

The Richlands Town Council held a regular monthly meeting in the Richlands Council Chambers on February 11, 2020 at 7:30pm with the following present:

Mayor: Paul Crawford
Town Manager: Tim Taylor
Town Clerk: Connie Allen
Council Members: Richard Brown, Rod Cury, Mary Ann Strong,
Rick Wood, Doug Ratliff
Council Members Absent: Vickie England
Town Attorney : Shannon Cooke

Mayor Crawford opened the meeting.

Mayor Crawford gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Crawford - Before we go any further, I have a letter addressed to the Town Council from Vickie England. "After much consideration on the matter, I am resigning from the Richlands Town Council for personal reasons. As of the receipt of this letter, please consider my resignation date February 10, 2020. It has been my honor to serve and wishing continued success in all the Town endeavors to achieve."

Mayor Crawford – Do we have any additions/deletions/corrections to the agenda?

Shannon – Consideration of Resolution R-2020-02-01 honoring Eugene "Gene" Hearl needs to be moved to the March meeting.

Mayor Crawford – Do we have a motion to approve the agenda as amended? Rick made the motion to approve the agenda as amended, Mary Ann seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries – 4/0. (Richard Brown late arriving)

Mayor Crawford – We have two (2) sets of minutes, Regular Council Meeting and Continuation of Meeting held on January 14. Are there any corrections, additions or deletions to the minutes?

Tim - Correction on page 4 under my comments – "If he qualifies based on eligibility not requiring a variance, it becomes the decision of Council not the Zoning Committee" should read " " If he qualifies based on eligibility not requiring a variance, it becomes the decision of Council not the Zoning Administrator".

Rod - Correction on page 5 under my comments - "Before we make a decision, we need to make a decision on how we are going to go forward and not make presidential treatment" should read "Before we make a decision, we need to make a decision on how we are going to go forward and not make preferential treatment".

Mayor Crawford - Do I have a motion to approve the minutes as corrected?

Rod- I make a motion to approve the minutes as amended, Mary Ann seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries – 4/0. (Richard Brown late arriving)

Mayor Crawford – Larry Johnson – Representing the Humane Society: Feral Cats

Larry – Thanks for having us and hearing us out. I have a more serious issue I need to talk about, I know it has been an issue before in our Town and has multiplied over the years. We have come up with a plan to put in motion to help not only to contain the feral cat population but also to help maintain in a way

that it is more beneficial to businesses in the Town, help get them away from the businesses and help get a program started where they will eventually and naturally dissipate. You are always going to have some outside influence come in to help build back up. If we can stay active with it and get ahead and get in different places in Town, hopefully in 10 years we can say it is a controlled situation. What the Humane Society is looking at doing is providing small feeding stations in certain areas in the Town especially in the problem areas. I know we have talked about the Richlands Mall obviously being a problem and around the McDonald's area. These are small containers that have a roof on them. It helps eliminate the buzzards and eliminates larger animals from getting in. You will always have raccoons and possums if you have anything outside. The Humane Society will maintain them, and volunteers will keep food in them. By setting back in wooded areas away from the businesses will get the population away from the businesses. You can trap the cats, have them neutered and return them back into the population. They can still take care of their kittens if they have any, eventually they will quit growing. Rick mentioned a buzzard problem. When I went behind the Mall the other day, there were cats, but it was more of the buzzards on the dumpsters. If you put a can of cat food out or you open a dumpster, they are going to go to the dumpster. We had this problem before that is why we have lids on them now. If the businesses could help keep the lids shut on the dumpsters that would help a lot too. I would like for you to consider allowing the Humane Society to set out these small feeding stations, maintain them and volunteers keep food in them. This will give the Police Department more teeth if they see people dumping out food, they can charge them. They can say there is a proper way for them to feed the cats, they knew about it but would not do it. I think it would help the whole situation.

Mary Ann - How soon could you get a few of these out?

Larry - It depends on funding; I think I have a business that will donate a few to get started.

Doug - Is there any cons?

Larry - The only cons would be if people did not utilize them. The main thing is to keep them maintained.

Doug - I would like to read you some problems that could happen. There is nobody that loves animals more than I do. A lot of communities have these; I would like to read some of the problems they have with them. The establishment or maintenance of cat colonies encourages people to release additional cats. If they see they are being fed and they want to get rid of a cat they are going to drop off and add to the population. It will increase population size. The high reproductive potential of cats, the effort involved in catching them, and the number of cats on the landscape combines to make it very difficult to neuter enough members of a colony to keep their numbers in check. Models show that in order for the TNR to be successful, between 71% and 94% of all cats in the colony must be spayed or neutered. Each time a non-neutered feral cat has a litter, or someone abandons non-neutered cats at the colony, the prospects for success diminish. Feral cat colonies are a major part of the cat problem, 69% of all cats kill birds in the U.S. They kill 1.3 billion to 2 billion birds a year. Cats devastate other population around them. TNR does not address the risks and hardships that cats face living in the wild and that contribute to an average life expectancy of as little as two (2) years, including injury, disease, predation, vehicle collisions and maiming during cat-cat fights. They are also a danger to dogs and other animals. A feral cat will challenge a dog. I love animals and I know we have to keep them away from the businesses. I just have a problem with what is it going to do to the other population like birds and squirrels and other animals around them. That is my only problem.

