

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE WYTHEVILLE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2022, AT 4:00 P.M.**

Members present: Beth A. Taylor, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman

Members absent: Cathy D. Pattison

Others present: Town Manager T. Brian Freeman, Assistant Town Manager Elaine R. HOLETON, Town Clerk Sharon G. Corvin, Patrol Officer Chastity Russell, Nancy Martin, Kirk Chamberlain

RE: CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order and established that a quorum of Council members was present.

RE: DISCUSS REAL PROPERTY TAX RATE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022-23 DUE TO PROPERTY REASSESSMENTS

Mayor Taylor advised that the special called meeting is to discuss the real property tax rate for Fiscal Year 2022-23 due to the property reassessments. She noted that per State Code, there is a deadline to advertise the public hearing following a reassessment, and Town Manager Freeman will continue to explain more on the subject. Town Manager Freeman explained that the State Code provides a number of items regarding the reassessment that must be published, and he noted the published advertisement may cause concerns for citizens and generate a lot of interest since it notes that there is a tax increase from the reassessments. Town Manager Freeman stated that the last time reassessments were performed, the number was \$856M in property assessments, and that number, after the reassessments, went up to \$1,186,816,460. He noted that after speaking with the Wythe County Commissioner of the Revenue earlier in the day, Town staff was told that the numbers include nontaxable properties, which will ultimately get removed. He commented that the types of properties included in those categories are churches, non-profit organizations, etc., for which the Town cannot collect taxes. Town Manager Freeman continued to explain the State Code advertising regulations with the Council. He noted that the main goal of the meeting was getting the Council to review and discuss the advertisement and the State regulations regarding the advertisement. Discussion ensued regarding the public notice advertisement, the tax rate increases over the past few years, etc. Town Manager Freeman explained that the revenue number has increased over the years due to the building of Walmart, Sheetz, etc., but not because of a rate increase. Councilwoman Atkins inquired as to what type of rate has been discussed and what rate would be best for the citizens. Town Manager Freeman advised that for a citizen's wallet, the answer would be less is better. Town Manager Freeman commented when it is asked what services the citizens are receiving, what level of service they expect and what the Council wants them to have, then it is a totally different perspective. He noted that, obviously, to a citizen, they will want the option of spending less, but, there is a certain level of service that people expect, which has to be considered, too. Councilwoman Atkins inquired of Town Manager Freeman as to what changes will or may be made since the tax rate will or may be changed. Town Manager Freeman advised that before the meeting, he reviewed the Town's audit report and put the information into a graph so that the Town Council could review it, but he wanted to point out that the Town is spending about \$3M more, annually, on public safety. He noted that this is a significant change in operating expenditures and a significant change in increase in service. Town Manager Freeman commented that citizens may not realize that increase in service until they dial 911, however, they are receiving it. Councilman Bloomfield

remarked that he could not remember what increased the numbers so much because of the public safety department. Town Manager Freeman advised that the Council will not see this listed in the budget as "Hazardous Duty Supplement Pay" listed under the Fire and Rescue and Police Departments' budgets, even though their employees are the only Town employees who receive this, because it is a retirement calculation spread across all the Town departments' budgets. Town Manager Freeman commented that he wanted the Council to see this because it is a part of every single Town employee's Virginia Retirement System (VRS) that gets paid in each departmental budget. Councilman Bloomfield inquired as to when this happened. Town Manager Freeman stated that this happened when the Town Council decided to go with a full-time paid Fire and Rescue Department. Discussion continued regarding the significant effect the Hazardous Duty Supplement Pay has had on the Town's budget and will continue to have permanently. It was also noted that this supplement is paid on the Town's total payroll even though only approximately 50-60 employees are eligible to receive it. Town Manager Freeman reiterated that this is why the Council and citizens will continue to see this in every department's budget and not just the Fire and Rescue and Police Departments' budget. Discussion continued regarding the Hazardous Duty Supplement Pay and who is eligible to receive it. Town Manager Freeman stated if the Council is going to allow the real property tax revenues to increase by more than \$16,000, then the advertisement must go to the local newspaper tomorrow. He noted that if it is a remote possibility for a tax increase due to reassessments, then the advertisement must go out immediately, and the real property tax rate has to be published as up to \$.195 per \$100 of assessed value. Town Manager Freeman explained that if it is not published as required, the Town Council cannot do anything until the budget is passed, and then the Council would have to go through the same process again. Discussion continued regarding the mandated verbiage that must be used for the public hearing advertisement. Discussion continued regarding the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget, and Town Manager Freeman advised that the Town will still need to use reserves to balance the budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23. Town Treasurer Stephens stated that the Council has done its job by scheduling the public hearing, noting that the budget is a work in progress and that things may change from now until June 13, 2022. Councilman Bloomfield advised that he has been told that only a 14-day public hearing notice is required if the State budget has not been adopted prior to April 30, and Town staff may desire to research this. Town Manager Freeman noted that the State Code advises that a 14-day notice may be provided if the State budget has not been passed by April 30. He inquired of the Council if they are in agreement to using the 14 day advertisement notice. It was the consensus of the Council for Town Staff to seek legal counsel regarding the State Code requirements. Mayor Taylor inquired if there is a motion to set the public hearing for June 13, 2022. A motion was made by Councilman Gillman and seconded by Councilman Bloomfield to set a public hearing for the Town Council meeting on Monday, June 13, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. due to the reassessments causing a tax increase. Discussion was held on the verbiage for the public hearing notice and the Council discussed including that this public hearing is required by State law because the real estate assessments result in an effective tax rate. Work on the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget is an ongoing process, and the Town Council has the authority to change the budgetary figures. The Town Council is respectful of the concerns of the Town of Wytheville citizens regarding a real property tax increase. The Town Council will carefully review the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget to determine if lowering the budget or the real property tax rate is feasible. The real property tax rate will not exceed the current rate of \$.195. Town Manager Freeman commented that Town staff will work on this verbiage. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion to set the public hearing. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: For: Beth A. Taylor, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman. Against: None.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be discussed, a motion was duly made, seconded and carried to adjourn the meeting (4:59 p.m.).

Beth A. Taylor, Mayor

Sharon G. Corvin, CMC, Town Clerk