

**Town of Grottoes
Workshop Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER: The Town of Grottoes Town Council held a workshop meeting on Tuesday, November 12, 2019, at 6:00 p.m., with Mayor Holloway presiding.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present were: Emily Holloway, Jo Plaster, Mark Keeler, Tim Leeth, and C.W. Stephenson.

Other Town Officials present were: Town Manager Nathan Garrison, Attorney Burns Earle, Town Clerk Tara Morris, Town Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director A.J. Hummel, Parks and Tourism Director Ashley Collier, and Police Chief Thomas James.

Mayor Holloway stated the first item for discussion is amending the B-2 zoning. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that the Planning Commission has been looking into rezoning Dogwood Avenue from B-1 to B-2 with the zoning permitting business from the B-1 zoning and having residential listed as a conditional use. He stated that this would not restrict any businesses from coming into this area, but it gives the Planning Commission and Council more say and would allow residence in the zoning more flexibility with their homes. Mayor Holloway asked if there have been any complaints from citizens. Town Manager Nathan Garrison said that once he explained what we are trying to do everyone has been receptive with the change.

Parks and Tourism Director Ashley Collier said that Grand Caverns has a 1998 Ford Contour car that was donated by Lettie Stickley in 2010. She stated that they are having problems with the car starting and it has a broken coil spring. She said the cost to repair the car would be about \$700.00 and the current value in its condition would be \$475.00 for trade in or \$758.00 private party. Parks Director Ashley Collier stated that she was going to suggest selling the car as is since the repairs would cost as much as the cars value. Councilman C.W. Stephenson made a motion to sell the Grand Caverns car. Councilman Tim Leeth seconded the motion. Council members Jo Plaster, Mark Keeler, C.W. Stephenson and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Mayor Holloway stated that the next item for discussion is Lil' Guss's tent request. Mayor Holloway stated that they want to be able to use the outside seating for the winter months and has been researching ideas for that. She stated what he has come up with is a party tent. She said since it will not be up more than 180 days we cannot consider it a permanent structure and based on building code they would not

need a building permit. Mayor Holloway said that in our code it states additional buildings needs to be approved by the Town Council. Councilman Tim Leeth asked if we knew the size of the tent and the heating source. Town Manager Nathan Garrison said that the tent is going to be a 20x40 and will be heated with an electric heater. He said that the fire marshal has given him a 49-person occupancy since the tent only has one door. Mayor Holloway said she knows everyone has received complaints for noise but stated that is a different topic that needs to be addressed and should not impact the decision for this request. Councilman Tim Leeth asked if they are aware of the noise complaints we have received, and Council Mark Keeler said that he feels the planning commission should review the noise ordinance.

Councilman Tim Leeth stated that the Special Events Committee is working on the parade and tree lighting and he will have more information at the retreat.

Councilman C.W. Stephenson thanked everyone who helped with the Haunted Cave and said it was a huge success.

Councilwoman Jo Plaster said that the paving along Dogwood and 3rd Street has been completed and got rid of the roughness in the road. She said the committee will meet soon to discuss future projects and that leaf collection will begin on November 18th.

Mayor Holloway reminded Council that this Saturday is a Council Retreat from 8:30 am and it will end by 12:00 pm. She said the purpose of this meeting is to discuss what we want to do before budget time. She said that on the agenda there is a committee discussion for planning for our future.

With no further business to discuss, Mayor Holloway adjourned the workshop meeting.

Mayor Holloway called the joint public hearing to order on Tuesday, November 12, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

Council Members Present were: Mark Keeler, Emily Holloway, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson and Tim Leeth.

Planning Commission Members Present were: Mark Keeler, David Bradley, Kevin Campbell, Miriam Miller, Justin Neitzey, and Jen Smith.

Town Council Members Absent were: Joshua Bailey and David Raynes

Other Town Officials Present were: Town Clerk Tara Morris, Attorney Burns Earle, Town Manager Nathan Garrison, Tourism and Parks Director Ashley Collier, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, and Police Chief Thomas James.

Town Clerk Tara Morris determined that a quorum was present for the Town Council and the Planning Commission.

Mayor Holloway stated that the reason for the joint public hearing is to hear citizens' comments regarding the recommendation to amend B-2 zoning.

Mayor Holloway stated that no one has signed up to speak either for or against the recommendation and asked if the Planning Commission or Town Council has any questions or comments. No comments were made.