Larry - We need some bigger cats to take care of the buzzards. In all honesty that is the same problem you already have. You already have all those problems and we are not doing anything about it. Any effort whatsoever will better the situation than what we have now. Right now, it is totally out of control, feeding is out of control and the cats are out of control. There is nothing out there actively trying to take care of the problem.

Doug - "It is almost universally agreed upon that the feral cat problem begins with cat owners and other people. There would be no feral cats without the abandonment of unaltered cats into the wild. Perhaps

more important, however, is getting a handle on how humans are feeding feral cats. Like all species, the number of feral cats is dependent on their food supply. Local governments can reduce feral cat populations by passing and enforcing ordinances requiring the sealing of garbage containers. This is evident when one considers that most feral cat colonies exist in and around dumpsters and open garbage dumps. Combined with responsible cat ownership, localized efforts to control how stray and feral cats are fed will yield more significant results than lawsuits would."

Larry - By saying that, obviously you want to punish the people who are feeding the cats.

Doug - I don't want to punish, I want to discourage it. I love all animals including cats. In average every cat takes 40 lives of birds in a year. If man messes with the environment and picks winners there is all kinds of repercussions, I don't mess with nature. We have a problem in my Shopping Center and at Advance Auto. Years ago, we had so many cats that they threatened to close Hardee's. I love cats but I love other animals too. I don't think we need to pick winners or a loser that is my opinion.

Larry - Messing with nature, we all mess with nature. When you make a road and cut down trees we mess with nature and we all do it. With the cat population we have no controls in place.

Doug - We are talking about wild animals in the environment. When you have a domesticated animal in your household, when you mess with nature it is the environment around you. It is two different things.

Larry - I understand what you are saying. I agree there is a difference between the two animals but by code they are not. Cats are considered companion animals not wild animals.

Rick - That means the animal shelter will take the cats.

Larry - They won't take them.

Rick - But they will save dogs.

Larry - They will not take a feral cat.

Rick - The only concern I have about the feeder, what if we get a raccoon in the feeder with rabies.

Larry - You are going to have that problem now, is the Town going to take care of it?

Rick - We would have to.

Larry - You would eliminate the problem; you are not going take them to the vet. We are all on the same side I am just trying to propose a solution to head it off eventually. It is going to take some time.

Rod - Larry thank you for coming with the idea. Did you mention there may be some grants to help the Humane Society purchase some of the feeding station?

Larry - A business is going to fund most of them.

Rod - It may help you in personal and private money, I believe there are grants, there is money available. I can find out more if it is of interest to you. Connie may be able to help you in the grant writing if possible.

Doug - How long has this program been, a few months?

Jerry - It started with the Incubator having a serious problem with buzzard tearing the roof off costing several thousand dollars. We started enforcing last summer because of the large amount of food that was being poured out on the concrete slab. We were trying to help with the buzzard issue. We had the Mexican restaurant put bars on their dumpsters, we battled with that for a little while, they have an

easy access to food they are coming and bringing their friends. The Town has battled this problem for several years. We are concerned with the destruction that the buzzards are doing.

Doug – Rick stated that we started out with 32 cats at the Mall, it is down to 17. Do you know what the main diet of a coyote is? It is "Cats". I am afraid if you have cat colonies coyotes will start coming in. In Arizona 42% of all the cats are eaten by coyotes. I feel for animals and I am on your side I just wanted to point out these things so we can consider both sides.

Larry –With everything we have going on in the area how much time do we have to devote a Police Officer to set and watch if someone is dumping cat food out? Is their time not better spent keeping someone from driving 85mph in a 55mph or catching someone selling dope instead of watching someone feed a cat?

Doug - The problem is going down at the Mall. How would you like to own property, which I know you have the feeders, example like Hardees food dumped up and down the side of the river?

Larry - That is what we are trying to remedy. If we have one contained station away from Hardees down in the woods so they don't have to set and wait for someone to throw french fries out the window.

Doug - Do you consider the other wildlife, all the birds?

Larry - Cats are going to kill birds whether we feed them or not.

Doug - When people see you doing that if they want to get rid of a stray or a cat they will bring it there and leave. You have a great plan but when they start dropping off cats the problem will get worse.

Larry - If there are only 17 left at the Mall, we only have to spade 10 to make effective. They will keep dropping off cats. They drop them off at my house all the time.

Doug - If you have 75% neutered, 25% grow.

Mayor Crawford - We usually only allow (5) five minutes, your discussion only took (5) five minutes we are starting to rehash the same thing. We have some other people who want to speak if they have something different than what we have already heard. I would appreciate keeping it to (5) five minutes and get on with the meeting.

Larry - I would like for you to take into consideration even if you want to do on a one-year trial basis. The proof will be in the pudding, see if it will work or it won't. If it doesn't work in a year it won't work. I think that is a fair request.

Rod - I think we need to hear other people and then we can take some action one way or the other.

Mary Ann – Larry, thank you and the Humane Society.

Mayor Crawford - Linda Keen

Linda – I came here to talk about the homeless cats and the people that feed them. These cats are homeless but not by choice it was humans that did not want to take care of them. They were dropped off at different places and they do not have a choice of where they live. They live anywhere they can find a spot. If it was not for the kind people that have been feeding the cats they would have starved to death. I do not agree with the way the Town Council has come up with a way to get rid of them. You think if the cats are gotten rid of by starvation it will stop the vultures from coming. If we have all these cats dying all over Town the vultures will be worse. These cats did not ask to be homeless, people contributed to that. I went by and fed the ones below Grant's I didn't get caught thank goodness and did not get a ticket like some have but it broke my heart. A little yellow cat was the only one I saw at the time it was in a pile of trash in the back of the building there is no top on the building just trash; they

stay up in the trash. I don't know how many. I went by and fed the cats and it broke my heart. My friend Patty normally feeds the cats but since the police officers started writing out citations it has been one (1) month today since she has been able to feed them. She was told by some people that people were shooting the cats. She found one (1) dead, she didn't call the police officer to come and see but when the police officer came by and checked on the cat the dead cat was not removed, she finally after a few days picked the cat up and buried it. A dead cat will cause vultures to come. Patty has 22 cats of her own, she recently had one (1) to have leg surgery cost her \$2500, she had one (1) that had seven teeth pulled cost her \$525 and when she got the citations she called Tazewell and they could not tell her how much it would cost. She hired a lawyer cost her \$400 to check to see if they could get the charges dropped so she would not become a criminal. This is devastating to a person on a limited income. The Town Council nor the Police Department gave no warning that they passed any type of law of not feeding the cats. There were no signs posted to not feed the cats. I am sure if the cats could talk for themselves, they are scared and hungry and they have nowhere to go. Anything that is starving I don't care what it is I am going to feed it. Most of the cats don't have a way to get out of the weather. We need to work out a better way to solve the problems, starving the cats is not a solution. Most of the cats are not wild they are cats that have been abused and neglected and scared of people. I feed the ones at the trash dump at Raven and Patty does too. We have adopted a lot of the cats out in the last two(2) years. I do not think that people with kind hearts like the people back here tonight who are feeding these cats should be given citations and have to pay fines and lawyers to get out of the fines. No one knew there was a law against feeding the cats. We all need to work together to find a place for the homeless cats or try what Larry has suggested with the feeders.

Doug - The last dealing I had with a cat, I have a car wash in Abingdon we were running cars thru and a baby kitten came out of a car, we got the cat and we took to Highlands Vet out of my own pocket I paid \$180 and found it a home.

Linda - Most people want something where they can still feed the cats and make sure they don't go hungry. If we had a chance to do that maybe some of us could go by and sit with the cats and try to tame them.

Mayor Crawford – Delores Mullins

Shea Cook spoke on behalf of Delores Mullins - I have learned a lot about the problem sitting here listening to Larry's presentation and the work he has done. I have listened to Doug and his rationing and I don't minimize that I think this is a serious problem if it is serious enough for you to start issuing citations it is serious enough for us to be here to discuss. As far as the studies, cats killing birds I really question the liability of those numbers, I really don't know how you quantified something like that. But by the same token I don't understand why if you have been presented a commonsense plan it is not going to cost the Town anything why would you not give it a try for a year. The problem you all are trying to deal with has been going on for decades without any action. What has caused the need to start issuing citations to little old ladies because they want to go out and feed a cat. Who are these people who are doing this; these are the people that you represent. There is a function for this Council to make wise decisions, you speak for the people. The people who care about this issue are here right now. I would ask again; Larry has presented to you a very well thought out plan that is going to address this growing population. May it end up being a nightmare or a second or third order effect like Doug has made reference to, I don't know, and we don't know yet. This lady here has adopted 30 cats, domesticated them, and neutered them. Just because you have a feral cat now does not mean that someone is not going to take care of it. I would say, to me what makes sense is to give this program a year since it is not costing you anything and see how it goes. We can review the issue 12 months from now and see how things go. If you have bad results that can be quantified, then start issuing citations. You have these little old ladies they live by themselves their spouses passed away and their kids have moved away, and they are alone. They get a little bit of joy going out and feeding the cats, so you are going to denied them of that and criminalize them by writing citations and they still don't know what the fine is going to be. It seems to me that there is a balanced approach to this, allow Larry and the people that support this program to implement it and you all monitor it. If at any point along the way you start seeing the wheels fall off the wagon do something about it but until shown not to be effective

why would you denied the people you represent the joy and pleasure of doing it and dealing with this issue in a very humane way. I don't see any losers by giving this opportunity why would you not do it. With that said that is my comments, Thank you.

