

DAMASCUS TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes for March 7, 2022
7:00pm Regular Council Meeting

Council Members Present: Mitchel Greer, Tom Hayes, Beaty Jackson, Charles Fields, Tony Doss, and Susan Coleman

Absent: None

Also Present: Katie Lamb, Mayor
Elena Smith, Town Treasurer
Kermit Turner, Police Chief & Fire Chief
Trent Crewe, Legal Counsel
Gavin Blevins, Town Manager
Tuesday Pope, Town Clerk

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 February 7, 2022, Regular Called Council Meeting Minutes, as presented.

- Mr. Hayes made a motion to approve the Minutes, as presented. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

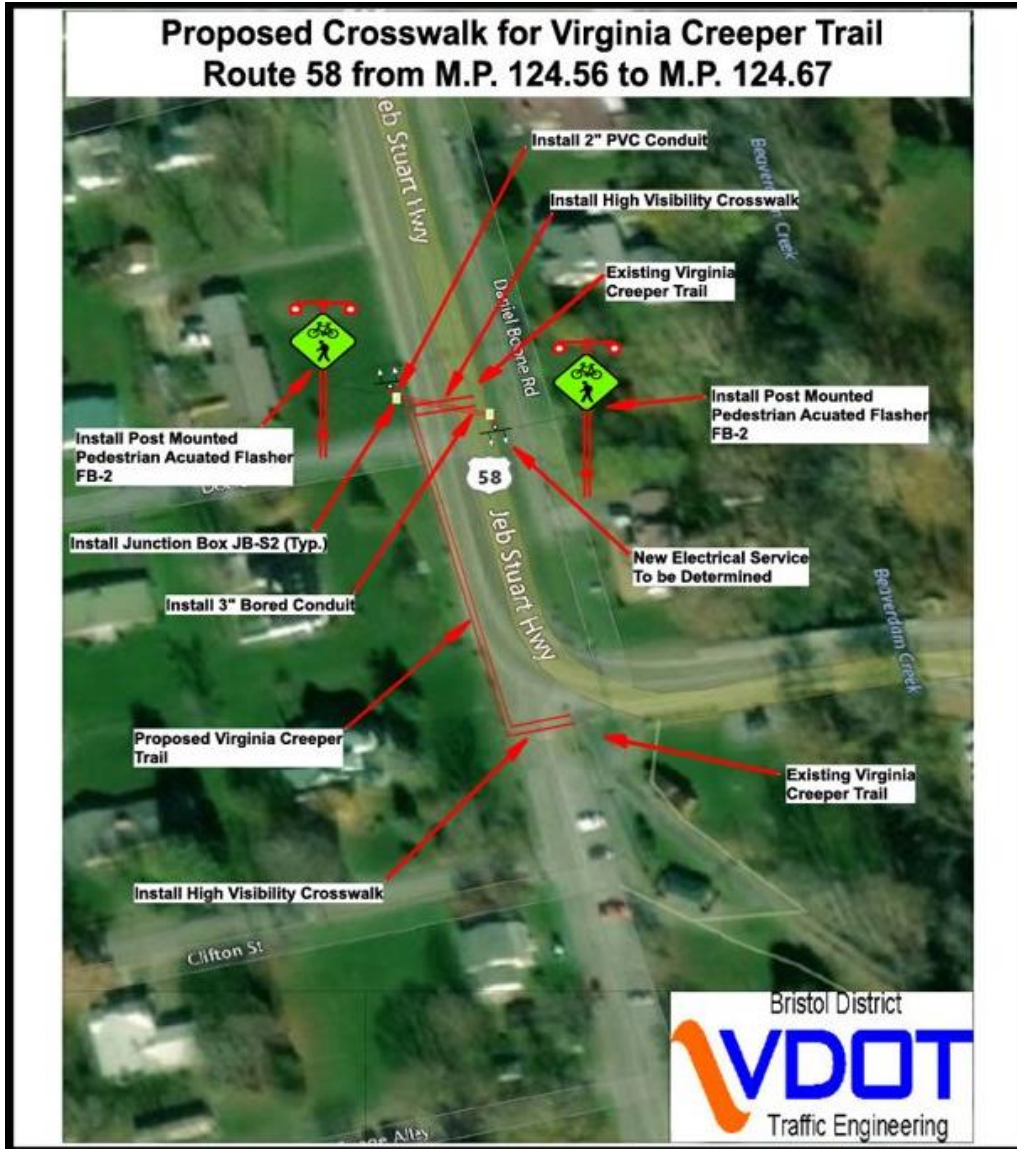
Mayor Lamb asked for approval of the February 8, 2022, Special Called Council Meeting/Joint Public Hearing with the Planning Commission, including several speaker name amendments.

- Mr. Jackson made a motion to approve the Minutes, with name amendments as requested. Mr. Greer 2nd the motion, which passed (5-0-1, with Mr. Hayes abstaining).

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

- Ms. Coleman made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Greer 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

VDOT Hwy. 58 Creeper Trail Crossing – Dennis Sanders reported on a project proposal to move the Creeper Trail crossing of Hwy. 58 away from the curve in front of Town Park, due to the dangerous lack of sight distance at that location. The proposal is to have riders cross over Hwy. 58 at Docie St., and then back over into the park from S. Beaverdam Ave, and vice-versa. This plan will add another road crossing, but these are safer crossing points than the one currently in use. VDOT wants to use Federal Lands Access grant to fund this project, and if approved for the grant, project construction would probably begin in 2024. The Creeper Trail Conservancy is also in agreeance that this is a needed safety improvement, and the Council agreed.



- Ms. Coleman made a motion to approve the proposed VDOT/Creeper Trail road crossing project, 2nd by Mr. Hayes. The motion passed (6-0).

Mayor Lamb asked Mr. Sanders when we can expect the Water St. bridge project to be completed.

Mr. Sanders replied that they will start working on it when the weather breaks and expect to have it completed this year.

Committee Reports

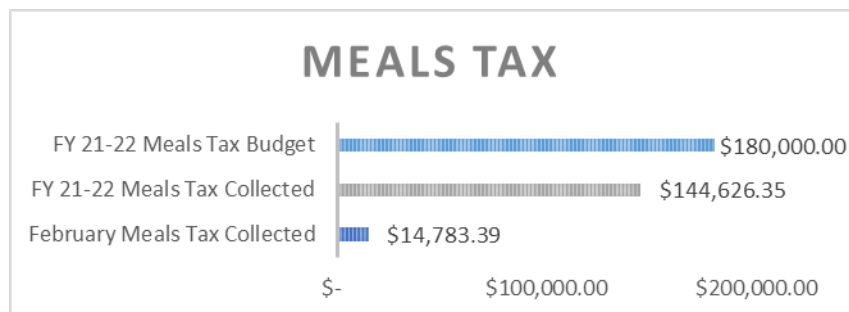
Budget, Finance, and Administration:

