

**Narrows Town Council Meeting**  
**April 14, 2025**

Mayor Tom Spangler called the meeting to order. Council Members present were John Hale (remotely), Sara Bowles, Jonathan Creger, and John Mills. Joe Goorskey was absent.

Staff members present were Melissa Cohen, John Davis, Cindy Laws, Terry Nicholson, Roger Shepherd, and Debbie Thomas.

Attorney Reid Broughton was present.

Councilman Jonathan Creger gave the invocation.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Terry Nicholson asked John Hale to state for the record where he was and why he was calling in to attend remotely.

Councilman Hale said he was on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina and therefore he was calling into tonight's meeting.

Mayor Spangler said he would like to thank Officer Cohen and Officer Stilley for their participation in the Easter Egg Hunt the other day. Quite a few different individuals told him how much it meant to see them there and the kids really enjoyed it, and council appreciated their participation.

**Approval of March 10<sup>th</sup>, March 17<sup>th</sup>, and March 31<sup>st</sup> Meeting Minutes**

**Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Councilman Creger seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 4-0**

**Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Councilman Creger seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 4-0**

**Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the March 31<sup>st</sup> meeting minutes. Councilman Creger seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills**

**Abstain: Bowles**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 3-0**

**Consent Agenda**

*Library Report*

Councilman Mills said it looked like paint night was a hit.

Cindy Laws said it was popular. Around thirteen people was about all she could hold in the library with the tables set up, and they were having more people than that to attend.

Councilman Mills said she was doing a great job.

Councilman Creger said on the library report Cindy Laws made a note concerning the continued goal for the Library of Virginia to acquire 100% funding for all the libraries in the state. How far along was the Iris Brammer Library in meeting that goal.

Cindy Laws said the funding had been presented several times, and then knocked back down. The Library of Virginia was hopeful that within the next two years the Iris Brammer Library would receive 100% state funding.

Councilman Creger said that was good.

#### *Parks & Recreation Report*

Councilmember Bowles asked if they usually had more kids to sign up for 11U baseball and softball.

Roger Shepherd said that usually bounced back and forth. One year they would have more teams of 13U and less 11U then they could have two teams of 11U. There was one group of kids that was playing travel baseball now, which went back to the series of incidents they had last year for that same group; they did not want to play in that league again as a result of what happened at the end of the season last year, so they were losing probably about 15 kids because of that. The 13U group would be less this year because that whole group of 13U kids that he had last year was now in 8th grade.

Terry Nicholson said he wanted to thank Roger Shepherd publicly for all the work that he had done on getting the Lurich Ballfields put back together. He did an awful lot of legwork looking for quotes for everything the town had to have replaced down there, and he appreciated Roger's efforts in doing that. The town was getting very close to the end of that project, where they would be able to submit to FEMA for reimbursement.

Mayor Spangler thanked Roger Shepherd and anyone else that was involved with this venture.

#### *Farmers Market Report*

A report will not be available until May 2025.

#### *Police Report*

Councilman Mills asked Melissa Cohen if the three people caught speeding between 10 and 14 miles over the speed limit was in the 25mph zones.

Melissa Cohen said that was probably in the 40mph zone.

Mayor Spangler said it was hard to believe 92 tickets were given out to people speeding on Route 460. He guessed people did not pay any attention or did not worry about the speed. Council appreciated all of the police officer's efforts.

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

Councilman Mills asked if it was correct that 91% of the tax revenue had been collected.

Terry Nicholson said that was correct and that was where the town would expect to be this time of year.

#### *Town Manager's Report*

Mayor Spangler said he would like to thank Terry Nicholson and others that had been involved with keeping the town running. He knew a lot of Terry's time had been taken up since November with the flood and dealing with the aftermath of that.

Councilman Mills asked how they were coming along on their school lights.

Terry Nicholson said he was able to talk with Mike Brown a couple of weeks ago and also sent him something in writing to say that council had approved what they wanted for that memorandum of understanding for the town, so the ball was in their court at this point.

Councilman Mills said, in his opinion, the ball had been in their court and they were just now asking for an MOU. What was going on with that bunch up there. It had been around 5 months now, was he exaggerating?

Terry Nicholson said no, it was in November 2024.

Councilman Mills asked Terry Nicholson if he thought the town was going to make some progress this time.

Terry Nicholson said the town will stay after them.

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

Mayor Spangler told John Davis it looked like the water and sewer department had been busy with a six-inch water leak.

John Davis said they had been looking for that leak for quite a while and knew something was coming off the farm tank. They knew they were moving way too much water up there and it finally came to the surface. They did leak detection all over that area. The farm tank only serves around 74 houses. They checked the alley and the farm road looking for that leak. After they fixed it, the water loss in that tank came back down. The water loss will be high next month because of that leak, because they lost a lot of water.

Mayor Spangler said he believed sometimes the town worried too much about percentages, because once they found the leaks and fixed them they were just being proactive. He was not going to worry about it too much and he did not believe anybody else would, as long as they knew they were headed in the right direction.

