

Mayor D. Dwayne Tuggle called a regular monthly meeting of the Amherst Town Council to order on February 9, 2022, at 7:00 P.M. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall at 174 S. Main Street.

It was noted that a quorum was present as follows:

P	D. Dwayne Tuggle	P	Sharon W. Turner
P	Rachel A. Carton	P	Janice N. Wheaton
A	Kenneth S. Watts	P	Andra Higginbotham

Also present were the following staff members:

Sara E. Carter	Town Manager	Becky L. Cash	Lead Water Operator
Vicki K. Hunt	Clerk of Council	Robert Shiflett	Chief of Police
Tracie Morgan	Office Manager/Finance Director	Caleb Martin	Police Officer/Accreditation Manager
Eric Lansing	Town Attorney	Brandon Payne	Police Officer/Assistant Accreditation Manager
Charles Thompson	Utilities Maintenance Foreman	Alison Davis	Assistant Accreditation Intern
Gary Williams	Director of Plants		

Recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was followed by an invocation by Charles Thompson.

Eric Smith, Manager for Standards and Policy with the Division of Law Enforcement, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, presented a framed accreditation certificate from the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission to Chief Shiflett for the Police Department's commitment to law enforcement excellence as evidenced by their successful completion of the certification process for the Virginia Law Enforcement Accreditation Program. Out of Virginia's over 400 law enforcement agencies, 103 are accredited, with the Amherst Police Department being the smallest department in the State of Virginia to receive such status.

Mayor Tuggle gave the State of the Town – 2021 in Review address. A copy of address is attached and made a part of these minutes.

Mayor Tuggle opened the floor for citizen comment.

Kim Powell, owner of Blue Ridge Slot Car Raceway, came forward in opposition of the need for a special use permit for her business and others that are related to family entertainment not serving alcohol or allowing or encouraging gambling.

Holden Chase, Amherst, VA, came forward in favor of the repeal of §§20-8 (Operation of Bicycles on Certain Sidewalks) and 20-9 (Operation of Skateboards on Certain Sidewalks of the Amherst Town Code).

There being no one else listed to speak on the citizen comment sign-in sheet or otherwise, no comments were made.

Ms. Carton made a motion that was seconded by Ms. Turner to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on January 12, 2022.

There being no discussion, the motion as to the January 12, 2022, minutes carried 4-0 via the roll call method as follows:

D. Dwayne Tuggle		Sharon W. Turner	Aye
Rachel A. Carton	Aye	Janice N. Wheaton	Aye
Kenneth S. Watts	Absent	Andra Higginbotham	Aye

After a report by Town Manager Carter on the final expenditures for the sliplining project, Ms. Turner made a motion that was seconded by Ms. Wheaton to approve purchase of a 2022 John Deere 10SL Backhoe Loader and Tag in the amount of \$131,387.00 from John Deere, allocated from USDA sliplining project funds, as recommended by staff.

There being no discussion, the motion carried 4-0 via the roll call method as follows:

D. Dwayne Tuggle		Sharon W. Turner	Aye
Rachel A. Carton	Aye	Janice N. Wheaton	Aye
Kenneth S. Watts	Absent	Andra Higginbotham	Aye

Town Manager Carter gave a report on the town’s survey regarding the necessity of an ordinance on trash cans on public right of way. After discussion, by consensus, Town Attorney Lansing and Town Manager Carter were directed to prepare an ordinance that would limit the amount of time trash cans can be left out in the public right of way for review by Council. Further discussion was deferred to the March 9, 2022, meeting.

Town Attorney Lansing gave a report on optional language amending the Code of the Town of Amherst, Virginia, Chapter 20 (Traffic and Vehicles), Article I (In General), §§20-8 (Operation of Bicycles on Certain Sidewalks) and 20-9 (Operation of Skateboards on Certain Sidewalks). Options presented for consideration were:

- (A) Prohibit skateboards only on sidewalks in the downtown area during business hours and prohibit bicycles on all sidewalks in Town at all times; or,
- (B) Repeal §§20-8 (Operation of Bicycles on Certain Sidewalks) and 20-9 (Operation of Skateboards on Certain Sidewalks); or,
- (C) Require skateboarders and bicyclists to yield to pedestrians and prohibit them from impeding a business or other public building.

A short discussion was held. Further discussion on the matter was deferred to a future meeting when all councilors are present.

Council members discussed whether certain businesses should require a special use permit. By consensus, Ms. Carter and Mr. Lansing were directed to include in the recodification of the Town’s zoning ordinances a revision of that portion of Table 7 that would separate and reclassify family entertainment businesses that do not serve alcohol or promote gambling as permitted uses.

Mayor Tuggle opened the floor for citizen comment.

There being no one listed to speak on the citizen comment sign-in sheet or otherwise, no comments were made.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:59 P.M., until March 9, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. on motion of Ms. Turner seconded by Ms. Carton.

The motion carried 5-0 as follows:

D. Dwayne Tuggle		Sharon W. Turner	Aye
Rachel A. Carton	Aye	Janice N. Wheaton	Aye
Kenneth S. Watts	Absent	Andra Higginbotham	Aye

D. Dwayne Tuggle, Mayor

Attest: _____
Clerk of Council

2022 State of the Town Address

At the end of 2020, there was incredible hope that 2021 would be a radically different year. Everyone hoped that there would be an end to the pandemic, and things would go back to normal. After two years of the pandemic, we now know that some things won't ever be quite the same again.

Understanding where we were during this time, the Town focused on fundamentals this year. We made improvements to our core services, reinvested in equipment and facilities, and maintained our positive economic position, ending the calendar year with more in the bank than when we started the year.

In an accomplishment that garnered statewide recognition, the Police Department became the smallest department in the state to become accredited. This accomplishment is based upon four years of consistent hard work- refining policies, expanding outreach, increasing uniform practices, and an incredible commitment to training and excellence. This would not have happened without the investment into the department; the renovated building offered a facility and space to accomplish these goals that should make our citizens proud. At the same time that the Police Department was achieving this goal, they also had their largest toy drive, their largest trick or treat event, and also started clean up campaigns.

The Town reinvested in facilities this year. We replaced the roof on Town Hall and upgraded our Council chambers. We sold and replaced the bucket truck with a new lift. We purchased two new police cars and obtained a generator for the Police building. At our plant's facilities, we continued work on the water plant renovation and the sliplining project. We received approval for a project to have a standby generator for the Waugh's Ferry water tank. Mass grading plans for Brockman Park, including environmental planning to be reviewed by the state was commenced. And the Town did many of these things utilizing competitive grant funds. The Town applied for and received revolving water drinking funds (a \$150,000 grant), a grant for police car and body cameras to bring all officers to a single standard (\$20,000), a grant for the work at Brockman (over \$100,000). Additionally, the Town began work on the Comprehensive Plan, which is being completed at no cost to the Town by our Planning District Commission.

The Town should be proud of the good work done this year, the focus on fundamentals, and the continued financial health of the Town. Staff this year demonstrated that it is possible to be in hard times, get the good work done, and do it well at a low cost.

Thank you, and let's hope for a great 2022.