

Town of Grottoes Workshop Meeting

CALL TO ORDER: The Town of Grottoes Town Council held a workshop meeting on Monday, November 9, 2020 at 5:00 p.m., with Mayor Emily Holloway presiding.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present were: Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, Tim Leeth, Joshua Bailey, and C.W. Stephenson. Council member David Raynes was absent.

Other Town Officials present were: Town Attorney Nathan Miller, Town Clerk Tara Morris, Town Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, Parks and Recreation Director Ashley Collier, and Police Chief Timothy Carroll.

Mayor Holloway said the first item for discussion is the CARES Act funding. She said at the last meeting Council approved the keyless entry system, the town hall and police department renovations, the touchless toilets and sinks, and the remote access for the wastewater treatment plant. Council member Bailey said the Town has \$60,000 remaining after deducting the items approved at the last meeting. Treasurer Danner said the other items discussed were the glass door at Grand Caverns, a second cash register at Grand Caverns, purchase of a new laptop and computer, hazard pay, payments to the Boys and Girls Club and Fire Department, and a Small Business Grant program. Council member Keeler said that the Boys and Girls Club is losing approximately \$6,000 a month. Mayor Holloway asked if anyone followed up on the small business grant. Council member Plaster said the only thing the Town received was a copy of the application from Luray. Mayor Holloway asked about the computers. She said there is one laptop for the clerk and one desktop for maintenance. Public Works Director Hummel said he would rather have a laptop for maintenance rather than the desktop so it can be used for the GIS system. Chief Carroll stated he does not know how operational the current computers are, but the equipment is old. Mayor Holloway said four computers will cost \$4,636 plus approximately \$1400 for setup. Council member Leeth asked how the Town will handle money for the fire department and boys and girls club. Council member Bailey said the Town should advise each that the Town can purchase items that meet the guidelines of the CARES Act; therefore, if the groups provide the Town with receipts for eligible items that is acceptable. Mayor Holloway asked if the Council wanted to move forward with the door and second register at Grand Caverns. Council agreed. Council member Keeler stated that he feels we need to consider hazard pay and funding for the Fire Department. He said these

people were on the front lines of this pandemic. After considering that, then see what remains for the Boys and Girls Club. Council member Leeth said that he agrees providing the fire department with the full amount to purchase PPE. Mayor Holloway said if that is authorized, the remaining balance is \$23,115.83. Council member Bailey said if the Town used \$4,000 to offset costs of the Boys and Girls Club, the remaining amount is \$19,115.83. He suggested giving all full-time employees that worked during the pandemic \$1,000.00 and \$1,500.00 for the four police officers. Council member Bailey said that the remaining funds could be split for the part-time employees that worked during that time. He stated that was just an idea and the Finance Committee could finalize it. Council member Leeth stated that he supported that proposal. Mayor Holloway read the list of items discussed including the purchase four computers, two desktops for the police department and a laptop for the clerk and a laptop for maintenance; funding for the glass door and the second register at Grand Caverns; \$24,000.00 for the purchase of PPE for the Fire Department; Hazard pay in the amount of \$1,500 for current police officers and \$1,000 for all other current full-time employees employed during the pandemic; \$4,000 for additional costs at the Boys and Girls Club, and allocate hazard pay for part-time employees using funds remaining after final costs of some items are received. Council member Leeth moved approval of the items listed by Mayor Holloway. Council member Keeler seconded the motion. Mayor Holloway stated that the Finance Committee will meet once all the quotes are received to finalize the allocation of the funds. Council members Keeler, Plaster and Leeth voted in favor of the motion. Council members Bailey and Stephenson abstained, motion carried 3-0-2.

Mayor Holloway said the building Council talked about for Shifflett Field was supposed to be discussed by the Little League and asked if the Town has received any information that the League has discussed the matter. Council member Stephenson said that the Little League held elections, and the new president is Colby Shifflett. He stated the Little League Board has scheduled a couple meetings over the next several months, with the next meeting scheduled for November 17th.

