

The Richlands Town Council held a "Regular Council Meeting" on March 8, 2022, in the Richlands Council Chambers at 6:00 pm with the following present:

Mayor: Rod D. Cury
Town Manager: John O'Daniel
Town Clerk: Connie Allen
Council Members: Mary Ann Strong, Doug Ratliff,
Richard Brown, Darrell Addison
Council Members Absent: Mike Street, Jeff Hurst
Town Attorney: Michael Thomas

Mayor Cury opened the meeting.

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

Mayor Cury – Is there any Additions/Deletions to the Agenda?

John – Add Contract Negotiations – 2.2-3711(A)

Mary Ann – I make a motion to approve the agenda as amended, Darrell seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, Mary Ann – Yes
Motion carries – 4/0

Mayor Cury - Is there anyone here that would like to be added to "Unscheduled Public Comments".
Please add Shea Cook, Steve Conley, Kevin Hamilton, and John W. Brown.

Mayor Cury - I need a motion to add these people to "Unscheduled Public Comments".

Darrell - I make the motion, Mary Ann seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, Mary Ann – Yes
Motion carries – 4/0

Mayor Cury – Recognition of the Richlands Wrestling Youth and Varsity Teams - Read the information sent in by Coach Daughtery and Coach Brown. Recognized the Youth Middle School, Varsity Teams and Coaches. Presented certificate to the Teams.

Mayor Cury - "Unscheduled Public Comments – Kevin Hamilton will not be able to be here tonight.

Mayor Cury - Approval of Minutes – Regular Meeting February 8 and Special Called Meeting February 21.

Richard - I make a motion to approve both sets of minutes, Darrell seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, Mary Ann – Yes
Motion carries – 4/0

Mayor Cury - Consent Agenda – Authorization to Pay Bills (February) and Authorize Line of Credit Drawdown #18. - Is there a motion to adopt the "Consent Agenda" as presented?

Darrell- I make a motion we approve the "Consent Agenda", Mary Ann seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, and Mary Ann – Yes Motion carries – 4/0

Mayor Cury – “Scheduled Public Comments” – Laura Mollo

Laura Mollo – 262 Linwood Drive

- Addressed the speech given by Richard Brown at January meeting. None of you should attack citizens for exercising their rights to speak at the meetings. If you are only going to listen to people that agree with you, you have bigger problems than I ever imagined. Not only attacking a citizen is wrong but what you said was not true.
- I want on the record any FIOA request that is requested by citizen is paid by the citizen and not the Town. FIOA is a legally protected right in America where we value freedom and transparency. Any citizen should be welcomed and encouraged not attacked.
- Representative democracy elected officials or servants of the people not the other way around.
- On the agenda you are considering the insurance renewal, I am asking that you remove Council insurance as an option and not to burden our budget with things that benefit you personally. Think of the citizens and do not allow yourself health insurance paid by the taxpayer’s money.
- Lifeguard Program at the Rec Park- I know it is difficult to find and keep enough lifeguards, the classes are expensive and the initial cost is \$250; it is required to become a lifeguard. Not everyone in Richlands can afford the class and excludes many qualified individuals. Bluefield has a program in place; they offer the classes for free to the citizens of the community in exchange for a one-year employment contract. This gives kids that may not be able to afford the fee a great way to take the class and have a summer job. It benefits the Town to make sure we have enough life guards during the time the pool is open. I am asking that you adopt a similar plan in Richlands giving every child an equal opportunity for a great summer job.

Mayor Cury – “Scheduled Public Comments” – Donnie Yates

Donnie Yates - 674 Fairground Road, Tazewell, VA

- This is my third Town on the County Tour; two out of the three Towns have been recognizing our young people.
- Special Year for the County Fair , 150th Anniversary
- No Fair in 2020 due to Covid and limited Fair in 2021.
- This year will have a mobile museum about the State of Virginia.
- Asking for Council to consider making a donation to the County Fair. Fairs are not cheap and anything you could donate would be appreciated.
- We are going to form a committee and I hope it will make it a true Tazewell County Fair. We are asking each Town to select someone to serve on the committee. Someone who is active in your community. We want to meet on a monthly basis. We are asking each Town’s representative to keep in touch with you and get your ideas on what you would like to see at the Fair.
- Handed out contact information about the Fair.

Mayor Cury – “Unscheduled Public Comments” – Shea Cook

Shea Cook - 215 Washington Square, Richlands – VA

- Handed out Letter written to Mayor Cury
- Request a comparison study by Weldon-Cooper, a free and competent analysis by an arm of the University of Virginia.
- If a determination is made to keep the power system, then adopt the exact price structure as used by AEP.
- Provide more transparency in every aspect of the power system by reconstituting the electrical committee, including at least three (3) customer members not employed by the Town.
- Do not take the attitude that customers are too dumb or unsophisticated to understand the issues.

