

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE WYTHEVILLE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON MONDAY, JULY 12, 2021, AT 7:00 P.M.**

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

Members absent: None

Others present: Town Manager T. Brian Freeman, Town Clerk Sharon G. Corvin, Town Attorney Michelle Workman Clayton, Vanessa L. Baldwin, Patrol Officer Cody Thomas

RE: CALL TO ORDER, QUORUM, PLEDGE

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order and established that a quorum of Council members was present. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilwoman Atkins.

RE: CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Taylor presented the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the regular meeting of June 28, 2021. She inquired if there was a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented or to somehow be amended. A motion was made by Councilman Gillman and seconded by Councilwoman Atkins to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes of the regular meeting of June 28, 2021, as presented. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: For: Beth A. Taylor, Cathy D. Pattison, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman. Against: None.

RE: PUBLIC HEARING – ORDINANCE REGARDING EXEMPTION OF PROPERTY TAXES FOR ELDERLY AND HANDICAPPED

Mayor Taylor advised that the meeting constituted a public hearing (due notice having been given) to consider amending Chapter 14, Taxation, Article II. Property Taxes, Section 14-16. Exemption for Elderly and Handicapped, of the Code of the Town of Wytheville, Virginia. She continued to explain the proposed revisions to the Town Code recommended by Town Treasurer Michael Stephens, which would increase the real property tax exemption for certain qualified property owners of the town, from \$75 to \$100. Mayor Taylor inquired if there were any citizens attending the meeting who wished to address the Council during this public hearing. There being no one who wished to address the Council during the public hearing, Mayor Taylor declared the public hearing closed and proceeded with the agenda. She advised that she would reserve the right to revisit this agenda item, if anyone arrived later during the meeting who wished to address the Council regarding the public hearing.

RE: CITIZENS' PERIOD

Mayor Taylor advised that the next agenda item is Citizens' Period. She noted that there are no citizens attending the meeting who wished to address the Council during Citizens' Period, therefore, she would proceed with the agenda.

RE: OLD BUSINESS

Town Manager Freeman advised that he did not have anything to report to the Council under Old Business, however, he did have some New Business to report, later in the meeting.

RE: STAFF REPORTS

The Staff Reports were entered into the record as follows:

A. The Code of the Town of Wytheville provides a real estate tax exemption for qualifying elderly or handicapped individuals. Citizens who are interested in this program must first apply and qualify under Wythe County's tax exemption program, after which they are automatically included in the Town's program. The tax exemption program currently relieves up to \$75 in real property taxes each qualifying year. Later in the meeting, the Council will consider an amendment to the Town Code that revises the language to note that the exemption amount can be amended from time to time. The Town Treasurer recommends increasing this exemption from \$75 to \$100. It would be the recommendation of Town Staff that the Town Council approve this Code modification, and to increase the exemption amount to \$100 per qualifying year.

B. For years, the Town has had an ordinance that required property owners in the town to "cut grass, weeds and other foreign growth" on a regular basis during the growing season. This ordinance has been modified over the years to better define what areas need to be mowed and to increase the frequency of mowing, all with the intention of improving the appearance of properties in town for the protection of adjacent neighbors. The ordinance provides for the Town to mow properties whose owners are either unwilling or unable to keep their properties mowed according to the regulations. With the second mowing deadline of July 15, 2021, fast approaching, we wanted to take a minute to remind citizens to cut grass, weeds, vegetation or other foreign growth up to 100 feet from their structures at least three (3) times per year - once before May 15, once before July 15 and once before September 15, or whenever it reaches a maximum height of twelve (12) inches.

Grass, weeds, vegetation or other foreign growth over 100 feet from structures and undeveloped lots shall be mowed two (2) times per year - once before May 15 and once before August 15.

Property located in A-1 Agricultural Zoning Districts, not within 100 feet of structure(s), shall control the grass, weeds, vegetation or other foreign growth by mowing at least one (1) time between May 15 and September 15.

Property located within 100 feet of the right of way of an entrance corridor shall mow all grass, weeds, vegetation or other foreign growth monthly, between April 1 through September 30, or when reaching a maximum height of 12 inches. Entrance corridors are identified in the Town Code.

C. For several years, the Town has permitted hunting on approximately half of the Town's property on Sand Mountain known as the Crystal Springs Recreation Area. The other half is reserved for outdoor recreational purposes, such as camping, hiking and biking trails. The Town issues up to 50 hunting permits each year, and when the number of applicants exceeds 50, the permittees are chosen by lottery. Last year, the Town revised the hunting regulations for this property to mirror the requirements set forth by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) for the adjacent Big Survey property. Along with the adopted changes, DGIF agreed to take over patrolling and enforcement

of these regulations for this area. This was a positive step that should improve the safety of hunting on this property. To date, the hunting program has been a positive for our citizens, and it would be the recommendation of Town Staff that we continue the hunting permit program again in 2021. The deadline to accept applications is Friday, August 13, 2021, at 5:00 p.m., and applications are available in the Town Manager's Office in the Municipal Building located at 150 East Monroe Street. Permits will be issued as soon thereafter as practical. The Staff Reports are attached and made part of these minutes.

Vice-Mayor Pattison inquired of Town Manager Freeman if there was a fee associated with the hunting permit application. Town Manager Freeman advised that the Town does not charge a fee for the hunting permit applications. Discussion continued regarding the hunting permit application process.

