TOWN OF HURT 2025 MEETING MINUTES

BUDGET HEARING MEETING

Date:	6/3/2025
Time: Location:	6:04 PM, Faith Christian Academy
Meeting called to order by:	MAYOR GARY HODNETT

COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Jimmy Harding, Paul Johnson, Steve Worley, Gary Poindexter, Vice Mayor Bob Majure, Alice Bond

MOTION FOR CLOSED SESSION

- Mayor Hodnett calls for a motion to move into closed session.

- Councilman Poindexter moves that the council convene a closed session in accordance with Virginia Freedom of Information Act as amended.
- A. Real Estate, Prospective Business (as necessary) (Authorization: § 2.2-3711 A (1) (3) (5) as applicable)
- Vice Mayor Majure seconds the motion for the closed session.
- Mayor Hodnett calls for individual votes on the motion.
- Council members: Gary P, Vice Mayor Bob M, Alice B, Jimmy H, Paul J, and Steve W. all vote in favor of the closed session.
- The motion is passed, and the council moves into a closed session at 6:06 PM.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED SESSION AND INVOCATION

- Mayor Hodnett calls for motions to return and certify a closed session.
- Vice Mayor Majure makes a motion for the certification of the closed meeting, citing the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.
- Mayor Hodnett calls for a second, which is given by Councilman Johnson, each council member; Worley, Johnson, Harding, Bond, Majure, and Poindexter approve.
- Mayor Hodnett announces the meeting is back in open session at 7:01PM

INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE, AND WELCOME

- Council Poindexter leads the invocation.
- Lead by Mayor Hodnett
- Mayor Hodnett thanks the attendees and mentions sign-up sheets for public comments and a Q&A session about the budget.

CONSENT AGENDA

May Expenditures

- Vice Mayor Bob Majure discusses a check for $338.45 to Kustom Signals Incorporated for vehicle maintenance, for the police car.
- Council Poindexter suggests focusing on a clean slate starting July 1 and mentions the importance of correctly coding.
- Mayor Hodnett and Councilman Gary Poindexter discuss the likelihood of receiving the auditor's report and the need for manual adjustments.

COMMUNICATION ISSUES AND WEBSITE UPDATE

- Vice Mayor Bob Majure discusses issues with communication, emphasizing the need for effective communication through the town's website and discontinuing the town's Facebook page. Proposes transitioning to YouTube live streams for town meetings and improving the live stream quality.
- The motion to discontinue the town's Facebook page and transition to YouTube live streams is seconded and approved.
- John Eller mentions the ongoing work to update the town's ordinance book and make it accessible online.

CHILD SAFETY ON SPRING STREET

- Vice Mayor Majure addresses concerns about child safety on Spring Street, mentioning previous issues with pets and now with children and bikes.
- Gary Poindexter suggests placing signage to alert drivers to the presence of children at play.
- Vice Mayor Bob Majure and Kayla McCluster discuss the possibility of VDOT placing signage and the cost implications.
- The council agrees to make a request to VDOT for signage and to communicate the decision to the community.

ORDINANCE ADOPTION AND PUBLIC HEARING

- Vice Mayor Bob Majure presents an ordinance adopting a new code for the town of Virginia, including sections on repeal, penalties, and amendments.
- The ordinance is seconded and approved by the council.
- Kayla McCluster questions the revisions to the ordinance and the lack of a public hearing, but Vice Mayor Bob Majure clarifies that the revisions were passed at public meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- The council opens the public hearing on the budget, with no additional public comments signed up.
- Kayla McCluster expresses concerns about the sustainability of the town's government and the rising water rates, which have increased by 35% in three years. Highlights the disparity in health insurance coverage for town employees compared to county employees and suggests reducing cell phone expenses. Calls for a referendum on returning the town to the county and urges the council to put the needs of citizens first.
- Rachel Lovelace supports the council, mentioning the challenges of maintaining the water system and the need for water rate increases.

WATER SYSTEM CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

- Vice Mayor Majure explains the state-mandated consent order to reduce disinfection byproducts in the water system and the associated costs.
- Councilman Poindexter elaborates on the need for upgrades to the water system and the financial analysis by Davenport.
- Vice Mayor Bob Majure mentions efforts to secure funding for a new water treatment plant and the challenges of finding a large water purchaser.
- The council discusses the potential for reducing water rates if a large water purchaser is found and the importance of maintaining the water system.

BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS

- Councilman Gary Poindexter proposes a Plan B to mitigate concerns, including leaving the real estate tax at 13.5% instead of the proposed 15%.
- The council discusses reducing technical support costs and other potential budget adjustments.
- Councilman Poindexter emphasizes the importance of balancing the budget and the need for preliminary approval of the budget. Discusses the initial budget for the Treasury position, noting it was set at $55,000, and mentions adjustments to save a few thousand dollars.
- The annual raise percentage was adjusted from 3.5% to 3.4%, maintaining a total raise of 2.4% based on the national inflation rate.
- Economic development reserve was slightly trimmed to balance the general fund without drastic measures.
- Real estate taxes were proposed to increase from $13 to $15, but the increase was kept minimal to avoid significant financial burden on residents.
- Discusses the initial budget for the Treasury position, noting it was set at $55,000, and mentions adjustments to save a few thousand dollars.
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- Real estate taxes were proposed to increase from $13 to $15, but the increase was kept minimal to avoid significant financial burden on residents.
- Vice Mayor Majure mentions a 3% raise for all positions and additional savings from tactical support and operational expenses.
- Specific savings include $450 from operational expenses in wastewater and $3000 from technical assistance on waste for the enterprise fund.
- The total expenditure difference from the proposed budget reduces water expenditures by $5750, allowing for a rate of $18.75 instead of $19.
- Suggests investigating how localities handle providing water to areas outside of town limits, noting that some counties subsidize the difference in rates.
- Mayor Hodnett introduces Plan C, involving savings from postage, GPS on the town truck, and employee training.
- Additional savings are identified in software and maintenance, totaling around $200.
- The proposed budget balances the enterprise fund at $1861, the minimum recommended amount.
- Councilman Gary Poindexter suggests updating the spreadsheet and website with the new budget version for preliminary approval.
- Proposes a hybrid approach combining Plan B and C to address budget adjustments.
- The plan involves keeping salaries where they are and finding savings elsewhere, such as in capital and office equipment.
- Vice Mayor Majure emphasizes the need for consistent rates and the potential for additional revenue from taxes on nicotine juice.
- The new preliminary budget will be available on the website as soon as possible, with further adjustments to be made in future meetings.

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PUBLIC HEARING CLOSURE

- The public hearing is closed, and the council prepares to move forward with final budget approval.

REPORTS FROM STAFF

- Treasurer – Marissa Padilla
- Handed out copies of the Check listing for councilmember signatures.
- Clerk – Shannon Race
- Shannon Race provides an update on digital record filing, training the treasurer, and handling utility-related tasks.
- Public Works – Joe Smith
- Paul Watlington discusses daily activities, including checking for leaks, maintaining fire hydrants, and assisting elderly residents with water issues.
- Police Department – Chief Lovelace
- mentions updates on child safety signs, assistance with a non-profit, and sending out letters for violations.
- Attorney - John Eller

MEETING ADJOURNED:

- meeting is adjourned at 8:54pm.
    - Next Monthly Business Meeting _____