

VARNVILLE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

September 10, 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, Town Attorney, Kevin Brown, and Secretary to the Mayor and Council, Amy Roberts. Absent was Fire Chief Dobie Hiers.

Among the general population in attendance were Brenda Willis, Martha Bazzle, Eugene Jenkins, James L. Smith, Michael DeWitt (Hampton County Guardian), and Alzena Rollins.

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

Mayor Shaffer presented the minutes from the council meeting held on August 13, 2012. Councilman Tuten made a motion that the minutes be accepted for approval and Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer presented the minutes from the special council meeting held on August 29, 2012 and Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to table the approval of those minutes until the October council meeting. Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

Mayor Shaffer made an announcement to the media and the general public explaining the town’s policy on distributing minutes which states that minutes cannot be released until approved by the council.

(II)

Introduction and/or requests of visitors

Mayor Shaffer acknowledged Martha Bazzle (Concerned Citizens for Responsible Government) who was on the agenda to speak about DHEC, budget items, and minutes. Mrs. Bazzle pointed out a transposition of numbers in the June 11, 2012 minutes – the year 2013 was incorrectly typed as 2103. Mayor Shaffer told Mrs. Bazzle the correction would be made promptly. Mrs. Bazzle then inquired about a Varnville tax on her Century Link bill which the mayor explained is a sales tax to the citizens of Varnville that is collected by the Municipal Association of South Carolina. Mrs. Bazzle then asked about a DHEC fee on her water bill. The mayor explained that the 75¢ fee is used to pay DHEC’s water and sewer regulatory fees they charge the town for engaging in the water and sewer business. She also questioned the solid waste fee. The mayor explained that fee is used to offset the cost the county charges the town for dumping limbs,

leaves, and other miscellaneous yard debris in the county landfill. The mayor then explained the formula of both fees to Mrs. Bazzle as she questioned why we budgeted a surplus in the fees versus the actual expense. The mayor stated that it was impossible to budget an exact figure due to residents relocating, environmental factors, and weather conditions. The town deemed it safer to charge a small surplus rather than risk shortfall. She also questioned a line item on the 2012-2013 budget that is listed as AMIR dues. This is for a radio frequency fee.

The council then allowed Mr. James L. Smith to express a concern he has about the lack of water pressure at his home. Mayor Shaffer and Public Works Director, Bobby Edwards, assured Mr. Smith that the problem would be taken care of in a timely manner.

(III)

Financial report

Mayor Shaffer presented the financial report in the absence of a town clerk. In August 2012, in the General Fund there was an income of \$114,776 and expenditures of \$130,673 with a deficit of \$15,897. The balance in the General Fund is \$178,835. Water Works had an income of \$70,022 and expenditures of \$90,536 with a net decrease of \$20,514. The balance of the Water Works account is \$377,298. The mayor stated that there were a lot of expenditures in August; however, the Town of Varnville is still well within budget.

(IV)

Unfinished Business

Mayor Shaffer reminded council that he had proposed a \$2.50 increase for garbage, refuse, and solid waste at the August 13, 2012 council meeting. This proposition was due to several important factors – the Streets & Sanitation Department is operating at a deficit; the town has only one operating garbage truck; and the longest-term Streets & Sanitation employee who drives that garbage truck is facing retirement. The mayor also presented the council with options for outsourcing garbage collection at a special council meeting on August 29, 2012, but the council and the general public has shown no interest in outsourcing. Mayor Shaffer expressed concern about whether the \$2.50 increase will be enough to sustain us for several years as he does not want to impose an increase annually. Councilman Tuten made a motion to table the unfinished business until the issue can be discussed further. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

(V)

Reports of Department Heads and Committees

Police Department: Police Chief Tyrone Smith stated that Code Enforcement Officer Michael Smith has really been cracking down on code enforcement regarding dilapidated buildings and tall grass/weeds. Mayor Shaffer interjected that there are many houses in foreclosure that are in direct violation of the grass/weed ordinance. Red tags have been attached to the doors of those

homes giving the owners 10 days to comply. If the grass is not cut within the allotted time, the Town of Varnville will cut the grass and put a lien on the property for the charges. Chief Smith also informed the council that the Varnville Police Department with the help of Bobby Edwards has captured and/or destroyed 15 to 20 dogs per the town code since the August 13, 2012 council meeting.