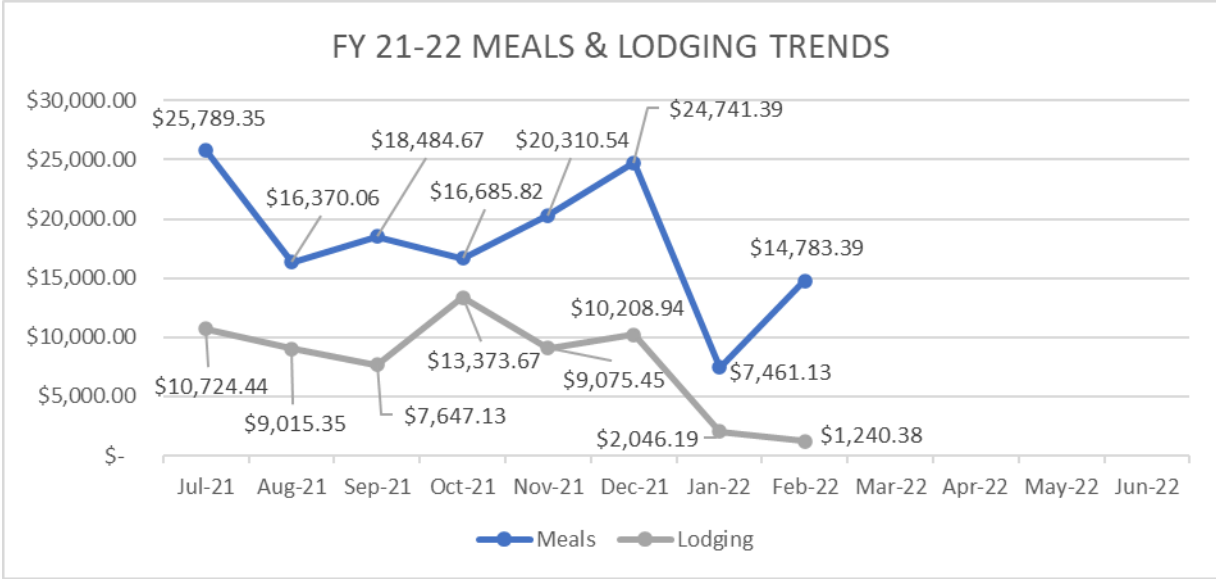
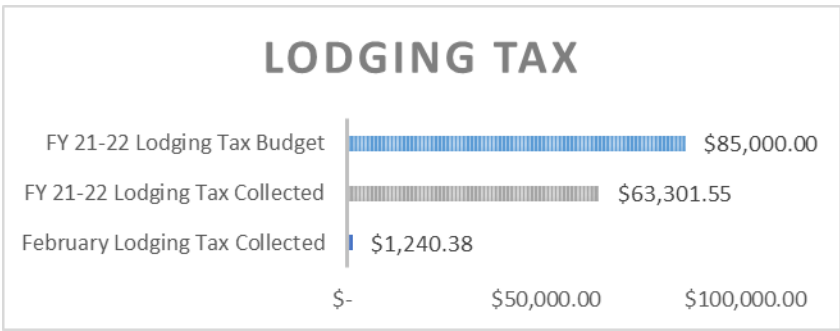
Town Treasurer, Elena Smith, presented the following report for the previous month:

Real Estate & Personal Property Taxes: The collection rate for 2021 Real Estate taxes is at 94.33% and the collection rate for 2021 Personal Property is at 85.47%.



Meals & Lodging Tax: We collected \$1,240.38 in lodging tax and \$14,783.39 in meals tax during the month of February, reflecting sales for January.





FY 20-21 Audit: Todd Owens with Owens CPA has dropped off our audit for fiscal year 2020-2021.

Budget Workshops: Budget workshops will begin March 22nd at 3pm and will continue on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday every month until complete.

Delinquent Real Estate and Personal Property Tax Accounts: The Town of Damascus has 2,318 real estate and personal property tax accounts. As of February 2nd, 2022, 488 of the 2318 accounts were delinquent. On February 11th, 475 delinquent tax letters were sent via USPS. As of March 2nd, the number of delinquent accounts has been reduced to 399. Fred Parker, the Washington County Treasurer, uses and recommends TACS for delinquent tax collection. This service is zero cost to the town.

Town of Damascus Virginia Investment Pool (VIP)	Account Balance	FYTD Income
VIP Stable NAV Liquidity Pool	\$550,568.31	\$323.68
Subaccounts		
RESERVE FUND	\$53,901.77	\$31.69
EARMARK POLICE VEHICLE	\$15,252.17	\$9.11
SEWER FUND CD	\$26,202.43	\$15.43
ANTHEM RECOVERY	\$43,792.27	\$25.64
ADDITIONAL WORKING CAPITAL	\$1,713.88	\$0.80
TRAIL DAYS RESERVE	\$7,430.84	\$4.06
TOD ARPA 2021	\$402,274.95	\$236.95

Streets, Lights and Maintenance:

Mr. Greer stated there have been a lot of problems with the Town Park bathrooms.