Doug - How far away would it be from private property and businesses?

Larry - Depends on which business it is, you have more room behind the Mall than you would have at Hardees. They can put up just about anywhere just as long as the property owner allows it.

Doug - What about the health hazardous?

Larry - Which kind would be there with feeders that are not there now?

Doug - The problem is going down, there is less numbers. There is health hazardous with it and if the population does grow it will be a problem for years.

Larry - It is the same problem that we have now if we don't try something different.

Doug - Not if it is going down.

Larry - If it is going down why are we here?

Doug - Rick said there used to be 32 cats now it is down to 17 cats. I realize about the suffering of the cats. I know they do kill birds and other animals.

Angie Johnson – We bought our house in 2003 and I have been messing with feral cats in the neighborhood since 2004, I think I look pretty healthy. I tamed them and found them homes just like Lisa has, I think there is no health hazards.

Richard - I can relate with this, I spoke to Larry and I done some research prior to this meeting. I am going to make a motion to adopt the plan that Larry has presented to the Council for a period of one (1) year. Rod seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries – 4/1. Doug “no”

Larry - The hillside in front of my house on Kents Ridge Road, when I was on Council I went and spoke to the manager and he had them going out every so often to fix the bank, it is an ongoing problem.

Tim - We are going to get on that, we have permission from the landowners to fix it as soon as it dries up, we are going to widen the road and pave it so the trucks can get in there.

Mayor Crawford - Just to clarify, we have adopted to try the houses, but the citations will still be in place for people bringing and dumping out food, Does everyone understand that?

Larry - We will put signs out to let people know the designated area.

Richard - Are they going to be identified?

Mary Ann - You can move quickly on getting the houses, correct.

Rod - Larry, the notching is that something the Humane Society can help do?

Larry - Yes

Rod - The areas not marked by the Town, who is supposed to do the marking.

Tim - It is not really the feeding of the cats, it is the public nuisance aspect of it, that is the problem. The problem could still exist if people keep scattering the food and not being responsible under your plan. The better you explain the better off you will be.

Larry - I think the plan has already got out and they understand it.

Tim - We will monitor it; Jerry will let us know if there are any holes in it. I don't see why we can't work together to make it happen. The ultimate goal is to trap and neuter, correct.

Rick - Trap and neuter

Larry - You have to get them going to a food source, once they start going to the food source it is easy to put the same food in the traps.

Mayor Crawford – "Unscheduled Comments"- Shea Cook

Shea – During the Invocation the Mayor very appropriately made reference to so many people in our community, region and Town that had been affected by the flooding which was somewhat unexpected. One of the largest floods in recorded history in Richlands. It was pretty sufficient in fact almost as bad as the flood in 1957 which covered most of the Brooklyn area, with that said you will find statistically a lot of the people that were affected most by the flooding are folks that do not have flood insurance because they cannot afford it or simply not eligible for it. It is really a double whammy; I have this flood I have to deal with and by the way my home is gone. I don't have the money to pay for it because some of the poorest people in the region live in this Town. It is kind of a cycle that is going to have a larger effect on some of the downturns, a negative impact on the community as we try to recovery. With that said I would ask that you consider modifying the general policy for the Town in regard to the power bill that when people become behind on the power that their power is not cut off and they are given a 90 day grace period which may involve making payments, giving grace period that you don't cut people's power off until the Spring. Right now, these people are on their knees and trying to recover. If you doubt that go down at the armory and see all the stuff that has being going out. People have been coming in and out. Many people are devastated I think if the Town wants to do something to help these folks it is something that would have a direct impact, allow a little bit of breathing room for people who are probably struggling to pay the power bill even under the best circumstances. Again, the cost of power in Richlands is very expensive and it is being sold to people who are some of the poorest people in Western VA. It seems to me again it is a small thing for the Town to do, it seems to be a commonsense thing to do. If the Town wants to provide some relief for these people and it is a direct opportunity to be able to do that, is there going to be some sacrifice to the Town, probably so. If you look at it, the sacrifice these people have made as they try to rebuild their life. I ask that you consider that and ask someone to make a motion to that effect.