Mayor Holloway said the next item is discussion of an Interim Town Manager. Mayor Holloway said that she was asked to check on an interim manager with the Berkeley Group. She said the Berkeley Group is a 100 percent local government consulting firm which can assist local governments in the search to hire a town manager. She said the firm also provides interim managers and department heads, who are retired managers or department heads. She said an interim manager works on a part-time basis, usually two to three days a week. Mayor Holloway said

she spoke directly with Joe Paxton, as requested by Council, and discussed his availability and willingness to provide the interim work for the Town. She said an interim Town Manager typically stays three to four months in that position. Mayor Holloway said the other part of the proposal was to consider having the Berkeley Group assist with the search for the Town Manager. The cost of that proposal is \$20,000. She stated that if this is an option Council wants to consider, she recommends that Council decide now if it wants to contract for the interim, and let the next council decide if they want to use the Berkeley Group to assist them with the search for a manager, since it is near a change of council. Council member Leeth said he is in support of an interim but is not sure about having the firm search for a manager. Mayor Holloway said the firm's rate for interim services is \$110.00 per hour. She said in the interim will work 16-24 hours per week. Councilman Mark Keeler made a motion to engage the Berkeley Group for interim manager services, with Joe Paxton to serve as the interim. Council member Bailey seconded the motion. Council members Keeler, Plaster, Leeth, Bailey, and Stephenson voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

Mayor Holloway said the next item is an update on the Lil' Gus issue. Mayor Holloway said Mr. Davis, an ABC agent, reached out to the Treasurer advising the Town of some concerns. Mayor Holloway said that Council member Plaster spoke with Mr. Davis, and Mayor Holloway asked her to inform the Council of those discussions. Council member Plaster advised that Mr. Davis told her the alcohol to food ratio for the restaurant was 55/45 alcohol sales, which is in compliance with the regulations. She said he told her his department was going to move forward with an administrative hearing and that all information from the Town related to this matter was required to be received by his office by October 30th. Council member Plaster said Lil' Gus is behind in payments to the Town, and that if the company established a payment plan with the ABC Board, the Town may want to consider a payment plan as well. Council member Plaster said there is the potential of a fine of up to \$500 as a result of the findings from the administrative hearing. Council member Plaster said she had a conversation with Mr. Davis on November 6th, and he informed her the hearing has not taken place and it could take up to three or four months before it is scheduled. Mr. Davis said Lil' Gus had agreed to a payment schedule with the state. No arrangement has been made with the Town. Treasurer Danner said the owner came in about a month ago and said that he is having some issues with his bookkeeper and said there may be some discrepancies in the reporting. He asked if he could work out a payment plan with the Town. Ms. Danner asked for him to provide her with the information and she would bring it to Council. Council member

Bailey asked when the special use permit for the business expires. Council member Bailey said it expires November 14th. Council member Stephenson asked about the water bill for the business and Ms. Danner replied that the business is two months behind. Council member Stephenson asked what the Town is doing with citizens that are delinquent, and she stated that because of the executive orders related to COVID pandemic, services have not been cut off. She stated there are several residents that are delinquent, and a notice has recently been sent for them to contact the Town for payment to avoid disconnection and this business was included in that notice. Council member Keeler said if he is not current on payments to the Town than his business license should not be renewed. Council member Bailey asked if they are delinquent on meals tax can they be shut down. Ms. Danner replied yes. Council member Bailey stated I so move. Council member Stephenson seconded the motion. Council member Bailey said this has been an ongoing issue and we have sent certified letters, had meetings with them and they continue to break ordinances. He stated that at some point the Town needs to stop it. Town Clerk Morris advised there is a process the Town must follow to shut down a business for failure to pay taxes, which requires notification and a period for the opportunity to comply. Council member Bailey made a motion to give Lil' Gus' 30 days to comply or the Town proceed to take action to shut down the business. Council member Stephenson seconded the motion. Council member Leeth asked what was meant by "comply". He asked if that means he needs a payment arrangement made with the Treasurer or a percentage paid. Council member Bailey said that he feels they should pay 100% owed within 30 days. Council member Leeth said he agrees that we need to do something, but he does not think we would make a citizen be 100% caught up and he is trying to be fair for everyone. Ms. Danner asked if Council wants to set a payment plan and then if he defaults, the business could be closed at that time. Council member Bailey stated he felt that the business should have to pay 50% of the past due balance within 30 days and the remaining 50% within an additional 30 days or 60 days total, and further stay current until July 1st in order for the Town to renew the business license. Mayor Holloway asked who seconded that motion. Council member Stephenson stated he did. Council member Bailey said the first time he is late his business will be closed by the Town. Council member Plaster said that she agrees he needs to be caught up and that something needs to be done but, if he is 50% caught up in 30 days, could Council allow a payment arrangement over several months for the remaining 50%, since we are heading into slow months for businesses. Mayor Holloway stated we have a motion on the floor and properly seconded. Council members Bailey, Keeler, Stephenson, and Leeth voted

in favor of the motion, Council member Plaster voted against the motion, motion carried 4-1.

Mayor Holloway recessed the workshop meeting at 6:30 pm.

Mayor Holloway reconvened the workshop meeting at 7:26 pm.

Mayor Holloway asked for a motion to excuse Council member Bailey from the workshop meeting. Council member Keeler made the motion. Council member Leeth seconded the motion. Council members Keeler, Stephenson, Leeth, and Plaster voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 4-0.

Mayor Holloway said we will start off with the Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting Ceremony. Council member Leeth said that the Special Events Committee would like to proceed with some sort of parade and tree lighting. He said he wanted to get Councils input on a traditional parade or more of a parade like we did in the summer where we travel the avenues. Mayor Holloway suggested that after the parade and the tree lighting that Santa could ride all the streets in Town. She stated that ran that idea past Andrew and said that the fire department supports the idea. Council member Leeth asked if we wanted to keep it a community parade or, do we want to reach out to the schools? Mayor Holloway said she did not know if we could get the tree lighting on the local government channel or Facebook live. Council member Leeth stated that we should ask citizens to social distance along the parade route. Council member Leeth asked if we wanted to extend the parade further down 6th Street to allow for social distance. Mayor Holloway suggested using Forest Avenue since its longer and it gives more room to spread out. Council member Leeth stated that we should not have any judging, prizes, or meet and greet with Santa. Mayor Holloway asked about putting the memorial tree out and having people come the month of December to put a bow on the tree. Mayor Holloway said we could start the parade at 5:00 pm and meet at the school for line up at 4:30 pm. Council member Leeth said we will have the parade, then the tree lighting and then Santa will travel through the streets of Town. Mayor Holloway said we should set a time for the tree lighting since it will be virtual. Council member Leeth said if we are starting the parade at 5:00 pm we should schedule the tree lighting at 6:00 pm.

Mayor Holloway said we discussed Chapter 4 of the Town Code and Town Attorney Miller will make some changes and get it back for review.

Mayor Holloway said the next item on the agenda is the noise ordinance. She said at the last meeting we talked about sending out a survey, but no one sent any questions to the Town Clerk to create the survey so that did not happen. Council member Leeth asked if we can be

diligent and get these survey questions sent in so a survey can be included in the next newsletter. Mayor Holloway said we need to address other concerns with the noise ordinance than just music. Council member Leeth said he would still like to get the citizens input before moving forward. Mayor Holloway asked that everyone get their questions for the survey to Town Clerk by December 10th so it can be discussed at the meeting and choose the questions we want on the survey.

Council member Plaster said that she wanted to discuss the renovations at the Town Hall. She said there is a leak in the lady's bathroom, and it has caused the trim boards to rot and the drywall to be ruined. She said the tile flooring is coming up. She asked if doesn't make more sense to install a new floor while the toilets are being replaced. Mayor Holloway said the sink area is a mess because all the soap drips to the floor. She asked if we install a counter to address that issue. Council member Leeth said the cost would not be that much more for a countertop and the drop-in sinks are not expensive. Mayor Holloway asked if this could be included in the amount we already approved for toilet and sinks and asked AJ to check on this.

Town Attorney Miller said the deed for the property on 3rd Street has been prepared. He said that the Town will have to rezone the property because it is currently zoned conservation. Mr. Miller asked if Council has established a price. Town Clerk Morris said the buyer offered to purchase the property for the cost of running the utility lines. Mr. Miller asked Council member Plaster if she had an estimate of the value of lots in town. Council member Plaster said that she would prepare a list of comparable sales and send a report to Council.

Mayor Holloway adjourned the meeting at 8:25.

Regular Meeting of Town Council
November 9, 2020

Mayor Holloway called to order the November 9, 2020 meeting of the Grottoes Town Council to order and welcomed citizens. Town Clerk Morris called the roll.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present were: Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, Tim Leeth, Joshua Bailey, and C.W. Stephenson. Council member David Raynes was absent.

Other Town Officials present were: Town Attorney Nathan Miller, Town Clerk Tara Morris, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, Parks Director Ashley Collier, and Police Chief Timothy Carroll.

Approval of the minutes.

Council member Leeth made a motion to approve the minutes from the October meetings as presented. Council member Plaster seconded the motion. Council members Keeler, Bailey, Plaster, Stephenson, and Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

Committee Reports.

FINANCE

Council member Bailey made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report for October 2020. Council member Leeth seconded the motion. Council members Keeler, Bailey, Plaster, Stephenson, and Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

Council member Bailey made a motion to approve the remaining bills from October 2020 and the bills up to November 9, 2020 a totaling \$49,554.63. Council member Keeler seconded the motion. Council members Keeler, Bailey, Plaster, Stephenson, Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

Council member Bailey made a motion to approve the CARES Act funding as discussed in the workshop meeting and then finalize in finance. Council member Leeth seconded the motion. Council members Keeler, Bailey, Plaster, Stephenson, and Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

WATER AND SEWER

Council member Bailey made a motion to approve the easement for a water line across the Begoon property for \$20,000 and the owner will be provided three water connections not to exceed 1" to be used to connect to the line within the easement. The seller is responsible for the cost to install the connections, and the water usage will be billed at the Town's standard rate. He stated that a 10' utility easement will be granted to the Town. Council member Leeth seconded the motion. Council members Keeler, Bailey, Plaster, Stephenson, and Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

ORDINANCE, HEALTH AND PROPERTY

Council member Keeler made a motion to approve amending Section 4-21, paragraph B. to add, additional Council members may attend Committee meetings, open or closed, but the additional members attending shall only observe and monitor proceedings and shall not be permitted to discuss or interact with the committee. Council member Bailey seconded the motion. Council member Bailey said this clarifies some questions that Council had regarding Council members attending committee meetings. Council members Keeler, Bailey, Plaster, Stephenson, and Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

Council member Keeler moved the second reading to amend Chapter 4 - Administration of Government, including establishing a quorum, moving presentation and petitions up on the agenda, and clarifying the committee meetings. Council member Leeth seconded the motion. Council member Bailey asked if the ordinance states how many council members may attend, does that include the mayor? Attorney Nathan Miller stated that normally it would not. Council member Bailey said we need to clarify how this should be worded before we approve. Attorney Nathan Miller said we could include the mayor as a committee member. Council decided to have three persons on each committee which can include the mayor. Council member Bailey said in light of changing this prior to approval he made a motion to table this until the December meeting. Council member Stephenson seconded the motion. Council members Keeler, Bailey, Plaster, Stephenson, and Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

Council member Keeler made a motion to approve the Code of Conduct and Ethics as presented and add to the resolutions to be adopted at the first meeting of each year. Council member Plaster seconded the motion. Council members Keeler, Bailey, Plaster, Stephenson, and Leeth voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

STREETS AND STREET LIGHTS

Council member Plaster informed the Council that we have a drainage problem on Aspen Avenue near Golden Rule and Public Works Director Hummel is working with the railroad to get this problem resolved. Council member Plaster stated that paving has been completed for the year.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Council member Leeth stated that we will be doing a Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting on December 6th. He stated that we will get the information out to citizens once we finalize the details.

PERSONNEL, FIRE AND POLICE

Mayor Holloway announced that the new police Chief, Timothy Carroll, started today. She also announced that the Council approved to bring on an interim Town Manager at the workshop.

OLD BUSINESS

Council member Bailey said in the Workshop Meeting he asked Police Chief Carroll if he would enforce our noise ordinance once the special use permit expires with Lil' Guss' and asked Mr. Miller to elaborate on that. Attorney Nathan Miller stated that once they reviewed the correct section Chief Carroll said he could enforce the ordinance.

With no further business to discuss Mayor Holloway adjourned the meeting at 7:19 pm.

Special Meeting
November 20, 2020

A Special Meeting of the Grottoes Town Council was held on Friday, November 20, 2020 at 12:00 P.M. Mayor Holloway called the meeting to order and Town Clerk Morris called the roll.

ATTENDANCE: Council Members present were: Mark Keeler, Jo Plaster, David Raynes, Joshua Bailey, and C.W. Stephenson. Council member Tim Leeth was absent.

Other Town Officials present were: Town Clerk Tara Morris, Town Treasurer Rhonda Danner, Public Works Director AJ Hummel, and Police Chief Timothy Carroll. Park and Recreation Director Ashley Collier was absent.

Mayor Holloway stated that the special meeting was called by three council members since she was not sure she would make it, but the reason for the called meetings is to finalize the CARES Act funding and discuss what we want to do about the websites for the Town and Caverns.

Mayor Holloway mentioned at the July 13, 2020 Council Meeting, the Council approved having a police officer assigned to the Guss' property on Friday and Saturday nights, and stated that CARES Act funding be used to cover that expense. She said Council has not considered that expense. Mayor Holloway said back in September she received a response from some community people that could not access our website. Clerk Morris noted that the Town's website vendor needed to update the website. Mayor Holloway said she did not know the website was an issue and we could not update it. She stated she was concerned Council did not know the website needed to be fixed. Mayor Holloway said that Ms. Morris sent an email at the last council meeting and now the cost of repair is \$17,000. Mayor Holloway advised Standout Arts is updating the website at a discounted rate of \$95.00 per hour, but there are some issues that need to be discussed.

Mayor Holloway said that she knows Council approved a distribution of the CARES Act funds, but feels we need a discussion now that the Town has received the bids. Treasurer Danner explained a spreadsheet that included the items approved by Council earlier. Mayor Holloway noted that if all of items approved are completed, not including the website or funds for the additional officer at Lil Guss', the Town is overspent by \$8,168.64. Treasurer Danner said she spoke with Rockingham County regarding the expenditures for the fire department

and Boys and Girls Club and those are acceptable. She said both groups will provide the Town with documentation of the actual expenses.

Mayor Holloway asked if Council members have reviewed the information about the website. Council member Plaster said she spoke to Shannon, with Standout Arts about the website and she said the company can start working on it right away. Ms. Plaster said the work is for both the Town and Grand Cavern's websites. Mayor Holloway said she does not understand why this has happened. Clerk Morris said staff was having problems with the functioning of the website. She said she would update the website and would get a call that the information was not on the site. She stated it would show on her screen, but no one could not see the information. Mayor Holloway said she remembered having that conversation. Clerk Morris said she contacted Shannon Sankar at Standout Arts, who is the company that the Town uses to manage its websites, with the issue and was informed that information would have to be sent to their company to be updated because our website was not working. Clerk Morris asked why this was the case, and what the Town needed to do for it to function properly. Ms. Sankar advised me she had been in contact with former Town Manager Nathan Garrison about the issue several months. Clerk Morris asked her to send the proposal that was sent to Manager Garrison so it could be sent to Council. Council member Keeler said the Town has received great support from Ms. Sankar in the past.