An estimate for repairs at the ballpark/tent city bathrooms will be sent to Council for approval as soon as we receive it.

Public Works has cleared off the gate behind Souls Harbor Church so our designated Scouts camping area can now easily be accessed.

Chestnut Ridge Construction has submitted an estimate of \$15,709.13 for finish work to the Laurel Creek Park restroom building.

- Mr. Greer made a motion to approve the estimate from Chestnut Ridge Construction. Ms. Coleman 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Parks and Recreation:

- 2022 Pool Season: Ms. Coleman stated that our regular pool season ends when school starts back, but she would like to extend the season August, September, and maybe into October, weather permitting. To do this, an extended season pool manager will need to be hired because the regular season pool co-managers cannot continue after school starts back.
- Ms. Coleman made a motion to advertise for an additional seasonal pool manager. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).
- Mr. Blevins reported that the Town's Recreation Program Director, Julie Kroll, has been working on the following grant opportunities:
 - * Virginia Commission for the Arts, Project Grant Approval Request (Murals/Art Trail)
 - * Virginia Tourism Corp Grant approval Requests – 1) Special Events & Festivals; 2) Destination Marketing Organization
- Mr. Greer made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to sign and submit the grant applications, as requested. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Planning Commission:

Mr. Blevins stated that Ralph Wilson wants to put in a walk-in cooler on Bank St. behind the Damascus Diner, which would require an easement from the Town, and wants to gauge the Council's thoughts on the matter.

The Council expressed some concerns about the space, or lack of, but will look into it further.

Police and Fire Advisory:

Chief Turner presented the following P.D. activity report for the previous month:

***Operations:** February 2022, Damascus Officers had 161 calls for service. We have taken 5 investigative reports and made 1 arrest.*

***Traffic Enforcement Activities:** We issued 22 citations along with 14 warnings.*

Speeding complaint areas include: Douglas Dr. & Damascus Dr.

Special Report:

We have scheduled some check point details and saturation patrols for this month. I have placed the Crosswalk Signs back out due to higher foot traffic in town with the warmer weather.

I will be scheduling meetings in the future with other Law Enforcement agencies to be preparing for Trail Days.

Special Notes:

Police Vehicles: None currently

Auxiliary: We have chosen two new Auxiliary Officers. They are Jared Minton and Andrew Jones. We will be starting their training this month and getting them ready for Trail Days.

