

**Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 4, 2017 | 6:00 p.m.**

Board Members Present: Mayor Dale Baldwin (absent), Alderman Calvin Green, Alderman Jerry McMillan, Alderman John Reeves, Alderman Stephen Shoemaker, and Mayor Pro Tem Brett Summey, Sr.

Town Staff Present: Town Manager Brantley Price, Town Attorney David Paletta, Town Clerk Rebecca Eldreth, Police Chief Jeff Rose, and Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller, and WWTP Superintendent Charles Call.

Several other residents of the community also attended.

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Summey called to order the meeting of the Board of Aldermen. Alderman Reeves gave the invocation. Those in attendance then stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the December 4, 2017 Agenda - With no changes, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Alderman Shoemaker seconded with a unanimous vote in favor.

Approval of Minutes - November 6, 2017 Regular Meeting - With no changes, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Alderman McMillan seconded with a unanimous vote in favor.

Organizational Meeting began at 6:02 pm

Swearing in Ceremony of Elected Officials by Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk

Mayor Pro-tem Summey asked West Jefferson Town Clerk Rebecca Eldreth to come forward for the swearing in ceremonies. Ms. Eldreth proceeded to swear in Calvin Green (*re-elected*), Stephen Shoemaker (*re-elected*) and John Reeves (*re-elected*) as Town Aldermen for a term of 4 years each.

Comments by Newly Sworn Officials - Each newly sworn official spoke to those in attendance expressing their appreciation to the citizens for electing them to their positions and looked forward to serving on the Board and working with their fellow Board members.

Appointment of Mayor Pro tempore - With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to appoint Alderman Summey as Mayor pro tempore. Alderman McMillan seconded with a unanimous vote in favor.

Regular Session

Discussion of Parking at the Public Library – Suzanne Moore, Librarian at Ashe County Public Library spoke on behalf of the Library. Suzanne passed out pictures of the proposed area for additional parking as she thanked the Board as well as friends and staff of the Library for their attendance. Suzanne stated the backdoor to the library has been repaired and patrons are taking advantage of the lower parking lot to access the library. She then reviewed with the Board the programs that are available at the Library that increase attendance to support the need of the additional parking spaces. The programs included the VITA program for tax assistance from January to April, the Summer Reading Program, library

meeting rooms, and serving as the campus library for homeschoolers and the Ashe Campus of WCC. Suzanne added that several spaces are used by people visiting the park which reduces the spaces available for patron use. The proposal for expanding the parking lot would be to level the hillside to the left as you are entering the library parking lot and build a retaining wall which would add 19 spots to park. The spaces could be used by the library patrons, park visitors and guests for local festivals. Suzanne stated that the county would help with funding the expansion project if the library could permission to use the land. Suzanne then asked if there were any questions about the project. Alderman Shoemaker asked for clarification about the location of the project. Suzanne added that there is a quote from Shatley Paving for the expansion of the parking lot and the retaining wall that would include stairs for easy access to the park from the additional spaces. The spaces would need to begin 100' away from an existing well. Alderman Green asked Eric Miller, Maintenance Supervisor, to confirm the distance from the well site for the project. Eric agreed that the parking spaces would need to be between 100 and 150' of the well. Alderman Reeves stated that he and the rest of the Board should do a site visit to get a visual on the project. Mayor Pro Tem Summey said further that he would like the maintenance team to mark the intended site including the 100' buffer for the Board members to review. Suzanne confirmed the amount of spaces for the project should be around 19 when after establishing the 100' safeguard from the well. Alderman Green expressed his feeling that the retaining wall for the project could create a potential hazard for children at the park by jumping or falling off the wall. Suzanne clarified that the project includes a rail on the wall for safety. Suzanne then conveyed the desire of the library to receive approval from the Town for the land use in order to take the next step to secure funding from the County. Mayor Pro Tem Summey stated the Aldermen would set aside a time to visit the proposed site before the next meeting. Suzanne then thanked the Board for their consideration.

Consideration to Update Personnel Policy – Brantley Price, the Town Manager indicated the need for part of the probationary period to be struck out due to conflict between another section as well as the renumbering of a section to accurately reflect the table of contents. Alderman Reeves made the suggestion to revisit the matter at the next meeting to give the Board more time to review the changes. Alderman Shoemaker asked if the changes had already been made and reviewed by the Town Attorney, David Paletta. Brantley stated the changes are of the suggestion of the Town Attorney, David Paletta. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the changes. Alderman Green questioned the reason for the deletion. Town Attorney advised the Board it was to remove a contradiction between policies that should have been removed with a previous revision. After the discussion Alderman McMillan seconded the motion with a unanimous vote in favor.

Consideration of Tax Releases – Mayor Pro Tem stated the following tax bills are proposed to be released:

- a) Hotel Tavern - billed leasehold improvements twice - \$1,194.14- Alderman Reeves made the motion to release this tax bill. Alderman Shoemaker seconded with all in favor.

Consideration of 2018 Holiday Calendar – With no discussion Alderman Green made the motion to approve the 2018 Holiday Calendar. Alderman Reeves seconded with all in favor.

Consideration to Move the January 1, 2018 Regular Meeting to January 8, 2018 – With no discussion Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve. Alderman Reeves seconded with all in favor.

Police Report- Police Chief Jeff Rose gave the police report for November. A total of 195 calls were dispatched through the communications center, 19 auto collisions were investigated, 11 people were arrested with DWI, larceny, assault and drug related crimes. 9 persons were arrested/charged for drug violations. The Board thanked the Chief for his report.

