

DAMASCUS TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes for July 1, 2024
7:00pm Regular Called Council Meeting

Council Members Present: Susan Coleman, Charles Fields, Tom Hayes, Beaty Jackson, Robert Kemmerlin, and Jack McCrady

Absent: None

Also Present: Katie Lamb, Mayor
 Tuesday Pope, Town Clerk
 Shawna Cook, Town Treasurer
 Gavin Blevins, Town Manager
 Lucy Phillips, Legal Counsel

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 4, 2024, Regular Called Council Meeting Minutes, as well as the June 17, 18, and 28, 2024 Special Called Council Meeting Minutes, as presented.

- Mr. McCrady 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 agenda, with the addition of Personnel Matters for Closed Session discussion.

- Ms. Coleman made a motion to approve the agenda with one addition. Mr. Kemmerlin 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

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 2024 first half Real Estate is at 75.63% and 2023 Personal Property is at 81.26%.

Meals & Lodging Tax: \$23,044.10 in Meal Taxes and \$19,256.10 in Lodging Taxes were collected for June 2024.

<i>Town of Damascus Virginia</i>	<i>Account</i>		<i>Inception</i>
<i>Investment Pool (VIP)</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>FYTD Income</i>	<i>Date</i>
<i>RESERVE FUND</i>	<i>\$59,307.79</i>	<i>\$3,142.14</i>	<i>08/11/2017</i>

EARMARK POLICE VEHICLE	\$503.05	\$634.80	04/04/2018
SEWER FUND CD	\$28,830.36	\$1,527.41	11/26/2018
ANTHEM RECOVERY	\$48,184.46	\$2,552.92	12/21/2018
ADDITIONAL WORKING CAPITAL	\$203,404.14	\$1,618.23	08/08/2019
TRAIL DAYS RESERVE	\$8,176.19	\$433.22	05/14/2020
TOD ARPA 2021	\$607,101.58	\$34,822.14	06/29/2021
VIP Stable NAV Liquidity Pool	\$955,507.57	\$44,730.86	

Due to issues with software, balances shown below are from online banking:

Bank of Damascus:

General Fund: \$292,480.66

CDBG ARC Downtown: \$478.70

CDBG Program Income: \$13,548.82

ARPA: \$76.00

Total: \$306,584.18

Announcements:

** Accounts in our software are not currently showing penalties for 2024 first half real estate, as an issue with the system was causing the penalty amounts to not be rounded properly. The problem is being addressed and will hopefully be corrected shortly. Penalties are still due for all payments made after June 20, 2024. Penalties will not be posted until they are correct.*

Streets, Lights and Maintenance:

Mr. McCrady reported that the department had been busy with mowing, weed eating, swapping out flags, and preparing for the event this week.

Mayor Lamb reported receiving complaints about pavement cave-in and potholes on Rutledge St.

Mr. McCrady stated also that the WCSA still needs to repair where they had made cuts across Bank St. and S. Shady Ave.

Parks and Recreation:

Mr. Jackson reported that 2024 Trail Days went very well, and we are already looking forward to next year's event. Event recap: Revenue \$166,000, Expenses \$67,000, still waiting on a few final items. Approximate financial outcome for 2024 is net \$99,000. 22% increase over 2023 mainly due to a vendor fee increase and \$5 increase in tent city wristbands. Everything we're seeing shows that crowd size is trending the same as recent years, despite the rain. Estimated 25,000 attendees over the weekend.

APPALACHIAN TRAIL DAYS FESTIVAL



THE WORLD'S LARGEST CELEBRATION OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL!

2024 EVENT STATS

128 Sponsors & Vendors
+18% Event revenue overall
+17% Merch sales
-7% Tent City wristbands
+9% May lodging tax*
+26% May meals tax*

*Based on monthly average for FY24

Each year in May, the tiny trail town of Damascus, Virginia swells from 700 residents to an estimated 25,000 people for Trail Days. The event brings out a grand reunion of thru-hikers past and present, a strong network of some of the best hiking gear brands in the industry, and a large, dedicated crowd of trail supporters and hiking enthusiasts. This festival sees a nationwide audience and a high rate of return visitation. Regional day visitors come en masse from a 2+ hour radius surrounding Damascus.

