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**SNOW HILL MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING**

**Town Hall Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, June 13th, 2023**

**7:00pm – Regular Session**

A regular meeting of the Mayor and Town Council of Snow Hill, Maryland was held at The Old Fire Hall on Green Street on Tuesday, June 13th, 2023, with Mayor Pruitt presiding.

**PUBLIC OFFICIALS PRESENT**

Mayor Mike Pruitt

Councilmember Regina Blake

Councilmember Janet Simpson

Councilmember Jenny Hall

Councilmember Diana Walsh

Councilmember Margaret Ann Fletcher

**STAFF IN ATTENDANCE**

Randy Barfield, Public Works Director

Lounell Hamstead, Finance Manager

Andy McGee, Police Department Chief

Carol Sullivan, Executive Administrator

Jerry Jeffra, Communications Officer

Rick Pollitt, Town Manager

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1. Mayor Mike Pruitt called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and asked Councilmember Blake to lead us in prayer.
2. **Approval of Minutes**:

Mayor Pruitt asked the council if they had any questions or suggestions for changes for the minutes for May 9th 2023’s regular meeting. The Mayor had one correction in the public comment section as there was a misspelling of a commenter’s name. The correct name is Debra Baines, as opposed to Debra Banks.

On a motion of Councilmember Blake and seconded by Councilmember Hall, the minutes for May 9th 2023’s regular meeting after edits were approved by the following vote.

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| **NAME** | **AYE** | **NO** | **ABSTAIN** | **RECUSED** | **ABSENT** |
| **Regina Blake** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Janet Simpson** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Jenny Hall** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **TALLY** | **3** |  |  |  |  |

Mayor Pruitt asked the council if they had any questions or suggestions for changes for the minutes for the following meetings: May 30th 2023’s Work Session, and June 6th 2023’s Work Session. There were no questions or suggestions by the Council.

On a motion of Councilmember Simpson and seconded by Councilmember Hall, the minutes for May 30th 2023’s Work Session and June 6th 2023’s Work Session were approved by the following vote.

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| **NAME** | **AYE** | **NO** | **ABSTAIN** | **RECUSED** | **ABSENT** |
| **Regina Blake** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Janet Simpson** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Jenny Hall** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **TALLY** | **3** |  |  |  |  |

1. **Treasurer’s Report**

Mayor Pruitt asked Councilmember Simpson and Finance Manager Hamstead if they had anything to add to the Treasurer’s report. There were no further questions or comments concerning the Treasurer's Report.

On the motion from Councilmember Simpson and seconded by Councilmember Blake, the treasurer’s report was approved by the following vote.

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| **NAME** | **AYE** | **NO** | **ABSTAIN** | **RECUSED** | **ABSENT** |
| **Regina Blake** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Janet Simpson** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Jenny Hall** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **TALLY** | **3** |  |  |  |  |

1. **Town Manager’s Report**

Mayor Pruitt asked Town Manager Pollitt if he had anything additional to add to his report. Mr. Pollitt said that we are making good progress on finding a candidate for the Grants Administrator position, on the disposition of the Black-Eyed Susan and the Circuit Rider Program. Mr. Pollitt also wanted to express gratitude from Clem Johnson to the Mayor & Council for gifting their family flowers and condolences after the passing of his sister.

1. **Department Reports:**
   1. Economic Development Report

Mr. Pollitt spoke to the restoration to the Legacy Logo on Dr. Plak’s building; it is going as scheduled. There are plans to host a celebration event to commemorate the new logo.

Councilmember Simpson asked if Wally was the lowest bid, Mr. Pollitt responded that although he was unsure if he was, Wally had more experience and was the one who painted the original mural on the building. Councilmember Simpson wanted to ask about the engagement campaign that Economic Development Director Lorissa McAllister was conducting, which Mr. Pollitt said he does not know about it.

* 1. Code Enforcement Report

Mr. Pollitt said that there are some issues with issuing and enforcing code violations when they are committed. According to attorney Kevin Karpinski, the Town’s authority only goes so far and while the Town is allowed to send citations, they would need to get a court involved to take on heavier enforcement actions. Mayor Pruitt responded that he’d like to find a balance in enforcement and stated that Maryland Municipal League could be a good resource for himself and Mr. Pollitt to explore more on this topic.

* 1. Public Works Report

Public Works Director Randy Barfield had nothing further to add to his report.

* 1. Water & Wastewater Report

Mr. Pollitt had nothing further to add to the report.

* 1. Museum Report

Mr. Pollitt remarked that Museum Director Cynthia Byrd has been in great demand, offering her services to other museums to aid in their projects and exhibitions. Mayor Pruitt announced on behalf of Dr. Byrd that paint night with local artist Jan Coulbourne will be on Wednesday, June 21st at the Train Station.

