mayor Spangler said after the last Farmers Market event he drove by about 8:30pm and Lindsey Thompson was there by herself beginning to take down all of the tents. There were about nine of them. He stopped and helped her take them down and they were pretty heavy. He asked her if she normally took the tents down by herself and she said she did a lot of the time and said there



is no one on payroll at night to come and help. He believes they need to try to have additional help with taking down the tents.

Councilman Goorskey said he understands what Mayor Spangler is saying but he does know that Lindsey Thompson receives a stipend for taking care of the Farmers Market. There is another employee that takes directives from the Parks and Recreation Committee that receives no additional money for working additional hours. If they did that for Lindsey Thompson they would have to do it for other employees. They do not provide additional assistance for the parks and recreation director and sometimes he stays until midnight for events and does not receive a stipend for this.

Mayor Spangler said his concern is any female that is pregnant having to do that job and something happens because of those activities, where would that place the town.

Terry Nicholson said he spoke with Lindsey Thompson concerning this and if she needs help she can contact John Davis and an employee can be called to come help her. Lindsey Thompson's husband sometimes helps her after these events.

Roger Shepherd said if she can call him in advance he could get a parks and recreation employee to help her.

### **New Business**

None.

### **Unfinished Business**

None.

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

Mayor Spangler said a meeting will be held June 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm to approve the budget and the water and sewer ordinance.

Terry Nicholson said council has received a request from Narrows Little League Football for a donation. Council approved giving them a donation in the amount of \$500 in August 2023 so that was in this fiscal year. There is only \$200 left in that line item.

Councilman Goorskey said he would not mind waiting until the next fiscal year so they do not set a precedence for donating twice in a fiscal year.

**Councilman Mills made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Goorskey seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Hale, 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