

WORKSESSION
December 14, 2009

In Attendance: Mayor Taylor, Vice Mayor Whittle and Council Members Baker, Le Vine, Mauck, Redmon, Ritenour, Terndrup and Vena. Staff: Town Manager Fauber, Director of Public Works Rhodes, Town Planner Rex, and Town Clerk Keller.

I. Public Hearings

- A. Proposed revision to Chapter 42, Fire Prevention and Protection, of the Strasburg Town Code
- B. Proposed revision to Chapter 38, Article II, Noise, of the Strasburg Town Code

Planner Rex explained the proposed revisions. As there were no speakers, Mayor Taylor closed the public hearings.

- II. Approval of minutes from the November 16, 2009 Work Session – being no changes, the minutes were approved as presented.

III. Public Comments

IV. Discussion Items

- A. Maintenance of streets not in the town system

Kelly and Greg Johnson, 132 Aden Drive said they are concerned because the street they are living on is not being taken care of. Ms. Johnson said the street was not plowed or treated during the recent snow.

Director Works Rhodes explained the street does have a base coat of asphalt on it, but streets are not accepted into the Town system until they are completely paved.

Council Member Le Vine said he has emailed Town Attorney Neal to learn of the legalities of using part of the bond money to pave the street, but is unsure of the outcome of this. **Mrs. Johnson** said she was under the understanding the Town should be treating the roads even if they are not plowed. **Director of Public Works Rhodes** was to check with his men to make sure the roads are treated. Mrs. Johnson said they were not treated last year either.

Discussion followed on how streets are accepted. **Town Manager Fauber** said when the development is completed, the streets are then turned over to the Town. It has been the policy of the Town to make sure the streets are treated or plowed.

Council Member Le Vine asked what the practicality of plowing the roads as damage could be done to the plow. It was asked if the ordinance should be changed so that an equitable solution can be found.

Council Member Vena said she had this problem in Frederick County and the snow was not removed.

Council Member Baker thinks the number of streets in this condition should be found out and all of the bonds should be looked at.

Director of Public Works Rhodes said plowing is not done because if damage is done to the infrastructure then the Town has to pay for it. He feels the infrastructure should be completed up to the point where the last house is.

Randy Kepler, citizen, said the top coat is mainly held off because of the construction vehicles. The Town could have a policy that when 50% of the development is completed, then the Town takes over the street and a bond is held.

Mayor Taylor asked if a homeowner is told the street will not be completed until the development is completed and he was told they are not.

B. Rescue Squad Report

John Nixon, representing the Strasburg Volunteer Rescue Squad, passed out a written report. While explaining the report, he said 42 members actually pulled duty. Copies of the report were given to all Council, but not to Staff.

Mayor Taylor said he has heard good reports on the squad.

C. VDOT Queen Street Project:

Council Member Mauck said she was concerned with the stamped sidewalk and also the lack of bike trails on the street as the plan showed parking on both sides of the street. **Council Member Redmon** said it had been decided in the former Streets Committee to not use the stamped sidewalk due to problems, etc. **Council Member Mauck** would like for Council to make a "statement" on this.

Randy Kepler said he attended the VDOT public meeting and VDOT had sent him the drawings of the plan; he showed the drawings of the proposal. He has reviewed the plans and several things that stood out to him with some being:

- 30' wide pavement and the curb and gutter --- this would make for a 34' drive aisle which he believes is too wide for Queen Street. He spoke, too, about the 60' radius at the corner. He added this is the historic district and so this width is not good as the street should have more of an historic feel to it.
- The plan is designed for 30 mph speed zone and he doesn't think it should be more than 20 mph. The proposal would allow traffic to maintain speeds higher than they should be so there needs to be plans for slowing down vehicles.
- Environmental concerns with the pavement widths and VDOT has regulations for this. He does not know why they are proposing this 34' of drive aisle as this is a lot of pavement.
- Cost concerns --- there are nine storm structures proposed and they cost at least \$5,000 each; he believes you could get by with four or five. Power lines will need to be relocated and this will cost \$10,000 each. He does not think enough thought has gone into this project.