Councilman Tim Leeth made a motion to close the public hearing. Councilwoman Jo Plaster seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Commission Member Mark Keeler made a motion to amend the B-2 as recommended. Commission Member Jen Smith seconded the motion. Commission Members Mark Keeler, David Bradley, Kevin Campbell, and Jen Smith voted in favor of the motion, Commission Member Miriam Miller abstained, motion carried.

Mayor Holloway called the joint public hearing to order and stated that the reason for the joint public hearing is to hear citizens' comments regarding the recommendation to rezone the B-1 section of Dogwood Avenue to B-2.

Mayor Holloway stated that no one has signed up to speak either for or against the recommendation and asked if the Planning

Commission or Town Council has any questions or comments. No comments were made.

Councilman Tim Leeth made a motion to close the public hearing. Councilwoman Jo Plaster seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Commission Member Mark Keeler made a motion to recommend to Town Council to rezone Dogwood Avenue from B-1 to B-2 as presented. Commission Member Jen Smith seconded the motion. Commission Members Mark Keeler, David Bradley, Kevin Campbell, and Jen Smith voted in favor of the motion, Commission Member Miriam Miller abstained, motion carried.

Mayor Holloway called the November 12, 2019 Council Meeting to order and welcomed citizens. Town Clerk Tara Morris called the roll. Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, Emily Holloway, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth were present. Also present were Town Clerk Tara Morris, Attorney Burns Earle, Town Manager Nathan Garrison, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, Tourism and Parks Director Ashley Collier, and Police Chief Thomas James.

Mayor Holloway asked for a motion to approve the minutes from last months meetings. Councilman Mark Keeler stated so moved. Councilman Tim Leeth seconded. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

FINANCE

Councilwoman Jo Plaster made a motion to approve the October Treasurer's Report as presented. Councilman Tim Leeth seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Councilwoman Jo Plaster made a motion to approve the bills as of November 12, 2019 and the remaining bills for the month of October 2019 totaling \$104,116.13. Councilman Tim Leeth seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

ORDINANCE, HEALTH AND PROPERTY

Councilman Mark Keeler made a motion to amend the B-2 zoning as presented. Councilwoman Jo Plaster seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Councilman Mark Keeler made a motion to rezone Dogwood Avenue from B-1 to B-2. Councilwoman Jo Plaster seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Councilman Mark Keeler made a motion to grant the request from Lil' Gus's for a temporary tent for a maximum of 180 days keeping in mind the town zoning requirements and fire marshal's requirements and that it be disassembled by 180 days. Councilman Tim Leeth seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Councilman Mark Keeler made a motion to have the Planning Commission review the current noise ordinance to see if any updates need to be made. Councilwoman Jo Plaster seconded the motion. Councilman Tim Leeth asked to include a decibel level. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

STREETS AND STREET LIGHTS

Councilwoman Jo Plaster stated that leaf pick up will begin November 18, 2019.

PARKS RECREATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

Councilman C.W. Stephenson announced the pool construction has started and hoping to be completed in April.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Councilman Tim Leeth announced the Caroling in the Caverns will be on December 7th from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm. The Grottoes Christmas Parade will be on Sunday, December 8th at 5:30 pm and the Annual Tree Lighting will be following the parade along with cookies and hot chocolate in the Town Hall. Councilman Tim Leeth also announced the judging of our Home Decorating Contest will be on December 16th beginning at 7:00 pm.

PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE PROTECTION

Councilman Tim Leeth made a motion to convene into closed session pursuant to section 2.2-3711(A)1 of the Code of Virginia to discuss matters for the purpose of considering such persons assignments, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining or resignation. Councilman Mark Keeler seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Councilman Tim Leeth made motion to adjourn the closed session. Councilman Mark Keeler seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Mayor Holloway read the certification of the closed session to the best of your knowledge that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under section 2.2-3711(A)1 of the Code of Virginia as only such public business matters that were identified in the motion by which a closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered in the meeting. Town Clerk Tara Morris took a roll call. M. Keeler; so certify, J. Plaster; so certify, E. Holloway; so certify, C. Stephenson; so certify, T. Leeth; so certify.

Councilman Mark Keeler made a motion to appoint Nathan Foerster to the Planning Commission. Councilman Tim Leeth seconded the motion. Council members Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, C.W. Stephenson, and Tim Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS AND CLAIMS

Aerika Williams addressed the Council asking the Council to consider a resolution in opposition of the proposed redistricting of South River Elementary School students to Elkton Middle School and East Rockingham High School. She stated that she is speaking as a voice for over 750 people that have signed a petition that is going to be presented to the Rockingham County School Board. She stated that she has lived in Grottoes for 29 years attended South River Elementary, Montevideo Middle and Spotswood High School and when she was pregnant with her son she decided to buy a home in Grottoes

because she wanted her children to grow up in the same school system that she did. She feels that if this redistricting happens it will negatively impact Grottoes as well. Ms. Williams stated that she has spoken to several couples who have said if this redistricting happens, they will put their homes on the market and move out of Grottoes and this will affect the Town's revenue. She feels that this will hurt the Town because so many homes will be for sale at one time and they will be sold for rock bottom prices. Ms. William said the change would double the length of time the children have to be on the bus and would have to travel Route 340 which is a dangerous road. She stated that this change would put some parents at work over an hour away from their child's school. Ms. Williams stated that as parents we have limited impact on decisions but with an entire Town's support, we may have a chance at what's right.

Ashlyn Chandler addressed the Council and stated that she has three kids that have attended school here. She said she is a Spotswood graduate and so is her husband. She said her daughter is a 9th grader at Spotswood and is already apart of the Spotswood Community. She said she has played sports at Spotswood for two years now and doesn't feel that the County has given adequate time to make a sound decision. She said with this proposed change taking place next August it doesn't give her enough time to put her house on the market and find something in the Spotswood district. Ms. Chandler stated that she has heard great things about Elkton Middle School and East Rock High School but said that is not where she chose to send her kids to school. She said this would be better if more time was given for the ones that want to relocate would have time to financially prepare themselves. She stated when the split happened with East Rockingham High School those effected had two years to prepare and this is less than one year.

Maite Taylor addressed the Council and stated that she built a home here in Grottoes so that her children would attend Spotswood High School. She said that she has a hard time believing that she is going to have to tell her 12-year old that not only will she have to change schools, loose half her friends, but also that she will be going to High School. She stated this is unreasonable. She said her son has participated in AAU basketball with the intent to flow into the basketball

program and will now have to start over with a new team and new coaches. She said that her children go to an afterschool provider that would not be available to her if her children are attending an Elkton Community School because the buses will not go to where her provider is located. She asked for the Council to please represent your Town because they don't feel they are being represented by the Rockingham County School Board.

Robin Skivaski addressed the Council and stated that she agrees with the other ladies that have spoke tonight. She said they rented a townhome for 11 years and decided to purchase a home here in Grottoes because they like the Town and the schools for their children. She said her children are in 11th and 7th grade and are very happy with where they are. She stated as a child she had to switch schools and she said that it is very hard on the child with trying to make and keep friends. She said she vowed not to do that to her kids. She asked for the Council to consider their concerns and to represent the citizens to the School Board.

Amanda Smith addressed the Council and said that she feels everyone has covered her concerns and she wasn't going to reiterate it all again but does feel that they have been railroaded by the school board. She said she cannot believe her junior is going to now be graduating at East Rockingham. She said her daughter suffers with anxiety and suffers from depression and has a hard time making friends. She said that she is already having anxiety over this. She said her younger daughter is in the 6th grade and just last week said she finally feels like she fits in and likes the school and now she is going to have to change schools next year and then again the following year. Ms. Smith said three schools in three years is too much for any child to adjust to.

Lisa Gaylor addressed the Council stated that she has been in Grottoes for 15 years with the intentions of her children attending Spotswood. She said she understands redistricting but a few years ago they redistricted the Grassy Creek Community from Turner Ashby to Spotswood knowing this would create a problem. She said that the School Board needs to come up with a better solution then shuffling kids around every couple years. She said that the County says their main priority is the children come first. She said it doesn't seem that way when you are taking them out of the school they have been attending and making them go to another school. She said the change is harder on the children than they are thinking. Ms. Gaylor said that she has been told with the over crowding of Harrisonburg that there are several kids coming to Spotswood and its not fair to our kids who have been

going there to have to move. She said we are stuck in the middle of it because this is not our choice and we need the Council's support because this is not okay. She said she can understand more on an elementary level that middle school may be different but not uprooting the middle schoolers or high schoolers.

Mayor Holloway stated the petitions and claims section on our agenda is not an open dialog. She stated you may have seen them taking notes she explained this is their time to listen to your concerns and then they can get back with you on how it moves forward from a Council standpoint. Mayor Holloway thanked them for coming tonight and expressing their concerns.

With no further business to discuss, Mayor Holloway adjourned the meeting.

**Town of Grottoes
Council Retreat**

CALL TO ORDER: The Town of Grottoes Town Council held a Council Retreat on Saturday, November 16, 2019, at 8:30 a.m., with Mayor Holloway presiding.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present were: Emily Holloway, Jo Plaster, Mark Keeler, Tim Leeth, and David Raynes.

Other Town Officials present were: Town Manager Nathan Garrison, and Town Clerk Tara Morris.

Mayor Holloway stated that the purpose of this is to plan from each committee before working on the budget. She said that she thought we would go by committees.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Councilman Tim Leeth stated that coming up we have the parade and tree lighting ceremony, and everything is ready for those events. Councilman Tim Leeth said for future events with the End of Summer Celebration growing he suggested adding beer and wine to the event. After discussion Councilman Tim Leeth made a motion to add controlled alcohol to the End of Summer Celebration. Councilwoman Jo Plaster seconded the motion. Council members Jo Plaster, Mark Keeler, Tim Leeth, and David Raynes voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Councilman Tim Leeth gave the dates to the following events. Street Dance on June 5, 2020 and End of Summer Celebration on September 12, 2020.

WATER AND SEWER

Town Manager Nathan Garrison said the GIS system for the Town Maintenance is almost complete. He said a future project for water and sewer is to replace water meters with radio read meters. He said this would be an upfront cost but would cut back on the amount of man hours it takes to read the meters and the accuracy of the readings.

STREETS AND STREET LIGHTS

Councilwoman Jo Plaster said the streets committee is looking into several things. She said we want to add new sidewalks, replace old street signs, replace a couple trucks, and purchase a small excavator and trailer to haul it. She said another future purchase would be a skid steer.

PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE

Mayor Holloway said Chief James is working on a 3-year plan for the police department. Items discussed were a Council Code of Ethics and an agreement among Council that we don't discuss matter before speaking on them and we have Nathan do the correspondences. Councilman Mark Keeler stated that Staunton does an affirmation every year, but they call theirs Council Procedures.

Mayor Holloway discussed evaluations and asked what type of evaluation we want to use and if anyone had any samples to please give them to the personnel committee by December 1st.

PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

Town Manager Nathan Garrison said some future plans for the park include infrastructures. Councilman Mark Keeler suggested looking into a more natural playground for Grand Caverns.

Councilwoman Jo Plaster said the Council has been invited to attend the Little League meeting on November 18, 2019.

Town Manager Nathan Garrison said the Blue Ridge Committee wants to meet with Council at an upcoming meeting.

ORDINANCE, HEALTH AND PROPERTY

Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that he has talked with Nathan Miller on how we should proceed with the citizens concerns on the redistricting. He said that no matter how we feel or what we say we ultimately don't have a say on what the County School Board will do and has been advised to respond back to the citizens letting them know that we basically cannot respond and encourage them to go to the school board meeting. Town Manager Nathan Garrison stated that he has drafted a letter for everyone to read and after review and a couple changes the letter was approved to be sent to the citizens that addressed the Council.

FINANCE

Mayor Holloway said we are at the point of the year where we need to consider bonuses. Councilman Tim Leeth made a motion to proceed with bonuses for Town employees by the end of December 2019. Councilman Mark Keeler seconded the motion. Mayor Holloway stated these bonuses are not merit based. Councilman Tim Leeth amended his motion to include these bonuses are not merit based bonuses for this physical year. Councilman Mark Keeler accepted the amendment. Council members

Jo Plaster, Mark Keeler, Tim Leeth, and David Raynes voted in favor of the motion, motion carried.

Councilwoman Jo Plaster said that she was approached by a couple people asking about a way to sponsor a child to be able to participate in Little League or Weavers Karate and/or other activities that someone may not be able to afford. Councilman Jo Plaster said she thought of doing like a Scholarship Program to assist a child to be able to participate in these activities. She asked about making a budget line item for this. Mayor Holloway suggested that we host a fundraiser for this so that it is not coming out of taxpayer's monies but still shows our interest in keeping the kids active and involved.

Mayor Holloway stated that we are out of time and adjourned the meeting.