2024 NOTES & ANECDOTES

The Hiker Parade and Tent City were just as big as always, despite the rainy weather! General consensus is that regional day visitation may have been lower but nothing can keep away the hiker crowd.

"Great crowd considering the weather and the reduced amount of thru-hikers this year. Friday was our biggest single sales day for any trail show ever!"

Friday showed a good increase in sales, Saturday held its usual big crowd, and Sunday was decent yet slower. Continued growth on Sunday remains a primary goal. Vendors report a mix of +/-20% in sales when compared to past years. A handful of vendors reported record sales for 2024.

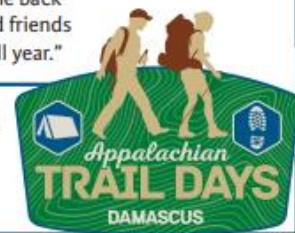
"Even with rain, attendance was good and the people were great to interact with." "I don't have a crowd size estimate but we were slammed non-stop. Almost lost my voice." "It seemed Friday started off with a bang!"

"Thanks again for all that you do to make this happen! I know that it is a ton of work. It is wonderful for me to come back each year from AZ and reconnect with old friends and make new ones. I look forward to it all year."



Thank you to all of our sponsors & vendors for your continued support and everything you do to make Trail Days possible!

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR! MAY 16-18, 2025



Mr. Jackson also reported that the pool season is going great, with attendance high. They will be doing a zip code survey this month, and parking is an issue for pool patrons.

Planning Commission:

Nothing to report at this time.

Police and Fire Advisory:

Chief Turner presented the following report for the previous month:

Operations: May 2024, Damascus Officers had 93 calls for service. We have taken 6 investigative

reports and made 2 arrests. We had 1 reportable accident. Arrests are as follows: Fugitive from Justice 1, Warrant Service 1.

Traffic Enforcement Activities: We issued 15 citations along with 15 warnings. The Speeding violations were 25 mph zone 4, 35 mph zone 3, Expired Tags 1, Drive Suspended or No Endorsement 2, Reckless driving 4 and Defective Equipment 1.

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

Special Report: The speed signs have been repaired and are back in service. I had to do some work on them before we could put them back out, but they have been placed back on the post today to start getting traffic data. I should have a full report for next month's council meeting.

Special Notes:

I have applied for a Grant called HEAT Grant for a LPR Camera System (License Plate Reader), this camera system will help with Identifying suspects, vehicles, Missing People, Wanted People, Stolen Vehicles or Tags that come through our town. The grant is a 100% reimbursement grant, we pay up front and once the paid invoice is received then I submit it and get our money back. The LPR system is made by FLOCK Safety and there is not a long-term contract that we have to sign, the grant is a reoccurring grant and all we must do is apply each year and if we get it again then it will pay each year for the system. With this system I could have had a better chance to have been able to Identify the suspect that had stolen a woodchipper back on May 9, 2024. I got a description of the vehicle and a photo but was not able to ID the owner due to the camera systems through town.

Damascus Volunteer Fire Department

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

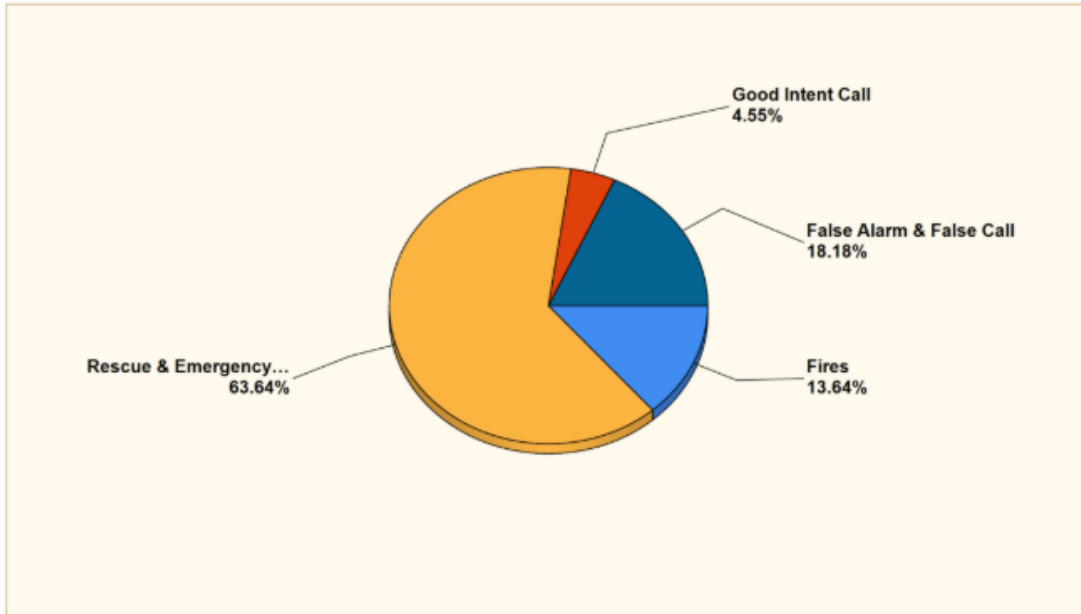
Damascus Fire Department

Damascus, VA

This report was generated on 7/1/2024 10:41:00 AM

Breakdown by Major Incident Types for Date Range

Zone(s): All Zones | Start Date: 06/01/2024 | End Date: 06/30/2024

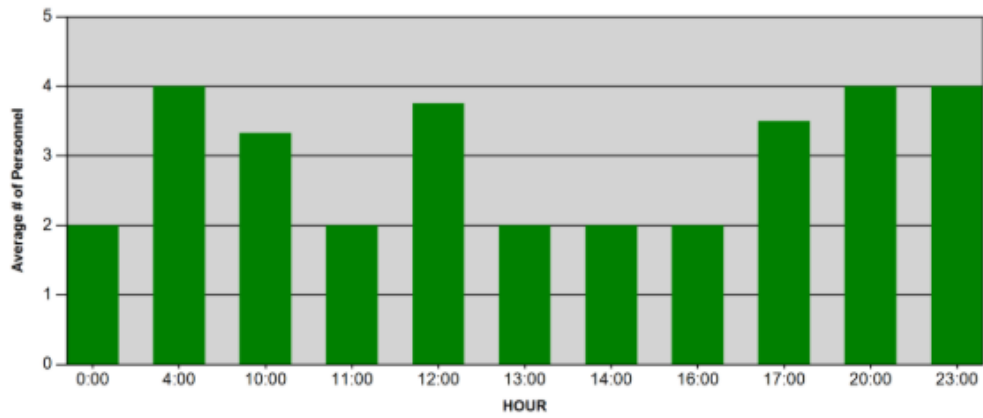


MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fires	3	13.64%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	14	63.64%
Good Intent Call	1	4.55%
False Alarm & False Call	4	18.18%
TOTAL	22	100%

Detailed Breakdown by Incident Type		
INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
118 - Trash or rubbish fire, contained	1	4.55%
131 - Passenger vehicle fire	1	4.55%
171 - Cultivated grain or crop fire	1	4.55%
300 - Rescue, EMS incident, other	1	4.55%
311 - Medical assist, assist EMS crew	9	40.91%
322 - Motor vehicle accident with injuries	3	13.64%
324 - Motor vehicle accident with no injuries.	1	4.55%
622 - No incident found on arrival at dispatch address	1	4.55%
736 - CO detector activation due to malfunction	2	9.09%
745 - Alarm system activation, no fire - unintentional	1	4.55%
746 - Carbon monoxide detector activation, no CO	1	4.55%
TOTAL INCIDENTS:	22	100%

Average Number of Responding Personnel per Hour for Date Range

Start Date: 06/01/2024 | End Date: 06/30/2024



HOUR	AVG. # PERSONNEL
00:00 - 00:59	2.00
04:00 - 04:59	4.00
10:00 - 10:59	3.33
11:00 - 11:59	2.00
12:00 - 12:59	3.75
13:00 - 13:59	2.00
14:00 - 14:59	2.00
16:00 - 16:59	2.00
17:00 - 17:59	3.50
20:00 - 20:59	4.00
23:00 - 23:59	4.00

