

DAMASCUS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes for July 10, 2023

7:00pm Regular Called Council Meeting

Council Members Present: Susan Coleman, Beaty Jackson, Jesse Kokotek, and Jack McCrady

Absent: Charles Fields and Tom Hayes

Also Present: Katie Lamb, Mayor
Tuesday Pope, Town Clerk
Kermit Turner, Police Chief
Shawna Cook, Town Treasurer
Trent Crewe, Legal Counsel
Julie Kroll, Recreation Program Director

7:00pm: Mayor Lamb called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance; Ms. Coleman gave the invocation.

Mayor Lamb asked for approval of the June 5, 2023, Regular Called Council Meeting Minutes as presented.

- Mr. McCrady made a motion to approve the June 5th Minutes as presented. Ms. Coleman 2nd the motion, which passed (4-0).

Mayor Lamb asked for approval of the June 13, 2023, Special Called Council Meeting Minutes as presented.

- Mr. Kokotek made a motion to approve the June 13th Minutes as presented. Ms. Coleman 2nd the motion, which passed (4-0).

Mayor Lamb asked for approval of the agenda, as presented.

- Mr. Kokotek made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (4-0).

Committee Reports

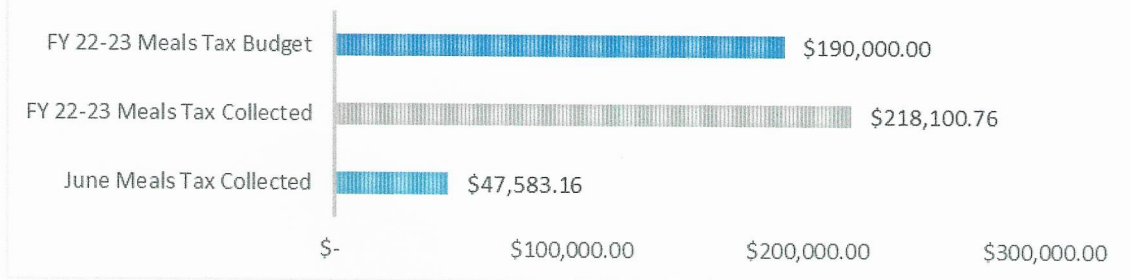
Budget, Finance, and Administration:

Town Treasurer, Shawna Cook, submitted the following report for the previous month:

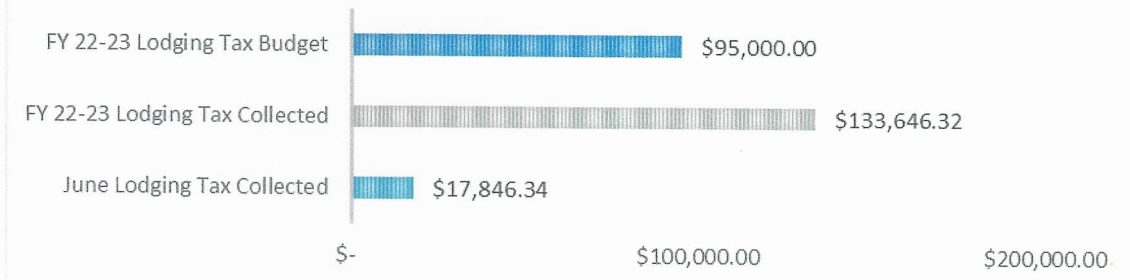
***Real Estate & Personal Property Taxes:** The collection rate for 2023 Real Estate taxes is at 88.39%, 2022 Real Estate collection rate is at 95.05% and the collection rate for 2022 Personal Property is at 82.64%.*

***Meals & Lodging Tax:** \$47,583.16 in Meal Taxes and \$17,846.34 in Lodging Taxes were collected for June 2023. The amount for Meals Tax is higher than usual due to some arrears being paid.*

