

Regular Meeting, Wednesday, March 13, 2024, 7:00 p.m., Government Center, Verona, VA.

PRESENT: Jeffrey Slaven, Chairman
 Pam Carter, Vice-Chair
 Michael Shull
 Butch Wells
 Gerald Garber
 Carolyn Bragg
 Scott Seaton
 Timothy K. Fitzgerald, County Administrator
 Jennifer M. Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator
 Doug Wolf, Director of Community Development
 Julia Hensley, Planner II
 Kathleen Keffer, Assistant County Attorney
 Angie Michael, Executive Assistant

VIRGINIA: At an adjourned meeting of the Augusta County Board of Supervisors held on Wednesday, March 2, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., at the Government Center, Verona, Virginia, and in the 248th year of the Commonwealth....

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Chairman Slaven welcomed those present at the meeting.

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Eric Balinko, Augusta County Sheriff Deputy, led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Ms. Carter, Pastures District, delivered the invocation.

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AMERICAN RED CROSS MONTH PROCLAMATION

Ms. Carter moved, seconded by Mr. Wells, that the Board adopt the following proclamation:

During American Red Cross Month in March, we recognize the compassion of people in Augusta County and reaffirm our commitment to care for one another in times of crisis.

This generous spirit is woven into the fabric of our community and advances the humanitarian legacy of American Red Cross founder Clara Barton — one of the most honored women in our country's history — who nobly dedicated herself to alleviating suffering.

Today, kindhearted individuals in our community exemplify Barton's commitment as they step up through your American Red Cross, Central Virginia Chapter to provide a beacon of hope for our neighbors in need.

Through their voluntary and selfless contributions, they make a lifesaving difference in people's darkest hours —More than 250 Red Cross volunteers provided 134 Central Virginia families with shelter, food, and comfort after a home fire; helped collect and process more than 18,000 blood donations for hospital patients; supported hundreds of

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AMERICAN RED CROSS MONTH PROCLAMATION (CONT'D)

military families, veterans and caregivers through the unique challenges of service; and helped save lives through providing nearly 14,000 residents with first aid, CPR and other skills training.

We hereby recognize this month of March in honor of all those who lead with their hearts to serve people in need, and we ask everyone to join in this commitment to strengthen our community.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Augusta County Board of Supervisors by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of Augusta County and the Commonwealth of Virginia, do hereby proclaim March 2024 as Red Cross Month. I encourage all citizens of Augusta County, Virginia to reach out and support its humanitarian mission.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-four, and of Augusta County, Virginia.

Vote was as follows: Yeas: Slaven, Carter, Shull, Garber, Wells, Bragg and Seaton
Nays: None

Motion carried.

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COURTHOUSE FINANCING

This being the day and time advertised to consider a Courthouse financing resolution.

Ted Cole with Davenport and Company, reviewed the different funding options for the new courthouse. It is recommended that the County work with the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA). The VRA is a pooled bond program that issues bonds three times a year on behalf of local governments. There are two options to choose from; borrow all at one time or split it into two borrowings over the course of the construction period. VRA has approved the County to participate in their program. Davenport and County staff have analyzed the pros and cons of borrowing all needed funds in the Spring of 2024 or funding 50% of project cost in Spring 2024 and the remainder of Fall 2024 or Spring 2025. The single funding option would require approximately \$70.7 million from the bond issue with a total debt service of \$121,434,512.00. The multiple funding option would require approximately \$69 million from the bond fund with a total debt service of \$119,062,521.00. The recommendation is to consider going through VRA and doing a two-step process, borrowing approximately half of the need now and borrowing again next fall or spring exactly what is needed to complete the project. This positions the County to manage the financing better and minimize the amount of debt that is being issued and take advantage of the cash that is set aside. There is a resolution due by mid-March that is required to authorize moving forward with the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA). The borrowing process can be decided on at another meeting.

The Chairman opened the public hearing.

There being no speakers. The Chairman closed the public hearing.

Ms. Carter moved, seconded by Mr. Wells, that the Board approve the Courthouse financing resolution with VRA and then decide on the financing process at a later meeting.

Motion carried.

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This being the day and time advertised to consider an ordinance amendment of Augusta County code Chapter 22-8 to extend the dates for Board of Equalization hearings by three months to meet the 2024 reassessment timeline.

Jennifer Whetzel, Deputy County Administrator, stated that this a public hearing regarding a change to an ordinance that is related to the Board of Equalization. The reassessment process had been extended for three months so this ordinance in effect changes the dates for the Board of Equalization to extend the time they meet by those three months. It would change the end date of July to October and then a date of receiving the applications from June to September.

The Chairman opened the public hearing.

There being no speakers. The Chairman closed the public hearing.

Ms. Carter moved, seconded by Mr. Shull, that the Board approve the ordinance amendment for the Board of Equalization.

Dr. Seaton questioned how the time table would work since taxes are due in June.

Ms. Whetzel stated that the notices have been mailed and the opportunity for hearings on the values is happening now. Once the Board of Supervisors sets the tax rate for the current year, the tax tickets will go out with the new rate and are due in June. The Board of Equalization process will not start until the end of April or beginning of May for citizens to start filing to get on the agenda for the Board of Equalization. The expectation would be for them to meet towards the end of June and could potentially go into October. If the Board of Equalization determines an individual's assessment needs to be lowered, the Commissioner of the Revenue's office will make an adjustment as an abatement to their taxes and they will receive a refund.

Motion carried.

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March 13, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

BLUE MOUNTAIN SITE MARKETING AGREEMENT

The Board considered authorizing the Chair of the Augusta County Board of Supervisors to execute the Blue Mountain Marketing Agreement between County of Augusta and Blue Mountain Investments, LLC

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the County has had a marketing agreement on the Blue Mountain site in Weyers Cave for many years. This is an agreement where the County would actively help to market that property for economic development purposes. The agreement set forth a purchase price. The renewals on the agreement has expired and after meeting with the owner a new agreement has been developed. The previous agreement had the County paying rollback taxes if the land was sold. The new agreement does not have the County paying rollback taxes. The owner or the purchaser will be responsible for the rollback taxes. This agreement is needed because there is a pending Go Virginia grant for a study to look at the possibility of what is called a Regional Industrial Facility Authority (RIFA). A RIFA can be formed by member localities to develop, own, and operate one or more facilities on a cooperative basis. The opportunities for a significant economic development investment could be high and could potentially be more than one locality could sustain.

Mr. Garber stated that he will be abstaining from voting due to a potential conflict of interest.

Ms. Carter asked if Augusta County is the only locality receiving the Go Virginia Grant.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the Shenandoah Valley Partnership applied for the grant on the County's behalf.

Dr. Seaton moved to postpone discussion to the Worksession to allow more time for review.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the next date for a Worksession is the Budget Worksession so there will not be a typical Worksession for March.

Mr. Fitzgerald answered several questions raised by Dr. Seaton regarding the property and the agreement.

Dr. Seaton withdrew his motion to delay.

Mr. Shull moved, seconded by Ms. Bragg, that the Board authorize the Chairman to execute the Blue Mountain Marketing Agreement between the County of Augusta and Blue Mountain Investments LLC subject to minor revisions approved by legal counsel.

Vote was as follows: Yeas: Slaven, Carter, Shull, Wells and Bragg
 Nays: None
 Abstain: Garber and Seaton

Motion carried.

Dr. Seaton stated that he abstained from voting due to not having enough information.

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The Board considered updates to the qualifications for Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled.

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March 13, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

MINUTES

The Board considered minutes from the following meetings:

- Regular Meeting, Wednesday, December 13, 2023
- Organizational Meeting, Wednesday, January 3, 2024

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the minutes were previously on the February 28, 2024 agenda and at the request of the Board were removed from the Consent Agenda for further review. There were no changes made to the minutes.

Ms. Bragg stated that Dr. Seaton had wanted to add specific word for word verbiage and that is not a typical practice for the minutes. The purpose of the minutes is to reflect on the business that was conducted.

Dr. Seaton reiterated why he wanted the minutes amended.

Ms. Bragg moved, seconded by Mr. Shull, that the Board approve the minutes as presented.

Vote was as follows: Yeas: Slaven, Carter, Shull, Garber, Wells and Bragg
 Nays: Seaton

Motion carried.

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CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Carter moved, seconded by Mr. Shull, that the Board approve the Consent Agenda as followings:

Mr. Fitzgerald pointed out that there was a technical error regarding the claims paid report. There was one-line item in which there were two invoices paid and the report only reflected one. A new set of claims have been provided with the appropriate changes and the new claims report should be the one considered for approval.

CLAIMS:

Consider claims paid since February 1, 2024

STREET ADDITION:

Consider Community Development's and VDOT's recommendation to adopt resolution for acceptance of the following into the Secondary Road System in accordance with VDOT requests:

- Bobby's Way-Mountain Laurel Manor
- Stone Valley Phase 3

Vote was as follows: Yeas: Slaven, Carter, Shull, Garber, Wells, Carter, Bragg
 and Seaton
 Nays: None

Motion carried.

March 13, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

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(END OF CONSENT AGENDA)

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MATTERS TO BE PRESENTED BY THE PUBLIC

Craig Brimhall, 650 Harrison Road, Grottoes, voiced concerns with the reassessment and the tax rates. He stated that the reassessment process should have been communicated differently. He asked that the Board consider a lower rate.

Joel Snively voiced concerns with the reassessment and requests that the Board lower the tax rate.

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MATTERS TO BE PRESENTED BY STAFF

- 1) Reminder of the Budget Worksession on Monday, March 25th at 8:30 a.m. and the Budget Public Hearing will be April 17th at 7:00 p.m.
- 2) The Courthouse contract has been signed.
- 3) Mr. Price gave the Board an update on the reassessment and appeals process. There was an average increase in home values of fifty-four percent since 2019. There have been 415 in person assessor hearings, 178 phone hearings, and 211 office reviews. Mr. Price the provided the land use value mailing that is sent to property owners.

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MATTERS TO BE PRESENTED BY THE BOARD

Mr. Slaven appreciates the information that Mr. Price has provided.

Ms. Carter stated that delinquent taxes are being collected and the County Attorney has given quarterly updates on the amount collected.

Kathleen Keffer, Assistant County Attorney, stated that as of October 2023 the amount collected was \$2.17 million.

Dr. Seaton reminded everyone that March 18th is the deadline to appeal the reassessment.

Ms. Bragg has been having listening sessions with citizens about things going on the County and answered questions. She congratulated the accomplishments of those with the Augusta County Fire-Rescue. EMS Provider of the Year was Rebecca Roper and Firefighter of the Year was Travis Beckman. There was a tie for Officer of the Year, Kenny Brown and Sean Brown.

Mr. Shull stated that the Board will do what they can do with the tax rate to help with the reassessments. The Board is responsible for the tax rates, not the assessments.

Ms. Carter thanked everyone that has helped out with the water situation in Craigsville.

MATTERS TO BE PRESENTED BY THE BOARD (CONT'D)

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that there are six members that would like to be trained to be a EMS First Responder (EMR). They have asked for it to be funded from the North River Infrastructure account. The volunteer account in the current budget has a balance that would cover the books, testing and registrations, which are state requirements. However, the cost to have the instructor come in was \$3150.00 for the class and those funds are not included in the budget.

Funding Source:	Middle River Infrastructure	8012-105	\$1,050.00
	Beverley Manor Infrastructure	8011-112	\$1,050.00
	North River Infrastructure	8013-76	\$1,050.00

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that this is allowed. One requirement of the use of infrastructure funds is that it needs to benefit three or more citizens.

Motion carried.

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ADJOURNMENT

Vote was as follows: Yeas: Slaven, Carter, Shull, Garber, Wells, Carter, Bragg and Seaton
Nays: None


Chairman


County Administrator