

Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Special Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2021 | 6:00 pm

Board Members Present: Mayor Tom Hartman, Alderman Rusty Barr, Alderman Calvin Green (absent), Alderwoman Crystal Miller, Alderman John Reeves, and Alderman Stephen Shoemaker

Town Staff Present: Town Manager Brantley Price, Town Attorney Jak Reeves, Town Clerk Rebecca Eldreth, Police Chief Brad Jordan, and Wastewater Superintendent Brandon Patrick

At 6:00 pm Mayor Hartman called to order the meeting of the Board of Aldermen. After the invocation was given, those in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the July 12, 2021 Agenda – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Public Hearings

Consideration of Recommendation to Rezone Parcel 19223 001 679 from Highway Commercial, Medium Density Residential, and Residential Agriculture to Highway Commercial – Mayor Hartman stated the purpose of the public hearing is to hear any comments on the proposed rezoning of the parcel located off East Second Street between the Vintage Farmhouse and the Graybeal house. The parcel is over 21 acres and has 3 different zoning districts. Mayor Hartman opened the public comment at 6:02pm. With no comment, Mayor Hartman closed the public comment at 6:03pm.

Consideration of Voluntary Annexation of Parcel ID 19267 016 – Mayor Hartman stated the purpose of the public hearing is to hear any comments on the voluntary annexation of 607 Oakwood Road owned by Larry and Beonde Donahue to gain town utilities. Mayor Hartman opened the public comment at 6:03pm. Property owner Larry Donahue thanked the board for their consideration of the annexation. With no further comments, Mayor Hartman closed the public comment at 6:04pm.

Regular Session

Approval of Minutes – With no discussion, Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting held on August 2, 2021. Alderman Barr seconded with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Discussion of Street Closure – Mayor Hartman explained that Chris Phipps purchased the old Tobacco Warehouse on Long Street along with the apartments across from the warehouse on Graybeal Avenue. He has requested to close a portion of Graybeal Ave between the warehouse and the apartments. The section of Graybeal Avenue is located at the end of the street. Chris received a letter from the other adjoining property owner stating they agree to close the portion of Graybeal. This section of the street is on the Powell Bill. Chris came before the board seeking permission close the dead-end section of the road. Alderman Reeves expressed concerns for closing the road as well as concerns for the impact on the Powell Bill funds. A suggestion was made to allow Chris to use the portion of the street without permanently closing the road. Alderman Barr made the motion to table the agenda item until more information could be obtained. Alderman Shoemaker seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Discussion of Proposed County Fire Tax Commission – Mayor Hartman introduced Ashe County Commissioner Chuck Olive to the board before he gave presented the plans for a county wide fire

commission. The county wide fire commission would pool all fire tax funds to be shared between the fire departments which would be controlled by the Fire Commission Board. The proposed county wide tax would increase the West Jefferson Fire District's current rate of 3 cents to 7 cents. The additional 4 cents would be placed in the pool to be shared by other districts. The Board thanked Chuck for his presentation.

Discussion of Spending American Rescue Plan (ARP) Funds – The Mayor stated that the town received its first disbursement of the American Rescue Plan funds and will receive another disbursement next fiscal year. The mayor continued by stating that it would be beneficial to use the funds to repair our sewer lines to reduce the amount of infiltration and inflow from stormwater. The board was in agreeance with the repairs.

Consideration of Budget Amendment #1 – Brantley Price Town Manager presented the budget amendment to the board. Brantley explained it would be best to set up a Capital Projects fund to track the ARP funds for Government reporting. Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the budget amendment as presented. Alderman Shoemaker seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Resolution to Dispose of Police Department Firearms by Private Sale – Mayor Hartman stated Police Chief Brad Jordan has three guns in the police safe and would like to sell the guns by private sale. With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the firearms by private sale. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Discussion of North Sixth Street Sidewalk Installation – At a previous meeting Brantley was asked to get a quote for the installation of a sidewalk on North Sixth Avenue. The quote was received was under \$10,000 for the 100 foot section of sidewalk to be installed. With no further discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the installation of the sidewalk. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Review of HCCOG Parking Study – Town Manager Brantley price presented the finding of the parking study competed by the High Country Council of Governments in the month of July. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Consideration to Rezone Parcel 19223 001 679 – With no discussion, Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the rezoning. Alderman Shoemaker seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Voluntary Annexation of Parcel 19267 016 – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the rezoning. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Tax Releases – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to release the tax bills as presented with Alderman Reeves seconding the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Police Report – Chief Jordan gave his report to the Board for the month of August. A total of 250 calls were dispatched through the communications center including 9 motor vehicle crashes, 8 larcenies, 10 drug cases, 14 minor citations, 1 DWI, and other miscellaneous calls. The Chief was then asked about the noise complaints from jake braking on North Jefferson Avenue. The Chief informed the Board that most of the noise is coming from the vehicles ascending the hill instead of descending the hill. Several of the vehicles seemed to be driving over the posted speed limit. The Chief then asked to equip all the cars

with radars. The Board agreed to equip the cars with radars. The Board thanked Chief Jordan for his report.

Water and Wastewater Report – Wastewater Superintendent Brandon Patrick gave his report to the Board. A total of 8 inches of rain were recorded for the month of August bringing the total for the year to 36 inches. The sewer system was smoke tested for several days throughout the month revealing several broken cleanouts that have now been repaired. In addition to the cleanouts several issues were found with some guttering and storm drains connected to the system. Keith Buff was able to assist with locating a leak in front of the high school caused by the hydrant blowing out on Long Street. There is currently one filter running about 35,000 gallons per day. The Board thanks Brandon for his report.

Town Managers Report – Brantley Price, Town Manager gave his report to the Board. The COVID case count for the county is 2945 total cases. There are 50 active cases and 101 directed to quarantine. A total of 50% of the total population has been vaccinated. The results of the 2020 census have been released. West Jefferson was down 20 people, and the County was down 704 people. The EV chargers have been used a total of 82 times for the year with 20 uses in July and 23 uses in August. The downtown Wi-Fi is averaging 60 clients per day. The town has received half of the allotted American Rescue Plan funds. The new basketball court has been paved, and the alley will be paved in the next few weeks. Section E of the Highway 221 widening project is 20% complete. Taxes collected to date total 76.9% of the levy. Sales tax year to date is up 17% from last year with the month of May up 39% from last year. Then, Brantley gave an update on the TDA starting with an increase in occupancy tax of 40% over last year. The online article for Our State magazine in July reached over 280,000 people with 8652 engagements making it the most successful online article for Our State. There have been several recent donations made to the police including one from Lifestore Bank, and Saloon Studios and another from an anonymous couple. The Antique Fair will be held this upcoming weekend with the car cruise in on that Sunday. Generations Ashe is planning their annual fuel assistance roadblock on October 8th with a rain date of the 22nd. Mo's Boots is planning a sidewalk sale on October 15th and 16th only in the parking spaces to the alleyway. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comments – Mayor Hartman opened the meeting to public comment.

Aldermen Comments – The Board thanked everyone in attendance.

Adjournment – With nothing further, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Alderman Reeves with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Tom Hartman, Mayor

Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk