

MINUTES
Town of Lexington
Executive Session and
Council Work Session

September 20, 2021

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Town Council held an Executive Session prior to the Council Work Session starting at 5:30 p.m. on September 20, 2021 at Town Hall in the Conference Center located at 111 Maiden Lane, Lexington, South Carolina. The meetings were attended by: Mayor Steve MacDougall, Mayor Pro-Tem Hazel Livingston, Councilmembers Kathy Maness, Todd Carnes, Ron Williams, Steve Baker and Todd Lyle.

Staff members present were: Town Administrator Britt Poole, Assistant Town Administrator Stuart Ford, Municipal Attorney Brad Cunningham, Police Chief Terrence Green, Transportation Director Randy Edwards, Planning, Building and Technology Director John Hanson, Economic Development Johnny Jeffcoat, Utilities Director Allen Lutz, Assistant Finance Director Laraine Wieder, Parks and Sanitation Director Dan Walker, Assistant Parks and Sanitation Director Johnny Dillard, Downtown Venue Promoter Walker Brewer, Communications Manager Laurin Barnes, Assistant Municipal Clerk Karen Hanner and Municipal Clerk Becky Hildebrand.

There were approximately ten (10) citizens present and no members of the news media were present.

OPENING STATEMENT

Mayor MacDougall welcomed everyone to the Council Work Session and introduced the Councilmembers. He read an opening statement to explain the procedures of a Council Work Session which stated: *“Work Sessions are less formal business meetings that enable Council to obtain and discuss information regarding Town issues from Staff members and/or consultants. Like Regular Council Meetings, citizens are encouraged to attend and observe Work Sessions; however, they do not include Public Hearings, but do allow for public comments at the end of the Work Session unless otherwise called on by Council. Council does not take an action vote on items during a Work Session other than to vote to place an item on Council’s next Regular Council Meeting agenda for consideration and an official vote. Council Work Sessions are taped for use by the Municipal Clerk only and Minutes are taken and posted on the Town’s web page following approval of Council.”*

INVOCATION, PLEDGE AND CALL TO ORDER:

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Councilmember Carnes gave the invocation. Councilmember Baker led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor MacDougall called the Council Work Session to order at 6:08 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION REPORT

Mayor MacDougall reported the *Executive Session* was called to order at 5:30 p.m. after a motion was made by Councilmember Williams and seconded by Councilmember Maness to go into *Executive Session*. The motion was unanimously carried by all those present. (Councilmembers Lyle was not present for the vote.) Council adjourned from *Executive Session* at 6:02 p.m. after a motion was made by Councilmember Maness and seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Livingston. The motion was unanimously carried. Mayor MacDougall reported that pursuant to SC Code §30-4-70(a) (1) and (2), Council met in *Executive Session* to discuss: two legal items regarding pending litigation and advice regarding agenda items; one contractual item regarding a downtown economic development issue; and one routine personnel matter. No vote was taken. A motion was made by Councilmember Maness and seconded by Councilmember Lyle to ratify the Mayor's report. The motion was unanimously carried.

DELETIONS ON AGENDA: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Livingston and seconded by Councilmember Williams to approve the minutes as submitted for the Council Meeting held on September 7, 2021. The motion was unanimously carried.

PRESENTATIONS

Pickleball Courts at Corley Street Park – Mr. Edwin Gerace and Mr. Mo Garcia, USA Pickleball District Ambassador: Mr. Gerace stated that he and Mr. Garcia wished to introduce Pickleball to Town Council as a quality of life issue for the Town. He stated that Mr. Garcia has extensive knowledge of Pickleball and the increased interest that families have in participating in Pickleball.

Mr. Garcia thanked the Mayor and Council for allowing him to promote Pickleball which is the fastest growing sport in the country. He added that his district covers Orangeburg to North Augusta to Lexington. Mr. Garcia stated that his position is non-paid and his duties are to promote Pickleball and help grow the sport. He stated that over 20 million people now play Pickleball in the United States and other countries. They hope to introduce it in 2032 as a sport in the Olympics. Mr. Garcia stated that he was here to help support the growth of the sport in the Lexington County area and to help Council understand the benefits to the community and to public health to invest in the sport of Pickleball. He explained the game as a cross between ping pong, tennis and badminton. Mr. Garcia shared some of the experiences from Aiken when they were growing Pickleball. He stated that Pickleball was started in 2007 by a couple that moved

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to Aiken from Virginia and Aiken Parks and Recreation agreed to put on a demonstration. Mr. Garcia stated that they started with a small number of people and now they have over 600 subscribers to their website. He added that Pickleball has added immense value to families with health benefits for people to get off the couch and participate. People reported that they had dropped some of their meds after playing such as their blood pressure meds and diabetes medication. Mr. Garcia reported that some of the benefits for Aiken were from their annual Pickleball tournament which brings in about 200 people from many states and represents approximately \$100,000 in spending in the Aiken area. He added that even realtors come to them to find out more about Pickleball because people moving to the area want to know if it is available. Mr. Garcia realizes that many cities have abandoned or dilapidated parks and the Pickleball community can help identify those areas and revitalize them by repurposing old tennis courts into Pickleball courts. He gave the example of one tennis court may have three people playing on it, but one tennis court could be converted to four Pickleball courts with sixteen people playing on it. Mr. Garcia stated that they introduced Pickleball to USC Aiken a couple of years ago and they now have it as a registered intramural sport. They also recently introduced Pickleball into a primary STEM school. He described a recent encounter that he had where three generations from a family were playing Pickleball and the grandson taught the grandmother how to play. As it turned out, Mr. Garcia (Coach Mo) had taught the grandson how to play at the STEM school. Mr. Garcia closed by stating that Pickleball is certainly for community/family building and it is important for Lexington to look at the possibilities of helping to grow Pickleball in the community. He added that it is very cost effective and some of the infrastructure is already in place. Mr. Garcia stated that the cost to play is very low, which is a ball and paddle and it is a lot of fun.

Mr. Gerace stated that as a resident of the Town for 27 years, he has seen the Town grow and he believed that we need a sport that is inexpensive and multi-generational. He added that he plays with a lady that is 72 years old and that is pretty cool. Mr. Gerace stated that he has looked at Corley Street Park as a location that should be looked at and utilized for Pickleball and there may be other locations. He stated that it is a fun sport and a growing sport.

Councilmember Baker stated that in the comparison provided that Mauldin has a few courts and asked if Lexington is the only town that does not have Pickleball courts. Mr. Gerace stated that the Town of Lexington does not have any courts but there are two courts off Gibson Road, and there are other small towns that do not have courts. Mr. Garcia stated that he made a similar presentation recently in Barnwell and Williston and they are looking at converting some old facilities into Pickleball courts after they raise some funds. He added that some commercials now show Pickleball being played and the Tennis Channel recently signed a contract with Professional Pickleball Tour to be aired on their channel.

Councilmember Maness stated that she was at a conference in Oklahoma last week and one night they went to Chicken and Pickle. She added that they had 10

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courts and all of them were packed and, of course, the elected officials were loving it. She advised Mr. Jeffcoat that Chicken and Pickle is a chain and she would like for him to look into it and see if we could get Chicken and Pickle to come to Lexington because it would be huge.

Stan (Lexington citizen) stated he had checked about Chicken and Pickle because he is from Wichita, Kansas and they would not come here right now, plus it costs \$26 million. He stated that when he moved here he checked to see where everyone played Pickleball and was shocked that there were so few courts based on the size of the area. He added that when he first moved here he knew three people, but since playing Pickleball he now has a family of thirty.

Mr. Garcia was familiar with Chicken and Pickle and said patrons pay \$40 an hour to play plus they eat there so it is a thriving business. He added that Palmetto Dunes, which is a tennis mecca in Hilton Head, had converted five of their tennis courts to 24 Pickleball courts, each of which are full every day at \$25 per hour to play. The manager is tickled pink. Mr. Garcia stated that Pickleball is having a huge impact around the country. He added that country clubs are also good candidates for Pickleball. He encouraged Town Council to embrace Pickleball and help with the swell of growth and interest in the sport.

Councilmember Maness stated that the first time she heard about Pickleball was in Camden, South Carolina and the Mayor showed her what an excellent job they had done bringing Pickleball to Camden. Mr. Garcia agreed and added that Camden has 12 courts right next to tennis courts so they both can exist.

Councilmember Williams asked how much it cost to build a Pickleball court. Mr. Gerace responded that he was waiting on some figures to come in, but they are building courts in Harbison and they estimated the cost to be between \$15,000 and \$17,000.

Mary (occupational therapist and citizen) stated that she started playing Pickleball at Palmetto Dunes. She had researched the cost of a court and estimated it to be \$17,000 unless you converted a tennis court then the cost could be approximately \$6,500 per court because it would have to be resurfaced and relined. She also researched the health benefits which include mental health, sleeping better and making friends. She had COVID last year and felt strongly that she would not have made it had it not been for being able to return to friends and Pickleball. She stated that it is a lucrative investment and asked Town Council to please consider building Pickleball courts. She added that it is a joy to see families out playing Pickleball. She encouraged them to come out and play to see how much fun they can have playing Pickleball. Mary later asked Town Council to go on-line and look at Margaritaville in Florida because they have 24 courts and are booked all the time. She said “go big” with 24 courts.

Mayor MacDougall thanked Mary for doing what she does as a nurse. He asked about the cost of the paddles in order to play Pickleball. Mr. Garcia responded

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that prices ranged from \$20 to \$50 for a ball and paddle. He added that some clubs have loaner paddles also. His club donated some paddles and balls to Aiken's Parks and Recreation for that purpose so people could determine if they loved the game. He extended an invitation to Town Council to grab a pair of tennis shoes and come out and play. Mayor MacDougall asked if you wanted to have a good tournament, how many courts would you need. Mr. Gerace responded that it would take at least six courts for a small tournament and sixteen courts for a large tournament. Mr. Garcia added that Griffin, Georgia installed sixteen courts, of which eight are covered. The Director at Griffin told him that he estimated the revenue was \$2 million to the City of Griffin from a recent professional tour. Mr. Garcia stated that satellite businesses near the courts do well such as breweries or Chicken and Pickles.

Mayor MacDougall thanked all the presenters and for educating the Council on Pickleball. He announced that they would now move on to business items.

BUSINESS ITEMS: (For discussion and recommendation for Council's October 4, 2021 Regular Council Meeting.)

1. **Icehouse Pavilion, Palmetto Collegiate Institute Rental Rate Increase – Downtown Venue Promoter Walker Brewer:** Due to increased utility costs, Town Staff recommended an increase to two rental facilities:

Icehouse Pavilion	Increase of \$50.00
Palmetto Collegiate Institute	Increase of \$25.00

Town Administrator Poole wished to add that the Pavilion increase is related to the gas expenditures because the heaters cost about \$100 for four hours. He stated that everyone would not be using them and that is why the rental is not \$400. He stated that there was no way to say you want to use it and you don't because it would turn cold and then the renter would want the heaters and this way it is available to everyone. Mr. Poole stated that the increased cost to Palmetto Collegiate is relating to the internet access. He stated that it was added about a year ago and the usage was monitored and almost 80% of the renters used it now that a lot of people are streaming music. He added that the increase would offset the cost of the internet and would be applied across the board so the In-Town rate, the Out-of-Town rate, etc. would have a \$25 increase.

Councilmember Carnes asked if the rate increase would be effective immediately. Mr. Poole explained yes, if Council voted in favor of it. He added that if someone had already rented the facility they would not have an increase.

Councilmember Lyle stated that he would like to see something added to the contract with some level of flexibility since it is not a large deviation. He later referred to it as a Utility Rider on the rental contract so they would

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not have to do this each year. Mr. Poole wished to confirm the request and stated that he understood that the contract would allow for an increase in the rate before the rental so if we ran into this same issue the Town could go to the renter and say it is going to be this much more. He added that they could add such a rider to the contract. Mayor MacDougall stated that it could say “rate subject to change”.

A motion was made by Councilmember Williams and seconded by Councilmember Baker to place the item on Council’s October 4, 2021 agenda for consideration. Councilmember Maness requested to see the rental rider language before making a decision. Mr. Poole stated that he thought of it as two different things and Staff could do some research and bring the rider back to Council. The motion was unanimously carried.

2. **Review of a Planned Unit Development Consisting of a 31 Unit Mixed Use Townhome Project Located in the 100 Block of Old Chapin Road – Director of Planning, Building and Technology John Hanson:** Revival Development, LLC requested approval of a Planned Unit Development consisting of 29 townhomes and two mixed use units to be constructed on 2.07 acres located at the rear of the Flight Deck Shopping center. The PUD request also includes the Flight Deck Commercial Center property. Primary access to the development will occur from Old Chapin Road through an easement with the commercial center. There will also be a gated access on Snelgrove Road for use by residents and service vehicles. Internal streets for the townhomes will be privately owned and maintained. The project requested approval as a Planned Unit Development due to the unique nature of the proposal and to allow variances in the traditional zoning requirements. The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended approval of the rezoning and plan for this project during their August meeting. Discussion and direction was requested from Council.

Mr. Hanson introduced the developers who were present to answer any questions and to give Council a brief presentation of the project. Mayor MacDougall confirmed that all the Councilmembers had received the package about the Planned Unit Development.

Mr. Todd Richardson, Land Architect, Land Planner and Principal with Synchronicity in Charleston, SC and Mr. Jonathan Stambolitis, Director of Development, Revival Developments, LLC: Mr. Richardson stated that he is with a small company with big ideas and they primarily deal in residential development. He added that they provide quality neighborhoods in communities that are looking for positive and creative solutions to their goals. Mr. Richardson reviewed the Sandpiper development as outlined in the Sandpiper package that Council received. (Copy attached.) He stated that the project is an aggregated redevelopment

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with parcels totaling 5.77 acres and current zoning is Limited Commercial and General Commercial with the proposed development consisting of two districts: The Urban Village and The Commercial Center. Mr. Richardson stated that the project goal is to comply with the Town's 2019 Vision Plan Guiding Principles and Goals. Mr. Richardson reviewed all the drawings, parking requirements, resident requirements and all the amenities that would be in Sandpiper. They anticipate that people would come home and park their cars and walk to businesses in the area. He explained several projects they completed in Mount Pleasant. Mr. Richardson asked if there were any questions.

Mayor MacDougall thanked Mr. Richardson and stated that the project was very impressive.

Mayor Pro-Tem Livingston agreed it was impressive but asked what would happen in 15 years when they want the Town to take over their roads. Mr. Poole responded that the Town could not take over their roads because the Town Ordinance does not allow to take over private roads. He added that the deed also excluded the Town from being able to take over private roads in the future. Mr. Poole stated that the developer's agreement requires that an HOA has something in place to maintain the roads. Mr. Richardson responded that the roads are engineered to the same load bearing standards with a different dimension width. He added that they are prefunded with an account for the HOA which makes the neighborhood responsible for the roads. Mr. Richardson stated that utilities would have their own easements so none of it would be a burden on the Town. Mayor Pro-Tem Livingston asked if the Flight Deck was going to have updated landscaping. Mr. Richardson responded yes they would along with this project because they wanted a balanced look. Mr. Poole stated that the Planning Commission instructed that part of the PUD was for all of the landscaping come up to the Town's Code.

Councilmember Carnes asked about the 2 ½ story buildings because the Town has a maximum height requirement of 40 feet. Mr. Richardson responded that 3 stories is the Code. Councilmember Carnes asked how would 2 ½ stories not exceed the maximum. Mr. Richardson responded that they have 40 feet indicated in case they have a scenario where they have a 12 foot ceilings on the first floor but they keep architectural restraints but they typically do not exceed 35 feet. He added that people want taller ceilings. Mr. Richardson added that they aim to have affordable housing for the middle class, and to keep in mind, these houses are small with approximately 1,450 square feet with quality trim and fixtures. Councilmember Carnes asked about the parking requirements because some are three bedrooms with two parking spaces. Mr. Richardson stated that they have the flexibility that some may be three bedrooms but they are generally two bedrooms. He added that the drive way stacks two and they are not planning on a family of six living in the units. Councilmember

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Carnes asked what would the relationship with the Flight Deck be when this builds out and will they always be allowed to park at Flight Deck. Mr. Richardson responded that they are legally joined for that reason with universal access. Councilmember Carnes told Council that it is a good time to look at these opportunities and at the scale as presented tonight because he would rather have five projects with 30 units than one project with 100 units. Mr. Richardson stated that they would love to bring Lexington four more and he had actually seen a great parcel on Main Street for one. He added that some of the larger projects tip the scale too abruptly.

Mayor MacDougall stated that people in smaller developments tend to come out of their homes and people in larger developments tend to stay in their homes. He stated that there were no further questions and the project looked like a homerun. He called for a motion.

A motion was made by Councilmember Maness and seconded by Councilmember Baker to place this item on Council's October 4, 2021 agenda for consideration. The motion was unanimously carried.

3. **Resolution Authorizing Water and Sewer Revenue and Refunding Bonds of 2021 – Assistant Town Administrator Stuart Ford:** The Town's Water and Sewer System Capital Improvements Plan for Fiscal Year 2022 totals \$13.3 Million with a 5-year total of \$65.2 Million. The updated 5-year CIP now reflects the anticipated projects related to the Watergate system and the initial phase of the parallel sewer force main to the treatment facility in Cayce. Currently, the Town's Series 2020 \$12.25 Million Water and Sewer Bond Anticipation Notes (BANs) are outstanding and are due on October 27, 2021. The projects funded by the BANs include the Cromer Road Pump Station and the acquisition of the Watergate Sewer System which are now complete. Additionally, the Series 2012 Revenue Bonds with a current balance of approximately \$7.52 Million will be eligible for current refunding in January, 2022. The current historically low rates in the bond market indicate these bonds can be refunded for significant present value savings. Accordingly, a Resolution is needed to authorize the issuance of Water and Sewer Revenue and Refunding Bonds. Budget and Finance: State Law allows for BANs to be issued with maturities of up to one year. The use of low interest short-term BANs is designed to minimize overall financing costs and maintain financial flexibility during the project construction phase. The current refunding of the Series 2012 Bonds can be marketed in October with a planned closing in January to qualify as a current refunding under federal tax law which allows for refunding within 90 days or the payoff date of the outstanding bonds.

Mr. Ford added that this is the last opportunity to refinance the Town's 2012 Bonds at very favorable rates. The Town's Bond Counsel will draft

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the Resolution for adoption at the October Council meeting. Council was ask to place this item on the October 4, 2021 agenda for consideration.

A motion was made by Councilmember Williams and seconded by Councilmember Carnes to place the item on Council's October 4, 2021 agenda for approval of a Resolution to Authorize Water and Sewer Revenue Refunding Bonds of 2021. The motion was unanimously carried.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

1. **Social Media Strategy Presentation – Communications Manager Laurin Barnes:** Town Administrator Poole introduced the item to let Council know he requested Ms. Barnes to make this presentation (1) to explain the amount of success she has had in the social media realm so Council was aware of it and (2) to explain the strategy that she has successfully been using which is very counterintuitive to the way he thought Facebook, or social media in general, worked. Mr. Poole added that it was really enlightening because there were a lot of things he thought worked one way in order to accomplish what Council had requested, which was to improve the Town's footprint on Facebook and social media. He added that Ms. Barnes absolutely taught him differently and proved how well it worked, which he thought was really interesting. Mr. Poole turned the presentation over to Ms. Barnes.

Ms. Barnes stated that, as Mr. Poole said, this is an overview of our social media strategy and success we have had for the past two years. She added that as Council knows the Town has multiple social media pages, but this is focused on the Town's official Facebook page and Instagram, which is considered a brand by Facebook which she requested everyone keep in mind as she goes through the presentation. Ms. Barnes stated that Council probably already knows the Facebook algorithm but she wanted to go over it to make sure everyone was on the same page. She explained that the Facebook algorithm decides which posts you see and in what order they show up. Ms. Barnes stated that the algorithm is constantly changing and they modify it over time based on what it thinks you want to see. She directed Council to a chart that shows key moments in the history of Facebook's algorithm. She pointed out in 2018 that Facebook made a change for the brands and prioritized content from the user's friends and family over something they see from a brand. Ms. Barnes stated that brings us to now which is a complex algorithm, but there are strategic tactics that we use to get our content to the widest audience possible. She explained that it takes every post in your network, scores it and discards ones that you are unlikely to engage with. She added that it scores remaining posts in a personalized way based on the history of your interaction then it arranges different media types so basically you keep scrolling and scrolling. Ms. Barnes added that Facebook is a business so the more you scroll the more it benefits them. She asked how we could

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use the algorithm. She stated that algorithm can be pretty tough on branded organic Facebook content but it depends on how a user regularly interacts with their posts. She explained that if you go on Facebook and feel like you keep seeing stuff from the same people, you are likely interacting with their posts all the time. Ms. Barnes stated that when it comes to earning more organic reach, the algorithm does not reward brands like us for the frequency of how we post, rather posting content that people engage with such as tagging their friends, sharing it and commenting on it. She added that it does not matter if it is a good or bad interaction just as long as you are answering back and engaging your audience. Ms. Barnes asked how we could work the algorithm to reach a wider audience. She stated that basically we reply to build connections and let the audience know that we are on the other end and not just posting and getting off the computer and we are paying attention to what they care about and what they are posting. Ms. Barnes stated that we also can get our audience replying to each other is value content that people want to share and discuss with their friends and Facebook views it as valuable and important information that they push out to a wider audience based on that. Ms. Barnes stated that the Facebook page is not just 8:00 to 5:00 because you can get messages 24/7/365 that can apply to any department and we need to respond to those as quickly as possible because of how the algorithm works which is important. She added that social media audiences are on line all day. Ms. Barnes explained another graph and what we see on the back end when someone “likes” a post that we put up and they are not already following our page, we go through hundreds of reactions and invite people to like our page, if they don’t already follow it. Ms. Barnes stated that there is a way to skip the algorithm and get our message out faster to our audience and that is with stories. She explained that they may have seen them and they are not part of the newsfeed and usually appear at the top in chronological order of when they were posted. Ms. Barnes stated that stories are a very effective way to promote what we want our followers to see right then, plus it is easy to post stories on Facebook and Instagram. She explained a recent story post the day before The Market and got 19 likes and some comments, then they posted it the day of The Market and got 13 likes and that same day they put post on Facebook and Instagram and Facebook got 8,500 opens and Instagram got 7,400 views. Ms. Barnes stated that brings us to Social Strategy which is (1) they want quality posts that encourage engagement and are responded and replied to in real time to reach the widest audience possible with the goal of inviting new people to follow our page; (2) they want to utilize our Facebook and Instagram stores to supplement posts and to deliver specific time sensitive information; and (3) respond to direct messages to resolve citizen requests, etc. She added that people use Facebook Messenger as a direct line to the Town and comments can range from trash pickup to being new in Town with questions. Ms. Barnes reviewed a chart showing the increase in Facebook and Instagram followers since July 2019 (Facebook 9,673 – Instagram 0) compared to 2020 and 2021 which she

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updated to include the past two months with Facebook at 21,000 followers.

Mayor MacDougall commented that we had 21,000 followers and based on the new Census figures we have 22,000 citizens. Mr. Poole responded that we have the largest presence in Facebook than any other jurisdiction in the Midlands. He added that we have more Followers than Richland or Lexington County or the City of Columbia and we are only off by a few 1,000 from City Charlotte's "likes". He added that "knock it out of the park" does not come close to even describe the change in our social media.

Councilmember Williams asked if there was a way to tell how many "likes" are in-town and how many are from the Police Department. He asked if they are not interconnected, could they be. Ms. Barnes responded that you have to go person by person. She added that they thought about doing the same thing for Icehouse but there was no effective way to really do it. Councilmember Williams stated that he sees where a lot of Police Department posts are reposted to the Town's page and is there a benefit to reposting them, because he sees a lot of people responding to traffic reports and then they tag their friends. In addition, he asked if there was anything else that could be done to help the Police Department with traffic issues. Mr. Poole responded that as he has learned, and as Ms. Barnes stated, if it is something that is happening right now and you put it on Facebook as a post those people might not see it for two days because the algorithm decides when the person sees it. He added that it is good and we need to get the information out but also we have to understand for things going on right now, most people won't see it right away and the wreck is already cleared. Mr. Poole stated that this is not the case with everyone and that is the part he has so much trouble with because it is so different for brands compared to your personal Facebook page because people on your Facebook page see it right away. He reminded Councilmember Williams of a time when they were discussing a post and Councilmember Williams had to refresh his page to see it.

Councilmember Baker thanked Ms. Barnes for her efforts in doing this and he can tell the difference and he is encouraged that people can engage with us because they used to not be able to do that. He sees people commenting all over the place, good and bad, and he also appreciates the negative comments. Councilmember Baker stated that by the Town responding it shows there is a human on the other side. He added that he was thrilled with the work Ms. Barnes has done and he super appreciates it.

Mayor Pro-Tem Livingston asked Ms. Barnes if she appreciated when Council knows about something that they feel is important and send it to her to post, because they understand that she may hear about everything that is going on. Mr. Poole responded that there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. He added that with the increased followership, we need

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to put up things that will people will actually interact with and like. He gave the example of the Gibson Pond Park post and the last time he looked it had 1.2 thousand where people had not just seen it but had responded with “like” or a heart. Mr. Poole stated anything like that where people can get behind it, then send it to Ms. Barnes. Mayor Pro-Tem Livingston asked about putting a post on Facebook to get people’s opinion on Pickleball just to see what the interest level is. Mayor MacDougall called it a “Pickleball Poll”. Ms. Barnes stated that on this topic it may not matter but there may be things they want only Town residents to respond. Mayor Pro-Tem Livingston agreed that for this topic it would not matter because people may come to Lexington to play Pickleball and to shop or eat.

Mayor MacDougall commented that it did not matter what they did, people from out of town would come. He asked Ms. Barnes to go back to the slide with the number of Town followers. He stated that from 2019 to 2021 it had increased from 9,673 to approximately 21,000. Mayor MacDougall stated that was incredible and what a good job and that’s exactly why Mr. Poole hired Ms. Barnes. He added that was a wonderful job and a lot of hard work because he could not imagine how it had changed seven times in the last five years. He stated that it would probably change again soon because that’s what they do since they control it. Mayor MacDougall asked what the best way is for them as individual members to get information out there quickly if they are passionate about it and was it better for them to put it out there themselves and the other members like it and share it. Ms. Barnes responded that it depends, but if it is something that Council is passionate about then feel free to put it on your personal page and the more people like it the more reach you will get.

Councilmember Lyle stated fantastic job.

Councilmember Williams wished to confirm that it sounded like what Mr. Poole explained is it would be faster for them to put it on their personal page than for it to be posted on the Town’s page. He did not want to post something and then the Town post it different. Ms. Barnes responded that she always tries to share the post from the Police Department about certain traffic problems or if a road is shut down.

Councilmember Carnes stated that the interaction is key and it has been good and when people realize that is how they can get information they will use it. Mr. Poole responded that he thought Ms. Barnes had played it down because just the message stuff has become 411 for Town Hall even though he would never think to do that, but people do it all the time just like calling the front desk with crazy questions. Councilmember Carnes stated that it would impact staffing with less people needed on the phones and it’s great because it is more fun to talk to people on the computer.

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Mayor MacDougall stated that having real interaction shuts down the keyboard cowboys who get out there and just say stupid stuff. He did not think they do that much anymore because they know someone will answer them and call them out and show them how they are wrong. Mr. Poole responded that also he has now seen other users on Facebook go back and jump on those people and get in an argument on the Town's page. He added that the whole time it is only increasing our interaction so go ahead. Mayor MacDougall wished to confirm that it is really important for Councilmembers to like something and share it when Ms. Barnes posts it because it increases the reach further and further. He added good job and great presentation.

Councilmember Baker wished to make a final comment and stated that this is more than just being a cool thing because this is us being in control of the narrative in our community and telling our story. He added that it is critical and it is good because he has taken less negative feedback since our social media has increased and he appreciates that. Councilmember Baker stated that he felt this was a good avenue for us to tell our story and we are so it has been very positive.

COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor MacDougall thanked everyone for attending the meeting. There being no objection from Council, Mayor MacDougall adjourned the Council Work Session at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Becky P. Hildebrand, CMC

APPROVED BY:

Steve MacDougall
Mayor

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FOIA COMPLIANCE – Public notification of this meeting was published, posted and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Lexington requirements.