

WORKSESSION

November 16, 2009

In Attendance: Mayor Taylor, Council Members Baker, Le Vine, Mauck, Ritenour, Terndrup and Vena. Staff: Town Manager Fauber, Town Planner Rex, and Town Clerk Keller.

Public Hearing for the Shentel Cable Franchise

Town Manager Fauber said the franchise is to expire next year and it is required by law to have a Public Hearing on the ordinance to adopt this franchise.

David Ferguson, representing Shentel: Said the agreement is the same as before except for the franchise fee. The franchise fee is not paid directly to the Town, but is included in a State tax and the State is to pay the individual towns. Courtesy accounts will still be made to municipal buildings, schools, and public safety departments.

Being no speakers, the Public Hearing was closed.

Council Member Mauck asked about the \$1 fee that goes to the municipality. Mr. Ferguson explained how this was due to lines being buried on private property versus State right-of-ways. This actually penalized Shentel because they had little State right-of-ways. He added that Shentel sends the money to the State, but he is not sure how the State distributes it as they do not know how many subscribers there are.

Council Member Le Vine said, for clarification, that Council will be approving a cable franchise for the Town of Strasburg. Mr. Ferguson said another cable company could come in and set-up another franchise. No one can be denied cable within the Town limits.

Council Member Baker asked how to get information to the public. Mr. Ferguson said Shentel provides a channel localities can use, but the Town would have to pay for the equipment to produce the programming. Strasburg could have up to three channels, but no other Town in the County uses this service because of the amount of work involved.

Action Item:

Minutes of the October 19, 2009 meeting were approved as presented.

- Meeting Dates:

Council Forums were discussed and it was said the forums will have more people dependent on what is being discussed or happening within the Town. It was discussed having the Forums in a different location --- church or homes. Mayor Taylor is trying to come up with ideas of how to get more people involved.

It is thought the current forums are intimidating for citizens. Citizens should be more involved and not as much Council involvement. Council Member Ritenour said the City of Chesapeake has "round tables" with Staff or Council Members being at the tables and the citizens are able to speak to the representative one-on-one. It was thought a problem with this is that the only person hearing a particular concern is the Council Member or

Department Head who is spoken to. It was said citizens have specific questions to a particular department head or questions pertaining to specific concern, such as taxes; concerns such as these would not need to be discussed with all Council.

Other suggestions for forum styles were:

- Devote 15 minutes before each committee meeting to allow citizens to voice concerns
- “One issue” forum or general topic forums
- Round Table time, followed by “one-issue” forum
- Writing questions or concerns on paper to be given to facilitator with Council responding
- New England style town meeting

Pros and cons of each idea were discussed with Council Member Le Vine saying he does feel there needs to be a “focus” for discussion.

Lyle Cameron, Jr. said this is the first meeting he has attended and he found it interesting that the discussion was on how citizens can make comments. Mr. Cameron thinks it would be beneficial to make an announcement to the general public, suggesting placing an ad in the newspaper, but knows that might be expensive.

Town Planner Rex said he has thought about a Facebook account as it would give Staff a way to relay messages in a timely manner. **Director of Public Utilities Tewalt** said the website is being improved and this might help with the notification.

Lana Le Vine suggested posting citizen comments on the Homepage of the website.

Summary:

It was decided more time needs to be spent studying the type of format to use for forums and how to best notify citizens. A plan will be come up with and then dates will be set for the next year. Council Member Ritenour will be in charge of this, with help from Mayor Taylor.

Mr. Cameron spoke again about the work recently done on Royal Avenue. He said Virginia Excavating Company started work about three weeks ago and he was apprehensive about it. He had the opportunity to talk with the workers and they seemed to know what they were doing and they did their job professionally. Kickin’ Asphalt also did work and did a fine job. The entire project was well planned and well executed and he wanted to commend the Town for a job well done.

- Meeting Guidelines and Procedures

It was stated the way the committee reports were given at the Council meeting was good, but it was suggested having minutes of the meetings available at the Council meetings for citizens who might want hard copies.

- Conflicts of dates in 2010:

When working on the 2010 calendar, it was noted that there were several dates of scheduled meetings that were on holiday. The committees affected by the conflicts will set the new dates at their next meeting.

The January Council Work Session will be held on Tuesday, January 19th.
The February Work Session will be held on Tuesday, February 16th.

- Weekly Reports

Town Manager Fauber said he could do a report every other week, but not weekly. Much of what was covered in the reports is now covered in a committee meeting. Some thought the reports were helpful as it let Council know what was going on, but the “news” wasn’t always timely. It was suggested having the reports being more of just “bullets” and not in-depth.

Mayor Taylor said important information is sent out immediately.

Summary: It was decided to have the weekly reports on an “as needed” basis and Town Manager Fauber is to use his judgment as to what Council should be notified of. If issues are apt to be controversial, make sure Council is informed.

- Meeting Guidelines and Procedures

Many new policies are being come up with by Council and it was asked if they should be compiled into one booklet. **Summary: This “policy manual” will be worked on by Mayor Taylor and Staff.**

It was decided that at the end of discussions during committee meetings, a summary should be given of the discussion and a “to do” list compiled and recorded in the minutes.

- Strasburg Rescue Squad

John Nixon, representing the Squad, said they want to have better communication between Council and the Squad.

Mayor Taylor explained there is not a “Public Safety” committee, but it has been suggested having a Council Member attend the meetings. **Mr. Doug Mowery**, also representing the Squad, said he would take this back to the membership as it is a private organization. It was stated the Squad would like to give the entire Council a tour of the facilities. It was said Council and the Squad need to develop trust.

Summary: It was decided to have the Strasburg Rescue Squad attend the Council Work Sessions to give a report. Work Session dates will be gotten to Mr. Mowery and Mr. Nixon.

It was stated the last few weekends have gone well.

- Reappointments to ARB

Mr. James Massey and Mr. Richard Seelbach are both interested in serving another term; Lisa Floryancic is not interested. Marcy McCann is interested in serving and has a lot of experience in working in historic districts.

Summary: The appointment of Ms. McCann to the ARB, as well as the re-appointment of Mr. Massey and Mr. Seelbach will be action items for the December Council meeting.

- Solids Handling Study

Director of Public Utilities Tewalt said the study for the waste water plant has come back and Chief Operator McKinley gave a synopsis of the options and their recommendations for the sludge. It is thought the sooner a decision is made, the better off the Town will be.

Council Member Le Vine said he is not sure he will be ready to vote on this at the December meeting. He has talked to Mr. McKinley and this will add \$1 million more to operating costs each year. He needs to study the figures more and see the impact to the citizens as this is a huge cost.

Council Member Baker said if this is not done, the Town runs the possibility of paying \$65,000 per day for fines. The only issue is which type of sludge treatment the Town will use. There is no time to wait for a vote.

Council Member Ritenour asked if this decision is time sensitive. It was said there needs to be an updated PER before grant money can be applied for. It was asked if the option being recommended will really save the Town money over the long run and the answer was yes and they recommend Class A sludge.

Council Member Vena said Class A is probably the way to go since the EPA will probably require it and so the plant will not have to be adapted for this later.

Town Manager Fauber said we are now licensed to operate 8 hours a day. It will not be known how many man hours the plant will have to be manned until the plant is designed and the State tells the Town this. In the report given, wages were calculated at 16 hours.

Council Member Le Vine said if he had not asked the question about the operating cost, they would not know the operating costs. He will not vote on something until he knows the estimate of the impact on July 1, 2010 as he has a responsibility to the Town. He trusts Mr. McKinley has made the right recommendation, but he wants to know if there are any other costs. To him, the issue is not Class A or Class B, but the monetary impact. Mr. Tewalt said they are only asking for a decision on Class A or B, but they are not asking for a commitment on the total amount.

Council Member Terndrup said this is the first time he actually understands what he is being asked to vote on and he thinks the public should know what is being voted on. He does not like being pressured on this and he only wants to discuss what is actually being voted on. Council Member Baker said he suggested getting together and Mr. Terndrup did not want to.

Council Member Le Vine said that even though this vote is only on Class A or Class B, this is actually a vote on the plant because each step leads to the completed plant. He wants the implications of what he is voting on known.

The \$1 million in operating costs will be added either way. The Town does not have a choice in the update of the plant, but the public has to be educated.

Council Member Le Vine said if you can let the people know how much their rates are going up and then people will come out.

Council needs to have something that will help them explain to the citizens what they are getting for \$25 million. Director of Public Utilities Tewart said Council knows the reason for the need of this plant.

Summary: Figures will be gotten by the Finance Committee meeting and an action item at the December meeting.

General Summary of the Work Session:

- Nothing needs to be done presently on the cable franchise
- Council Member Ritenour and Mayor Taylor will explore forum formats and other ways to notify the public of items.
- Weekly Reports will be done as-needed with Council being notified of important issues immediately.
- Mayor work with Staff to compile a policy manual
- Rescue Squad will attend Work Sessions for the next three months and Council will tour the facility and do ride-alongs.
- Action Item for December Council meeting: Marcy McCann to be appointed to the ARB and Mr. Massey and Mr. Seelbach re-appointed.
- Resolution will be written for Rescue Squad with Council Member Vena working with Staff on this.
- Committees affected by holidays will set new dates.

Adjourned at 9:04 p.m.