* 1. Police Department Report

Police Department Chief Andy McGee wanted to remind everyone that today was the last day for school. Discussions about the Blessings of the Combines event will soon start.

Councilmember Simpson asked Chief McGee if he met with his advisory board, and Chief McGee responded that they would have National Night Out in Byrd Park on Tuesday, August 1st. Chief McGee is accepting donations and volunteers for the event.

* 1. Fire Department

Mayor Pruitt noted that the fire department recently hosted their elections, and announced the following results: Michael Creech is Fire Chief, Andrew Quillen is 1st Assistant Chief, Ray Wooten is 2nd Assistant Chief, Mark E Deao is 1st Captain, Eddie Carman is 2nd Captain, Daniel Downes is 1st Lieutenant, and Glenn Smith is 2nd Lieutenant.

Mayor Pruitt asked Mr. Barfield about an update on the fire hydrants. Mr. Barfield spoke with Mike Finch on Saturday evening at the Tyson Farm about two fire hydrants that went bad and had called people to replace them.

* 1. Grants Office

Mr. Pollitt remarked that since the Grants Administrator job has been upgraded to a full-time position, the Town has received applications from 4 interested people. The Town is aiming to have someone hired by the 1st of July.

1. **Unfinished Business**
   1. Ordinance No. 2023-04 Budget Amendment: Second Reader.

Mayor Pruitt asked Mr. Pollitt to speak about the budget. After discussions with Finance Manager Lounell Hamstead, the water/wastewater department wasn’t balanced with the expenses it was accruing, and this budget amendment was issued to correct the issue. Mr. Pollitt proceeded to read the ordinance aloud.

On the motion from Councilmember Blake and seconded by Councilmember Hall, the second reading and adoption of Ordinance 2023-04 was approved by the following vote.

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| **NAME** | **AYE** | **NO** | **ABSTAIN** | **RECUSED** | **ABSENT** |
| **Regina Blake** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Janet Simpson** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Jenny Hall** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **TALLY** | **3** |  |  |  |  |

* 1. Ordinance 2023-05 Water and Sewer Rates increase: Second Reader.

Mayor Pruitt asked Mr. Pollitt to talk about the water and sewer rates. Mr. Pollitt reminded everyone that from the results of the analysis completed by Jean S. Holloway about the expenditures, the department was discovered to be far into a deficit situation. This ordinance is to course correct the department so that it may become self-sufficient as required by law. While the newly issued rates would begin in July, the increased costs would not be seen by the public until October. Mr. Pollitt also remarked on the water research report completed by Clerk Jerry Jeffra and its comprehensive study on the how, what, when and whys of the situation and an exhaustive list of assistance from local, state and federal sources residents can use to ease the burden of the coming rate increase. Mr. Pollitt strongly advised the public to read it when it’s publicized. Mr. Pollitt then proceeded to read the ordinance. Councilmember Simpson asked when will this report be published, and Mr. Pollitt responded that it will be very soon after some small edits suggested by Ms. Holloway.

On a motion from Councilmember Simpson and seconded by Councilmember Blake, the second reading and adoption of Ordinance 2023-05 was approved by the following vote.

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| **NAME** | **AYE** | **NO** | **ABSTAIN** | **RECUSED** | **ABSENT** |
| **Regina Blake** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Janet Simpson** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Jenny Hall** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **TALLY** | **3** |  |  |  |  |

* 1. Resolution No. 2023-03 approving the lease of the new dump truck.

Mr. Pollitt noted that this item has been in the budget and under discussion for a while. Mr. Pollitt opened the floor to Public Works Director Barfield to speak more about it. Public Works Director Barfield added that this was supposed to be completed several months ago; the original company that agreed to the lease had changed ownership and threw the process into chaos. After some time and conversations, the new company honored what the previous company quoted the Town for leasing the vehicle, and the process was no longer on hold. October is the earliest time in which the Town could get the truck, and the lease would be good for five years. Mr. Pollitt noted that the Town’s attorney has taken a look at the resolution and it is good to go.

On a motion from Councilmember Simpson and seconded by Councilmember Blake, Resolution No. 2023-03 was approved by the following vote.

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| **NAME** | **AYE** | **NO** | **ABSTAIN** | **RECUSED** | **ABSENT** |
| **Regina Blake** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Janet Simpson** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Jenny Hall** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **TALLY** | **3** |  |  |  |  |

1. **Recognize out-going Councilmembers: Jenny Hall and Regina Blake**

Mayor Pruitt commented that although the farewell is bittersweet, he wanted to take the chance to recognize outgoing councilmembers Regina Blake and Jenny Hall. Mayor Pruitt read a resolution for each member, commemorating their achievements and service to the Town and its citizens. The out-going members were then presented with a wall plaque and dish garden in thanks for their devoted services.