Doug - I make a motion to give a 90-day grace period on electric bill if they are affected by the flood, Mary Ann seconded the motion.

Tim - Just so I will know what to do, we have been doing that on a case by case basis, and I know some people are devastated. Just allow me to get with the attorney to get a statement of promise to pay. They have to make payments. Often times they think it is forgiveness, but it really is not. In the meantime, they can try to get help from various sources.

Richard - How are you going to split between the utilities, or are you going to do the whole utility bills.

Shea - It makes sense to include both.

Tim - The bill includes both, but everyone refers to it as their electric bill. I do disagree we are not the highest, but we are close to APCO.

Shea - We can discuss in more detail at a later time.

Rod - How do the town employees discern?

Tim - We already know which homes have been affected. They are already worried about their water bills since they are using a lot of water for cleanup, the ones affected have a hard time paying anyway. We will work it out with them.

Shea - People in the flooded areas, that makes sense, but in reality where do you think these people are living that have been flooded, many instances they are moving in with friends and family members which many live here in Richlands. So, as a consequence their power bill is going up because they have additional people in the house. I don't see why we can't honor or at least get thru winter to allow people not just suddenly cut someone power off because they get behind at least until we get to warmer weather. Whether that involves some type of payment plan to keep their power on or you just give them a grace period to pay, I don't know seems to me humane thing to do, in reality it is where our Town is right now.

Rod - The Town can discern the people that need it, when I was on Council early on there were some discussion about flood victims, we had people in general who could not pay their bill, the discussion was who would determine these people. It was established at that time that the ladies in the front pretty well done this consistently, flood or not to work with them. Is that right?

Tim - We try to work with everyone who can't pay in the winter time we don't cut off people if it is below freezing. We won't cut off people if they have not paid without an effort to understand why, we give them calls, notices and they come in.

Shea - What if it is 40 degrees, I don't want to see people's electricity turned off in the winter?

Tim - Is that the whole town, how are we supposed to pay the bills?

Shea - As far as paying the bill, apparently the course of the past couple of years in addition to are user fees and things like this, I don't know, topic for another day. How do you streamline the provision of power in a way that makes sense? You have an Electric Committee, correct?

Tim - Yes

Shea - Are there any citizens members on the committee?

Tim - No

Shea - There should be, these are the people that have to pay the bill.

Mayor Crawford - We do not have a standing Electric Committee; I am the one who appoints it.

Shea - We should have, the power bill and the whole electrical system is a wonderful thing it makes Richlands unique and provides a lot of benefits. By the same token, the reality is we are in a situation you have part of the Town paying power from the Town and you have another part of the Town paying power bill from AEP. AEP kilowatt is basically the same.

Mayor Crawford - I am going to stop this, it is not part of the discussion that we are having. I appreciate what you are saying but we have a motion on the floor.

Mary Ann - Can we clarify the motion.

Shannon - That is exactly what we need to do.

Doug - I make a motion to give a grace period of 90 days for all people effective by the flood for all utilities, Mary Ann seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries – 5/0.

Mayor Crawford - Thank you Shea, I am not being rude.

Shea - I understand, you have a tight ship and I appreciate that but how do you determine who has been affected?

Tim - We will take their word for it.

Shea - Rod suggested that the ladies at the front desk, that is total unsatisfactory.

Rod - I didn't suggest it I said that was what was earlier.

Mayor Crawford - I am closing down the discussion.

Mayor Crawford - Downtown Events – Connie Allen

Connie - Fireworks - I checked with American Fireworks Company and they do have July 11 open to shoot fireworks for the Town, but we need to book now if we want them to come. He said he could do the same type show he did for us a couple years ago around \$5000 may be just a little bit more. He will confirm pricing when we book. We will have to raise the money to get the fireworks. I need for Council to tell me yes or no and are we are going try to raise the money, or where is the money going to come from.

Richard - I make the motion to schedule the Fireworks for July 11 for the Town of Richlands, Rick seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries – 5/0.

Mary Ann - I will say we need to help Connie and the committee raise the funds.

Connie - We have to come up with the money, we can discuss later. I just need to book the fireworks for July 11.

Connie - CPRP Grant - We have started working on the CART Building, hoping to get finished remodeling before we start on the greenway. Ginger has been cleaning out all paperwork, we have been taking down wallpaper, working on the walls. Will get started back once we get out of the crisis we have now. The goal is to get the CART building finished before we move to the greenway.

Connie - Event Collaboration Meeting on 1/30/20 - We had approximately 25 people to attend. Again, it was a very informative meeting. We did have some people attended that had not been to the meetings. We plan on having the meetings quarterly.

Connie - Richmond Trip (Legislative Visit) - I did meet with DHCD along with Jim Baldwin and Debbie Milton on January 22 concerning our Planning Grant. I meet most of the key people in the DHCD department, which was very good for me, putting faces with a name is very helpful. They give us until April 30 to complete the activities requested for the Planning Grant. I have started working on the Physical Inventory Survey.

I also went to the Virginia Tourism Meeting the same day. We were the only one in the county that applied for the MLP Grant, which we should have an answer by February 22 if we received the grant.

Again, I did meet a lot of people that can help answer questions or direct us in the future. We were mentioned several times on things we were doing in the community.

Mayor Crawford – “Council Members Report” – Rod Cury

Rod – My heart goes out to the victims of the flood; I am grateful for those who helped in every possible way. We had a Planning Commission meeting, but I was unable to attend and Tim was unable to attend. I will pass the ball to Tim and he will pass to Kevin.

Tim - Kevin represented us at the meeting, I don't think we had a quorum.

Rod - Kevin, can you give us a report.

Kevin – There were only two (2) people that come to the meeting basically there was not a quorum. They discussed a little bit about what she wanted to do, and we included her in the next Planning Commission meeting. She wanted some ideas from the Planning Commission to see about some different things she can do with her Mobile Home Park. She is coming back next month.

Rod - That is the first Tuesday of the month.

Mayor Crawford – “Council Member Reports” Rick Wood

Rick – I just want to thank all the people who come to help when we were in need. People in Wise, Pulaski and others come to our rescue. That is something to be grateful for. I do hate all the houses that were under water and we will work hard to help everybody.

Mayor Crawford – “Council Member Reports” – Doug Ratliff

Doug – I would like to make a motion that we revive the Electrical Committee and require equal number of citizens being on the committee as Council.

Mayor Crawford - May I suggest something, before I ask for a second. By charter it is my responsibility to set up committees and I will be glad to do that if you guys could give me some names of people interested and who will take part in it. I will take those names at the next meeting.

Doug - I just want to make the motion that we require that equal number of citizens.

Mayor Crawford - I think we can do it without a motion.

Tim - It is your role to do.

Doug - So we are going to have a meeting of the minds with Council that we agree to have an equal number of citizens on the committee.

Mayor Crawford - I am agreeing right now that is what will be on the committee.

Doug – Can we get a yes from everybody?

Rod – No

Rick – Yes

Mayor Crawford - I don't want to be changing the charter, is that all you have?

Doug – Yes

Mayor Crawford – “Council Member Reports” – Richard Brown

Richard – I noticed in Executive Closed Session we will discuss contract negotiations for Fire & EMS Protection. I spent the weekend with Rick I think full Council needs to recognize of the impact and necessity that Fire and Rescue have in saving people especially in the past few days. We could not do without them. They were in the county as much as we were in the Town. Jerry can speak to the police side of it, but there is no way we could have done without those guys. They deserve a round of applause.

Mayor Crawford – “Council Member Reports” Mary Ann Strong

Mary Ann – As Rod said it is really hard to put into words how our hearts are broken for so many people who have lost everything makes me very proud of our community. If you walk into our Police Department it will make you really proud how much support has poured out from locals and grateful for Gods Pit Crew that came from Danville and other organizations. I would not want to live anywhere else just because how much Richlands cares about their people. I agree with what Richard said about our Fire and EMS. I just want to give a personal thanks to Matt Whited, I have a friend who is a little bit challenged and was trapped in her trailer and would not leave, was scared to get in the boat. With Matt’s help they were able to rescue her. I guess I should have not mention individuals name because I know everyone in the EMS department has worked timeless; Connie has been living at the PD helping organizing items for overload of things people have brought. Makes me very proud and we will continue to pray, support and care for each other. A lot of people have posted Richlands is strong and we will stay that way. Rec Commission meeting this coming Monday at 7:30pm. If you have not played pickle ball I hear that is the new rage, new exciting event at the Rec Park , Monday Wednesday Friday 10 -12, Sunday’s from 6 to 9.If you are looking for something new fitness wise give it a try.

Mayor Crawford - “Mayor’s Comments”

Mayor Crawford – When we started at the Police Department Saturday morning all the tables were full of canned goods, cleaning items, trash cans. When people started going thru that my thoughts were oh man, we are going to run out of stuff, throughout the day the same number of people taking was the same number of people bringing items. When I talked to the press it was like the five loaves and two fishes, everyone keeps coming and getting what they needed and there is still plenty there now. Thank you to all who worked with it, I appreciate it.

Mayor Crawford – “Attorney Comments” – Shannon Cooke

Shannon – If you will recall at the last meeting Mr. Ratliff requested that an ordinance be drafted regarding the placement of dumpsters in trailer parks. I have a draft prepared and ready to go I just need someone to motion and second the reading of the first reading tonight.

Doug - I make the motion of the first reading of the ordinance, Mary Ann second the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries – 5/0.

Shannon - Read the ordinance with dispense of the second reading next month.

Shannon – Read the ordinance Q-2020-03-01 - That is the first reading we can dispense with the second reading next month.

Mayor Crawford – “Manager’s Reports” – Tim Taylor

Tim - Please take a few minutes to look at the checks dispensed this month. Check No. 7441 – Electronic Systems, Inc., \$10,274.40, maintenance on servers, divided between all the departments. Check No. 7482 – Schwawratz & Associates, Inc., \$14,670.00, bridge inspection with engineers out of Lynchburg. Report already submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation. Check No. 7479 – Robinson Farmer Cox Associates \$7,340.00, 2019 audit final billing.

Mayor Crawford - Do I have a motion to authorize Town Manager to pay the bills?

Rick - I make the motion to authorize the Town Manager to pay the bills, Mary Ann Seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries – 5/0.

Tim – Monthly Power Cost Report of December 2019 – We didn't sell as much as we expected, \$0.10/MWh lower than budget all-in wholesale power cost rate of \$80.20/MWh with the dollar cost of \$62,631 lower than budget. Actual sales came in 11% lower than budget. AFEC out of service but we didn't need the power because we sold less than expected.

Tim – Financial Review Update - We provided the purchase order for the fire truck, it is on order. We are working with the bank to finalize the initial payment. We were waiting on the performance bond but it came in today, they will email to the Town and we will forward to the bank. We took advantage of all the incentives that we could. I think we have everything in order to make the payment and finalize the papers with the bank. Hopefully everything will be done to maximize on the savings.

Tim – Non-Revolving Line of Credit RFP-Interim Financing (WWTP Rehabilitation Project) we had three (3) local banks that provided a quote. We do have questions and we sent out to some of the banks, once we get everything we will have a recommendation to Council next month. Average cost for that particular service is \$40,000 per month. The credit will be paid off once we get total financing and we come up with a package.

Tim - I give you two (2) handouts from Thompson and Litton. One is for WWTP upgrades and improvements. The second page will show where we are at on the project. We have accepted DEQ funding offer for total of \$11,000,000 at .5% for 25 years. We expect that to be better once reviewed. We may qualify for some additional funding. We met with some people in Richmond to discuss a potential block grant that we may qualify for part of the funds. The DEQ does not offer grant monies. The Block Grant is actual grant monies if we qualify, we may be able to use to offset some of the loan. If you will remember part of the proposal that we reported to Council was contribution from funding sources. I hope we will be successful. The only thing I see and I hope we can get resolved the block grant folks use a different criteria than DEQ uses for qualifying for subsidized grant funding. They use a census type base analyzes to determine low to moderate income it is a lot higher than what DEQ uses. I think they use 2% of public services; it is hard to understand why that is so far apart, mainly because the census is dated. I think they use more statistics to forecast these types of. They are in the process of doing a census now which can help us but may not be in a proper time. That might require us to canvas population for salaries in certain districts in the Town and service area. We are working with Cumberland Plateau to resolve too. We have begun conversation with firms to do a cost of service study, which we have to do because our water and sewerage rates will not fund the debt going forward. Rates are a 1/3 what our neighbors services are, we have shown to Council that will change because we have to replace the 30 year old water/sewage plant.

Tim - The WWTP – Will be due for rehabilitation about the same time; we meet with the Department of Health while we were in Richmond. We discuss various parts of funding, it was well received. As far as qualifying I think we will qualify for a good package on the water side. As you can see we completed the meeting which is on page two. The next step is to apply for funding; we will have the application to present to Council at the March meeting. We don't have the PER approved yet.

Tim – I will go over the statistics of the flooding – These people were professionals and they did a great job in taking care of people. The people I seen them helping were very appreciative. I also appreciate what they did for us. The Statistics VDEM, they did a great job in assisting, what they did in the background help keep the people in the front line going. They did an assessment; the chart I gave you was produced by them. There were 369 structures homes/commercial that was damaged. The public damage was estimated at \$273,275, residential damage in and out of Town estimated \$573,261 and total estimated for commercial damage \$808,433. This will not trigger any money. People will have to depend on local funding and nongovernmental agencies. Will try to see what is out there to help the people, could be some money in the housing department. According to the chart, "Affected" means water to the main door but did not go in the building/house, "Minor"- water on the main floor and then category of "Major".

Richard - Did you know if there were any issues with the land fill? Do we need to do anything on tipping fees?

Tim – Not as far as I know, I always ask on their behalf, as long as they know where it is coming from with a private contractor may be a little more difficult, I will try to work on that.

Tim - The County did provide us a larger dumpster down behind the Police Department and one in the Doran area too. We provide dumpsters throughout the Town and George is picking up as they fill them. If it is too large to go in the dumpster we will make arrangements to pick up as soon as we can.

Rick - I asked Mr. White to be put on the agenda and I just seen him sitting in the audience. He is here to talk about a bicycle race he wants to have.

Derek White - The proposal letter that I sent to Town was to have a three (3) day race event it would be for collegiate athletes, amateurs and professional cyclists. I already have a permit from USA cycling. It would be on Memorial Day weekend, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The first event would be from here to Baptist Valley and back and the other would be a road race throughout the county. We already have some tentative backing. The last day would be criteria in the Town. I think it would be a good event for the Town and bring some interest.

Tim - Do you already have the route designated?

Derek – Yes I do, we would start from Critterville go to Baptist Valley and back, day two starts at Critterville with a route going thru Bandy do a few loops go Daw Road and a few other places in between. The last day would be a route here in Town. That is the only day we would need to close roads temporary.

Rick - I have the package.

Derek - I mailed to Council not sure if you received in time.

Rick - It is well laid out.

Mary Ann - I love the idea, I am for it I think it would be great. Do you know how many?

Derek - I do know that I have had professional cyclists interested. I have not reached out to any colleges yet. I have not gotten to the point where I can put up a link to see what kind of interest there is.

Mayor Crawford - I am not familiar on how these races are done but if you have 50 cyclists are, they all going to leave at the same time?

Derek - No they would leave in increments. It is broken down in categories.

Mayor Crawford - Do you foresee that you will have good attendance, do you see 25 cyclists going up the road?

Derek – Absolutely

Mayor Crawford - There is a good part but there is also a bad part which is traffic.

Derek - After the start it will thin out.

Rick – What do you need from us?

Derek - I will need police support on those days and EMT services if they are available to be on alert for those days. We would have to have some roads close for a period of time.

Doug - Do you need to close one road or the whole thing?

Derek - It does cross the railroad tracks, explained the route.

Doug - How long will it last?

Derek - Off and on the course of that day, you will have several groups.

Rick - Do you have to close the whole road?

Derek - On the criteria you would have to have road closure on Front Street. We would be going both ways on that one street. That would be on Memorial Day.

Doug - Can you design where you just have to have one side of the lane; I think that would be more acceptable.

Derek - That is a possibility.

Jerry - Would be fewer problems.

Rod - When do you have to know to facilitate this, could we vote in the March meeting so we could look at the route?

Derek - It will push me hard monetarily but that would be fine. If they force me to close the permit I can always resubmit.

Rod - Where do you get the permit?

Derek - USA Cycling

Richard - You figure out the logistics, I think it is a great idea.

Rick - I think it is a great idea too, just get with Jerry to work out the route, when you close the whole street that is a different thing.

Tim - The railroad would have to approve the route and get VDOT involved.

Mary Ann - I hate for you to wait until March to publicize.

Doug - I think we go ahead with Jerry and Tim approving the route

Jerry - The closing of any major route will have to have approval thru VDOT especially on a holiday.

Doug - I make a motion that we give tentative approval for the bike race with you designing route thru the Town Manager and Police Chief for acceptance, Mary Ann seconded the motion.

Richard - Would it be possible to change the criteria to Sunday instead of Monday, less traffic.

Derek - We probably could flip those two (2) days.

Richard - I think that would help.

Mayor Crawford - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 5/0.

Mayor Crawford - At this time I need a motion for the Mayor and Members of Council convene in executive closed session as permitted by the Code of Virginia for the purpose of discussion of 2.2-3711(A)(1) Personnel, 2.2-3711(A)(29) Contract negotiations for Fire and EMS protection.

Rick - I make the motion to go into executive session, Rod seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 5/0.

Mayor Crawford - I now entertain a motion that the Members of Council reconvene in open session and accept the CERTIFICATE OF EXECUTIVE SESSION certifying that the matters discussed while in executive session were those both lawfully exempted from the open meeting requirements and identified in the motion by which the closed session was convened.

Mary Ann- I make the motion for Council to return from "Closed Session", Rick seconded the motion.

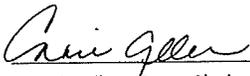
Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 5/0.

Mayor Crawford – Roll Call Vote – Doug - Yes Rick-Yes, Mary Ann-Yes, Richard-Yes, and Rod-Yes - Motion carries - 5/0.

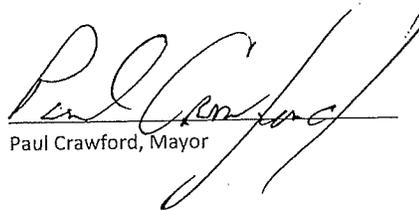
Rod- I make a motion to Recess until February 20 at 6:30pm, Richard seconded the motion.

Mayor Crawford- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 5/0

Recessed until February 20 at 6:30pm.



Connie Allen, Town Clerk



Paul Crawford, Mayor