

**CITY OF BUENA VISTA  
REGULAR (VIRTUAL) COUNCIL MEETING  
AUGUST 6, 2020**

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

Council Members Present:  
Melvin Henson  
Stanley Coffey  
Tyson Cooper

Mayor Bill Fitzgerald  
Danny Staton  
Cheryl Hickman

Members Absent: Vice-Mayor Lisa Clark

**ADG #1 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND PRAYER:**

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

**ADG #2 PUBLIC HEARING:**

Mayor Fitzgerald read the following:

**PUBLIC HEARING  
CITY COUNCIL  
August 6<sup>th</sup> 2020**

Pursuant to Code of Virginia Section 15.2-2006, notice is given that the City Council will hold a public hearing to receive comment on the following matter.

- 1) Vacation of an unnamed street running through the parcel known as Tax map ID 47-1-E—A, located at 6<sup>th</sup> and Magnolia Avenue from the City of Buena Vista, and donation of this land to the Dabney S. Lancaster Community College Real Estate Foundation.

The Public Hearing will be held virtually via Zoom at approximately 6:00 PM on Thursday, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Instructions for joining the Zoom meeting may be found at <https://www.buenavistava.org/city-services/government/city-council/council-agenda-minutes/> along with the meeting agenda. Citizens may join the meeting via computer or traditional telephone. Any person desiring to be heard will be given the opportunity to speak during the meeting or may submit written comments by email or USPS at the addresses below. Additional instructions may be found on the website listed above. Staff reports for this

matter, and a copy of the Comprehensive Plan, are available from the Director of Community and Economic Development, Thomas Roberts, 2039 Sycamore Avenue, Buena Vista VA 24416 or (540) 261-8607 or [troberts@bvcity.org](mailto:troberts@bvcity.org) or [www.buonavistava.org/planning](http://www.buonavistava.org/planning).

Mr. Tom Roberts, Director of Planning and Zoning, started the discussion by stating that he gave Council a memo with the graphics of the 1958 plats. It shows the road, but the road is on paper only. The City intends to donate the land to DSLCC. There has never been a road and there are no easements with the utilities.

Council Member Hickman wanted to know if the vacation of the road would affect any of our citizens in any way.

Mr. Kearney advised the road was never built; it is on paper only.

Mayor Fitzgerald closed the Public Hearing.

### **ADG #3    APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:**

Motion was made by Councilman Cooper to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilman Staton, carried by Council.

### **ADG #4    APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING (VIRTUAL) HELD ON JULY 2, 2020 AND THE SPECIAL CALLED (VIRTUAL) COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON JULY 23, 2020:**

Motion was made by Council Member Hickman to approve the above minutes, seconded by Councilman Cooper, carried by Council.

### **ADG #5    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.**

Mr. Tom Roberts said that he had given Ms. Wheeler an update on our IT services to email to all of Council. He advised we have contracted with Virginia Technology Solutions (VTS) to be our new service provider. We should start transitioning to VTS by the middle of the month. EN will stay on board until the end of August. We have also been working on procuring a new internet service for several months. He opined that we could save money and improve the service. The bids are due tomorrow. They will be looked at next week to select a firm. VTS is also one of the firms that has submitted a bid. They are also beginning to form a committee with staff members that will look at software options. He said within the next few weeks they will start exploring that.

## **ADG #6 REPORTS:**

### **1.) Mayor:**

None.

### **2.) City Manager:**

Mr. Scudder started his report by saying that he and Spencer from Rockbridge County have been talking about how horrendous the last 2 weeks have been with all the things that are going on. One of the things they have discussed is the COVID-19 money. He learned today that our local Registrar can receive \$51,000.00 to spend on COVID related items. A work group has been formed from participants all up and down the valley that is being headed by Bonnie Riedesel of the CSPDC. They have done some surveys and compiled a lot of information on what everyone is doing with the CARES money. Charles Clemmer has been involved with this also since he is the Finance Director. There has been a lot of time spent on research, legal aspects, questions that have been asked to the State about what everyone else is doing with this money. They are waiting to see what Congress does in the next week but at the same time they are looking at what we can do with this money to help our community through this COVID-19 pandemic. There is a lot of money that is coming to us. We are supposed to get a second round of funding in the next couple of days that will match the original round of funding. The canal project has been finished. We have been doing a lot of cleanup with the Public Works crews and the water crews on a storm event cleanup. We had a couple of big water lines to repair after the storm. Mr. Kearney may give an update on the financing on our water and sewer debt. If we refinance the water and sewer debt we really need to look long and hard at where that puts us financially. Right now, with USDA money at 1 ½ to 2% interest, it is probably the right time for us to stretch a water/sewer project. We certainly have some big needs out there and repairs that need to be made. He opined this is a monumental time to do that and start working towards USDA money. He has also been working on the paving contract for Route 60 and Route 501. He thanked Mr. Roberts for all the work he has done on the IT project. He said it will be monumental for people to be able to pay their taxes and water bills without contact with money or people.

### **3.) City Attorney:**

Mr. Kearney advised that we heard from the USDA late last week. They are still interested in doing things with us. They indicated they would work with us closely. It will probably be their next fiscal year which starts September 1. They asked for some information and he is compiling it to give to them to see what we can get. We could refinance the Dickinson Well project and the original USD loan and combine it all into one and save a substantial amount of money for the City. It is a long way to get to USDA. Hopefully, he will have more updates in the next few months and come up with some numbers.

Councilman Cooper wanted to know if the USDA was talking about this September or next September.

Mr. Kearney said they are talking about September 2020. He said it will take a couple of months to get everything together and there is also going to be more grant money. He opined it looks very promising.

