

**FLOYD TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
W. SKIP BISHOP JR., TOWN HALL
January 21, 2021
5:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

MEETING CALL TO ORDER – Mayor Griffin called the January 21, 2021 meeting of the Floyd Town Council to order.

ROLL CALL –Vice Mayor Patton, Councilman Turner, Councilman Whitaker, Councilman Bond, Mayor Griffin, Town Manager Cox and Town Clerk Holfield were present. Town Attorney Shortt attended remotely.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE-

Vice Mayor Patton led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS COMMENTS-

Town Manager Cox read the following public comments that had been submitted via email.

Dear Town Council:

I have heard that there is a proposal by Councilman Whitaker to add a prayer to the beginning of town council meetings. The rationale is that the Board of Supervisors utilize a prayer to start their meetings, thus the town council should follow suit.

I oppose such a move and I will explain why mostly from a personal perspective. I am of the Jewish faith. My grandparents were murdered by the Nazis at Aushwitz because they were Jewish. My grandparents were able to get most of their children out of Germany before they were taken away. My father escaped around 1936 and later joined the U.S. Airforce to return to Europe to fight the Nazis. He came here with his sister because this country was built on the strong principle that the government would not impose a state sponsored religion on its citizens. He felt safe here and built a future for his family in the United States knowing that the government would not try to impose another religion on him nor persecute or kill him because he was not Christian.

I have attended Board of Supervisor meetings where they start the meeting with a denominational prayer to Jesus. Although I respect Christianity, have many friends who are Christian, and I am married to someone raised in the Christian faith, I still feel uncomfortable and unwelcome at Supervisor meetings when the prayer is read. I don't feel included. I don't feel recognized and I don't feel protected by a governmental body that is pledging allegiance to a deity, that I respect and honor, but do not worship.

I would appreciate it if the Council does not have prayers at their meetings, as the message is--- only those who follow a certain religion are welcome. That is not what the Founders of this country intended.

I currently speak for myself and not for the local bar organization that I am President of.

Respectfully,
Alan Stuart Graf, esq.

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of the National Lawyers Guild
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I support the proposal of an opening invocation at meetings however I don't think the invocation should be a prayer of a particular religion.

I am Jewish. I love prayer. I love God. When I go to a Christian home, a private Christian celebration, a Christian Church or a Christian funeral I expect the prayers to close in the name of Jesus. I sincerely feel God's love during my time with my Christian friends and families because of the fellowship that brought us together at those Christian gatherings.

If however, I am at a public event, meeting or celebration such as a public high school graduation and the prayer is not announced as a Christian prayer and it then closes in the name of Jesus I feel duped, embarrassed and discriminated upon. It's shocking. Imagine how you would feel if you had your head lowered or eyes lifted and the prayer you were participating in ended in the name of Satan, Howdy Doody, the Divine Goddess, etc.

I do not believe that our country is solely a Christian Nation and I hope that thought is not what guides you.

Thank you for your time and consideration, Linda E. Laplante

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION-

A. 2021 Business License

Council members discussed waving the \$30 business license fee for 2021 at the last Town Council meeting. The matter was table to give the finance committee a change to review the year-to-date budget. Mayor Griffin stated that he met with Councilman Bond

and Town Manager Cox (the finance committee) to review budget. They felt it was best to increase the meals tax revenue from the projected \$175,000 to \$230,000 and decrease the business license revenue from \$81,000 to \$74,000 to account for waving the business license fee. With these changes we would project about \$60,000 more in revenue than originally budgeted. Mayor Griffin noted that the finance committee would also suggest that Town Council approve the VCA Creative Communities Partnership Matching Grant of \$4500 for Floyd Center of the Arts, Old Church Gallery and Floyd Creative Music.

The Town Council meeting was interrupted due to a cyber breach on the Zoom meeting feed. Council members took a 10-minute recess to allow staff time to set up a new Zoom meeting and post the new virtual meeting information on the Town's website.

Councilman Whitaker makes a motion, seconded by Councilman Turner that the 2021 Business Licensure fee of \$30 be forgiven with the exception of any new businesses in 2021. The forgiven fee would not apply to any businesses who are delinquent on taxes.

Vice Mayor Patton-aye
Councilman Turner-aye
Councilman Whitaker-aye
Councilman Bond-aye
Mayor Griffin-aye

Vice Mayor Patton asked how the loss in revenue would affect the budget. Mayor Griffin stated that when he, Councilman Bond and Town Manager Cox reviewed the budget, they took into account a decrease of around \$7500 for the business licensure fee forgiveness. Mayor Griffin state the finance committee will take another look at the budget in March.

Councilman Whitaker makes a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Patton to differ the due date of Business Licenses applications until May 1, 2021.

Vice Mayor Patton-aye
Councilman Turner-aye
Councilman Whitaker-aye
Councilman Bond-aye
Mayor Griffin-aye

It was noted that according to state code business licenses must be submitted by May 1st and no deferral of fees could be issued outside of that date.

B. Financials

Vice Mayor Patton voiced concerns about overages in several categories on budget; payroll, public works vehicle maintenance and economic development. Town Manager

Cox stated that increase in payroll expenses was due to the approval of hazard pay. Vehicle maintenance cost saw an increase because the new trash truck had been unable to dump several of the business dumpsters and both trucks have continued to stay in use. Several weeks ago, a sensor went bad on the old truck and needed to be replaced. The new truck has been modified now so it can get all the dumpsters. Economic Development line increase includes an invoice from the Floyd County Public Service Authority that was approved in FY19-20 and was not received until FY20-21. Vice Mayor Patton then questioned the revenue projection for bank stock tax. Mayor Griffin stated that bank stock tax was reduced by about \$12,000 in the budget. Town Manager Cox stated the banks are required to submit their initial bank stock tax report in March.

a. FY20 Town of Floyd Audit

Town Manager Cox stated that a final copy of the audit had been received. She noted that this is the first audit the Town has conducted while she has been working here. This audit was required since the Town had more than \$750,000 in Federal funds for the sidewalk project through the Virginia Department of Transportation. She stated that the audit firm, Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates was very impressed with the accounting and they only noted one material weakness regarding segregation of duties. Since the Town only has an office staff of two this was not an uncommon weakness. Town Manager Cox noted that a hard copy of the report is available in the office for council members to review.

Vice Mayor Patton stated that the New River Valley Regional Commission completes an audit each year and based on the auditor's listed weakness for the Town he is not surprised by their feedback. He continued by praising the Town office staff on a job well done.

Vice Mayor Patton makes a motion, seconded by Councilman Bond, be it resolved that Town Council express their sincere gratitude to the Town Manager and Town Clerk for the fantastic audit report that was received.

Vice Mayor Patton-aye
Councilman Turner-aye
Councilman Whitaker-aye
Councilman Bond-aye
Mayor Griffin-aye

Mayor Griffin asked that council discuss the Virginia Commission for the Arts grant funding that was awarded for Floyd Center for the Arts, The Old Church Gallery and Floyd Creative Studios. Council members discussed how the funds should be divided amongst the three groups, stating that this is the first year Floyd Creative Studios has applied for the grant. Vice Mayor Patton stated that it is important for the organizations to understand that these are extra funds, and they should not be depended on for operating expenses.

Councilman Turner makes a motion, seconded by Councilman Whitaker to approve the 1:1 matching Virginia Commission for the Arts grant in the amount of \$4500.

Vice Mayor Patton-aye
Councilman Turner-aye
Councilman Whitaker-aye
Councilman Bond-aye
Mayor Griffin-aye

Councilman Whitaker makes a motion, seconded by Councilman Turner to allocated the following donation for the Virginia Commission of the Arts matching grant; \$1,750 for Floyd Center for the Arts, \$1,750 for the Old Church Gallery and \$1,000 for Floyd Creative Studios..

Vice Mayor Patton-aye
Councilman Turner-aye
Councilman Whitaker-aye
Councilman Bond-aye
Mayor Griffin-aye

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT-

Town Manager Cox stated that she has worked through the final revision to the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). She has emailed a copy to Mr. John McEnhill, Chamber Director and council members for their review. She will add the agreement to next month's agenda.

Town Manager Cox exited that meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS-

Vice Mayor Patton asked if council was going to discuss adding an invocation to the agenda. Clerk Holfield stated that she was unsure if Town Attorney Shortt was ready to give his legal option on the matter at night's meeting. Town Attorney Shortt stated that "the Town can open their meetings with a prayer so long as the prayers over time do not denigrate, convert or attempt to convert others to another religion or belief, betray an impermissible government purpose, or discriminate against potential prayer-givers."

Councilman Whitaker makes a motion, seconded by Councilman Turner to table discussion of the invocation until next month's Town Council meeting.

Vice Mayor Patton-aye
Councilman Turner-aye
Councilman Whitaker-aye
Councilman Bond-aye
Mayor Griffin-aye

CLOSED SESSION-

None

ADJOURNMENT-

Councilman Whitaker makes a motion, seconded by Vice Mayor Patton, and unanimously carried, to adjourn until February 4, 2021 at 5:30 pm at the Floyd Town Hall.

William R. Griffin, Mayor

Katie Holfield, Town Clerk