



**Town Council
Regular Council Meeting Minutes
February 22, 2022**

The Town Council of Bedford, Virginia, held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, February 22, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Municipal Building at 215 East Main Street, Bedford, Virginia.

Town Council members present:

Mayor Tim Black, Vice Mayor C. G. Stanley, Councilman Bob Carson, Councilman Stacey Hailey, Councilman Bruce Hartwick, Councilman Bruce Johannessen, Councilman Darren Shoen

Town Staff present:

Town Manager Bart Warner, Town Attorney Michael Lockaby, Electric Department Director John Wagner, Director of Public Works D. W. Lawhorne, Clerk of Council Debra B. Anderson, and Recording Secretary Julia Peters

Mayor Black called the meeting to order and led all those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mayor Black declared that the minutes of the regularly scheduled Council meeting of February 8, 2022, were approved as presented.

REPORT OF TOWN MANAGER

Town Manager Bart Warner reported that the formal recognition by Council of Chief Foreman's retirement would be postponed until the March 8, 2022 Town Council meeting. Chief Foreman had a close friend pass away and was attending the viewing that evening.

APPEARANCES BEFORE COUNCIL

Cherie Whitehurst, 1310 Vistarama Lane, Bedford, VA

Ms. Whitehurst addressed the Council and noted that according to this year's Virginia Department of Education report, there were 1,560 students being home-schooled in Bedford County. Of that number, 173 were being home-schooled for religious reasons. The per pupil expenditure for this year was over \$10,000, so they were losing a tremendous amount of revenue because parents were making the decision not to send their children to Bedford County public schools. Several years ago, the student enrollment at Liberty High School was 1,039 students. This past fall, the student enrollment was 713. This was a difference of 326 students and to put it into perspective, it was as if the whole senior class and half of the junior class were gone. When the student enrollment is that low, it is hard to offer the same courses and extracurricular programs that sister high schools have. When the City of Bedford reverted to a Town status, the General Assembly allowed Bedford County Public Schools to use the Town's lesser local composite index for 15 years. Since the 2013-2014 budget, Bedford County Public Schools has been receiving \$6 million in added state funding. In just a few years, the reversion money will go away and there will be a \$6 million shortfall for each subsequent year. The District 7 School Board member seat was recently vacated and the School Board will be appointing a replacement on March 3, 2022. With the declining enrollment and the future \$6 million shortfall, they will need a District 7 School Board member who knows the community, understands the issues, and who can help problem-solve. She would like to serve her community in this role and she would appreciate Council's support. She grew up in Bedford, attended the Bedford Primary School in the 1960's, graduated from Liberty High School, her children graduated from Liberty High School and her grandson will be hopefully attending a school in District 7 in the Fall. Besides the school finance issues, there are other areas that she would like to support as the District 7 School Board member. These areas included career and technology education, school libraries, the fine arts program, school nurses, and alternative education. For the last several years, the textbook monies have been used for technology, which is not a bad thing. However, the problem is that teachers have not had the curriculum to go with the Chrome books and the technology. It is very hard on teachers to be out there surfing the web trying to find resources. They do not get paid enough to spend those extra hours doing this, so they need to be equipped with appropriate curriculum so they can teach their lessons. Strengthening partnerships with community organizations are also very important, such as the YMCA, Bower Center, and CVCC. Listening to the community voices is important too, and ensuring that all community members feel valued and are treated with respect and dignity. She would like to be at the table with the other School Board members, representing the many voices in District 7, which includes a large portion of the Town of Bedford.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Black thanked Ms. Whitehurst for her comments and thought it was a very important time for the community with the upcoming appointment of the school board member for District 7. District 7 encompasses about half of the Town of Bedford and it is incumbent upon Council to

know what is going on and to make sure a good representative is appointed. He thanked Martin Leamy for his six years of service as the District 7 school board representative. He has known Ms. Whitehurst since he was a kid growing up with her brothers. He knows her character, she is well educated with a Bachelor Degree in Elementary Education from James Madison University. She also has a Masters Degree in Education and a Doctorate Degree in Education Leadership. She has spent most of her career in Bedford County Public Schools beginning as a teacher, then an assistant principal and has served in all three zones in leadership roles. She served as the Deputy Superintendent of Bedford County Public Schools and there is no one more experienced than Ms. Whitehurst. He noted that he gave all Council members a copy of her resume' and said she is doing this for all the right reasons. She is a servant at heart, and wants what is best for the students, the parents, staff, and community. He has no reservation about supporting Ms. Whitehurst for the District 7 seat on the school board.

Councilman Carson said he just retired from the school system and had to meet with school officials on different issues and has previously spoken with Ms. Whitehurst. He is concerned about the school system, especially about losing good experienced teachers and what it would take to get the schools back up to par. In some areas, students are hurting and as much as there is a need for virtual learning, it is not serving its purpose, in his opinion. He sees students in and around his neighbourhood that should be excelling and they are falling back. He thinks some of it has to do with the parents not stepping up to make sure the students get their work done at home. He has known Ms. Whitehurst for a long time and any board dealing with educational curricula for students should have experienced educators on-board. Ms. Whitehurst has his full support and he hopes she will get the position. She is certainly well-qualified for it and he is glad to see her getting back into the system because she has too much to offer.

Councilman Shoen said that as an attorney, he has dealt with the school system on different issues and Ms. Whitehurst has always been there to help, which he appreciated. Her qualifications speak for themselves and there is no question she is well-qualified.

Councilman Hailey noted that the Covid pandemic has really put a strain on the school board and the students. He has known Ms. Whitehurst for the last 12 years and she has been a great asset to the school system. She taught his wife in school, has been a principal, and a deputy superintendent of schools. She has more qualifications than the average person and the kids need to be back on track with learning so they can understand the current world. He thought Ms. Whitehurst would bring a lot to the table and she has 100 percent of his support.

Vice Mayor Stanley remarked that Ms. Whitehurst somehow tolerated both of his sons in school and echoed what other Council members have already said. He does not know of anyone else who is more qualified than Ms. Whitehurst. He had reviewed her resume' which speaks for itself and he is glad to see she wants to give back and serve her community. With the declining enrollment, he feels there is something not right somewhere and she has his full support and if there was anything he could do to help, she could let him know.

Councilman Johannessen stated that he has worked in economic development for many years and the one thing that employers always ask about is the educational system in the area. It is the most important thing to them. If they are going to settle in the area, they want to know that the

schools are top-notch, not only for their own kids' education, but also for those of their employees. It is critical that school board members understand education and he has heard from townspeople how much they appreciate Ms. Whitehurst, and Council will support her any way it can.

Councilman Hartwick said he had given Ms. Whitehurst a call and asked her questions and her answers hit the nail on the head with expanded answers. Experience aside, she also demonstrated a wealth of knowledge, a willingness to make the community better, cares about the students and wants to make sure Bedford has a better workforce for good paying jobs in the future. He thanked her for running and said she had his full support. He also stated she could look up the poem from Teddy Roosevelt entitled "The Man in the Arena". It is a poem that will give some encouragement regardless of what happens.

REPORT OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

None.

REVISIONS TO AGENDA

The Proclamation for F. Todd Foreman was moved to the March 8, 2022 Council meeting.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

None.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Black read Closed Session pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (a) (3) of the Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended, for the acquisition or disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position.

Mr. Hailey moved, seconded by Mr. Hartwick, to enter into closed session.

Voted upon and carried by the following roll call vote.

Councilman Carson	aye
Councilman Hailey	aye
Councilman Hartwick	aye
Councilman Johannessen	aye
Councilman Shoen	aye
Councilman Stanley	aye
Mayor Black	aye

The motion carried with seven members voting aye.

Council adjourned into closed session at 7:17 p.m.

Mr. Warner noted there were two specific items to be discussed. Mr. Warner, Mr. Wagner, and Mr. Lockaby remained present for the first item of the closed session.

Mr. Wagner departed the closed session at 7:50 p.m. while Council members, Mr. Warner, and Mr. Lockaby continued the closed session for the second item of discussion.

Council reconvened into open session at 8:04 p.m.

The Recording Secretary read aloud the following resolution.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the Town of Bedford hereby certifies that (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Council.

On a motion by Councilman Hartwick, seconded by Councilman Hailey, voted upon and carried by a roll call vote, Council adopted the resolution. The roll call vote follows.

Councilman Hailey	aye
Councilman Hartwick	aye
Councilman Johannessen	aye
Councilman Shoen	aye
Councilman Stanley	aye
Councilman Carson	aye
Mayor Black	aye

The motion carried with seven members voting aye.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Black adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m. until February 26, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. for a Budget Work Session in Council Hall.

Tim Black, Mayor

Debra Anderson, Clerk of the Council