

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

- **FY 2021-2022 Budget** – The FY 2021-2022 budget was approved at the June 7 council meeting. The adopted budget included a 2% cost-of-living adjustment for full-time employees. This was possible due to the projected increase in revenues from the first draft of the proposed budget.
- **Economically Sensitive Revenues** – Meals, Lodging, and Local Sales and Use Tax revenues were strong the last quarter of the fiscal year. From April to June, Meals, Lodging, and Local Sales and Use tax revenues increased by 14.6%, 2.4%, and 25.7%, respectively, over pre-pandemic (2019) levels. The Town exceeded its annual revenue projections for Meals and Local Sales and Use Tax revenues by 6.1% and 8.8%, respectively. Lodging tax revenues were 17.1% less than projected, but that was due to the decline in travel last summer and fall.
- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)** – Director Finance Steve Trotman gave a presentation at the June 22 council meeting. The Town received the first tranche (1/2) of the \$8,162,144 on June 30.
- **Sports Complex** – Construction of the concession stand and maintenance building continues; concrete curb and gutter installation continues for parking lots; fencing work continues throughout the site; approximately 2,000 feet of 1” conduit was added for video camera cable for parking lot security. Sod has been placed on the small multi-use field; some fields are nearing completion of base and root zones and will be ready for sod installation in July and August.
- **Park Street Improvements** – The Town resubmitted required documentation to VDOT for authorization to acquire right-of-way. The Town and consultant have received plan review comments from VDOT. A meeting is set to discuss with VDOT a resubmittal along with a request to proceed with ROW acquisition.
- **Hassinger House** – The Town published the Request for Proposals on June 8. An open house was held on June 17 and a second is scheduled for July 11. The closing date for proposals is July 21.
- **Veterans Memorial Park Restrooms** – Facilities Maintenance staff has completed interior plumbing and vanities. Outside contractors are currently working on electrical, guttering, and the ADA ramp.
- **Fields-Penn House** – HVAC installation is complete. Partial demolition and reconstruction of the back porch is underway and should be completed by mid-July. A contract has been signed for exterior painting to begin in July. Quotes were received for plaster and interior trim work. Design plan and bid documents were developed in-house for new pedestrian walkways from Main Street to the front porch and from the municipal lot handicap spaces to Main Street.
- **Sanitary Sewer System Inflow and Infiltration** – The Sanitary Sewer Evaluation Study (SSES) was submitted to DEQ. Town staff, consultant, and DEQ discussed the study results and strategy moving forward with applications for I&I project funding. Public Works and Wastewater management met with the Town Manager and Director of Finance to propose project scope and funding requirements for recommended I&I repair, rehabilitation, and replacement work. The Town Manager authorized staff to apply for the full \$3,314,000, with a possible 50% in principle forgiveness.
- **Wastewater Contract Operations** – An RFP for wastewater contract operations was published June 30. The deadline to submit proposals is July 21.
- **VDOT Smart Scale Projects** – New Empire Drive connection at Exit 19 is complete and operational. Work at Exit 17 continues on Gravel Lake Road. Some utility has started.
- **Remsburg Drive Pedestrian Bridge** – Town staff met with Norfolk Southern operations agent to discuss the sequence of construction and protocol for the contractor once construction begins. Plans have been completed and are ready for bid.
- **East Main Street Sidewalk Connection** – The utility pole has been relocated.

