

Good afternoon; it is the 12 noon hour—and on behalf of the City of Staunton I warmly welcome everyone, including local and regional public officials. My name is Doug Guynn. I serve as City Attorney for the City of Staunton, my birthplace.

It is tradition that the City Attorney temporarily presides for the beginning of this organizational meeting of the Staunton City Council until the election of the Mayor, who then assumes the gavel and then may want to make other recognitions and comments on behalf of the City.

On behalf of the City, I congratulate our four newly elected Council members: Ms. Andrea Oakes, Mr. Steve Claffey, Ms. Amy Darby, and Mr. Mark Robertson. And we extend an added warm Staunton welcome and thank you especially to Judges Moreau and Reed, who are taking time out of their busy circuit court schedules to join us for today's proceedings. Judge Moreau, Ms. Oakes' sister, is a circuit court judge in the 22d Judicial Circuit and has made the long trip to be with us; as an aside, I observe that Judge Moreau and I encountered each other in Richmond when statewide bar committee unanimously gave her its highest rating just as it had done before. She is an extraordinarily accomplished and respected judge—a role model for all of us. And Judge Reed is the newest judge in the 25th Judicial Circuit—and the first female judge in the history of the Staunton Circuit Court. She may not know or recall it, but we have an intersection by virtue of Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church, my home church—and, as a matter of history the home church of another esteemed circuit court judge of this part of the Valley, now deceased Judge William Moffett.

Today is July 1. It is a day for recognition and celebration—and it is a day for some procedural legalities all about the organization of what is a new City Council. But, before we turn to the legalities, we ought to take a moment to recognize our venue, as lawyers and judges might say.

Please allow me to note the place where today's Staunton City Council's organizational meeting is being held: A.R. Ware, Jr., Elementary School, which is owned by the Staunton School Board. We thank the School Board and Dr. Smith, the Division Superintendent, and the school principal and staff for allowing us to convene here today and for their hospitality. This school at one time was named the Westside Elementary School. In 1979, the Staunton School Board—one of whose members at the time was Mr. Claffey's Mother as history would have it—renamed the school as A.R. Ware, Jr., Elementary School, in honor of Mr. A.R. Ware, Jr.. Mr. Ware had been the highly regarded principal at the Booker T. Washington High School in Staunton for 17 years, from 1951 through 1968. Mr. Ware was an educator, an administrator, leader in his church and community, and an inspiration to countless children and adults. We stop to remember Mr. Ware for his profound and lasting impact in the community and in various roles over 37 ½ years as an educator in his native Staunton. It was the immense esteem in which he was so highly held that led to the naming of this school for him upon request and resolution of the Booker T. Washington Alumni Association. This momentary pause is especially merited because this year marks the 65th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's second decision in *Brown v. Bd. of Education*—or *Brown II*—when the Supreme Court ordered that public schools be integrated with all deliberate speed. We know from our state's history that racial integration painfully did not occur with speed. Against this historical backdrop, given this venue today, it is fitting that we pay tribute once more to A.R. Ware, Jr. and to others like him whose stories may be untold despite their dedication and sacrifice.

According to the Charter of the City of Staunton, the Council “shall consist of seven members, who shall be elected at large . . . and shall serve for a term of four years from the first day of July next following the date of their election.” And the Charter further provides that “[t]he Council shall elect one of its members to preside over its meetings, who shall be entitled president, and who shall be ex officio mayor of the city, and shall also elect another member to be vice-president of the council, to act in the place of the president” when the president is absent or incapacitated. Under our City Charter, the president and vice-president—what we know as the Mayor and Vice Mayor— of the council shall be elected for a term of two years . . .” In similar fashion the Code of the City of Staunton prescribes that “the council shall . . . biennially . . . on July 1st so elect two of its members accordingly. Today is that day, and to those ends the Council of the City of Staunton adopted a resolution on June 25, 2020 to formally recite these considerations and give notice of this organizational meeting. Notice of this meeting has been given in various ways reasonable under the circumstances consistent with Council’s resolution. And by the way, today’s organizational meeting, although being held in person, is also being held electronically through the Zoom platform with virtual participation by several incumbent members of City Council within the framework of City Council Ordinance 2020-04, which recognizes the emergency and crisis circumstances related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting audio, in addition to being available to citizens and others immediately by livestream and broadcast, is being recorded. We thank the City’s IT staff and other staff for their continuing exceptional efforts to support this meeting and others of City Council during these times.

I now ask the four newly elected members of Council to step forward to receive their oaths of office. We ask Judges Moreau and Reed also to come forward. Judge Moreau first will administer the oath of office to Ms. Oakes, her sister. Judge Moreau: would you proceed with the oath of office to Ms. Oakes.

I now ask Judge Reed to administer the oaths of office to Mr. Claffey, Ms. Darby and Mr. Robertson.

Congratulations, again, to each and all of you. And thank you, Judges Moreau and Reed.

We next will proceed with the election of the Mayor by vote of the seven members of the Staunton City Council. For this process, I will call for nominations from the floor by City Council members for the office of Mayor. No second is required but may be offered. Once there appear to be no more nominees, without the necessity of a motion to close the nominations, I will proceed to state the question as to each nominee—in the order received— until one nominee is elected Mayor by majority vote upon poll of Council members by the Clerk of Council. I then will relinquish the gavel to the newly elected Mayor, who in turn will conduct the election for Vice-Mayor and preside over the remainder of the meeting.

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