Fire Department: Nothing to report in the absence of Fire Chief Dobie Hiers

Department of Public Works: Public Works Director, Bobby Edwards, stated that he has been busy pouring cement on the sidewalks near Brice Herndon Funeral Home. He also said that progress will soon begin on the Mill Pond Pump Station Upgrade. Mayor Shaffer added that he signed a letter of intent to award the bid to J.R. Wilson Construction. J.R. Wilson Construction submitted a bid of \$115,000 for the job. Two other companies submitted marginally lower bids; however, they did not meet the criteria of the town code. Town Attorney, Kevin Brown, suggested that the town might want to consider amending the code to add a local contractor provision.

Clerk Treasurer's Office: Nothing to report

Mayor's Office: Mayor Shaffer reminded the council of the Yemassee Shrimp Festival Parade that will take place on Saturday, September 15, 2012. Mayor Shaffer, Councilman Major, Councilman Campbell, and Councilman Smith plan to ride in the parade in a Town of Varnville car. The mayor stated that he had received a request from Wade Hampton High School for a permit to hold the school's Homecoming Parade within the town limits on Friday, September 21, 2012 at 3:15 PM. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to grant the request for the permit contingent upon the students cleaning up any posters, streamers, or other litter they generate. Councilman Smith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer agreed to send the permit to WHHS Principal, Barry Rosenberg, with the contingencies listed. The mayor mentioned the Town of Estill's Fall Festival will begin on October 6, 2012 at 11:00 AM. Mayor Shaffer informed the council that as Risk Management & Safety Coordinator, Amy Roberts plans to attend a free back safety training sponsored by the Municipal Association of South Carolina on October 4, 2012 at the Isle of Palms. Attendance at this training counts toward SCMIT Minimum Guidelines credit. The mayor presented a request from Clerk of Court, Reneé Bennett, to attend the Business Licensing Officials Association's annual meeting in Hilton Head, SC from Tuesday, October 23, 2012 to Thursday, October 25, 2012. The approximate cost of the conference is \$383. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to grant the request and Councilman Williams seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer reminded the council of the 10th Annual Hampton County Library Book Sale to be held October 11 – 13, 2012, with each member of council receiving a complimentary ticket to the book preview and dessert sampling on October 10, 2012. Mayor Shaffer informed the council that they needed to appoint an ADA (American Disabilities Act) Coordinator for the town and reappoint the current members of the ADA Committee. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to appoint Amy Roberts as ADA Coordinator. Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All

members were in favor. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to reappoint Councilman Adam Major, Randy Crews, and Frank McClure to the existing ADA Committee. Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

(VI)

New Business

Mayor Shaffer read Resolution No. 2012-03 to amend the Town of Varnville Employee Handbook to require current Streets & Sanitation and Water Works employees to obtain a Commercial Driver's License (Class B minimum) within 180 days of the adoption of the resolution and future employees to obtain a CDL within 180 of their date of hire. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2012-03 and Councilman Campbell seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer read Resolution no. 2012-04 to grant a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) loan to Lowcountry Regional Water Systems (LRWS) for \$150,000. The terms of the loan are a five year balloon, interest only at 2.5% interest with interest payments due quarterly. Councilman Tuten made a motion to grant the loan request and Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer read Resolution No. 2012-05 to authorize workers' compensation coverage for inmate labor. Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith made a motion to adopt the resolution and Councilman Major seconded the motion. All members were in favor. Mayor Shaffer presented a preliminary copy of a comprehensive dog ordinance and plans to have the ordinance complete by the October 8, 2012 council meeting.

(VII)

Old Business

None

(VIII)

Council members' concerns/comments

Councilman Williams had no comments.

Councilman Major had no comments.

Councilman Campbell thanked Mrs. Bazzle for her comments.

Mayor Pro-Tem Griffith thanked Mayor Shaffer for presiding over the council meeting and told him his work at this council meeting was the best he's ever done! He asked the mayor to please work on getting another garbage truck.

Councilman Tuten reminded the council of the Hampton County Municipal Association's meeting to be held October 22, 2012 at 6:00 PM at Lake Warren. The meeting will be sponsored by Hampton School District One.

Councilman Smith asked the mayor if the town could speed up the process of enforcing the grass/weed code.

(IX)

Adjournment

Mayor Shaffer called for a motion to adjourn at 8.31 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