

Narrows Town Council Meeting

December 8, 2025

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

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

Attorney Mike Bedsaul was present.

Councilman Mills gave the invocation.

Council and audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Oath of Office - Alicia Lane

Krystal Johnston, Master Chief Deputy Clerk with the Giles County Circuit Court, administered the oath of office to Alicia Lane for her term commencing January 1, 2026, and expiring December 31, 2026.

Introduction of New Police Officer

Mayor Spangler introduced Megan Whited, the town's newest police officer.

Police Chief Ratcliffe stated that Officer Whited came to Narrows with experience from Radford University and Radford City. She has completed her FTO program and is now working independently.

Recognition

Mayor Spangler read a letter from Business Rate recognizing Miss Audre's Fabric and Fellowship as a Top 10 of 2025 Virginia award winner in the fabric store category, based on verified data from Google reviews. Council congratulated Miss Audre on this achievement.

Councilman Hale thanked Miss Audre for representing the community.

Miss Audre thanked council for their support.

Approval of November 10th Meeting Minutes

Councilman Mills made a motion to approve the November 10th meeting minutes.

Councilman Creger seconded the motion.

Ayes: Hale, Bowles, Creger, and Mills

Abstain: Lane

Nays: None

Motion Carried 4-0

Audit Report

The audit report was postponed until the next meeting.

Consent Agenda

Library Report

No comments.

Parks & Recreation Report

Councilman Hale thanked Roger Shepherd, Jenny Wheeler, and Jennifer Clark for obtaining the skating rink sponsorships.

Councilmember Bowles noted that banners for the sponsors are displayed.

Councilman Mills praised Roger Shepherd for his work, particularly mentioning seeing him manage activities on Saturday.

Police Report

Councilman Mills stated the police department does an excellent job and praised Chief Ratcliffe's leadership in building community relationships.

Councilman Creger noted the importance of filling positions after losing an officer.

Police Chief Ratcliffe stated he had additional lights to add to the light outage inventory but did not include them in this month's report due to ongoing issues with AEP.

Mayor Spangler and Police Chief Ratcliffe discussed the streetlight replacement situation. Chief Ratcliffe noted that some lights reported five months ago remain unfixed. Terry Nicholson and John Davis indicated they would follow up with AEP, with plans to take additional action by mid-December if necessary.

Financial Report

Councilman Creger asked about PPTRA (Personal Property Tax Relief Act).

Terry Nicholson explained this is a set amount from the Virginia Department of Taxation that reduces personal property taxes for each individual in town, with newer cars receiving a discount.

Town Manager's Report

Councilman Mills praised Terry Nicholson, John Davis, and his crew for excellent work on water loss reduction.

Terry Nicholson reported that water loss has decreased from 40% to 20% over the past two years, with the standard deviation becoming much more consistent.

Councilman Mills thanked council for previously approving resources needed by the public works crew to accomplish these improvements.

Terry Nicholson credited the new meters approved by council for significant water loss savings.

Mayor Spangler noted that none of the meters have failed.

John Davis explained that the new meters have no moving parts and can provide minute-by-minute reports showing exactly when water is being used, which helps identify issues like leaky toilets. Lindsey Thompson in the office does an excellent job monitoring water billing.

Councilmember Bowles thanked staff for being available during emergencies.

Council members praised the public works crew for excellent work on recent snow removal and Christmas decoration installation.

Public Works Director's Report

Councilman Creger asked how the Orchard project was going.

John Davis reported that the Orchard project is moving slowly due to sewer backups requiring attention and an upcoming Camp Success project. The crew has approximately 3,400 feet of pipe to install but has not yet begun installing the 4-inch water line.

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

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Communications, Concerns, and Requests from the Public

None

Communications from Mayor, Council, and Staff

PSA Report

Councilman Mills reported that not much was discussed at the recent PSA meeting.

Terry Nicholson said the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday night.

Councilman Mills stated his opinion that the convenience center/dumpster situation is working fine and should be left alone.

Mayor Spangler said the convenience center attendants were sitting in their vehicles in cold weather to stay warm. It would be nice to have a small, heated building for them.

Terry Nicholson expressed concern about constructing anything in the floodplain.

Council agreed that any structure would need to be temporary and easily movable. General consensus was that the county should address this issue since it is their operation.

Wolf Creek Runs Wild Event Report

Councilmember Lane presented a comprehensive report on the inaugural Wolf Creek Runs Wild 5K and 10K event held on October 18, 2025. Key highlights included:

- The event sold out at 250 participants with a waitlist of at least 25 more
- October 18th was one of the highest visited days in Narrows over the past 12 months, behind only the Fourth of July and Fall Festival

- 548 people were in the park that morning
- Nearly 20% of attendees traveled more than 30 miles, with participants from three or more states
- Visitors came from outside the New River Valley, including Harrisonburg, Charlottesville, Beckley, and Tazewell
- 4% of attendees stopped by the flower shop in Narrows and 3% went shopping in Pearisburg
- Participants consistently stated it was the most beautiful and best race they had ever run
- Community members came out to their yards to cheer on runners

Major sponsors included: Carilion Giles Community Hospital, Giles County, Town of Narrows, Celco Credit Union, Sands Anderson, and Thompson and Litton.

Volunteers included: Narrows High School varsity cheerleaders, ACCE volunteers, Narrows High School Band, Boy Scout Troop 68, Narrows Junior Women's Club, Giles County Rotary, Narrows Fire Department, Police Chief Ratcliffe and staff, and the town public works crew.

The event's branding was designed by McKinna Huffman, a Narrows High School graduate.

After all expenses were paid, the event raised \$15,000 for repairs to the footbridge at Mill Creek Nature Park.

Plans are underway for the second Wolf Creek Runs Wild event in fall 2026, with consideration of adding a kids fun run.

Alicia Lane stated her planning partners Terry Nicholson, John Hale, and Cora Gnegy were a fantastic group to work with and really helped bring the event together.

Councilman Mills stated he would ensure one of the sponsors continues their support for next year.

Council thanked Alicia Lane for her excellent work on the event.

CDBG Urgent Need Grant - Generator for Wastewater Treatment Plant

Terry Nicholson reported that the New River Valley Regional Commission is nearing completion of environmental studies for the wastewater treatment plant generator grant. The studies were delayed by the government shutdown but are proceeding again.

Terry Nicholson explained that three documents require council approval as part of accepting the grant:

1. Business and Employment Plan - stating the town will not discriminate in business or employment practices
2. Non-Discrimination Policy
3. Grievance Procedure - outlined in the personnel policy

Attorney Mike Bedsaul reviewed all three documents and had no comments.

These items would be voted on later in the agenda.

Blighted Properties Discussion

Councilman Hale thanked Sara Bowles for sponsoring a breakfast for people less fortunate in town.

Councilman Hale requested support from fellow council members for additional funding in the next fiscal year to more effectively manage blighted properties in town. He emphasized the importance of being fair to all citizens and stated this is about making the town look as good as possible.

Councilman Hale noted that the town may not currently have sufficient resources to effectively manage this concern. He referenced a property that has been worked on for a long time but is now encumbered by bankruptcy laws. He stated that addressing these issues sooner rather than later prevents complications.

Councilman Hale requested support for additional funding to hire necessary resources, even part-time, to help more effectively manage blighted properties.

Councilman Mills agreed completely and stated this is his number one subject for the new year. He compared this to the water line situation where providing necessary resources resolved the problem.

Councilman Creger asked for clarification on what "manage the property" means - whether it refers to the notice and follow-up process or the actual demolition and cleanup.

Councilman Hale clarified he is referring to the entire process from start to finish, including providing adequate notice, following up on notices, and ensuring situations are remedied or addressed.

Councilman Mills stated this would require a dedicated individual but not necessarily a full-time person. He referenced the Town of Bluefield, which used an ordinance he provided to eliminate 22 of 50+ dilapidated structures without going to court a single time. They accomplished this by working with a single vendor.

Councilman Hale stated it requires will and the right person.

Councilman Creger emphasized not reinventing the wheel but using existing templates with attorney involvement.

Councilman Mills agreed, noting it requires the right individual willing to deal with such matters.

Terry Nicholson stated this is being considered in the budgeting process for next year.

Councilman Mills stated that once enforcement begins, it creates momentum as property owners see action being taken.

Mayor Spangler asked about progress on a letter that was being constructed concerning a property in town.

Terry Nicholson indicated there was no further progress at this time.

Hannah Farmer Window Painting

Councilmember Bowles reported on Hannah Farmer's artwork on town windows. Hannah Farmer is an extremely talented art student at Narrows High School. Her mother is a teacher at the elementary school. She watched Hannah paint and was amazed at her talent, noting Hannah worked without stencils or templates. Hannah invested 16 hours painting all the windows, including a snowman, ice skating rink, train, deer scene, and other winter scenes. She noted that Hannah's work has been highlighted on Facebook with positive comments about her talent and discussed the possibility of Hannah creating murals in the future. She stated Hannah was excited about that opportunity.

