

Town Council – September 7, 2006 @ 5:30 PM

The Town Council met in regular session with Mayor Jones presiding.

Members present: Brooks, Emery, Gillette, Illg, & Rosenfeld

Others present: Town Administrator Fitch & Attorney Eaton

Mayor Jones led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Access

During the public access portion of the meeting, Land Use Administrator Bertrand reported that Susie Doyle, of Susie's Moped business, has presented a plan to the Community Development Department in an effort to resolve her outside storage issue.

600 Warbass Way

Mayor Jones opened discussion of an application for license to use the public right of way by Paul Upchurch for property located at 600 Warbass Way. Administrator Fitch explained that the property owners intend to construct a retainage wall and guardrail, and a pedestrian access way with a handrail at said location within the public right of way. Mr. Fitch recommended approval of said application. Following inquiry, Councilmember Brooks moved and Councilmember Rosenfeld seconded to accept Administrator Fitch's recommendation for approval of Mr. Upchurch's application to make use of the public right of way at 600 Warbass Way as described.

Councilmember Emery commented that her concerns regarding lack of pedestrian space were answered.

Councilmember Rosenfeld suggested that any future infrastructure placed within the Warbass Way right of way be restricted to 2 or 3 feet to avoid crowding the limited pedestrian space available. Following further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution #1538

At 5:39 PM, Mayor Jones opened discussion of draft Resolution #1538. A resolution authorizing the Mayor to sign an Agreement And Deed Exchange To Clarify Public Street Right-Of-Way concerning a portion of Warbass Way. Attorney Eaton explained the particulars of said resolution and its solution to resolve possible future disputes of right-of-way issues along this section of Warbass Way. Following discussion and inquires, Councilmember Gillette moved and Councilmember Brooks seconded to adopt Resolution #1538 as stated. Following further inquires, the motion passed unanimously.

Fire Department Merge

At 5:50 PM, Mayor Jones opened discussion of the Ad Hoc Advisory Panel's report on the financial implications of combining Town and Fire District #3 Fire Departments. Mayor Jones publicly thanked said advisory panel (Gary Gibbons, George Johnson, and Steven Kennedy) for a job well done. Mayor Jones summarized the Advisory Panel Report for those present.

George Johnson, panel member, commented that the panel was restricted to studying the financial implications of combining the two fire departments. Mr. Johnson explained various components of the report.

Steve Kennedy, panel member, explained that the potential \$75,000 savings to the Town was calculated by taking the County fire levy rate and applying it to the assessed value of Town property compared to the difference the Town is currently budgeting for fire protection in its General Fund.

Discussion followed regarding the potential savings of merging the two departments versus diminished control; public safety; maintaining good relations between the two departments; personnel wages; and advantages or disadvantages to the Town.

Administrator Fitch expressed concerns regarding joint training difficulties. Mr. Fitch commented that previously when the Town had an interlocal agreement with Fire District #3 for training, their training officer had indicated that training both departments was too burdensome and the agreement was eventually dissolved. Later in the meeting, Mr. Johnson indicated that if the Fire Departments merged an additional Assistant Fire Chief position would be added and personnel allocation would be the responsibility of Fire District #3 to get the training job accomplished.

Councilmember Brooks inquired if a merge would affect the Town's fire insurance rating. Administrator Fitch answered that he did not feel it would impact the Town's fire rating significantly.

Bill LaPorte, Friday Harbor resident, stated that the financial savings did not warrant the loss of control that would happen if the fire departments merged.

Pete Kilpatrick, Town property owner and Fire District #3 firefighter, commented that because the Town was currently recruiting for a new Fire Chief, it was a good time to join the two departments and that combining the two departments would improve safety for everyone.

Bob Jarmen, Fire District #3 Commissioner, explained how a "functionality" agreement between the Town and Fire District #3 would operate in regards to capital improvements; costs, and safety.

Councilmember Gillette suggested the two departments remain separate, but increase joint training to improve safety.

Tom Eades, interim Town Fire Chief, indicated he did not have a preference one way or another on the merge issue, but encouraged a thoughtful process prior to dissolving a 50 year old fire department and potentially losing dedicated Town volunteer firefighters.

Mayor Jones commented that if the volunteers of both fire departments' were encouraging a merge, he would be more inclined to agree with combining the departments.

Following discussion regarding training; mutual cooperation; savings; future process; the impact continued merge discussion has on the Town volunteer firefighters, and Sheriff Dispatch procedures, no action was taken.

At 6:48 PM, hearing no further business and no objection, Mayor Jones declared the meeting adjourned.

David F. Jones, Mayor

Kelle Wilson, Town Clerk