

TOWN OF WACHAPREAGUE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Public Meeting Regarding Raising the Transient Tax and Meals Tax to 5%

March 10, 2022

COUNCIL PRESENT:

Fred Janci Mayor,
Sandie Puchalski, Vice Mayor
Robert Williams,
Robert Bilicki,
Stephen Joseph
Glenn Schagelin,
Margo Digan

I. Town Council Meeting

Meeting began at 7:00 PM

Councilman Glen Schagelin prayed.
Pledge of Allegiance followed.

TOWN OF WACHAPREAGUE COUNCIL MEETING

- Mayor Fred Janci called the meeting to order.

I. Public comments

Mayor Fred Janci asked for public comments.

- Vinney from Berlin Maryland spoke about visiting town hall and asking about ordinances and zoning. He was interested in transient properties, the rules, regulations, ordinances, and zoning regarding short term rentals. Mayor Fred Janci asked if he got a copy of the zoning map. He said he did. Town Clerk Charlie also said that he was given a zoning map. She said she pointed out the areas zoned commercial residential (the area that allows short term rentals) She stated she also showed the residential areas. (Short term rentals are not allowed there.) She explained each of the areas to him and gave him a zoning map. Vinney stated he was looking for the ordinance with the language to coincide with the map. Mayor Fred Janci said the town is currently working on the ordinances. Councilman Bob Bilicki asked for Vinney's number to help him with the ordinance. Councilman Bob Williams said that the transient ordinance can be moved up on the list of things to do.
 - Vivian didn't agree with raising the meals and transient taxes. She said it wasn't a good time to raise taxes since everything else was going up. Mayor Fred Janci explained, everything is also going up for the town.

- Vivian inquired about a marble memorial bench that was damaged at Seaside Park. She said it had been placed

there as a memorial for her mother -in- law.

Councilman Bob Williams stated that he was planning on repairing it once the weather warmed up. He explained how he would repair it and the epoxy he would use.

Vivian said the benches need to be cleaned every year and the top needs to be sealed with Thompson Sealer.

- There were several comments made regarding raising the transient and meals tax. People were questioning why we are raising the tax to 5%. It was explained that was the rate for Accomac County. The town needs the money and were attempting to bring the taxes to what the rest of the county is currently charging.

- Randy Powell stated he didn't agree with raising the transient tax or the meals tax.

He asked Fred if we had enough money to run the town now.

Mayor Fred Janci replied we do, but we do not have enough to do anything extra.

Councilman Steve Joseph asked would you have your property taxes raised.

Randy responded, "I was just told we have enough to run the town."

- Councilman Steve Joseph reported we need a new garbage truck, and the town does not have the funds to purchase one. He also stated we do not have enough funds to run the town in the future.

Mayor Fred Janci interjected, "we are putting a lot of projects off that need done due to lack of funding."

Councilman Bob Bilicki asked Randy Powell if he was a town resident. He responded that he was not.

- Chris Wardius asked if it was government greed that wanted to raise the transient and meals tax. He didn't believe we were spending the 25% of taxes that was allocated for tourism. He said the town should be pumping up the businesses in town. He said, "this is why we don't advertise that we are the town with the lowest taxes." He said he didn't believe that this is the time to raise taxes with the increase of the price of gas and other expenses.

- Chris Wardius said he has prices for a sign for the town to review.

- Mayor Fred Janci stated our cost have also gone up. You have raised your rates 15%. Blake has also raised his prices to cover the additional expenses. The mayor stated that we have employees that probably won't stay here if we do not increase the pay rate. Mayor Janci stated we need to keep up with expenses. He went on to say if we use Davis Disposal it will cost the town more money. The mayor asked, "when was the last time you went out to eat at the Island house or stay at the local hotel? He explained most of the meals and transient tax will be paid by people coming into town, not the people that live here. "It does not come out of Chris Wardius' or Blake's pocket either".

Blake said he has increased his prices about 10%.

Wardius inquired as to why we can't slowly raise the transient and meals tax.

Councilman Bob Bilicki asked what he paid his employees. Chris stated \$11.00 for a 15 year old girl to clean rooms.

Bob explained that the town has an employee who had worked here for 20 years and he was only making \$9.25 an hour before the minimum wage increase.

Councilman Bob Williams spoke about building the town's reserves. He stated that most grants were 50/50.

He said the town doesn't have enough money to match in order to get a grant. Williams explained that our town needs a grant to fix our drainage system. They are 50/50 Grants and we do not have the money to get one. He also reported that Town Hall and the Fire Company are in a floodplain. He stated his living room is bigger than the Town hall.

Councilman Bob Williams stated that we need capital investment so we qualify for 50/50 grants.

Wardius said these are legitimate reasons.

Councilman Stephen Joseph said we are not trying to take money from the town.

- Mayor Fred Janci spoke about how much is accomplished in this town due to donations from residents, Examples are: the new Radar Sign, and the gazebo because people donated funds. We have been told by the electric company we need to update our Christmas lights.” Where is that money coming from?” Mayor Fred Janci stated that Sandie and Richie Puchalski use their own money to fix things at Powell Park.

A gentleman in the audience stated, “if things are that bad then we need to do something.” Fred said we are not taking money out of Blake’s pocket. He actually makes ¼ for holding the money.

Aileen Joeckel said Saxis is raising their meals tax to 5%. She said they have 2 restaurants and they believed the town was a good steward for their money.

- Aileen Joeckel spoke about the survey. She asked the town to cover the cost of approximately 400 stamps and envelopes. She asked council to approve the survey the Planning commission wanted to send. Council agreed on the survey.
- Carley said, “can’t we pull money from tourism since not as many people will be traveling?”
- She also questioned the condition of the tennis courts. She spoke about how they need repair and are not safe to play on.

Aileen Joeckel stated that ESVA is putting more money into ESVA because more people are traveling locally.

- A lady in the audience inquired about the basketball hoop. She asked when the town would be installing another one to replace the missing hoop. A different women said she would pay for the new hoop if someone installed it. They said their families like to play at the courts.

Mayor Fred Janci said there have been problems regarding the basketball court. He said there has been public urinating and one of the issues that need addressed is to have either a porta pot or access to the public restrooms. He stated there have also been complaints regarding loud music and swearing when the basketball court was in use.

- Councilman Bob Bilicki stated that Air BnB, VRBO, etc. have been instructed to collect transient tax. In VA the taxes are collected by the Commission of Revenue. He stated the Commission of Revenue doesn’t know how to control the funds. Kim S. of the Commission of Revenue said they do not know how to distribute the funds. Councilman Bilicki stated that the money is deducted from his payout by Air BNB. He said he is honest and pays this transient tax to the town. “We are getting hit twice”.

Mayor Fred Janci closed the Public Comments.

II. Town Council Meeting

- February 10th 2022, minutes were reviewed. Councilman Bob Bilicki motioned to accept the minutes. Glen 2nd the motion, All agreed.

III. Review of Financial Report

- Mayor Fred Janci asked to review the town budget. Councilman Glen Motioned to accept Councilman Bob Bilicki 2nd All Agreed.

- Mayor Fred Janci asked to review the marina financials.
Vice Mayor Sandie said, “lease renewals are out.
That is where the bulk of the money comes from.”

Vice Mayor Sandie Puchalski motioned to accept the marina financials.
Councilman Glen Schagelin 2nd.
All agreed.

IV. Meals Tax

Mayor Fred Janci explained a hand out showing the increase to the town raising the meals tax.

(Hand out is attached to the minutes.)

1% increase would equal \$18,000

2% increase would equal \$36,000

3% increase would equal \$54,000

Mayor Fred Janci stated this was based on the current figures.

Councilman Glen Schagelin said that figure would probably be higher since Blake has raised his fees.