Councilman Creger made a motion to compensate Hannah Farmer \$400 for the painting on town windows. Councilman Hale seconded the motion.

Councilman Hale noted that the IRS threshold for filing taxes is \$600, suggesting the town should not cause Hannah to have tax-filing requirements.

Councilman Creger amended his motion to compensate Hannah Farmer \$599.

Councilmember Bowles seconded the amended motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

New Business

None.

Unfinished Business

Thompson and Litton Report - Wastewater Treatment Plant

Terry Nicholson reported on the meeting with Thompson and Litton regarding remaining repairs at the wastewater treatment plant. Attendees included Mayor Spangler, Councilman Mills, John Davis, Cody Kast, and representatives from Thompson and Litton.

Following the meeting and additional consultation with Matt Peters, the wastewater specialist engineer, Thompson and Litton identified the following necessary repairs:

Primary Clarifier Replacement:

- Total cost: \$30,428
- This motor drives skimmers across an in-ground tank
- The unit was submerged during the flood and already had some wear
- This repair would be reimbursable by FEMA
- Thompson and Litton recommends completing this repair

Electrical Repairs:

- Estimated cost: \$45,000 to replace all electrical components that got wet
- Thompson and Litton stated they are comfortable with the town not doing electrical repairs at this time
- Individual electrical line replacements cost only a couple thousand dollars each
- Recommendation is to address electrical issues as they arise rather than preemptively replacing everything
- This approach would save significant money

Terry Nicholson stated that the total cost has been reduced from close to \$300,000 to \$30,428 in recommended repairs, with \$45,000 in optional electrical work that can be deferred. No formal approval was needed at this meeting. The repair work would be put out for bid, with council approving the actual bid amount at a future meeting.

Terry Nicholson noted that unlike the concession stand situation, the clarifier should not be subject to a 50% reduction by FEMA because it is not related to a building and cannot be insured.

Councilman Mills praised this as good work and supported moving forward.

Closing on Gallimore Property

Attorney Mike Bedsaul reported that closing on the Gallimore property is scheduled for Monday at 1:30 PM. This relates to two pieces of property (1.935 acres and 0.85 acres) that the town has been leasing. The town previously finalized purchase of part of the property. Due to Mac Gallimore needing additional time beyond the one-year period to remove personal property from the leased land, the Gallimore's agreed to reduce the second lease payment by \$5,000 (from \$75,000 to \$70,000).

Attorney Bedsaul explained that an amendment to the original lease and real estate purchase agreement was necessary to account for this \$5,000 reduction.

Attorney Bedsaul requested council to:

1. Approve the amendment to the lease and real estate lease purchase agreement
2. Approve the deed transferring the two properties to the town
3. Authorize Terry Nicholson to sign these documents and take any other actions necessary to complete the closing

Councilman Mills made a motion approving the amendment, the deed, and authorizing Terry Nicholson to sign the documents and take necessary actions to complete the closing. Councilman Creger seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Terry Nicholson reported that public works staff have cleaned out the building and are using it for storage of equipment. Christmas decorations will be stored there when taken down, improving the town's storage situation. A garage door will eventually be installed on the large entrance.

Matters for Consideration by Council

Giles County Christian Service Mission Donation

Mayor Spangler reported that the Giles County Christian Service Mission has requested a donation. The organization does significantly good work in the county. The town donated \$500 in 2023.

Councilman Mills made a motion to donate \$500 to the Giles County Christian Service Mission. Councilmember Bowles seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

CDBG Grant Documents Approval

Councilman Creger made a motion approving the Business and Employment Plan, Non-Discrimination Policy, and Grievance Procedure. Councilman Hale seconded the motion.

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

Nays: None
Motion Carried 5-0

Items for Council Information

Council reviewed informational items with no discussion or concerns.

Additional Comments

Councilman Creger said he would not be at the January meeting.

Councilmember Bowles announced she will not be at the January meeting as she will be out of town.

Terry Nicholson reminded council members to bring their audits to the next meeting or leave them at the office.

Adjournment

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

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

Nays: None

Motion Carried 5-0

Clerk, Debbie Thomas

Mayor, Tom Spangler