



**Town Council
Adjourned Council Meeting Minutes
January 21, 2023**

The Town Council of Bedford, Virginia, held an adjourned meeting on Saturday, January 21, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Municipal Building at 215 East Main Street, Bedford, Virginia.

Town Council members present:

Councilman Tim Black, Councilman Bob Carson, Councilman Stacey Hailey, Councilman Bruce Hartwick, Councilman Bruce Johannessen, and Councilman C. G. Stanley

Town Council members absent: Councilman Darren Shoen

Town Staff present:

Town Manager Bart Warner, Finance Director Anne Cantrell, Town Attorney Michael Lockaby, Police Chief Ronnie Lewis, Electric Department Director John Wagner, Planning and Community Development Director Mary Zirkle, Director of Public Works D. W. Lawhorne, Clerk of Council Debra B. Anderson, and Recording Secretary Julia Peters

Mayor Black opened the meeting by saying that he had thought about this for some time, and spoke to Mr. Warner about having a meeting to focus on the long-term strategy to meet the vision of what Bedford should be. Time has been spent on the short-term issues such as next year's budget but he wanted to work as a team with other Council members and the department heads to start a process of discussing where Bedford is now and what is the mission of Town government in five or ten years down the road. With no agenda for the meeting, it might get rather chaotic but sometimes out of chaos comes clarity.

Mayor Black said the specifics could be tied in as they go along and this is a long-term process where today they could identify some big items and hear from each one about where they want their department to be ten years from now.

Mr. Warner remarked that Council has talked about growth for many years in generic terms and has said they need to prepare because it will be here at some point. But growth is here now. Bedford has always been robust and an interesting place, but it is constantly evolving. Manufacturing has changed. There is a significant manufacturing base in Town, just not in the

same scale or form that is remembered such as Rubatex. Manufacturing like Rubatex is not realistically coming back. Most things are predicated on residential growth which has been an issue with economic development over and over. For a long time, Bedford floated at about a one percent growth or decline rate. Bedford continues to become more diverse and can offer something to retirees as well as the 20-somethings.

Mayor Black stated that maybe they needed to look at the Town's strengths and weaknesses. He agreed with Mr. Warner that Bedford is diverse, having both young families and an older generation. There is some wealth and some poverty as well. Bedford is changing with people moving here from all over the country. People look around and visit Bedford and fall in love with the place and stay. This will lead to different thoughts and talents that can be accessed by the community and this process is happening now whether everyone likes it or not.

Discussion continued about changes in the workforce, demographics, and growth, and the Town needs to be ready for it, including infrastructure like water, sewer, and electrical. Services not offered will also need to be addressed. It was noted that businesses already located in Bedford must be maintained and services must be provided to allow those businesses to grow within Town. Department heads spoke to Council about the strengths and weaknesses they experience during day-to-day interactions with staff and citizens. Other topics discussed included:

- The education system and its student preparation for new and available jobs
- Town staff shortages and staff retention, recruiting, medical benefits and insurance premiums, internal promotions, lateral movement, salary compression/rates/increases, staffing needs and outsourcing jobs
- Difficulties in working and communicating with the County
- Cooperation with the County and coordination of services
- Difficulties in working and communicating with the Bedford Regional Water Authority (BRWA)
- Communication with citizens
- Town identity
- Park facilities' upgrades and maintenance
- Town transportation issues, working with Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), and devising a replacement plan for the Town's vehicles
- Phase II boundary adjustment and annexation and the timeline
- Economic development, community development, and marketing assets; procuring grants
- Private investment in the community
- Workforce development
- Revenues and revenue streams not utilized, cash reserves
- Aging infrastructure maintenance and costs to replace, expand and upgrade
- Sewage and stormwater issues
- Comprehensive Plan revisions
- Ordinance revisions
- Capital improvements
- Incurring Town debt

- Taxes and fees
- Special election and its process
- Risk management

Mayor Black ended the meeting by saying the conversations were beneficial and will need to continue. He was encouraged by the discussion and thought there were opportunities to improve the Town of Bedford with everyone's help and he thanked all in attendance for participating.

ADJOURNMENT

12:20 p.m.

Tim Black, Mayor

Debra Anderson, Clerk of the Council