

**New Castle Town Council Regular Virtual Meeting
Tuesday, May 18, 2021, 7:00 PM**

**Due to concerns related to COVID-19, this meeting was open to
the public as a virtual meeting only.**

**To join by computer, smart phone or tablet:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7096588400>**

**If you prefer to telephone in:
Please call: 1-346-248-7799
Meeting ID: 709 658 8400**

Call to Order

Mayor A Riddile called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Present	Councilor Hazelton
	Mayor A Riddile
	Councilor Leland
	Councilor G Riddile
	Councilor Owens
Absent	Councilor Copeland
	Councilor Mariscal

Also present at the meeting were Town Clerk Melody Harrison, Town Treasurer Loni Burk, Public Works Director John Wenzel and members of the public.

MOTION: Mayor A Riddile made a motion to excuse Councilor Mariscal's absence. Councilor Owens seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Mayor A Riddile made a motion to approve Councilor Copeland's absence. Councilor Hazelton seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Roll Call

Meeting Notice

Town Clerk Melody Harrison verified that her office gave notice of the meeting in accordance with Resolution TC 2021-1.

Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

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Agenda Changes

Clerk Harrison told the council that staff wanted to remove the proclamation honoring the Coal Ridge Cheer Team because they were unable to attend the meeting due to a scheduling conflict. The council agreed.

Citizen Comments on Items not on the Agenda

There were no citizen comments.

Consultant Reports

Consultant Attorney – not present.

Consultant Engineer – not present.

Items for Consideration

~~**Proclamation Honoring the Coal Ridge High School Cheer Team**~~ – removed.

Welcome Colorado River Fire Rescue Chief Leif Sackett

Mayor A Riddile greeted Colorado River Fire Rescue Chief Leif Sackett and Fire Prevention Chief Orrin Moon. Mayor A Riddile told the council that Chief Sackett took command of the district in late 2020 following the retirement of Chief Randy Callahan. He also said that Chief Sackett had begun his firefighting career in 1999 and had been a battalion chief since 2013.

Chief Sackett said he had started as a volunteer and after the promotion to battalion chief in 2013 he had been promoted to Operations Chief in 2016.

Councilor Leland asked Chief Sackett to explain the department's tax proposal.

Chief Sackett said that the board of directors had not yet decided about the tax proposal. He said that the tax proposal in 2020 of 6.99 mils had not passed. He said that the department had been working hard to build public trust and with that had closed one fire station in South Rifle, station 43. He said they had not filled six open positions, and had combined some of the administrative positions to be dual-function positions, and they had also sold some apparatus to help make ends meet.

Chief Sackett said that the tax proposal they were looking at was a phased-in approach. The idea was to ease the burden for the tax payors and collection would be in 2022, 2024 and 2026. Again, Chief Sackett emphasized that no decision had been made about the tax proposal and that the Board of Directors was still researching it.

Councilor Leland said that in 2020 just after the tax issue was defeated by the voters, the fire department was in the news week after week fighting the wildfires and helping other areas. Councilor Leland said that he hoped that people remembered that.

Councilor Leland asked that Chief Sackett let the town know when the board of directors made their decision about the tax proposal and said that he, personally, would be glad to help where he could.

Chief Sackett said that he had spoken to Clerk Harrison about being on the June 1 council agenda to be able to hopefully discuss the issue in more depth.

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Mayor A Riddile asked how the department's response times had been since closing a station and not filling open positions.

Chief Sackett said that their response time in South Rifle had been affected and had increased by one minute and three seconds. Otherwise, response times in the rest of Rifle, and in Silt and New Castle had remained consistent.

The council and Chief Sackett discussed the value of public surveys and noted that the town's recent survey indicated that wildfire was certainly a concern in New Castle and that the fire department should be paid more.

Chief Sackett said that he and Chief Moon had met with Administrator Reynolds to discuss wildfire mitigation and evacuation plans. Mayor A Riddile said that the town would certainly like to pursue a partnership with CRFR regarding mitigation and messaging for the public. Councilor Leland said that the Climate and Environment Commission was interested in helping as well.

Chief Sackett said that it was part of the department's mission: protection of life, home and property through leadership, education and partnerships. He said that Chief Callahan had done a phenomenal job of building relationships and he said he wanted to continue that.

Councilor G Riddile asked how retention in the department was after the reorganization. Chief Sackett said it was good although they had lost a few to opportunities elsewhere. He said that they had made efforts several years ago to bring their pay scales in line with a wage survey. He also said that morale was good, and retention was better. As part of that, Chief Sackett said they had built up their volunteer program and were building from within. He said they had found that hiring from the volunteer ranks and hiring from within had improved tenure.

The council thanked Chief Sackett and congratulated him on his new position as Chief.

Update: Town Treasurer Loni Burk

Town Treasurer Burk told the council that she had hired Assistant Treasurer Viktoriya Ehlers a little over a year earlier and she was doing a fantastic job. She said that Asst. Treasurer Ehlers had completely taken over payroll, she was very organized and reliable. Treasurer Burk said in February 2021 Beth Elswick had been hired to support both Planning and Finance as an experiment. Treasurer Burk said it was working out quite well, and that Support Assistant Elswick had been able to take on some of finance department work which had been a great help. Treasurer Burk said that her department had been busy with new hires, which was a time-consuming task. also said that she would be training Asst. Treasurer Ehlers to do some of the work that only she knows how to do as well as get her more involved in the budget process. Treasurer Burk said that the auditor had completed their preliminary field work on May 17 and 18 and that had gone well. The auditor will complete their audit and then complete their annual report in the coming months.

Treasurer Burk gave a power point presentation regarding the 2021 budget and where it stood at the end of first quarter.

Treasurer Burk gave a report regarding the Corona Virus Relief Fund Grant that the town received and how that money had been used to provide assistance for local businesses as well as other COVID-related expenses.

Treasurer Burk also gave a report regarding the wastewater treatment plant loan.

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The council complimented Treasurer Burk on a great report.

Update: Public Works Director John Wenzel

Public Works Director John Wenzel greeted the council and said that he had an update for them on 2021 capital projects.

Those projects included a new roof on the town hall; the South Alley fence; capital streets maintenance; a CDOT revitalizing Main Street grant program application in which recipients would be notified in June; the renovation of Burning Mountain Park which had been put on hold; County Road 335 Guard Rail; and a fall grant application for upgrades to the community center kitchen. Director Wenzel described each project thoroughly for the council including budget and progress.

Director Wenzel also said that the town had ordered a new street sweeper, but delivery had been delayed due to a lack of manufacturing because of the pandemic. In addition, the large area mower had been ordered but delivery on that was delayed.

Director Wenzel said that there will be control upgrade to filters 3, 4 and 5 in the water treatment plant.

The council thanked Director Wenzel for all his hard work.

Town Survey Discussion

Mayor A Riddile reviewed the information in the survey results that indicated the public's opinion regarding how the town was doing in various departments as well as the town parks amenities. After a brief discussion, the council felt that the town's budgets were in better standing than anticipated after the pandemic, and that it was not probably the best time to place tax issues on the ballot. They also agreed that they did not wish to compete with the fire department

The council felt that they would like to talk about a new parks master plan. Director Wenzel said that his staff had begun some work towards a new master plan.

Consent Agenda

April 6, 2021 Minutes

April 20, 2021

May 4, 2021

MOTION: Councilor G Riddile made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mayor A Riddile seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Staff Reports -

Town Administrator – not present.

Town Clerk – Clerk Harrison told the council that her new Administrative Assistant Remi Bordelon was learning clerk's office responsibilities quite quickly and writing herself standard operating procedures at the same time. Clerk Harrison said that she was a great asset to the department. Clerk Harrison said that Garfield County had rescinded their emergency COVID-19 declaration from last year and the announcement said the county was back in green level. She asked if the council would consider having a conversation at next meeting about how the council wished to move forward with mask requirements and the like. The council agreed.

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Town Treasurer – Treasurer Burk said that she was working on the budget calendar.
Town Planner – not present.
Public Works Director – nothing to report.

Commission Reports

Planning & Zoning Commission – nothing to report.
Historic Preservation Commission – nothing to report.
Climate and Environment Commission – nothing to report.
Senior Program – nothing to report.
RFTA – Mayor A Riddile said they had not talked about much other than COVID. They had offered RFTA employees \$500 to get their vaccine.
AGNC – nothing to report.
GCE – Councilor Leland said that last month there had been one installation in New Castle through Solarize Garfield County and this month there had been four additional purchases. Councilor Leland asked if Treasurer Burk had received information about the rural energy savings program and she had not. He said he would send her the information.
EAB – nothing to report.

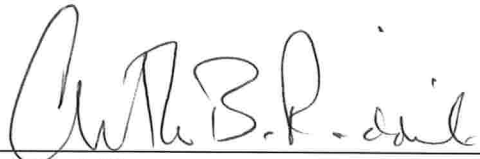
Council Comments

Councilor Leland said that at last council meeting Bill Ray had talked about educational/information videos for You Tube. He noted that the videographer for Spellebration had done a great job, and she offered to meet with Administrator Reynolds and Administrative Assistant Firth to discuss it. Councilor Leland said that the videographer charged \$80 per hour, and he felt that two or maybe three videos could be produced in that time. The council thought it was a good idea.

MOTION: Mayor A Riddile made a motion to adjourn. Councilor Hazelton seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mayor A Riddile


Town Clerk Melody Harrison, CMC

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