

# TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL CALLED EMERGENCY MEETING MINUTES



## Gate City Town Council Special Called Emergency Meeting Minutes October 22, 2019 156 E Jackson Street

**I. COUNCIL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:30 P.M. BY: Mayor - Frances Perry**

**II. ROLL CALL –** Town Clerk – Lydia Lane

	PRESENT:	ABSENT:
Mayor, Frances Perry	X	
Vice Mayor, Robin Richards	X	
Council Member, Allan “Cotton” Roberts	X	
Council Member, Roger Cassell		X
Council Member, Wallace W. Ross, Jr.	X	
Council Member, Ron Kindle	X	
Town Manager, Greg Jones	X	
Town Attorney, Michele Brooks	X	

Others present: Mary Gamble, Patricia Anderson, Thelma Anderson, Debbie Kindle, Angela Gilbreath, Deanna Ragon, Natasha Parker, Harold Shoemaker, David Wolfe, Ellen Bailey, Cindy White; Scott County Virginia Star, Stanley Rogers, Geralett Wolfe, Whitney Adams, Hussan Kasonyo, Charles Senior, Contrinia Payne, Jeff Brickey; Gate City Fire Department, Officer Ethan Penley; Gate City Police Department, Chief Terry Sivert, James Wood, Elizabeth Wood, Deanna Ragon, June Mott

**III. INVOCATION –** Charles Senior, Kingsport TN

**IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE –** Chief Terry Sivert

**V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Motion made to approve the agenda.**

Motion by: Allan “Cotton” Roberts

2<sup>nd</sup> by: Ron Kindle

VOTE: Aye, 4  
Nay,  
Absent, 1  
Abstain

**Motion Carried.**

**VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**• Manville Community/ Fire Hydrant Issue**

Dave Wilson; Mattern & Craig – Mr. Wilson introduced Eric Gustos who tested the hydrants. Mr. Gustos stated that a flow test was completed on Chestnut, Promise St. and Manville Rd. Mr. Gustos stated that the flow results on hydrant one had a flow pressure of 130,000 gallons per minute and a static gauge on hydrant two reported 140 which went down to 86 pressure per second when hydrant one was flowed. Mr. Wilson stated that no pressures were experienced below 20 psi. Mr. Gustos explained the flow test results for the other hydrants and explained that they are functioning properly. Mr. Gustos stated that the hydrant on Chestnut is on a 4 inch line. Council Member Ross, Jr. asked which lines does the pump cover? Mr. Wilson stated that the pump station itself is on the Manville Rd. line. Council Member Ross, Jr. asked

why the hydrant on a 4inch line could not be used in a previous house fire? Mr. Wilson asked when the hydrant was removed? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that it was replaced in early 2017. Mr. Wilson stated that the hydrant on a four inch line had a flow of 455 gallons per minute in an operational state with pumps operating. Mr. Ross, Jr. explained his concerns for the other hydrants in the community and their operational abilities. Mr. Wilson stated that the hydrants flowed when tested. Ms. Payne asked if the hydrant behind Ms. Muncey's home was tested? Mr. Wilson stated that it was not checked but the fire department probably has records of the last time these were tested. Mr. Wilson stated that since the hydrants are within the same proximity it is likely that they are on the same line but they have not seen the water line system.

Chief Jeff Brickey stated that the fire department suggested that the hydrants be put on the six-inch line with a hot tap. Vice-Mayor Richards asked who the suggestion went to? Chief Brickey stated that Council Member Ross, Jr. and the public works have both received the suggestion. Chief Brickey stated that the fire trucks were full of water and Weber City also had a pumper and tanker which totaled 5,000 gallons of water. Chief Brickey stated that when the hydrant was hooked to the hose went flat. Chief Brickey stated that water from the tanker truck was used and the crew had a handle on the fire. Chief Brickey stated that the fire was out in 29 minutes from the first page on the crew's alert system. Chief Brickey stated that the fire department operates as an independent volunteer company including 25 active fire fighters that have gone through training. Chief Brickey stated that the fire department is rated by the insurance service office as a level 4. Chief Brickey stated that each hydrant is checked at least once a year. Chief Brickey stated that each hydrant is color coded and the red hydrants are less than 500 gallons per minute. Chief Brickey stated that the fire department tries to avoid these hydrants. Chief Brickey explained the process that he and his department go through to check the hydrants. Mayor Frances Perry asked when was the last time the hydrants were checked? Chief Brickey stated that the hydrant in question was checked June 27, 2019 and it was working properly. Vice Mayor Richards asked if it was a four-inch line? Chief Brickey stated that it is a four-inch line but a lot of rust has built up which may make the line smaller. Vice-Mayor Richards asked what is the process if you find an issue with the hydrants that are inspected? Chief Brickey stated that a form is filled out and sent to the Town Hall. Town Manager Greg Jones stated that ideally communication should come through him in order to keep a chain of custody of what issues occurred and how they were resolved. Chief Brickey stated that there are several four-inch line hydrants. Council Member Ross, Jr. asked when a previous fire occurred and there were two hydrants that didn't work, does the report confirm that there is something wrong with these hydrants? Chief Brickey stated that these hydrants don't have a lot of flow. Mr. Wolfe asked why the hydrant in front of the church was taken out? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that there are 3 other hydrants within 400 ft in the same location and it didn't make economic sense to put a hydrant back in the same location. Chief Brickey stated that the fire department likes to avoid laying long hose lines. Town Manager Jones asked what the ideal length for hydrants to be placed would be? Chief Brickey stated that typically hydrants are 1,000 feet apart but ideal conditions are not always present such as another truck coming in. Chief Brickey stated that a cheaper thing to do would be to tap the bigger line. Council Member Ross, Jr. asked if there is any way for Chief Brickey to know that there is a power failure? Chief Brickey stated that he doesn't have a way to know. Chief Brickey stated that there are two to three water systems in Gate City. Ms. Gamble asked how many houses is each hydrant supposed to service? Chief Brickey stated that it would depend on the density of the population, but that hydrant is serving about 15 houses and the church. Chief Brickey stated that there are more hydrants where there is a higher density or more risk such as in industrial or business sectors. Ms. Payne asked if it would be easier if the hydrants

were closer together? Chief Brickey stated yes because not as much hose would need to be laid. Mayor Frances Perry asked why the fire department did not hook to the hydrant behind Ms. Muncey's house? Chief Brickey stated that this was about 610 ft and the truck would have had to been moved out and move the hose and it was easier to pump from that hydrant and continue fighting the fire. Vice-Mayor Richards asked if Chief Brickey felt he had enough water at that hydrant? Chief Brickey stated yes at that point because we had a handle on the fire. Ms. Bailey asked if this fire happened again, what would you do? Chief Brickey stated that he would most likely do the same thing especially if the pump was running. Chief Brickey stated that the hydrant was ok but the pump being out hindered the situation. Mayor Frances Perry asked why is there a hole in a hydrant that has not been repaired? Chief Brickey stated that he is unaware of a hole in one but that a grease fitting may be missing and he will check it. Mayor Frances Perry asked why was the hydrant taken out? Chief Brickey stated that the public works were trying to repair a leak but could not get the hydrant level at that intersection and the pipe would be sticking out of the ground. Mayor Frances Perry asked if the hydrants are flushed regularly? Chief Brickey stated that they are flushed yearly unless there is a fire or water is taken out of a hydrant and this counts as a flush. Council Member Ross, Jr. asked why the hydrant hasn't been replaced on Manville and Chestnut since it has been taken out and why a hydrant near his home has never been used? Chief Brickey stated that that hydrant has low pressure. Mr. Wolfe asked what hydrant will be used to fight a fire at his house? Chief Brickey stated that it could be the hydrant around the curve. Council Member Ross, Jr. read minutes from previous meetings and stated that he has brought up the hydrant issues before. Council Member Ross, Jr. asked why there is no report that the home caught on fire three times? Chief Brickey stated that these occurrences were logged into 911 and have been reported. Town Attorney Michele Brooks asked if the Town was in compliance with the 1,000 feet requirement? Chief Brickey stated that the engineers would need to be consulted but to the best of his knowledge the Town is in compliance. Ms. Trinkle asked if the hydrants are within compliance but they are all red top, can another one be put in? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the hydrant would need to be on a larger size line. Mr. Wolfe stated that the hydrants located near his home are located over 1,000 feet. Town Manager Greg Jones asked for his address. Vice-Mayor Richards asked how can we get in contact with the American Red Cross when someone has a fire? Chief Brickey stated that the American Red Cross in Bristol can be reached by calling dispatch and if individuals ask for assistance a case worker is sent. Vice-Mayor Robin Richards asked how many pumps there are that would require generators? Chief Brickey stated that there are 4. Ms. Bailey asked what can be done to improve this situation? Chief Brickey stated that seeing what the engineers can do about putting hydrants on a 6-inch line, see if it is feasible to spend money on a generator for the pumps and possibly placing hydrants closer would be helpful.

**Motion made to apply for a planning grant funded by the Virginia Department of Health to determine a feasible plan for the backup generators for the line itself and for the water treatment plant and to include master meters to manage the unaccounted water.**

Motion by: Allan "Cotton" Roberts

2nd by: Ron Kindle

VOTE: Aye: 4

Nay:

Absent: 1

Abstain:

**Motion Carried.**

## **VII. PUBLIC COMMENT – UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Mary Gamble: 1022 Maple St. Kingsport, TN** – Ms. Gamble stated that she owns the property on Sherman St. Ms. Gamble asked what were the results when the hydrants were inspected before 10-10-19? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the Town didn't inspect the hydrants before 10-10-19. Ms. Gamble asked if they were inspected when the fire occurred? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the hydrants were not inspected during the fire. Ms. Gamble asked why there was no water in the hydrants? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the hydrants had no water due to a power outage that happened an hour earlier that affected the pumps that pressurize the Manville water lines. Ms. Gamble asked why the power did not go off in the homes? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the pumps are on different circuits and some homes had power while others did not. Ms. Gamble asked how the police officer who made the determination that Ms. Muncey was deceased could make that determination? Mayor Frances Perry stated that she did not know and it was the first time she was hearing that statement. Chief Sivert stated that it was also the first time that he had heard about Ms. Gamble's statement. Ms. Gamble asked who asks this family if they need help? Ms. Gamble asked if the American Red Cross was called or if the Town has an American Red Cross here? Mayor Frances Perry stated that there is not a Red Cross here. Town Manager Greg Jones stated that this is not typically something that the Town does. Vice-Mayor Robin Richards stated that this may be a question for the fire chief.

**Thelma Anderson: 164 Elliott Drive** – Ms. Anderson asked why didn't the fire department hook to the hydrant behind Ms. Muncey's house? Ms. Anderson stated that the hydrant on Chestnut St. could not have been used because it has a hole in the hydrant itself and the one on Promise is the same thing. Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the individuals who tested the hydrants in question may be able to further explain. Ms. Anderson asked if Ms. Muncey was unconscious how could she yell help? Mayor Frances Perry stated that this was the first time she had heard about this. Ms. Anderson asked if there is any money allocated for fire hydrants? Mayor Frances Perry stated that the Town gives the fire department a certain amount of money each month. Town Manager Greg Jones stated that it is a budget appropriation for maintenance and repair. Ms. Anderson stated that the main concern is the amount of pressure coming out of the hydrants on Manville Rd., Chestnut St., and Sherman St. Ms. Anderson asked if there is not adequate pressure how can these hydrants be considered adequate to fight a fire? Ms. Anderson asked if it is the Town's responsibility or the fire department's responsibility to replace the hydrants? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that it is the Town's responsibility to repair and replace the hydrants.

**Natasha Parker** - Ms. Parker stated that her dad's house on 194 Chestnut St. burnt down three times within a two-month period. Ms. Parker explained the situation concerning her dad's home. Ms. Parker stated that she is glad that it is being proven that there is a situation with the hydrants not working rather than her and her family being blamed for the fire that took her dad's home. Ms. Parker stated that she is here on behalf of her father.

**Harold Shoemaker: 2601 N. John B. Dennis By Pass, Kingsport TN**- Mr. Shoemaker asked if someone filed a false police report saying that they went in and saved Ms. Muncey with the help of one other person would they be held liable for it? Mr. Shoemaker stated that four people from the community went in and rescued Ms. Muncey before the police even got there, but on Facebook it is stating that "I am the hero" and that is not true. Mr. Shoemaker stated that the roads are not in need of repair that they needed addressing at this time. Mayor Frances Perry stated that the state is repairing the roads not the Town. Mr. Shoemaker stated that putting up the decorations for Christmas and Halloween takes man hours and money that is being allocated for Halloween rather than for the pump that is needed. Mr. Shoemaker asked if the priorities of the Town are in line? Mayor Frances Perry stated that it is evident that the Council is concerned for its citizens.

**David Wolfe: 569 Manville Rd** – Mr. Wolfe asked how much does a fire hydrant cost? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the hydrant and installation costs between four to five thousand dollars. Mr. Wolfe stated that the power went out at 6:14 P.M. according to the AEP report which was an hour before the fire and that all the homes on the same street as Ms. Muncey, Promise St. and Manville Rd. had power. Mr. Wolfe asked where was the power outage at? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that according to AEP there was a power outage that affected 120 residents and the pump was part of it. Mayor Frances Perry stated that AEP could answer why the power is on in one location but not another. Mr. Wolfe stated that when the house behind the church burned down, they hooked to that hydrant as well and didn't get any pressure then. Mr. Wolfe asked what happened in that situation? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that he was unaware of any problem with the hydrant during that particular fire.

**Ellen Bailey** – Ms. Bailey asked when the power outages happen, is there a system in place to reach homes with water from the fire department? Ms. Bailey asked is there a back-up plan when these outages happen? Council Member Allan “Cotton” Roberts stated that the fire department has water tankers that they take with them. Ms. Bailey asked if the Town has generators that were not used? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the Town does not have back-up generators. Ms. Bailey asked if this could be a remedy to the power outage situation? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that it comes down to a cost vs. benefits situation and council may be able to look at a planning grant and check with our engineers. Ms. Bailey asked if all hydrants have been tested for water pressure? Town Manager Jones stated that the hydrants that the Town tested were the three that were in question to make sure they were working. Ms. Bailey asked if the fire department is operating under the proper national standards and does the fire department have everything, they are supposed to have in relation to other fire departments? Ms. Bailey stated that individuals are not aware of the power outage in the area, but that Council Member Roger Cassell explained the outage and how it works to her, her sister and her mother after the last meeting. Ms. Bailey stated that having Council Member Cassell could explain this if he was present. Ms. Bailey reviewed the points that she had discussed. Mayor Frances Perry stated that the fire department is volunteer and operate under their own charter. Ms. Bailey asked if they still meet the national standards? Mayor Frances Perry stated that they do and insurance premiums would be higher if they were not operating properly. Ms. Bailey stated that the Town needs money to assist the fire department. Mayor Perry stated that the town makes a monthly contribution that is in the budget.

**Geralett Wolfe: 569 Manville Rd** – Ms. Wolfe asked if the town has evidence that everything is up to code in regard to insurance standards that would keep rates lower? Mayor Frances Perry stated that this question can be directed to Chief Brickey. Town Attorney Michele Brooks stated that the Town is not responsible for any insurance company and the decisions that they make.

**Contrinia Payne** - Ms. Payne asked Town Manager Greg Jones if he stated that the town is not responsible for the fire hydrants? Town Manager Greg Jones stated No that the Town is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the hydrants and inspections are done by the fire department. Ms. Payne stated that Town Manager Greg Jones stated in a Times News Article that all homes were occupied. Ms. Payne stated that there were 13 homes that are vacant. Town Manager Greg Jones stated that his comment to the paper was that the homes involving house calls in the last ten years for fires were all occupied, not every home in Manville. Ms. Payne expressed her concerns about statements that were made in the Times News and the Scott County Virginia Star. Ms. Payne asked how much money is in the budget? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that there is approximately 4- 4.5 million in the total budget. Ms. Payne asked how much a fire hydrant and a generator would cost? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that a hydrant is four to five thousand dollars while a generator depends on the system itself but the minimum would be about \$100,000. Ms. Payne asked which would be easier to purchase; three fire hydrants compared or \$100,000 generator to keep homes and lives safer. Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the whole system itself needs to be looked at in order to determine costs and benefits along with feasibility. Ms. Payne stated that adding fire hydrants would make her feel safer.

**Deanna Ragon: 448 Benbolt Rock Ln** - Ms. Ragon stated that the hydrants may not be getting pressure due to weather conditions or clogged lines. Ms. Ragon stated that the hydrants may need to be checked for blockages and cracks. Mayor Frances Perry stated that the lines were checked this Summer.

**Hassan Ali Kasango: 140 Promise St** – Mr. Kasango stated that there is only one hydrant on Promise St. and it does not work. Mr. Kasango stated that there is a hydrant near Council Member Ross’ home and a hydrant between two boulders up the street. Mr. Kasango asked what would be used if the other homes on Manville Rd. caught on fire? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that the fire department can answer this question when they come up. Mr. Kasango stated that another hydrant is needed across from the Church of Christ. Mr. Kasango stated that there are several hydrants in other areas of town but feels that his community has been let down. Mr. Kasango stated that he pays his taxes, water bill, and goes to work every day and the Town needs to do their job. Mr. Kasango stated that five men from the community saved Ms. Muncey not a police officer. Ms. Payne stated that these men deserve something for putting their lives at risk. Council Member Roberts asked for their names.

**June Mott: 173 Richmond St** – Ms. Mott asked how is Ms. Muncey doing and what can we as a community do to help the Muncey community? Mayor Frances Perry suggested that a community meeting be called at a church and get someone to talk to the Red Cross as a private meeting.

**Charles Senior** – Mr. Senior asked if the hydrants can be physically opened to ensure that there is ample water pressure? Town Manager Greg Jones stated that this could be done.

**VIII. CLOSED SESSION - NONE**

**IX. ADJOURN**

**Motion made to adjourn.**

Motion by: Ron Kindle

2<sup>nd</sup> by: Allan “Cotton” Roberts

VOTE: Aye: 4

Nay:

Absent: 1

Abstain:

**Motion Carried.**

\*Mayor Perry adjourned the meeting at 8:45 P.M., until the next scheduled Council Meeting on November 12, 2019.

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Frances Perry – Mayor

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Lydia Lane - Town Clerk