Councilman Cooper wanted to know if they are ready to talk about specific projects.

Mr. Scudder said they are going to get together with Hunter and staff and have a brain storming session. Hunter is one of our on-call engineers and he knows a lot about the water and sewer here in the City. They are going to try to pull some projects out that they think are most advantageous for us. We already know about some of the ones at the WWTP. We may try to reach out and do some projects that will set the City up for future growth and make some repairs that really need to be made. If we refinance the things that Mr. Kearney mentioned and have a savings, our goal would be to see what kind of projects we could do within the same range of financing the payments we are making today. He opined we may very well luck out on this if we can pull through with it. There will be a lot of work to get these funds.

Councilman Cooper said that he and Mr. Scudder talked about 5 or 6 months ago about a bigger upgrade to the WWTP and getting to a point where we would not have to buy nitrogen credits but perhaps sell them.

Councilman Coffey opined that it would cost 8 to 10 million dollars to do the upgrade to the WWTP.

#### **4.) Council Committee/Representative:**

Council Member Hickman said that she sent out an email earlier in the week to reconvene the Finance Committee meetings. Her idea was to look over some things that could be cost savings like the IT project. With all the fiscal issues that we have had we need to work on getting the City in a good financial light. She feels we need to come out of the bad financial light to a good one and feels that we are working on it. She feels we really need to focus on the City's finances. She opined it is very important for Council to do everything they can to keep the City in a good financial light. She then addressed the Labor Day activities. Unfortunately, we are not going to be able to do anything except the fireworks and maybe a couple of food trucks for Labor Day. She stated that she really wanted to do more for Labor Day, but she gave in to the consensus to not do more for Labor Day. She opined they were worried more about bad PR if Labor Day festivities were held like in the past. The COVID-19 cases are rising in our area. Based on the survey, 70 percent of the people were on board to come out and do something.

Councilman Coffey said that he agrees with the Finance Committee meetings. He opined we need to try to find ways to save money and cut costs.

Council Member Hickman said she also wanted to look at the Cares Act funding. She has some ideas that she would like to ask about. She also

realizes that Jay and the others are working very hard on how to spend these funds. She said we need to use as much of the fund that we can to improve the City.

Councilman Henson advised that the Buena Vista Fire Department will be 115 years old this year. He advised they had a Public Works/Public Safety Committee meeting. He said there was a lot of good information on changes that need to be made and it was a good meeting. He opined there are several departments that lack teamwork. When asked to do a job they will reply, "It is not my job". He opined if they work for the City, it is their job.

**CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO VARIOUS BOARDS,  
COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES:**

NONE.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**OB #1 DISCUSS RE-ADVERTISING FOR THE CITY MANAGER  
POSITION:**

Mayor Fitzgerald opined that Council should put the advertisement out again.

Mr. Kearney said the only issue with the advertisement is the dates and he wanted to know if anyone wanted to make any changes to it. He also said we would have to update the profile on the web site.

Councilman Cooper said the only question he has is when we would feel comfortable bringing candidates in for an interview and when would candidates feel comfortable coming in. He said when he went on vacation, they flew but he has good friends that will barely leave their homes.

Council Member Hickman opined if they apply, then they should assume they will be coming for an interview.

Mr. Kearney said that he felt like Councilman Cooper was trying to say he wonders if people will not come for an interview because of COVID-19.

Council Member Hickman said we were in the very start of COVID-19 when we advertised the first time and we got a lot of applicants.

Mayor Fitzgerald said the selection of applicants was not the best.

Councilman Henson said we still have 4 or 5 out of the original ten that was chosen. He suggested that we check to see if any of them are still interested.

Councilman Cooper said when we re-advertise, Ms. Wheeler could reach out and ask if they would like to still be considered. He opined that trying to interview in November or December is not a good idea. He suggested not interviewing until January if they cannot get the interviews done before November.

Mayor Fitzgerald said they could set a date for the first of November and then decide if that is when they want to interview.

Councilman Coffey asked if Council felt like candidates would want to come for interviews due to COVID-19:

Mr. Kearney suggested virtual interviews.

Mayor Fitzgerald said he is not in favor of virtual interviews.

Councilman Coffey suggested that the initial interview be virtual and if the candidate shows potential, bring them in for an in-person interview. After some further discussion, it was decided that the advertisement would run until September 30 and then start looking at applications for interviews on October 1.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**~~NB #1 DR. KEELER TO SPEAK CONCERNING THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS:~~**

**NB #2 FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR VACATION OF AN UNNAMED STREET RUNNING THROUGH THE PARCEL KNOWN AS TAX MAP ID 47-1-E-A, LOCATED AT 6<sup>TH</sup> AND MAGNOLIA AVENUE FROM THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, AND DONATION OF THIS LAND TO THE DABNEY S. LANCASTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE REAL ESTATE FOUNDATION:**

Ms. Wheeler read the following Ordinance:

**ORDINANCE**

**Abandonment of Public Right of Way  
Unnamed street traversing parcel  
Ordinance Text  
3 August 2020**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA, that in accordance with Section 15.2-2206 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, that the public right of way described in "Exhibit A" ("the Property") attached hereto shall be vacated and abandoned.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that this ordinance shall be recorded in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court for the City of Buena Vista, Virginia, and indexed under the names listed in Exhibit A.

This ordinance shall be effective 30 days following adoption by City Council.

\_\_\_\_\_  
William Fitzgerald, Mayor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dawn Wheeler, Clerk of Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

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WILLIAM H. FITZGERALD, MAYOR

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Dawn M. Wheeler, Clerk of Council