Vice Mayor Puchalski stated she didn’t think we should raise it to the full 5%.

Councilman Bob Bilicki stated that he thought we should table this until this discussion until May 2022, after we review the new budget.

Councilman Bob Bilicki motioned to table the discussion until after the April Budget meeting to May 2022.

Councilman Glen Schagelin 2nd.

Councilman Margo Digan,

Councilman Sandy Puchalski,

Councilman Bob Bilicki and

Councilman Bob Williams agreed.

Councilman Stephan Joseph apposed.

It was agreed to table the discussion until May 2022.

Vice Mayor stated this will give us time to come up with what we need.

Transient Tax

Vice Mayor Sandy Puchalski motioned to table the discussion regarding transient tax until May 2022.

Councilman Bob Bilicki 2nd the motion.

All Agreed.

Councilman Bob Williams stated that we need to show the town’s people where the money is needed. He stated even with the increase it will take years to come up with the money to meet 50/50 grants. He mentioned that the Fire Company and Town Hall are in a flood plain.

Jim Bell talked about the town’s comprehensive plan. He stated the Comprehensive Plan for 2016 is on the Town’s website. It is required by state law to be updated every 5 years. Jim reported the plan is for where you want to be and where you want to go. The plan needs to have specific steps in place. Some issues it may include are infrastructure, sea-level rise, charter improvements, and how much it will cost.

He explained that the Planning Commission is working on that now.

Jim Bell stated when he drives down Main Street, he doesn’t feel the town is very welcoming. He stated, “if I am arriving with my family, one of the amenities I need is a public restroom. We do not have one available at all times.” He asked, “has anyone seen the public restrooms at Saxis?” Part of the Planning Commission is to address these items.

Aileen Joeckel spoke about the survey the planning commission wants to send to all the residents and home owners of Wachapreague. She asked for approval from the council members for the town to buy approximately 400 stamps and envelopes for the project. A self-address, stamped envelope would be included with each survey for return. Aileen also asked for approval of the survey in which they are asking for the wants and needs of the residents and property owners.

Vice Mayor motioned to approve the survey and expense.

Councilman Bob Bilicki 2nded.

All Agreed.

Jim Bell spoke about the historic District. He said the state came in and surveyed several properties in Wachapreague. Jim stated that a video is available for viewing at Wachapreague Renaissance Website regarding this. He stated within three weeks we should have all the documentation on fifty properties in town. He said that properties do not necessarily mean homes; it could be cemetery etc.

Jim will make a report at that time and it can be decided if the town wants to be on the National Registry.

V. Powell Park

Vice Mayor Puchalski reported that new swings were purchased for Powell Park.

She stated that Richie Puchalski and Don Motto

cleaned up trees around the ball field. Don and Richie are planning to split the cost of a stump grinder (approximately \$600.00 to rent) between themselves if no money is available from the town.

- Councilman Bob Williams interjected, "did you hear what she said, two of our town employees are cleaning up our park and will split the cost between them for a stump grinder?"

Mayor Fred Janci stated the town should be doing this, not the residents.

- Regarding the gate at the park, Vice Mayor Sandi Puchalski stated to purchase everything. The cost of the gate and hardware should cost approximately \$250.00, and it will be under \$300.00.

Mayor Fred Janci reported that part of the town's ballfield is on somebody else's property. The new owners are willing to leave the field alone and allow continued use for the town. They owners just ask for access to the easement for use to access the rest of their property. The gate will solve this issue. Vice mayor Sandy Puchalski said we will need to get something in writing stating the baseball field fence remains where it is.

Council Margo Digan motioned for the town to spend up to \$300.00 for a new gate at the ballfield.

Councilman Glen Schagelin 2nded the motion.

All agreed.

Councilman Bob Bilicki asked, "who will write this up?"

Vice Mayor Sandi Puchalski said we will have a legal agreement signed.

Someone said, "why are we mudding up the water? It will cost more in legal fees to have this done."

Councilman Bob Bilicki receded his idea about the baseball fence and legal documents regarding that the fence remains.

A vote was taken regarding installing the gate and expenses gate. All agreed.

- Vice Mayor Sandie Puchalski stated that there was going to be a Powell Park cleanup day. She will have several of the coast guard people help with painting and cleanup. The coast guard volunteers and Vice Mayor Puchalski will feed them.

- Mayor Fred Puchalski spoke about the basketball court at Powell Park, He said he had a complaint about public urination. Mayor Janci said we need to have facilities for them to use.

Mayor Fred Janci asked, "should we put a porta pot there?"

Councilman Margo Digan asked why they can't use the public restrooms that are there.
Vice Mayor Sandie said she can't keep them opened all the time because they are not taken care of.

A conversation ensued regarding porta pots. One was a basic no frills with hand jell, another had a hand wash, wheel chair accessible. The basic was only \$95.00 with service once a week. Additional fees are for jell hand cleaner.
Vice Mayor Sandi Puchalski thought a basic porta pot would be sufficient at Powell Park.

Councilman Margo Digan stated that Charlie and she were scouting out a space for a porta pot at Seaside Park. Charlie Gible stated she thought it should be accessible for use for the new store opening across the street from town hall. She also spoke of a conversation she had with the mayor of Saxis and their public restroom. The Mayor told her that they were able to get the town's restroom with grant money. Discussion ensued regarding how nice their restroom is.

It was agreed to do a walk at Seaside Park and pick a spot for a porta pottie.

It was agreed to put this in next year's budget. (Approximately \$130.00 a month for Powell Park)

VI. Marina

Vice Mayor Sandie Puchalski said she is waiting for some renewals to come in.
She stated that she has received estimates for scraping. Wardius came in at \$1995.00 and Richie's estimate was \$1675.00.
Chris Wardius said he wouldn't be able to get to it right away.

Councilman Glen Schagelin motioned to approve the money to have the work done.
Councilman Steve Joseph 2nd.
All Agreed

Vice Mayor Sandie Puchalski said she applied for a grant for dredging for next year. She is just waiting for the VPA.
Vice Mayor Sandie also spoke about a pipe that collapsed. It runs through Randy Lewis Jr. land and past the Joeckel's.
Lewis would like the town to fix it. The town marina uses it.

Councilman Steve Joseph recommended Ronnie Reul to fix the pipe.

VII. Maintenance

Councilman Glen Schagelin has not received a 2nd quote regarding outside trash hauling. The company has all the information but they have not responded.

He stated the boys have been cleaning up the brush from the trees taken down.

Councilman Glen Schagelin wanted to inform the council the guys cleared the sidewalks on Main St. after the last snowfall.

Mayor Fred Janci stated, "shouldn't the people who own the property do that?"

Councilman Glen Schagelin stated that they're a lot of homeowners who do not live there in the winter.

Mayor Fred Janci stated that maybe this should be an ordinance. Home owners are responsible for their own sidewalks.

VIII. Ordinance

Councilman Bob Williams stated that the town needs to schedule the next ordinance working session.
March 17th was the date chosen. The meeting was scheduled to be at Town Hall at 7:00. p.m.

IX. HRSD

Adrian Kotula of the Chesapeake Bay Commission told Councilman Bob Bilicki that Wachapreague should be in good shape because it did not go into committee. Councilman Bilicki explained when something is going to committee, it usually means it is getting chopped. He explained the worst we should be getting is 2.7 million, the best 3.6 million.

Phil Hubbard is our new contact. Councilman Bob Bilicki believes we will have a 6- inch pipe with a below grade Eastern Shore pump station. Alarms will be above grade.

Councilman Bob Bilicki and Mayor Fred Janci believe the earliest we will know regarding money for the sewer is mid-April. (April 16th)

Councilman Bob Bilicki thanked Steven Joseph for having his guys work on Patricia Brags home. They are working on the inside of her home.

X. Tourism

Councilman Bob Bilicki stated that he will be meeting with the Nature Conservatory. They will be discussing the Bird Watching Station. He said the footprint will be similar to Oyster. They will also be discussing how to turn that property over to the town.

- Chris Wardius and Councilman Bob Bilicki are working on the sign at the corner of route 13 and route 180. It will cost the town \$225.00 a month. The electric would run around \$25.00. The town would be subletting from Chris Wardius. Randy Lewis owns the property.

Councilman Bob Bilicki reported Mary (CBES Rider) asked him about a banner for the CBES rider's event. They thought there may be one in a closet at town hall or in one of the storage areas where the maintenance guys have items stored.

Vice Mayor Sandie Puchalski will check the concession stand where many items get stored.

Councilman Bob Bilicki spoke about having a post CBES rider's event. The post event would run 12:30pm-4:30pm. We could have a Beer Garden. The vendor would be responsible for the drinks and the town would make a dollar on each drink. The town could also sell t-shirts to make money. He said he has permission to make T-shirts.

Councilman Bob Bilicki said he will have the CBES pay for the park permits. They will be responsible for the parking and the cleanup afterwards.

Councilman Bob Bilicki will need to have food also. Blake recommended Pizza. He's also planning to have music. Shawn Fate will have a spaghetti dinner, drive thru the night the CBES rider. This will be a fundraiser for the Fire company.

XI. Safety and Security

Councilman Bob Williams spoke to the radar sign company. He got instruction on how to fix the sign so it is not reading speeds from too far away.

Councilman Bob Williams asked Councilman Steve Joseph and Councilman Glen Schagelin to help reposition the sign. Councilman Bob Williams reported he got the data regarding speeding and when most of the speeding takes place.

He said the highest speed was 45.

Councilman Bob Williams will bring this information to the next meeting.

XII. Streets and Drainage

Councilman Bob Williams asked, "if the guys have time, could they work on cleaning the ditches?"

XIV. Zoning

Mayor Fred Janci stated that he has written a letter to go to planning commission regarding the Schagelin Air BnB.

Janci wrote that they should be granted the permit with the following stipulations:

No on street parking

No noise complaints

Primary residence must remain primary

Business license and transient taxes must remain current

Maximum guests allowed are 4.

Permit is lost if the home is sublet or sold.

Failure to comply will be immediate revocation of the permit.

\$100 per day will be charged and a lien will be placed on your home if you would continue to run an air bnb from your home if the permit is revoked.

Mayor Fred Janci stated he has written the same letter for the Honeycutts.

Councilman Bob Bilicki stated he thought that should apply to all the Air BnBs in town.

- Councilman Bob Bilicki said, “you do not need to get a business license at Accomack if you get one in Wachapreague.” The treasurer at Accomack informed Councilman Bob of this.

XV. Beautification

Councilman Bob Bilicki stated he is going to have the grass reseeded, change the light, and fix the concrete table at town hall.

XVI. Grants

Town Clerk stated that we need to report what we are doing with ARPA grant.

XVII. Town Wide Yard Sale

No dates were chosen

XVIII. Bank

Councilman Fred Janci and Vice Mayor discussed switching our PNC Bank to Atlantic. Atlantic offers more services for free. Vice Mayor Sandi Puchalski motioned to change banks.

Councilman Steve Joseph 2nded.

All agreed.

XIX. Town Hall

Major Fred Janci spoke about making changes to town hall.

He said we can't do any major changes until we make sure there is enough in the budget.

Town Clerk Charlie asked, “can we paint the inside before the budget meeting?”

Councilman Glen Schagelin said the guys could paint on rainy days.

Councilman Schagelin said we also need to put in a new floor.

XX. Adjournment

Vice Mayor Sandie Puchalski motioned we adjourn the meeting and go into executive meeting.

Councilman Bob Bilicki 2nded.

All Agreed.