

**COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLADENSBURG  
WORK SESSION MINUTES**

**May 9, 2022 @ 5:30PM**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor James called the meeting to order. Those in attendance were Mayor James and Council Members Blount, Brown, McBryde, and Route. Also in attendance were Chief Collington, Town Treasurer Tinelli, Town Marketing Specialist Jefferies, and Town Clerk Charnovich.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

A motion was made by Council Member McBryde to approve the Agenda, which was seconded by Council Member Route. Mayor James asked that a Proclamation be added to the Agenda for National Police Week. Council Member Route asked that an update on the Mental Health Awareness Day Event planning be added to the Agenda. The motion passed 5-0.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Town Clerk Charnovich informed the Mayor and Council that there were no minutes completed for approval consideration at this meeting.

**IV. APPEARANCES**

- a. Renee Green of the Town Patriotic Committee provided an update on the "What the Flag Means to Me" contest, Memorial Day Event, July 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks' Event, Veterans' Day and rededication of the Peace Cross.

**V. OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Road Improvement Projects for FY22

Mr. Hall of the Public Works Department presented information on road improvement projects needing done in the near to immediate future. Mr. Hall explained the bids that were received to complete work on the Decatur Street cul-de-sac. Mr. Hall and Mr. Charnovich are recommending Pronto Paving to complete the work on the Decatur Street cul-de-sac.

- b. LA Perez Consulting

This item will be discussed during the Regular Meeting.

## VI. NEW BUSINESS

### a. Dump truck purchase for the Public Works Department

Mr. Hall explained the details on the dump truck that needs replaced in the Public Works Department. Mr. Charnovich explained the procurement process for the truck and that the current bid received is under review.

### b. Fireworks Proposal for 2022 July 4<sup>th</sup> Event

Mr. Jefferies, Marketing Specialist, made a presentation regarding the fireworks' vendor bids that have been received. Mr. Jefferies and Mr. Charnovich recommended that the Town contract with Fantastic Fireworks for the July 1<sup>st</sup> Fireworks Event. The item will be on the Regular Meeting.

### c. Seton Summerfest Sponsorship

Mayor James discussed the upcoming Seton Summerfest Sponsorship. It was determined that the item would be on the Regular Meeting Agenda for consideration to sponsor at the \$1,500 level for the event.

### d. End Time Harvest Ministries Scholarship

Discussion was held concerning the amount of the scholarship that would be provided to each of the 7 students who are graduating seniors. This item would be on the Regular Meeting Agenda for further discussion.

### e. Mayor and Council Discretionary Funds for FY22

Town Treasurer Tinelli explained the overall process for Council discretionary funding in the Town budget. It was determined this item would be placed on the June 6 Council Meeting Agenda.

### f. PGCMA Elections

Council Member Route presented this Agenda item and asked that the Town Council vote on the slate of officers at the Regular Meeting.

### g. LEOPS (Law Enforcement Officers Pension System)

Mayor James read a statement into the record related to the process of entering the Law Enforcement Officers Pension System. During a staff meeting with the Town Council on August 4<sup>th</sup> officers asked the Town Council to reconsider Law Enforcement Officers Pension System (LEOPS), which essentially is a retirement system that provides sworn officers a pension after 25 years of service. The Town Council recognizes the importance of a retirement system that will allow for the Bladensburg Sworn Officers to retire after years of wear and tear on their bodies and provide an opportunity for Officers to spend more time with their families. The Town Council also recognizes LEOPS is a strong recruitment and retention tool for our police department.

The Council agreed to financially fund an actuarial study to explore the Town's commitment into LEOPS. The Town submitted the application for the actuarial study which was due on August 27,

2021. On April 7, 2022 a letter was sent to the Town with the outcome of the study and we were told we had to make a decision by April 25th to proceed with the process.

The timing seemed rushed so the Council asked SRS for more time to consider as well as a meeting to talk through the information in the study. We met on April 20 and had a representative from SRS walk us through the analysis. After thoughtful consideration and lengthy deliberations and separate conversations the council has come to a decision regarding LEOPS in 2022.

The Town Council is unanimously supportive of this retirement plan. The Town Council understands the cost of the plan and the Town Council, in collaboration with the Town's Directors, need to determine where the funding will come from to support this retirement benefit, as this benefit is a commitment. With this in mind, the Town Council will hire a consultant to financially plan for the funding of the LEOPS retirement benefit for the Bladensburg Police Department sworn officers. We recognize there are programs that the Bladensburg Police Department is working towards such as the speed camera and ticketing programs that can fund LEOPS. Hiring a consultant to map out a plan will provide us with data points as well as a realistic sense of the revenue we can anticipate year over year to fund this LEOPS. Again, I want to stress every single member of the Town Council expressed agreement on the merits of this retirement plan and commitment to working with the team to get to a yes. As leaders we have a fiduciary responsibility to make sound financial decisions that impact the Town both now and into the future, so I want to layout some of the factors we had to consider in coming to this conclusion for 2022:

The cost of this plan is approximately \$310K based on the 20 employees currently enrolled in the State Retirement System from the police department.

The Town transitioned from a 457b plan several years ago and there was a cost of \$744,000 to do so. While we've been paying this fee down on an annual basis, we still owe \$111,000 on this plan that needs to be paid off. It isn't prudent to embark on another plan while repaying this debt.

We also have to ensure sufficient budget to continue funding State Retirement for our civilian staff which costs approximately \$170,000 annually. While State Retirement is offering us an annual \$125,000 phase in credit to offset the increased costs, the additional cost of joining LEOPS would burden the Town an additional \$185,000 annually. This would only increase as we continue to make salary improvements to be more competitive with our neighboring jurisdictions and would also increase if we expand our police force.

While we agree the funding for LEOPS can be derived from speed cameras, we have to be honest and say as of today, May 9, 2022 we have not yet received any revenue from the traffic enforcement/speed cameras. Making a 25-year commitment to LEOPS on behalf of Town taxpayers without having a clear understanding of the revenue trends is not something we are willing to do at this time.

The Town Council in consultation with the Directors understand the importance of pay and benefits. With this understanding the Town Council and Directors will use this budget session to continue efforts to make the salaries of our sworn Police Officers comparable to neighboring jurisdictions. The Town Council will discuss and ultimately approve adjustments to our annual budget to increase the salaries of our sworn officers which will become effective July 1, 2022.

As we move forward, I want to stress the Council expressed commitment to working Chief Collington and members of the PD to form a small taskforce to continue efforts to help us get to the yes. If you are interested in serving on the task force, please contact Chief Collington with your interest.

Takisha D. James  
Mayor  
Town of Bladensburg

h. FY23 Budget Discussion  
Town Treasurer Tinelli provided an update on the FY23 budget setting process.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Council Member Brown to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Council Member Blount. The motion passed 5-0.

DRAFT