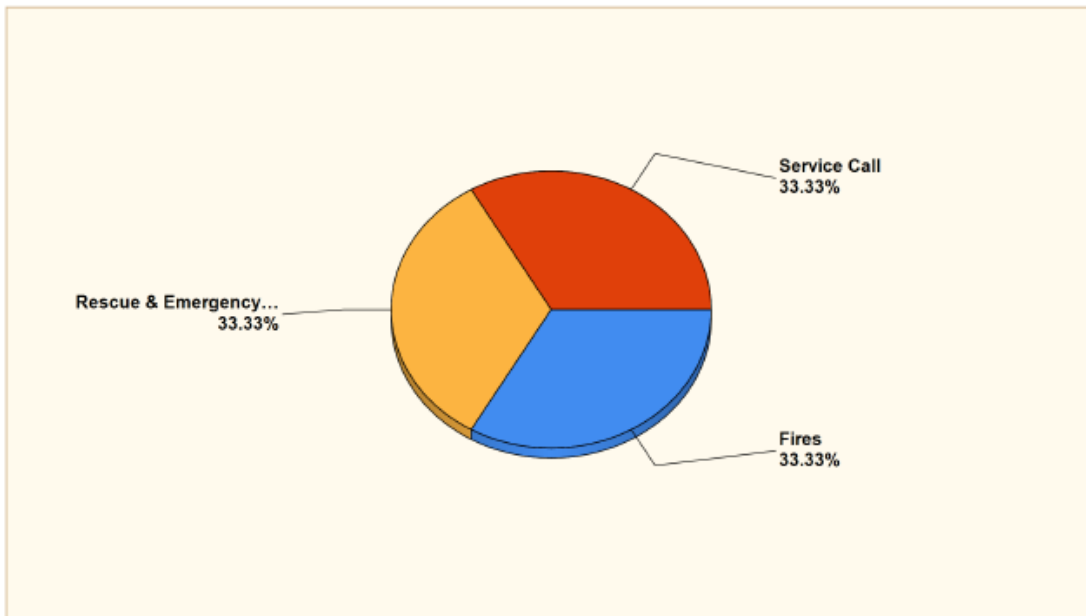
Damascus Volunteer Fire Department

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

* *NOTE: The actual number of incidents in February was 5, not 3 as the reports state.*

Damascus Fire Department ✖
Damascus, VA
This report was generated on 3/1/2022 2:44:00 PM

Breakdown by Major Incident Types for Date Range
Zone(s): All Zones | Start Date: 02/01/2022 | End Date: 02/28/2022



MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fires	1	33.33%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	1	33.33%
Service Call	1	33.33%
TOTAL	3	100%

Detailed Breakdown by Incident Type		
INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
171 - Cultivated grain or crop fire	1	33.33%
322 - Motor vehicle accident with injuries	1	33.33%
551 - Assist police or other governmental agency	1	33.33%
TOTAL INCIDENTS:	3	100%

Personnel Hours for Incidents for Date Range (Not Payroll Related)

Start Date: 02/01/2022 | End Date: 02/28/2022

PERSONNEL	TIME SPENT ON INCIDENTS (Hours:Minutes Dispatched to Cleared Scene)
Feliciano, Yamir	3:28
Johnson, Michael	3:28
Justice, Jason	4:08
Mullins, Troy	1:48
Phipps, Jennifer N	1:40
Phipps, Michael	1:48
Turner, Kermit	3:28
Turner, Walter B	0:41
Total:	20:27

