

**REGULAR WORK SESSION OF THE FARMVILLE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**HELD ON APRIL 1, 2020**

At the regular work session of the Farmville Town Council held on Wednesday, April 1, 2020, at 11:00 a.m., in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall, 116 North Main Street, Farmville, Virginia, there were present Mayor David E. Whitus, presiding, and Council members G.C. Cole, D.L. Hunter, B.R. Vincent, T.M. Pairet, D.E. Dwyer, A.D. Reid, and J.J. Davis.

Staff present were Town Manager, C. Scott Davis, and Administrative Assistant, Jackie Vaughan.

Mayor Whitus called the meeting to order and welcomed guests viewing the meeting via Facebook Live. Mayor Whitus explained the meeting was being streamed live on Facebook due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Council is following the advice of health experts by practicing social distancing and observing the ten-person limit set forth by Governor Ralph Northam.

Councilmember Jamie Davis provided the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice Mayor Reid.

The Administrative Assistant called the roll noting all members were present.

**DISCUSSION OF COVID-19 LOCAL IMPACT**

Mayor Whitus asked the Town Manager to address Council on steps the Town has taken in light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the possible economic impact on the Town.

Mr. Scott Davis, Town Manager, briefed Council on the precautions the Town has taken to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. He stated Town offices are closed to the public; however, all offices are still conducting business by communicating via email, mail, the website and Facebook. Instructions have been made available to the public as to how to submit payments to the Treasurer's Office. Mr. Davis stated that the Town is doing everything feasible to keep the employees as safe as possible, while still serving the public.

The Town Manager then provided Council with information on the potential local impact of COVID-19. He explained how it will affect the Town's current budget ending June 30, 2020, and the impact to the coming fiscal year's budget. He stated that the information he was about to share is a prediction based on the current state of the economy in the Town. Mr. Davis shared the following information with Council:

The bulk of the Town's revenue comes from taxes and licenses, which are 48.05% (an estimated \$8 million dollars) of the Town's total revenue in the current budget. He stated that out of the 48.05%, the largest amounts come from the meals tax at 37.81%, business tax at 19.04% and then lodging tax at 9.41%. Mr. Davis stated because the meals, lodging and business taxes are variable taxes, the decline in sales will affect the Town's current budget revenue and possibly the next two fiscal year's budget revenue. He stated business license taxes are based on a business's last year's numbers, and with the recent turn of events it could typically take at least two years for businesses to return to their normal revenue. Mr. Davis asked Council to keep this information in mind as they look at these taxes for core resources for services provided to Town residents, the community and Town staff. After Mr. Davis spoke to several local business owners, and because of the anticipated loss of revenue between March 1 and June 30, 2020, the Town will take in an estimated \$200,000 less in lodging tax revenue and an estimated \$680,000 less in meals tax revenue, which is an estimated loss in revenue of over \$881,000 from the current budget.

Mr. Davis then spoke to Council on ways the Town could potentially save money and maintain while in the current budget. He mentioned the salary lapses due to several positions that are currently vacant, which is an estimated \$293,000. Mr. Davis explained that another potential area of saving money is the reimbursement to employees who elect not to take the Town's health insurance benefit. He stated that if the Town stops paying the benefit from April 8 through June 17, 2020, it would save \$76,117 in the current budget. If the Town continues to cease reimbursement into next fiscal year, it will save \$329,843.

Council member Cole inquired about the current percentage employees pay for each of the different health insurance plans. He stated if the Town were to consider eliminating the reimbursement benefit for employees electing not to participate in the health insurance benefit, then the Town needs to look at increasing the amounts paid by employees for single, dual and family coverage. Mr. Cole stated that the change in cost for the benefit should be shared by all employees. He suggested that the Town look at other areas to save money that will minimize the effect of reductions in staff or their pay. Discussion continued.

Mr. Davis mentioned to Council that to save money on the operational side, he has instructed all departments to only spend money on items that are essential.

Mr. Davis updated Council on items that have been implemented to help offset expenses for the residents and businesses such as not adding penalties, fees or interest on late utility bills,

lodging taxes or meals taxes and eliminating the convenience fee for paying with a credit card. He then suggested to Council the Town not disconnect water and sewer for non-payment up to 90 days, now through the end of June.

**AUTHORIZE TOWN MANAGER AND TREASURER'S OFFICE TO SUSPEND COLLECTION OF CONVENIENCE FEES, WAIVE PENALTIES AND INTEREST, AND SUSPEND DISCONNECTION OF WATER, EFFECTIVE THROUGH JUNE 30, 2020.**

On motion by Mr. Hunter, seconded by Mr. Davis, and with a recorded vote with Council members Cole, Hunter, Vincent, Pairet, Dwyer, Reid, and Davis voting "aye", Council authorized the Town Manager and Treasurer's Office to suspend collection of convenience fees from March 25, 2020, through June 30, 2020, waive penalties for water and sewer late payments from April 1, 2020, through June 30, 2020, waive food and lodging penalties and interest from March 1, 2020, through June 30, 2020, suspend disconnection of residential or commercial water for 90 days in arrears, and Council will re-evaluate all listed by July 1, 2020.

Mr. Reid inquired if the Town has a payment plan or installment plan for residents or businesses that may fall behind in their payments. Mr. Scott Davis advised that he will research and bring the information back to Council. He said starting today, staff in the Treasurer's Office began calling account holders who were 60 days, plus their current bill, asking them to pay something on their account.

**AUTHORIZATION TO DIRECT THE TOWN ATTORNEY TO SUSPEND SENDING OUT COLLECTION NOTICES FOR DELINQUENT ACCOUNT RECEIVABLES**

On motion by Mr. Davis, seconded by Hunter and with all Council members voting "aye", Council directed the Town Attorney to suspend sending out collection notices for delinquent accounts receivable until June 30, 2020.

**BACKGROUND:** Mr. Jamie Davis asked if the Town Attorney, Mr. Gary Elder, was still sending out collection notices for delinquent accounts receivable and stated that during this time, the Town should suspend sending out notices until at least June 30, 2020.

Mr. Scott Davis, Town Manager, continued speaking on the economic impact that COVID-19 will have on the Town's budget. He stated looking into next year's budget, it is safe to say there will be no salary increases for employees, and there will be no large capital improvement items. Mr. Davis said that the Town must do paving to continue receiving funds from VDOT.

Mr. Scott Davis spoke on the Town's cost to operate the Farmville Regional Airport. In fiscal year 2018-2019, the Town spent over \$300,000 on the airport, which did not include grant funds. He asked Council to consider an authority or commission for the airport, which would need action by the General Assembly. Mr. Davis then mentioned the Town's cost to operate the Farmville Municipal Golf Course. He stated in this year's budget, we projected revenue to be \$123,975, and the expenses at \$316,367. He said while recreation is a service to the community, and most times do not make money, the Golf Course should be its own enterprise and should make money. Mr. Cole suggested that the Town close the airport and golf course until the economy improves. He said he would prefer closing the golf course and airport in lieu of laying off or furloughing employees.

Mr. Cole also suggested that the Town Manager contact VDOT to inquire if the Town can put the paving project on hold. Mr. Hunter asked that the Town look at other options before considering lay-offs or furloughs.

**AUTHORIZE ADVERTISEMENT OF PUBLIC HEARING TO REDUCE THE WATER AND SEWER CONNECTION FEES FOR 18 MONTHS**

On motion by Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. Dwyer, and with a recorded vote with Council members Cole, Hunter, Vincent, Pairet, Dwyer, Reid, and Davis voting "aye", Council authorized advertisement of a public hearing to reduce the water and sewer connection fees to \$1,000 each for 18 months, effective immediately.

**BACKGROUND:** Mr. Jamie Davis stated that he wanted Council to consider reducing the water/sewer connection fees to \$1,000 each for 18 months, effective immediately as an incentive to boost the Town's economy. Mr. Dwyer spoke of a similar program being successful in the past.

Mr. Scott Davis informed Council that they would need to decide about the Town's health insurance plan. He said it is decreasing my 2%. Discussion continued about fringe benefits. Council decided to leave all benefits as is until next budget.

The Town Manager advised Council that Three Roads Brewing Co. is requesting a waiver of their monthly parking rental. They currently rent three parking spaces from the Town, but with the business being closed due to the COVID-19, they are asking for a waiver of the monthly rental. Council asked the Town Manager to bring to the meeting next week for their consideration a list of everyone that currently renting parking spaces from the Town.

**DISCUSS DOSWELL STREET FUEL SITE UPGRADE**

Mr. Scott Davis said that there have been issues with the fuel site located on Doswell Street, and the Town has lost money due to the system not operating properly. He said the Town now has an opportunity to upgrade fuel site for approximately \$15,000. He stated that funds can be moved from another department to pay for it.

Council asked the Town Manager to research if the pumps are currently malfunctioning and if there have been any additional incidents, other than the one they already know about.

**COMMENTS BY THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF TOWN COUNCIL**

Mr. Jamie Davis thanked the Council, Town Manager and staff for everything they are doing to keep the community safe from COVID-19. He said he is grateful for the community for their contributions.

Mayor Whitus welcomed the Facebook Live viewers to send in questions or concerns and reminded them to follow the guidelines of the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization and the local health department.

**CLOSED SESSION – PERSONNEL**

On the motion by Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. Hunter, and with all Council members voting “aye,” Council went into closed session under paragraph **A.1 of Section 2.2-3711** of the Code of Virginia, discuss the performance of the Town Manager concerning specific personnel matters.

Council returned to the regular order of business.

***CLOSED MEETING CERTIFICATION***

WHEREAS, the Farmville Town Council has convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of The Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by the Farmville Town Council that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Farmville Town Council hereby certifies that, to the best of each member’s knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Farmville Town Council.

VOTE: Seven “ayes,” No “noes”

MOTION: Davis

SECOND: Hunter

AYES: Dwyer, Hunter, Vincent, Pairet, Reid, Davis and Cole

NOES: None

ABSENT DURING VOTE: None

ABSENT DURING MEETING: None

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Clerk

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned.

APPROVED:

ATTEST:

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David E. Whitus, Mayor

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Jacqueline B. Vaughan, Deputy Clerk