Mr. Kepler said he has talked to Planner Rex and several Council Members and some residents regarding this plan. Some of the residents are pleased by the plan and this is mainly because of the storm water improvements, but others think the taking of property for utility easements that are unnecessary is not good. Mr. Kelper came up with his own plan for the street and presented copies to Council. He plans to submit comments to VDOT, but is not sure if he will give them his plan as he would like for the Town to work with him on this and submit comments on this project. His plan shows 22' of drive aisle and does not reduce the number of parking spaces. Also, power poles would not be moved.

Town Manager Fauber said the comments need to be gotten into VDOT, but there is a lot of time as the project is not slated to begin until 2015. **Planner Rex** and **Town**

Manager Fauber will meet with Mr. Kepler and draft a letter to VDOT and the issue will then be taken to Infrastructure Committee.

Council Member Terndrup said he feels Council should support the customized plan for Queen Street.

D. Habitat for Humanity

A letter from Habitat was included in the Work Session packet.

Larry Baker, representing Habitat, said two lots were just purchased on Jenkins Lane. The group is excited about this as this will be their first project in the northern end of the County. They are currently building their 10th house in Mount Jackson and are totally dependent on the community to pay for the homes. They utilize funds as frugally as possible and would like for the Town to reduce or eliminate the cost of the hook-up fees.

Mayor Taylor asked if this is something they ask for in all communities. Mr. Baker said this isn't something they have had to ask in the past, but with the costs of hook-ups increasing, they will be asking other areas for the same thing.

Council Member Terndrup said in Warren County, Habitat homes are in the revitalization plan; Mr. Baker was not aware of this program and will look into it.

Council Member Le Vine said the normal hook-up cost would be \$20,000 and since a house cost is \$72,000 that is a big portion. But, the Town must make up the fees somehow if these are waived and the only way to do so would be to raise rates to all or increase hook-up fees to other developers. He also reviewed the amount of donations given to other organizations. He added the Town is trying to organize a meeting with developers to come up with creative ways on paying availability fees --- how can this cost be spread out? could the owner pay this back in increments?

In conclusion, Mr. Baker said it would be another year or two before Habitat would be ready to build in Strasburg so there is time to work on this.

Council Member Terndrup will look into the use of stimulus money through the NSVRC. **Council Member Le Vine** asked Mr. Baker to fill out an application for donations so the Finance Committee can review this with other non-profits at a future committee meeting.

E. Public Forum format, dates/times:

Included in the Work Session Packet were two options for consideration for the Forums.

Council Member Terndrup asked what was "broken" with the way the Forums are being handled now. He said they were designed to be similar to a New England Town Hall meeting. **Mayor Taylor** said some people are intimidated by the structure and that attendance was waning so it was thought a re-vamp might cause attendance to increase.

Council Member Le Vine gave several suggestions to the options offered:

- Instead of having stations/tables by person, have the stations/tables be by topic.
- Suggested having index cards at all Council meetings so these could be collected and then discussed at Forums.
- Have a vigorous ad program to notify the public.
- The 15 minute presentation is good, but would like Option A to include a presentation.

- Did not think July was an ideal month to hold Forums as this is just after new Council Members take office and so suggested January, March, and September.
- Conclusion, suggested combining options 1 and 2

Council Member Ritenour said he would rather have Staff at a table since Council just sets policy, but Staff must carry it out. He added people do not want to come to a presentation as they want to ask their question, receive an answer, and leave.

Council Member Vena said location was discussed and she thought people were intimidated by it being in the Town Hall. **Mayor Taylor** thinks if the structure is changed, it will make it less intimidating. **Council Member Vena** likes the index cards and maybe having the public sign-up in advance so an agenda could be created. It was felt it would be good to have the answers ready for the night of the Forum. Also stressed was the keeping of the presentations to 15 minutes only.

Council Member Terndrup said this was supposed to be done as the New England Town meetings. He doesn't think the room intimidates the people except for going to the podium and he says it is necessary to have a wireless microphone. He added the 15 minute presentations have grown to 45 minutes.

Council Member Baker thinks different locations should be used. The tables can have more than one Council Member at it so more input can be given and gotten. **Council Member Ritenour** thinks the tables should be headed by a Department Head; Council is welcome to sit, but the expertise advice is given by the Department Head.

Council Member Redmon likes the idea of having refreshments. To encourage participation, he offered the idea of giving a prize to the person who submits an idea the Town then uses.

Dan Kitzmiller, citizen, said that a Department Head can be called anytime regarding problems or questions. He feels the Public Forum should be for future visions and what the actual purpose of the Forum needs to be better defined.

