

**TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Second Committee Meeting**  
**July 21st, 2022**  
**4:00 P.M.**

Mr. Hudson called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. at 802 Main Street, West Point, Virginia 23181.

Members Present: Mayor, Jim Hudson; Vice Mayor, Deborah Ball, Tina Gulley, Jack Lawson, James Pruett, John Ragsdale and Chris Vincent.

Also Present: John Edwards, Town Manager; Karen Barrow, Town Clerk; Walt Feurer, Director of Public Works, Susan Harlow, Town Treasurer; Holly McGowan, Director of Community Development and Donna Pauley, Human Resource Officer.

Members present from West Point Schools: Dr. Larry Frazier, School Superintendent, and Nathan Leach, Assistant School Superintendent.

**I. Agenda Changes**

There were no changes made to the agenda.

**II. Education Committee**

1. Review of Preliminary School Data

Mr. Ragsdale congratulated Dr. Frazier on obtaining his PhD degree.

Dr. Frazier reviewed the following items. 1) Current covid conditions and the after-effects it has on students, teachers and academics. 2) The current number of tuition students is 130 for the upcoming year. 3) Teacher/substitute teacher shortage. 4) End of the year test scores. 5) West Point received full accreditation last year.

2. Staffing Update

Nate Leach stated that there are 19 new teachers and that West Point is fully staffed for next year. Out of the new employees, only two come with no experience, the rest all have experience and good qualifications. Eight live in West Point, seven have students in West Point, the remainder came from other Counties.

3. School Safety Update

Nate Leach advised that the schools hold safety meetings throughout the year with a safety forum in March to review the crisis plan. The Chief of Police and Chief of Chatham have done a safety walk through recently to ensure doors are working accordingly and safety equipment is operational. The Department of Criminal Justice Services has a three-year grant for an additional School Resource Officer in the elementary school and a Security Officer in the Middle School. The grant would cover the first year with no match, years two and three would have some kind of match that would be approximately \$32,000.00 a year for both positions. There are also grants to upgrade the security cameras.

Mr. Edwards asked what the status would be after the third year. Would the Town be responsible to fully fund both positions.

Nate Leach stated no.

Mrs. Ball said that she thinks by the end of the three years, the positions will receive some kind of full funding.

### **III. Public Safety**

#### **1. Fire Department Update**

Chief Chatham advised that in June the Fire Department was able to rescue three people in the Mattaponi River who's boat sunk. We were able to use the rescue boat the department purchased with assistance from the Town. The boat has proven to be an asset to the department, Chief Chatham thanked Town Council for their support with the purchase of the boat.

Chief Chatham provided the attached Memo providing an update on the department and the funding with King William County. The Memo reflects on the quality of the services the department provides for the Town and the County.

Chief Chatham thanked Town Council for the funds from the ARPA grant that will be purchasing much needed equipment.

Mr. Lawson asked what the status is on recruiting volunteers.

Chief Chatham advised that the department is ready to launch a marketing program looking to recruit the professional volunteer. In the past the department has accepted volunteers that were unable to obtain EMT certifications. We are now ready to recruit what we are calling professional volunteers.

#### **2. Police Department Update**

Chief Sawyer advised that the department is short handed due to vacation and sick leave. With the increase in social media, we are now in a different environment dealing with complaints and request for body camera footage. Chief Sawyer also stated that with the approval of the solar panel farm in King and Queen, we are expecting an increase in truck traffic of about 100 to 150 tractor trailer trucks a day during the construction of the farm. We still have a lot of speeding coming off the Eltham bridge, a tractor trailer was clocked recently doing 71 in a 35 zone. It is a safety concern with children that cross the road in the summer time to go to McDonalds.

#### **3. Law enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement**

Chief Sawyer presented a Mutual Aid Agreement with King William County, and stated that currently there is no agreement in place. The agreement is to protect the West Point Police Department.

Mr. Edwards advised that Sheriff Walton is reviewing the agreement and we are waiting for any comments the Sheriff might have. Once we receive the final approval from Sheriff Walton, we will bring it back to Town Council for adoption.

### **IV. General Information**

#### **1. Tappahannock Fire Contribution**

Mr. Edwards advised that the fire in Tappahannock last week was devastating to a number of businesses. The Mainstreet Association has set up an assistance fund to help with the devastation. Mr. Edwards suggested the Town make a donation to assist with the recovery. Mr. Edwards stated that he would call the Town Manager to see what is the appropriate way to provide assistance.

The consensus of Town Council is for the Town Manager to contact Tappahannock to find out how West Point can provide assistance with recovery from the fire.

## 2. Food Trucks

Mr. Edwards advised that one of the vendors for the food trucks is concerned about the excessive heat inside the truck while preparing food for scheduled event on Friday. As a result, the event has been cancelled due to the heat.

## 3. Paving – Chelsea Road

Mr. Edwards advised that upon completion of the recent repaving of the brick pavers on 14<sup>th</sup> Street, the contractor dumped the left-over asphalt on Chelsea Road. VDOT has advised that they will correct the issue and repave a section of Chelsea Road next week.

## 4. Closed Session

Mrs. Ball made a motion to enter into closed meeting pursuant to Virginia Code §2.2-3711(A)(1), a matter involving the discussion of the performance evaluation of the Chief of Police. Seconded by Mr. Vincent. Upon roll call, Mrs. Ball, Mrs. Gulley, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Pruett, Mr. Ragsdale and Mr. Vincent all voted "Aye". The motion was approved.

## Reconvene

Mr. Lawson made a motion to reconvene in open meeting, seconded by Mrs. Ball. Upon roll call, Mrs. Ball, Mrs. Gulley, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Pruett, Mr. Ragsdale and Mr. Vincent all voted "Aye". The motion was approved.

## Certification

Mr. Lawson made a motion to certify that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting by the Council. Seconded by Mrs. Ball, upon roll call, Mrs. Ball, Mrs. Gulley, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Pruett, Mr. Ragsdale, and Mr. Vincent all voted "Aye". The motion was approved.

## Action

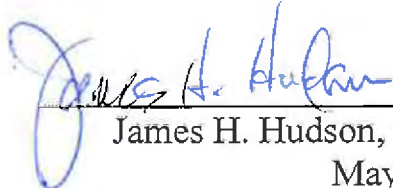
Mrs. Gulley made a motion to approve a 5% merit increase for the Chief of Police, seconded by Mrs. Ball. upon roll call, Mrs. Ball, Mrs. Gulley, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Pruett, Mr. Ragsdale, and Mr. Vincent all voted "Aye". The motion was approved.

## V. Town Council Agenda


## VI. Next Meeting: August 9th, 2022

## VII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

  
James H. Hudson, III  
Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Karen M. Barrow  
Town Clerk

Council Members:  
TINA S. GULLEY  
ROBERT J. LAWRENCE  
JOSHUA T. "JACK" LAWSON  
JAMES "JAMIE" PRUETT  
JOHN G. RAGSDALE, II  
CHRISTOPHER P. VINCENT



JAMES H. HUDSON, III  
Mayor  
DEBORAH T. BALL  
Vice Mayor  
JOHN B. EDWARDS, JR.  
Town Manager

## TOWN OF WEST POINT

To: John Edwards  
From: Spencer Cheatham  
Date: July 14, 2022  
Subject: WPVFD Overview

Serving since 1904, the West Point Volunteer Fire Department is the oldest non-profit organization in King William County. The department is well organized with significant business acumen, a strong financial foundation, and they focus on the mission of protecting the community. They own their apparatus, equipment, and building, employ their own part-time personnel, and manage their own EMS billing. In addition to this billing, their funding comes from the town, the county, grants, the goodwill of the public, and a robust investment portfolio.

The department is the primary response agency for the Town of West Point as well as for the lower third of King William County. It operates the only ladder truck and heavy rescue in the county as well as the only marine response unit. WPVFD answers about 750 calls per year.

### Staffing

WPVFD is staffed with a minimum of two firefighter/EMTs with at least one certified at the advanced life support (ALS) level. This addresses most EMS calls and allows for a basic initial response to fires or vehicle accidents until further help arrives from mutual aid departments.

Most of this staffing is filled by utilizing part-time personnel who work full-time for other departments. The considerable experience they receive in their full-time work proves extremely valuable when there are just two people on scene and the closest help may be over 10 minutes away.

The department also utilizes volunteers whenever possible. These personnel, who so graciously give their time, provide both administrative and operational support. Operational volunteers must be trained to the same certification level as the part-time employees to meet minimum staffing requirements. These volunteers also augment the part-time staff to provide more personnel for emergency incidents.

This model of mixing highly experienced employees with volunteers works well but has a downside. Part-time firefighters can be recalled to their full-time department for mandatory overtime or when major incidents, such as natural disasters, strike. WPVFD seeks to mitigate this by increasing its volunteer staff and hiring future part-time personnel from diverse locales.

### Leadership

WPVFD is led by a fire chief from the non-profit side augmented by a town fire chief. This "two-chief" leadership was intentional in the transition phase of the new town fire chief, brought on in May. Many volunteer departments struggle with acceptance of a new fire chief from the local government. They often feel as if this was forced on them and that they lose their voice in the process. Overwhelmingly, this leads to an eroding of the volunteers and their commitment.

To avoid such an occurrence, the town worked closely with the department to put into place the right chief as well as developing a process for transitioning that person into both organizations. Although both the department and town chief continue to work closely together, and will into the future, the "two-chief" model will cease at the end of the year and there will be one fire chief for both entities. This was agreed to by both the town and the fire department as the best way to move into the future.

### Community Outreach

The department seeks an active relationship with the community it protects and fosters this through interaction with local groups such as the chamber of commerce and the Rotary. It collaborates with local industry to ensure it stays up to date with any emergency response information. Notable is the department's presence during several events such as the Chesty Puller 10k, Crab Carnival, Halloween, the department's Santa Run, and Christmas on the Town. The department also maintains a meaningful relationship with both American Indian reservations in the county, including having volunteers from those tribes over the years.

### Fund Raising and Grants

While WPVFD does not conduct fund-raising events, instead choosing to focus on service delivery, it does receive donations from the community. Additionally, it aggressively seeks grants, having won over \$650,000 in the past 5 years. These represent not only state grants, but from a Virginia-based non-profit and the federal government as well.

### Municipal Funding

WPVFD receives the following funds from the town and the county:

	Operations		CIP		LODA		Total		
	WP	KW	WP	KW	WP	KW	WP	KW	Total
FY 21-22	130,000	273,840	60,000	0	0	6,596	190,000	280,436	470436
FY 22-23	338,130	327,800	60,000	50,000	0	13,224	398,130	391,024	789154

### Value

The department represents a significant value to the town and the county. While it does not employ full-time staff, its use of part-timers augmented by volunteers provides a significant cost savings. Although cost per hour may be more, part-time personnel incur none of the fringe benefits cost and little of the overtime cost that are associated with full-time firefighters.

The other aspect of part-time firefighters is that, if hired for their experience, they need very little supervision. Not only are they effective on the EMS scene or fireground, but they are well-disciplined and used to what is involved with working with others, interacting with the community, and running a fire station. With a small amount of indirect guidance, they can function on their own. Couple this with their ability to train and mentor volunteers and their worth increases significantly.

Combining part-time staff and a well-run volunteer department can mean a significant cost savings for local governments. Despite their experience and the decreased need for supervision, part-time staff wages can be equal to or less than full-time staff wages. For West Point, the cost to constantly staff two firefighter/EMTs (with at least one of them ALS) is \$368,000 which is comparable or less than the cost of the six full-time personnel needed to accomplish the same. Add in the savings brought by competent operational and administrative volunteers and this model's worth is considerable.

For comparison, King William Fire and Emergency Services (KWFES) is funded at \$1,698,470 and WPVFD is funded at \$679,154 for their operating budgets in FY 22-23. Capital improvements are funded at \$365,000 and \$110,000, respectively. WPVFD has a call volume which is 50% of KWFES' but is doing so for 40% of the cost.

#### Summary

Volunteer fire departments across the country, in this state, and even locally vary on a large scale. Most do a fantastic job of providing a significant cost savings to the community, but sometimes this comes at a cost of decreased service. WPVFD carries on a tradition of quality fire, rescue and emergency medical response while also exhibiting fiscal responsibility through strong business and organizational practices. It strives to be seen as a leader in combining paid and volunteer staff and its staffing model, unique to the region, may be one others look to for success.