MEALS TAX



LODGING TAX



Town of Damascus Virginia Investment Pool (VIP)			
	Account Balance	FYTD Income	Inception Date
RESERVE FUND	\$56,165.65	\$1,353.65	08/11/2017
EARMARK POLICE VEHICLE	\$15,892.81	\$383.06	04/04/2018
SEWER FUND CD	\$27,302.95	\$658.04	11/26/2018
ANTHEM RECOVERY	\$45,631.54	\$1,099.75	12/21/2018
ADDITIONAL WORKING CAPITAL	\$1,785.91	\$43.03	08/08/2019
TRAIL DAYS RESERVE	\$7,742.97	\$186.62	05/14/2020
TOD ARPA 2021	\$658,875.79	\$17,660.01	06/29/2021
VIP Stable NAV Liquidity Pool	\$813,397.62	\$21,384.16	

Announcements:

- *On behalf of the Town staff, the Treasurer respectfully requests that the Council give consideration to discontinuing use of the Southern Software system and approve funding for the Accufund system.*

Mr. McCrady asked how much had been paid, and Ms. Cook responded Southern Software had been paid half up front for the conversion, approximately \$7000. Mr. McCrady asked if some of the money could be refunded, and Ms. Cook responded that she had spoken with Mr. Blevins about that prospect and Southern Software would need to be asked. Mr. Kokotek stated that if the Treasurer lost her computer, all Citipak information would be lost, which is correct. Ms. Cook explained that Accufund had two packages, either a desktop system or cloud based. The desktop version was more expensive upfront, but cheaper yearly. It would require the Town to maintain

servers, as well as a separate computer for the payment portal. Server costs had not been provided by our IT service at the time of the meeting.

The cloud version was cheaper upfront, most costly year over year, but did not require a separate payment computer or servers. Payments from the portal would be brought directly into the system, according to the best of Ms. Cook's understanding. Mr. Kokotek expressed that there had been problems with the software in the past, and the Council was trying to get the best they could for the Town staff.

- Ms. Coleman made a motion to proceed with Accufund cloud-based software for tax with funds coming out of the ARPA account. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, and the motion passed (4-0).

Mr. McCrady said there was the possibility of closing Town Hall to the public one day a week as an employee workday.

Mr. Jackson stated it would be a good experiment and recommended trying it for one month.

- After discussion, Mr. McCrady made a motion to close Town Hall to the public one day a week for a sixty day trial period. Mr. Jackson 2nd, and motion passed (4-0).

This matter will be placed on the September agenda to revisit. Mr. McCrady said the measure could not be made permanent until the Town petitions the legislature to change the Town charter.

Mr. McCrady stated that there had been a 2023-2024 Budget request from Holston High School Athletic Boosters and Holston High School Cheer Team. He stated that the budget process ended in February and this request was not allocated in this budget.

Mayor Lamb said maybe business owners could help sponsor.

Ms. Coleman indicated the request could be put on the budget agenda for next year.

Mr. Kokotek invited any business owners or private citizens who were interested in contributing to come see him or any Council member.

Streets, Lights and Maintenance:

Mr. McCrady reported the department has been busy with picking up brush, and that permission had been granted from the Virginia Department of Forestry and the U.S. Forestry Service to allow for controlled burning of brush on 23 acres of (IDA) property owned by the Town. This will save the Town \$20 a load in landfill transfer fees, a sizeable amount, and the Fire Department will assist with burning the brush.

The large dump truck is having a brake issue due to air loss and will be taken to a garage for repair.

Mr. McCrady stated that he had spoken to Bad Boy Supplies about getting a new cargo cover for the dump truck at an estimated cost of \$900, since the old cover had been torn up.

