

Special Called Council Meeting Minutes

January 07, 2025

Present:

Mayor Michael Hoops

Councilmember Danny Willis

Councilmember Jonathan Hankins (Virtual)

Councilmember Zach Cline

Councilmember David Fox

Councilmember Emily Davis

Councilmember Joe Beasley

Absent:

Staff members present were Town Manager, Leeanne Regon; Executive Assistant, Susan Reeves; Clerk-Treasurer, Jessica Hayes.

Call to Order

Mayor Hoops called the special called town council meeting to order at 6:00pm in the Town Hall Council Chambers

Pledge of Allegiance.

Manager Regon led the meeting in the invocation prayer.

Special presentations/Requests

(A) Lincolnshire Aqua Park

Manager Regon provided an update regarding the Lincolnshire Aqua Park. She stated that she has a quote of \$44,000 that would replace the floats that were taken out of service in 2023-2024. The splashpad has significantly increased the pool's income. The aqua park revenue varies and is more difficult to track because tickets can be purchased at the pool or aqua park. There was discussion on whether to shut it down for a year to find a way to stagger the cost of replacing floats. Manager Regon and Recreation Director Greg Quesenberry considered other activities such as paddleboats, fishing, and a tackle shop. Councilmember Cline inquired if had any proposals for his department for the upcoming year. Recreation Director Quesenberry expressed interest in paddleboats but emphasized the main focus on the pool and its mechanics. The diving board is at the end of its life, and there are leaks that need to be repaired in the pool. Mayor Hoops mentioned public opinion

on removing this attraction. Councilmember Fox raised concerns about lifeguards' ability to provide services if the floats begin to fail. Manager Regon suggested replacing only a few floats instead of all the ones currently out of service to manage costs better. Recreation Director Quesenberry noted that there is a long lead time on these replacement floats, and they may not arrive before opening day even if ordered immediately.

Councilmember Beasley suggested shutting down for 2025 to focus on repairs elsewhere and revamp the aqua park for 2026. Councilmember Cline asked about purchasing lane reels, to which it was confirmed that replacements are planned and fall within the current budget. Councilmember Cline proposed funding pool improvements from the LGIP funds instead of next year's budget, addressing necessary repairs to the pool, pump, tile, and leaks. He also suggested doing both pool repairs and float replacements at the aqua park. Councilmember Beasley recommended staggering float replacements to avoid simultaneous future replacements or reducing the number of large floats from ten to six while maintaining a fun experience.

Councilmember Willis questioned the wisdom of investing \$44,000 when the revenue is \$12,000 and suggested spending \$20,000 on new floats with a possible design change. He supported improvements to the pool. Manager Regon proposed creating a Cabana area option for future rental at the pool. The council asked Manager Regon to confirm with Recreation Director Quesenberry if he agrees with the \$20,000 expenditure. If so, the council will proceed with that plan.

(B) Ball Fields and Little League Fields

There was also discussion revisiting the ball fields at the park. It would cost \$66,000 to redo the infields at the park and \$300,000 to redo both the infields and outfields. Executive Assistant Reeves has applied for a planning grant to help plan this design with project estimates that could fit within the space. The grant will be awarded in Spring.

Jay Shott has offered to purchase the little league fields and handle the field work and press boxes if grants are not considered. Mr. Shott's interest is in putting an obstacle course in place of those fields. Another consideration is the retaining wall at the little league fields, which may need replacement in the future due to liability concerns. Councilmember Fox is against selling the fields due to concerns for the neighbors, the children, and preserving the history of the fields. Little League representative Roger Vandyke stated that the little league would be willing to relocate if another facility is available.

Councilmember Cline suggests shuffling assets to work best for the town, setting up small achievable goals to reach the ultimate goal for the town.

(C) Natural Gas Consideration/ Property Acquisition for Economic Growth

Councilmember Willis proposed adding natural gas to the town and sees potential for youth activities in the park. He suggested planning recreational leagues and outdoor sports facilities.

Councilmember Cline anticipates growth due to new medical facilities and suggested utilizing the Hayes Drug property for additional facility options. He also recommended attracting restaurants and acquiring unused properties in the 4-way area.

Councilmember Beasley supports branding the town as a "quirky mountain town" and expanding hiking trails. The Barnes property may be for sale, offering an opportunity to maintain existing trails and prioritize outdoor tourism.

(D) Mountain Biking Trails in Gratton - Presentation by David Barrow

Councilmember Cline invited David Barrow to present an option for our area. Mr. Barrow joined the discussion virtually. The proposal involves utilizing land in Gratton for biking trails. The County is willing to collaborate on this project. It is suggested that funding could be sourced from one of the properties we currently own for developing biking trails on another property. David Barrow has experience in initiating biking trails in Bristol and other areas and has participated in several competitions. He believes these trails can benefit the community by attracting tourism. He has connections with professionals who can build low-maintenance trails. This initiative could positively impact town revenue through increased tourism. There are also grant opportunities for such projects. Mayor Hoops agrees that using the property we already own for this purpose is a good idea. Since tourism is a significant source of income for the area, it makes sense to leverage existing assets. Additionally, there is potential for developing primitive camping facilities as part of the project.

(E) Housing and Zoning

Councilmember Willis aims to increase housing options in the Town. He suggests considering RV Parks and Tiny Houses, although trailers are not allowed in the Town of Tazewell. Current regulations prevent replacing old double-wides with new ones within town limits, resulting in unusable properties. Willis proposes designated zones for tiny houses and emphasizes improving tax infrastructure and zoning to support housing and outdoor activities to boost revenue.

Council members created a priority list to help advance these proposals suggested during this meeting.

(A) Tourism including outdoor recreation

1. Ball field development/obstacle driving course
2. Mountain biking in Gratton
3. Cabins at Lincolnshire
4. Barnes Property
5. Skate Park/ climbing park
6. Soccer fields/ pickleball at Ramey Lot
7. Rec sports program
8. Warhawk Park
9. Lincolnshire restoration

(B) Urban Planning

1. Natural Gas
2. Water & sewer to homes in town (that these are currently not available to)
3. Housing Review Zoning/town code
4. Infrastructure (Tax for tourism)
5. Farmer's Market
6. Property Acquisition
7. Sidewalk/Barnes Trail to park
8. Comprehensive Plane & code review
9. Sewer Plant Upgrade

Council Comments

Councilmember Fox expressed concerns about the floats at the aqua park. Councilmember Willis stated that the plan is to replace them and ensure they are safe.

Adjournment

Councilmember Beasley made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion, On vote, Councilmember Danny Willis, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55p.m.