

TO: Mayor Webb and Town Council  
FROM: James Morani, Town Manager  
RE: Town Manager Report for January 2021

- **Economically Sensitive Revenues** – As of January 31, meals tax revenues are down 10.2% from the previous year while lodging taxes are down 45.5%. January saw decreases of 7.6% and 56.8%, respectively. For FY 2020-2021, the total decrease in meals, lodging, and local sales and use taxes is 16.8%. Fiscal year projections for these combined revenue streams is a decrease of 32.2% so the Town is well above its total projected revenues. However, the next three months are usually the lowest of the year for meals and lodging tax revenues.
- **FY 2021-2022 Budget** – Director of Finance Steve Trotman held preliminary meetings with Department Heads in advance of the upcoming budget. Budget preparation worksheets have been provided to all departments for completion prior to staff budget meetings in February. Staff will provide an update on the budget process at the February 16 council meeting.
- **Sports Complex** – Notice to Proceed will coincide with AEP establishing a temporary power source for Quesenberry's office trailer. This is expected to be mid-February.
- **Park Street Improvements** – The Town's design consultant, Thompson & Litton, has finalized right-of-way plans with final pole relocations. Town staff has also worked with the property owner on the west end of the project to maintain two-way traffic while still constructing a new sidewalk. T-L will prepare a submittal set for application to VDOT to begin to acquire property for the project.
- **Hassinger House** – Town staff presented a proposed boundary adjustment plat at the January 19 Work Session. This adjustment is intended to be recorded before, or with, the sale of the property to retain access to, and use of, the Veterans Park bathroom and Cummings Street banner pole. Town Council agreed to move forward with this configuration. Town staff will have T-L produce a revised preliminary plat with the adjusted southern boundary, and show the right-of-way on the northern side of the parcel as Town right-of-way, incorporated with Grove Terrace.
- **Fields-Penn House** – Town staff has identified work within the renovation schematic that architectural consultant, The Lane Group, developed that can be done by Town crews to reduce costs. Facilities Maintenance staff has begun purchasing materials to perform interior electrical work, which will begin soon. A staff advisory group has been formed to assist in aesthetic and functional work-space decisions as the renovations move forward. A Request for Quotation is being developed for HVAC work. Other work including outside renovations will be done as staff availability allows.
- **Sanitary Sewer System Inflow and Infiltration** – Town design consultant Mattern & Craig continues to develop final plans and bid documents for both the East Valley/Walden Road I & I Sewer Replacement Project and the Exit 19 Area Force Main Replacement project. Bid documents are being finalized and the project is expected to be out for bid by the end of February.
- **Remsburg Drive Pedestrian Bridge** – Town consultant Thompson & Litton has been contracted for the design of step replacement. They have performed necessary survey work and started design plans.
- **East Main Street Town Creek Crossing** – The Town has issued a task order to AMT to prepare a grant application for \$50,000 to study the Town Creek watershed and stream capacity.
- **Traffic Study** – Field data collection continues with consultant RK&K to study Main Street traffic circulation from Cummings Street to Pecan Street and lead to a design for changes at the Main/Pecan intersection.
- **Annual Asphalt Resurfacing Work** – The Town received bids on January 26. W-L was the as-read low bidder. Staff will make a recommendation to Town Council at the February 1 meeting to award the contract to W-L. Work is anticipated to start mid-April and be completed by mid-June.

- **Virginia Creeper Trail (VCT)** – Town staff is currently working with the VCT Conservancy on two issues. The first issue is the traffic control at the Meade Drive trail crossing. Staff’s opinion is the signal there is not warranted and actually contributes to confusion for trail users and vehicular traffic. A plan is being developed to transition to a “Trail STOP” control and remove the signal. The second issue is the chaotic and undefined trail and parking areas at Alvarado station. Staff and VCT Conservancy are working with VDOT to reconfigure the trail path and parking.
- **Tree Removal** – Quotes are being solicited to remove three sycamore trees on Court Street between Main Street and Plumb Alley, a sycamore tree in the S-curve between East Valley Street and Walden Road, and a hemlock tree on the west side of the Fields-Penn House.
- **White Avenue ROW Vacation** – Town Council appointed three citizens to serve on the Board of Viewers for the proposed ROW vacation on White Avenue. The opinion of the Board of Viewers is that no inconvenience to the Town would result from the requested vacation. Director of Public Works John Dew will present the recommendation of the Board of Viewers, which includes conditions of the vacation, at the February 1 council meeting.
- **New Officer Hired** – John Carter was hired as a new police officer. He is a native of Smyth County and attended Chilhowie High School. He later obtained an Associate’s Degree in Administration of Justice from VHCC. John was previously employed as a corrections officer at the Southwest Regional Jail Authority. He holds DCJS certifications in General Instructor, Firearms Instructor, and Field Training Officer.
- **Marcus Alert System** – Chief Holbrook participated in meetings with law enforcement executives as well as representatives from Highlands Community Services (HCS) to establish protocols for the Marcus Alert System, which is new legislation concerning individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. HCS was selected by the Department of Behavioral Health as one of the five initial programs.
- **Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance Update** – At the January 19 meeting, Town Council approved a contract with The Berkley Group for these services related to the updated Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. Director of Community Development Jason Boswell will manage this project.
- **Housing Assessment** – The Town was awarded a \$40,000 grant from DHCD for a housing assessment. Staff worked with the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission to apply for this grant. This study will be included in the FY 2021-2022 budget.
- **Economic Development/Tourism Activities**
  - Director of Economic Development Tonya Triplett and Community Relations Coordinator Tenille Montgomery met virtually with a group of local attractions to explore where the Town can assist or fill gaps for any projects they may be working on. A shared calendar is being created for the group, which will assist with the coordination and scheduling of events.
  - Staff met with Becky Brett (VHF) and plan to assist with marketing for events planned for 2021.
  - Staff met with VTC, Barter Theatre, The Crooked Road, and William King Museum to discuss a promotional video.
  - New brochures for Sinking Spring Cemetery and retail shopping are under development.
- **Prepared Meals Grant** – This program started on January 11 and has been very successful. Town staff continues to administer the grant by creating schedules, collecting invoices, order equipment, coordinating payments with the EDA, and requesting funds from DHCD.
- **Washington County Business Challenge** – This annual program kicked off on January 19, meeting every Tuesday evening for six weeks. Several businesses are competing, both new and existing.
- **Coomes Recreation Center** – An Invitation to Bid for a lease of a portion of the Coomes Recreation Center has been posted. The proposed lease area is an unused portion of the facility that was vacated as a result of relocating administrative offices. The Town is seeking interested parties who could provide therapy services on site.