

**CITY OF BUENA VISTA
REGULAR (VIRTUAL) COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 21, 2020**

The City Council for the City of Buena Vista met for a Regular (Virtual) Council meeting on Thursday, May 21, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Council Members Present:
Melvin Henson
Stanley Coffey
Tyson Cooper

Mayor Bill Fitzgerald
Danny Staton
Cheryl Hickman
Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark

Members Absent: None.

ADG #1 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND PRAYER:

Mayor Fitzgerald opened the meeting by asking everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilman Coffey delivered the prayer.

ADG #2 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

Councilman Cooper motioned for the approval of the agenda, seconded by Councilman Coffey, carried by Council.

ADG #3 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING (VIRTUAL) AND PUBLIC HEARINGS HELD ON MAY 7, 2020:

Motion was made by Vice-Mayor Clark to approve the above-mentioned minutes, seconded by Councilman Coffey, carried by Council.

ADG #4 RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS: Citizens who desire to speak on matters not listed on the agenda below will be heard at this time. Citizens who desire to speak on a specific item listed on the agenda, open for public comment, will be heard when that item is considered.

No one spoke.

ADG #5 REPORTS:

1.) Mayor
None

2.) City Manager

Mr. Scudder started his report by reminding Council that he shared a video from Munters showing a new product called Side Cool. They are supplying these units to data centers all over the world. He also wanted to touch on the regional work we have been doing with the Planning District Commission with all the localities to try to get around some of the initiatives with COVID-19. Not just re-opening the City and some of our different departments but also

recreation locations within our jurisdictions and trying to wrap our minds on some of the COVID-19 money. Mr. Scudder advised that he and the Mayor attended a meeting on Wednesday with other area officials and there were good discussions around those areas.

3.) City Attorney

None.

4.) Council Committee/Representative

Vice-Mayor Clark reported that she spoke with some folks from RARO and they are getting ready to do some work on the dugouts at Laurel Park and they are also going to install a new scoreboard and timeclock at Camden Field.

Mr. Scudder advised that RARO is also working with the library and some other organizations regionally to put together some activities for the kids this summer.

Kristina Ramsey reported that the EDA is working with the community foundation for their COVID-19 relief funds. They have gone through the second distribution of that and have just approved to give 7 applicants \$500.00 each. They are still receiving applications for the COVID-19 relief funds.

Councilman Henson wanted to know what was done as far as flood protection during the recent high-water events.

Mr. Scudder said we did as we always do check the culverts and monitor the water level.

Councilman Henson wanted to know how the FY2020 budget was looking.

Mr. Scudder said the budget is extremely tight. He said that Charles Clemmer was on the phone today with some of our organizations juggling bills.

CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO VARIOUS BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES:

ADG #6 BUENA VISTA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY:

Mr. Peter Trotman has resigned. His term will expire on January 31, 2023. This is the fifth time it has appeared on the agenda. **ONE APPLICANT – MR. J. DAVID GOWDY -ADVERTISED THE NEWS GAZETTE FEBRUARY 5, 2020: WEB SITE AND CHANNEL 18 JANUARY 30, 2020**

Motion was made by Councilman Cooper to appoint Mr. Gowdy to the BVEDA, seconded by Vice-Mayor Clark, carried by Council.

OLD BUSINESS:

OB #2 SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE TAX RATES FOR THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA FY2021: (READ OUT OF ORDER)

Mr. Kearney said since there has been talk about reducing the real estate tax rate, Council should discuss OB #2 before discussing OB #1. If the real estate tax rate is reduced, the budget will have to be modified to reflect the reduction. It was agreed that Council would discuss OB #2 before discussing OB #1.

Councilman Henson read a letter as follows:

Yes, I am a "TRUE BLUE" from walking the halls of the former Parry McCluer - High School for 11 years (first grade was held in half day sessions in a church)

You talk about previous, but think about the people with professional careers that have graduated from Parry McCluer High School and the impact that they have on the U.S.A, and it's many states, Armed Forces, sports communities,

On occasions, I will walk the halls of the entire building and think "If these walls could talk" No seriously, thinking about the greats that have helped inspired us into achieving greatness.

Ms. Mattie Campbell, Ms. Ruby Huffman, MS. Bea Gilbert, Ms. Daisy Hannah, Ms. Essie Glass, Ms. Betty Hawes, Mr. Pop Childress, Mr. Albert McCown,, Mr. Landon Camper, Mr. Charlie Kurtz, Mr. Clayton Camden, just to name a few.

True enough we did not have all the extras, that we presently have, [BUT WE MADE IT]

Remembering meeting Mr. Buck Kling in the hallway, he knew everyone by name and always spoke to you. His duties of being over the school system especially grades 1 - 7 and after you passed the library, you met Mr. Clayton Camden who took care of the high school, he also enforced the Law of the Land.

I know that things have changed, but that much, we had right at 100 people in our graduation class. Of which 30 % have gone out in the world and made names for themselves, Parry McCluer High School, and the City of Buena Vista.

Let me say right now, none of us on the Buena Vista City Council want to do anything to hurt our youth in any way. We realize they are our future.

But let us sit back and YOU make some decisions.

B.V. has a high tax rate. [so, they say] (compare the figures) What is your house valued at in B.V., what would be its value be in Lexington, in Rockbridge County? You would be paying more taxes either place than you would in B.V.

B.V. has let so much go or put on the back burner, but YOU must make some hard decisions NOW, not tomorrow but TODAY.

If we go with our present draft budget, means that we are \$ 19,000.00 in the hole from the word go.

If we raise taxes to allow for some of the things that are wanted and needed, means a higher tax rate. The Federal Gov't suggest that we have a Fund Balance of \$ 5 M we now have less than a half million

You say CUT, you tell us what services you want to cut out, trash pickup, street maintenance, parks & rec., mowing, etc.

You say DON'T CUT services, but this means higher taxes.

You mentioned level funding, think about the whole older population, of our city and what they have coming in each month to pay utilities, meds., doctors, groceries, maybe rent, maybe an treat from time to time, TAXES , not count9ng food for themselves and their pets {family} And an lot of this is did on less than \$ 1,000.00 per month from Social Security. But some barely manage to survive. Think about this next time put yourself in their shoes, what w would you do if you had less than \$ 1,000.00 a month coming in and that was it.

I know that most changes are for the better if you can afford them. Now what services do we cut "YOU CALL"

Mr. Gibson, you sit up here in the same seat that I am sitting in, tell us about hard times back then.

And something that pissed me off, here we are trying to look out for the best for Buena Vista, giving our time and energy, trying to make the decisions for the citizens of B.V. bearing in mind our love for our youth, then we read an email saying WE DEMAND that you do level funding for our school system, I am friends with most of you and have worked with a lot of you on various committees and projects, BUT THINK ABOUT THE OVER ALL PICTURE.

WHERE ARE THE CUTS COMING FROM?

Mr. Mike Gibson stated that he knows that Council has a tuff task ahead of them tonight. He requested that Council leave the budget and tax rate as they have been advertised. He opined that a lot of things need to happen in Buena Vista; we need to build up a fund balance and keep our schools at level funding. He said if more cuts must be made in the school budget, it will have a negative impact on the students; they will lose personnel and programs.

Mayor Fitzgerald reminded Mr. Gibson that the public hearing was last week and that he could only speak on other items that are not on the agenda.

Vice-Mayor Clark asked Charles Clemmer if on the sheets that he showed the Finance Committee last week with a \$1.33 or a \$1.31 tax rate, was that to build the fund balance.

Mr. Clemmer said it was to build our fund balance.

Vice-Mayor Clark then read the following letter:

I wanted to share some final thoughts on our budget situation before Thursday's meeting.

With an increase to 1.31 and the cuts already proposed we do not NEED to cut any department any further to begin building back the fund balance.

The city will be receiving 500,000 or more in CARES act funding to be spent by December. This money will have restrictions but can supplant some of our budget areas to make additional savings to the fund balance.

Police Department has already cut line items and personnel. City has cut line items and personnel.

Due to state, federal, and lottery losses -- schools will lose at least 13 employees without any additional cuts from the city. There is no pay increase for teachers (who are already the lowest paid in Virginia); insurance is going up 100.00 per pay period for every employee. Kling will lose one of its preschool programs leaving at least 20 students with no opportunities for preschool and its writer's workshop program that has ignited the reading program for the past 6 years. THIS IS ALL WITHOUT ADDITIONAL CUTS FROM THE CITY! I do not know how we could even consider cutting anymore and still maintain educational equity.

Some of you say I fight this battle because I work for the schools -- that is not true. I fight this battle for the students and the youth of our city. I decided to run for city council the night that the former council took 250,000 out of the school fund to make a golf course payment. I did not even work in Buena Vista at that time but have fought for our youth since being elected my first term. The schools have not ever fully recovered from that cut -- they have been playing catch up ever since. Our City cannot afford to continue to widen the gap between what we can give our students and what our neighbors give theirs. Schools have begun to see an increase in enrollment with several many coming from neighboring school systems because of the programs they can offer -- programs that they will surely have to cut if funding is further cut.

I have a great understanding of the educational inequity the youth of Buena Vista face. I have a great understanding of what it takes to educate students who are living below the poverty level and what a decrease in funds, personnel, and invested educators will do to our City's future. The number of support staff our schools are already losing with greatly impact our students. Students who have received special instruction, tutoring, one on one assistance, emotional support and more will not be getting that.

As a council member, I feel our students and our youth are the future for us. We should provide them with an education that gives them a competitive edge in this big ole world. We need to make this a priority.

It has been said that "no one wants to cut schools." Then do not. We DO NOT need to have a good budget that builds our fund balance.

We have all agreed we want to reduce jail costs and CSA costs -- we will never be able to do that by reducing funds to public safety and public education.

In order to attract new people to our schools and out community we need to have a per pupil expenditure that is competitive and productive. We cannot do that by reducing funds.

Motion was made by Councilman Cooper to read the following Ordinance by title only, seconded by Vice-Mayor Clark.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| | | | | | |
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | X | | |
| | | | | | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | X | | |
| | | | | | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | X | | |
| | | | | | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | X | | |
| | | | | | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | X | | |
| | | | | | |
| Danny Staton | X | | X | | |
| | | | | | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | X | | |

Ms. Wheeler read the following Ordinance by title only:

Council Member Hickman stated that she does not want to go any higher than \$1.29 per \$100.00 assessed value on the real estate tax. She opined that an \$0.08 tax increase is high enough for our low-income citizens and citizens living on a fixed income.

Council Member Hickman motioned to set the real estate tax rate at \$1.29 per \$100.00 assessed value, seconded by Councilman Coffey.

Vice-Mayor Clark motioned to set the real estate tax rate at \$1.31 per \$100.00 assessed value, seconded by Councilman Cooper.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows for the rate of \$1.29 per \$100.00 assessed value:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | X | | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | X | | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | | X | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | X | | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | | X | |
| Danny Staton | X | | X | | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | X | | |

Motion was made by Council Member Hickman to adopt the amended Ordinance from \$1.33 per \$100.00 assessed value to \$1.29 per \$100.00 assessed value, seconded by Councilman Coffey.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows for the rate of \$1.29 per \$100.00 assessed value:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | X | | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | X | | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | | X | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | X | | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | | X | |
| Danny Staton | X | | X | | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | X | | |

AMENDED

**AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE TAX RATES FOR THE
CITY OF
BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2021**

ORDINANCE – ORD 20-07

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA, that in accordance with Section 26-1 of the Code of the City of Buena Vista, there is hereby levied upon taxable real estate an effective tax rate of ~~One Dollar and Thirty-Three Cents (\$1.33)~~ **One Dollar and Twenty-nine Cents (\$1.29)** per One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) assessed valuation for the fiscal year 2021, said levy to be based upon the value of such property as of July 1, 2020.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that there is hereby levied upon Personal Property a tax rate of Five Dollars and Eighty-Five Cents (\$5.85) per One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) assessed valuation for the calendar year 2021, said levy to be based upon the value of such property as of January 1, 2020.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that there is hereby levied upon all public service corporation real estate the sum of ~~One Dollar and Thirty-Three Cents (\$1.33)~~ **One Dollar and Twenty-nine Cents (\$1.29)** per One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) assessed valuation for the fiscal year 2021, said levy to be based upon the value of such property as of January 1, 2020.

BE IT STILL ORDAINED, that the Refuse fee shall be Twenty-One Dollars and zero cents (\$21.00) per month residential and shall be Eight Dollars and Forty cents (\$8.40) per unit commercial.

BE IT STILL FURTHER ORDAINED, that all other tax rates not expressly defined above shall remain the same until further action by council.

William H. Fitzgerald, Mayor

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Date of Adoption

**OB #1 SECOND READING OF THE ORDINANCE FOR THE
FY2021 BUDGET APPROVAL: (READ OUT OF ORDER)**

Mr. Kearney said since there has been talk about reducing the real estate tax rate Council should discuss OB #2 before discussing OB #1. If the real estate tax rate is reduced, the budget will have to be modified to reflect the reduction. It was agreed that Council would discuss OB #2 before discussing OB #1.

Mr. Kearney stated there will be a lot of changes to this Ordinance because of the lowering of the real estate tax rate. We have reduced the General Property Taxes by \$140,000.00 from the beginning budget amount so we will have to balance the budget by finding \$140,000.00 to cut from the budget.

Councilman Cooper proposed to cut the salary of City Council from the budget in the amount of \$39,598.00 seconded by Vice-Mayor Clark. Councilman Cooper said that the adjustments that have been made to the budget since the first reading is \$73,526.00. This brings the amount cut from the budget to roughly \$113,000.00. Council needs to find another \$10,000.00 to cut in order to balance the budget.

Mr. Kearney reminded Councilman Cooper that we need \$140,000.00 in order to balance the budget.

Councilman Cooper said we need another \$25,000.00 to \$30,000.00 to balance the budget.

Mr. Kearney wanted to know where the \$73,526.00 was cut in the budget.

Councilman Cooper answered by saying that \$45,955.00 was cut from the general fund; \$10,288.00 was cut from the water/sewer fund; \$13,340.00 was cut from parks/rec; \$3,939.00 was cut from the golf course fund. He said it is his understanding from the Finance Committee and Council meetings that the first objective is to rebuild the fund balance. He opined if the tax income is reduced by \$140,000.00, we also have to reduce what goes into the fund balance.

Vice-Mayor Clark wanted to know the original amount that was agreed upon to cut non-profits such as the library.

Mr. Clemmer stated that the library requested \$174,225.00. We reduced them by \$35,000.00 so they are now at \$139,225.00.

Councilman Coffey motioned to cut the schools by \$200,000.00 and the police department by another \$35,000.00.

Councilman Cooper said that originally the police department cut \$30,000.00 to \$35,000.00 before the budget was proposed and that took their budget to \$1,590,000.00. Between the first reading and this reading, they have come down another \$20,000.00. The police department has come down a total of \$50,000.00 to \$55,000.00.

Mr. Scudder advised there have been no further cuts to the police department other than the original \$35,000.00.

Mr. Clemmer said the \$20,000.00 reduction for the police department was from removing the 2% raise. All departments removed the 2% pay increase for their employees.

Councilman Cooper wanted to know if the first reading of the budget had the 2% pay increases removed.

Mr. Clemmer said the first reading included the 2% pay increases.

Mr. Kearney wanted to know what has been changed in the new budget that Council has in front of them now.

Council Member Hickman said the \$88,000.00 in pay increases has been removed from the new budget.

Councilman Cooper then suggested that the pool not be opened this year at a cost savings of approximately \$60,000.00.

Mayor Fitzgerald said that when you make a decision like closing the pool, you have to come back and revisit everything again.

Councilman Cooper opined that we basically need to reopen the whole budget. He said that the last time they met, there was a general feeling that \$1.31 real estate tax would work and tonight 5 of 7 Council members voted for \$1.29 real estate tax. He opined it is absurd to talk about cutting the school district. He said 100 years ago technology was not there and textbooks did not change every year. Back then it was not the same kind of future like what we are trying to prepare students for now. He said he cannot see us cutting our way out of poverty. Councilman Cooper said that council, after council, has done the same things for the past 30 years. They have made short sided decisions that have hurt our City and it puts this council in the position to decide tonight if we are going to keep doing what has been done in the past or are we going to change the trend. He said we are currently paying twice what we were paying 4 years ago in social service and jail costs because of the last 30 years. It has caught up to us now. The question is how do we fix it? No one has had any solution other than cutting education. His concern is the only solutions that are on the table for fixing our poverty problem, which everything we have thrown out, including having a higher tax rate than our neighbors, all of it points to poverty. The reason our property values are so much lower is because we are a less affluent community. The dollars we pay to our school district per pupil are less than our neighboring municipalities. The medium household income in this area is \$43,000.00; for Buena Vista it is \$32,000.00. He said that means that our neighbors make 30% more than we do. He asked again how do we get out of poverty? How do we get to affluence as a community if not through education? There is a proposal to take \$200,000.00 from the school district when we do not need to to build the fund balance. Councilman Cooper said he is absolutely floored that we are interested and seriously considering a short-sighted economic decision. He opined we will never get out of this.

Vice-Mayor Clark said that she agrees with Councilman Cooper that there is not a real understanding of what a \$200,000.00 cut from the schools would do to the

school system and the City as a whole. She said she has tried everything she can to make people understand what the impact of the school cut will be.

Councilman Cooper opined we will not see the impact tomorrow. We will start seeing the impact 10 to 15 years from now. He said they are patting themselves on the back because we kept the tax rate down two cents, but we are still going to be the second highest in the State.

Mayor Fitzgerald said it is a year thing to look at the savings of not giving raises and cutting the swimming pool; it is not a long-term thing. To do things like that you have to come back and revisit all of them every year.

Councilman Cooper said that Mayor Fitzgerald is correct. His concern is he sees no end. We are now, as a community and a nation, at the end of the longest prosperity cycle in U.S. history. Twelve years of increasing fortunes all across the country including our own community. Our Commissioner of the Revenue says she is hoping the assessed value of our real estate will go up a little, but it will not get back to values it was 10 years ago. All of our factories have grown; all of our educational institutions have grown; the medium household income has grown; yet our property values have not gone back up. That is his problem: he wants to know what will be different a year from now. He opined if we add \$150,000.00 to \$200,000.00 to the fund balance, a year from now we are not going to be sitting pretty. From what he understands, we will need a minimum of \$500,000.00 to \$600,000.00 additional to give the kind of float that Mary Lee and Charles need to continue making payroll without making any undo burden by withholding payments from vendors. We are not going to reassess property values for another 3 or 4 years. In 3 or 4 years from now we will be 2 or 3 years out of a recession.

Vice-Mayor Clark said she was texting Mr. Kearney to see if people could speak. She said there are a ton of people that want to speak, and she realizes this is not the public hearing. The night that the public hearing was held, \$200,000.00 being cut from the school budget was not mentioned.

Mayor Fitzgerald said the public hearing was 2 weeks ago. He said we all know how everybody feels.

Councilman Cooper stated that he agrees with the Mayor. If the discussion is opened back up it will be problematic.

Mr. Kearney wanted to know if there is any other information that Council needs to proceed.

Vice-Mayor Clark wanted to know what the library was funded in 2015.

Mr. Clemmer said the library was funded \$116,267.00 in 2015.

Councilman Cooper opined that the library has dramatically increased their service to our City. He said that Councilman Henson's comment at the beginning of the meeting was spot on. What do we want to cut? We can pull the lever of increasing revenue or pull the lever of decreasing spending.

Mayor Fitzgerald opined that cutting the schools \$200,000.00 is too much. He also said higher taxes for the citizens is also crazy. He said that Council needs to find a balance and that is what they are here tonight to do. He said everyone needs to be calm because we only have so much money to spread around.

Councilman Cooper opined that Council controls how much money they have. He said that he has had zero people tell him they do not want us to raise taxes. Mayor Fitzgerald said he has heard both sides.

Councilman Cooper opined that we do not want to raise the taxes so high that we cripple some of most vulnerable citizens. On the flip side, the other more vulnerable citizen is the children and they have no voice.

Vice-Mayor Clark said she always thought Council was stewards for the children. Mayor Fitzgerald said we have to look at the whole City. He said he does not like raising the taxes or cutting organizations. It is no sense criticizing each other over this. He asked that they find a solution that would have the least impact on everyone.

Councilman Henson said at one time they were talking about cutting the schools \$70,000.00; \$35,000.00 cut from the police department; \$35,000.00 from the library.

Mayor Fitzgerald opined that Council has been really harsh on both sides and suggested they find a middle ground.

Mr. Kearney wanted to know if Mr. Clemmer knows how much will be left in the fund balance with the \$140,000.00 cut.

Mr. Clemmer said that where we are right now, we are increasing the fund balance by about \$114,000.00.

Councilman Cooper wanted to know what "from where we are right now" means. He said the way he understands it is the only adjustment made to the budget from the first reading to the second reading is \$88,000.00 was removed for pay increases.

Mr. Clemmer said that the non-profits were also decreased by about \$10,000.00.

Councilman Cooper wanted to know if \$98,000.00 was taken from the budget since the first reading, why is the difference only \$73,500.00. He wanted to know if something was increased.

Mr. Kearney said they reduced the budget by \$98,000.00 from the first reading and reduced the revenues by \$140,000.00, leaving about a \$40,000.00 difference.

Councilman Cooper said the numbers are not playing out. On the Ordinance appropriating funds, it says the total budget is \$18,890,247.00. That is only \$73,500.00 less than the first reading of the Ordinance. He said we are missing \$23,000.00 to \$25,000.00. He wanted to know if anything was increased in the budget.

Mayor Fitzgerald opined they will have to look at giving the employees raises next year. He said we cannot keep making cuts and pay raises. He said this might be a 1-year savings, but Council needs to look at things that will benefit the City for a while.

Councilman Cooper said all of the levers we are pulling to reduce spending is his main concern. They all amount to 1 big lever and it is a 1-year thing.

Mayor Fitzgerald said they need to come to some type of agreement that will have the least impact on everyone.

Vice-Mayor Clark said that was her comment in the very beginning. We continue to chop away at everything without setting any priorities to build upon. When the

meeting was started at \$1.31 per \$100.00 assessed value, we had a balanced budget with money going into the fund balance. Now the real estate tax rate has been reduced to \$1.29 per \$100.00 assessed value and they are proposing to continue to chop away at things. She asked Mr. Scudder to explain the tax relief program for the lower income and fixed income people.

Mr. Scudder explained that the City has a very robust tax relief program for low income folks. Our revenue cost is approximately \$230,000.00.

Vice-Mayor Clark said that talking about reducing the tax rate will relieve some of the tax burden. Is there somewhere we can look at in the tax relief that we could save some money?

Mayor Fitzgerald said that Vice-Mayor Clark wants to take money from the poor people.

Vice-Mayor Clark said that is not what she meant. She wanted to know if there could be any savings in the tax relief fund.

Mr. Scudder said that whatever the tax rate is they will still get tax relief.

Mr. Clemmer said a lot of the tax relief is on the personal property side and that rate is not changing.

Councilman Henson wanted to know what percentage of the older people qualify for tax relief.

Mr. Scudder said he does not know that number off the top of his head.

Councilman Henson opined there are a lot of people that do not qualify that are living in poverty.

Mr. Scudder said a lot of people do not take advantage of the tax relief.

Ms. MarVita Flint, Commissioner of the Revenue, spoke next. She said the tax relief program will still be in effect. For example, if the tax rate goes up, and someone is getting 60 percent off, they will be getting more tax relief. There will not be any savings there. In addition, if their property value would go up during this reassessment and the rate goes up, we will be giving more tax relief on real estate. She said she cannot give Council a number because there are so many variables in the program; from 20 percent based on income up to 80 percent.

Vice-Mayor Clark wanted to know if the rate goes down and the value goes up, what would happen.

Ms. Flint said it would be the same thing. The tax relief they are getting now is based on \$1.21 so even with the tax rate going up \$0.08 and their value goes down, you are probably going to have more tax relief for our elderly and disabled citizens. Also, in that relief our veterans that are 100 percent disabled, get 100 percent tax relief. That amount will be raised also.

Councilman Cooper said it is all percentage rates. The effective dollars go up, but the percentage rate does not change. He then asked Mr. Clemmer to explain why there is only a \$73,000.00 difference.

Mr. Clemmer said he is not seeing anything that jumps out to explain the difference.

Councilman Cooper said he cannot vote on a budget until he understands it completely. He said it appears we are off \$20,000.00 and do not know why. He said we would have to have a special meeting because the budget has to be adopted by the end of May.

Council Member Hickman wanted to know what to do about the motions on the floor

Mr. Kearney said they can go back and vote on them.

Mayor Fitzgerald wanted to know if there were any other motions.

Councilman Cooper said he would motion to take the pool to \$0.00.

Mayor Fitzgerald opined that the pool probably will not open this summer.

Councilman Cooper opined this would ensure that the pool would not open this summer and it would ensure that the pool would not open next year until July 1 unless Council comes back and allocates funds later.

Councilman Henson advised that if we open our pool it will be the only one open in the area. The Parks and Rec Committee recommended to open the pool this year.

Mayor Fitzgerald said if the pool opens this year it will probably be for only 1 month and he feels we should not waste the money for such a short time.

Councilman Cooper and Vice-Mayor Clark agreed to take the money out of the budget for the pool. Vice-Mayor Clark said if they take the money out of the budget for the pool, they will not have to look for the money elsewhere.

Mayor Fitzgerald said that he agrees but we are only fixing a problem until this time next year. He opined that is one of the problems with a higher tax rate. We are trying to get people to come in to increase the revenues. That is why he did not want to go over \$1.29. He really did not want to do that.

Councilman Cooper said that he agrees. He has been on Council for 2 years and this is his third budget. For 2 years we have attempted that strategy and we have had a few good restaurants open. However, we do not have any major new industry. Thankfully, our home sales have gone up, but he does not feel like that is because of the tax rate. He feels we have really cheap houses and because the economy has been building. He said we are now in the middle of some kind of economic something and we are currently 3- or 4-years overdue for a recession. He does not feel that anything magical is going to happen in the next year. He started this up about 6 to 8 months ago that Council needs a vision for the City. He said that Vice-Mayor Clark has brought the subject up a few times and it was on the agenda for the retreat, but they did not get to it. He opined that Council does not know where they are going and what their priorities are. He feels that is part of the issue tonight: they do not know what to fund and what to cut. You do not run a successful organization by cutting everybody a little bit all the time.

Mayor Fitzgerald said you cannot fix a problem by saying you are not giving raises this year.

Councilman Cooper said to not forget that he is the one who proposed the \$1.33 tax rate. He said all of the cuts are not his ideas. If the only thing they can all agree on is we want to increase the fund balance, at a \$1.29 we will have to cut. He opined that 1 year from now, if we do not do something different, we will be having the same conversation. He said we do not have a strategic vision or direction for the City. If we wanted to go out and recruit new businesses for our City, we would not know where to go or who to talk to because we do not know

what we want. He totally agrees the only way to solve this is to have a strategic plan.

Council Member Hickman said we were not going to settle that tonight. Tonight, is for working on the budget.

Vice-Mayor Clark requested that Mr. Kearney read the motions that are on the floor and if any of them have a second.

Mr. Kearney said there are 5 different motions on the floor at this time. They are as follows:

- 1.) Postpone the vote tonight and have a special meeting
- 2.) Reduce the police department by \$35,000.00
- 3.) Reduce the schools by \$200,000.00
- 4.) Reduce the City Council budget to \$0.00
- 5.) Reduce the pool to \$0.00

Mr. Kearney said we will also have to have a motion to reduce the general fund revenue by \$140,000.00.

Councilman Cooper said we will also have to have a motion to reduce the Parks and Rec budget if we keep the pool closed.

Vice-Mayor Clark wanted to know if anyone had another motion to change the amount that schools would be cut.

Councilman Henson motioned to cut the schools by \$70,000.00; cut the police department by \$35,000.00; increase the library by \$17,500.00 because we suggested cutting them \$35,000.00 and everyone else is cutting them only \$17,500.00.

Mayor Fitzgerald said we do not have to be like everyone else. He wanted to know if Council was considering cutting the police department another \$35,000.00 in addition to the \$35,000.00 that was already cut from their budget.

Motion was made by Councilman Coffey to cut the budget for the police department an additional \$35,000.00, seconded by Councilman Staton.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | | X | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | X | | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | | X | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | X | | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | | X | |
| Danny Staton | X | | X | | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | X | | |

Motion was made by Councilman Coffey to cut the school budget by \$200,000.00 seconded by Councilman Staton.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | | X | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | | X | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | | X | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | X | | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | | X | |
| Danny Staton | X | | X | | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | X | | |

Motion was made by Councilman Henson to cut the schools \$70,000.00. The motion was not seconded and died on the floor.

Mayor Fitzgerald said the next item is the pool. Someone motioned to reduce the pool to zero, but he opined we still have to maintain the pool.

Councilman Cooper said to take out everything except the maintenance for the pool.

Councilman Henson said the Parks and Rec Committee was told the pool is ready to go now.

Motion was made by Councilman Cooper to reduce the pool budget by \$47,312.00, seconded by Vice-Mayor Clark.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | X | | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | | X | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | X | | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | | X | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | X | | |
| Danny Staton | X | | | X | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | | X | |

Ms. Wheeler wanted to know if Council is planning on getting the pool ready to open this year.

Mayor Fitzgerald said he does not think the pool will open this year.

Vice-Mayor Clark wanted to know if the opening of the pool will come before Council to approve because of the COVID issue.

Mr. Kearney said the decision to open the pool will be made by the local and State Health Departments.

Motion was made by Councilman Cooper to cut the City Council budget to \$0.00, seconded by Vice-Mayor Clark.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | X | | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | X | | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | X | | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | | X | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | X | | |
| Danny Staton | X | | | X | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | | X | |

Motion was made by Councilman Henson to increase the library budget by \$17,500.00 seconded by Councilman Cooper.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | | X | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | X | | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | X | | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | | X | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | | X | |
| Danny Staton | X | | | X | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | | X | |

Councilman Cooper wanted to know, with all the cuts, what the final dollar amount will be that goes back into the fund balance.

Mr. Clemmer said we are at about \$189,000.00, which is approximately where we were with the \$1.31 tax rate.

Mayor Fitzgerald reminded Council that they have cut a raise for all employees; they were counting on shutting the pool down; both of these will probably be given back next year.

Councilman Cooper reminded Mayor Fitzgerald that the pool was not taken out.

Mayor Fitzgerald said he was trying to point out that the cuts that were made are very short term. He opined that in 1 year, Council will be discussing the same things again.

Vice-Mayor Clark said that hopefully 1 year from today the world will be in a different place.

Councilman Cooper said the world may be, but Council will not be. We keep doing the same thing over and over again.

Mayor Fitzgerald advised since changes have been made, there is a flaw in the numbers. He wanted to know if they should wait to see the final number before they vote on the budget.

Mr. Kearney opined it would be wise to have a clean version of the budget in front of Council.

Mayor Fitzgerald said the budget has to be approved before the end of May. He suggested we have a special meeting next week to go over the amended budget.

Councilman Cooper suggested as Ms. Wheeler reads the budget, Mr. Clemmer make any necessary changes, so we do not have to meet again.

Vice-Mayor Clark opined she would much rather have Ms. Wheeler read the budget and Mr. Clemmer make the changes than go through another budget meeting.

Council Member Hickman wanted to know how much has been saved by cutting the budget. As she has said before, we need to build the fund balance. She said she cannot sit there, looking at the numbers for the school, and say they cannot afford to take a cut this year. She said she knows the schools can take a cut because she has looked at the numbers. They have the same budget they had last year with \$70,000.00 more plus the \$211,000.00 from CARE. She opined she cannot see how anybody cannot be cut if you have the same amount of money that you had last year plus \$70,000.00. We need to revisit it every year and if we need to give the money back to the school, we may be able to do that. Council Member Hickman motioned to cut the school budget \$150,000.00, seconded by Councilman Coffey.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | X | | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | X | | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | | X | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | X | | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | | X | |
| Danny Staton | X | | X | | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | X | | |

Councilman Cooper said if he has done his math right, we are now putting back into the fund balance \$340,000.00.