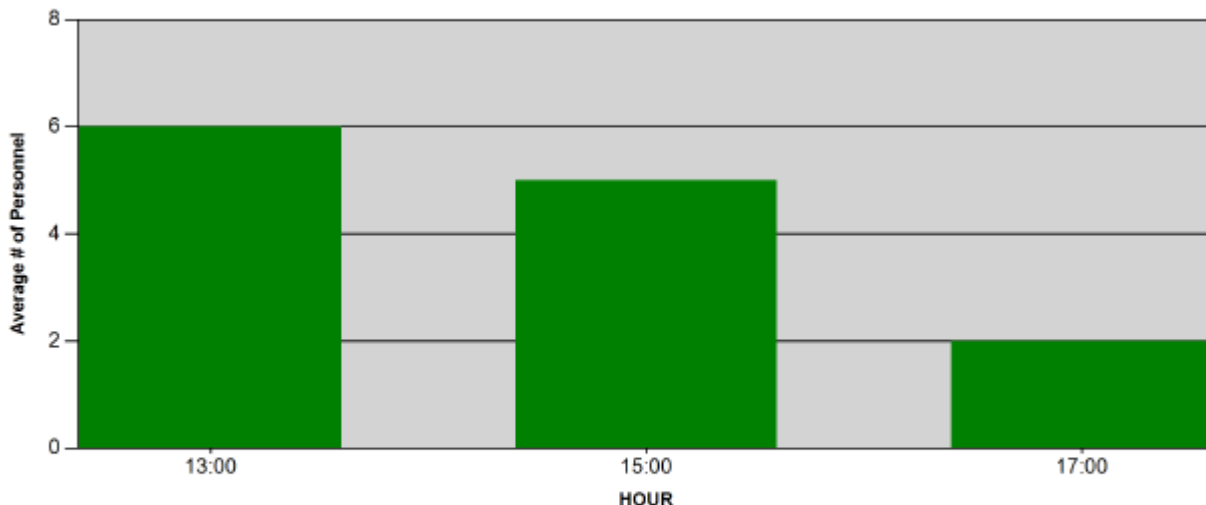
Incident Statistics

Zone(s): All Zones | Start Date: 02/01/2022 | End Date: 02/28/2022

INCIDENT COUNT			
INCIDENT TYPE		# INCIDENTS	
EMS		1	
FIRE		2	
TOTAL		3	
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	
OVERLAPPING CALLS			
# OVERLAPPING		% OVERLAPPING	
0		0	
LIGHTS AND SIREN - AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME (Dispatch to Arrival)			
Station	EMS	FIRE	
Station 1400	0:20:00	0:12:21	
AVERAGE FOR ALL CALLS		0:13:24	
LIGHTS AND SIREN - AVERAGE TURNOUT TIME (Dispatch to Enroute)			
Station	EMS	FIRE	
Station 1400	0:12:49	0:03:55	
AVERAGE FOR ALL CALLS		0:06:42	
AGENCY		AVERAGE TIME ON SCENE (MM:SS)	
Damascus Fire Department		57:10	

Average Number of Responding Personnel per Hour for Date Range

Start Date: 02/01/2022 | End Date: 02/28/2022



HOUR	AVG. # PERSONNEL
13:00 - 13:59	6.00
15:00 - 15:59	5.00
17:00 - 17:59	2.00

Response Percentage per Station per Personnel for Incident Types for Personnel

Personnel: All Personnel | Incident Type(s): All Incident Types | Start Date: 02/01/2022 | End Date: 02/28/2022

Personnel	Calls Attended	% of Calls for Selected Incident Types
Station: Station 1400		
Feliciano, Yamir	2	66.7%
Hurd, Emilee	1	33.3%
Johnson, Michael	3	100.0%
Jones, Dave	1	33.3%
Justice, Jason	3	100.0%
Mullins, Troy	1	33.3%
Phipps, Jennifer N	1	33.3%
Phipps, Michael	2	66.7%
Stewart, Timothy	1	33.3%
Turner, Kermit	2	66.7%
Turner, Walter B	1	33.3%
Widener, Anthony	1	33.3%
Total Incidents for Station Station 1400	3	

Total Incidents for all Stations 3

Special Committees

- Bonfire Half Marathon – Jesse Kokotek reported that the event, which was held on February 19th, had 32 registered runners and beautiful weather for their 13.1 mile run. Mr. Kokotek thanked the volunteers who helped, the Appalachian Heritage Distillery for hosting the packet pick-up, 7 Trails Grill for hosting the after show, and Trailhead Designs for supplying their printing needs. The Damascus Volunteer Fire Department was presented with a check for \$1,510, which was raised by the event to benefit their agency. Mr. Kokotek thanked Chief

Turner for all the department does and asked him to pass that gratitude along to the rest of the members.

- Damascus Farmers Market – Donna Foltz reported the market will start back up in April, on Saturdays from 9am-noon. Ms. Foltz will be offering the option for vendors to commit to a half season or the whole season, at a discounted rate, as well as the daily rate like last year.

Manager's Report

Mr. Blevins submitted the following report for the previous month:

Downtown Revitalization (CDBG) & Waterfront Development Initiative (ARC)

- *Mitchel and I have been trying to get a contractor lined up for the exterior and interior bathroom finishes. (Quote from Chestnut Ridge Construction approved.)*

TRRC – Trail Center

- *Landscaping efforts continue with next projects underway including the connecting trail and rain garden.*
- *East TN Metal has delivered and installed the additional two sections of railing on the porch.*
- *Interior painting in the garage walls has been finished; the ceiling has to be refinished before painting (including new lights).*
- *New doors and windows are still pending order. * Quote presented from Building Accents totaling \$10,567.72.*
 - Mr. Greer made a motion to approve the purchase of doors and windows from Building Accents, at the quoted price. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Scattered Site Housing Rehab Project

