

**ROCKY MOUNT TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN HALL MEETING
OCTOBER 25, 2010**

A Rocky Mount Town Hall meeting was held on October 25, 2010 in the Council Chambers of the Rocky Mount Municipal Building located at 345 Donald Avenue, Rocky Mount, Virginia at 6:00 p.m.

Although the Rocky Mount Town Council did not preside over the meeting officially, the following members of Council were present:

Mayor Steven C. Angle, Vice Mayor Gregory B. Walker and
Council Members Bobby M. Cundiff, Jerry W. Greer, Sr.,
P. Ann Love, Robert L. Moyer, and Robert W. Strickler

The following Town of Rocky Mount staff were present:

- C. James Ervin, Town Manager
- Patricia H. Keatts, Town Clerk
- David Cundiff, Chief of Police
- Charles Robertson, Fire Chief
- Linda Woody, Finance Director
- Robert Deitrich, Water Department Superintendent
- Timothy Burton, Wastewater Department Superintendent
- Matthew C. Hankins, Assistant Town Manager/Community Development Director
- Ryan Lester, Community Partnership for Revitalization Board President
- Cecil R. Mason, Public Works Department Director

TOWN HALL STYLE MEETING

The Town Manager shared a general orientation of the Town Hall meeting, stating that this meeting would be very informal, with the department heads highlighting what their departments are doing and what is going on in the Town. He requested that any questions from those citizens attending to please wait until after each department head had made their presentations, then the floor would be opened up to take any questions or concerns from the citizens.

PRESENTATION OF DEPARTMENT HEADS

The Town Manager introduced each department head.

A) Police Department

Chief of Police David Cundiff introduced himself as the Interim Chief of Police. He commented that he would be speaking about the services the Police Department offers, being:

- Has School Resource Officer in the middle and high school.
- Unlocks vehicles.
- Has a gang officer and programs starting in the schools.
- Still conducts business and residential checks.
- SWAT Team is a special weapons and tactical team which assists with the State Police and County, when needed.
- Have four officers going through drug interdiction this week.
- Have two forensic trained investigators at this time (Todd Maxey and Don Brown).
- Assisted with the prescription recycling center that took place.
- Continues doing community policing.
- Continues doing child safety seat checks.
- Officer Todd Maxey will be the Investigator conducting internet crimes against children.
- Also received computer and software program to get information from cellphones.
- Officer Todd Maxey and Sergeant Craig Sloan working on child abuse issues.

The Chief pointed out that he is working on future goals for the department, such as: property trained officer; less lethal equipment Taser put in use just recently as an alternate means of force (bean bag rounds for mentally challenged people), and the use of pepper spray.

B. Fire Department

Fire Chief Charles Robertson introduced himself and stated the he and his department will give the Town and the surrounding County area 100%. The Fire Chief pointed out the following.

- The department is an all volunteer organization, with the sole intent to serve and provide fire protection to the citizens of Rocky Mount and surrounding areas.
- Have membership capacity for 35 active members. At present, have 26 active members.
- Have 24 members that have the required Fire Fighter 1 level of training. This consists of 150 hours of classroom training and 35 hours of Hazmat operations training. This is required to attain full membership.
- Have two "probationary members" that are in the process of attaining the Firefighter 1 level so they can have full membership.
- Have 14 members that have the Firefighter 2 level of training. This consists of 85 hours of classroom training and Hazmat training.

- All members have various other advanced levels of training and skills that is offered through the Virginia Department of Fire Programs.
- Answer on average 350 calls a year, with an average of 12 to 14 members on all calls.
- Have an average of a four minute "reaction time", and a nine minute average response time. This, by all standards, is excellent.
- The fiscal year 2009-2010 has brought about many changes due to the loss of Fire Chief Posey Dillon and former Fire Chief Danny Altice, but to the department's credit, they continue to move forward in making the department the best that they can make it.
- It is the department's intent to keep their training levels, equipment, apparatus, and personnel levels strong to assure the citizens in their primary response area that their ISO ratings will remain good. The ISO ratings are important to maintain so as to keep the citizens and businesses insurance premiums as low as possible. The lower ISO ratings are also a tremendous tool for the Town Council to bring in new industries and jobs.

The Fire Chief stated that in closing, it is the department's intent to keep striving to provide the best possible fire service to all of the Town's citizens.

C) Finance Department

Finance Director Linda Woody introduced herself, and went over the handout that was presented to those attending, pointing out the following:

- Due to actual overage of budgeted items, the Town will not have to dip into the fund balance for appropriated fund balance for Fiscal Year 2011: meals tax is 103% of budgeted to-date; local sales tax is 127% of budgeted to-date; water charges are 124% of budgeted to-date; appropriated fund balance Fiscal Year 2011 is \$472,054; total fund balance available is \$6,217,945; and went over debt service.
- Interest earnings chart shows interest earned is steadily going down. The 2.25% is with about 15 bonds that the Town is holding.
- The invested dollars history show a decrease from \$10,150,000 in Fiscal Year 2000 to \$7,355,000 in Fiscal Year 2011 to-date.
- Confirmed to the Town Manager that the auditors have conducted their audit of the Town and she is waiting for their report.

D) Water Department

Superintendent of the Water Department Robert Deitrich introduced himself, and presented the following:

- The Plant makes between 800,000 to one million gallons of water per day to serve the Town's domestic, business and manufacturing uses. The Plant can produce up to two MGD (million gallons per day), if needed.

- The water source is Blackwater River.
- Since the last annual Town Hall meeting, the Plant has had a very successful year. Have kept the health department happy by the Plant not having any violations of the waterworks regulations; increased the level of operate certification at the Plant; updated safety equipment and procedures for the Plant to be more self-sufficient as a staff; and most importantly, kept the water tanks full of water.
- Main goal is to always make the best drinking water out of whatever the Blackwater River gives them, but staff has other goals as well.
- The economic crunch facing the Town motivated staff to focus on cutting costs, with them looking for any way to save:
 - Able to virtually eliminate overtime with some simple schedule changes, with staff willing to be flexible.
 - Staff took every opportunity to handle own repairs and maintenance where possible to keep cost of outside contract labor down.
 - Changed the way they operated the Plant somewhat to reduce electricity demand.
 - Looked for better prices on all of the chemicals and supplies that are used.
- By pinching pennies and only spending on what was absolutely necessary and operating smart, they finished up the fiscal year approximately \$50,000 under an already reduced budget, and they are very proud of this, with staff doing really good on reducing the budget even further.
- Continuing to focus on getting the most out of the 30 year old facility in order to make even better water at an even lower cost to the Town's customers, by:
 - Training operators so that they can stay at the top of their game.
 - Adding monitors throughout the production process to help reduce the Plant's chemical usage.
 - Testing new chemical additives to help reduce over use of the Plant's most expensive chemicals.
 - Taking care of the facility to get as much value out of the equipment as possible.
- Feedback is essential if staff is to continually improve the quality of the product they produce. Once the water leaves the Plant, it travels through miles of pipe and through water storage tanks. A lot can happen between point A and point B, and depending on where you are in the Town's distribution system, your water could be different than it is on the opposite end of Town.
- Encourages anyone with comments, good, bad, or otherwise, to give him a call, send him a letter or e-mail to let him know how the Plant's staff is doing.

E) Wastewater Department

Superintendent of the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Timothy Burton introduced himself, presenting the following:

- The biggest change in the past year was the retirement of Jessie Jones (former Superintendent), and the promotion of himself to Plant Superintendent as of November 1, 2009, with this transition being fairly smooth and somewhat of a learning curve for him.
- The WWTP is a 2.0 MGD facility that operates seven days a week, 365 days a year, and is manned eight hours a day Monday through Friday, and four hours a day on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, with a staff of four operators, including himself.
- The WWTP operated at .847 MGD for the Fiscal Year 2009-2010, which is 42.4% capacity. The WWTP operated another year at 99% efficiency and without any violations, which enables it to continue to operate at a reduced testing schedule and reduced hours of operation, saving the Town a large sum of money annually on testing supplies and labor.
- The WWTP operators also maintain six lift stations, taking care of most maintenance issues.
- The biggest challenge in the past year has been the Virginia Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (known as VELAP) that went into effect on January 1, 2009 per regulations of the Virginia Administration Code (VAC) 30, Chapter 45. The State, of course, did not notify anyone of this change, and to make matters worse, there was a September 29, 2009 deadline for applications for accreditation that had to include a Quality Assurance Manual and a Standard Operation Procedure Manuals for all lab tests. Directions on what all they wanted in these manuals was not received until August 2009, leaving them just a few weeks to complete, which they were successful in doing. All of this led up to the first inspection by the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (known as DCLS) July 22, 2010. With all this being said, the WWTP now has its Environmental Laboratory Accreditation and is in compliance with Virginia Code and can continue operating its lab and reporting results to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Without this accreditation, the WWTP would have to send out all of its samples to a commercial lab at a considerable increase in operational cost.
- The challenge in the future is going to be the increase in repairs and maintenance to continue to discharge the cleanest Effluent possible. Staff is starting to see more electronic failures due to the average life expectancy of electronics being ten years, with the Town's, for the most part, being 16 years old. In the near future, the Town will have to look into upgrading parts of its treatment process due to the obsolete and worn out equipment in order to maintain its good track record of a very clean Effluent.
- If anyone has any questions or concerns about the WWTP, he can be reached at 504-483-1202 or by e-mail at tburton@rockymountva.org.

