

# VARNVILLE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

October 8, 2012 @ 7:00 PM

(I)

## **Call to Order**

Officials present were Mayor Nathaniel “Nat” A. Shaffer, Mayor Pro-Tem Lloyd “Tootie” Griffith, Jr., Councilmen Ralph Smith, Henry Tuten, H. Alexander Campbell, Adam Major, and Ronald Williams, Police Chief Tyrone Smith, Public Works Director, Robert “Bobby” Edwards, Fire Chief Dobie Hiers, and Secretary to the Mayor and Council, Amy Roberts.

Among the general population in attendance were Brenda Willis, Martha Bazzle, Al Roberts, Kathy Roberts, Perry Padgett, Sr., and Billy Henderson.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Shaffer. The invocation was given by Councilman Tuten and the Pledge of Allegiance followed. Mayor Shaffer gave the FOIA Compliance Report stating that the meeting agenda was faxed to all media outlets and posted outside the town hall on October 6, 2012.

Mayor Shaffer presented the minutes from the special council meeting held on August 29, 2012. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion that the minutes be accepted for approval and Councilman Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer presented the minutes from the council meeting held on September 10, 2012 and Councilman Campbell made a motion that the minutes be accepted for approval. Councilman Major seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

(II)

## **Introduction and/or requests of visitors**

Mayor Shaffer acknowledged Al Roberts who was on the agenda to speak about a residential issue in his neighborhood. Mr. Roberts expressed concern that his neighborhood has been invaded by a junkyard and fears it will affect his property value. Mr. Roberts stated that citizens from all walks of life have lived in his neighborhood throughout the years and until now he has never had to deal with the unsightliness of wrecked junky cars. The junkyard is owned by Jimmy Butler whose property borders Mr. Roberts’ property. Mr. Roberts noted that Mr. Butler has been willing to put a fence around the junkyard but it is still an eye sore for the neighborhood. Mayor Shaffer informed Mr. Roberts that Mr. Butler’s property is unique because the property is zoned half residential and half highway commercial. Mayor Shaffer asked Mr. Roberts to give Mr. Butler the opportunity to approach the Varnville Planning Commission to have the property rezoned. The mayor explained that Mr. Butler has not broken any laws at this time.

(III)

## **Financial report**

Mayor Shaffer presented a simple written financial report. He informed the council that a deposit

of \$18,841.00 had been made to the reserve fund because the town had received an unbudgeted reimbursement of funds paid to the Local Government Assurance Group prior to switching to the Employee Insurance Program. The reserve fund now has a balance of \$97,016.64. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to accept the simple financial report as information only. Councilman Tuten seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

(IV)

### **Unfinished Business**

Mayor Shaffer called for a motion to table the first reading of Ordinance No. 2012-04 to raise rates for garbage, refuse, and solid waste. The mayor stated that the town has been consumed with an audit; therefore more time is needed to determine whether the \$2.50 proposed increase will be enough to sustain the town for several years. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to table the first reading and Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

(V)

### **Reports of Department Heads and Committees**

**Police Department:** Police Chief Tyrone Smith presented the council with a written report for the Varnville Police Department. The chief stated that he and Lieutenant Smith responded to a bomb threat at Wade Hampton High School on September 27, 2012. The juvenile suspect has been charged with a petition for the bomb threat. Chief Smith also informed the council of a rumor of a potential drive by shooting at Wade Hampton High School on October 4, 2012. After investigation, the rumor proved to be unfounded. Chief Smith requested permission from the council to attend the Police Chief Association's Annual Conference from October 24, 2012 to October 28, 2012 for a cost of \$540. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to grant the chief's request and Councilman Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Chief Smith also said that every citizen who received a code enforcement letter regarding dilapidated buildings responded in a positive manner and all were willing to comply.

**Fire Department:** Fire Chief Dobie Hiers had nothing to report. Mayor Shaffer expressed his condolences to Chief Hiers on the recent death of his father.

**Department of Public Works:** Public Works Director, Bobby Edwards, informed the council that there will be a bid meeting at Varnville Town Hall at 2:00 P.M. on October 18, 2012 for the water looping project. Mr. Edwards also stated that the caboose behind the gazebo had been vandalized and it would cost approximately \$400 to replace the windows. Mayor Shaffer suggested that the Parks & Recreation Committee meet with the donor of the caboose and discuss the repairs and ways to prevent vandalism in the future.