- *DHCD updated contract ready for execution (CDBG contract #21-21-10).*
 - Mr. Greer made a motion to reapprove the contract, which has been updated. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).
- *Contract for Housing Rehabilitation Specialist is ready for execution, serves procured through the planning grant.*
 - Mr. Greer made a motion to approve the Agreement for Rehabilitation Specialist Services between the Town of Damascus and Anna F. Meade for \$57,650, which will be paid with grant funds. Ms. Coleman 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Miscellaneous

- *The final Creeper Trail Master Plan was delivered Friday and we will schedule to have that presented in the near future.*

- *Planning for the SLFRF Spending Plan will begin this month along with Capital Improvements Plan and initial FY2023 budgeting.*
- *Paving for the WCSA water lines should be completed this month and we are securing costs for the road striping at the same time.*
- *MRPDC will be restarting progress on the Comprehensive Plan update with a goal to be completed by end of June 2022.*
- *Washington County is discussing shifting their accounts receivable system to Avenity and would like the towns to do the same – we are waiting on pricing since in the near future we will have to change from CitiPak due to non-compatibility with Windows 11. We are still looking into an accounts payable system to switch to.*
- *We've looked into a company called Granicus to utilize some of their programming and services to resolve ongoing and growing issues with business license and lodging tax compliance of short-term rental businesses in town (see attached slideshow and agreement).*
- Mr. Greer made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to enter into an agreement for services with Granicus. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).
- *We've also been looking into more efficient and effective ways to resolve delinquent real estate and personal property tax accounts and would like to partner with TACS to pursue many of these delinquent accounts – this would be at the cost of the property owner(s).*
- Ms. Coleman made a motion to move forward with the process of utilizing Taxing Authority Consulting Services, PC (TACS) for delinquent tax collections. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Mr. Blevins presented a quote received from Friendship Elect. For electrical upgrades needed at Town Hall for \$2,500.

- Mr. Greer made a motion to approve the electrical upgrade quote as presented. Mr. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Mr. Blevins recommended taking the Laurel Creek Park stump carving project out of committee and turning it over to staff, which was the consensus of the Council.

Mr. Blevins recommended taking the mural project out of committee and turning it over to staff, which was the consensus of the Council.

Old Business

Nothing to report at this time.

New Business

- The Local Choice Health Insurance Renewal – 4.7% Price Increase
 - Mr. Greer made a motion to approve the 2022-23 health insurance renewal with The Local Choice. Ms. Coleman 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

- Damascus/Abingdon MOU for Creeper Trail Trestle Repairs
 - Mr. Greer made a motion to approve the MOU for trestle repairs, as presented. Ms. Coleman 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

- First Baptist Church Paving Request – Trestle St.
 - Mr. Greer made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to put together an agreement between the Town and First Baptist Church for a paving project that will alleviate some of the stormwater drainage onto Laurel Ave. Ms. Coleman 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Legal Matters

Nothing at this time.

Mayor & Council Members Reports

Mayor Lamb stated that for the past several months she has been paying Jesse Kokotek to video the Council Meetings, and she would like the Council to approve the Town paying for this service moving forward.

The Council consensus was for staff to determine available funding in the budget, and from which line item, to be discussed further at the April Council Meeting.

Mayor Lamb Thanked the Damascus Volunteer Fire Dept., and Rescue Squad for all their agencies do, and asked for prayers for Ukraine.

Ms. Coleman stated that an AED is needed for the pool facility, and she has a quote for \$1,715. Chief Turner stated the Police Dept. has an extra one in storage that can be used at the pool.

Citizens Comments

Nothing at this time.

Announcements

UPCOMING EVENTS & OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- * *For information on upcoming events, go to our website visitdamascus.org. For citizen info go to damascus.org, and don't forget our social media presence on **Facebook**, **Instagram**, and **Twitter**!*

Consent Agenda

- Mr. Greer made a motion to pay the bills for invoices exceeding \$500, 2nd by Mr. Jackson. The motion passed (6-0).
- Mr. Greer 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. Jackson 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).
- Mr. Jackson made a motion to adjourn, 2nd by Ms. Coleman. The motion passed (6-0).

Katie Lamb, Mayor

Tuesday Pope, Clerk