Mr. Clemmer said \$340,000.00 is correct.

Council Member Hickman said we have a \$900,000.00 digester problem at the WWTP that needs to be fixed.

Councilman Cooper said we have a multi-million-dollar issue at the WWTP. He said again Council is taking short term stop gap measures rather than really evaluating and taking care of the whole thing.

Council Member Hickman said she understands what Councilman Cooper is saying. She opined we can re-evaluate the WWTP again next year.

Councilman Cooper said that Council has been doing this for 30 years.

Mayor Fitzgerald said the budget is over and done and we need to move on.

Mr. Kearney wanted to know how quickly they could go through the budget with what Council had in front of them.

Mr. Clemmer said that Ms. Wheeler could read what we currently have in each line item and he can give the amended amount for each line item that has changed.

Councilman Cooper made a motion to read the following Ordinance for a second time, seconded by Council Member Hickman, carried by Council.

Ms. Wheeler read the Ordinance as follows:

FINAL AMENDED ORDINANCE FY 2021
AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE FISCAL YEAR 2021
BUDGET

ORDINANCE – ORD 20-08

BE IT ORDAINED, the City Council on **May 7, 2020** held a public hearing on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2021; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, the City Council during a series of work sessions, has developed a balanced budget for fiscal year 2021.

Now, **BE IT STILL FURTHER ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA**, that the following budget be and the same is hereby adopted for fiscal planning purposes:

GENERAL FUND REVENUE

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>PROPOSED</u> <u>2020-21</u> |
|--|---|
| General Property Taxes | \$6,433,620 |
| Other Local Taxes | 1,965,500 |
| Permits, Privilege Fees | 20,775 |
| Fines and Forfeitures | 76,420 |
| Earnings from Investments | 3,000 |
| Charge for Services | 852,676 |
| Miscellaneous Revenue | 253,105 |
| Non-Categorical Aid from Virginia | 680,169 |
| Shared Expenses | 955,510 |
| Categorical Aid from Virginia | 3,653,234 |
| Categorical Aid Federal | 123,747 |
| Transfers - Other Funds | 10,000 |
| TOTAL GENERAL FUND REVENUE | <u>\$15,027,755</u> |

GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| City Council | \$ 0 |
| City Manager | 146,313 |
| City Attorney | 70,000 |
| Information Technology | 62,450 |
| Finance Director | 293,727 |
| Independent Auditor | 40,700 |
| Commissioner of the Revenue | 203,335 |
| Reassessment | 33,000 |

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Board of Equalization | 3,000 |
| City Treasurer | 279,676 |
| Insurance | 68,600 |
| Electoral Board | 116,675 |
| Circuit Court | 6,250 |
| General District Court | 6,800 |
| Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court | 33,490 |
| Clerk of the Circuit Court | 244,334 |
| City Sheriff | 450,084 |
| Commonwealth's Attorney | 243,905 |
| Criminal Justice Services | 73,747 |
| Police Department | 1,537,786 |
| Fire Department | 158,000 |
| Rescue Squad | 110,903 |
| Probation Officer | 3,000 |
| Magistrate | 420 |
| Medical Examiner | 150 |
| Economic Development | 110,437 |
| Planning | 207,756 |
| Administration & Engineering | 63,932 |
| Street Maintenance | 894,466 |
| Street Lights | 73,000 |
| Refuse Collection Department | 300,000 |
| Maintenance of Building & Grounds | 411,691 |
| Maintenance of Greenhill Cemetery | 166,276 |
| General Tax Relief | 80,000 |
| Retiree Medical Plan | 30,000 |
| Central Dispatch | 317,528 |
| School Fund | 2,433,803 |
| Regional Jail | 570,000 |
| Transfers to Other Funds | 424,791 |
| Debt Service | 187,968 |
| Social Services | 3,100,000 |
| Non-Profit Agencies | 389,656 |
| TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES | \$14,429,049 |

WATER & SEWER REVENUE
PROPOSED

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>2020-21</u> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Charge for Services | \$2,554,791 |
| WATER & Sewer Fund Revenues | \$2,554,791 |

WATER & SEWER EXPENDITURES

| | | |
|--|-----------|------------------|
| Administration & Engineering | \$ | 194,189 |
| Water Maintenance | | 342,602 |
| Sewer Maintenance | | 349,794 |
| Wastewater Treatment Plant | | 770,946 |
| Water Production | | 310,116 |
| Debt Service | | 576,856 |
| WATER & SEWER FUND EXPENDITURES | \$ | 2,544,503 |

PARKS AND RECREATION REVENUE

| | PROPOSED | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | <u>2020-21</u> | |
| Charge for Services & Misc. Revenue | \$ | 193,800 |
| Transfer From General Fund | | <u>119,657</u> |
| TOTAL PARK FUND REVENUE | \$ | 313,457 |

PARKS AND RECREATION EXPENDITURES

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Administration | \$ | 54,122 |
| Recreation Department | | 102,076 |
| Activities Department | | 16,300 |
| Maintenance of Parks and Campgrounds | | 83,172 |
| Swimming Pool | | <u>57,787</u> |
| TOTAL PARK FUND EXPENDITURES | \$ | 313,457 |

GOLF COURSE REVENUE

| | PROPOSED | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>2020-21</u> | |
| Charge for Services | \$ | 457,847 |
| TOTAL GOLF COURSE REVENUE | \$ | 457,847 |