Parks and Recreation:

The following expense approvals and funds appropriations were requested:

1. VTC Safety Rest Area Brochure Distribution for I-81 and I-77 - \$3,210 for one-year term (funded by VTC DMO 2023 grant).
 - Mr. Jackson made a motion to approve \$3210 for VTC Safety Rest Area Brochure Distribution funded by the VTC DMO grant, as requested. The motion was 2nd by Mr. McCrady, and passed (4-0).
2. Brochure order drop shipped to VTC - \$3,740 for 25,000 copies (funded by VTC DMO 2023 grant).
 - Mr. Jackson made a motion to approve \$3740, funded by the VTC DMO grant, for a brochure order of 25,000 to be drop shipped to VTC. Motion was 2nd by Mr. Kokotek and carried (4-0).
3. Ad placement in Virginia Travel Guide 2024 - \$4,900 for 1/3pg size for one year (funded by VTC DMO 2023 grant).
 - Ms. Coleman made a motion to approve \$4900 for a 1/3 page ad placement in the Virginia Travel Guide for 2024, funded by the VTC DMO grant. Motion was 2nd by Mr. McCrady and passed (4-0).
4. Request to appropriate Make-A-Wish funding to Josie's Nature Playground.
 - Mr. Jackson made a motion to approve spending the Make A Wish funding for Josie's Nature Playground, in accordance with the grant, as requested. The motion was 2nd by Ms. Coleman, and passed (4-0).
5. Request to appropriate \$3,000 from the Forest Sustainability Fund toward group programs at the Damascus Trail Center.
 - Mr. Jackson made a motion to appropriate \$3000 from the Forest Sustainability Fund toward group programs at the Damascus Trail Center, as requested. The motion was 2nd by Ms. Coleman, and passed (4-0).

Mr. Jackson gave the following additional updates:

The StoryWalk by the library is complete! A ribbon cutting is scheduled for July 22nd at 11:30am before the Beaverdam Jams event in the Park.

New dates for the contra dance series, Trail Town Twirl, on September 22, December 15, March 22, June 21, and September 20. The dances are scheduled quarterly around the solstices and equinoxes. The first three dances have shown consistent growth and the first four are grant funded.

The report from the April zip code survey is ready and 24 businesses participated in April. The 2023 Market Study continues with another zip code survey July 21-27. Copies of the report will be sent to participating businesses and we'll share a presentation at the Damascus Business Group meeting on July 25.

Gateway signage is almost done! We're just waiting on the lettering to be installed, which should be completed this week.

Damascus won a few awards in the Best of the Mountains reader polls for Blue Ridge Country Magazine. #1 Best Biking Trail and #1 Best Rail-to-Trail System for the Virginia Creeper Trail; #3 Best Quirky Festival for Appalachian Trail Days Festival.

Mr. Jackson met with Mr. Dancer at the pool and 1334 people visited the pool in June, with an additional 175 people at the two night swims. He stated that they would like to acquire a few more umbrellas for the lifeguard stands and deck chairs and has been saving money by ordering pool chemicals from a company near Johnson City.

Ms. Coleman stated that she had submitted an additional budget request to Washington County for the pool.

Mr. Jackson stated the Dog Park is looking good and Robbie Kemmerlin is doing a great job with the maintenance of the park. He stated it is a great volunteer effort and asset for the Town.

He reported the fireworks display on July 3rd was great, Mr. Kroll and Ms. Pope were the heroes regarding the success of the event. Mr. Jackson said an app that located cell phones indicated that there were around 9,200 people in Town at 9pm that night, and we are guessing that probably close to 7,000 of those were in the Park. He commended Mr. Shifflett on the maintenance team for his work cleaning up, and also Mayor Lamb for her work the following morning cleaning up.

Final number for Trail Days, best guess is a little over \$76000, it was the biggest and best so far.

Mr. Jackson stated that the playground needs mulch.

Mr. McCrady said Shoun's in Tennessee was the closest place to get the special mulch that was required for the playground.

Mr. Jackson mentioned the vendors and bands who would be at the upcoming Beaverdam Jams and requested volunteer assistance for the event.

Mr. Jackson mentioned that state of the park bathrooms remain closed and in need of additional repairs, and said the Council needs to come to some decision.

Mayor Lamb suggested maybe ARPA funds could be used to redo the bathrooms, and that we should get special locks and cameras outside the bathrooms to deter vandalism and prosecute offenders.

Mr. McCrady said he felt the best way would be to completely gut the old bathrooms and use the new epoxy and commercially built stall enclosures to redo the bathrooms. He mentioned that some of the 90 degree turns on the barriers had been cut down and it was a dangerous area for potential crimes.

