The Wythe County Board of Supervisors held its regularly scheduled meeting at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, October 11, 2022. The location of the meeting was in the Boardroom of the County Administration Building, 340 South Sixth Street, Wytheville, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Brian W. Vaught, Chair
Rolland R. Cook
Jesse R. Burnett
James D. “Jamie” Smith
Stacy A. Terry

MEMBERS ABSENT:
Ryan M. Lawson, Vice Chair
B. G. “Gene” Horney, Jr.

STAFF PRESENT:
Stephen D. Bear, County Administrator
Martha Collins, Administrative Assistant/Clerk
Scot Farthing, County Attorney
Matt Hankins, Assistant County Administrator
Lisa Shelton, County Planner

OTHERS PRESENT:
Evan Atwell
Jerry Blevins
Lori Guynn
Zach Lester
Linda Meyer
Dickie Morgan
Jacob Vanover
Kathy Vaught

CALL TO ORDER
Chair Vaught determined that a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Chair also asked that everyone keep the family of Wayne Sutherland, who recently passed away, in their prayers. Wayne served as Town Manager for the Town of Wytheville for 40 years and he will be sorely missed.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
Pastor Jacob Vanover, Rural Retreat Baptist Church, provided the invocation and Supervisor Cook led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS‘ TIME

1. Neighbor Complaints – Mr. Jerry Blevins appeared before the Board and stated “Since my last domestic terrorist report to the Wythe County Board of
Supervisors, things have gotten slightly worse. There have been two cases of trespassing of which an air filter on a tractor was loosened so the filter was exposed. And a circuit breaker just installed and a new electric panel was placed in an engaged position whereas when installed, it was placed in a disengaged position. The tractor air filter had just been installed by me and latch tie sealed with duct tape but when checked, the tape had been pulled back and the latch disengaged. These acts show me that I am still under surveillance or no one would have known that I was working on them. Otherwise, on these cyber events issues like locking vehicle doors, mess with television, or portable heater were involved. Despite the problems of the past few months, my immortal friend has been kind to me, which is more than I can say for our country or the world at large. Our problems continue to grow and the OPEC follows through with its intention to cut production by 2M barrels of oil a day, as we head into winter, the situation could get dire indeed. Unfortunately, our problems are not going to improve because we have worn out the planet we live on. My immortal friend is trying to remove mortals from the earth as quickly as possible using disease, fires, floods, drought, tornadoes, hurricanes and even more as a means to achieve his goal. So far, my immortal friend is being quite successful at his goal. Those of us that fully understand the situation will be in a much better position to deal with the problems we are facing. I noticed NASA has not launched Artemis 1 yet but did try to change the orbit of an asteroid by firing a rocket at it creating a dust cloud 6500 miles long. I realize NASA’s nerves are on edge after what happened to ... but I can tell you now that firing rockets at asteroids is risky business and should be avoided. If my immortal friend wishes to destroy the planet with an asteroid, he’ll be sure to send one of adequate size to get the job done. God is doing the ... of our planet by taking many different steps at once, making life as uncomfortable as possible while doing it. Thank you, sir.”

2. Water Bill Policy – Mr. Zach Lester appeared before the Board and stated “Good afternoon, Board. Thank you all for what you do and thank you for always being here. I’m just here to talk about the water bill policy again. I’m just going to bring up that I would offer to volunteer for the County to reach out to the disconnections a week in advance so that we can try to set up a payment plan or even just giving them a little bit of insight, I think would resolve a lot of the disconnections. I think it’s a big issue kind of cutting off peoples’ water over really small amounts and the $75 fee is a little much, so I think it’s something that we can definitely address. Times are really tough for a lot of people, my generation, you know we’ve been handed a pretty bad bag of goods. You know inflation’s 11% which is quite a bit higher than that but that’s going off of their numbers.
We’re $30T in debt to China. China did just arrest 1.42M of its innocent citizens over the past 100 days. They announced a 100-day campaign to lock up Christians, Uyghurs and political activists, such as myself. And so this is a country that manufactures everything we own; everything in this building was manufactured in China. Everything in your homes, your cars is manufactured in China, and all of your technological information is stored in China. So, Eugene Yu who is the CEO of Konnech Company, got arrested last Tuesday, He manufactures the software and hardware called PollChief. Fairfax County and Loudoun County in Virginia are still using; Fairfax just admitted that they’re going to stop using the software for PollChief because Eugene Yu just got allegedly proven the information from our elections are being stored on backbone servers in China. Once again, we’re pointing out the big elephant in the room but it’s so hard for us as the citizens to just survive. How could we ever even come out and you know reform our government and start to rebuild this collapsed system. Our dollars are worth 99% less than 100 years ago, I mean, we really are looking into some pretty dreary times. I would love to see our Board get a little bit more involved in trying to help the community instead of holding the pressure of the boot down on our necks, getting us to capitulate to whatever you all want. And I think that that’s inhumane; I think that there’s a lot of ways that we can resolve most of these issues. And me volunteering, stepping outside of all the bureaucracy, I could 100% guarantee that the water bill disconnections could be done indefinitely and then our County could set the precedent, one person changing the policy and helping the community sets the example in Wythe County; what happens in our neighboring counties. They also want to say ‘Well, my community members shouldn’t be losing their water over $50. Why don’t we set up a program and manage those accounts? I think it’s very doable and within five years, Virginia could be one of the only states which, there are states right now that do not allow water disconnections at any point in the year, but Virginia could be one of those. Guys, thank you all for what you do. I think we have a long, hard, hungry road ahead and cold, very, very cold. I hope you all really find some inspiration. Thank you all for listening.”

Hearing no other comments, Chair Vaught closed Citizens’ Time.

**INTRODUCTION OF COUNTY PLANNER, LISA SHELTON**

Mr. Hankins introduced Ms. Lisa Shelton as the new County Planner. Ms. Shelton spent the last seven years in the Commissioner of Revenue’s office, and has already jumped right in whereby reducing the added workload placed on Mr. Hankins over the last few months.
Ms. Shelton said that she is available to help anyone with whatever they need, and that she greatly appreciates this opportunity.

PUBLIC HEARING – TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR CERTAIN ELDERLY AND DISABLED PERSONS ORDINANCE OF WYTHE COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Chair Vaught read “In compliance with the Code of Virginia of 1950, and amendments thereto, the Wythe County Board of Supervisors will conduct a public hearing to consider an Ordinance entitled, “Tax Exemptions for Certain Elderly and Disabled Persons Ordinance of Wythe County, Virginia. The Board of Supervisors shall hear comments from citizens concerning the proposed Ordinance on Tuesday, October 11, 2022, at 6:05 p.m. in the Board Room of the Wythe County Office Building, 340 South Sixth Street, Wytheville, Virginia.”

The Chair opened the comment period of the public hearing.

1. Ms. Linda Meyer appeared before the Board and stated “I read the ordinance and I really don’t have a problem with it except that it is on the back of the Commissioner of Revenue. I think to keep things transparent and not to put pressure on one person, that you should at least have a committee of three. Perhaps have the Commissioner of Revenue, somebody from the Mount Rogers District that is involved with people that are disabled and the elderly, and then somebody else. Just to make sure that there is transparency and to make sure because the Commissioner’s job is a elected job and so on, that could be a little bit dicey. So, I think you should reconsider and have an actual committee of three people and so on, and this would make sure that it was fair and transparent for everybody. Thank you so much.”

With no one else signed up to address the Board, the Chair closed the public comment period of the hearing.

PAYMENT OF COUNTY INVOICES

Supervisor Terry made a motion to pay the invoices for approval on October 11, 2022, for the various departments of County government. The invoices were paid on General Warrants 30113694-30113766 and two wire transfers as follows:

EXPENDITURES BY DEPARTMENT
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
October 11, 2022
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30113739 10/11/2022  SEGRA  30.35
30113740 10/11/2022  SHENTEL  1,345.33
30113741 10/11/2022  SMITH, JAMIE  31.13
30113742 10/11/2022  SMYTH WYTHE AIRPORT COMMI  13,430.00
30113743 10/11/2022  SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA EMS CO  875.00
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30113745 10/11/2022  STEPHENSON ALLEN B  18.48
30113746 10/11/2022  TACS  1,225.00
30113747 10/11/2022  TIRE DISCOUNTERS, INC  2,579.94
30113748 10/11/2022  TOWN OF WYTHEVILLE  767.98
30113749 10/11/2022  TRANSUNION RISK & ALTERNATIVE  75.00
30113750 10/11/2022  TYLER BUSINESS FORMS  600.00
30113751 10/11/2022  TYLER TECHNOLOGIES INC  800.00
30113752 10/11/2022  UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA  150.00
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30113754 10/11/2022  V&M RECYCLING  85,754.07
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30113760 10/11/2022  WEBB, CARMEN H  26.53
30113761 10/11/2022  WILSON BAIT & TACKLE INC  468.90
30113762 10/11/2022  WOOD EQUIP SERV CO INC  60,800.00
30113763 10/11/2022  WORDSPRINT  394.00
30113764 10/11/2022  WYTHE TIRE AND MUFFLER  290.00
30113765 10/11/2022  WYTHE-GRAYSON REGIONAL LI  89,225.25
30113766 10/11/2022  WYTHEVILLE OFFICE SUPPLY  101.50

TOTAL EXPENDITURES 10/11/2022 $2,704,208.86
Supervisor Smith seconded the motion and the roll call vote was as follows:

AYES: Brian W. Vaught  Jesse R. Burnett
      Rolland R. Cook  Stacy A. Terry
      James D. “Jamie” Smith

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Ryan M. Lawson  B. G. “Gene” Horney, Jr.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
The Board was presented with the September 27, 2022 minutes for approval.

Supervisor Cook made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Burnett, to approve the September 27, 2022 minutes as presented.

The vote on the motion was unanimous, with two absent.

APPOINTMENT VACANCIES
Supervisor Smith made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Terry, to appoint Mr. Raymond Matney to the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission Board.

The vote on the motion was unanimous, with two absent.

TAX EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN ELDERLY & DISABLED PERSONS ORDINANCE
Mr. Bear explained this ordinance replaces the Ordinance No. 78-5 (last amended in 2007) with increased values. The Commissioner of Revenue has reviewed and agrees with the proposed amounts. If the Board takes no action, the previous ordinance, with lesser amounts, will remain in effect.

Supervisor Burnett asked the Commissioner approximately how many people take advantage of the tax exemption.

Mrs. Vaught replied that approximately 450 people receive the exemption. The Commissioner’s office contacts applicants a few weeks in advance of the deadline to remind them to act before the deadline. Their office also makes every effort to verify the
financial information submitted is factual and correct. The Commissioner did say that most applicants are honest and very much in need of the exemption.

Mr. Farthing believes the Code delegates the responsibility of reviewing/approving applications to the Commissioner of Revenue. However, he will research and confirm that. The Commissioner’s office has access to all personal property tax records as well as real estate property owned.

Chair Vaught mentioned that a doctor’s affidavit is required to verify an applicant’s disability.

Supervisor Cook said that if the applicants meet the criteria, then why the need for a committee? The applicants’ eligibility is pretty much cut and dry.

Mr. Bear asked the Commissioner about timing to get this adopted, to which she replied by the next meeting would be fine.

The Chair brought up the Dillon Rule which states that local governments are limited to the powers expressly granted to them by the state.

Mr. Farthing responded that the Code states to “… file with the Commissioner of Revenue.”

Supervisor Burnett would like to see a larger tax break given to the elderly/disabled stating that a $250 exemption doesn’t seem enough. He feels that an exemption of $500 is more appropriate, with total asset value of $150k versus $100k, and total income raised to $55k.

Supervisor Terry appreciates what Supervisor Burnett expressed but has concerns about how to cover the lost revenue created by increasing the exemption.

The Chair said that the entire Board would like to be able to do more but he doesn’t want to put this on the backs of the younger taxpayers. Wythe County taxes are lower than most and he’d like to keep it that way. The Board can adjust this next year if they so choose.

Mrs. Vaught added that there are other available credits too (i.e., veteran’s credit and land use credits).
The Chair raised a valid point that a citizen who has lived in and has paid taxes in Wythe County for 50 years should be receiving more than the person who’s only been living here and paying taxes for a year or two.

Supervisor Smith made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Burnett, to approve the Tax Exemption for Certain Elderly and Disabled Persons Ordinance, as presented.

The roll call vote was as follows:

AYES:       Brian W. Vaught       Jesse R. Burnett
            Rolland R. Cook       Stacy A. Terry
            James D. “Jamie” Smith

NAYS:       None

ABSENT:     Ryan M. Lawson        B. G. “Gene” Horney, Jr.

**BUDGET COMMITTEE**

1. **Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund** – Supervisor Smith made a motion, as recommended by the Budget Committee, to request Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency funds and to amend and appropriate $140,076.38 to 9000-470251 (Revenue Code 11003-334008).

The roll call vote was as follows:

AYES:       Brian W. Vaught       Jesse R. Burnett
            Rolland R. Cook       Stacy A. Terry
            James D. “Jamie” Smith

NAYS:       None

ABSENT:     Ryan M. Lawson        B. G. “Gene” Horney, Jr.

2. **Sheriff’s Office – Covert Deployable Pole Cameras** – Supervisor Smith made a motion, as recommended by the Budget Committee, to approve i2c Technologies as the sole source provider for covert deployable pole cameras.

The roll call vote was as follows:
AYES: Rolland R. Cook                Jesse R. Burnett
     James D. “Jamie” Smith         Stacy A. Terry

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: Brian W. Vaught

ABSENT: Ryan M. Lawson             B. G. “Gene” Horney, Jr.

3. **Sheriff’s Office Budget Transfer Request** – Supervisor Smith made a motion, as recommended by the Budget Committee, to transfer $3,415 from the State Asset Forfeiture Fund to the General Fund, and to amend and appropriate same to 3102-457502 (Narcotics Enforcement).

The roll call vote was as follows:

AYES: Rolland R. Cook                Jesse R. Burnett
     James D. “Jamie” Smith         Stacy A. Terry

NAYS: None

ABSTAIN: Brian W. Vaught

ABSENT: Ryan M. Lawson             B. G. “Gene” Horney, Jr.

**SUPERVISORS’ REPORTS**

1. **Recreation Department** – Supervisor Cook asked if other Board members received an email about the Rec Department and whether the Board wants Mr. Bear to address it. Apparently, Mr. Bear was copied on the email.

2. **Ft. Chiswell Road** – Supervisor Smith said there was a head-on collision at the intersection of Red Hollow Road and Ft. Chiswell Road right after our last meeting. Action clearly needs to be taken.

3. **Ft. Chiswell Crosswalk** – Supervisor Smith encouraged people to come and observe, during the school day or on Friday nights, all the people crossing the street. We need to protect the kids, and all residents, at this crossing.
4. **Ivanhoe Road** – Supervisor Smith said the speed limit needs to be lowered and it’s becoming increasingly more dangerous with major ag farmers travelling through there. Apparently, VDOT and our legislators are unwilling to help.

5. **Max Meadows Fire Department** – Supervisor Smith asked about part-time help for MMVFD.

   Mr. Hankins said he is waiting to receive the agreement from Chief Haywood but he will follow-up with him tomorrow.

6. **Lead Mines Rescue Squad** – Supervisor Smith understands that workers have not been there for over a week.

   Mr. Hankins heard from the contractor yesterday indicating they were waiting on a plumbing part. He too is not pleased that a 6-month project is taking nearly 18 months to complete.

   Supervisor Smith also mentioned there is an apparent issue hearing the radio from the bays (no speakers).

7. **Orion Drive** – Supervisor Smith asked if anyone has heard back from the residents.

   Mr. Hankins said four residents have submitted a petition and he will try to get a public hearing scheduled in November.

8. **Ghent Lane** – Supervisor Smith asked Mr. Bear for an update.

   Mr. Bear responded that there’s a very narrow right of way through there so they are looking at setting up a meeting with the residents about extending the right of ways.

9. **Ft. Chiswell Crosswalk** – Chair Vaught asked if we can get a cost estimate? Perhaps we can use the casino money for this (transportation projects). This Board has been discussing the need for a crosswalk at this location for three years now.

   Mr. Bear feels this is as close as we’ve ever come to getting anywhere on this topic. He said that about a month ago, VDOT sent us a TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) form. We have submitted that form and once it’s reviewed,
VDOT will then provide cost estimates, feasibility, etc. and funding sources. It may, however, involve or require improvements to the sidewalks. Mr. Bear said this is probably the best source of funding available to allow us to move forward, and that Supervisor Smith’s persistence seems to be paying off.

10. **Tractor Signs** – Chair Vaught asked about the tractor signs along some of the roads (he referenced the recent fatality in Crockett) and who puts those signs up? There are many roads that could use those signs.

Mr. Bear will follow-up on that.

Supervisor Smith added that tractors coming up Route 94 are coming from Ivanhoe and running through Fort Chiswell, 8-10 tractors at a time. They take up a large part of the road.

The Chair suggested that Mrs. Delp reach out to Farm Bureau about possibly putting out a joint public information campaign.

**CLOSED MEETING**

Supervisor Cook made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Smith, to enter into Closed Meeting under [Code of Virginia](#) Section 2.2-3711.A.3 Acquisition/Disposition of Real Property (APEX Lease), Section 2.2-3711.A.5 Prospective Business or Industry (Solar), and Section 2.2-3711.A.8 Consultation with Legal Counsel (Solar).

The vote on the motion was unanimous, with two absent.

Supervisor Terry made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Cook, to return to open meeting.

The vote on the motion was unanimous, with two absent.

Upon returning to open meeting, Supervisor Terry made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Smith, to adopt the following Resolution certifying the business conducted in closed meeting as follows:

**RESOLUTION**

**CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING**
WHEREAS, the Wythe County Board of Supervisors has convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and,

WHEREAS, Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by the Wythe County Board of Supervisors that such meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Wythe County Board of Supervisors hereby certifies that, to the best of each member’s knowledge, (i) 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 (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Wythe County Board of Supervisors.

The roll call vote on the motion was as follows:

AYES:   Brian W. Vaught       Jesse R. Burnett
        Rolland R. Cook        Stacy A. Terry
        James D. “Jamie” Smith

NAYS:   None

ABSENT:   Ryan M. Lawson      B. G. “Gene” Horney, Jr.

PUBLIC HEARING
Supervisor Cook made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Smith, to set a public hearing for November 9, 2022 at 6:05 p.m. for consideration of potential lease for APEX facility.

The vote on the motion was unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT
With no other business to come before the Board, Chair Vaught adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:18 p.m.

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Brian W. Vaught, Chair