

Narrows Town Council Meeting
June 18, 2024

Mayor Tom Spangler called the meeting to order. Council Members present were John Hale, Sara Bowles (attended by phone while on vacation), George Conley, and John Mills.

Staff members present were Terry Nicholson, Benji Ratcliffe, and Debbie Thomas.

No attorney was present.

Councilman George Conley gave the invocation.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Communications from Mayor, Council, and Staff

Police Chief Ratcliffe said the town interviewed an individual yesterday to be hired as a police officer for the Town of Narrows. They have hired Melissa Cohen that currently works for the Town of Pearisburg. She is very community oriented and will be a great fit for the town police force.

Terry Nicholson said the PSA had a very brief meeting. The lead and copper rule study is proceeding well and they are making good progress with that.

Terry Nicholson said he wanted to give council an update on the preliminary engineering report for the waste water treatment plant. It is not completely done yet but is far enough along that Thompson and Litton has let him know the town will probably need to stay on their own for a waste water treatment plant. They are not completely abandoning the idea of a combined system, and will work with the county some more to see if they would be able to help, but right now Narrows needs to focus on their own facility. To renovate the Narrows plant, it would cost around \$9.9 million. That would leave Pearisburg with \$2.9 million for their Mill Road Facility and \$13.1 million for renovation and upgrade to their plant. That brings the construction estimate total to \$25.9 million. When the forced main is added to pump sewage from Narrows to Pearisburg costs go off the rails, because it would cost \$10.9 million to go along Route 100 or \$15.5 million to go along Route 460. There are some problems with Route 460 that make the \$15.5 million questionable. That puts the total packages at \$36.2 million or \$40.8 million, depending on the route. That is why Thompson and Litton is saying for Narrows to focus on its own plant. There are some possibilities for Narrows to decrease the \$9.9 million for the renovation of the waste water treatment plant. The reason the renovation is so costly is that Narrows has peak flows during rain events from infiltration and influx (I&I). That is either from broken sewer lines on the public side or private side, manhole covers, sump pumps, or rain going directly into our system. Thompson and Litton is proposing the town contacting DEQ for the possibility of obtaining a grant (deadline July 26th) to do an I&I study of the town's system. The maximum cost would be \$95,000 and they would do it hourly. This would be contingent on the town receiving the grant. Thompson and Litton feels very positive about Narrows receiving the grant because we are moving in the right direction and they recognize the plant is exceeding its capacity. When there are significant rain events the plant can be at four times its capacity. That can lead to sewage being placed directly in the river and the town does not want to do that and DEQ does not want the town to do that. This will cost money but if the cost of renovating the plant can be decreased that savings can be spent on the plant itself.

Councilman Conley asked if Thompson and Litton had informed Pearisburg about this.

Terry Nicholson said yes. Narrows, Pearisburg, Giles County, and Thompson and Litton are still talking to one another about where they go from here. They are going to meet with someone from DEQ in Richmond concerning this.

Councilman Conley said DEQ takes a hard look at this.

Terry Nicholson said the Narrows waste water plant is in the floodplain so it is good there are options available.

Councilman Hale said he thought Narrows was going to proceed with working with Pearisburg on this venture. What information came to light to bring Narrows where they are now?

Terry Nicholson said Pearisburg waited for Narrows to receive their Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) study done on its own plant to say what would it cost to keep the current plant running compared to what it would cost to turn the Narrows plant into a pump station and pump sewage to Pearisburg. They also looked at what it would cost to expand Pearisburg's facility to have the sewage pumped there. That is what the PER was for and DEQ paid for that to be done.

Councilman Hale wonders if they thought about going in the other direction and including Glen Lyn and Rich Creek in the partnership.

Terry Nicholson said they did. Prior to doing the PER there was a larger study which looked at regionalizing the whole county with the idea that both Pearisburg and Narrows would pump toward Glen Creek (Glen Lyn and Rich Creek together). The cost to pump sewage to that area is what prohibited this from being studied further. Narrows needs to go to the county and to DEQ and say here is the difference and let them know Narrows still supports the idea of regionalizing this and only having one plant. This would be a better solution but there is a huge cost difference.

Councilman Conley said he wanted to make sure they had one year to complete this.

Terry Nicholson said that was correct. After one year, it will be possible to go back to DEQ for more implementation money.

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the grant proposal for an I&I study of the waste water system. Councilman Hale seconded the motion.

Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Terry Nicholson said after last week's meeting he spoke to Verkada again about the camera system and gave them a list of questions council had asked. Warranty on the cameras is for ten years and warranty on the installation is for one year. If there is an equipment problem the town would deal with the manufacturer and if there was an installation problem the town would deal with the installer. One of the references he received was Virginia Transformer in Roanoke. He spoke to their IT person about the cameras and they said they loved their system. They have not needed much help concerning the cameras but if they contact the company it takes them no longer than two days to contact them back: it usually only takes one day. The other reference was Bluefield, Virginia, so Councilman John Mills spoke to the police chief.

Councilman Mills said Police Chief Shane Gunter had researched Verkada extensively and he believes the company is phenomenal. He is very pleased with the camera system.

Councilman Hale asked how long Bluefield, Virginia, has had the camera system.

Terry Nicholson said they have had it for two years. They switched from another company and the comparison was like night and day. He also checked on Axis (a company Radford uses for cameras) and the cost was significantly higher than the Verkada system. The Axis system has to have a network video recorder so that is part of the reason it is so much higher. Verkada stores everything in the cloud. Video evidence captured by the camera system would be court enforceable. The date is time stamped on the video and they also have an app that can detect if a video is legitimate or if it has been altered. Terry Nicholson spoke with Verkada and told them the town had been spending around \$6,000/year on the current Arlo system so they knocked off that cost for the first year. They also decreased the camera price a bit and said if the town would pay slightly more per month for 60 months they will make that pay for the ten-year plan and after five years there would be no payments for the last five years of the ten-year plan. They could still do the same thing with the five-year plan but would still incur costs for camera licenses, Verkada license, and cellular gateway license. If the town went with the five-year plan, the total paid would be \$129,756.33. The ten-year plan would be a total of \$132,583.20. The difference is \$2,826.87 which would lock in the gateway, licenses, and warranty for five years.

Mayor Spangler said the town would be paying \$2,209.72 for 60 months (five years) but the gateway, licenses, and warranty would be good for ten years.

Terry Nicholson said that was correct.

Councilman Hale asked if this camera system was expandable.

Terry Nicholson said yes. They could even add card access for the town hall where someone would have to swipe a card to enter the building from the back. This could be done at any location. Police Chief Ratcliffe is very interested in this camera system.

Police Chief Ratcliffe said it would be a great tool for the police department because there are some great capabilities. These cameras will have a license plate reader and can detect motion.

Terry Nicholson said if they are looking for a suspect with a white shirt and jeans they can type those parameters in and the camera will show footage of all people that have on a white shirt and jeans.

Councilman Hale asked if a camera could be installed on a temporary basis.

Terry Nicholson said yes.

Mayor Spangler said if a camera needs to be relocated would a town employee do it or the installer.

Terry Nicholson said he would recommend the installer do it because it will stay under warranty. There would be a fee for relocating the camera.

Councilman Mills made a motion to the approve the five-year payment on the ten-year plan for the Verkada security camera proposal. Councilman Hale seconded the motion.

Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Matters for Consideration by Council

Councilman Hale made a motion to approve the FY2025 budget as presented. Councilman Mills seconded the motion.

Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the water and sewer rate increases.

Councilman Conley seconded the motion.

Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

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

Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Conley, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Clerk, Debbie Thomas

Mayor, Tom Spangler