1. **Swearing in of Newly-Elected Councilmembers:**
   1. Central District Council Diana Walsh

Mayor Pruitt swore in and welcomed Diana Walsh to the Council.

* 1. Western District Council Margaret Ann Fletcher

Mayor Pruitt swore in and welcomed Margaret Ann Fletcher to the Council.

1. **Mayor Appointments: Council Treasurer and Secretary**

Mayor Pruitt remarked that there would be a change in roles; Councilmember Walsh would serve as Treasurer and Mayor Pruitt asked Councilmember Fletcher if she would like to serve as Secretary, which she accepted.

1. **Mayor Appointment: Town Attorney**

Mayor Pruitt acknowledged that the budget just adopted provided funding for the appointment of a Town Attorney as called for by the Town Charter. This is not to completely replace Kevin Karpinski, the Town’s current attorney, who would still be available for specialized cases, such as employment-related matters, but would serve as a local legal resource to attend meetings and be available for quick counsel on legal issues that arise from day to day. The Mayor called on the Council to approve his recommendation to engage the Town Attorney. While Councilmember Simpson offered a motion to accept the Mayor’s appointment, both Councilmembers Walsh and Fletcher expressed concerns about not knowing enough information about the attorney or the details involved and wished to table the discussion until they are more familiar with the topic. Mayor Pruitt agreed, and the motion has been tabled.

1. **Comments from the Council**

Councilmember Simpson welcomed the new councilmembers and is looking forward to working with both of them. She also wanted to thank all the staff members for their assistance and appreciated all the citizens in Town. While some recent discussions are a cause of concern, Councilmember Simpson is optimistically looking towards the future. Councilmember Fletcher wanted to thank all of her supporters and is looking forward to working with everyone. Councilmember Walsh also expressed gratitude towards the citizens and voter turnout during the elections and stated that she would work with high energy to achieve great things.

1. **Comments from the Mayor**

Mayor Pruitt wanted to thank and welcome all the new councilmembers, as well as thanking outgoing councilmembers Regina Blake and Jenny Hall. Mayor Pruitt hopes to resolve the attorney appointment quickly.

1. **Comments from the Public**

Former Council member Rita Williams welcomed the new council members. She wanted to ask about the Grants Administrator position and the current status of it. Mr. Pollitt stated that process was being handled through his staff under his administrative authority. Ms. Williams remarked that the Council should be a part of those discussions.

Eddie Lee also welcomed the new council members. Mr. Lee wanted to ask Mayor Pruitt for more transparency, specifically pointing out two things, one about the lease of the truck and how much it would cost the town, and the other was about the appointment of the attorney and if the public was notified adequately enough about it and knowing how much it would cost the Town. Mayor Pruitt remarked that he would make sure the Town would know the costs, and he would do better.

Sylvester Dale welcomed the new council members. He suggested to Mr. Pollitt that the Town should explore other options before purchasing or leasing a vehicle, such as going through the State. Mr. Dale also remarked about the discharge of water on Ross Street, which Mr. Barfield replied the congregation of water was from testing being performed in the area. Mr. Dale pointed out since the Town is increasing water rates, how are they going to combat rainwater possibly affecting the costs to the wastewater department treating the runoff as if it was sewage. Mr. Barfield stated that he would contact him at a later time to provide more information about that concern. Mayor Pruitt also noted that the Town is aware of this predicament and is in the process of rectifying it.

Clinton Creesy asked about the Black-Eyed Susan and the discussions about it. Mayor Pruitt is unsure how much he can answer, but they are still in the process of disposing of the boat.

Fran Price asked if someone makes an offer that’s worth less than we borrowed for the Black-Eyed Susan; are we still good with the deal with the county? Mr. Pollitt stated that we should be after discussing with our attorney, and that it is with the Town’s full intent to stay with the interest free loan the county graciously granted the town.

Joe Marx asked if the town council could talk to the businesses and suggest that they can consider opening during the weekends. Mayor Pruitt replied that while the council cannot enforce anything, they could talk with business owners to see if they can publicize their hours more.

Ms. Manuel said while she commends Police Department Chief McGee’s efforts in cleaning up the streets, she wants to strongly suggest more police presence to continue combating crime.

1. **Adjournment**

With no other business to conduct, on a motion from Councilmember Fletcher, seconded by Councilmember Walsh the meeting was adjourned by the following vote. The time was 8:01pm.

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| **NAME** | **AYE** | **NO** | **ABSTAIN** | **RECUSED** | **ABSENT** |
| **Margaret Ann Fletcher** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Janet Simpson** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Diana Walsh** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **TALLY** | **3** |  |  |  |  |

Respectfully Submitted,

Jerry Jeffra

Clerk I