GOLF COURSE EXPENDITURES

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Golf Operations | \$ 457,847 |
| TOTAL GOLF COURSE EXPENDITURES | \$ 457,847 |

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION REVENUE
PROPOSED

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>2020-21</u> |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| City Funds | \$ 313,065 |
| Transfer School Operation Fund | 140,000 |
| Interest Recovery | <u>18,173</u> |
| TOTAL SCHOOL CONSTRUCT REVENUE | \$ 471,238 |

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION EXPENDITURES

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Literary Loan | \$ 375,000 |
| Bus Lease | 53,474 |
| Middle School Loan | <u>42,764</u> |
| TOTAL SCHOOL CONSTRCT EXPEND | \$ 471,238 |

SENIOR CENTER FUND REVENUE

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>PROPOSED</u> <u>2020-21</u> |
|------------------------------------|---|
| BV/Lex/Rock County | \$ 8,500 |
| TOTAL SENIOR CENTER REVENUE | \$ 8,500 |

SENIOR CENTER FUND EXPENDITURES

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Utilities and Operation Costs | \$ 8,500 |
| TOTAL SENIOR CENTER EXPEND | \$ 8,500 |

SCHOOL NUTRITION FUND REVENUE

| <u>ITEM</u> | <u>PROPOSED</u> <u>2020-21</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Nutrition Revenues | \$ 441,105 |
| TOTAL SCHOOL NUTRITION REVENUE | \$ 441,105 |

SCHOOL NUTRITION FUND EXPENDITURES

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Nutrition Expenses | \$ 441,105 |
| TOTAL SCHOOL NUTRITION EXPEND | \$ 441,105 |

William H. Fitzgerald, Mayor

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Date of Adoption

Motion was made by Council Member Hickman to adopt the budget as read, seconded by Councilman Coffey.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | X | | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | X | | |
| Tyson Cooper | X | | | X | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | X | | |
| Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark | X | | | X | |
| Danny Staton | X | | X | | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | X | | |

OB #3 SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE
APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE CITY
OF BUENA VISTA FOR THE FY2021:

Motion was made by Councilman Coffey to read the following Ordinance as amended, seconded by Councilman Staton, carried by Council.
Ms. Wheeler read the amended Ordinance as follows:

AMENDED

ORDINANCE - ORD 20-09
AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE
CITY OF BUENA VISTA FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2021

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA, that in accordance with 4-1, Budgets and Appropriations, of the Charter of Buena Vista, funds to support the operations of the City for the Fiscal Year 2021 is hereby appropriated effective July 1, 2020 in the amount of **\$18,665,699** and in accordance with the following provisions:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| General Fund | \$14,429,049 |
| Water & Sewer Fund | 2,544,503 |
| Parks & Recreation Fund | 313,457 |
| Golf Course Fund | 457,847 |
| School Construction Fund | 471,238 |
| Senior Center Fund | 8,500 |
| School Nutrition Fund | <u>441,105</u> |
| Total FY 2021 Budget | \$18,665,699 |

William H. Fitzgerald, Mayor

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Date of Adoption

Motion was made by Councilman Henson to approve the above amended Ordinance, seconded by Councilman Cooper.

Ms. Wheeler polled Council as follows:

| | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Mayor Fitzgerald | X | | X | | |
| Melvin Henson | X | | X | | |
| Vice-Mayor Tyson Cooper | X | | | X | |
| Cheryl Hickman | X | | X | | |
| Lisa Clark | X | | | X | |
| Danny Staton | X | | X | | |
| Stanley Coffey | X | | X | | |

NEW BUSINESS:

NB #1 PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING THE BUENA VISTA POLICE DEPARTMENT AND SHERIFF’S DEPARTMENT FOR NATIONAL POLICE WEEK:

Councilman Cooper read the following Proclamation:

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the well-being of all citizens of Buena Vista is preserved and enhanced as a direct result of the vigilance and dedication of the members of the Buena Vista Police and Sheriff’s Department; and

WHEREAS, the men and women of the Buena Vista Police and Sheriff’s Department, at great risk to their personal safety, presently serve their fellow citizens as guardians of peace; and

WHEREAS, 146 peace officers were killed in 2019, including 24 who died from 9/11 related illness, 48 from gunfire, 22 from Automobile Crashes and 18 from heart attacks. This equals one death every 54 hours. Since the first known line-of-duty death in 1791, over 22,056 U.S. law enforcement officers have made the ultimate sacrifice; and their names are memorialized on the Wall of the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington D.C.; and

WHEREAS, each year, during the month of May, a week is set aside and designated as Police Week; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of such designation is to honor the memory and hold tribute to the many courageous and heroic police officers who have laid down their lives in the protection of our homes and our persons, and to those officers who continue to faithfully protect and serve the citizens of Buena Vista; and

WHEREAS, it is important to promote public respect and appreciation for the protection and rescue efforts in which our police officers are performing.

NOW THEREFORE, I, William H. Fitzgerald, Mayor of the City of Buena Vista, Virginia, do hereby proclaim May 10 through May 17, 2020 as

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

and urge all citizens to honor police officers and sheriff deputies for their outstanding service to the City of Buena Vista, and to honor the memory of all police officers who have given their lives in the performance of their official duties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be duly affixed the Seal of the City of Buena Vista, Virginia, this 21st day of May 2020.

William H. Fitzgerald, Mayor

ATTEST:

Dawn Wheeler

Buena Vista Clerk of City Council

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

WILLIAM H. FITZGERALD, MAYOR

Dawn M. Wheeler, Clerk of Council