

## Town Council Reflections

When I went to the Town Council meeting, I was rather nervous, seeing as how I had never been to a Town Council meeting before. The most experience I had ever had with government functions was keeping up with various media coverage online, and since that media coverage had depicted the government as a hotbed of arguments and confrontation, I was expecting the Town Council to be similar. I thought there would be heated discussions about various pressing issues, and I was even prepared for a lot of insult-slinging. I guess my expectations were warped, because that hotbed of confrontation I was expecting isn't even close to what occurred.

The first major event I remember happening wasn't even a discussion at all. It was a proclamation, designating October 29th as a holiday in honor of a Mr. Dudley Sauvey, who had apparently done a lot for Farmville's performing arts in the past forty-three years. (He directed 175 plays!) I thought it was a sweet thing to do, and the man seemed very grateful for the honor. However, I was still a little wary, because I knew that this happy moment was only a prelude to the discussions to come.

After that, Ms. Cox gave an update on Longwood. She talked a bit about the Early Childhood Development Center, the Virginia Children's Book Festival, and the Local Housing Development Fair. I was only sort of paying attention at this point, mainly because I was waiting to get into the real meat of the meeting.

Then, the discussion started.

The first topic was a resolution on the budget. It was currently \$30,028,165.80, and the proposed amendment was \$676,566.70. Apparently, the amendment's purpose was to carry out a contingency. Surprisingly, the Council didn't discuss that proposal for very long. There weren't any questions, so they closed that public hearing and moved on to other things.

As the Council moved through various motions, they always tended to do it the same way. The motion would be proposed, then seconded, and then they would go along the table and say "aye" or "nay." They all seemed very calm about it, as if it was just a routine and nothing really important was being decided (even though that couldn't be further from the truth).

Finally, the Council got to the item that seemed to be the “main event”: the request to rezone a certain property. Much to my surprise, they were able to carry on their discussion quite civilly, and there weren’t any heated arguments going on. Everyone who had an opinion presented it, and then they all just talked things through in a calm and logical manner. To be honest, it got so civil that I almost fell asleep, which really says more about me than it does about the Council.

Overall, attending the Town Council Meeting was an interesting experience. I wrote in my previous essay about the importance of civility--specifically, its importance in government functions. I wrote about how in order to conduct a debate properly, you need to put aside your own pride and work to create compromises that will benefit everyone. I also wrote about how you couldn’t resort to anger and hostility, and how you had to respect each others’ opinions even if you disagreed with them. The Town Council was a perfect example of everything I wrote about in that essay. Everyone practiced perfect civil discourse. Everyone’s opinions were respected. Everyone worked to improve the community.

Honestly, our current federal government could learn a few lessons on civil discourse from the good people of the Farmville Town Council.