

**Narrows Town Council Meeting
May 12, 2025**

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

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

Attorney Reid Broughton was present.

Councilman John Mills gave the invocation.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of April 14th and April 28th Meeting Minutes

Councilman Creger said on page four of the April 14th meeting minutes it stated ‘Councilman Creger said he believed that offer had expired’. He asked that Debbie Thomas change the sentence to say ‘Councilman Creger said he wondered whether that offer had expired’.

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the April 14th meeting minutes as amended. Councilman Hale seconded the motion.

Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills

Abstain: Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the April 28th meeting minutes. Councilman Hale seconded the motion.

Ayes: Hale and Mills

Abstain: Bowles, Creger, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 2-0

Consent Agenda

Library Report

Councilman Creger said he was glad to see that the library continued to improve. He did not know veterans were meeting there and that was very important because in this area, as veterans, they were a long way off from a lot of services generally and it was nice that there was something close.

Parks & Recreation Report

Councilman Hale said he had a question about the notice that was on Facebook soliciting applicants for work at the park this summer. He was curious whether they had any response to that.

Roger Shepherd said he had four or five applicants.

Councilman Hale said that was good.

Terry Nicholson said he did not believe they would have any trouble filling that position.

Farmers Market Report

Councilmember Bowles said there was an excellent lineup of vendors at locals night.

Councilman Hale thanked Lindsey Thompson for her report. Did the list of vendors listed in her report typically grow through the season.

Lindsey Thompson said yes. The ones listed were the ones who paid \$85 to set up for the entire season, meaning they would be there at least every Saturday and every locals night.

Councilman Creger told Lindsey Thompson she had done a really good job with the Farmers Market and it had really become something the town could be proud of.

Police Report

Councilman Mills asked Police Chief Ratcliffe what happened at the red light in Narrows the other day.

Police Chief Ratcliffe said there was a wreck.

Financial Report/Treasurer's Report

No comments.

Town Manager's Report

Councilman Hale thanked Terry Nicholson for finishing the work on the Mill Creek grant application that they worked on last year. He was very optimistic about the outcome of that application and hoped that shortly they would hear something favorable, with the likelihood of making some significant improvements to the Mill Creek trail head.

Councilman Creger said in light of the disappointing news about the EPA thriving communities grant, were there any other options or any other things the town could pursue to replace that.

Terry Nicholson said unfortunately not right now and he suspected that funding like that was going to be hard to come by for a while because those kind of programs were being shut down. The town received notice that we received the grant that he applied for with Stantec, which was the engineering firm that did the highest and best use study of the Gallimore properties. The town was notified that they received that grant for \$350,000, which they were pretty excited about. Last week he received an email from the director of that program saying the federal government had shut it down, so the grants were not going to happen this year and the town lost \$350,000 that we thought we were going to get. The grant application was to design the fire department and to acquire some more land up there. We are still working towards building the fire department and had a plan in place for financing that, so we will continue towards that. Grant money is going to be hard to find for a while.

Councilman Mills asked Terry Nicholson if this was the appropriate time to talk about what Chris McKlarney shared with them at the consortium meeting.

Terry Nicholson said they met with Chris McKlarney and the Giles Team from the HOME consortium. Kim Thurlow (Town of Blacksburg) spearheaded that program with Jennifer Wilsie from the New River Valley Regional Commission. They met with the team to talk about the funding that was coming to the town and Giles County, and that funding was also in danger right now. Federal funding was also still a question mark for regional commissions, including whether money would come through for the HOME funding. As of right now, it was still planned for the town to get that money, and that would be a big boon to the town, because we were looking at anywhere from two to four building sites in Narrows that Habitat for Humanity would put low-income housing on, and there would be some others in Giles County as well. It could be more than four properties in Narrows depending on the funding. That was an exciting thing because it was melding several pots of money. The one that was not in jeopardy was what was coming from FEMA, and that was going to be put towards low-income housing. If everything came together, there would be several pots of money that would be blended and that would leverage what the town would be able to do here. There was talk of creating a revolving-loan fund that people could use to fix properties up and then pay it back, and that loan fund then would continue in perpetuity. There were some really exciting ideas coming out of that program. He placed in council packets a report from the home consortium that he wanted council to be aware of because it talked about the prior projects they had done. The town office building was a home consortium project a number of years ago.

Councilman Mills said he really hoped the town received these funds.

Public Works Director's Report

Councilman Mills told John Davis someone must be doing something right because the town's water loss was still coming in at 24% to 25%.

Councilman Hale told Terry Nicholson they had spoken about repainting the handicap parking spaces in front of the activity center. Was that something that may be completed this summer or was that in the work schedule.

Terry Nicholson said they could do that; they just needed to be refreshed.

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

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Communications, Concerns, and Requests from the Public

Mayor Spangler said Jacob Taylor was present with some information for council.

Jacob Taylor said he gave council a pamphlet before the meeting started. He was one of the animal control officers in Giles County, and had been training dogs since 2017. He was a master dog trainer/behavior/psychologist and attended a community college in Charleston, West Virginia, to achieve that. Precision K9 was locally owned and operated. They were a small business and had been in Narrows since 2023. They offered training for puppies on- and off-leash, police dogs, service dogs, tracking, really anything. They had a working dog club that met twice a week, and they prepared for trials and competitions for outdoor events. They were the one-stop shop for dog education and training in this area. One of the problems they had currently was their location, which was potentially being included in the area of the new fire department and police department. They were currently located at 200 Hare Street and that presented a problem for them. They were pretty well established, had been here for a little while, and everybody knew who they were at this point and they were continuing to grow. In reference to the building on Monroe Street, he believed it used to be an outdoor store but did not know the name of that location. If they were able to rent that property it would only help the town as far as a continued revenue source of stable income. They had a local client base but really pulled most of their clients from the surrounding counties and even states as far as Texas and Washington. He had flown dogs in before and had owners fly in to continue their training with them. He thought that was just something that was super important for the town: bringing more people here to actually see what Giles County and Narrows really were, because this was a beautiful place. He was originally from West Virginia, but had lived here for about five or six years and did not want to go anywhere else because he thought it was absolutely beautiful here. One of the things they were very passionate about was community outreach, public education, and public engagement. Since they had been here, they had done seminars at King Johnston, educational classes at Narrows Elementary and Eastern Elementary, and taught at Giles High School. Those were just a few of the places where they had done business and it was only growing. They were dedicated to participating in any event. He knew the town did a lot with the farmers market and it was closely located to the building on Monroe Street. He would be more than glad to host a seminar every quarter or whatever they would need to do. Public education was crucial for Giles County. He could speak to it from the animal control side, but also by the dogs that he saw coming to the facility, and it showed there was a lack of education in this area for dogs. This transition could happen pretty quickly once they agreed to terms, as far as what the rent would be and so on. A few minor adjustments would have to be made at the facility but nothing major. No structural changes and nothing too encompassing. One of the questions he knew they had to conquer here today was that the grant that was obtained to fix that property up was to meet outdoor recreational status. He truly felt from the research he had done, that dog training was truly outdoors and included anything from obedience to dog trials to hunting dogs to herding dogs to tracking dogs and he felt like they met that requirement. Those were just a few of the things that they trained themselves to help meet that. He also included some pictures for council to see of the public engagement they had done and how they operated. On the very last page he

included a bio of himself. He knew he had fed council a lot of information and would be more than glad to answer any questions council might have.

Councilman Hale said for their regular training classes could he describe where their clients came from?

Jacob Taylor said they offered two different avenues: a boarding/training program and private lessons. If they were doing private lessons, those people could be coming from places such as Princeton, Roanoke, and Christiansburg. Private classes were once a week for x amount of weeks, so they would have to be semi-local for that. When they started getting out of state clients, that was when they were talking about boarding trains. There were not many trainers out there who did behavior modification for people, and that was when they were flying in to actually come here and stay for x amount of time.

Councilman Hale thanked Jacob Taylor for his response.

Police Chief Ratcliffe said Jacob Taylor had one of his dogs right now. He was on a 30-day program with him, and he could vouch for him and his work. He did a tremendous job and had made a remarkable change in his dog.

Councilman Creger said Jacob Taylor mentioned activities like herding and obstacle courses. Was there a possibility to have things like competitions and generate people coming in to do those sort of things.

Jacob Taylor said absolutely. They were looking into hosting a trial accompanied by WDA (Working Dogs of America). He spoke to John Hale, along with some of the other county employees, a little bit about a location and trying to find somewhere in Narrows to host that. That would be something they could do multiple times a year. They were hoping to host a more affordable larger scale obedience class and having jumps they would incorporate into that.