F) Community Development

The Community Development & Economic Director Matthew Hankins (who also serves as Assistant Town Manager) introduced himself, presenting the following:

- Overall direction and challenge is working to responsibly develop the Town in an appropriate locations without overburdening transportation, parks, or public infrastructure.
- Good deal of what he does is project management, with that being right now the Uptown revitalization project:
 - Construction started in April.
 - \$2.4 million dollar project.
 - Major problems have been utility related: storm sewer; phone conduits unmarked and depth.
 - Expect to be completed in February 2011.
 - Explained the Microenterprise Loan Program, which works in conjunction with the Façade Program improvements for Uptown.
- Went over Economic Development:
 - Empire Foods is completed.
 - Trinity Packaging expansion underway.
 - Walgreen is opening soon.
 - Business lost are: Edible Vibes, Fit Club, Caroline's In the City, Red Clay Restaurant, Carousel Hair Salon.
 - Businesses opening soon are: The Grainery, The Artisan Center, Renick's Antiques, Pyramid Bakery & Pizzeria.
 - Working to help market some prime properties with property owners and banks. Need to have some type of sit-down restaurant, west-end grocery, and Central Business District retailers.
 - Weaver Street Extension completed and opened up Cox property.
 - Working to develop Cox property as next great community economic engine.
- Went over what he believes is the next big things:
 - In-town Amphitheatre.
 - Retail recruitment and attraction, such as: Arts and cultural center to take advantage of the area's art and cultural heritage.
 - Working on some neighborhood blight issues in trying to identify property owners to try to figure out what to do with those properties that are blighted.
- Updated Council on the Enterprise Zone, explaining it as an economic tool that gives breaks to businesses trying to relocate to the Town.
- Explained to Council that regarding zoning and planning, staff is updating the Comprehensive Plan to reflect changes since its last adoption; hiring a Planner to help with planning for the five to 20 year horizon; and explained that Oaks at Rakes Tavern construction is underway. Also stated that since the Community Development Office is down from four people to two, they are working on how to fill the Planner position and hope to have one hired within 60 to 90 days.
- Updated Council on the Town's parks management: Celeste Park parking; Gilley's Park shelter; and Veterans-Lynch connector walk.

The Town Manager stated that the Assistant Town Manager downplayed what he does, especially in economic development, giving a brief synopsis of what had transpired since he came to work for the Town.

G) Community Partnership for Revitalization

The Town Manager explained that Katie McElroy, the Executive Director for Community Partnership for Revitalization (CPR), has been with the Town for the past year, and she was invited to attend the Town Hall meeting, but has since resigned to be the Tourism Director for Waynesboro, Virginia. In her place, the CPR Board President Ryan Lester, made the presentation.

Community Partnership for Revitalization (CPR) Board President Ryan Lester introduced himself to Council, presenting the following:

- CPR has a new website up and running.
- Went over 2010 accomplishments, which are: '5 on Us' campaign; Wayfinding signage assessment completed; façade assistance to property owners will take place once streets are done; and offered retail consultant training to businesses located within Town limits.
- Explained the continued efforts of CPR: wayfinding signage implementation; administrative work for Footlights of the Blue Ridge; Uptown Façade Program; Town decorating; business recruitment; VMS trainings; 'Round the Mountain Artisan Trail; and Arts & Cultural District.
- Went over CPR community events: "Come Home to a Franklin County Christmas" and County tree lighting; had a very good turnout for the annual Pigg River Ramble; conducted the "History in Bloom" Rocky Mount Home Tour, which was very successful; the Chug for the Jug 5k road race was very popular; and now working on the downtown scarecrow contest.

H. Public Works Department

- Regarding Uptown projects, gave a brief synopsis on the water line improvements; and regarding Warren Street, stating there will be new sewer main, laterals and cleanouts at each lot.
- Regarding snow removal, reminded citizens not to park on streets, especially the narrow and one-way streets. Also found salt at a cheaper price this year.
- Regarding leaf removal, will start probably picking up leaves the second week in November and would like to end by Christmas, as the same truck that picks up leaves is also used for snow removal.
- Advised that the Town's clean-up week starts the first Monday of each month, and if that day is a holiday, will start on Tuesday. Reminded everyone that his department needs all items placed at the curb the day the cleanup starts so items will not be missed. If by the following Friday his crew has not picked up items, call Sheriff's Office at 483-3000 and they will find him so he can send out a crew to pickup those items.