Mayor Taylor stated that she would like to share her thoughts regarding the mowing regulations, etc. She commented that the list of properties that the Town has to mow due to property owners not following the Town Code is growing, and she understands that there are some property owners who need this type of service, however, in her opinion, there are a lot of property owners who take advantage of the Town's mowing operations. Mayor Taylor remarked that the property owners who are taking advantage are those who are complaining about what the Town is charging them for mowing their property. Town Manager Freeman advised that there were over 100 properties on the list for Town Staff to mow for the May 15 mowing deadline. Mayor Taylor stated that she would like for Town Staff to review this ordinance and think of solutions to decrease the number of mowings on the list each time, etc. Councilman Bloomfield remarked that he personally thinks that the penalty amount should be increased. Discussion continued regarding the mowing regulations. Town Manager Freeman advised that Town Staff would research the topic and discuss the issue at a future Council Work Session.

RE: NEW BUSINESS

Under New Business, Town Manager Freeman reported the following:

1. Mr. David Schmidt's term on the Building Code Appeals Board expires July 26, 2021. Mr. Schmidt is eligible for reappointment and has expressed a willingness to serve again, if reappointed to a five year term. Town Manager Freeman inquired of the Council if they would like to schedule a Meet and Greet session with Mr. Schmidt prior to his reappointment on the Building Code Appeals Board. It was the consensus of the Council not to schedule a Meet and Greet session with Mr. Schmidt before his reappointment.
2. A member of the Willow Brook Jackson/Umberger Homestead Museum Advisory Board has resigned (term expires July 31, 2023), and Mr. David Sharitz has expressed a willingness to serve on the Board, if appointed. Town Manager Freeman inquired of the Council if they would like to schedule a Meet and Greet session with Mr. Sharitz prior to appointment on the Willow Brook Jackson/Umberger Homestead Museum Advisory Board. It was the consensus of the Council to schedule a Meet and Greet session with Mr. David Sharitz for the July 20, 2021, Work Session, to consider him for appointment to the Willow Brook Jackson/Umberger Homestead Museum Advisory Board.
3. Town Manager Freeman advised that before the Council is a request from the Wythe Arts Council, Ltd. for a raffle permit for the 2021 calendar year. He explained that the Wythe Arts Council, Ltd. is a 501(c)(3) organization and meets the requirements for issuance of a raffle permit. He remarked that Town staff is requesting that the Town Council consider approving

this request for issuance of the raffle permit. A motion was made by Councilman Bloomfield and seconded by Vice-Mayor Pattison to approve the request of the Wythe Arts Council, Ltd. for issuance of a raffle permit for calendar year 2021. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion to approve the request of the Wythe Arts Council. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition: For: Beth A. Taylor, Cathy D. Pattison, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins, Gary L. Gillman. Against: None.

4. The New River Regional Water Authority will meet on Thursday, July 15, 2021, at 10:00 a.m., at the facility in Austinville.
5. The Board of Zoning Appeals will meet on Thursday, July 15, 2021, at 11:00 a.m., in the Council Chambers.
6. The next Council Work Session will be held on Tuesday, July 20, 2021, at 7:00 a.m., in the Council Conference Room.
7. The Homestead Museum Advisory Board will meet on Thursday, July 29, 2021, at 10:00 a.m., at the Homestead property
8. The Joint IDA will meet on Thursday, July 29, 2021, at 3:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers.
9. Mayor Taylor welcomed Ms. Vanessa Baldwin. She inquired of Ms. Baldwin if she wished to address the Council. Ms. Baldwin stated that she did not wish to address the Council. Mayor Taylor proceeded with the agenda.

RE: ORDINANCE NO. 1400

Mayor Taylor presented Ordinance No. 1400, an ordinance amending and reenacting Chapter 14, Taxation, Article II. Property Taxes, Section 14-16. Exemption for Elderly and Handicapped, of the Code of the Town of Wytheville, Virginia, on first reading. She inquired if there was a motion to amend the ordinance as presented, as well as to approve increasing the exemption amount from \$75 to \$100 for qualified elderly and handicapped residents. Vice-Mayor Pattison inquired if the ordinance could be adopted on first reading. Mayor Taylor stated that is correct. A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Pattison and seconded by Councilman Bloomfield to adopt Ordinance No. 1400, an ordinance amending and reenacting Chapter 14, Taxation, Article II. Property Taxes, Section 14-16. Exemption for Elderly and Handicapped, of the Code of the Town of Wytheville, Virginia, on first and final reading, and to approve increasing the exemption amount from \$75 to \$100 for qualified elderly and handicapped residents. Mayor Taylor inquired if there was any discussion on the motion to adopt the ordinance and approve increasing the exemption amount on first and final reading. There being none, the motion was approved with the following voting in favor and there being no opposition:

FOR: Beth A. Taylor, Cathy D. Pattison, Mark J. Bloomfield, Holly E. Atkins,
Gary L. Gillman

AGAINST: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

Ordinance No. 1400 was adopted on first and final reading.

RE: MILLWALD THEATRE

Councilman Bloomfield announced that the Millwald Theatre closed on its New Market Tax Credit deal on Thursday, July 8, 2021. He noted that the Board has issued a Notice to Proceed letter to the contractor. Discussion continued regarding the construction of the Theatre.

RE: ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be discussed, a motion was duly made, seconded and carried to adjourn the meeting (7:17 p.m.).

Beth A. Taylor, Mayor

Sharon G. Corvin, CMC, Town Clerk