Councilmember Bowles said she went to an event that Jacob Taylor hosted on a Saturday at King Johnston and she left feeling armed with great information, and was very impressed. If he was able to rent the outfitter building, would he be putting in dog runs and things like that in the back that were for training and could that somehow check the box of outdoor recreation and maybe incorporate something like a dog park.

Terry Nicholson said he met with Jacob Taylor a couple of weeks ago for him to see the inside of the building. He contacted DHCD to talk with them about whether this would qualify or not under the grant, and the person that he needed to talk to was out of town and he had not talked to him yet. Terry Nicholson thought Jacob Taylor's business would be a great fit and the building would be a great fit from what they saw when they toured it. As far as the dog park, he was not sure that was the site to do it, but they had some other possibilities they had been talking about. He had talked with Chris McKlarney about property at Jason Circle . They talked about the county or the town acquiring that property to be used as a dog park because it was an isolated location, but that was just beginning. He thought for the types of things Jacob Taylor wanted to do the town had several options of public land he could use to do that. Camp Success was a good location as well.

Jacob Taylor said they were a small business and they had three dog kennels that would be housed at the location. In reference to the dog park, he would be more than glad to switch hats for council and they could talk in more detail. He would be more than happy to sit down and meet with anyone who was actually interested in having the dog park. He had approximately a 10-page report already from another town that was interested in doing the dog park. He thought it was a great asset and a great tool. He thought they just had to do it to benefit everyone with the safety of the animals in mind.

Councilman Creger said it seemed like Jacob Taylor could train hunting dogs. Was that true or not true.

Jacob Taylor said yes.

Councilman Creger said that seemed to be outdoor to him. He was certainly leaning towards supporting Jacob Taylor because he thought it was an outdoor activity and was certainly a better

use of the building than they had right now, which was nothing. Was there the possibility of the outdoor kennels becoming stinky and the dogs yapping and being a nuisance.

Jacob Taylor said the kennels would be located inside of the building and they cleaned religiously. He was in and out of there multiple times a day currently at their current facility and the same would apply here. They were obviously doing bathroom schedules because that was one of the biggest things people came to them for was bathroom training so they had the dogs on a very strict schedule and pretty much could predict when they were going to have to go to the bathroom. He was not saying there would never be an accident because they were animals, but they would be able to minimize that. They cleaned out the kennels religiously, removed the feces, sprayed out the kennels, scrubbed them with bleach and Odo ban so they did not have any major smells. In reference to the dogs barking, they did bark some but by no means did it meet nuisance qualification. This particular building was not in a high residential area and that was one of his biggest struggles of finding a place. When he came to the meetings in reference to the new buildings, one of his biggest questions was that he was an established business, paid taxes, paid everything here, and brought people here. He absolutely supported Narrows growing but he had to have a place to go because he did not want to leave, so if and when there was ever a problem with dogs barking or something like that they had tools and ways to manage that if that was ever to become a concern.

Councilman Goorskey said the town had twice before run an RFP for the use of this property. He did not want to discuss terms and mess up this man's opportunity.

Terry Nicholson said just for clarification the town would have to run an RFP to ask for folks to give the town proposals on what they would like to do so they needed to be aware of that.

Councilman Goorskey said he would just want to caution that the town was not expressing that Jacob Taylor was going to get it no matter what and then somebody else that put a bid in on it said this was skewed from the start. He told Jacob Taylor he loved this and wanted him to have it but they should not discuss terms out loud because it would weaken his position in the bargaining later.

Jacob Taylor said he came into this meeting with the understanding that there was going to have to be an RFP, but he was the type of person who did business face to face and wanted to get in front of council and tell them what he was about, who he was, and what they could do.

Councilman Mills said people he trusted had endorsed Jacob Taylor mightily which made him okay in his eyes. It might be a bit premature but at some point if they had a relationship he would look Jacob Taylor in the eye and ask him if he had the town covered if a dog bit somebody or something went south. He was not a pessimist, but life happened.

Jacob Taylor said he carried \$2 million general liability insurance and carried another insurance policy for any dog that was in his custody or control that did any harm to himself or another.

Councilman Mills said Jacob Taylor was going to get a fair shake from council.

Councilman Creger said he thought Jacob Taylor had a good idea. Dogs definitely needed training and that was what made a good dog.