Incident Statistics

Zone(s): All Zones | Start Date: 06/01/2024 | End Date: 06/30/2024

INCIDENT COUNT			
INCIDENT TYPE		# INCIDENTS	
EMS		14	
FIRE		8	
TOTAL		22	
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			
736 - CO detector activation due to malfunction		2	
746 - Carbon monoxide detector activation, no CO		1	
TOTAL		3	
MUTUAL AID			
Aid Type		Total	
Aid Received		1	
OVERLAPPING CALLS			
# OVERLAPPING		% OVERLAPPING	
2		9.09	
LIGHTS AND SIREN - AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME (Dispatch to Arrival)			
Station	EMS	FIRE	
Station 1400	0:20:08	0:16:18	
AVERAGE FOR ALL CALLS		0:17:41	
LIGHTS AND SIREN - AVERAGE TURNOUT TIME (Dispatch to Enroute)			
Station	EMS	FIRE	
Station 1400	0:03:35	0:05:27	
AVERAGE FOR ALL CALLS		0:04:27	
AGENCY		AVERAGE TIME ON SCENE (MM:SS)	
Damascus Fire Department		49:51	

Incident Type and Street Name for Date Range

Incident Status: Reviewed | Start Date: 06/01/2024 | End Date: 06/30/2024

Incident Date	Address	Incident Type
06/02/2024	Jeb Stuart HWY, Damascus, VA 24236	CO detector activation due to malfunction
06/07/2024	Osceola RD, Abingdon, VA 24210	Carbon monoxide detector activation, no CO
06/07/2024	CREEPER TRAIL, Creek Junction, VA 24236	Medical assist, assist EMS crew
06/08/2024	Creepers TRL, Damascus, VA 24236	Medical assist, assist EMS crew
06/09/2024	Osceola RD, Abingdon, VA 24210	CO detector activation due to malfunction
06/10/2024	Monroe RD, Meadowview (RR name Meadow View), VA 24361	Motor vehicle accident with injuries
06/10/2024	Creepers TRL, Damascus, VA 24236	Medical assist, assist EMS crew
06/11/2024	S Shady AVE, Damascus, VA 24236	Alarm system activation, no fire - unintentional
06/12/2024	Liberty Hall RD, Glade Spring, VA 24340	Cultivated grain or crop fire
06/15/2024	Creepers TRL, Damascus, VA 24236	Rescue, EMS incident, other
06/17/2024	Creepers TRL, Damascus, VA 24236	Medical assist, assist EMS crew
06/17/2024	Jeb Stuart HWY, Damascus, VA 24236	Motor vehicle accident with no injuries.
06/18/2024	Jeb Stuart HWY, Damascus, VA 24236	No incident found on arrival at dispatch address
06/18/2024	Rivermont DR, Meadow View (RR Name For Meadowview), VA 24361	Trash or rubbish fire, contained
06/19/2024	Virginia Creepers TRL, Damascus, VA 24236	Medical assist, assist EMS crew
06/22/2024	Jeb Stuart HWY, Damascus, VA 24236	Motor vehicle accident with injuries
06/22/2024	Virginia Creepers TRL, Damascus, VA 24236	Medical assist, assist EMS crew
06/22/2024	Virginia Creepers TRL, Damascus, VA 24236	Medical assist, assist EMS crew
06/28/2024	Saturn DR, Abingdon, VA 24210	Passenger vehicle fire
06/28/2024	Rambo ST, Damascus, VA 24236	Medical assist, assist EMS crew
06/28/2024	22360 Alverado Road, Damascus, VA 24236	Medical assist, assist EMS crew
06/29/2024	Jeb Stuart HWY, Damascus, VA 24236	Motor vehicle accident with injuries
		Total Incidents: 22