Water/Wastewater & Maintenance Report – WWTP Superintendent Charles Call gave an update on the WWTP. There was a total of 1.8 inches of rain for the month of November. The department hauled approximately 100,000 gallons of sludge to the fields. Both filters were replaced at the filter plant and both are up and running. The water inspection went well and the inspector was pleased with the water filters. A bearing was replaced in the oxidation ditch along with other routine maintenance. The Board thanked Charles for his report.

Maintenance Report – Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller gave an update on the Maintenance Department. A total of 24 one call tickets for the month of November which is down from the previous month. The Town had a total of 6 water leaks and 4 sewer line issues this month. The main focus this month was setting up the Christmas lights. All streetlights that are out have been tagged and reported to Blue Ridge Energy. New hire Jacob Cruvey has started in the position of Park Maintenance Worker. Keith Buff came to assist the maintenance department to check meters, hydrants, and valves. The Maintenance Department found a bad water leak Friday night below the library in a 6" valve. It took some work to get the water turned off in order to replace the valve but they were able to repair the leak that night. A new tap was installed for Bennett Realty in order to remove them from a private well line. The new hoist is ready to be installed on the dump truck to replace the original one that had some issues. Jessica Wellborn updated the water and sewer maps with new additions and changes including the Graybeal and Burkett Avenue project as well as West Town Way. The maintenance department made one trip to the landfill and will be making another trip soon. When not working on water leaks the crew is clearing the park and drains of leaves and will continue as time allows. Eric then stated he will mark the proposed parking expansion at the Public Library for the Aldermen. Alderman Green then asked Eric his opinion on the parking expansion. Eric responded by saying that it could impact the existing ball field beside the proposed site. He added the suggestion that if the Library had a special event they could notify the Town in advance and the Town could let the Library use the extra spaces in the maintenance lot for their employees. He stated by allowing the staff to use the maintenance lot it would free up more room for the elderly and mothers with small children to park in the front of the building. He feels it is essential for the Town to preserve the space for the park and protect the Town's well. The Board thanked Eric for his report.

Town Managers Report – Brantley Price, Town Manager stated that the survey work is almost complete for well site and belt press project and hope to have the acreage secured in the next week or so. Taxes collected to date are \$1,004,917 which is 78.8% of the levy. Priscilla Norris plans on submitting the audit today and should have the results back in the next 30 days. The charging station was used 2 times in November for a total of 23 times since it has been installed. New playground equipment is set to be installed at the Park with weather permitting. Brantley thanked Eric and his crew for working to get the water back on after the leak on Friday night. The Town of West Jefferson has 450 streetlights and after speaking to Blue Ridge Energy Brantley found out it is up to the member to report any outages of the streetlights. Brantley then asked Chief Rose if the night shift could assist with reporting the outages. The Hometown Christmas event and the tree lighting ceremony went great. Brantley believed the attendees enjoyed the old firetruck more than anything. He then thanked Sexton Tree Farms for donating the tree in Town Hall and the decorations at the Backstreet Stage. He also thanked Rusty Barr for the Christmas tree used at Backstreet Stage for the tree lighting. Thanksgiving weekend was a busy

weekend for all the merchants and several of them broke sales records that weekend. Brantley then read an email that he received the past week. The email read - I apologize for the email but I just want to let you know that my family and I just got back from spending last weekend in West Jefferson where we went to the Town tree lighting and got our tree from Frosty's. I have to ask you to please stop promoting your Town. It is absolutely magical. It is such a wonderful place that the more you promote it the more the word is going to get out and it will be overrun with crazy tourist. Believe me, I live in Apex, NC and once it got named the best place to live in America in 2015 it started to change. We can't even go to our own town's Christmas celebration because it has gotten so crowded. You have the absolute most perfect little town in the entire state and applaud everyone for making it what it is. We only spent the weekend there but I can ensure you that we will be returning often. My goal is to now find a cabin to come back to every time. Have a great day and be grateful you live in such a great place and take care. The email is from Allen Buck, Assistant Professor in the Communications Department at Meredith College. Brantley then shared a letter from one of the residents who had experienced some water issues. The letter read – It was my experience yesterday to witness the professionalism and expertise of 2 employees, Eric and Travis, as they worked to again get water to my daughter's home at 418 Mount Paddy. Water was off at the residence for most of the weekend due to meters having been damaged. Both Eric and Travis stayed on the job until it was done and done correctly. My sincerest thanks to both of them. Brantley said he likes to share notes he receives about the Town. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Aldermen Comments – Alderman Green started by saying he has more comments about the Christmas light than anything else in the town and other town's decorations do not even compare to what Eric and the Maintenance Department have done. Also, he asked Eric to express his gratitude to the Fire Chief, Donnie Miller for driving the old fire truck for the kids at the Hometown Christmas celebration and the Trick or Treat downtown for Halloween. Alderman McMillan stated he would like to thank all the Town employees. Mayor Pro Tem Summey echoed Alderman McMillan in thanking all the Town employees. He also stated how many compliments he had heard about the Christmas lights and how well they were done. Alderman Reeves likewise thanked the Town and said how nice the Christmas lights displays are in the Town. Alderman Shoemaker furthermore thanked everyone. He said how truly amazed he is with the changes in the Town over the years and how blessed we are with the Town.

Closed Session – The Mayor Pro Tem stated the Board would be entering into closed session per G.S. 143.318.11(a) (6).

Adjournment- Alderman Green made the motion to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Alderman McMillan with all in favor.

Dale Baldwin, Mayor

Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk