



City of Buena Vista City Council

Regular Council Meeting

March 7, 2024, 6:00 PM
Council Chambers – 2039 Sycamore Avenue

The City Council for the City of Buena Vista met for a Regular Council Meeting on Thursday, March 7, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Tyson Cooper

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton
Michelle Poluikis
Melvin Henson

Steve Webb
Todd Jones
Ronald Cash

Members Absent: None

ADG #1: CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND PRAYER

Mayor Cooper called the meeting to order, and Councilman Cash delivered the opening prayer.

ADG #2: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice-Mayor Staton moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilman Webb, and carried by Council.

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 15, 2024, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilwoman Poluikis, seconded by Vice-Mayor Staton, and carried by Council, with Councilman Jones abstaining.

ADG #4: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS

- Brent Styler, 2104 Walnut Avenue, chairman of the EDA, spoke first regarding the two openings on the Authority. He noted that everyone on the EDA is pleased with the two incumbents but would be equally as pleased with the two applicants. He then spoke about the airport study, noting that he had read the materials provided in the packet regarding it. He mentioned that if anyone has any more particulars than just a general “we need an airport,” he would like to see that and opined that the need for the airport or whether the expense is needed is questionable.

ADG #5: REPORTS

1. Mayor

Mayor Cooper mentioned that he had the opportunity to do a few things representing the City. The biggest one was that he and Mr. Tyree were able to accompany Mayor Friedman and the City Manager from Lexington as well as County Chairwoman Ayers and the County Administrator to Washington DC. They had some very productive meetings with our Congressman and two Senators.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree noted at the next Budget & Finance Committee meeting on March 12, they will have a draft budget available.

We got a new door system at City Hall. The system is now active, and we are working to get everyone updated. He stated that the old system is still in place until we get everyone acclimated and up to date.

There have been a lot of complaints this week about damage to the Secrist ball field. This was not RARO related, it was an adult softball team. They created large ruts in the field and left trash everywhere. This has created some overtime hours for RARO and some issues for the Park's crew. He, Ed, and Chad are going to be sitting down next week to talk about fees for the ball field. These fees will go to operational costs and to help maintain the field. Anyone who comes to use the field and trashes it will not be allowed to use it again.

Mr. Tyree then shared House Joint Resolution No. 330 which commends Nothin' Fancy:

WHEREAS since Nothin' Fancy was founded in 1994 in Crimora to compete in a bluegrass competition, the celebrated bluegrass band has consistently delighted and entertained multiple generations of Virginians across the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS Nothin' Fancy has grown in popularity, released 17 full-length albums, and continues to perform at festivals across the United States and in international engagements; and

WHEREAS Nothin' Fancy has earned six Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America (SPBGMA) Entertainers of the Year awards, honorary West Virginia Mountaineer status, certificates of appreciation from several towns in the Commonwealth, and the declaration of a "Nothin' Fancy Day" by the mayor of the City of Buena Vista; and

WHEREAS the Nothin' Fancy Bluegrass Festival at Glen Maury Park in Buena Vista has entertained audiences for twenty years, adding to the rich legacy, history, and cultural impact of bluegrass music and its storied history in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS the Commonwealth's own musical history is likewise entwined with Nothin' Fancy's repertoire of bluegrass, Appalachian, old time, gospel, and mountain music; and

WHEREAS, Nothin' Fancy has recovered from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which especially affected music festivals and other touring music industries, to commence its 30th anniversary tour across America and beyond; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend Nothin' Fancy on the occasion of its 30th anniversary for its members' accomplishments as historically significant bluegrass, gospel, and Americana performing artists; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the members of Nothin' Fancy as an expression of the

General Assembly's appreciation for their artistic contributions to the musical traditions and fabric of the Commonwealth.

Since Nothin' Fancy is a big event for us and is mentioned in this Resolution, he wanted to share that and thank those folks for everything they do.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees/Representatives

Councilman Jones reported that the Budget & Finance Committee held their first meeting on February 27th. They discussed overall budget objectives for the current fiscal year; a major event will be the real estate reassessment which will affect real estate rates beginning July 1st. His understanding is that the assessment will show enough increase that we will seriously have to look at the rate in order to balance things out. They will start on the draft at the next meeting on March 12th. They have planned two meetings in May; one for reading of the Budget and second for adoption. They will discuss and schedule any needed work sessions to get the budget put together.

Councilman Henson shared the following:

- There was a volunteer workday on Saturday throughout the City.
- Mountain Gateway Community College received bids for repairs on the Courtesy Motors building. They hope to be in that building by January 2025.
- The Fire Department Auxiliary will be doing a spaghetti dinner on March 15 from 4:30 – 7:00 p.m. The cost is \$10 and includes salad, spaghetti, and garlic bread; drive through pick up in the alley.
- The Outdoor Spaces Committee is working on scheduling a meeting for March 23. They will start riding around looking at different places, taking notes and pictures for potential projects.

Mr. Tyree mentioned that he and Dr. Francis have a meeting next week and one of the items on their agenda is to discuss the School Facilities Committee.

5. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers/Court Clerks

a. Edward Armentrout – Parks and Recreation

- The 2024 Calendar of events is now available (he provided a copy for each member of Council).
- Staff are preparing for the Easter Egg Hunt on March 31. There will be face painting, a jump house, pony rides, and prizes. They have roughly 25,000 eggs and have had 11 bikes donated as prizes.
- There will be a volunteer workday this Saturday with Tom Roberts and the SVU students. Some of the work will consist of fence painting and trail maintenance.
- There is discussion of possibly hosting a youth fishing day in April; they are just trying to work out all of the details.

- They are hoping to purchase either an electric bicycle or a minibike to assist in keeping the trails more up to date. The length of the trails inside the park makes it difficult to maintain all of them in a timely manner; this will cut down on the time it takes to get around.
- New outdoor grills for the shelters are being ordered soon and will be installed before the season begins.
- The golf cart lease has officially ended, and the carts will be returned to EZGO.
- Projects that have been completed include:
 - Support beams installed and drainage issues fixed at the multi-purpose pavilion
 - 25 additional trees removed from various areas inside the park
 - 43 stumps removed from upper campground
 - Siding and trim replaced on pool house
 - Exterior of Hill Top and Oak Ridge bath houses have been repaired
- Projects that are currently underway or upcoming include:
 - New bathroom for lower campground
 - Shelter #4 survey issues have been resolved
 - Fence and roof quotes are being collected for the Shelter #4 project
 - New siding being installed as well as new restroom doors
 - Drainage ditch and culvert pipes at entrance to park are being repaired
 - Playground fence and handicap parking area will be completed in April
 - Surface treatment of tennis/pickleball courts will be completed in the Spring
 - Work continues at the baseball field at Camden with assistance from RARO; new dirt to be installed as well as covers for the dugouts
 - Roof to be repaired on Double Decker restroom in April
 - All bath houses will be pressure washed inside and out when open for the season
 - Restroom fixtures will be replaced on an as needed basis
 - Repairs to the pool pavilion will begin next week
 - Plan to repair Double Decker floor are complete and will begin in April

b. Chris Coleman – Circuit Court

Mr. Coleman first thanked Mr. Tyree's support in getting the carpet replaced throughout his office and the record room after 30 years. He then announced that his office has received a \$25,575 grant from the Library of Virginia for scanning and indexing all remaining land records back to the founding of the City in 1892. This not only creates a permanent digital image of each land record, but records will be available online for subscription. We currently have about 18-20 paid subscribers and by adding these additional 80 years to our online database, he is confident that it will boost our subscriptions and generate additional revenue. Although the grant funds are to be used primarily for technology upgrades in the office, he does have some discretion to use the funds generated by the subscription fees and that would greatly reduce his reliance on the City for operational expenses.