- Do not raise any rates, forecasted or not, during 2022.
- Eliminate the PCA for 2022.
- Councilmembers that are not Town customers should abstain from voting on any rate adjustments.

Mayor Cury – “Unscheduled Public Comments” Steve Conley

Steve Conley – Cedar Bluff, VA

- Discussed his electric bill in the Town of Richlands.
- Has a shop on 404 Allegheny Street called Seasonal Treasures. We have been shut down since December, nothing on except to small heaters to keep the pipes from freezing, electric bill \$397.92 and we just opened back up today.
- Electric for my house in Cedar Bluff \$218.00 AEP.
- Wants someone to explain why.

Mayor Cury - Here is my suggestion, I wish I could help immediately but I don't know what to say, have you talked to the people at the Town?

Steve Conley - I have not talked to nobody.

Mayor Cury - I would suggest after the meeting you talk with the Town Manager or come to the Town Hall tomorrow and maybe some the staff here, may not resolve but do their best explain what your bill is. I know it is not the only one and I am very aware of it but I don't think anyone here can right now.

Doug - I will give you some history on it. About ten (10) years ago under Tim Taylor, when we came in about fifteen (15) years ago the Town was using the electric fund for a crutch and taking a lot of money out of it, off of the top like I said a few minutes ago. When we came into Council fifteen (15) years ago we did away with that, if you check back in years Richlands was the cheapest electric system in Virginia. About five (5) years into my term Tim Taylor came to me and said we need to take \$200,000 for taxes, I said you shouldn't do that because you are going to run into problems in years to come. Against my warning, I was on the committee and so was Mary Ann. Tim Taylor went against and vote of Council with my warning, taking \$200,000 off the top. Two (2) years went by and he came back and said we need more, against my warning the Council voted to take more and more, it's like drugs. At this point the reason your electric bill is so high they are taking close to a million dollars, you can check the budget to see where it goes, that is what makes your bill twice of what it should be because of the greed of the Town and using for other things.

Steve Conley - My bill is twice as high as my house.

Doug - If you were with AEP you would probably pay around \$70.

Mary Ann - First of all, I love your shop. How does this compare with your bill last year when you shut down?

Steve Conley - It is not as bad but they were high. We go ahead and pay don't want to be cut off.

Darrell - Your house was \$218.

Steve Conley – Yes, my shop was \$397.92.

Doug - Someone ask how you could fix it, can I tell how you can fix it? You can fix it by doing a budget that you don't use the electric fund because don't use as a crutch and spending on wasteful spending that we should not spend. If I had ten (10) minutes with the budget I could cut off a million dollars and not have to use our electric fund and have the cheapest rates in Virginia. That is how you fix it.

Mayor Cury - We are not here to argue against what you are saying, I do suggest if you can find a few minutes to come to the Town Hall and let them go over it with you.

Mayor Cury – “Unscheduled Public Comments” – John W. Brown

Richard - I think he was with the wrestlers.

Mayor Cury – Agenda Items – IDA Update – Blake Ray

Blake Ray –

- Send Ashley Harris a message and congratulate her on all the hard work she has done on Pop-Up Richlands. She has gone way beyond on working with the project.
- Everything is ready to start on March 24.
- We have nine (9) participants that have signed up.
- SBDC has done a great job in putting a curriculum together as well as a local attorney and CPA volunteering their time.
- The participants are below the age of 30, which is huge.
- Regarding Pop-Up Richlands in our IDA February meeting we voted to request Council to go ahead and allocate the first \$15,000 for the use of the seed grants for the participants.
- The Council allocated \$25,000 to the IDA fund, in the IDA documents anything over \$15,000 the Council has to approve. If you could please make a vote to allocate that \$15,000 so we don't have any hang-ups once the participants go thru the course and the judges have made those decisions.
- We had a meeting last week that was not advertised properly a lot of the discussion topics were around creating incentives for industries that are really too small or mid-size range. We are going to address in our March 28th meeting at 6:00pm. I will give you some updates at the April meeting.
- I met with two (2) members of the Tazewell County IDA, Shanna Plaster- Northwestern District Supervisor. We discussed in our January meeting, to move a lot of the items we have been discussing for a long time over the finish line. Our goal is to work on allowing ATVs and side by sides in downtown; it is not going to come by Fannie's it is going to come by the Jewell Ridge West Fork exit. Access the Town from that exit. Jerry Gilbert was also in the meeting. This is something we are going to request that you look at.
- From a business incentive standpoint, I want to give complete credit to former Mayor Jan White and the Council that work there, they started working on business incentives that is 80% done. The IDA's focus is to look at the incentives and make sure they still meet the needs of the community and address any incentives that can be added. It is not going to happen overnight we want to take our time. As we work thru the incentives we will bring to the Council for approval.
- My request tonight is the approval of the \$15,000 for Pop-Up Richlands.

