

Council Budget Work Session Meeting Minutes

April 17, 2025

Present:

Absent:

Mayor Michael Hoops

Vice Mayor Joe Beasley

Councilmember Danny Willis

Councilmember Jonathan Hankins

Councilmember Zach Cline

Councilmember Emily Davis

Councilmember David Fox

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

Mayor Hoops called the meeting to order.

On vote, Councilmember Danny Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hoops called work session meeting to order at 6:00pm

The Tazewell Town Council met in a budget work session at 6:00pm in the Town Hall Council Chambers.

BUDGET WORK SESSION (6:00 p.m.)

1. Tazewell Today/Virginia Main Street Funding Discussion (6:00 p.m.)

(Amy Guzulaitis, Virginia Main Street Program Coordinator, DHCD, and Courtney Mailey, Virginia Main Street Coordinator & Program Manager, DHCD)

Presented from a virtual presence.

Amy Guzulaitis delivered a presentation regarding the Main Street Program and its potential benefits for the community. This program is adaptable and grounded in preservation and asset-based economic development. It has proven effective in revitalizing traditional downtown neighborhood commercial districts through a framework that respects historical significance and focuses on transformative strategies such as economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization. The strategy aims at family-friendly environments, fostering a quirky entrepreneurial ecosystem, and promoting tourism.

The program offers benefits to key stakeholders, including business owners, residents, property owners, and local governments. Councilmember Cline inquired about the frequency of fundraising workshops. Mrs. Guzulaitis responded that the last workshop was held in 2022 and they are conducted on an as-needed basis. She noted that there is no one-size-fits-all approach regarding the success rate of these workshops. When asked if there are documented successful fundraising initiatives, she mentioned current efforts with Tazewell Today and highlighted the importance of property value assessments within specific districts. Successful fundraising ventures often include events, ranging from large-scale to low-key, raffles, and other diverse options.

Councilmember Cline further questioned the time frame for establishing funding sources and what criteria define success. Mrs. Guzulaitis explained that progress tracking and evaluations are essential for identifying areas of improvement and acknowledging successes. An assessment conducted in early March with Tazewell Today revealed positive feedback and opportunities for enhancement, which will be shared with the council.

Regarding grant, Councilmember Cline inquired about the possibility of increasing the grant amounts or whether these amounts are fixed. A financial feasibility study can vary. The council has a community business launch program and numerous grants available due to the Main Street Designation, including the SMART grant for municipalities with populations under 5000 people. Councilmember Cline asked how many municipalities have a full-time executive director. Mrs. Guzulaitis will research this matter for the council. Galax, for instance, has a full-time executive director, while only one part-time manager exists in the region, despite the workload necessitating a full-time position.

A memorandum to specify roles and expectations is suggested. Colonial Beach serves as an example where there is a blended role: the Main Street Director and Economic Director for the entire town. She mentioned that a memorandum between Tazewell, Tazewell Today, and The Virginia Main Street District is in place. Councilmember Davis contacted DHCD and another agency, confirming that there is no requirement for nonprofits to follow a procurement process, as it is not a contracted service.

3. Economic Development (6:30 p.m.)

Manager Regon is seeking clarification from the council on whether they want her to include salary for hiring an economic development role in the upcoming budget. Mayor Hoops mentioned that this position would collaborate with Tazewell Today, Manager Regon, and work on projects, events, and grants. This role would involve reaching out to corporations and groups to initiate these events or projects, fostering interest and relationships to support them. The position would also attend county meetings and work directly with the economic director to build strong relationships, ensuring more successful projects and growth in the area. Councilmember Cline expressed interest in establishing this position and views it as a five-year commitment.

The discussion continued regarding whether the role should be full-time or part-time. Councilmember Davis questioned the need for a full-time position at present, to which Manager Regon responded that if the council proceeds with the projects it has decided to pursue, there would indeed be a need for a full-time employee to handle the additional workload. Councilmember Davis raised concerns about the sufficiency of work to justify a full-time position. Councilmember Cline provided an example, highlighting the benefit of having someone in that position to provide analysis for upcoming projects and comparing them with other municipalities. He emphasized the value of increasing bandwidth to complete projects. Vice Mayor Beasley agreed with the proposed salary option, while Mayor Hoops believed it might not be sufficient for the expected responsibilities of the role.

The conversation shifted to event donations for Tazewell Today. Manager Regon requested the amount that the council would like to approve for the upcoming budget. Councilmember Davis showed the council what it would look like if the donation amount was \$50,000 for the upcoming budget. She presented the Tazewell Today budget, which covers events such as Easter, 4th of July, Veteran's Day Parade, Trunk or Treat, Christmas Parade, Winter Market and Main Street Moments. These events are funded by donations from the Town of Tazewell, totaling approximately \$25,000. Tazewell Today President Nate Thomas mentioned that as part of the Main Street Designation, there must be a full-time executive director, considering costs associated with salary, administration fees, and events. He is concerned that the council is not taking that into account. The concern of Tazewell Today is that with this donation decrease they may not be able to fund the events. Councilmember Cline responded that there have been previous discussions with DHCD today regarding fundraising to cover some of these costs so that they are not exclusively operating on the donations from the Town. Councilmember Davis explained that they are trying to find funding in various sources including fundraising. One difficulty they have in planning and scheduling events is that their fiscal year begins before the towns. Councilmember Davis stated that the reason the MOU designated a minimum amount was

for planning and budgeting appropriately for their new fiscal year, starting in January, contrasting with the Town's budget cycle beginning in July.

Councilmember Cline expressed concern about continuous investment in certain events that do not seem to yield improvement. He hopes to see Tazewell Today grow, improve, and become profitable.

Councilmember Willis asked if the ice-skating rink needs to stay under Tazewell Today or if they should have the Recreation Department take that over. The ice-skating activity cost Tazewell Today \$2,498 last season. Manager Regon agreed that transferring responsibility for ice skating to the Rec Department to alleviate Tazewell Today's budget. The council suggests that Manager Regon to utilize contingency funds to budget \$70,000 for Tazewell Today's donations in the upcoming budget.

4. Lincolnshire Park Fields (6:50 p.m.)

Manager Regon would like direction on what the council would like to do at this time regarding the Lincolnshire Park Fields. Manager Regon has received two quotes for repair of the back field. One was for 2" depth field restoration at \$9,975. This option is for minor repairs with the drainage and could be a temporary fix. There was a second quote for a 3" depth field repair for \$1,330. Micheal Dotson will charge \$2,500 to do grading work for the back field. Considering the price of drainpipes and materials, this projected would be approximately \$30,000. This could get the back field in full functional condition so that it can be utilized. The council would like to see a quote for repair of both fields. Councilmember Cline would like to consider utilizing the Ramey lot by turning that into an outdoor field facility. He would like to consider using recovery funds to help complete these projects. Manager Regon will acquire a quote for both fields and present it at the May meeting.

5. Fire Department Digital Sign (7:05 p.m.)

It has been discussed in past meetings regarding purchasing a sign for the Fire Department in commemoration of Cecil Johnson. Manager Regon would like to know if she could move forward and obtain quotes, purchasing, and installation of the sign.

6. General Fund Budget Review (7:15 p.m.)

Train station budget was reviewed. The council decided that it may be best to address the days that it is operating to save money. Manager Regon will look at having the Train station open Thursday thru Sunday. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday closed to save on operating costs.

Manager Regon went through each section of the general fund budget with the council.

Tazewell Today's donation budget approved at \$70,000 but an MOU is encouraged to specify the amount of money they should acquire by fundraising. Council agrees that \$2,000 from the contingency needs to be allocated in sidewalks repair and access created for ALS support.

Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned 8:28pm