

**THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE GRETNA TOWN COUNCIL WAS HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025 AT 7:00 PM WITH MAYOR R. KEITH MOTLEY PRESIDING.**

**The following were present for the meeting:**

R. Keith Motley, Mayor	Bill Gillespie, Interim Town Manager	Michael G. Turner, Attorney
Chief Hewitt, GPD	Crystal Grubbs, Clerk/Treasurer	Stacy Hedrick, Asst. Clerk/Treasurer
Sharon Kelly	Virginia Clark	Ben Meeks, GVFD
Gene Okeson, 7:14 PM	Michael Davis	Barbara Hubbard
Kell Stone		

**Council Members Present:**

Riverra Jackson	James Gilbert	Mike Bond
Dianne Jennings	Mike Burnette	Deborah Moran

**Meeting called to order at 7:04 PM**

1. Prayer.
2. Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **Approval of Minutes:**

A motion was made by James Gilbert seconded by Deborah Moran to approve the minutes of the Regular Council meeting March 18, 2025.

Motion carried/Vote was unanimous

4. **Invoice Review** – Council reviewed and discussed the invoice list – no longer required for approval. Invoices paid \$57,454.07.
5. **Council Agenda**

**Police Report-** Keith Motley stated that Chief Hewitt was here tonight to give the monthly police report. Chief Hewitt gave the police report. There was discussion about vehicles and laptops.

**Gene Okeson** – Keith Motley informed Council that Gene Okeson was here tonight to address then concerning two parcels adjoining his. Mr. Okeson stated that according to his lawyer, the Town needs to sign off on a deed stating that it does not have any interest in a particular parcel of land. Mr. Okeson stated that he is purchasing 2 parcels of land that are equal to 500 square feet. This is so that his parcel of land will be squared off. Mr. Okeson showed Council a map of what he wanted to do. Michael Turner asked, “You’re going to vacate a boundary line to create a new one? Mr. Okeson stated yes. Bill Gillespie reminded Council that this parcel is so small that you can’t build on it or anything like that and is not a significate zoning issue. After further discussion, it was determined that Mr. Okeson needed a plat to be signed by the Town not a deed.

**7:30 PM – Public Hearing – Burial Vaults Ordinance - Open**

Michael Turner stated that he has an updated version of the ordinance than what was included in your packets. This version is what was advertised in the paper. Keith Motley opened the public hearing on Section 4-5-11 on the Burial Vaults Ordinance and asked if there were any public comments. Barbara Hubbard asked about the ordinance. Mr. Motley stated that after tonight, if this ordinance is passed, it will require that a concrete or steel vault be used for all burials in the Towns cemeteries. The only exception would be for cremation urns; they would not require a vault. Kell Stone asked what the reasoning for this was, is it for sanitation reasons? Mr. Motley stated yes, health reasons and Mr. Stone asked if there was a study on those health reasons. Mr. Motley stated that he wasn't sure but in discussions with the funeral homes, you could have a shift in the graves, and the dirt settles and could create holes in the ground. You run the risk, if the ground caves in, damage to the casket. Riverra Jackson stated that she thought it was always required. Mr. Motley stated that it's always been a part of the burial plan, but the funeral homes have had some people request no vault. Mr. Motley asked if there were any other comments from the public. No other comments were made. Public hearing was closed.

**7:36 PM – Public Hearing – Closed**

A motion was made by Deborah Moran seconded by Dianne Jennings to adopt the Burial Vaults Ordinance.

**Roll Call Vote:**

Riverra Jackson – yes  
Dianne Jennings – yes

James Gilbert – yes  
Mike Burnette – yes

Mike Bond – No  
Deborah Moran – yes

Motion carried/Vote was 5 – yes, 1 – no

**Discussion of proposed Fire Prevention Ordinance** - Michael Turner stated that the reason for this ordinance is the Town does not have one in place. This was brought to the attention of the Town by events in California and North Carolina. This will help the Town mitigate or reduce the horrific results that could come from an out-of-control wildfire. This is hopefully a means to reduce the likelihood of that happening. Riverra Jackson asked about the fireworks section on page 14. Mr. Turner stated that with regards to the fireworks section, there are various codes within the state law that addresses the fireworks and the importance of addressing fireworks. You will see various references to those codes throughout the ordinance which provide reasoning as to the rationality of potentially adopting the ordinance. Ms. Jackson stated that it would be against the ordinance to shoot fireworks that go into the air. Mr. Turner stated yes, this addresses those fireworks that are the most dangerous. Keith Motley stated that this would require a permit for those types of fireworks from the Fire Marshall. Mr. Turner stated yes, it does address permits and things.

**7:45 PM – Public Hearing – Fire Prevention Ordinance – Open**

Keith Motley opened the public hearing on the fire prevention ordinance addressing fire prevention in the Town of Gretna. Mr. Motley read the ordinance to Council and citizens that were in attendance. Mr. Motley asked if there were any comments from Council or the public? Deborah Moran stated that this wasn't completely in the newspaper, right? Michael Turner stated no, just a description of what the ordinance was about. Mike Burnette asked if Riverra's group wanted to do the fireworks, all they would need to do is get a permit, correct? Mr. Turner stated that there is a process for obtaining permits, I would have to know more about what exactly that group wanted to do. If all of the requirements were met, then they could be eligible for a permit. Riverra Jackson asked if the Town Manager issues the permits on behalf of the Town. Mr. Motley stated yes, that's what it looks like in the ordinance. Ms. Moran mentioned a section on page 14, Article not applicable to certain fireworks. Ms. Jackson stated that this would be the fireworks you can buy from the grocery store. Mr. Turner stated that if the fireworks fit within the exception, you can do whatever. The more dangerous the fireworks are, you will need a permit. Ben Meeks stated that in order to do a fireworks show, you have to have a permit from the Fire Marshalls Office, Public Safety Office, the applicant has to show where they have insurance coverage and then you have to have a licensed pyrotechnician. The State of Virginia does not allow public individuals to buy any fireworks that shoot up into the air. Mr. Meeks suggested adding to the ordinance, if there is a burn ban in place, no fireworks are to be shot. Ms. Moran asked if there was already something in the ordinance about the burn ban. Mr. Turner stated that the Town Manager would know when there is a burn ban in place and a permit would not be granted. Sharon Kelly asked about burning trash in a barrel. Mr. Meeks stated that it's up to the locality, but you need to make sure there is no burn ban in effect, but you also need to be aware inside the town because the homes are so close together. Mr. Turner stated that those issues are addressed on page 7 under subsection 2. Mr. Turner stated there is no burning trash in a barrel because the Town offers collection services to in town residents. Also under section 8-1, it discusses leaves/grass can be burnt under certain circumstances, but it needs to be at least 300 ft. away from homes and cars. Mr. Meeks mentioned that the Fire Department does what's called a "doll house burn" we build a structure that we use for training purposes, how will this ordinance affect us? Mr. Turner stated that there is an exemption for that purpose on page 7 of the ordinance. Mr. Motley asked if there were any more public comments. No more comments were made; Mr. Motley closed the public hearing.

**7:56 PM – Public Hearing – Closed**

A motion was made by Riverra Jackson seconded by Deborah Moran to adopt the Fire Prevention Ordinance.

**Roll Call Vote:**

Riverra Jackson – yes  
Dianne Jennings – yes

James Gilbert – abstain  
Mike Burnette – yes

Mike Bond – yes  
Deborah Moran – yes

Motion carried/Vote was 5 – yes, 1 – abstain

**Paving bid update** – Bill Gillespie stated that the Town received only one paving bid back from 7 packets being sent out. That bid amount is \$109,825.93 plus \$300 per square yard. This bid is to repair 10 potholes from water line repairs. The bid comes from Whites Construction. This work comes with a 1-year warranty; they can start within 2-3 weeks due to other jobs they have scheduled. Mike Bond asked if we could do any of this work. Mr. Gillespie stated no, because with VDOT specs, you have to have VDOT registered flagger, we don't have a VDOT licensed inspector, therefore we don't qualify to do the work and VDOT has to approve it. Keith Motley asked about the funding for this project. Mr. Gillespie stated a contingency or savings. Mike Burnette asked about a time frame for completion of the project. Mr. Gillespie stated that they will complete all repairs at one time, and it will take anywhere from 30-45 days. Road closures will be coordinated with VDOT. Bid is good for 30 days and prices of asphalt have gone up about 50%.

A motion was made by Mike Burnette seconded by Deborah Moran to accept the bid of \$109,825.93 from Whites Construction and the terms of the bid. Funds are to be appropriated from the General Fund Account.

**Roll Call Vote:**

Riverra Jackson – yes  
Dianne Jennings – yes

James Gilbert – yes  
Mike Burnette – yes

Mike Bond – yes  
Deborah Moran – yes

Motion carried/Vote was unanimous

**Fire Department funds request** – Ben Meeks, Fire Chief for the Gretna Fire & Rescue, is requesting that the Fire Department be placed on the Towns budget as a yearly line item for the next 15 years for an amount of \$25,000 per year. Mr. Meeks informed Council that the amount the department spends on current trucks/equipment, etc. Mr. Meeks expressed the need to complete the upstairs of their firehouse so that volunteers can rest and take naps when not on a call, and we would like to add a game room as well. There was discussion of a live-in program which allows for volunteers to stay at the firehouse certain nights of the week rent free but in exchange you have to run calls. We provide our volunteers with free Wi-Fi, showers, exercise equipment, and free training. There was discussion of the fire department applying for grants.

**Kell Stone** – Kell Stone expressed to Council that he is all for the efforts to beautify the Town but there are some concerns. It has been brought to my attention that there are some concerns about what is going on at B & B Towing and the upkeep of the area. Mr. Stone referenced the cost of renovations to the property. There has been a new roof put on the building and updated the building to local codes, etc. We do not get grants, so those funds come from the church. Mr. Stone said that while you look at ordinances and things like that, you need to make sure not to target certain places. These ordinances that you put into place need to be for the betterment of the Town. And these ordinances need to be carried out across the board and not just for one particular area. Michael Turner stated that ordinances of this nature are based on citizen complaints. If there are situations that may exist in the town, the town will not go out looking for things, and we are not going to address situations. But if they are brought to the attention of the town officials via complaint, then those will be looked at.

**Michael Davis** – Michael Davis stated that he would like to address the streetlights being out. Keith Motley noted the lights that were out. Mr. Motley stated that we need to get the pole numbers and turn them into Dominion for repairs. Crystal Grubbs stated that anyone can get the information. Stacy Hedrick stated that we need the pole numbers and the location, and we can turn them in. Mr. Motley stated that it's just a matter of getting the information and turning it in.

9:03 PM

**Closed Session**

A motion was made by Mike Bond seconded by Mike Burnette to go into closed session pursuant to **Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711 A, Subsection 5** dealing with the discussion concerning a prospective business or industry or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the businesses or industry's interest in locating or expanding its facilities in the community. **Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711 A, Subsection 8** dealing with consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel.

**Roll Call Vote:**

Riverra Jackson – yes  
Dianne Jennings – yes

James Gilbert – yes  
Mike Burnette – yes

Mike Bond – yes  
Deborah Moran – yes

Motion carried/Vote was unanimous

9:20PM

**Meeting Reconvened**

A motion was made by Mike Bond seconded by James Gilbert to end closed session. Under **Virginia Code Section 2.2-3712 D** a roll call vote was taken, certifying that to the best of each member's knowledge, only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements, 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 Town Council. Any member of the Town Council who believes that there was a departure from the requirements shall so state prior to the vote, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his/her judgment, has taken place.

**Roll Call Vote:**

Riverra Jackson – yes  
Dianne Jennings – yes

James Gilbert – yes  
Mike Burnette – yes

Mike Bond – yes  
Deborah Moran – yes

Motion carried/Vote was unanimous

**6. Unfinished Business**

**Storm Shelter** – James Gilbert mentioned that the American Legion could be used as a storm shelter. Mr. Gilbert stated that he spoke with Lionel Reynolds concerning this, and that they have been considering using the Legion for that purpose. The Legion will hold a meeting and discuss this issue.

**Cornhole Boards** – James Gilbert suggested that the Park Committee think about using concrete cornhole boards. English Park in Altavista has them.

**Caboose painting** – Mike Burnette asked about painting the Caboose. Keith Motley does not have any updates and is open to finding someone else. Riverra Jackson suggested doing an RFP (Request for Proposal). Bill Gillespie stated that you would need to know someone to send that RFP to and you also need to know the specifications of the project to put in the RFP. Mr. Burnette stated that he knew someone that could come look and tell us what is needed.

**Cemetery** – Keith Motley stated that the Maintenance Department is getting the cemetery cleaned up. They have gotten up some of the trees, and we still need to get with the funeral home about the headstone that has fallen over in the section next to the tree line.

**Jeremiah's Park** – Keith Motley stated that Jeremiah's Park has been cleaned up and it does look good. Mr. Motley stated that the Maintenance Department will re-rake it and put some grass seed and some straw. We've always partnered with the phone company.

**Elba Park update** – Keith Motley asked if there was an update on Elba Park. Bill Gillespie stated that public input is the next step.

**Old Beyond Video building** – Keith Motley was wondering why things were being moved out of the old Beyond Video building. No one had heard what was going on.

#### 7. New Business

**Future Council Meetings** – Keith Motley asked Council if they would like to change the times of future Council Meetings to 6:30 PM. Mr. Motley stated that normally we do executive sessions at the end of the meetings, would Council want to change that to the middle of the meeting like we did tonight. After some discussion, Council agreed to the time of 6:30 PM. But moving the executive session to the middle of the meeting, then the citizens would have to leave and then come back in. Council would rather continue with closed session at the end of the meetings. Starting in May 2025, meeting times will be at 6:30 PM.

**Adjournment** – A motion was made by Mike Bond seconded by Riverra Jackson to adjourn the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:36 PM**

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R. Keith Motley, Mayor

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Stacy Hedrick, Assistant Clerk/Treasurer