**Clerk Treasurer's Office:** Nothing to report

**Mayor's Office:** Mayor Shaffer read a thank you note from the Varnville Community Council. The Community Council thanked the town for including them in the budget which allowed them to purchase a picnic table for the park and put curbing in the middle of the parking lot on Main Street. The Community Council plans to have "Halloween at the Gazebo" on October 31, 2012 from 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. Also the Community Council requested permission to block Palmetto Avenue from Main Street to Palm Street for "A Night on the Town" on December 7, 2012 from 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. Councilman Williams made a motion to grant the request. Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer stated that the Public Works Department is currently short staffed and the Streets & Sanitation Committee has been conducting interviews. Also the Varnville Police Department is short staffed and Mayor Shaffer, Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith, and Police Chief Smith have been conducting interviews to fill the position. Mayor Shaffer informed the council that he is in the process of renewing the town's liability insurance with SCMIRF. The process is very tedious as all property owned by the town has to be listed. The mayor also stated that he has been working with the Lowcountry Regional Water System listing all of the town's assets and liabilities. Mayor Shaffer announced that preliminary reviews of the town's audit are good and the official audit report could possibly be available by December.

(VI)

### **New Business**

Mayor Shaffer presented the council with three business license requests. Councilman Tuten made a motion to approve a new business license for David Bridges d/b/a Electronic Solutions. Councilman Williams seconded the motion and all members were in favor. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to approve a new business license for Eddie Carter d/b/a Complete Fire Systems. Councilman Major seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to approve a new business license for Sandra Crews d/b/a Dips, Dogs, & Deli. Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer gave the first reading of Ordinance 2012-05 to authorize the Municipal Association of South Carolina to act as the municipal agent for purposes of distributing to municipalities the municipal broker's tax collected by the South Carolina Department of Insurance. It is necessary to amend the Business License Ordinance to conform to the state law. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to approve and amend the ordinance. Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer read Resolution No. 2012-06 to amend the employee handbook policy regarding bereavement leave. The amended policy will state that an employee will be paid for 5 consecutive days beginning the day after the death of a family member. Councilman Campbell made a motion to adopt the amended policy and Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor. The mayor gave the first reading of Ordinance No. 2012-06 which is a comprehensive animal/dog control ordinance. Councilman Tuten made a motion to adopt the ordinance and Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

(VII)

**Executive Session**

Mayor Pro-Tem made a motion at 8:06 P.M. to go in to executive session to discuss a personnel matter regarding an employee's grievance hearing for former employee, SRO Stacy Loadholt. Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor. After a brief discussion, Councilman Campbell made a motion to come out of executive session at 8:20 P.M. Councilman Major seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

(VIII)

**Old Business**

None

(IX)

**Council members' concerns/comments**

Councilman Smith said the police department needs to beef up security in the neighborhoods as stealing is on the rise.

Councilman Tuten said he is impressed by the town's financial situation as the town has come a long way in the past five years. He congratulated his fellow councilman on a job well done.

Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith stated that the town needs to work diligently on acquiring another garbage truck as we are down to one truck. He agreed with Councilman Tuten that the town is doing well financially.

Councilman Campbell asked if a request had been submitted for a street light to be placed on the corner of Park and Highland Streets. Mayor Shaffer confirmed the request had been received. Councilman Campbell stated that Chief Smith needs help on the police force and hopes an officer will be hired soon.

Councilman Major said that he is happy that the town has money to fall back on. He agreed with Councilman Campbell that a police officer needs to be hired quickly to take some of the work load off of Chief Smith.

Councilman Williams was curious as to how many officers have been interviewed. He said crime rate goes up this time of year and hopes an officer is hired soon. Councilman Williams said that the town needs to be proactive in taking care of our parks as the Ginn Street ballpark is an eye sore. He mentioned that he spoke to Lindsey Conrad regarding broadband service in the Varnville area and thanked the mayor for referring her to him.

(X)

**Adjournment**

Mayor Shaffer called for a motion to adjourn at 8:40 PM. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion and Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Roberts  
Secretary to Mayor and Council