

Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2016 | 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Dale Baldwin, Alderman Calvin Green, Alderman Jerry McMillan, Alderman John Reeves, Alderman Stephen Shoemaker, Alderman Brett Summey, Town Manager Brantley Price, Town Clerk Wesley Barker, Finance Officer Heather Holdaway, Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller, WWTP Superintendent Charles Call, Police Chief Jeff Rose. Several other residents of the community also attended.

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Baldwin called to order the meeting of the Board of Aldermen. Alderman Reeves then said the invocation and those in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the February 1, 2016 Agenda- Mayor Baldwin asked the Board to consider several items be added to the agenda that includes the following: discussion of family exemption under subdivision regulations, discussion of public restroom project and consideration to award Little Mountain Builders contract for streetscape project at Jefferson Ave. and Second St to include base amount, alternate #1 and alternate #2. Alderman Summey made the motion to approve the agenda with the proposed additions. Alderman McMillan seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Public Hearing- Per G.S. 160A-20- Security Interest to Finance Purchase of Real Property- The Mayor stated a public hearing would be held as the Town is looking to purchase a piece of property owned by Jak Reeves just off of E. Main St. Because this purchase will be financed, a public hearing is required by General Statute 160A-20. The purchase price of this property is \$122,500. The Mayor then opened the public hearing at 6:08 p.m. With no comments the public hearing was closed at 6:09 p.m.

Approval of Minutes- January 4, 2016 Regular Meeting- With no comments, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Presentation of FY 2014-15 Audit- Priscilla Norris, CPA- Priscilla Norris came forward and presented the Board with the synopsis of the FY 2014-15 Town audit report. Priscilla stated the audit was good overall with no major findings. Priscilla said no expenditures went over budget this year, the Town's fund balance was at 67%, whereas the minimum must be 8%. Further, she added revenues were increased and expenditures were decreased and the Town tax levy collection rate was 98.19% for the year. The Board thanked Priscilla for her report.

Review of Streetscape Project- Jefferson Ave. & Second St. - Mike Norris- Before Mike came forward to speak, Mayor Baldwin introduced State House Representative Jonathan Jordan who came forward to speak. Mr. Jordan stated the NC House would award West Jefferson \$130,000 in NCDOT contingency funds to assist with the streetscape project. Mr. Jordan suggested that the Town approach the NC Senate for NCDOT contingency funds as well for this project, so as to split the \$130,000 between the House & Senate.

Mike Norris from McGill & Associates then came forward to speak to the Board on the streetscape project at Jefferson Ave. & Second St. Mike stated this project had to be re-bid as they came in too high during the first bid and it included alternates in addition to the base bid. The low bidder was Little Mountain Builders from Catawba County at a base bid price of \$306,613.40, which was \$56,613.40 over the funding from DOT (\$250,000). Further, alternate #1 for this project included brick pavers at a price of \$27,085 and the intersection of Jefferson Ave. & Backstreet was alternate #2 at a price of \$84,828.20.

This makes the price of the total project \$438,526.60 which also includes decorative lighting, electrical and boring under the roadway. With the \$250,000 federal highway funds from DOT and the NCDOT Contingency Funds of \$130,000, the Town match would then be \$58,526.60. Mike said this intersection would be converted from stop lights to a 4-way stop intersection as the other intersections in Town were. Alderman Shoemaker suggested a warning for drivers coming into downtown via Highway 194 (Radio Hill) of the change in traffic pattern. Further, Mike said sidewalks are included with this project down to the gravel lot past Dollar Tire. DOT plans to resurface E. Second Street within the next three years. The begin date for this project is tentatively April as DOT has to review the bid and project plans and get contracts signed/bonded before the project can begin.

Brantley explained to the Board if they want to complete the project as presented and use the \$250,000 from federal highway funds and \$130,000 from the state contingency funds, they would need to approve proceeding and approving a budget amendment to use \$60,000 from Fund Balance. Brantley said the DOT funds have to be used by October 23, 2016. The Town's unrestricted fund balance is \$908,834 as of June 30, 2015, so the funds are available if the Board would like to proceed. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the streetscape project as presented and to approve the additional \$60,000 in funds from the Town's Fund Balance for the additional items. Alderman McMillan seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration to Award Little Mountain Builders Contract for the Streetscape Project (Jefferson Ave. & Second St.)- Alderman McMillan made the motion to award Little Mountain Builders the contract for the streetscape project. Alderman Shoemaker seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Christmas in July Festival Update and 2016 Road Closure Request- Jane Lonon- Jane Lonon presented the proposal for the 2016 Christmas in July Festival to the Aldermen. Jane said this will be the 30th year of the event which will be held on Friday, July 1st from 6-10pm and Saturday, July 2nd from 9am-7pm. Jane thanked the Town for their continued support of the event each year. Jane said the Festival footprint remains the same as it has in years past. Jane said 2 bands are scheduled for Friday evening with the presentation of colors, Santa and a street dance. 10 bands are scheduled at the main stage on Saturday. The Community Stage will feature the best of Ashe County's young people throughout the day, the civil war re-enactors will return and there will be over 100 craft, non-profit and food vendors set up at the Festival. Christmas Tree Growers events will also take place on Saturday. Jane said the planning committee is seeking approval from the Aldermen for the festival footprint and road closures for 2016. The road closures include the following-

- Thursday, June 30th at midnight: Backstreet between Ashe St. & Main St.
- Friday, July 1st at noon: Main St. between Jefferson Ave. & Backstreet
- Friday, July 1st at midnight through Saturday, July 2nd: Entire footprint of the Festival is closed to vehicle traffic-
 - Main St. from Jefferson Ave. to Church St.
 - Backstreet from Ashe St. to Second St.
 - State St. at Jefferson Ave.
 - College St. from Main St. to First Ave.

Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the footprint and road closures for Christmas in July. Alderman Summey seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor. The Board thanked Jane and the Festival committee for their continued work with the Festival each year.

Consideration of Purchase Contract and Authorization for Mayor to Sign Contract, Loan Document & Statements- The Mayor said the Board could discuss the purchase of this property and the purchase contract for the lot owned by Jak Reeves just off of E. Main Street for a purchase price of \$122,500. A survey was also enclosed in the Aldermen's packet that gives the Town access from Main Street. The purchase of this property would be used to create extra public parking spaces. With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the purchase contract and to give the Mayor authorization to sign all documents. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Agreement between Town & Ashe County for Inspection Services- Brantley explained the County was reviewing files and found there was not an actual signed agreement between each town for the County to provide inspection services. For the County to provide inspection services for the town, the County is requested each town to approve the agreement for inspections. With no discussion, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the agreement for inspection services. Alderman McMillan seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Resolution in Support of Connect NC Bond Proposal- On the March 15th, 2016 primary ballot, there will be a bond referendum to vote on that will not increase taxes. The bonds will be used to fund critical improvements in both rural and urban communities. The bond would provide assistance to Mt. Jefferson State Natural Area and New River State Park. The High Country Council of Governments has already adopted a similar resolution of support of the referendum. Brantley said if the Board is interested in supporting the bond referendum they would need to adopt the resolution presented. Alderman Summey made the motion to adopt the resolution in support of the Connect NC Bond Proposal. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Tax Refund for Parcel # 19223-001-649- Charles Barnett has requested a tax refund on a parcel that no longer exists on the map. Ashe County feels this parcel was voided and recombined with a larger parcel. The County stated all property is accounted for and is covered on the map and they have already given reimbursement. Mr. Barnett is now requesting a refund from the Town for \$52.63 for taxes paid from 2011 to 2015. With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to approve this tax refund. Alderman Shoemaker seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of Adding a Family Property Exemption for 1-2 Lots under Subdivision Regulations- Brantley explained to the Board that the Town's current Zoning Ordinance does not have this exemption in its ordinance. Town Attorney David Paletta recommends this exemption be added and sees no problem. He suggests the Board send to the Planning Board for consideration of family property exemption up to 2 lots. Alderman McMillan made the motion to send this item to the Planning Board for review. Alderman Shoemaker seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of Public Restroom Project- Brantley explained to the Board the bids for the public restrooms were opened and all came in high. The low bidder was Greene Construction at \$166,721 which is a difference of around \$72,000 over budget. The Town has an estimated \$35,000 to utilize from the Planning and paving budget. The remainder of the funds would come out of Fund Balance. Brantley said the Board could move forward with the project and approve a budget amendment if they so wished. After some discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve & move forward with the budget amendment for the remainder of the funds. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor. Attorney David Paletta will draw up the contract and place timelines to complete and include damages for the contractor if the due dates of completion are exceeded.

Police Report- Chief Rose gave a report on the Police Department. Chief said during the month of January, 192 calls were dispatched through the communications center, 16 auto collisions were investigated, 1 person was arrested including charges of DWI, larceny, assault and drug related crimes. Further, the Chief said 1 person was arrested for drug violations. Alderman Green suggested having an auction for the old police cars that are parked at the Maintenance building as well as for any old equipment. The Board thanked the Chief for his report.

Water/Wastewater Report- Charles Call said the filter plant has potential to go back online as he was working with Rural Water and the new requirements issued by the State. Charles said other water plants are having to meet this same requirement, not just West Jefferson. No major issues were currently reported with the WWTP and the water levels were good. The Board thanked Charles for his report.

Maintenance Report- Eric Miller gave a report on the Maintenance Department for the month of January. 18 one calls had been called in for the month. Eric said 1 water issue and 1 sewer issue had been reported and resolved. Further, Eric said with the recent snow storm, the department had totaled 1,057 miles of snow pushing with the Town vehicles during the last snow storm, 780 tons of snow had been removed from Jefferson Avenue and 52 tons of salt were delivered back to the Maintenance salt shed. The Board thanked Eric for his report.

Town Managers Report- Brantley Price gave his report to the Board. He asked the board if they would rather have the land to be purchased from Jak Reeves for parking be totally paved or to leave some grassy areas. The Board was in consensus to leave for parking as that is why the Town would be purchasing the land. Brantley said the USDA application would be sent in hopefully this week. Taxes collected to date were \$943,645 or 94% of the levy. The Town currently has \$58,400 in past due taxes and letters were mailed out January 19th, 2016. These past due taxes would be advertised in the paper in March. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comment- The Mayor opened public comment at 7:16 p.m. Jane Lonon invited the Board to visit the remodeled kitchen and refinished floors at the Ashe County Arts Council as it is a Town-owned building. With no other comments, public comment was closed at 7:18 p.m.

Alderman Comments- Alderman Reeves and Shoemaker thanked all Town employees and the departments for their work and the maintenance department for the snow removal. They also thanked Representative Jordan for attending the meeting. Alderman McMillan thanked everyone for coming to the meeting, the Town staff and Eric with his work with the Christmas in July Festival each year. Alderman Green congratulated Fire Department Assistant Chief Eric Miller for being voted best fireman. He also congratulated Police Officer John Muldowney for being voted best police officer from the Mountain Times recent award ceremony. He said this said a lot about West Jefferson's staff.

With nothing further, Alderman Summey made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman McMillan. The vote of 5-0 in favor. The time was 7:25 p.m.

Dale Baldwin, Mayor

Wesley M. Barker, Town Clerk