Mayor Holloway said that the website is an important discussion for the Council but is not sure it can be paid for using the CARES Act funding since Council has already approved expenditures that would use those funds. Council member Keeler made a motion to approve the proposal submitted by Standout Arts to repair and update the Town and Grand Caverns' websites, with funding from the admin capital account. Council member Plaster seconded the motion. Treasurer Danner asked for clarification of the total approved for the two websites. Clerk Morris noted that the proposal totaled \$15,750. Council members Keeler, Plaster, Bailey, Stephenson, Raynes voted in favor of the motion, motion carried 5-0.

Mayor Holloway asked Treasurer Danner if she had the total cost of the cost for the extra patrol officer Council approved last July related to the Lil' Guss issue as it was not included in the spreadsheet provided. Mayor Holloway advised Council that some expenses would need to be removed from the list Council approved earlier or additional Town funding would be necessary to complete all of the items. Council member Plaster asked if the renovations for the police department were included in the amount listed for Town Hall renovations. Chief Carroll advised that the renovations were being made to keep the police

department more secure, and to provide more workspace for the receptionist. He advised that the renovations will allow anyone wanting to speak with an officer a private setting for the discussion without having to be in the secure area of the department and behind locked doors. Mayor Holloway asked if the sink staff purchased would be installed. Public Works Director Hummel said the only thing that would be replaced was the faucet, as the sink that was purchased is too large for the space. Mayor Holloway noted that it may also make sense to repair the floor when replacing the toilets. Public Works Director Hummel advised staff had not included the repair of the floors in the quote. Mr. Hummel noted that staff would replace the toilets. Council member Keeler asked if the sinks and toilets are being replaced or is the plan to replace the hand flushers with a sensor, and if that is something the Town wants to spend this much money on. Mayor Holloway asked if this change would be required for Grand Caverns to be open since it is a tourist facility. Mayor Holloway said that if Council does not believe the project is worth \$20,000 these funds could be used on other COVID-related projects. Council member Keeler noted that he felt some remodeling that is not covered in COVID expenses needs to be done and the Town should budget for this work, including touchless fixtures. Mayor Holloway asked staff if it was too late to change the project. Public Works Director Hummel advised that staff had not authorized the purchase. Mayor Holloway said the three quotes received to complete the conversion to touchless fixtures total \$16,269.10. Council member Keeler said if this work is delayed for now, Council can consider this renovation in next year's budget. Council member Bailey said to be eligible for Cares Act funding, the items had to be purchased before the end of the year. The Town can buy the equipment now and install them during a later renovation.

Mayor Holloway noted the amount to cover the cost of the extra patrol officer is \$5,789.22, and if the approval of the touchless option is removed, the Town has \$8,100.46 to be allocated. If \$5,789.22 is deducted for the additional officer expense, the balance of CARES Act funds is \$2,311.24. Mayor Holloway asked if the remaining funds could be applied toward the website. Council member Keeler said that he liked that idea. Mayor Holloway went through the list of expenses for the CARES Act Funding. She said that it would be \$29,500.00 for the keyless entry to town hall, \$44,020.00 for the renovations to the office and police department, \$4,460.00 for the wastewater treatment plant remote access, \$3,000.00 for the glass door at Grand Caverns, \$6,361.88 for two laptops and two desktops, \$5,982.49 for a second register and software upgrade at Grand Caverns, \$24,000.00 for the Fire Department for PPE, \$18,000.00 for Hazard Pay, \$4,000.00 for the

Boys and Girls club expenses related to COVID, \$5,789.22 for law enforcement expenses related to the additional officer, and \$2,311.24 (part of the cost to repair and update the two websites. Council member Keeler made a motion to approve the CARES Act Funding as presented by Mayor Holloway. Council member Raynes seconded the motion. Council members Bailey, Raynes, Keeler, and Plaster voted in favor of the motion, Council member Stephenson abstained from the motion, motion carried 4-0-1.

With no further business to discuss Mayor Holloway adjourned the meeting at 12:49 pm.