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

Start Date: 06/01/2024 | End Date: 06/30/2024

PERSONNEL	TIME SPENT ON INCIDENTS (Hours:Minutes Dispatched to Cleared Scene)
Campbell, Candace	13:24
Campbell, Dalton	5:59
Doss, Brady	0:25
Greer, Jesse	0:06
Hicks, Emilee	2:38
Hicks, Mindi	1:41
Hicks, Noah	5:01
Johnson, Michael	8:57
Norris, Ralph	3:38
Reedy, Tony Mitchell	2:38
Richey, Jordan	16:42
Turner, Kermit	16:08
Turner, Walter B	16:53
Widener, Alex	10:34
Total:	104:45

Response Percentage per Station per Personnel for Incident Types for Personnel

Personnel: All Personnel | Incident Type(s): All Incident Types | Start Date: 06/01/2024 | End Date: 06/30/2024

Personnel	Calls Attended	% of Calls for Selected Incident Types
Station: Station 1400		
Campbell, Candace	14	63.6%
Campbell, Dalton	8	36.4%
Doss, Brady	3	13.6%
Greer, Jesse	4	18.2%
Hicks, Emilee	6	27.3%
Hicks, Mindi	4	18.2%
Hicks, Noah	8	36.4%
Johnson, Michael	11	50.0%
Jones, Andrew	1	4.5%
Jones, Dave	3	13.6%
Norris, Ralph	4	18.2%
Phipps, Jennifer	8	36.4%
Reedy, Tony Mitchell	3	13.6%
Richey, Jordan	15	68.2%
Turner, Kermit	10	45.5%
Turner, Walter B	16	72.7%
Widener, Alex	9	40.9%
Widener, Anthony	2	9.1%
Widener, Bailey	2	9.1%
Total Incidents for Station Station 1400	22	

Total Incidents for all Stations

22

Special Committees

Nothing at this time.

Citizens Comments

Citizens Comments were heard from the following people:

1. Scott Judd, Daniel Boone St., Damascus

Manager's Report

Gavin Blevins presented the following Manager's Report:

Scattered Site Housing Rehab Project

- *The application for Phase 2 was submitted with a total budget of \$929,147.00.*

Creeper Trail

- *Trestles 30 & 31: Core sampling has been completed with mixed results; the engineer is proposing that based on the sampling results, and the capabilities of the USFS, that we replace the stringers rather than utilizing tensions rods – this will increase the initial cost of the project but should last longer with easier maintenance.*
- *Trestle 16: The Conservancy is still seeking an engineering firm that can complete the USFS-required pin testing on the steel trestle superstructure.*

- Trestle 43: The USFS is planning to redeck T43, which will require a 3-day closure to complete; preliminary site surveying has been complete and VCTC and USFS are coordinating this to coincide with the substantial reconstruction of T30 and T31.

DOF Urban & Community Forestry

- We are preparing to bid the removal of the rest of the trees.

Miscellaneous

- Gap Analysis + Feasibility Study: The Town completed final submission to VTC Drive 2.0 grant by 03/15 for the \$20,000 to complete a gap analysis. Washinton County has already sent us \$5,000 in match, and the IDA has committed to \$5,000 in match, and we have applied to the Wellspring Foundation for \$20,000 to fund the feasibility study. Notification of grant awards is expected in early August.
- Laurel Creek Trail: Currently, there are two options for the Laurel Creek Trail (other than leaving it where it was designed and built), and I have confirmed that VDOT requires sealed drawings to either relocate the Trail or remove the Trail.
 - o The council previously decided to have that section of the Trail removed.
- Printer lease: The printer has been ordered and scheduled for delivery/installation this week.
- Painting/sealing: We tried but were unable to get all of Laurel Avenue striped before Trail Days due to rain, but we are ready to finish up along with restriping the perpendicular streets once the Council decides on the Laurel Creek Trail design
- Engineering: I'm still working on getting contracts finalized for the stormwater engineering in the downtown and parking/sidewalk design along Legion Ave. I still need to follow-up on streambank stabilization engineering.
- Landscaping: I haven't had the chance to get a RFQ out for the landscaping/hardscaping projects around town yet.
- VTC LOVEwork: The LOVEwork mural was completed on wall of the Town Pool and \$1,500 in total reimbursement has been received from VTC. The listing has been added to the official Virginia LOVEworks map and database.
- I'm still finalizing the managed IT services contract and services.

Legal Matters

At the appropriate time, the Mayor and Council will Recess into Closed Session for Discussion and Consideration of Personnel Matters, per VA Code Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1).

Old Business

Nothing at this time.

New Business

Nothing at this time.

Consent Agenda

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

Code Enforcement:

Mayor Lamb presented the following activity report for April from the Town's Code Enforcement Officer, Marty Berry:

Visits and Contacts: 14

Zoning: 0

Business License: 6

Lodging: 4

Meals: 0

Complaints and Investigations: 3

Assist P D: 1

Mayor & Council Members Reports

Mayor Lamb reported on the following: it is political season, so please make sure any signs you put out or allow on your property are not placed in the right-of-way; we have a bear problem in the area, so please make sure to keep all trash secured; and the Council and the Planning Commission have received a letter from an attorney, on behalf of concerned business and property owners in Damascus, reminding elected officials or people appointed to committees of their oath of office (Code of Virginia) to remain impartial and unbiased, as well as the Town's sign ordinance, which limits the amount of time yard signs are allowed to remain up.

Mr. McCrady stated that he would like to know the identity of the business owners and residents involved in retaining the attorney who sent the letter Mayor Lamb was referring to.

Mr. Jackson reported that he met with the board of directors of the senior center and spoke with them about establishing a community garden on their property. Also, he is now Chairing the Damascus Health Center Commission, as requested by the previous Chairman, Stuart Wright.

Mr. Kemmerlin, following up on David Atwood's Citizen Comments at a previous meeting, stated that he has looked at the property again closely and hundreds of gallons of water is flowing through the ditch well, but the issue seems to be that the site is just overwhelmed because it is even with the water table and there is nothing the Town can do to help the soft/soggy issue on Mr. Atwood's private property. Also, as we are starting to talk more about short-term rentals, instead of growing animosity, people need to work together to understand each other's differences in opinions and come up with ideas and solutions that satisfy everyone.

Mr. McCrady stated that: the sign in his yard is not outright against transient lodging, only in allowing additional ones in residential neighborhoods, we need to keep the citizen base strong and growing; Trestle 16 has some loose boards; and overgrown trees need to be cut back off the rights-of-way or the Town will do it.

- * Mr. McCrady made a motion to include July 5th as a paid holiday for Town staff. Mr. Fields 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).

Announcements

UPCOMING EVENTS & OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- o Farmers Market - Saturdays 9am-noon
 - o Town Pool is open for the season
 - o July 3rd – Damascus Independence Day Celebration at Beaverdam Creek Park
 - o July 4th and 5th – Town Hall will be CLOSED in observation of Independence Day
 - o July 26th – Creeper Trail Ride to End Cancer (CTREC) Kick-Off at the Damascus Old Mill
 - o July 27th – CTREC Event
- *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** and **Instagram!***
- Mr. McCrady made a motion to Recess into Closed Session for Discussion and Consideration of Personnel Matters, per VA Code Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1). Mr. Kemmerlin 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).
 - Mr. McCrady made a motion to return to Open Session, 2nd by Ms. Coleman. The motion passed (6-0).
 - *CERTIFY (individually): We Certify that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and only such matters identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed, or considered in the closed meeting.*
 - Susan Coleman – Yea
 - Charles Fields – Yea
 - Tom Hayes - Yea
 - Beaty Jackson– Yea
 - Robert Kemmerlin - Yea
 - Jack McCrady - Yea
 - Mr. McCrady made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to offer up to budget to identified candidate. Mr. Fields 2nd the motion, which passed (5-0-1, with Mr. Hayes abstaining).

- Ms. Coleman made a motion to set a Special Called Council Meeting for July 5th at 9am. Mr. Kemmerlin 2nd the motion, which passed (6-0).
- Mr. McCrady made a motion to adjourn, 2nd by Mr. Jackson. The motion passed (6-0).

Katie Lamb, Mayor

Tuesday Pope, Clerk