

**VIRGINIA:**

At a joint meeting of the Washington County Board of Supervisors and Abingdon Town Council held Monday, June 21, 2004, at 6:30 p.m., at the Jubilee House Retreat in Abingdon, Virginia, the following were present:

**Board of Supervisors**

**PRESENT:**

John B. Roberts, Sr., Chairman  
Phillip B., McCall, Vice Chairman  
Bobby D. Ingle  
Odell Owens  
Anthony S. Rector  
Kenneth O. Reynolds

Mark K. Reeter, County Administrator  
Christianne E. Parker, Assistant County Administrator

**ABSENT:**

Dulcie M.Mumpower

**Town Council**

**PRESENT:**

Lois H. Humprheys, Mayor  
Dr. French H. Moore, Jr., Vice Mayor  
Edward B. Morgan  
Thomas C. Phillips, Jr.  
Robert M. Howard

G. M. Newman, Town Manager  
Mark Godbey, Finance Director  
Al Bradley, Planning Director  
Joey Burke, Fire Chief  
John McCormick, Assistant Fire Chief  
Linda F. Wilson, Town Clerk

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**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Lois Humprheys called the meeting of the Abingdon Town Council to order.

Chairman John Roberts called the meeting of the Washington County Board of Supervisors to order.

## 2. Presentation by Abingdon Fire Department

Assistant Fire Chief John McCormick advised that the purpose of the presentation was to provide justification for the Fire Department's 2004/2005 budget request to Washington County and how the amount was calculated.

Assistant Chief McCormick reviewed the following topics of the budget presentation that was previously provided to members of Council and the Board of Supervisors:

- Population & Structures Covered by Each County Fire Department
- Real Estate Values for the Coverage Area of Each Fire Department
- Total Fire Related Calls Answered by Each Fire Department
- Current Recommended Budgets for Each Fire Department
- Cost Per Call Based on the Budget for Each Fire Department
- Percentage of Calls Within Corporate Limits – 49%; Outside Corporate Limits – 51%
- Virginia Department of Fire Programs Funding – based on population
- Budget Requests of the Abingdon Fire Department to Washington County from 1997-1998 through 2004/2005
- Taxes Paid to Washington County by Town of Abingdon Residents
- 5-Year Plan prepared in September 2003 by the Washington County Firefighters Association – a significant need was identified for an aerial device (truck) in the central portion of Washington County
- Summary – The Abingdon Fire Department covers twice the population and more structures than any other department in the County, real estate values in Town are \$600 million more, answers more than 150 fire related calls, yet their appropriation is less than three other departments and they receive less per call than any other department in the County

Assistant Chief McCormick advised that the budget request was based on fire related calls that were made outside the corporate limits. However, for the past eight years the Town had funded fire operations outside the corporate limits for a total of \$137,870. The Fire Department had made a request for the new budget that the Town purchase, staff, house, and maintain an aerial fire apparatus costing approximately \$850,000. It would be used throughout Washington County as was recommended in the five-year plan for a cost share from Washington County in the amount of \$212,500 or ¼ of the total cost. Assistant Chief McCormick reviewed the information resources in which he obtained the information for his presentation.

Mr. Roberts advised that the County had appointed an Emergency Services Committee to conduct a study in an effort to develop a standard funding method. He felt that a their plan might be utilized in the future. Mr. Roberts added that based on the County revenue, he felt their appropriations were legitimate. However, the County budget had not been finalized and he did see the need for the proposed truck.

Chief Burke advised that the Abingdon Fire Department had reduced the number of calls being answered for vehicle accidents that were located in the County. That had saved the Department some money.

Discussion included the types of calls that are billed to insurance companies.

Chief Burke reviewed the following information regarding the aerial device:

- Department Staffing, Number of Incidents Responded to in 2003, Number of Fire Related Calls
- Future Growth and Consideration of a Master Plan Process
- Insurance Services Office and ISO Protection Class Zones
- Insurance Rate Implications of Aerial Platform and Insurance Rate Implications of Aerial Ladder
- Aerial Facts and Aerial vs. Ground Ladders, Firefighter Safety Issues, Aerial Ladder History in Abingdon
- Current Operational Status of 100' Aerial Ladder
- Aerial Choices: 1979 Aerial, Used Aerial, or New Aerial

Chief Burke advised that aerial facts were misunderstood. The device was not just about height, but about reach as well. An aerial device was much safer than a ladder and was essential for rapid rescue, and to reach tall buildings such as three story houses. Chief Burke reviewed pictures of various buildings that were located in the Town and County where an aerial device would be necessary in case of fire. He added that he felt the best and most effective way to invest in the future of Abingdon Fire Department would be to purchase a new aerial device.

The question was asked if the Bristol, Virginia Fire Department could assist with their platform truck (aerial device) if needed in Abingdon or the County. Chief Burke replied that the agreement with the City of Bristol requires that prior approval be given by the City Manager. He added that in some instances too much time could be lost while awaiting approval.

The meeting was recessed for a ten-minute break.

Kenneth Reynolds asked if the aerial truck could be financed over a period of years. Mr. Morgan asked if the County had the ability to commit to financing over a period of years. The County Administrator replied no, that counties could not commit beyond one year of their operating cycle; however, they could lease items for more than one year.

Mr. Newman replied to Mr. Reynolds that the Town had looked into leasing an aerial truck, but he didn't feel that would be feasible.

## **2. Presentation Regarding Funding for Town of Abingdon Parks and Recreation Department**

Mr. Howard advised that he was frequently asked questions regarding athletic fields in and around the Town. He noted that currently 80% of those participating in Abingdon programs are out of town residents. Mr. Howard asked if the Supervisors might be interested in discussing the possibility of a joint project to develop additional fields.

Mr. Ingle replied yes. He added that before budgets were constrained, a study was conducted and the County had looked at some property near Abingdon. Suggestions had been made to develop a park that would include a walking track, soccer fields, etc.

Mr. Roberts advised that following the study, it was suggested that a recreation complex be developed for the central part of the County. However, before that could happen, it would be necessary to address small existing complexes and the need for recreation facilities in some remote areas.

Mr. Ingle asked if the County located some property that could be developed for a park, would the Town be interested in going outside the corporate limits into a joint venture with them. Mr. Howard replied that was what he had in mind.

It was noted that the County's funding amount to all its town recreation departments was \$200,000 - \$250,000 out of a \$96 million budget. The Town of Abingdon appropriation to its recreation department was \$1,075,000 out of an \$8.8 million budget. It was noted that the Coomes Recreation Center is used by 80% County residents, and 20% Town residents. Mr. Morgan added that some Town projects help to drive the economy of Washington County, however, all are residents of the County.

### **3. Presentation Regarding Zoning Related to Adjacent County Properties**

Mr. Morgan noted that the Town and County were both experiencing growth. He expressed concerns about what happens adjacent to the borders of Town, development right outside the corporate limits over, which the Town has not control. However, that could have a great impact on what happens in Town and the services that are necessary for the Town to provide. He hoped that over the next few years the Town and County could discuss those issues, such as zoning, and how they might relate to both governments. Mr. Morgan felt the Town and County should be working together. He encouraged everyone to think about that in the future.

Discussion included the increased traffic on Cummings Street and how it might be dealt with.

Mr. McCall felt that one of the main traffic problems existed at the intersections located in Town. Motorists on their way to the lake come through Town because there is no other route for them to travel. He added that the outskirts of Abingdon were primarily residential zones because of the infrastructure.

Mr. Morgan noted that some subdivisions were allowed to be developed without proper infrastructure, such as inadequate water flow for fire protection. Some type of constraint should be required. Mr. McCall agreed.

Mr. Reeter commented that the County had allowed some residential development in agricultural zones. There was currently no control over that; however, plans to rewrite the zoning code would remedy that. The timeframe for that would be within the next two years because sections of the code would be done in increments.

Mr. Owens noted that housing continues to grow in Washington County because it is a desirable place to live. He added that farming is gradually declining and the farmland will probably be converted to subdivisions. Mr. Morgan noted that it is important to make decisions now in order to continue to make Abingdon a great place to live.

### **4. Discussion on Various Sewer Issues**

- a. Town Sewer to Westwood Subdivision**
- b. Town-County Cooperation on Sewer Service to Unincorporated Areas**

Mr. Reeter asked about the status of the Town running sewer lines to Westwood, and for a discussion of ways in which the Town and County could jointly coordinate services to the unincorporated areas.

Mr. Newman advised that the Washington County Service Authority had conducted a survey of the Westwood area. Only 60% of the surveys were returned and less than one-half of those were not interested in getting sewer services and didn't need it. The Town was currently in the process of spending \$8.5 million to improve the treatment plant. Therefore, the Town could not run sewer lines in the County. It was not in the agreement between the Town and the County. The Town was responsible to treat the sewage in the 201 Service District.

The supervisors advised that two years ago a large number of Westwood residents requested that sewer lines be run in that area. Mr. Moore advised that the Town could have gotten a zero percent loan to run sewer lines in that area, but the residents said they didn't need the service, therefore, the decision was made not to do it. Mr. Morgan added that if the Board of Supervisors could ignite some interest in the residents, the Town might be willing to provide the service.

Mr. Reeter felt the low interest that was expressed by the residents because of the connection fee. Ms. Parker suggested that a community meeting be held to inform the residents.

Mayor Humpreys advised that for many years she had received many requests for sewer in Westwood. Mr. Reeter added that the connection fee must be rolled in the actual construction cost for the project. Mr. Newman noted that the amount for the connection fee was \$2,400.

Discussion included the cost to install a septic system and current related requirements. Mr. McCall noted that the cost to rebuild a septic system would probably be as much as the sewer connection fee.

It was consensus of Mr. Reeter and members of the Board of Supervisors that they would like to see the County work with the Town in an effort to extend sewer service to areas of the County. It was also suggested that the County make an effort to educate its citizens regarding the advantages of sewer service versus septic systems.

##### **5. Discussion Regarding Town Funding of Abingdon Main Branch Library**

Dr. Moore noted that several years ago the library director requested Council to assist the Library. The Town appropriated some money and when the Board of Supervisors discovered the amount given their appropriation was cut back. Therefore, it didn't help the Library at all. Town residents felt that they were already funding their share of the library by paying County taxes and the County had chose to locate the library in the Town. The Town was later told that if it appropriated money to buy books, the County amount would not be reduced. Therefore, the Town did so.

He added that approximately two years ago the Library approached the Town regarding a water problem in their parking lot. The Town appropriated \$10,000 for the project and the problem was corrected. Mr. Morgan added that in addition to that, the Town had made a significant appropriation to the Library endowment fund.

Mr. Roberts noted that the Library was in a good location for the citizens of Abingdon. A committee was currently reviewing building sites because the use had outgrown the size of the

Library. Their desire was to keep the main library in Abingdon; however, suggestions had been made to make the Abingdon Library a branch and relocate the main branch elsewhere.

Mr. Phillips advised that he was a member of the committee that was studying sites. He added that studies had indicated that the Library had outgrown the present location and there was not adequate space to expand it.

Mr. Reynolds noted that the Library was a good asset during industrial recruitment.

## **6. Concluding Remarks**

Mr. Roberts advised that he felt the joint meeting had been good. Issues were put on the table that he hoped the Town and County could work together to resolve. He added that some industrial jobs had been lost in the area, but it had been fortunate in the tourism had taken up some of the slack. However, jobs were still needed in order for people to make better money. He felt that progress was happening slowly and that the Town and County were going in the same positive direction. Mr. Roberts thanked Council for their cooperation.

Mayor Humpreys added that it was a pleasure to meet with members of the Board of Supervisors and she felt that it should be done annually.

Dr. Moore expressed appreciation to the County for their cooperation with the Town of Abingdon and the City of Bristol, VA and the joint Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator project. The project had received a tremendous amount of grant money to make it possible. He had recently served on the committee that had hired a director for the Incubator.

## **7. Adjournment**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Mayor Humpreys and Chairman Roberts.

**Prepared by:**

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Linda F. Wilson, Abingdon Town Clerk

**Approved by the Washington County  
Board of Supervisors:**

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John B. Roberts, Sr., Chairman