

Special Town Council Meeting

Wednesday November 3, 2021

5:30 p.m.^[SEP]

Town Hall

104 North King Street

Public comment will not be accepted at this meeting

Present: Mayor Jim Auxer, Lori Robertson (Recorder), Jim Ford, Chris Stroech, Cheryl Roberts, Jenny Haynes, and Marty Amerikaner.

Absent: None

Staff: Amy Boyd – Town Clerk

Visitors: – In-person-Steve Pearson and Cris Kinsella. Meeting was also live streamed

Agenda:

1. Call meeting to order^[SEP]
Call the meeting to order by Mayor Auxer at 5:30 p.m.
2. Purpose – Mayor - The purpose of the special meeting is to give Town Council members the opportunity to discuss and share ideas about future projects that they may be considering but have not been introduced to a committee or at a Town Council meeting. These may also include projects in progress. Budgeting and funding of these projects and ideas will be considered. There will be no votes taken at this meeting. The meeting will be streamed on the Town's Facebook page Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

M. Amerikaner – when first elected he found the budget interesting. He met with the Mayor as to how it worked. The Reserved Funds account is large – it had \$3,495,000 in it. It now has \$3,724,000. When Mayor Auxer took over as Mayor, the town

was broke and he commends the Mayor for keeping us solvent. What kinds of projects would be a good use for these Reserve Funds? He handed out a Theory VS Practice informational sheet that didn't specify a universally accepted amount. It did state that 5-25% could be held back of annual operating expenditures.

L. Robertson – noted that at a 5-8% hold back rate that would be \$97K-155K. One of our garbage trucks can cost upwards of \$60-70K. The overtime we pay to keep our streets freed up from a heavy snowfall is a lot. Those two things alone could eat up ½ of the 5-8% reserve.

Mayor – when we went through COVID, we didn't have to lay anyone off. Our reserve funds helped keep us afloat. The projects that are current or potential all require manpower to keep them alive. The issue, currently, in the past, and possibly in the future, is the lack of people doing the work required to move these projects along.

J. Ford – Some towns can rely on more property taxes, income taxes, and 1% sales taxes than Shepherdstown. Video lottery has dropped considerably and can even go away. We need to keep a lot in the bank to cover underlying expenses. Any ideas for projects can be brought up to town council, do the work, and those ideas can then go to Finance.

Good uses of funds have been the Streetscape project, the new Town Hall and the serious upkeep for the Entler.

Mayor – the town lost \$700,000 during the pandemic. We are lucky, as we have no debt. When we need x/y/or z fixed, we do it, because we can. We can figure out the matching funds for grants, etc.

L. Robertson – the first grant for the bike path was in 2009 and was denied. We applied again in 2014 and were accepted. We have applied for several more grants since then, some awarded, others not. We were recently turned down for a large grant, but the Mayor and I are applying for another this week and next. Matt Mullenax from Metropolitan Planning and I have been at this for

years. I have lost members of the Advisory Board from people moving on, relocating, delays in the project itself, etc. Matt, the Mayor and I have kept it alive over the years. Projects like this take a lot of feet on the ground doing the work. We have exhausted all avenues at getting the remaining match due.

C. Stroech – where do we want to see us in 5-10 years? Some funding will go away. He thinks the bike path is a good example.

Mayor – a document was sent to him recently regarding the bike path from the Department of Highways to sign and send a check in the amount of \$200,000. This will get us to breaking ground status. It could be sent to Finance and to the December Council meeting to request the funds. There is no decision being made tonight for the bike path using the surplus. We will continue to seek more funding from other sources.

C. Stroech – another idea is a common area in the center of town or utilizing one of our parks. The idea is to explore options. The town would have to own the property of the common area. The available grant requires us to be shovel- ready. That means a consultant would be needed to advise us on an appropriate location and engineering completed. A common area could include picnic tables, a stage, benches, etc. He would like to have a committee for this and we can apply each year. A possible good use of the reserve funds could be for a consultant for this project. The grant committee has had some listening sessions about what is wanted/needed in town. He is working on a memo summarizing those sessions.

C. Roberts – there is an idea for a nice path through Cullison Park using a material called Flexipave that the quote received is \$100,000. The project could be done in phases and might be a good use of the reserve funds.

C. Stroech – this is a good project for the grant committee to take a look at.

M. Amerikaner – there has to be a point person on all of these projects.

Mayor – correct. We currently maintain our Tree City status, we have a town gardener for the upkeep of the beds along German/King and Princess Streets, and we keep are streets clean. Hiring consultants are great ideas for these projects, but we need people to find them, interview them and have a process in place to choose them. Right now we need help at the Welcome Center and helping Jenny with Christmas in Shepherdstown.

J. Ford – annexation should be at the forefront as well. Residential annexation is nice, as we would get a small amount in property tax revenue. However, the 1% sales tax would be hugely beneficial to town if we could annex the larger businesses outside of town. Those resident and businesses would have to want to annex in

Mayor – there have been in discussions. Letters were sent to the owners of the commercial properties – some responded, some did not.

J. Ford – video lottery revenue used to be approximately \$600K a year – no longer is it that, and it’s declining. It has gone down \$300K. The 1% sales tax helped make up for that loss. Annexing commercial property would be good for us.

The Mayor suggested placing Future Funding Projects on the Town Council agenda. He suggested that each member give some brief wish list items.

J. Haynes – sidewalks

J. Ford – fiber optics in town, putting the utility lines in the alleys and off of German Street

M. Amerikaner – promote climate sensitivity, solar placement facing German St.

L. Robertson – possible diagonal parking on German St.

C. Roberts – to pursue comments/suggestions for Parks, and amphitheater, etc.

C. Stroech – parking for employees –a possible mini-bus to transport from a remote SU lot.

Mayor – can possible touch base with the auditor to give input as to how much the minimum should be in the Reserves Fund.

3. Adjournment.

**J. Ford – move to adjourn at 7:01 p.m. Second by C. Stroeck.
No objections noted.**

Draft Minutes respectfully submitted by L. Robertson, Recorder for the Corporation of Shepherdstown.