Mayor Cury - The \$15,000 and the work you are doing with Spearhead to speed up and get this going with our trails. I remember John yesterday, I got lost in the shuffle, and can you explain to me what is going on.

John - It is essentially at the previous meeting when we changed the date we didn't realize it when we did our publication, the items on the list will be moved to next month's agenda for approval if they are approved by Planning Commission. The can be brought back to Council as request, which is the side by side that we discussed and the business incentives.

Mayor Cury - The \$15,000 I was going to ask the Attorney to weigh in on that so the Council can do it properly.

John - The only thing the IDA is requesting tonight is the \$15,000 approval because the way they are set up anything over \$1500 has to have Council approval. We have legal to look at that and see how we can address that hurdle and when we do award these grants we can move quicker.

Blake Ray - There has been some discussions and questions about the allocations of the funds for the \$25,000 and the \$7000 that came from the County. Pop-Up Richlands is doing two (2) sessions this year. The first session starts on March 24 and then a Fall Session. The funds came from the ARPA funds and \$7000 from the County will be used in year one. Approximately 98% of the funding will go directly back to the taxpayers in form of entrepreneur grant. What happened last week when you approved the grant application for the Thompson Foundation, we are looking for funds for year two (2) and three (3) of Pop-up Richlands and looking for private sources of money. I just want to make sure it is on the record that those funds that were allocated are going directly to the program. I think there was around \$2000 for marketing, but don't think we spent all that because the marketing was done for free. The participant guides for the people who are taking the classes, there is paper cost, money we wanted to make sure that was covered and not forgotten about. I just wanted everyone to know the money is going straight to participants.

Doug - You are saying it is ARPA funds, right?

Blake Ray - There was a vote that

John - These have been called ARPA funds in the past but essentially they are lost revenue that has come to the Town.

Doug - Is that legal, I think there will be questions on that. We are using the funds and it might be illegal to use those funds.

John - It has been approved based on my discussions with legal counsel. There is a final ruling coming down in the next two (2) or three (3) weeks. We won't be spending any of the money until we receive the final rules but based on what has been put out, the way we will be handling the funds will be spent on this. We will be using it essentially for lost revenue, so essentially it is just revenue coming into the Town, same as taxes or anything else.

Doug - I was just afraid that it would be challenged if you spend it and then the Town would have to pay it back. That is up to the Town Attorney.

Mayor Cury - Health Insurance Renewal

John - This is our annual health insurance renewal for our employees as well as Council. This has to be submitted by the 15th of this month. We will have to have approved at this meeting so we continue to have insurance for our employees. I am asking Council to approve the request so we can move forward with the insurance part of our budget.

Doug - The employees deserve it, they put their heart into their work but I would ask the Council to take themselves out of the health insurance. The Town is having such a hard problem; we are always screaming we don't have enough money in the budget. I don't think it is prudent that we pay for the Council's health insurance and ask that the Council consider taking that out and only paying for the full-time employees as it was meant to be.

Mayor Cury – Consideration of Solar Policy Proposal

John - We have had a couple of requests coming recently about people potential interested in solar panels either on their business or their home. I have reached out to Blue Ridge Power and they are working with GDS to help us with a policy. Right now if someone puts solar panels on their house we have no policy that allows them to potentially sell back to the system if they have excessive amount of electricity compared to what their building uses. I talked to them and anywhere between \$10,000 and

\$20,000 is kind of our best guess right now what that would cost to get a policy in place as well as look at our rates and see what would be a fair value to put on that electricity could potentially come back into the system. I think it is something we should look into and have something in place before someone spends thousands of dollars on solar panels and finds out we are not going to pay the rate they were told they would receive if they have excessive voltage on their system. I don't have any numbers yet but wanted to give Council an update on that, as soon as we get some more concrete numbers I will bring back to Council.

Mayor Cury - I think it is the right idea about the solar panels but until the numbers are finalized we really can't really move on that yet.

Mayor Cury – Prom Request

John - The Richlands High School has requested permission to have their prom in the downtown area as they have the last couple of years. I wanted Council to approve formally; it is a pretty big and important event for the school and has an impact on our downtown.

Richard - The students really like the outside nature of having their prom. They really like the Greenway space and the Section House; it is much cooler on them. This will be no expense to the Town. It is a joint venture with Project Graduation who has agreed to reimburse the cost for blocking the streets or anything electrical needs to be fixed at the Greenway or any of their needs for the prom.

Mayor Cury - Is there a date on the prom?

Richard – May 7

Mayor Cury - Discussion of Procedural Changes to Council Meetings

John - We have talked a couple times of ways to speed up and expedite our meetings. One of the items that was brought up was to move the executive closed session to the front of the meeting. I would also like for us to consider on how we do our public comments, having three (3) minutes and five (5) minutes, and putting a time limit on Council reports. I think if we do three (3) minutes, if anybody shows up that wants to speak they sign up and get three (3) minutes, make it simple. The rules and regulations of what you are allowed to speak on at public comment and three (3) minute limit for Council will hopefully expedite that time as well. If there is agenda item like the prom that someone wants to discuss further or something important that we need additional time, I ask that be sent to me before we send out agendas and we can add to the agenda for full discussion as we did the prom item. I would like to get some direction on what Council would like to do.

John - First item - Move the executive closed session to the front of the meeting, the advantage I will let Richard talk about.

Mayor Cury - We talked about it yesterday, to be upfront about it, the concern generally, we begin regular session at 6:00pm are we speaking of 5:30pm

Richard – Between 5:30pm to 5:45pm depending on what we have, if we have a simple litigation or simple contract negotiations that should not take any longer than 15 minutes. At 6:00pm when our regular meeting starts we don't have people waiting at 9:30pm or 10:00pm waiting for executive close session to finish.

Mayor Cury - Since it is Council action, correct?

Richard – Yes

Mayor Cury - The only concern was time, we have regular council meeting at 6:00pm, if there is flex time on how much would infringe on citizens who could be waiting if we go over. Sometimes we have quite lengthy sessions.

Richard - When you are in executive session you get your point across and there is a consensus or a topic has been discussed it tends to get you out of executive closed session faster.

John - One of my concerns if it does run over and you have people wanting to do public comment or see what the other agenda items are.

Richard - I have checked with other localities and seem to think it works a lot better and you don't have citizens waiting at 11:30pm at night.

John - If you are interested we can try for three (3) months.

Darrell - I can't be here no earlier than 6:00pm.

Mayor Cury - It is vital we have all Councilmembers.

Richard - It is just a suggestion.

Darrell - When I agreed to be on the Council I knew it was going to be tight.

John - We can just stick to 6:00pm and adjust the agenda, it would be interesting to see how other places do it, we could try to mirror that, give it three (3) or four (4) months and try it. If we realize it doesn't work for us we can switch back. We could commit to three (3) or four (4) months and give it a try.

Richard - Speaking to other Members of the Board seems like we get tied up in executive session talking about a specific item and we never get to the bottom of it and of course we can't vote on anything. In talking to other Board Members or Councilmembers that have this in place with their executive session at the beginning of the meeting it speeds up their meeting entirely because they know the public is waiting for them to finish.

John - If there is a consensus we can give it a shot.

Mayor Cury - Can we cover the other points you want to consider.

John - Can we get a consensus and then move to the next item. We would start at 6:00pm and then the executive session would be three (3) or four (4) down the line on the agenda.

Doug - So we would try for three (3) or four (4) months is that what you are suggesting?

Richard - If we have an executive session next month we try it at the beginning of the meeting after we call the meeting to order then go into executive session.

Mayor Cury - For example recognizing anyone such as our young people tonight they would go first obviously, we would approve the agenda and the minutes and then move into executive session.

Mayor Cury - Doug

Doug - I am neutral on it, I can see where it would speed up the process maybe, but if we have a long executive session an hour and sometimes we do that would create a problem for some of them. I am neutral I will go either way.

Mayor Cury - Richard

Richard - My suggestion was we would know the topic that we will discuss, like the ones tonight we don't expect to be very lengthy. If we know it is going to be lengthy we can move to the end of the agenda.

Mayor Cury - I think we add this for consideration and add for April, May and June.

Darrell - I am fine with it.

Mayor Cury - So you are neutral too?

Darrell - Yes

Mayor Cury - Richard

Richard - I would like to try it to see if it works.

Mayor Cury - Mary Ann

Mary Ann - I think it is well worth trying.

Mayor Cury - There is a consensus in trying it, two (2) neutrals and (2) positives. We will try April, May, June.

John - Next would be adjusting our public comments to three (3) minutes and putting a three (3) minute limit on Council comments. We would have an embedded resolution that explains on how our public comment works, it is not very clear we need to address anyway. I thought it was a perfect time to simplify that and if you show up and sign up you get three (3) minutes. Council would also get three (3) minutes.

Mayor Cury - Anyone wanting to speak to Council it is a three (3) minute limit period. They have to sign up. I would suggest that we still offer in here if they want to speak.

Doug - We only had (2) speakers tonight. Most of the time we have maybe two (2) to four (4) speakers. I don't think we should limit it you are only going to save ten (10) minutes. If a citizen has something to say and it takes longer than three (3) minutes he should be able to say his piece and have the time to say it. I don't think we are going to save time by limiting the citizens.

Darrell - I agree we are not going to save enough time to restrict somebody from speaking.

Richard - We adopted Robert's Rule of Order for running the meetings, it would be interesting to see how the rules are.

Mayor Cury - I can't tell you what the rules are, they are complex we have went back and forth but they were standard. I don't know if it has a limit on there, it does have ten (10) minute limits. I would suggest for the time being.

Mayor Cury - Mary Ann

Mary Ann - I would respect the Town Manager's recommendations, he manages the Town and we have to defer to him for a lot of policies and procedures, however I can see the point that Doug and Darrell made two (2) more minutes doesn't add that much time. I am undecided at this point.

Mayor Cury - We have a Councilmember that wants to research Robert's Rule of Order and keep it as it is, I think we consider the consensus and leave it like it is and compare at the July meeting.

John - Would it change anybody's mind if we leave at five (5) minutes or three (3) and you just sign in when you come to meeting? Council can always change the time at the meeting. The Resolution that we have is very hard to understand and how it describes the interpretation of the use of the five (5) minutes. I want to make sure we don't have an issue where people read it differently. I want to try to clean it up.

Mayor Cury - This is what we have been doing. I know embedded resolutions can be difficult. We tell citizens five (5) minutes are scheduled, three (3) minutes are unscheduled, and Brian volunteers and helps us with the time. Sometimes people go way beyond their five (5) minutes. I don't want to be rude and stop them as the Mayor but I am respectful of the time that we spend here and it can be quite lengthy and cumbersome. I think the first thing we need to consider as well as dotting our "I" and crossing our "T" and respect to the citizens and allowing them the five (5) minutes. It is a tradition of what we have done. My suggestion is leave it as it is, and not try to reinterpret the resolution; I think we can leave for at a different time.

Mary Ann - Are you saying five (5) minutes for scheduled and unscheduled comments.

Mayor Cury - Five (5) minutes for scheduled and three (3) minutes for unscheduled, what we have been doing.

Mary Ann - You were thinking it would be easier if they were equal, right?

John - You would not have the scheduled you could show up and get the five (5) minutes. It makes the process simple. You don't have to call in just sign up.

Mayor Cury - That is a reasonable approach.

Mary Ann - I like that a lot better.

Mayor Cury - We will have a consensus, anyone coming to the Town Hall and they can't come in late gets five (5) minutes.

Doug - I think that is a great idea.

Darrell - I think it is a good idea.

Richard - Yes

Mary Ann - I think it is an excellent idea.

Mayor Cury - John, five (5) minutes and they don't have to call in just sign in before the meeting.

John - Since it is not embedded resolution we will have a resolution drafted for approval for our next meeting.

John - Council update time limits.

Mayor Cury - You want time limits on Council updates?

John - I think it is worth considering. I will leave up to you for further discussion. If you have something that needs further discussion we can add as an agenda item. I just ask that you send before if we decide to put time limits on Council reports.

Doug - I think that is a bad idea. You should not limit Council we represent the people. Sometimes we might have some controversy, fifty people call in and you can't get it all in, in three (3) minutes. I think

you are treading on unknown waters when you start limiting the time for Council. I am not sure it is legal in the Charter.

Mayor Cury – Darrell

Darrell - I don't think I have heard the Council speak over five (5) minutes. I don't think it is a problem or an issue.

Mayor Cury – Richard Brown

Richard – It is a non-issue for me.

Mary Ann - I think it is a good idea because like John said, if you have people called you out, you call John ahead of time and get it on the agenda and you have as much time as you need. Basically unlimited.

Mayor Cury - If you have listed on the agenda and you have 20 or 50 people you have a special place on the agenda.

John - It would be an agenda item under No. X.

Doug - I don't think you should ever limit Council.

John - It is up to the Mayor's discretion, but you know you need to get my points over in a "x" number of time you tend to speak the points get those address versus rambling when you have unlimited time.

Doug - I don't remember going over five (5) minutes but I assure if I go over five (5) minutes I am not rambling, I get straight to the point.

Mayor Cury - We have two (2) neutrals.

John - We can table until next month.

Mayor Cury - That would be good we would have full Council.

John - We can vote on both items. I don't recall anything else to expedite our meetings.

Mayor Cury - We will move forward with our (2) new protocols beginning in April.

John - We will formally vote on in April. We won't be changing a policy one is a resolution. If we have close session next month we will go ahead and try that, but the other two (2) be adopted or approved at the next meeting.

Doug - Which ones do you want to table until next month?

John - We need a resolution for public comments we will have to change that, and discuss the time limits on Council.

Mary Ann - The next meeting for the citizens.

John - The same thing we are doing now until a new resolution is passed.

Mary Ann - I just want to make sure citizens understand that.

John - Will not change until Council adopts a new policy.

Darrell - John I want to thank you for trying to speed these meetings up. Councilmembers get tired sitting here after a really long day, town employees that have worked all day and the citizens.

Mayor Cury - Blake Ray – IDA has asked that we allocate \$15,000, is there a motion for that?

John - I would like for legal counsel to look into that to see how we need to handle. I want to make sure the way they were set up as an organization that we allocate or allow them to manage the correct way.

Mayor Cury - I think that is a wise decision.

Mayor Cury - Would someone like to make a motion to renew our health insurance?

Darrell - I will make the motion, Richard seconded the motion.

Doug - I would ask as I have asked before that Council be taken out of the health insurance. I don't know of anyone on this Council that can't afford their own insurance. We have citizens struggling on \$1800 and trying to pay an \$800 electric bill. I wish the Council would consider exempting the Council from the health insurance before we vote.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- No, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, and Mary Ann – Yes Motion carries – 3/1 (Doug voted No)

Mayor Cury - There is a request to have the Richlands Prom in the Town of Richlands for May 7.

Mary Ann - I make a motion that we allow Richlands High School to have their Prom on the Town properties on May 7, Darrell seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, and Mary Ann – Yes Motion carries – 4/0

Mayor Cury – “Town Manager” – John O’Daniel

John – We received three (3) different requests from the Planning Commission, The first they have requested a joint public hearing with the Council at next month’s meeting and the second is an additional joint public hearing. The first public hearing is a tract of land to be rezoned; the attorney will probably speak to that. The second one is a conditional use permit for a mobile home. We would need to have a public hearing with both Boards before we move forward with those. There are some questions that the attorney has on the request for rezoning as it is an overlay that is something we have on our zoning map. I will defer to him for anything we need to add to that discussion to move forward.

Mike - There is a piece of property over at the old Magic Mart , I believe came from the Planning Commission as an overlay of industrial as well as B2 that kind of frees up and less restrictions. Planning Commission has discretion at that point to decide if it is industrial or B2 at that point and how they want to proceed on that. There is an advertisement that they have to go thru, it is a recommendation from the Planning Commission. We would have to have an ordinance that has to be approved and public hearings.

John - At this point would need to be referred back to the Planning Commission for a recommendation and back to Council and then go thru the public hearings and advertisement. Council would have the opportunity for the first reading. If everything moves quickly we could still do next month. It will be when Planning Commission will be able to make a recommendation.

Mayor Cury - We need a public hearing.

Mike - Yes, but we have to have recommendation from the Planning Commission.

Mayor Cury - Are you asking for us to schedule a joint public hearing?

John - Yes, or you want the Planning Commission to look into further if you want to allow that property to be rezoned.

Mayor Cury - Is it B2 right now?

John - It is B2 right now and then overlaid, so essentially it is both. We have some properties that are like that but we don't have it explained how it really works, so we need to have in place so Council can consider the overlay.

Mayor Cury - Who is asking Travis?

John - Yes

Mayor Cury – He has bought the property, and wants to do some things over there so I think we should consider it. I am suggesting, Planning Commission do some work and they can have a joint public hearing with us if that is the case. Once we have the joint public hearing they can make a recommendation to the Council and Council can vote. Is Council willing to have a joint public hearing in April?

John - You want Planning Commission to look into this further?

Mayor Cury - Any more questions? Council agreed

John - Next is the mobile home for a conditional use permit, we can have a public hearing on the same day and allow the Planning Commission to recess and come back with a recommendation. The mobile home is aged and it is being replaced. They already have a demolition permit. It is 105 Augusta Avenue.

Mayor Cury – We need public hearing, we will do both topics in April. Council agreed

John - The third item, we put a zoning map update out for bid, we only received (1), we had \$30,000 budgeted for this study, it came in at \$98,000. They are asking during the budget process allocate the \$30,000 or maybe a little bit more and put out for bid again and hopefully we get several more and be a little bit more competitive. I don't need an action tonight but we can discuss at budget workshop.

John – We looked at the Iron Street property with DEQ, we will have to schedule a meeting. Hopefully in the next couple of months we can have a discussion. Blake and I will be discussing with them.

Mayor Cury – “Attorney Comments” – Mike Thompson

Mike – I don't have anything at this time.