6. Invited Community Organizations

a. Thomas Bell – Library Board of Trustees

Mr. Bell announced a new bulletin board program they have begun called “In Our Neighborhood.” This program involves community leaders taking a photo with their library cards and posting it on the bulletin board along with a brief biography. These photos and bios will also be featured on their website. Mr. Bell then handed out library cards that they had made for each Council member.

b. Bryson Adams – RARO

- Winter sports (basketball and wrestling) both had good numbers.
- Adult league numbers are good
- They have had to start another league for baseball and softball due to the increase in participation. Those practices begin on Monday.
- RARO Adventures is doing the kayaking program again this year.

Mr. Adams then spoke about an incident that occurred the previous weekend at Sechrist field. A group of adults playing softball engaged in destructive behavior causing extensive damage to the field. Not only did they vandalize the field by dragging mud through the outfield and sinking a 4-wheeler in the infield causing significant damage, but they also left the whole space completely trashed, including the Guy Carawan memorial. He opined that this disregard for public property and memorials is unacceptable and feels that immediate action needs to be taken to hold those responsible accountable for their actions. His suggestion is to conduct an investigation and ensure these individuals face appropriate consequences for their actions. He further opined that measures must be put in place to enhance the security of City facilities to prevent any future acts of vandalism and ensure the safety and sanctity of our public spaces and memorials. Mr. Adams provided some photos of the field and the damage that occurred.

Mr. Adams noted another incident that had occurred this past week that left him feeling extremely disappointed, frustrated, and feeling that there was a lack of support from the City in preparing for our youth rec leagues. There is a lot of dirt that needs to be moved from the baseball field at Camden. It was recommended that the City bring a dump truck by to haul it for them as it would only take them about two truckloads, whereas it would take the team from RARO multiple loads. Each day he was assured that it would be taken care of, but it still has not been. He noted that the most infuriating part of this incident was him seeing the inefficiency of City employees firsthand. He stated that he followed a City dump truck, which was needed for their project but was “unavailable,” for 29 blocks before returning to the Public Works building. He noted that there was minimal effort in clearing leaves from gutters, while neglecting other areas that did require attention. Only one employee got out of the truck twice during the entire process while two or three other employees sat in the truck. The tailgate of the dump truck was also left down for the leaves to simply fly out. He provided some photos that he had taken during that incident as well.

ADG #6: CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES:

Economic Development Authority

- Mr. Jerry Miller's appointment expires on March 31, 2024. Mr. Miller is willing to serve again. This is a four-year term and the first time it has appeared on the agenda.
- Ms. Coretta Thurman's appointment expires on March 31, 2024. Ms. Thurman is willing to serve again. This is a four-year term and the first time it has appeared on the agenda.

Mrs. Jody Fix and Mr. Peder Weierholt applied for the openings.

Councilman Webb moved to reappoint Mr. Jerry Miller to the EDA. The motion was seconded by Councilman Henson and carried by Council.

Councilman Jones moved to reappoint Ms. Coretta Thurman to the EDA, seconded by Councilman Webb and carried by Council.

Mr. Kearney mentioned that there will be another EDA opening coming up at the next meeting.

Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission

Mr. Bill Fitzgerald has resigned from the CSPDC. This appointment begins immediately and will expire on June 30, 2024. This is the first time it has appeared on the agenda. This seat must be filled by a Council member; typically the Mayor.

Councilman Henson moved to appoint Mayor Cooper to the CSPDC with Councilman Jones seconding. Council carried the motion to appoint Mayor Cooper.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

NB #1: DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR A REGIONAL FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORT

Mr. Tyree read the following Resolution:

Resolution of Support for Rockbridge Area General Aviation Airport Feasibility Study

WHEREAS the Rockbridge Region is interested in exploring opportunities for a General Aviation Airport in the area;

WHEREAS the Rockbridge Region understands the important economic benefits that a General Aviation Airport would bring to the Region; including but not limited to:

- Support for business and manufacturing in the area
- Allow for critical medical transport and air ambulance services
- Provide facilities for aerial firefighting, search and rescue, and law enforcement

- Provide training opportunities for flight school and aviation technology workforce training
- Support overnight and just-in-time delivery
- Accommodate agricultural and forestry operations
- Encourage educational programs
- Enhance outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities

WHEREAS the Rockbridge Region has garnered the support of many community and economic development organizations, four (4) institutions of higher education, and private business and industry;

WHEREAS the Virginia Department of Aviation through the Virginia Air Transportation System Plan (VATSP) has identified a “gap” in aviation services in the Rockbridge Region and considers the Rockbridge Region an underserved community;

WHEREAS The Virginia Department of Aviation and the Federal Aviation Administration have eligible funding for planning, which may provide on a cost-sharing basis for a feasibility study, which, in turn, would provide for an in-depth analysis of the potential project, a market condition analysis, an in-depth look at competition, and recommendations for a site selection analysis;

WHEREAS the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC), the leading public planning entity in the region serving the 21 communities in the district, wishes to assist Rockbridge County, the City of Buena Vista, the City of Lexington, the Town of Glasgow and the Town of Goshen, with this initiative.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Buena Vista requests the CSPDC to seek and apply for state and federal funding to conduct a feasibility study for a General Aviation Airport and to administer the planning grant(s) for the feasibility study, if awarded.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Buena Vista commits to providing support for this initiative and cost-share in the feasibility study.

Mr. Tyree noted that the County has already approved the Resolution and Lexington is discussing it tonight at their own City Council meeting. He also made note that this is NOT for a commercial airport.

Councilman Cash asked what the City’s portion of the cost would be. Mr. Tyree stated that the City’s share of the cost for the study would be \$7,185.

Mr. Kearney suggested adding the words “in an amount not to exceed \$7,185” to the Resolution.

Councilman Webb moved to approve the Resolution with the amended language.

Councilman Jones noted a few concerns he has with the Resolution as it is currently written. He mentioned that he has never heard the term “Rockbridge Region” and suggested that the first paragraph be changed to “the Rockbridge Board of Supervisors requests the City of Buena Vista’s support.” He also suggested that the second, third, and fourth paragraphs be removed as those are generalizations and opinions.

Councilman Webb amended his motion to **approve** the Resolution with all the suggested amendments. The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Staton and carried by Council.

The approved Resolution, as amended, is as follows:

**Resolution of Support for
Rockbridge Area General Aviation Airport
Feasibility Study**

WHEREAS the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors requests the City of Buena Vista's support in exploring opportunities for a General Aviation Airport in the area;

WHEREAS the Virginia Department of Aviation and the Federal Aviation Administration have eligible funding for planning, which may provide on a cost-sharing basis for a feasibility study, which, in turn, would provide for an in-depth analysis of the potential project, a market condition analysis, an in-depth look at competition, and recommendations for a site selection analysis;

WHEREAS the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC), the leading public planning entity in the region serving the 21 communities in the district, wishes to assist Rockbridge County, the City of Buena Vista, the City of Lexington, the Town of Glasgow, and the Town of Goshen, with this initiative.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Buena Vista requests the CSPDC to seek and apply for state and federal funding to conduct a feasibility study for a General Aviation Airport and to administer the planning grant(s) for the feasibility study, if awarded.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Buena Vista commits to providing support for this initiative and cost-share in the feasibility study in an amount not to exceed \$7,185.00.

This Resolution shall be effective on and from the date of its adoption.

Adopted this 7th day of March, 2024.

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

NB #2: DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF EMPLOYER REQUEST FOR FORFEITURE OF MEMBER BENEFITS

Mr. Tyree mentioned that this is for former Chief of Police, Keith Hartman. Approval of this will allow for the money that the City paid in to Mr. Hartman's retirement to be returned to the City. Council must certify that Mr. Hartman was convicted of a felony and that the felony was in association with the performance of their job duties.

Councilman Webb moved to **approve** the certification for forfeiture of benefits. Councilman Cash seconded the motion. Ms. Burch completed a roll call vote of Council as follows:

| Member | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------------------|----------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| Councilman Henson | X | | X | | |
| Councilwoman Poluikis | X | | X | | |
| Councilman Jones | X | | X | | |
| Councilman Webb | X | | X | | |
| Councilman Cash | X | | X | | |
| Vice-Mayor Staton | X | | X | | |
| Mayor Cooper | X | | X | | |

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor