



**Town Council
Regular Council Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2023**

The Town Council of Bedford, Virginia, held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Municipal Building at 215 East Main Street, Bedford, Virginia.

Town Council members present:

Mayor Tim Black, Vice Mayor C. G. Stanley, Councilman Bob Carson, Councilman Stacey Hailey, Councilman Bruce Hartwick, Councilman Bruce Johannessen, Councilman Darren Shoen

Town Staff present:

Town Manager Bart Warner, Town Attorney Michael Lockaby, Police Chief Ronnie Lewis, Clerk of Council Debra B. Anderson, and Recording Secretary Julia Peters

Mayor Black called the meeting to order and led all those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Black declared that the minutes of the regularly scheduled Council meeting on December 13, 2022 were approved as submitted.

REPORT OF TOWN MANAGER

Mr. Warner reported:

- The passing of two former Public Works Department employees, John Hensley and Bobbie Mitchen, who were legendary figures back in their day and performed tremendous service to the community. He asked that everyone remember their families at this time.

- Public Works Director D. W. Lawhorne provided some data related to the solid waste service provision during 2022 that was interesting. Last year, the Town of Bedford collected over 1,000 tons of brush compared to 900 tons the prior year. One hundred ninety-four tons of leaves were collected which was up from 169 tons the prior year, and 37 tons of tires were collected compared to 26 tons the prior year. They continue to see robust usage of the solid waste operation, and hopefully all citizens appreciate that.
- Town Council members were reminded that their Economic and Conflict of Interest forms were due back to Mrs. Anderson by January 23, 2023.
- Town offices would be closed on Monday, January 16, 2023, in observance of the federal holiday honoring the late Reverend Martin Luther King; Jr.

In response to Council's questions, Mr. Warner confirmed that demolition in advance of some redevelopment in Town was underway and the Chamber of Commerce Board had agreed to the latest documents sent to them by the Town and they will get back with him once they have met and taken action.

APPEARANCES BEFORE COUNCIL

Mary Jo Boone, 126 S. Bridge Street, Bedford, VA

Mrs. Boone stated that she owned the business, The Well, which backs up to the Farmers' Market. A year ago, they put in a nice back deck on the Well and put a bench out there. Two weeks ago, they found beer cans, trash, and cigarette butts up on the deck. They also had a report that someone went and opened their cellar doors on Washington Street and tried to open the locked door behind them. The cigarette butts, beer cans, and trash have now been left several nights in a row. The police were contacted and she asked them to drive by on a regular basis at night, since they do not know what is going on. On the back stairs she put some holiday garland with lights which is plugged into an outlet on the deck. They were coming over and plugging cell phones into this outlet all day and night and hanging out, which potentially deterred people from coming into her business. She did not have a solution, this was the first time in the two and one-half years she has owned there that this has happened. She is putting up cameras and noted it is something the Town needs to deal with. She was willing to help in some way but felt something needed to be done as it was affecting her store.

Erika McFaden, 220 W. Washington Street, Bedford, VA

Mrs. McFaden introduced herself and said she was the Farmers' Market Manager. She has received several phone calls about the transient folks that are hanging out at the Market's pavilion causing problems. Trash has been left and they have to sweep it all up before a Farmers' Market. They are getting ready for their monthly markets and would like to keep a family-friendly and safe environment for customers. People are congregating in the Town's free areas and tend to claim these spaces which tends to cause problems such as in-fighting, drugs, and panhandling, and she doesn't want that for the Farmers' Market. She, like Mrs. Boone, does not have a solution but would be on-board with whatever the Council could come up with. Unfortunately, the population that needs shelter are starting to cause problems and it needs to be

addressed. They put up signs when they have a market, but it is just a temporary solution. She is happy to help when a long-term solution is found and she appreciated Council's attention to the matter.

Jeremy Roulett, 221 W. Washington Street, Bedford, VA

Mr. Roulett said he owned Roulett's Auto and Tire and has served the Bedford area for approximately 17 years in the automotive business. He moved the business to his present location about four years ago. He said he and his employees are there during the day and have seen a little bit more of the problem such as assaults and women grabbed by the hair and yanked down. It is becoming more frequent and there are obvious drug transactions occurring also. Some people are using open flames and doing cooking over there. Cussing and swearing can be heard by them in their offices across the street. Women and children come in and wait for their car to be repaired and they are complaining at his front desk and office and they should not have to be exposed to such language. He would like to see the problem resolved since it reflects on his business. Customers question whether it is safe to leave their vehicles there. He saw the plastic wind shields at the Market had been rolled up and he hopes that will help. There are gang signs being marked in condensation on the plastic wind shields. He also said he would help in any way possible.

Crystal Johnson, 221 W. Washington Street, Bedford, VA

Ms. Johnson said she worked for Mr. Roulett and has seen more people congregating in the past six months across the street at the Farmers' Market pavilion. In turn, it has caused a significant increase in general disturbances and nuisances in the area. There are multiple drug deals taking place daily, and she has photos of them. She also has a photo of a gang sign placed on the plastic shields which she mailed to each Town Council member. She has called the police on several occasions and to-date, nothing has been done. The last incident had six or seven people fighting over in the Farmers' Market with them ending up in front of Fisher's Automotive. The Shepherd's Table also had an incident last month involving a disorderly person wielding a machete. Multiple customers in their waiting area have complained and one customer said she would not come back until the riff-raff across the street was gone, since she did not need to hear the filth coming from their mouths. Another lady had Ms. Johnson walk her to her car during one of the outbursts across the street, saying she was afraid after hearing all the yelling and cursing. It is too comfortable for these people over there and they take it as a shelter. When the plastic wind barriers were rolled up, they scattered for a bit but congregated back in the afternoon. Picnic tables are doubling as beds over there. No Loitering signs should be put up and the Town needs to enforce the Town codes that these people are violating. A lack of respect is being shown to the Town, its community, and its taxpaying businesses, and something needs to change.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilman Carson said many of the people congregating are not homeless people but he is sorry for what the business owners are going through. He knows many of the people over there and their families and he can almost tell you who is doing what. Many are coming around because they are going into Christian Ministries or Shepherd's Table and they gather and wait there. Some people are there at 5 or 6 a.m. and he knows they have not slept there all night. There is also a women's shelter opened on Center Street and women utilizing that shelter have to get out of it by 6 a.m. so they also will hang out there. The police are doing everything they can without seeming like bullies. The people are not breaking laws if they are just sitting there. There have been conversations about the Farmers' Market and something does need to be done but the problem is not being ignored and not all the people are causing the problems. There are a few of them that are disruptive and a long conversation is needed by the Town Council about what to do so that a decision isn't made that affects all the law-abiding citizens that utilize that space. The bad ones will need to be weeded out. The Town needs to do better about signage to give the police more to work with. The situation is not going unnoticed and they will do what they can to straighten it out.

Councilman Shoen said that if there are crimes being committed openly such as drug transactions, the Town needs to solve that problem.

Councilman Hailey stated that he has seen things happening himself and they need to discuss what direction they need to go in.

Mayor Black noted this was a sticky problem and he would like to give staff some time to address the issue and to come up with some recommendations. It is a problem that is happening all over the country. He thought the County needs to be involved as well as Social Services. It is a bigger problem than it looks and the Town does not have services for people in these types of situations.

Councilman Stanley thought this discussion was better suited for the Council's retreat on January 21. He appreciated what the speakers have said and it has not gone unheard but he asked them to be patient so they can get more information and have further discussions.

Mayor Black said the Town needed to be thoughtful about handling this and everyone has rights so all rights must be protected. However, if there is a crime being committed, then citizens should call the police. In the meantime, Council will work on ways to deal with the issue and give staff time to work on solutions and think through the problem.

Councilman Johannessen agreed with Mr. Carson that this was a complex problem and cannot be settled that night. Council must look into the matter and gather more information. Shepherd's Table does not have open dining anymore so people are given boxed lunches that must be eaten somewhere else so they eat them at the market. He was over there himself a short time ago

taking pictures and was confronted by one person who said he could not take his picture. They need to figure out how to close the problem down and be fair to the merchants but they don't want to drive the Shepherd's Table away either because they do a lot of good in the Town. It is more complex than just having a few signs up and having the police visit ten times a day. It is not being ignored but it will need to be thought through.

Councilman Hartwick thanked everyone for speaking their concerns. His worries are people breaking into businesses and drug deals. It is a delicate situation and it only takes one bad apple to spoil the bunch and he has an issue with people that are destructive and causing harm. Council members will need to talk to staff and amongst themselves to get rid of the weeds but be fair to the ones that aren't causing trouble. He thanked Terry Owens for fixing up buildings in downtown. They are looking better than before and he hopes he will keep up the great work. He thought that more affordable housing may take care of some of the riff-raff and they will need to look into it.

Mayor Black noted that Monday, January 9 was National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, so he expressed his appreciation for the Town's police, State Police, the County's sheriff department and all law enforcement agencies and what they do to protect the community. He went to the County Board of Supervisors (BOS) meeting and congratulated Edgar Tuck for being named Chairman of the BOS and Tammy Parker, who represents District 7, as Vice-Chairman. He looked forward to working with them over the next year. He also noted the extremely cold weather snap and how well law enforcement, public works, and fire department handled all the calls about water breaks and power outages. There were tough working conditions and he wanted to express his appreciation for their hard work.

REPORT OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

None.

REVISIONS TO AGENDA

Mayor Black requested adding two closed sessions pursuant to Sections 2.2-3711 (a) (1) and (a) (4) and (a)(8) of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended. Consensus was agreeable to the additions.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

Request to Close Streets – Bedford Boys Tribute Center “Operation Bedford Remembers”

The Bedford Boys Tribute Center is requesting permission to hold an “Operation Bedford Remembers” welcoming home parade for soldiers of the 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team commemorating return from their recent one-year deployment to the Horn of Africa on Saturday, February 11, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. and to close the following streets:

Group Staging Area: Bedford Avenue at 4th Street including Liberty Station Restaurant parking lot area. This will also require street closures on 4th Street at Depot and Mason Streets.

The parade will proceed East on Bedford Avenue to N. Bridge Street, turn south; continue on N. Bridge Street to the corner of E. Main Street, turn East; continue on E. Main Street and parade will end at South Street in front of the County Court House.

End of parade street closures will necessitate E. Main Street to be closed at Otey Street for parking of school busses to transport soldiers to Armory.

The Bedford Boys Tribute Center will notify the Fire Department, Police Department and Bedford County Fire & Rescue of the street closings. The residents of the affected streets will also be notified and will have ingress and egress to their homes.

ACTION REQUESTED:

Town Council is requested to approve the closing of the above streets for the “Operation Bedford Remembers” parade starting at 10:00 a.m. on February 11, 2023.

Mr. Warner noted that the fee for this application was not paid and the applicant was requesting a waiver of the fee.

Mr. Hailey moved, seconded by Mr. Johannessen to approve the closing of the mentioned streets for the “Operation Bedford Remembers” parade starting at 10:00 a.m. on February 11, 2023.

Discussion followed. Council members expressed concern for traffic delays during this event. Mr. Warner said that there would be some snarls but for an hour on a Saturday, the Town would probably be ok. Waiving the application fee was also discussed. Council members agreed with Mr. Warner to waive the \$100 application fee.

Voted upon and carried by the following roll call vote.

Councilman Carson	aye
Councilman Hailey	aye
Councilman Hartwick	aye
Councilman Johannessen	aye

Councilman Shoen	aye
Vice Mayor Stanley	aye
Mayor Black	aye

The motion carried with seven members voting aye.

Request to Close Streets – Bedford Boys Tribute Center “Wreath Laying Ceremony”

The Bedford Boys Tribute Center is requesting permission to hold a wreath laying ceremony in front of the County Court House on Tuesday, June 6, 2023, and to close the following streets:

Street closure request for Tuesday, June 6, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to allow set up and tear down time of tents and chairs on E. Main Street.

One block of E. Main Street from N. Bridge Street East to South Street

The Bedford Boys Tribute Center will notify the Fire Department, Police Department and Bedford County Fire & Rescue of the street closings. The residents of the affected streets will also be notified and will have ingress and egress to their homes.

ACTION REQUESTED:

Town Council is requested to approve the closing of the above streets for the Wreath Laying Ceremony from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on June 6, 2023.

Mr. Hailey moved, seconded by Mr. Carson, to approve the closing of the above streets for the Wreath Laying Ceremony from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on June 6, 2023, and waive the \$100 application fee.

Discussion followed. Council members expressed concern regarding street closures for four hours on a Tuesday during normal business hours and into rush hour. Consensus from Council members was that four hours was too long for street closures. The motion was withdrawn by Mr. Hailey and seconded by Mr. Carson, so Mr. Warner could speak with the applicant, Mr. Ken Parker and invite Mr. Parker to discuss the request in-person at the next Town Council’s meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Appointment of Todd Stone as Fire Chief of the Town of Bedford

Mr. Todd Stone has been reelected by the Fire Company and recommended to be the Fire Chief for a full one-year term. The Town Code states he must be appointed by the Town Council to serve in this capacity.

Council is requested to ratify the election of Todd Stone as the Town’s Fire Chief.

Mr. Hailey moved, seconded by Mr. Hartwick to appoint Mr. Todd Stone as the Town of Bedford’s Fire Chief.

Voted upon and carried by the following roll call vote.

Councilman Hailey	aye
Councilman Hartwick	aye
Councilman Johannessen	aye
Councilman Shoen	aye
Vice Mayor Stanley	aye
Councilman Carson	aye
Mayor Black	aye

The motion carried with seven members voting aye.

Mayor Black read Closed Session pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (a) (1) of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended, to discuss or consider the performance or salary of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of the Town Council, specifically the Town Manager’s annual review process; and pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (a) (4) and (a) (8) of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended, for the purpose of receiving legal advice and for the protection of privacy of individuals in a personal matter not related to public business.

Mr. Hailey moved, seconded by Mr. Carson to enter into closed session at 7:55 p.m.

Voted upon and carried by the following roll call vote.

Councilman Johannessen	aye
Councilman Shoen	aye
Vice Mayor Stanley	aye
Councilman Carson	aye
Councilman Hailey	aye
Councilman Hartwick	aye
Mayor Black	aye

The motion carried with seven members voting aye.

Town Attorney Michael Lockaby remained for the closed session.

Council reconvened into open session at 8:23 p.m.

The Recording Secretary read aloud the following resolution.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the Town of Bedford hereby certifies that (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies; and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Council.

Mr. Hartwick moved, seconded by Mr. Hailey, to adopt the resolution.

Voted upon and carried by the following roll call vote.

Councilman Shoen	aye
Vice Mayor Stanley	aye
Councilman Carson	aye
Councilman Hailey	aye
Councilman Hartwick	aye
Councilman Johannessen	aye
Mayor Black	aye

The motion carried with seven members voting aye.

Mayor Black stated Council was adjourned until Saturday, January 21, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. for the Town Council's Strategic Planning Session in Council Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

8:25 p.m.

Tim Black, Mayor

Debra Anderson, Clerk of the Council