Mayor Spangler asked Jacob Taylor if there would be any additional fencing required.

Jacob Taylor said he would not need any additional fencing.

Mayor Spangler said council appreciated Jacob Taylor's interest and they would do their due diligence to see if it qualified.

Jacob Taylor asked when the town would be looking at putting out an RFP.

Terry Nicholson said once he heard back from DHCD, which should be this week. The town usually tried to advertise it for two weeks. He would make sure Jacob Taylor received a copy of the RFP.

Communications from Mayor, Council, and Staff

Councilman Mills said the PSA had a good meeting and Terry Nicholson would be discussing some items later. They had a discussion concerning the Lurich Road dumpster site. He had asked for some work to be done a couple of times now, but it had not manifested itself. He and Terry Nicholson had asked for a drawing or representation of what they believed would be functional there. He had asked PSA management to put it to paper and to present it to the authority having jurisdiction because he wanted no surprises. He did not want to think they had a deal and think that it was something that would work for them, and then find out it was contrary to some regulation no one had ever heard of. They should receive that by the next PSA meeting.

Terry Nicholson said the idea was they needed to prove to FEMA, in order to get mitigation money, that this site currently was not workable. They would need to show how high they would have to elevate it in order to get it out of the floodplain, which at that site was like 12' or 15' so there was no way they could do it. They needed to be able to show them that the site was not workable in that sense and that financially it did not make sense to operate it there. They could then pursue funding for relocating it somewhere else.

Councilman Mills said the PSA consummated the deal with the treasurer's office in preparing the bills for the PSA.

Terry Nicholson said in council's packets there was a memo that Mike Brown from the school board office sent to him. It was a memorandum of understanding between the town and the county for purchasing the school speed limit signs and stated the town as being responsible for continuing to maintain those in the future. They did what the town requested, where they said if the town were to put photo enforcement on those signs and generated revenue for it, the town would put that revenue towards the cellular bill for operating the signs.

Councilman Mills said he had been very loud and clear in his criticisms of folks and today he wanted to thank them profusely and appreciated their work.

Terry Nicholson said he would ask council to approve the MOU for him to sign on the town's behalf.

Mayor Spangler said he read in the MOU that if the signs were damaged by an act of God or accident it was the town's responsibility to replace them. Was there any reason to believe the town's insurance would not cover any of those events.

Terry Nicholson said no. The town had instances in the past where a light pole was damaged and the insurance of the person that hit it covered and replaced it.

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between Giles County Public Schools and the Town of Narrows for the installation of school speed limit signs and to approve Terry Nicholson executing the Memorandum of Understanding on council's behalf. Councilman Creger seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Councilman Hale said he was asking for council's agreement to author and execute a resolution. He thought council knew that he had some concern for some time that was originally brought to him by one of their constituents about the lack of handicap parking accessibility, particularly on the home field side on the back side of Ragsdale Field for football games, youth athletic events, and probably things like graduation ceremonies and those sorts of things. Because of the topography of the area, it was quite difficult to construct ADA approved permanent handicap parking spaces. He met with Jason Buckland the president of the school board. They are proposing an agreement between the school board and the town, and that was what he was asking council to agree to. If council adopted this resolution, it would allow the school board to close Holston Street (which is the pass-through street immediately behind the home field stands). If council would permit them to close that street during special events such as those he had described, then they will, during those periods, establish temporary handicap parking spaces in that area. For those that may be familiar, that street is effectively closed daily during school when school buses are lined up, and there is no way for traffic to pass through there. His personal opinion was that during events at the stadium there should not be a mixture of pedestrian traffic

and vehicular traffic at the same time either. He did have a personal concern about the handicapped parking spaces, but looking beyond that he thought there was certainly a safety issue that they could help address if council would agree to this resolution that he was requesting. He asked that council approve this resolution so that he might continue his efforts to incorporate the temporary handicap parking spaces behind the home field side of the football stadium during special events such as he described.

Mayor Spangler said he wanted to make sure everybody understood that Councilman Hale was talking about the extension of Holston Street between Ragsdale Field and the back side of the elementary school that went down over the hill.

Terry Nicholson said yes and that it was just the one-block section.

Councilman Goorskey said he absolutely loved Councilman Hale's work on this and his continued work because he knew it was literally an uphill battle finding flat ground in that area. His only concern was that the resolution did not limit the total number of spaces they could possibly get that would be usable and the potential for still needing a drop off and pickup there of other handicapped individuals. The resolution did not need to be so tight that they ended up eliminating some use of that space for the same people. He saw that pretty often at events where grandma was not going to go down the hill or up the hill to get to the car so she could stay put and someone would go get the car, whereas that car may not have room because there were only so many spaces to fill because there really was only so much distance there before it dropped off and could not be used for a handicap spot. There still may be a need for people to drive through and pick grandma up.

Councilman Hale assured Councilman Goorskey that he would be sure that was part of their discussion.

Councilman Creger said he did not want to limit themselves because it was excellent work, an excellent initiative, and was a great need that was only getting greater every day.

Police Chief Ratcliffe said his only concern with it, and he loved what Councilman Hale was doing, was that people may have to have wait especially if they needed an emergency vehicle.

Councilman Mills said he appreciated everybody's wisdom and comments but they had to have enough faith in Councilman Hale that he had enough sense to negotiate this properly and allow for those concerns and he had confidence that he did.

Councilman Creger asked if there would need to be people there to monitor this.

Councilman Hale said yes.

Councilman Creger said he trusted Councilman Hale to bring this home and make it workable.

Mayor Spangler said they definitely needed the ability to be able to drop off and pick up individuals that could not walk that hill.

Reid Broughton asked Councilman Hale if he was going to bring back a resolution for approval at another date.

Councilman Hale said he was hoping Reid Broughton or Mike Bedsaul could prepare the resolution.

Reid Broughton said they could do that.

Councilman Creger made a motion to allow Councilman Hale to move forward with the handicap parking situation, negotiate that, and bring a resolution back to council at a later date to be approved. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Councilman Hale told council they had been hearing from him for some time concerning the 5K-10K race. They would be holding this community event they had named Wolf Creek Runs Wild. Several people had been involved in preparing this and three of the four committee members were in attendance tonight: Alicia Lane, Terry Nicholson, and himself. Cora Gnegy from the county tourism department was also a member of the committee. They had been involved in planning this event which was scheduled for October 18, 2025. This would be a 5K and 10K event. The 5K race would begin in the downtown area, proceeding up on the westbound side of Old Wolf Creek Road, and then returning that same way back to home. The 10K route would follow the 5K route, beginning from downtown up the old Wolf Creek Road and then crossing over the Jarrett Lane Bridge near the Kathleen Memorial Church and then coming back the new side of Route 61. They would propose to VDOT that they have lane closures: one lane on the westbound side coming from town up to the Jarrett Lane Bridge and then the eastbound side coming back down the creek. He asked if anyone had any questions.

Terry Nicholson said people coming from Bland to Narrows would come down Old Wolf Creek Road and people going from Narrows to Bland would go out Route 61. There would be one lane closed on each part of the route and that way the runners were always facing traffic and they would be on the creek side.

Councilman Hale said council had been given a pamphlet that Alicia Lane had done a lot of work on, and he wanted to highlight a few things. The second page inside the front cover referred to the collaboration presented by the New River Runners Group, the Town of Narrows, and Giles County Tourism. They were targeting that they would have 250 people. The event will be a 5K and 10k timed race. It will be a destination event that showcased the best of Giles County and what they knew would be a vibrant afterparty experience. Their mission and vision included promoting active and healthy lifestyles, encouraging residents and visitors alike to come see the beauty of Giles County, showcase the Town of Narrows, fund essential trail signage improvements and military trails, and bring their community together for a day of celebration. They had a budget of \$18,000 for this event based on 250 participants and the sorts of things they would like to do as part of this event. The budget was broken down as follows: 30% for participant experience, 30% for the post-run celebration, 20% for race operations, 15% for marketing and promotion, and 5% for contingency. They intended to spend as much of the sponsorship money as possible locally so that the sponsorship dollars continued to make a favorable difference within their community. His request from council tonight as part of their co-sponsorship of this event was a \$1,500 contribution. This would help support the race website and social media campaigns, strategic local advertising, eye-catching flyers, banners and community signage, and race logo and branding capturing the spirit of all three.

Councilman Creger asked if council had money in the budget for things like this.

Terry Nicholson said yes.

Councilman Mills said he believed in this and in the people doing it. From where he was sitting he thought council should double that number because it was that big of a deal.

Councilman Creger made a motion to approve a donation of \$3,000 to the Wolf Creek Runs Wild 5K & 10K Race. Councilman Goorskey seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Councilman Hale thanked council for their donation. It was certainly gratifying and he appreciated it very much.

Alicia Lane thanked council for believing in them. The logo was designed by a Narrows High School graduate McKinna Huffman who just graduated from Radford University. They were going to involve local vendors as much as they could so the town would get to experience the talents of people in their community. She thought it was a beautiful logo. The logo would be the race t-shirt design, the medal, and they would probably have other merchandise for sale as well to help raise money to support outdoor recreation and this year it would all be going towards Mill Creek.

Mayor Spangler said he thought this was something that could really grow into a pretty big thing for the town and the county. His biggest concern was safety.

Terry Nicholson said they were on all of that and were working on the insurance aspect of it. VDOT had been very gracious by continuing to work with the town as they figured out the route.

New Business

Terry Nicholson said there was a company called Asterra that they had discussed at a PSA meeting. The man who created this company was the one they had read about in the newspapers who created the technology to find water on Mars. It was satellite ground penetrating radar that could detect water beneath the surface and had been perfected to the point that he could tell the difference between chlorinated water and non-chlorinated water. This meant if they had a natural spring occurring somewhere it would not show up as a leak in their water system. It would detect leaks in their water system and their sewer system, which was something the town was already working on for inflow and infiltration. The PSA had investigated and came up with a price of \$34,000 to do a countywide survey. They were proposing to split it among all of the towns and the county by customers basically so the number of connections that each of the communities had would be their percentage of what would be contributed toward getting this survey done. They were applying for a grant to do two more surveys after the initial survey that the town would be paying for. What this all came down to was that the town's cost would be around \$7,000 to participate in this study. They would then give the town a map on their GIS system with their water system map on it and they would show the town points where within 150' of that point they detected a leak. J.J. Perdue, the town employee that did leak detection, would be able to take that point and go look for it so it would narrow down for him spots to go look at. Terry Nicholson thought this was a great investigative tool and definitely thought it was worth a try. Council had talked about the money they had saved by getting their water loss down from 50% to 20%, which was now pretty consistent, so now they were saving \$4,000 to \$5,000 a month by doing that so if they could take it down even another 5% with this that would save the town \$1,000 or more a month and that could go towards paying for this. He thought \$7,000 was a reasonable cost for the town to participate in the countywide study and asked that council would approve the town participating in that with the PSA. If council had any questions, Kevin Belcher would be happy to answer them and had offered to come talk with Terry Nicholson concerning any questions about that. He was asking the town to pay for the initial survey and then the grant would pay for two surveys after that which would probably be about four months apart so it would spread out over a year. They could see how things changed over a year for the town.

Councilman Creger asked Terry Nicholson if he was talking about \$7,000 out of the town's pocket.

Terry Nicholson said yes.

Councilman Creger said it sounded like a great idea. They already had their water guys doing a great job working hard and this seemed like it would only help them, help the town, and seemed like a benefit to everyone. The fee seemed more than reasonable for the help that it would provide.

Councilman Goorskey said they could correct him if he was wrong but when they gave John Davis the ability to replace whole sections of water line and they kept their water loss at 20% they had more than paid for the work that he had done through the savings of the water loss.

Councilman Mills said he had gambled all his life. He was as convinced with the presentation as Terry Nicholson was and in the scheme of things this was nothing. The payback potential was huge.

Councilman Hale said he agreed with everything that had been said and would just add one more thing. As leaders in this community and the County of Giles, he wanted to be part of something like this and wanted his town to be part of something like this.

Councilman Creger made a motion to approve the Asterra PSA Proposal and approve an amount to be paid for this not to exceed \$10,000 and authorize Terry Nicholson to execute the proposal. Councilman Mills seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None
Motion Carried 5-0

Unfinished Business

Terry Nicholson said he wanted to do a real quick review of the budget for the benefit of council members that were not able to be here for the budget work session. What they were able to do this year as they had talked about in their planning sessions was to keep the tax rates the same this year so personal property and real estate taxes were going to stay the same. They were going to increase their water and sewer rates, which they had planned to do last year and were going to continue to do step increases for the next several years to get the town to where Davenport & Company was telling them they needed to be in order for the town's water and sewer to be able to support itself for the infrastructure upgrades they were going to need to do. They were raising water and sewer rates by another 10% this year, which was what they did last year. Income from personal property taxes would actually go up some this year and that was simply because appraised values of new and used vehicles had gone up over the last year. Unlike real estate, the vehicles were reappraised every year because they followed the blue book value so that value went up each year. They expected that the town's allotment from VDOT for street maintenance would also go up but would not know that for sure until the state budget was approved and that had not been done yet. He did increase the figure for the sale of property for the bank building and the Wheeler building because they had talked in the strategic planning sessions that they wanted to sell those two buildings. Under expenditures, they had funds continuing there for the zoning ordinance update and for Davenport & Company to continue to work with the town on this ten-year plan they were implementing. The part-time parks and rec budget did include plans for a part-time person to be at the town park for the summer. They left in there the I&I study amount which was ongoing. That amount was a carryover item basically so between now and June they would actually spend some more of that down so that as an expenditure would go down and that would only benefit them in the budget. Employee's health insurance rates this year rose by 12% so what he did to counteract that was to increase the amount that the town covered for the employee by 5%. Lower-paid employees with that 12% increase in their health insurance would have actually made it so even with the 3% cost of living increase in the beginning their take-home pay would have gone down and he did not want that to happen. They increased what the town contributed toward their health insurance by 5% and then gave them a 3% cost of living increase, which they would actually see as an increase in their pay. They would be purchasing a work truck for public works and a mini excavator for the water project and would be financing those. They were basically running the budget at a little bit higher deficit than they usually did. They had typically ran their deficit budget between \$55,000 and \$60,000 but this year they were going to be at \$116,000 and were spreading that over Fund 10 (general fund) and Fund 20 (water and sewer fund) so that both of those funds balanced each other. In doing that, they did not have to raise property taxes or personal property taxes, they would continue with the water and sewer increase as they had planned to do, and they would be comfortable for this coming year's budget. They had been aware all along that once the appraisals of real estate happened the town would have an increase in income on the general fund side for real estate taxes so next year they would likely be able to drop the tax rate from where it was now and still get an increase in income because the value of homes was going to go up so much. He felt like this was a good bridge for the town to get through this year and get to the point that this would benefit them and they would be in a much more comfortable position next year.

Councilman Creger said if things all went as they planned next year they would not be operating at a deficit.

Terry Nicholson said they would not be operating in any more deficit than they typically did. The town had operated under a deficit budget for years but had never had to use that deficit but had built that into the budget. It was just a way of balancing the budget.

Terry Nicholson said he wanted council to have that summary to let them know where they stood. The budget would be advertised and a public hearing would be held at their January 9th meeting. They would then have to lay it aside for at least a week and would have to have a special meeting where they could come together and actually call the vote to approve the budget. They would do that on June 16th.

Councilman Goorskey said he knew they did this every year so he was very familiar with what he was talking about concerning operating on that budget. In order to balance the budget, they put in a line item to pull from these funds he mentioned but they never ended up pulling the funds. When Terry Nicholson mentioned operating at a deficit he mentioned the dollar amount and he was used to hearing a percentage amount. What was last year's amount and how close did they ever actually get to that versus what he was talking about.

Terry Nicholson said last year they built into the budget roughly \$55,000 and this year they built in \$116,000 out of a \$4 million budget.

Councilman Goorskey asked how close did they ever get to needing that.

Terry Nicholson said they had never had to use that deficit.

Councilman Goorskey asked if the town ever came within \$200,000 or \$500,000 in needing to. He was trying to understand how that worked.

Terry Nicholson said that was really a cash flow question and the town did have problems with cash flow occasionally and they had talked with Davenport & Company about building in some kind of financing possibility for the town, basically a bridge loan the town could use for cash flow problems. The town received most of their income one time during the year when taxes came in and that was the biggest chunk of what the town received.

Councilman Goorskey said there might be a time in the year where they were saying "don't spend anything right now unless it got approved" but that was normal.

Terry Nicholson said the town was not putting themselves in any worse position by doing this than they would be anyway. The revenue was going to be consistent no matter what.

Councilman Creger said, to answer Councilman Goorskey's question, \$116,000 on a \$4 million budget was 2.9%.

Councilman Goorskey said it seemed like they had been near that before.

Terry Nicholson said his charts looked at the last ten years.

Councilman Goorskey said when they moved ARPA funds over to help with that it added a little bit of buffer there.

Terry Nicholson said yes. The thing that was hurting the town right now for their budget was they had quite a bit of money loaned to FEMA basically that would be reimbursed.

Councilman Creger asked if it would happen in this budget year.

Terry Nicholson said the payments would happen in this budget year but he was not sure whether the revenue would come back in this budget year. They had talked some about that today as to how they might handle that and they said if it came in time the auditors could post it back to the previous year. The other option was they could show it as a receivable as money that was owed to the town so it would balance things that way.

Mayor Spangler asked if there was any worry about the FEMA funds disappearing.

Terry Nicholson said never say never but that had been appropriated so it should be pretty hard for the federal government to call that back.

Mayor Spangler said council would meet on June 9th for a public hearing concerning the budget and would then have a special called meeting on June 16th to approve it.

Reid Broughton said the town had a cable franchise that expired November 19th, 2024, and there was a public hearing on November 11th, 2024. Before council was a proposed renewal of that franchise. It had a term of 5 years and a renewal term of 10 years, so a total of 15 years and he guessed it just continued what was in place now.

Terry Nicholson said council had seen this before and Mike Bedsaul had reviewed it. The only things that he was back and forth with them on was about their name and the fact that the name that they were using in the franchise agreement was not the name they were registered with under the SCC so that had been changed. There were a few other minor things that had to do with how the town could terminate that agreement if they were not performing their services under the plan. Those were really the only changes that Mike Bedsaul had dealt with them about. It took them a while because they drug their feet but they did get it done. Rhett Gum, who came and spoke to council about this initially, had planned to be here tonight but had a schedule conflict but was planning to come to next month's meeting. He wanted council to have the opportunity to talk with him if they had any complaints of their own or of their constituents about the cable service. The town had contacted Rhett Gum several times with either customer complaints or complaints from the town office when there had been outages. The town had called him and he had been very grateful to address those issues for the town.

Councilman Mills asked if council was going to listen to him before they voted on the franchise agreement.

Terry Nicholson asked council to go ahead and approve the franchise agreement unless they felt like they needed to talk with him.

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the Optimum Cable Franchise agreement. Councilman Hale seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Councilman Hale addressed this to Reid Broughton. He heard discussed earlier tonight about work on the Wolf Street property and did not know if Reid Broughton had been directly involved in that. Councilman Hale wondered if Reid Broughton could help expedite that.

Reid Broughton said he could. It was a delinquent tax property and Sands Anderson had prepared pleadings to file with the circuit court to seek leave to sell that property and also if the court agreed leave to sell that property to the town. They would either sell it at public auction or sell it to the town.

Councilman Hale said he was not familiar with the legal process, it just seemed to be from the outside that this had been a long time coming and hoped his firm was doing all they could to move this thing along.

Reid Broughton said he thought they were. Once they got it filed they had to serve people and then they had time to respond and then Sands Anderson had to go before the court and ask the court for permission to do whatever they were going to do with it so it was a process but it was in the process.

Councilman Goorskey said after a lot of careful consideration he was going to have to tender his resignation from council and it would be effective at the end of this meeting. He had an enormous amount on his plate and it was becoming hard for him to attend a meeting and that was not fair to the town and to the people that elected him. He thanked everyone for the time that he had been allowed to serve and apologized to those who put him on council for not being able to complete his term.

Councilman Mills said Joe Goorskey was a man of honor and integrity and he had enjoyed every moment with him working together at the county and working together on council.

Mayor Spangler said council appreciated everything Joe Goorskey had done and that he would be missed. His knowledge had been immeasurable in a lot of the things that had been accomplished.

Councilmember Bowles said there would be some huge shoes that needed to be filled and thanked Joe Goorskey. She said she completely understood.

Councilman Hale thanked Joe Goorskey and said he particularly appreciated his expertise on a number of subjects that had been of great benefit to council and to the town.

Councilman Mills said council needed to go into executive session to discuss personnel.

Councilman Mills made a motion to go into executive session to discuss personnel (Joe Goorskey's resignation), Sec. 2.2.3711.A.1 of the Code of Virginia. Councilman Hale seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

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

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

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: Hale, Bowles, Creger, Mills, and Goorskey

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

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

Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Clerk, Debbie Thomas

Mayor, Tom Spangler