The Town Manager stated that at least three times this past winter, the Public Works Department crew worked 24 hours straight, and his crew is some of the hardest working folks in Rocky Mount.

TOWN MANAGER

The Town Manager pointed out the following:

- Everything that was pointed out by the department heads that is done by their departments is taken care of by only 55 Town employees.
- There are still some vacancies in some departments not filled.
- Has been a real challenge this past budget and the year before this past year to see how the budget met all their needs.
- Have had three consecutive years that departments have had to cut the budget. It is staff's intent to have a balanced budget and the department heads that the citizens have heard from have tried very hard to adjust to this and the economy to keep things working, with them still doing their jobs.
- The Town has fantastic employees doing their best, and he certainly appreciates them and can't say enough about them.
- Veterans dam removal is not a popular course, but he personally supports it because the Town just had two fatalities at the other dam. Will certainly be looking at this and would like to be proactive and make the community safe.
- Along the same vein of losing two people at the dam at the Water Plant, the Town just lost two of their own and due to this, looking at installing the Opticom system. The Town wants to learn from their tragedies. He believes this is the right thing to do, and thanks to a generous fund raising effort by the citizens and use of State street maintenance funds, the Town will be one of the smallest communities in the Commonwealth to get a public safety traffic signal pre-emption system.
- A lot of what the citizens have heard from staff is deciding among complex alternatives, and every year, Council has to make choices when it comes to complex issues of what projects to pursue and how to fund them. These choices are easier to make when the citizens are at the table.
- Reminded everyone that he has an open door policy and his phone number is listed.

CITIZENS COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FOR DEPARTMENT HEADS

Let the record show that those citizens that did pose questions, did so from the floor and not from the podium; therefore, did not come forward to speak. Due to this, the following comments are those that could be heard from the floor.

- Former Mayor Mark Newbill wanted to know if the Town was going to do away with vehicle decals, with the Finance Director replying that she has talked with the County about this and they are not planning on doing this; therefore, the Town would not be doing away with decals as it is hard for the Town to do something if the County does

not do likewise. Mr. Newbill also questioned why the Town did not move May elections to November and hoped Council would re-visit this, with the Town Manager stating he would communicate this to Council.

- Johnny Woods, a native of Franklin County, questioned the development of community retainment walls and why one has not been repaired on Byrd Lane that is at his father's property, with the Assistant Town Manager stating the Town has looked at this before, but will revisit this matter again. The Assistant Town Manager also confirmed to Mr. Woods that the Town cannot condemn property unless the Franklin County Building Inspector does inspection and deems the property is able to be condemned.
- Jewell Hunt asked if there was any way that the Town could negotiate with landowners of business property in-town to reduce their rental rates, with the Assistant Town Manager giving a history of the Town trying to do this. The Town Manager stated that one property owner did come down in rent and the Town thinks it has hit a home run with this one for a long-term renter to be in that building. Mrs. Hunt also stated that she believes the Public Works Director is the hardest working man in Rocky Mount; that the current Council members are hard working; and mentioned that the *Franklin News-Post* had mentioned Council negatively and she thinks this should be the time for healing. Also mentioned Mr. Cundiff is doing a good job.
- Barry Smith stated that he believes the Council is doing a great job contrary to what the *Franklin News-Post* has printed in its editorial. He applauded Council for working for its citizens. Regarding the uptown project, questioned why the contractors could not work at night, with the Assistant Town Manager explaining why they could not. Also, commented on how the Public Works Department does a great job and thanked them for always being there.

CONCLUSION

The Town Manager thanked everyone for coming to the meeting, stating that he thinks that the Town employees are the greatest staff that he has ever worked for.

The Mayor introduced himself and thanked all the department heads for their input, and especially for the hard work they and their staff do every day. He reiterated what the Town Manager had said about there being only 55 employees for the Town taking care of over 5,500 people, with this taking place 365 days a year. He further commented that although Council may be the face of the Town, staff is what makes the Town what it is, and he appreciates what all the Town staff does. He also stated that he appreciates the citizens coming out and invited everyone to attend the Council meetings, which take place the second Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. He finalized his comments by stating that not everything you read in the newspaper is always 100% correct.

The meeting concluded at 7:11 p.m.

Steven C. Angle, Mayor

ATTEST:

Patricia H. Keatts/Town Clerk

/phk