Mayor Cury – “Council Member Reports” – Richard Brown

Richard - Just wanted to express my appreciation to the Fire and Police Departments for a quick response on an incident with a resident a couple days ago. The Forestry Department is looking into it. Just wanted to let them know I appreciate their quick response.

Richard - I have had several complaints about the billing in January the amounts were excessive, it was the delay in between the times they read the meters and when they received the bill. I waited until this month to bring up because February bill was back to normal.

John - We had an issue but it has been addressed. We will continue to monitor if you get complaints we will look into it further.

Richard – Zoning, more and more people are working from home now, I don't know if we have ever addressed the people who run businesses from their home. We have probably never enforced it but if we are looking at zoning my request is to include that as well. It is not fair to the business owners who are in the business district who are paying their licenses and fees and taxes and then someone else running their business from their home that is exempt or excluded from those because it is not picked up in the zoning.

John - I want to say we have something in place; I will get up with you to see if it needs to be more restrictive or more defined.

Richard - I don't think it is a huge problem now, but I think it will be more and more with broadband improving.

Mayor Cury – “Council Member Reports” Darrell Addison

Darrell - I was in the meeting that Blake referred to about the side by sides with the Spearhead Trail, I think it would bring a lot of business to downtown Richlands and help our restaurants which helps our tax money, I think we really need to look at that and maybe consider the company that Shea told us about with UVA to help us with that.

John - I reached out to them today and waiting to hear back from them.

Mayor Cury – “Council Member Reports”- Doug Ratliff

Doug - I would like to make a motion.

Mayor Cury – I don't mean to interrupt you but the way it is written in our packet, it is non-voting items, it presents a conundrum, I am not calling you down, it is the way it is written.

Doug - So what do you want me to do?

Mayor Cury - Wait until after all this and then make a motion.

Mayor Cury – “Council Member Reports” – Mary Ann Strong

Mary Ann - As Richard commented on the Police Department, on behalf of the Clinch Valley Medical Center, I know the CEO Peter Mulkey reached out to Chief Gilbert and myself to thank them for heading off what could have been a very volatile event in the emergency room recently. Dr. Mulkey wanted you all to know his compliments to the Police Department, he has always said they are always there, extremely prompt and how appreciative the Clinch Valley Medical is for our Police Department and our EMS.

Mary Ann – Rocky Hill, he heads up a wonderful organization called “God's Rock Stars”, he presented to the Rec Commission, I will need to wait, and we will have to vote.

Mary Ann - Basketball is wrapping up tonight. The Richlands Road Race 5K in partnership with the hospital and the Rec Department will be held June 4. They are talking about having the awards at the Section House and maybe a pancake breakfast. The Adopt a Child Program is now accepting sponsors. It is a wonderful program most Councilmembers sponsored last year. It is \$180 a year and provides a complete membership to a child that may not be fortunate enough to have membership to the Rec Park. You can see Jessica Reynolds Lawrence if you are interested in sponsoring a child. You don't have to have a name she can assign one.

Mary Ann - I wanted to welcome the Railroad Depot on Front Street and thank Lori Stacey with the Tazewell County Chamber for a great ribbon cutting. She had a lot of media there; it was nice to see radio and TV to cover that event. The Lucky Duck a new business down toward Grants, I would like to welcome them. The Bad Axery is getting closer to having a ribbon cutting scheduled.

Doug - I have had a lot of requests of why we are not on the Access Channel. I thought we paid \$5000 to get it on the Access Channel. I wish we could address that. A lot of people don't do Facebook and YouTube.

John - I will follow up and look into it.

Doug - Can you address why we paid \$5000 to get it on the Access Channel.

John - I will have to look into it I don't have an answer at this moment.

Richard - Access Channel has moved to a higher channel, I think 260/280 if you don't have a box you don't get those channels.

Doug - I just think the citizens need to know what is going on in Town. Can you have an answer next month?

John - I will look into it.

Mayor Cury - I will open the floor up for motions.

Doug - I will make a motion, it will cost the Town nothing it is free, Shea requested a comparison study by Weldon-Cooper a free competent analysis with the Arm of the University of Virginia to study our electric system to see how it can be run appropriately or make it a better system.

Mayor Cury - The motion is to contact Weldon-Cooper to seek their counsel about our electricity.

Doug - Do a study and make a recommendation of why we are much higher than AEP and make suggestions.

Mayor Cury - Weldon-Cooper has been here before and they are very good at this, I think they can do studies but recommendations is not necessary in their purvey.

John - I have already reached out to them, we can go from there if it is something they can do for us.

Darrell - I will second the motion.

Richard - Is it something the Town Manager is already doing?

Doug - If we have a motion John will have full authority to contact them and ask them to do a study and a comparison to AEP and our electric system.

John - I am just hesitant they could come back and say it is \$20,000 and we already voted.

Darrell - I am taking my second back for a few minutes, as long as you say "free".

Doug - I will put on my motion as long as it is "free". Free consultation for a study of AEP versus Richlands electricity.

Darrell - I will second it.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, and Mary Ann – Yes Motion carries – 4/0

John - I will continue discussion and bring back to our next meeting for further consideration.

Mary Ann - Rocky Hill approached the Rec Commission and it is the recommendation of the Rec Commission that we allow “God’s Rock Stars” to have their prom at the Recreation Department on April 30 from 5pm to 9pm. The reason the vote has to come from Council he is asking for the gym to be closed for the prom the rest of the Rec Center will be open. Whenever we close a section of the park, we want Council approval. Richard seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, and Mary Ann – Yes Motion carries – 4/0

Mayor Cury – “Mayor’s Comments’

Mayor Cury - I received a note and I want to apologize to Charles Church I have not called this person; there was a note in my packet. Mr. Church I will get with you. I also received several messages on Facebook messenger; any citizen can contact me thru messenger. I am very reluctant I have had numerous contacts about the electric utility bills. I don’t respond to those. Anyone listening you are welcome to contact me any possible way but reluctant to contact you that way. If you call me or want to contact me please send me your phone number and I will call you back. I have had people call me about the utilities that they are high and some say their bills are arriving late. In the olden days I always got my bill on the first of the month but I don’t know.

John - Anyone can call the Town Hall if it got lost or is running behind.

Mayor Cury – John, Is this the same company we have used for a while?

John – We have since I have been here, at least a couple of years.

Mayor Cury - I want to clarify to the public the staff here don’t actually send your bill; I don’t want any implications they are behind.

Doug - Why was it outsourced? When we had four (4) people in the office we always sent from the office and now we have eight (8) or nine (9).

Mayor Cury - I don’t know how to answer that I will refer to Heather.

Heather - It was just a general delay, there is a shortage in paper and mailing. We can only tell you when we request them.

Doug – Why was it changed?

Heather - I assume it had something to do with cost.

Doug - What is the cost per month? Can you bring next month? What we are paying them a month.

John - The thing with the cards they tend to get lost especially if they get sent to another Town, the full envelope seems to be more reliable. It may be a little more expensive.

Mayor Cury - We use to have small postcards and then we went to envelope. I like the envelope I feel my bill is my business.

Mayor Cury - At the Section House we are intending on purchasing dusk to dawn lighting, for our guest during the Honey Festival, we will have (4) different things at the Section House. They were very well attended; I think some people are still afraid to get out because of Covid. We had several guest, one of the readings was Author Dr. Jones which Dr. Willis had, they came that evening and requested that we put in lighting and we considered it at our last meeting. We are doing that, we don't need the money from the Town. If you want to send some money our way you can. We have made the money from selling cakes and pies. We have already contacted George on what to do. We have numerous activities planned hopefully I can share at the next meeting. I am always thankful for our Town Crew and our Police, everyone thank you for all your hard work every day. It means a lot.

Mayor Cury – Executive Closed Session – 2.2-3711(A) Personnel (Town Clerk) and 2.2-3711(A) Contract Negotiations regarding Water Plant Upgrades.

Darrell - I make the motion to go into Executive Closed Session, Mary Ann seconded the motion.

John - I will clarify it is the Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, Mary Ann – Yes Motion carries – 4/0

Mayor Cury – Council is now back in regular session. I will entertain a motion to return to regular session, when voting you are certifying that Council has discussed nothing except for 2.2-3711(A) Personnel, (Town Clerk) and 2.2-3711(A) Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Mary Ann - I make a motion to come back into regular session, Darrell seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, Mary Ann – Yes Motion carries – 4/0

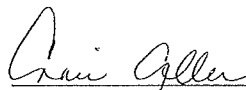
Richard – I make a motion to authorize the Town Manager, John O'Daniel to request funding thru the Clean Water Finance Inc. an assistance program in regards to grants and loans for the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Darrell seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- 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. Roll Call –Doug- Yes, Darrell - Yes, Richard- Yes, Mary Ann – Yes Motion carries – 4/0

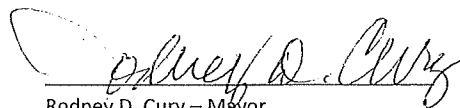
Mayor Cury – Next Council meeting is April 12 and Budget Workshop on March 19 at 8:00am

Doug - I make the motion to adjourn, Darrell seconded the motion.

Adjourned



Connie Allen, Clerk



Rodney D. Cury – Mayor