

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

No Board Meeting was held in July 2016

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, 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 gave the invocation and those in attendance then stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the August 1, 2016 Agenda- The Mayor asked the Board to consider adding the approval of a promissory note to the agenda in order for the Town to purchase a new track hoe. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the agenda with the addition. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Approval of Minutes- June 6, 2016 Regular Meeting- With no comments, Alderman Summey made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Gene Hafer- Gene Hafer came forward to speak to the Board on the potential of the Ashe Campus of Wilkes Community College (WCC) being relocated to Jefferson Station. Gene said he was speaking on behalf of the West Jefferson Land Company and was speaking in favor of relocating the Ashe Campus of WCC to Jefferson Station. Gene explained the WJ Land Company was part of the WJ Centennial Commission, as it was set up initially. Gene said Jefferson Station is a good size with room for classrooms. Gene said he is unsure if WCC leaders have formed an opinion about the future placement of the Ashe campus, but it would be in the best interest of the students and staff. Gene said he is formally requesting the Town of West Jefferson's support for potential relocation of WCC's Ashe campus to Downtown West Jefferson. He feels it would be a good fit for West Jefferson. Some discussion took place on the WJ Centennial Commission's status as a corporation. Gene said the corporation does not exist just by filing the Articles of Incorporation with the NC Secretary of State as there was more to it including electing officers and establishing by-laws, which the Centennial Commission never did. Alderman Reeves said he felt something should go into Jefferson Station, but until the lumber company moves out or reorganizes, he suggests the Board visit this item again because then the road would be freed up without the lumber company there. Mayor Baldwin spoke on the bond money from the State which would help with construction of a new WCC campus. The Mayor also said the County has not made any decisions and feels the Town should wait until more information is given. Gene clarified and said the WJ Land Company is only seeking support from the Board, nothing else at this time other than signing a piece of paper in support of WCC relocating to West Jefferson. Gene reassured the Board he was not trying to only promote this location of Jefferson Station, as there could be other locations in West Jefferson that could work. Gene said he is only seeking Board support of WCC relocating to downtown West Jefferson. Gene said he realizes WCC is looking at other locations, but this would endorse and entice them to consider downtown West Jefferson as a location. Gene said this would be a "downtown West Jefferson concept" for WCC leaders. Alderman Shoemaker wanted to clarify that the Town wouldn't be voting on anything, but would simply be supporting the effort to have WCC consider coming to downtown West Jefferson to which Gene answered yes. Mayor Baldwin asked Chief Jeff Rose, who is also the County Commissioner Chairman, if anyone from WCC had approached the County Commissioners at this time. Chief Rose said they had not been approached as of yet as everything was

still being considered. Alderman McMillan said he doesn't believe the college would consider Jefferson Station unless the lumber company moves out as it is not conducive to a college setting. After some other discussion, a consensus among the Board was to support WCC relocating to downtown West Jefferson. No votes were taken.

ABC Report- Haskell McGuire- ABC Board Chairman Haskell McGuire gave a financial report for the 4th fiscal quarter of the ABC store. Haskell said the total sales for this quarter was \$434,512, a 7.6% increase over this quarter last year. A check for \$12,000 had been delivered to the Town of West Jefferson for the quarter. Further, Haskell said the ABC building mortgage has been paid off in full to avoid costs of refinancing and additional interest charges on the remaining balance. Bids on repairing the ABC store building had been received from where someone ran into the building. Haskell said shelving, carpet, the building itself and landscaping would all need to be repaired with an estimated cost of \$26,032 at this time. Haskell said they had considered installing a barrier in the landscaped area to prevent this accident from occurring again. The insurance of the customer who hit the building will cover all damages. The ABC store had to account for all merchandise damaged and broken per ABC Commission. The Board thanked Haskell for his report.

Update on Ashe Dash 5K Race- Maria Julian of the Appalachian District Health Department spoke to the Board on the upcoming Ashe Dash 5K race. Ms. Julian said this 5K race supports the Top Dog Clinic at Ashe County Middle School. The route for this race has changed since the last meeting and per the Board's recommendations. The start and finish for this race will now be at the WJ United Methodist Church. The route will continue along E. Second Street to the bowling alley and loop back around to the church cutting through some Town streets. The race will be held on Saturday, September 10th beginning at 8 a.m. A shuttle from Ashe County Ford will be given to runners so they can park their vehicles. With nothing further, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the Ashe Dash 5K race as presented. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Engineering Agreement with USDA/ARC Project- Brantley explained this agreement is for the new water supply well, WWTP sludge dewatering press and water & sewer line extensions. Town Attorney David Paletta spoke on this item stating he does not like this agreement explaining conflicts with engineers are common with municipalities and can cause issues. Mr. Paletta said he has reviewed this agreement to make sure it is not a disaster if it happens to go to court. Mr. Paletta stated he had objected to every engineering agreement he's seen and wanted to explain to the Board as to why he is objecting. He said he represents the Town Board and their best interest. Mr. Paletta said this contract is a sample that is standard among engineering firms by the American Engineering Standards and they charge high fees but take no responsibilities on what they do. Mr. Paletta says he has seen no responsibilities of the engineering firm in the contract, which puts burden on the Town. Mr. Paletta said law firms who write these engineering contracts are paid big money to protect their clients just as he protects the Town. He stated Towns are golden clients for engineers as Town's always pay their bills and have a lot of business. Mr. Paletta then spoke on burdens and obligations a Town incurs that engineering firms do not including interest penalties if bills are not paid if a Town isn't happy with work they've done. As a result, this interest is still liable during a litigation process. Mr. Paletta said he feels engineers should protect the Town's interests as well, but they do not as much as they should. Mr. Paletta did say luckily there had been no issues with any engineering contracts since he's been West Jefferson's attorney, but it could happen at any time and is just protecting the Town. Mr. Paletta suggests going forward, the engineers use the Town's contract and the Town should not do businesses with any firm that does not have malpractice insurance, to protect the Town's interest. The Mayor said the Board would table the approval of this contract until next month until further review could be done.

Consideration of Horse Drawn Carriage Service- Debbie and James Pucci spoke to the Board on a proposal of a horse drawn carriage service in downtown West Jefferson. Mr. Pucci said they currently own the business Rabbit Trails. He said they would like to bring a horse drawn carriage business to downtown as it would be a good attraction for visitors and increase foot traffic. He stated many businesses in downtown are in support of this. Mr. Pucci said they are suggesting to operate their business after hours as to not impede traffic in downtown. Hours planned for operation would begin at 5:30 p.m. during the week and after 2 p.m. on Saturdays. The route of these rides would be off of Jefferson Avenue except to cross at Main Street and would also go into the residential areas. This business would offer general horse drawn wagon rides as well as private scheduled rides for special occasions. Mrs. Pucci said the general rides would begin and end near Jefferson Station along Hice Avenue. The Board was given a proposed business plan and route to review. Alderman Shoemaker said this was a neat idea and spoke on the big draw the fire truck rides have during the holidays and feel this would as well.

Consideration of Horse Drawn Carriage Ordinance- The Mayor said the Board had been given a Horse Drawn Carriage Ordinance to review. He said this had once been brought up, but had never been formally approved. The proposed ordinance has since been updated. This would be added to the West Jefferson Code of Ordinances under Chapter 111. After some discussion, since this is a brand new ordinance, it was suggested by Attorney David Paletta that the ordinance could be amended by the Board at a later date if issues arose. Alderman Reeves then made the motion to approve the Horse Drawn Carriage Ordinance as presented and to add to the West Jefferson Code of Ordinances under Chapter 111. Alderman Shoemaker seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Procurement Plan & Equal Opportunity Plan for CDBG Grant- Brantley explained to the Board these plans are for the CDBG water/sewer project and is requiring the Town to revise the two plans as they were originally combined into one. The Town adopted these plans last year with other compliance documents. Now, Brantley said, DEQ (or HUD) requires two separate plans to be adopted in order for the project to move forward. With no discussion, Alderman Summey made the motion to approve the Procurement Plan and Equal Opportunity Plan for the CDBG Grant. Alderman Reeves seconded. The vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of 2016 Paving Projects- Brantley stated he and Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller had reviewed the streets that need repair and had Shatley Paving quote. The quotes presented included: paving the entire Backstreet from 2nd Street to Main Street at a cost of \$98,129. This was more than was budgeted for paving this year, so one option would be to break the Backstreet into two sections and pave half of the street this year and the other half next year. Other streets could be paved if the Backstreet were to be split into sections. However, Brantley said he did find monies that were not budgeted under ABC distribution which would allow the Backstreet to be paved as quoted if the Board wished. Brantley said he and Eric felt the Backstreet & State Street were the two worst streets and the costs were higher due to the old pavement having to be removed before re-paving. After some discussion, the Board was in agreement to paving the Backstreet all at one time rather than to negotiate prices at different times. Alderman Green made the motion to approve the paving of the Backstreet from 2nd Street to Main Street and to use the additional ABC funds for the additional cost. Alderman Shoemaker seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of Base for Pocahontas- Brantley explained to the Board that Gareth Jordan had given the Town a quote of \$10,277 to construct a base for Pocahontas covering four sides with black granite with the interior being block filled with concrete. Other quotes given was for pink granite with a 4" Georgia

grey granite at \$4,218, polished pink granite at \$14,230 or a solid piece of Georgia grey granite at \$6,975. Brantley said Fund Balance will have to be used to construct the base as it was not in this year's budget. Further there is \$2,600 remaining in the WJ Centennial bank account that can go towards the project. After some discussion, Alderman Summey made the motion for Gareth Jordan to proceed with constructing the base using the black granite with concrete filled interior at the cost of \$10,277. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor. The Board also mentioned installing lights to shine on Pocahontas once installed.

Discussion of Bumpout at corner of W. Second St. and Jefferson Ave. (First Baptist Church side) -

Brantley asked the Board if they would like to move forward with constructing a small bumpout at the intersection of Jefferson Avenue at the First Baptist Church. This item had been mentioned before and an engineered drawing would be required and approved by DOT before proceeding. The cost of drawing and plans would be \$1,100 and the estimated cost of the small bumpout would be \$6,000. Brantley said if the Board is interested, he could move forward with the design for DOT and get quotes for construction at a later date. Brantley says he felt the main reason a bumpout is needed is to be able to install the stop sign closer to the lane for motorists to see and to protect the stop sign. After some discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to proceed with the bumpout design at this location and to be constructed next year. Alderman McMillan seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

The Board then discussed the Backstreet stop & yield signage when merging into Second Street. The Board asked Shatley Paving look at redesigning while paving and eliminating the yield sign.

Consideration of Thank You Letter to Christmas in July Festival for Public Parking Lot Contribution-

The Board was in consensus to send the festival a thank you letter for their \$5,000 contribution towards the public parking lot off of E. Main Street.

Consideration of Approval- Order of Collection of Taxes 2016-

Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the order for the collection of 2016 taxes. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration for Mayor to Sign Promissory Note for Purchase of New Track hoe-

The Mayor said the Town would be purchasing a new track hoe and plans to finance through Herbert Francis. This approval would give the Mayor permission to sign all paperwork for this loan. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the Mayor to sign the promissory note with Herbert Francis. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of September 2016 Board Meeting Date Change-

Due to Labor Day falling on the first Monday of September, the Board was in consensus to reschedule the September meeting until Monday, September 12th at 6:00 p.m.

Police Report-

Chief Rose gave a report on the Police Department. Chief said during the month of July, 234 calls were dispatched through the communications center, 17 auto collisions were investigated, 15 people were arrested including charges of DWI, larceny, assault and drug related crimes. Further, the Chief said 10 persons was arrested for drug violations. Alderman Green mentioned the department patrol the residential areas for speeding and to talk to parents about their children wearing helmets when riding bicycles. The Board thanked the Chief for his report.

Water/Wastewater Report- absent.

Maintenance Report- absent.

Town Managers Report- Brantley Price gave his report to the Board. Brantley said the sidewalk replacement between State Street and Ashe Street would begin on August 8th. Taxes collected to date were \$989,330 or 98.5% of the levy. Also, the Town has been working with Attorney Jak Reeves & Attorney David Paletta on collecting past due taxes since 2013 when there were \$115,000 in past due taxes owed. Currently, there is only \$38,000 in past due taxes owed with \$15,000 of this for 2015 taxes. The TDA is currently running promotions on thesouthernweekend.com with the new video created by Raycom Media. Also, the TDA has a new logo and tagline of “everyone fits here.” Further, Brantley said YMCA will not be pursuing a facility in Ashe County at this time due to lack of support. Ashe Services for Aging will be holding a fund raiser for fuel assistance as they did last year at the downtown intersections. This will be held on October 7th from 8am-5pm with a rain date of October 21st. Brantley read the all compliant letter from the recent Wastewater Collection System inspection praising the WWTP employees for their good work. Brantley spoke on the Ashe Vision meetings that were recently held throughout the county which is to develop a plan to leverage the future growth potential for economic and community development in Ashe County. High Country Council of Governments has completed the data gathering and analysis and will be reporting to the board in the coming weeks. The next step would be to host a community summit and a follow up meeting to create a plan. The group is comprised of business leaders, the faith community, local government leaders including agricultural, but is independent and not lead by the County. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comment- The Mayor opened public comment at 7:58 p.m. With no comment, public comment was closed at 8:00 p.m.

With nothing further, Alderman Reeves made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Shoemaker. The vote of 5-0 in favor.

Dale Baldwin, Mayor

Wesley M. Barker, Town Clerk