Vice Mayor Whittle said maybe an Open House should be scheduled so others know who the Department Heads are. The Public Forum would just be a time for Council to give views --- would be individual views and not those of the entire Council.

Council Member Mauck likes the idea of letting people write down their questions on index cards and then have a short presentation so the index card questions can be organized. She suggested have the Forums during the months of April, August, and December. She agrees the citizen participation has been lost using the current format and a rapport needs to be built with the citizens.

Mr. Kepler said the question is why people would want to come to this meeting. It was said the initial idea of the Forums was to discuss the broad problems of the Town that would impact many and when there are "hot" topics, more people come. Mr. Kepler said there must be a reason the citizens want to come to the Forum and the Forums need to be advertised and he suggested putting a flyer in the water bills.

Summary: It was decided to have a presentation, as needed, and limit the time to 15 minutes. Refreshments will be served and various organizations will be asked to provide these. Staff and Council Members will be available at tables. Index cards will be available at all times so concerns can be addressed in a timely manner, if needed. The consensus was to have an informal gathering, a short presentation, and then discussion time. **Council Member Redmon** said Council should be soliciting answers to difficult problems the Town has. Mayor Taylor will look into supplying a cordless microphone.

The first Forum for 2010 will be on Monday, February 22 at 7 p.m. Refreshments will be served and representatives of the Rescue Squad were asked if they would like to furnish these; they will check and let Town Staff know.

F. Honoring Community volunteers/projects/efforts:

Mayor Taylor mentioned recognizing organizations or individuals monthly at Council meetings for various projects. We currently honor student athletes who attain State titles; this could be expanded to have someone honored monthly. **Council Member Ritenour** shared a form the City of Vienna is using to promote volunteerism. **Mr. Greg Johnson** said the Town of New Market recognizes at least two organizations a month.

Summary – A form will be developed and placed on the Town’s website so citizens can nominate others for this. General recognition will be given at the Council meetings.

G. Policy Manual Draft

Mayor Taylor had sent a draft of the manual electronically and asked for comments/suggestions. This will be put into a handbook and printed, as needed, but will be added to the website where it can be accessed by Council by password.

H. Town Manager Performance Evaluation

Vice Mayor Whittle presented handouts outlining the evaluation. Completed evaluations should be returned to him by December 30. There will be a Closed Meeting for Council Members only at the January, 2010 meeting and a Closed Meeting for Council and Town Manager Fauber at the January, 2010 Council Work Session.

I. ARB appointment:

Jeremiah Scheler, who interviewed for the Council vacancy, has shown an interest in serving on the ARB. Vice Mayor Whittle will be talking to Mr. Scheler regarding this.

J. Bike Helmets

Will be deferred to a later meeting.

Council Member Baker urged all to sign-up for Nixle.

Council Member Ritenour questioned the donation to Tourism and the Chamber of Commerce and asked if a certain amount was asked for or how it was decided how much each would receive. It was said the Finance Committee decided how much would be given to each organization and the Strasburg Museum was the only one who received more than their request and that was due to the new roof.

Council Member Ritenour discussed the Legislative Day and thinks all of Council should plan to attend to make Strasburg's voice heard. **Town Manager Fauber** will look into travel arrangements.

Council Member Vena asked about the \$25,000 donation to the Squad and wanted to know if Council could give the donation in halves instead of thirds. This will be decided at the Finance Committee so it can be voted on at the January Council meeting.

Summary and to-do list:

- Habitat for Humanity --- Outside sources will be researched as well as seeing how this could be funded in increment.
- Public Forum – February 22, 2010 at 7 p.m.
- Honoring of Volunteers – Form will be developed and placed on the website
- Policy Manual – Suggestions should be gotten to Mayor Taylor
- Performance Evaluation – Completed evaluations should be gotten to Vice Mayor Whittle by December 30.
- ARB – Vice Mayor Whittle will speak to Mr. Scheler. Comments should be gotten to Vice Mayor Whittle on this.
- VDOT – Randy Kepler will work with Staff to draft a letter to VDOT; will then go to the Infrastructure Committee.
- Maintenance of Streets – Staff is going to look into this and make sure streets are treated; legalities to be discussed with Town Attorney Neal; finally an ordinance will be written, if need be.
- Nixel – All urged to sign up for Nixel

Adjourned at 9:04 p.m.