

Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 1, 2021 | 6:00pm

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

Town Staff Present: Town Manager Brantley Price, Town Clerk Rebecca Eldreth

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 February 1, 2021 Agenda – Mayor Hartman stated the addition of the Consideration of Fire Department Purchase of Equipment needed to be added to the agenda. Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the agenda with the addition of the Fire Department Purchase. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Regular Session

Approval of Minutes – With no discussion, Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the minutes from the January 4, 2021 Regular Meeting. Alderwoman Miller seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Presentation of FY 2018-19 Town Audit – Priscilla Norris presented the Board with the audit findings for FY 2019-2020. Some noteworthy items in the report include an increase in Fund Balance of \$368,715 as of June 30, 2020. There were no instances of expenditures over budget in the General Fund. The total net position of the Water and Sewer fund has increased by \$42,484, due in part to Federal grants for the dewatering project. The Town's property tax collection rate has increased slightly to 98.04% from 97.37% in the previous year. Overall, the Town was in a good financial state with no major issues found. The Board thanked Priscilla for her report.

ABC Report – Haskell McGuire presented his report to the Board for the second fiscal quarter. An increase of 25.05% in sales was reported from the same quarter in the previous year. A check in the amount of \$32,500 has been delivered to the Town. Haskell reported that during the second quarter sales continued to exceed the budget and last year's results. The store reverted to longer hours during the holiday season to maximize sales but saw few sales in the early or late hour extensions. The Board thanked Haskell for his report.

Consideration of the Fire Department Air Compressor – Fire Chief Eric Miller expressed to the Board the need for a new air packs before their inspection by the NC Department of Insurance in May. After some discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the purchase of a new air compressor. Alderman Green seconded the motion with a 5-0 vote in favor following the motion.

Budget Amendment #2 Fire Department Salary and Breathing Compressor – Mayor Hartman stated budget amendment #2 is necessary to replace the police vehicle that was a total loss in the deer collision. An additional \$15,000 will be needed to add to the \$30,000 received from the insurance company discussed. Also, the budget amendment will account for the fire department salaries in the amount of \$1,000 for the assistant chief position becoming a paid position and for the breathing compressor for the fire department in the amount of \$50,000. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to

approve the budget amendment as presented. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of Creative Placemaking Committee – Mayor Hartman stated funds have been budgeted to work with a Creative Placemaking Group, the Atlas Community Studios. The representative for Atlas Community Studios spoke at the Blue Ridge Energy Community Leaders Meeting and Blue Ridge Energy offered to partner with some of their communities – West Jefferson and Sparta are the communities that approved to move forward with this great opportunity. The Board was in favor of moving forward with the Creative Placemaking project. No motion was made at this time.

Consideration of TDA Appointment – Mayor Hartman explained that Don Baumeister’s term on the TDA board expires this month. Don has been on the board for three two-year terms and is not eligible to be reappointed. Don recommended Joseph Kesserling, the General Manager of the Holiday Inn Express, to replace him on the TDA board. Alderman Barr made the motion to appoint Joseph Kesserling to a 2 year term on the TDA Board. Alderman Shoemaker seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Christmas in July Update – Mayor Hartman read aloud a letter from the Christmas in July Committee informing the Board that the 2021 festival has been cancelled due to the uncertainties of planning such a large event during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion of Old Sound Equipment – Mayor Hartman stated that the Town of Lansing is in the process of setting up for zoom meetings due to COVID restrictions. A representative for the Town of Lansing stopped by to inspect the updates the Town has made and believes the Town of Lansing could use the old equipment. With nothing further, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to donate the old equipment to the Town of Lansing. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a unanimous vote in favor of the donation.

Consideration of Resolution to Update High Country Council of Governments Charter – A request was emailed to Mayor Hartman stating the High Country Council of Government’s Executive Board would like to update their Charter, but in order to do so two-thirds of the member governments need to adopt the amended Charter. With no further discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to adopt the resolution in support of the amended Charter. Alderwoman Miller seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor of the motion.

Tax Release – Two tax releases were brought before the Board totaling \$73.93 for property not located within city limits. With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the tax releases as presented. Alderwoman Miller seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor of the motion.

Town Managers Report – Brantley Price, Town Manager gave his report to the Board. The spring is running with one filter producing 50,000 gallons of water per day. Executive Order 189 has been extended to February 28 with a total case count of 1884 in Ashe County where 58 of those cases considered active and 141 cases being monitored. App Health Care has a vaccine interest form posted online for anyone interested in receiving the vaccine. The County will be receiving 200 doses of the vaccine for the next three weeks with the hopes of receiving up to 1500 first doses and 1500 second doses in the near future. A survey of the property that houses the maintenance department and the new shed determined that the buildings are appropriately placed on the Town’s property. The renovation of the Old Hotel is awaiting approval of historic tax credits before moving forward. The ARC downtown

wi-fi project has a completion date of June 1 or before. Taxes collected to date total 95% of the levy and delinquent tax notices will be mailed out this week. Sales tax revenue continue to be strong and up 12.6% over prior year. Occupancy tax remains at the same level as last year which will allow for additional promotion for the spring. The census should be completed by April 30. Andy Guion with the Tavern called to praise the actions of Officer Farmer during an incident with a customer at the restaurant. The wastewater treatment plant operators, Jody and Nick are visiting all restaurants to check grease traps and informing the establishments of our fats, oils, and grease program after a line was stopped up due to a restaurant not having a grease trap. The Fire Department will be having their inspection by the NC Department of Insurance/State Fire Marshal will conduct an inspection of the Fire Department on May 24 which determines our fire insurance rating. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comments – Maria Vasquez would like to see additional lighting installed on Burkett Avenue and High Drive. The Board will send Maintenance Supervisor Eric miller to the location to make a recommendation on the lighting.

Aldermen Comments – The Board thanked the Town staff for their efforts during the recent snowstorm.

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

Tom Hartman, Mayor

Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk