TOWN OF MARLINTON

Marlinton Town Council
January 18, 2024
Special Meeting Minutes

Location: Municipal Building Auditorium with Zoom and call-in options.

Mayor Sam Felton called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

The Mayor led the Council and the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Recorder called the roll.

Present:	Sam Felton, Mayor	Mary K. Clendenen, Recorder
	Olivia Dean	Joe Smith
	Scott Gibb	Roger Trusler
	Tom Miller	
Absent:	None	

Throughout this meeting, many members of the public expressed concerns and commented about the Town's intentions for water and sewer at Beard Heights and implementation of the Home Rule and Municipal Service Fee. Several members of the public requested copies of the Home Rule Plan. Mary Clendenen informed them that, because the Council is still gathering information and preparing the Home Rule Plan and Application, it is not yet available to present to the public. The Mayor and Recorder insured everyone that all information would be put out for public review when it is available and before any actions are taken by the Council.

1. **Discuss and/or Act on Beard Heights Water and Sewer System:** Mayor Felton said, in 2017, there was a possibility that Marlinton Elementary School could have been moved to Beard Heights. If that had happened, the Town would need the equivalent of 50 additional residences to supply the revenue needed to keep the water and sewer system funded. He said the Town needs to plan for the potential need to expand its water and sewer system to the area of Beard Heights where the Marlinton Middle School and Pocahontas Memorial Hospital are located, if necessary, to keep our system funded. Otherwise, the only other option would be to raise fees for the residents and businesses already in town, and he wants to keep fees for existing customers as low as possible. He clarified that the Town is not considering installing water or sewer to the area of Beard Heights on the side of Route 219 opposite of the hospital. We only want to be ready to provide water and sewer to the area where the hospital, middle school, and state police office are located if the need should arise.

   Commissioner Walt Helmick attended the meeting to explain what the Pocahontas County Commission has done with the water and sewer at Pocahontas Memorial Hospital. He informed the Council and the public that the County Commission has recently received grant funding to relocate the hospital's sewage treatment plant from its current location to a new site further south on Route 219. The Commission is also purchasing another section of land nearby with an existing well that would ensure an adequate water supply for the hospital in the future. He said the County Commission would like to see the Town or the Public Service District run the water and sewer system for the hospital in the future, because the Commission did not want to be in the public service arena. Many years ago, the Commission asked the Town Council to take over the water and sewer, but they were not interested at that time. The Town had previously annexed the area around the hospital, so the Commission is providing water and sewer service within the Town limits. Commissioner Helmick added that, if the Town would decide to provide water and sewer service to the hospital, it would take a few years to get the needed infrastructure installed to make that happen. He said the Commission is not currently asking for anything from the Town of Marlinton, but if Marlinton needs that additional area to help with revenue to support its systems, the Commission would like to do whatever is in the best interest of the Town.

David Sharp, of Potesta and Associates engineering firm, addressed the Council via Zoom and said he had studied the existing water and sewer system for the hospital, school, and state police office to see if the system needed to be upgraded or relocated. Potesta also looked at whether there were additional areas that could potentially be served by a public water or sewer system, and what would be needed for fire protection. The Town of Marlinton has the capacity to produce enough water to serve the area of the hospital, and also has the capability to provide sewer service. Potesta's cost estimate to install the sewer infrastructure was $2.94 million, and $2.1 million to extend the water system to Beard Heights.

The Mayor said a future meeting would need to be scheduled for the Council to get more detailed information from its engineering firm before making any decision about whether it would take over the current system at Beard Heights.

2. **Review of Home Rule Information – Jeff Feamster, Review of Financial Reports – Jeff Feamster:** Mr. Feamster addressed the Council via Zoom and reported that he had not yet completed the financial information needed for the Home Rule application because he needed to know what B&O classifications would be eliminated so that the 1% sales tax could then be charged on those sales. Mr. Feamster said the beauty of the Home Rule tax is that there is no implementation cost to the Town and the administration of the tax is performed by the State Tax Department once it is established. Due to a previous engagement, Mr. Feamster's time was too limited to discuss the financial information for the Home Rule application in detail at this meeting.

   The Mayor said that the extra 1% sales tax would help to provide some of the things the public wants to see in our town, and it is one of the few revenue streams that can make a difference. He said the additional visitor traffic that is expected over the next several years will add to this revenue stream.

   Due to the amount of information that still needs to be gathered to complete the Home Rule Application and Plan the Council decided to schedule another special meeting on January 25, 2024 to complete this work.

3. **Discuss and Discuss Municipal Fee Ordinance:** The Mayor said the discussion of a Municipal Fee had started because of the delay in getting the Home Rule Plan implemented and the need to fund a police department. The Council decided to wait to see if the West Virginia Home Rule Board approves our participation in that program before further consideration a Municipal Service Fee.

The Council also discussed that a time limit of three minutes per person should be imposed on public comments for future meetings.

Adjournment: As there was no further business, the Mayor adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Sam Felton

Sam Felton, Mayor

Mary K. Clendenen

Mary K. Clendenen, Recorder