- **East Main Street Town Creek Crossing** – The Town was given notice the \$50,000 grant has been awarded for the study of Town Creek. An agreement for grant funding through DEQ is forthcoming.
- **Annual Asphalt Resurfacing** – All paving and pavement markings on contract is complete. Total reconstruction of eastbound Valley Street East and west of Cummings Street was completed where the road base was failing. The next round of paving is scheduled for spring 2022.
- **Virginia Creeper Trail (VCT)** – Conversion of the Meade Drive crossing to STOP control for trail users has been completed. Town staff completed review of a proposed plat for transfer of right-of-way at Watauga Road and forwarded comments to Addison Surveyors for revision; Town staff is coordinating with developer John White’s surveyor and attorney to complete documents needed for conveyance of Town property to Washington County for access road right-of-way.
- **Tree/Arborist Work** – Town staff continues to work around business operations on Court Street to restore curb, gutter and sidewalk damaged by Sycamore trees. Sidewalk, curb, gutter, and pavement restoration completed on east side of Court Street, Main Street to Plumb Alley. Tree-Give-away initiative sold out very quickly.
- **New Officer** – Officer Britt Denton successfully completed the basic training academy. His state certification test score was the highest in his class. Officer Denton will be in field training until late July.
- **Police Department Promotions** – Chris Jennings and Blake Eades were both officially promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. A swearing in and pinning ceremony was held at the May 20 council meeting.
- **Police Department Training** – All officers received firearms/use of force training at the range; most officers attended a legal update through the Washington County Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office.
- **Marcus Alert** – Highlands Community Services has scheduled a local stakeholder group, which will take place on July 22 and August 12. Chief Holbrook and I will both attend.
- **Code Enforcement** – School Resource Officers were assigned to conduct code enforcement activities throughout Town. They will be in this assignment until school begins in August.
- **Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance Update** – At the June 28 Planning Commission meeting, The Berkley Group presented recommendations for the proposed Use Matrix and Definitions, Zoning District Standards, and Special and Overlay Districts. Planning Commission members discussed the proposals and provided constructive feedback.
- **CRC Outdoor Pool** – The outdoor pool opened June 2 and will stay open until August 8. Due to limited staffing levels, the facility is open Wednesday through Sunday, with Sunday being members only swim. The last three Sundays of the season will be open for all swimmers (members and non-members).
- **CRC Youth Activities** – The Washington County Recreation Department is hosting their summer youth camp program at the center. The seven-week rental will generate \$10,500 in revenue. Washington County will also utilize the center to serve Watauga and Greendale Elementary Schools to offer an after-school program for the 2021-2022 school year. This will result in approximately \$10,800 in revenue.
- **CRC Fitness Instructors** – In coordination with the Director of Finance, CRC staff has developed policies and procedures for fitness instructors to serve as independent contractors. Classes are expected to start in August.
- **Recycling** – Town staff is working to prepare one of the recycling trailers for placement at CRC. Currently, the proposed use of the trailer would be for aluminum materials. For the past few months, the Town Manager has participated in meetings via Zoom to discuss regional recycling efforts. A working group comprised of local government representatives and key stakeholders is being formed.
- **Natural Gas Franchise Agreement** – The RFP for the natural gas franchise agreement was published. Bids will be opened at the July 6 meeting.
- **Personal Property Sale** – The personal property sale was conducted on June 25 and was very successful, generating over \$10,000 in sales. Kim Kingsley and Tenille Montgomery planned and organized the event. The Police, Finance, Street, and Parks & Grounds Departments made significant contributions.

- **The Muster Grounds** – The Town finalized an agreement with the Overmountain Trail Victory Trail Association (OVTA) to provide volunteers to operate the Keller Interpretative Center on Saturdays and Sundays through November 14, as well as appropriate times during the Virginia Highlands Festival. OVTA will also provide volunteers to conduct “Call to Arms” and other educational programs in coordination with local schools.
- **Outdoor Refreshment Area** – Staff is working with the Town Attorney and local stakeholders to develop proposed regulations for an Outdoor Refreshment Area (ORA) in Abingdon. The new law, which is effective July 1, will allow customers who purchase alcohol beverages to leave the premises and travel outdoors within the designated area. The purpose of the legislation is to promote economic activity in downtown business districts.
- **Prepared Meals Grant** – The prepared meals program continues to be a success. The Town has secured an additional \$200,000 for the program, which will allow it to continue into 2022.
- **Economic Development/Tourism Activities**
 - Best of Abingdon – 30 awards to small businesses
 - Small Business Spotlight – 3 Tuesdays in May
 - Assisted with coordinating filming activities for Barnwood Builders and Blue Ridge PBS
 - Hosted two travel writers
 - Hosted a group of 12 Airstream campers on Remsburg Drive for four days
 - Delivered 300 Abingdon bags with maps to participants of Dam Yeti 50-mile race
 - Delivered 200 Abingdon bags to the Bristol Welcome Center for National Tourism Week
 - Updated Town map
 - Developed updates to marketing plan
 - Special event meetings and coordination
 - Completed Virginia Tourism Corporation Marketing Leverage Grant
 - Continue work with Washington County to expand the Enterprise Zone into downtown