Councilman Mills said he disagreed to a point. As long as the town was doing their dead-level best, he was going to be satisfied because what other barometer did they have to know whether they were being successful or not.

John Davis said he would like to update council on the backflow preventers they discussed at last month's council meeting. They now had three of them installed and would install another one tomorrow. They had already installed backflow preventers for Bill Riddle, Doug Kirby, and Chris Bennington.

Councilman Mills said the town did the right thing by installing the backflow valves.

Mayor Spangler asked how many households were identified as needing the backflow preventers.

John Davis said they were only doing four, because there were several houses that the fire department had to go pump water from their houses, and it was ground water and not from anything else.

Mayor Spangler said it could have been worse.

John Davis said there were four residents that reported water in their basements and those were the four they installed backflow preventers for.

Councilman Mills said council thought it was going to be twelve households so that was good news.

Councilman Creger said he wondered whether that offer had expired.

John Davis said he did not know that it needed to expire. Residents just needed to prove that it backed up in their sewer and was not just ground water that came into their basement.

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

**Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills**

**Nays: None**

## **Motion Carried 4-0**

### **Public Hearing**

Mayor Spangler opened the public hearing concerning the DHCD Urgent Need Grant.

Terry Nicholson said he wanted to explain this process, because this was going to be a multi-step process for the town. DHCD (Department of Housing and Community Development) had received money as a result of the Helene flooding, that had been designated for what they were terming 'urgent need'. They had a list of possible uses for those funds which he would like to talk about tonight. He wanted to explain what the scope of this was, and what the town was looking at pursuing. The town will hold another public hearing on April 28th when they do their budget meeting, and again offer for people to come and make any kind of public comment that they would like to. By then, the town will have narrowed it down to the scope of what they believe they would like to apply for. This urgent funding can be used, and he was going to read from DHCD's guidance on this, "for housing, for infrastructure, and/or for business support". Examples of eligible uses included but were not limited to and the first one was "permanently affixed generators for treatment plants". That was what they talked about when Kevin Byrd was here for the strategic planning sessions council had. That was what Kevin Byrd and DHCD had encouraged the town to apply for. Terry Nicholson said housing was intriguing to him, because that was something else the town was looking at, but in talking with Kevin Byrd, and from Kevin Byrd's conversations with DHCD, they believed there was another pot of money there called "Disaster Recovery" funding, which was separate from this urgent need funding, that would have more applicable housing money for the types of things the town might be looking at. For instance, John Mills had mentioned wanting to have some funding that the town could put in a housing bucket that they could use for helping people repair their homes, maybe acquire some properties to get them turned over the way the town would like them to. That was a possibility with this new Disaster Recovery fund for housing. So, they felt like the scope of what they were offering in the urgent need would push the town more towards looking at the infrastructure-type projects, and the generator was something we knew is needed. He asked Thompson and Litton to put together a brief summary of what it would cost the town to put a generator in that would be sized so that it could run not only the town's wastewater plant currently, but could also run the future pump station they intended to turn the plant into, if they built a new plant with Pearisburg. The generator to run the pump station would have to be larger than the one to run the current plant. Thompson and Litton put together an estimate which was about \$660,000, and that was within the scope of what the town could apply for under this program. The town will be putting together an application for this, and will have an application available to the public, so they could see what the town was applying for and what their reasoning was for doing that. The urgent need program requires serving low- to moderate-income households, but because the town was doing something for the wastewater treatment plant, it served the whole community, so all of the low-to-moderate income families would benefit. The town felt this was a good direction, and he would welcome any input council may have concerning this as well. In their conversations, Kevin Byrd and Terry Nicholson felt like this was a good ask for them and that they had a pretty strong possibility of receiving funding for this.

Councilman Mills asked Terry Nicholson what he needed from council.

Terry Nicholson said nothing tonight. This was just the public briefing aspect of it and he wanted to explain for the public record what the town was trying to do here. They will talk about it again in two weeks when they meet for a budget work session and will hold another public hearing like this one. We will advertise the public meeting again, to show DHCD that we advertised it and what we were advertising for. This was a good opportunity for the town that we felt we really needed to take advantage of.

Mayor Spangler asked if the quote Thompson and Litton gave was strictly for a generator and making it operable.

Terry Nicholson said yes, and it was to get it out of the floodplain; to build it on a platform so that it would be raised out of the floodplain. It will have the same kind of automatic transfer switches, so it will be able to turn itself on. It will be natural gas powered rather than diesel fuel which the current generator runs on. The town already had natural gas run to the site, so it included that setup as well. The generator itself was \$131,000 but the pad to put it on was \$150,000, so it would be costly in order to be able to get it out of the floodplain, and that cost

was the largest part of the project. The town will have to replace some electrical panels that would be related, so they had to add all the automatic switching that made sure that if the generator kicked on they were not sending power to AEP lines, so that if linemen came to work on the AEP lines, nobody got shocked by the town's generator being on, and those kinds of things.