Mr. McCrady mentioned that the split rail fence at the park would be coming down as soon as the bump guards are in.

Mayor Lamb asked about building a bathroom like the one at Alvarado Station. Concerns were mentioned about being in the flood plain, however, Mayor Lamb mentioned that the bathroom could be raised. Mayor Lamb said it would be a positive thing to comply with FEMA and ADA requirements.

Mr. Jackson said he felt it would be good for people to start bringing ideas and looking for costs to get realistic estimates.

Mayor Lamb asked about having a committee and Mr. Jackson recommended having citizens as well.

Planning Commission:

Nothing at this time.

Police and Fire Advisory:

Chief Turner presented the following report for the month of June:

Operations:

June 2023, Damascus Officers had 133 calls for service. We have taken 12 investigative reports and made 6 arrests. We had 1 reportable accident.

Arrests are as follows: Shoplift 1, Warrant Service 2, Trespass 1, Resist arrest 1 and Drug Violation 1.

Traffic Enforcement Activities:

We issued 11 citations along with 20 warnings.

Speeding complaint areas include:

No new complaints.

Special Report:

At our last council meeting, we had a complaint of speeding on Rambo St. I have had Officers setting on Rambo St. on several different occasions. While sitting there we had multiple vehicles pass by and the fastest speed that was observed was 27mph. I have sat on Rambo St. on several different occasions and the fastest speed I observed was 23mph.

Special Notes:

Police Vehicles: I have submitted the letter of intent to Sheehy Ford for the purchase of the vehicle. I am getting quotes for the equipment and installing it in the new vehicle as well. Lt. Wagner's vehicle has been towed to Empire Ford for diagnostic of the steering issue. The steering has gone out on 2 different occasions. I am working with Empire Ford and have received a quote for the repair for \$2047.55.

- * Mr. Hayes approved the repair quote presented.

Auxiliary: Nothing new currently.

Citation Totals by Charge

Damascus Police Department

(06/01/2023 - 06/30/2023)

Charge:	Number of Charges:
18.2-103 - Petit Larceny	1
46.2-1158 - EXPIRED STATE STATE INSPECTION	1
46.2-802 - FAIL TO DRIVE RIGHT OF HIGHWAY	1
46.2-852 - reckless driving	1
46.2-874 - SPEEDING 25 MPH ZONE	5
46.2-875 - SPEEDING 35 MPH ZONE	2
Total:	11

Incident Case Status Totals by Offense

Damascus Police Department

(06/01/2023 - 06/30/2023)

Offense:	Active:	Active TOT O/A:	Inactive:	Inactive WOF:	Closed Service:	Closed Except.:	Closed Arrest:	Adult Arrest:	Juvenile Arrest:	Adu./Juv. Arrest:	Unfd.:	Rptd.:	Actual:
13B - Simple Assault	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
18.2-456 - Capias: Attachment of the Body	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
23C - Shoplifting	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
23H - All Other Larceny	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
35A - Drug/Narcotic Violations	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
35B - Drug Equipment Violations	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
90J - Trespass of Real Property	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
90Z - All Other Offenses	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	5	0	0	0	5	5
Totals:	1	0	1	0	1	0	9	11	0	0	0	12	12

Arrest Race/Sex Totals by Offense

Damascus Police Department

(06/01/2023 - 06/30/2023)

Primary Offense:	White Male:	Black Male:	Indian Male:	Asian/ Pac. Isl. Male:	White Female:	Black Female:	Indian Female:	Asian/ Pac. Isl. Female:	Juven.:	Adult:	Resd.:	NonRes.:	Arrests:
23C - Shoplifting	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
90J - Trespass of Real Property	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
18.2-456 - Capias: Attachment of the Body	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
90Z - All Other Offenses	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	3
Totals:	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	6	5	1	6

Damascus Volunteer Fire Department

Chief Turner presented the following report for the previous month's activities:

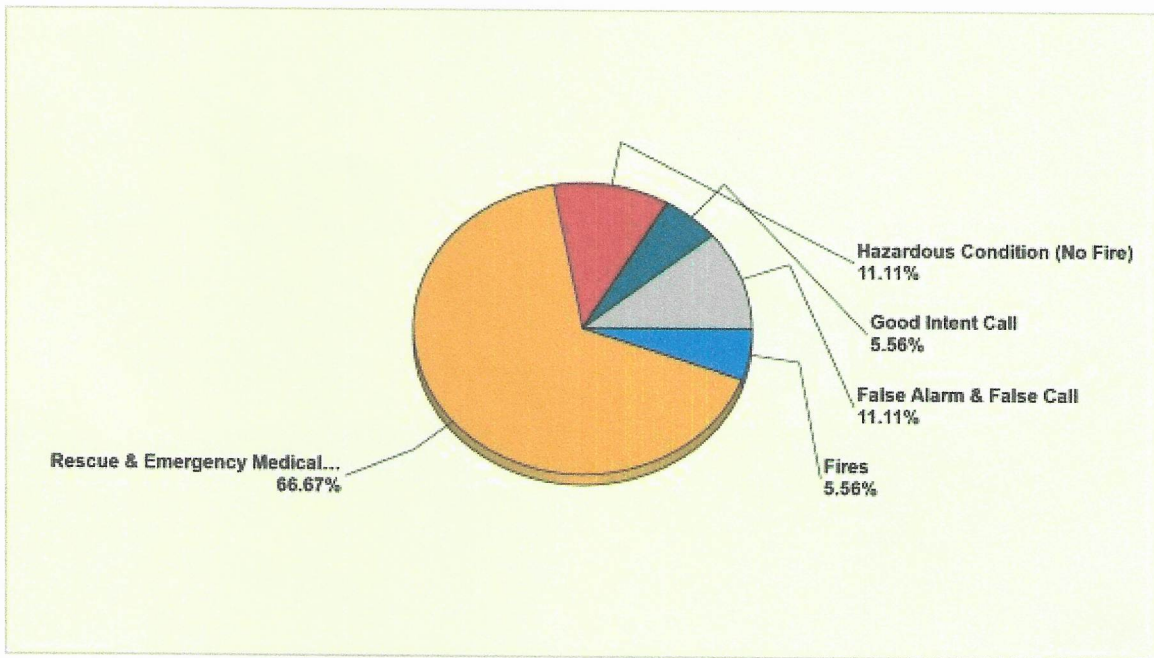
Damascus Fire Department

Damascus, VA

This report was generated on 7/5/2023 4:28:35 PM

Breakdown by Major Incident Types for Date Range

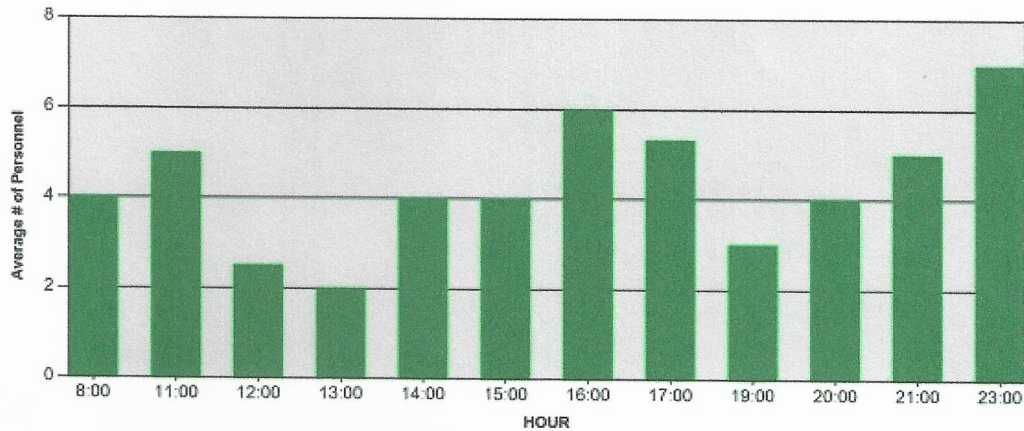
Zone(s): All Zones | Start Date: 06/01/2023 | End Date: 06/30/2023



MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fires	1	5.56%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	12	66.67%
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	2	11.11%
Good Intent Call	1	5.56%
False Alarm & False Call	2	11.11%
TOTAL	18	100%

Detailed Breakdown by Incident Type		
INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
131 - Passenger vehicle fire	1	5.56%
311 - Medical assist, assist EMS crew	5	27.78%
322 - Motor vehicle accident with injuries	5	27.78%
324 - Motor vehicle accident with no injuries.	1	5.56%
341 - Search for person on land	1	5.56%
444 - Power line down	2	11.11%
611 - Dispatched & cancelled en route	1	5.56%
745 - Alarm system activation, no fire - unintentional	2	11.11%
TOTAL INCIDENTS:	18	100%

Average Number of Responding Personnel per Hour for Date Range
 Start Date: 06/01/2023 | End Date: 06/30/2023



HOUR	AVG. # PERSONNEL
08:00 - 08:59	4.00
11:00 - 11:59	5.00
12:00 - 12:59	2.50
13:00 - 13:59	2.00
14:00 - 14:59	4.00
15:00 - 15:59	4.00
16:00 - 16:59	6.00
17:00 - 17:59	5.33
19:00 - 19:59	3.00
20:00 - 20:59	4.00
21:00 - 21:59	5.00
23:00 - 23:59	7.00

Personnel Hours for Incidents for Date Range (Not Payroll Related)
 Start Date: 06/01/2023 | End Date: 06/30/2023

PERSONNEL	TIME SPENT ON INCIDENTS (Hours:Minutes Dispatched to Cleared Scene)
Barr, Derek	1:55
Campbell, Candace	21:51
Campbell, Dalton	7:27
Campbell, Wendy	10:10
Doss, Brady	3:40
Johnson, Michael	18:07
Jones, Andrew	1:55
Jones, Dave	7:31
Justice, Jason	3:18
Phipps, Michael	5:34
Turner, Kermit	26:36
Turner, Walter B	21:59
Widener, Alex	17:44
Total:	147:47

Incident Statistics

Zone(s): All Zones | Start Date: 06/01/2023 | End Date: 06/30/2023

INCIDENT COUNT			
INCIDENT TYPE		# INCIDENTS	
EMS		12	
FIRE		6	
TOTAL		18	
TOTAL TRANSPORTS (N2 and N3)			
APPARATUS	# of APPARATUS TRANSPORTS	# of PATIENT TRANSPORTS	TOTAL # of PATIENT CONTACTS
TOTAL			
PRE-INCIDENT VALUE		LOSSES	
\$0.00		\$0.00	
CO CHECKS			
TOTAL			
MUTUAL AID			
Aid Type		Total	
Aid Given		1	
Aid Received		2	
OVERLAPPING CALLS			
# OVERLAPPING		% OVERLAPPING	
2		11.11	
LIGHTS AND SIREN - AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME (Dispatch to Arrival)			
Station	EMS	FIRE	
Station 1400	0:17.55	0:18:13	
AVERAGE FOR ALL CALLS			0:17:30
LIGHTS AND SIREN - AVERAGE TURNOUT TIME (Dispatch to Enroute)			
Station	EMS	FIRE	
Station 1400	0:06:05	0:08:07	
AVERAGE FOR ALL CALLS			0:06:18
AGENCY	AVERAGE TIME ON SCENE (MM:SS)		
Damascus Fire Department	82:11		

Response Percentage per Station per Personnel for Incident Types for Personnel

Personnel: All Personnel | Incident Type(s): All Incident Types | Start Date: 06/01/2023 | End Date: 06/30/2023

Personnel	Calls Attended	% of Calls for Selected Incident Types
Station: Station 1400		
Barr, Derek	1	5.6%
Campbell, Candace	15	83.3%
Campbell, Dalton	6	33.3%
Campbell, Wendy	5	27.8%
Doss, Brady	9	50.0%
Hicks, Emilee	3	16.7%
Hicks, Noah	2	11.1%
Johnson, Michael	11	61.1%
Jones, Andrew	4	22.2%
Jones, Dave	5	27.8%
Justice, Jason	4	22.2%
Minton, Jared	2	11.1%
Norris, Ralph	2	11.1%
Phipps, Michael	4	22.2%
Reedy, Tony Mitchell	1	5.6%
Turner, Kermit	17	94.4%
Turner, Walter B	13	72.2%
Widener, Alex	15	83.3%
Widener, Anthony	4	22.2%
Wingler, David	1	5.6%
Total Incidents for Station Station 1400	18	

Total Incidents for all Stations 18

Special Committees

Roy Wright Park & Josie's Nature Playground: Ms. Kroll stated that progress was going really well. Great volunteer turnout. There was a workday last week or the week before and 28 people came out to volunteer, getting three times as much work done as was planned for the day. Another workday was held last week, 8 people came out. Nearly done with clearing and seeding grass. Park items and playground elements should be going in soon. A number of things have been donated which will allow us to cover expenses for a few long-term items, like parking spaces and extension of Laurel Creek Trail. Thanks to volunteer turnout and Chief Turner's use of his tractor, we have not needed to contract the additional \$2500 for more clearing, which was approved on June 13th. Public works is still removing the brush pile and relocating it to property outside of Town. Picnic tables have been ordered, have a 3-4 week lead time, and will need to be assembled. Emory and Henry students are coming to volunteer on August 8th, 15-20 students will be on site. We are on track to finish up by the end of September.

Citizens Comments

1. Ben Earp, 511 Bowlin St., expressed his upset that there are active vacation rentals around his house in a residentially zoned neighborhood. He quoted Airbnb statistics and information, as well as VRBO, about not doing background checks on renters, etc., and feels this creates an unsafe environment for his family with small children.
2. Montanna Earp, 511 Bowlin St., cited code/ 16.4/ conditional use regulations, and said it is an unethical commercial business having these short-term rentals in residentially zoned areas. She is also concerned that having them in front of and beside her home creates an unsafe environment for her family with small children.
3. Dede Goodwin, property owner, was present last month asking the Town to purchase lots 7 & 9 on 5th St. She owns three adjoining lots there and would like to move forward with improving the area.
4. Danny Waters, 528 Clifton St., asked for clarification about Mr. McCrady's comment regarding removing the fence at the Town Park.

Manager's Report

Nothing at this time.

Legal Matters

Nothing at this time.

Old Business

Mr. McCrady stated he would get the bump guards ordered that will be installed when the fence at the Town Park is taken down.

New Business

Nothing at this time.

Consent Agenda

- Mr. McCrady made a motion to pay the bills for invoices exceeding \$2,500, 2nd by Mr. Jackson. The motion passed (4-0).
- Ms. Coleman made a motion to pay the bills presented as well as the standard and/or recurring bills that will come in before the next Council meeting. Mr. Kokotek 2nd the motion, which passed (4-0).

Mayor & Council Members Reports

Mayor Lamb stated she is impressed with the StoryWalk behind the Library; and she appreciates the work of the Town Staff for the Independence Day Celebration.

Mr. Kokotek gave a shout out to Morgan's on Main, which is a new business in Town.

Announcements

UPCOMING EVENTS & OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- * Damascus Farmers Market open every Saturday 9am-noon
- * Damascus Town Pool - open to the public daily
- * July 22nd- Beaverdam James in the Town Park
- * July 28th-CTREC Kickoff Dinner & Silent Auction at the Black Horse Resort
- * July 29th- Creeper Trail Ride to End Cancer (CTREC)

*For upcoming events, go to our website visitdamascus.org and check out the **Events Calendar**. For citizen info go to damascus.org, and don't forget our social media presence on **Facebook** and **Instagram**!*

- Mr. Jackson made a motion to adjourn, 2nd by Ms. Coleman. The motion passed (4-0).

Katie Lamb, Mayor

Tuesday Pope, Clerk