Mayor Spangler said Terry Nicholson mentioned the housing and that it was a different bucket of money. Was this one grant or was it separate grants. Would it be one grant and they would have two or three different places they could pull funds from.

Terry Nicholson said it would be a separate grant. The grant he was just speaking of would be just for the generator itself, and then the town would apply under the disaster recovery funding for the housing.

Mayor Spangler said he believed they were all thankful that grant money was available and hopefully it would be accepted.

Terry Nicholson said this was all Helene related, so this money was in place already. This was not something that could get clawed back from the town. This was a good option for the town to pursue, and he felt reasonably confident that they had a good chance of receiving funding.

Mayor Spangler thanked Terry Nicholson for his explanation. Since there were no members of the public present for the hearing, Mayor Spangler declared the public hearing closed.

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

None.

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

Terry Nicholson said he talked to Todd Meredith today, since neither John Mills nor himself were able to go to Thursday's PSA meeting. Todd Meredith gave him an update on some of the things they talked about. They did get the arrangement with Angie Higginbotham in place they had been working on, so that was done. The other thing was they had a presentation from a company that did some type, and it almost sounded like sonar type, of leak detection and the PSA was looking at maybe pursuing that countywide, to help with leak detection. Terry Nicholson had just learned about this today, so he did not have a whole lot of information about that, but wanted council to be aware they were talking about that. He would get more information on it, and John Davis and himself will look at that together and talk about how that might benefit the town. There would be some cost to each of the towns to bring in this company countywide, but he did not know exactly what those costs would be yet. As they learn more, he will share it with council.

Terry Nicholson said he had already signed the fencing contract, because this was something the town was going to submit for reimbursement to FEMA. He wanted to let council know that Mike Bedsaul prepared that contract for the town, and they gave that to the fencing contractor, who had signed it. He wanted to make council aware of that, and would ask council to formally approve the contract on behalf of the town for that fencing replacement, and that would cover the town with FEMA as well.

**Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the fencing contract for the Lurich Road Ballfields. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 4-0**

Terry Nicholson said he received an email from Jon Butler concerning the dry hydrant grant. This had been a year and a half or maybe two years ago that the fire department requested placing a dry hydrant in the river at the boat landing down on Lurich Road. Council approved it. The project was going to use grant money, so it was at no cost to the town. The project did not get done, the flood happened, and now they have come back to Jon Butler and said because of the flood issues with that site, they did not want to spend the money to put a dry hydrant there,

because they were concerned that every time it flooded, it would get taken out by debris. He wanted to share that with council so they were aware of the fact that this would not happen.

Councilman Creger asked what a dry hydrant was for.

Terry Nicholson said a dry hydrant was just a pipe that extended underground into the river so that the fire department could go with a pumper truck and pull water out of the river into their truck. It was a quick way for them to draw water out of the river.

Mayor Spangler asked Terry Nicholson if that grant money was still available, did they have another location that might be more suitable.

Terry Nicholson said he did not know but would ask. That was a good thought.

Mayor Spangler said it could possibly be a big benefit to the fire department.

John Davis said they had several of those put up Wolf Creek when he was in the fire department, and they were never really used. You had to prime them and depending on how steep it was, it took a while to prime them with the truck, and they were better off just to come back into town and hook up to a hydrant. They were a good idea in areas that did not have access to a hydrant.

Terry Nicholson said he would ask Jon Butler if there was anything else that grant money could be used for.

Councilman Mills said he would like to interject something at this point. Havens Hill Florist will be having a ribbon cutting ceremony on Saturday, June 7th at a time to be determined. He thought if at all possible, some members of council could show up there to support them.

Terry Nicholson said he told Havens Hill Florist the town would participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony, so once he gets the date and time he will share it with council.

### **New Business**

None.

### **Unfinished Business**

None.

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

Mayor Spangler said the first item was to consider approving an engagement letter from Rodefer Moss for the pre-audit.

Councilman Creger asked if this was the same company the town had worked with in the past.

Terry Nicholson said yes.

**Councilman Creger made a motion to approve the engagement letter from Rodefer Moss for the town's pre-audit. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.**

**Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills**

**Nays: None**

**Motion Carried 4-0**

Mayor Spangler said the next item was to consider approving a request for the Giles/Narrows After Prom.

Councilman Mills asked how much did the town give last year.

Councilmember Bowles said \$500.

**Councilman Mills made a motion to approve a donation of \$500 to the Giles/Narrows After Prom. Councilman Creger seconded the motion.**



**Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills**  
**Nays: None**  
**Motion Carried 4-0**

Mayor Spangler said the next item was to consider approving a request from the Narrows Elementary School PTA. Council donated \$100 last year.

**Councilman Mills made a motion to approve a donation of \$100 to the Narrows Elementary School PTA. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.**  
**Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills**  
**Nays: None**  
**Motion Carried 4-0**

**Councilman Mills made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Creger seconded the motion.**  
**Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills**  
**Nays: None**  
**Motion Carried 4-0**

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Clerk, Debbie Thomas

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Mayor, Tom Spangler