

**Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
August 7, 2017 | 6:00 p.m.**

Board Members Present: Mayor Dale Baldwin, Alderman Calvin Green, Alderman Jerry McMillan, Alderman John Reeves, Alderman Stephen Shoemaker, Alderman Brett Summey, Sr.

Town Staff Present: Town Manager Brantley Price, Town Clerk Wesley Barker, Police Chief Jeff Rose, Wastewater Superintendent Charles Call.

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 Shoemaker gave the invocation. Those in attendance then stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the August 7, 2017 Agenda- With no changes, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Alderman McMillan seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Public Hearing

CDBG Infrastructure Grant- Burkett & Graybeal Ave. - Closeout Hearing- The Mayor said this public hearing is to discuss the closeout of the CDBG Infrastructure Project for Burkett & Graybeal Avenues where water and sewer lines were replaced with grant funds. The Mayor opened the public hearing at 6:02 pm. Michelle Ball with the High Country Council of Governments addressed the Board with a review of the project. Michelle stated the Town received a total of \$504,453 in CDBG funds from the NC Department of Environmental Quality to aid in the replacement of a water line on Burkett Ave. and on Graybeal Ave. This project consisted of installing 1,470 linear foot of 6-inch water lines that serves 11 households. Further, the Town also received \$157,025 in CDBG funds to aid in the replacement of a sewer line on Burkett Ave. This project consisted of installing 430 linear foot of 8-inch sewer line that serves 5 households. Michelle said the CDBG funding must assist areas that must have at least 51% low and moderate income or less than 80% of the Ashe County Median income. 10 of the 11 homes with the waterline replacement were low and moderate income and those with the sewer line replacement, 100% were low and moderate income. Michelle said the projects are complete and came in under budget. A total of \$115,837.05 in grant funds for the waterline replacement were unexpended and a total of \$32,543.45 in grant funds for the sewer line replacement were unexpended. These unexpended funds will be returned to the NC Department of Environmental Quality to be used for other CDBG funding programs. With no other comment, the Mayor closed the public hearing at 6:09 pm.

Regular Session

Approval of Minutes- July 10, 2017 Regular Meeting - With no changes, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Alderman Summey seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Closure of Proposed Roadway- off Fairview Dr. - The Mayor stated David Ashley has purchased a piece of property located on Fairview Drive (parcel # 19223-001-956). Currently, there is a proposed Town street between this property and the adjoining property owned by Shirley Powers (parcel # 19223-001-731) which has never been dedicated. Mr. Ashley is requesting to have this section of the proposed road off Fairview Drive to be closed and states Mrs. Powers is in agreement to close the proposed street portion. Mr. Ashley spoke to the Board requesting this proposed roadway be closed. The Board asked if the adjoining property (owned by the Trivette heirs) at the far end of the proposed

roadway had been contacted to which Mr. Ashley said not at this time. The Board was in agreement that they would like to table this item until the September meeting until the Trivette family was contacted and agreed with this proposed road closure. No vote was taken at this time.

Consideration to Transfer Well House at Ashe Co. High School to Ashe Co. Board of Education & Authorize Mayor to Sign Deed – The Mayor stated at a previous meeting, the Board discussed the shutdown of the well located on the Ashe Co. High School property due to the high concentration of iron which would have required an expensive filtering system to keep the well in operation. As a result, the Town requested the state, and they approved, disconnecting this well from the Town’s water supply. The high school would like to utilize this well and well house to water the softball field and use the well house for storage. After discussing with the Town Attorney and per G.S. 160A-274(b), it allows the Town to convey the land in question to another public entity. In order to donate the well and well house to the Ashe Co. Board of Education, the Board just needs to approve the transfer of property and allow the mayor to sign the deed. With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the transfer of property to the Ashe Co. Board of Education & authorize the Mayor to sign the paperwork. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Resolution to Authorize Trade-In of 2009 Honda CR-V at Fair Market Value- The Mayor explained the current budget included the trade in of the 2009 Honda CR-V for a new town vehicle. A resolution was included in the Aldermen packets which would approve the trade in of the Honda at fair market value according to Kelly Blue Book, which was calculated to be \$8,500. Town Manager Brantley Price said he was looking at ordering a Chevrolet Equinox at a cost of \$25,811. With the trade in of the Honda at \$8,500, the difference would be \$17,311. This difference owed would be under budget by \$4,689. With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to approve the resolution authorizing the trade-in of the 2009 Honda CR-V at fair market value. Alderman McMillan seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Sidewalk Request- 114 N. Jefferson Ave- Butch Phillips- Butch Phillips, owner of this property, spoke to the Board on his follow up proposal to turn 114 N. Jefferson Ave. into a music and entertainment venue. Mr. Phillips was following up on his request from last meeting to construct a handicap accessible entrance to this building. Mr. Phillips said a plan B was to construct a handicapped entrance with the ramp set back (recessed) off of the sidewalk. The initial plan was to construct a ramp on the existing sidewalk without a recessed entry. Mr. Phillips stated the importance of the handicapped accessibility due to the change in the use of the building from commercial to assembly use per the County. Mr. Phillips also spoke on other accessibilities of buildings in Town including ramps and tables/chairs which impede the sidewalk. Mr. Phillips requests to be treated fair in this consideration. Mr. Phillips said he plans to turn this building into an event center and rent the upstairs portion or turn into condos, retail or a restaurant. After some discussion it was determined no vote would be needed by the Board if Mr. Phillips decides to create a recessed entryway and would not need to use any sidewalk space. The Board was in consensus with Mr. Phillips’ plan B. No votes were taken at this time.

Consideration of Approval- Order of Collection of Taxes 2017- With no discussion, Alderman McMillan made the motion to approve the order of collection of taxes for 2017. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Resolutions for Street Closures- NC DOT requires a resolution be passed concerning any special events that affects DOT roads in order to ensure there are no known conflicts during the event for road closures. These proposed road closures are for the Antiques Fair on September 15-16, 2017 and the Holiday Parade to be held on November 18, 2017. With no discussion, Alderman Reeves

made the motion to approve both resolutions for street closures as presented. Alderman Summey seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of Stormwater Grant- Town Manager Brantley Price explained a few years ago the Town's storm drains and piping were mapped out, but an updated is needed. There is a grant opportunity the Town could apply for to update the stormwater GIS mapping. If the Board would like to proceed with these updates, there would be an approximate \$3,500 cash match required, with the total cost of the project being \$14,000. Monies from excess tax revenue can be used for this cash match if the Town was awarded the grant. With the Board's approval, Brantley said he would write the High Country Council of Governments a letter stating the Town is interested in pursuing the stormwater grant and willing to pay the match of approximately \$3,500. The HCCOG will be assisting with the grant administration. With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the stormwater grant application. Alderman Summey seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Planning Board Appointments- The Mayor explained there are four members of the Planning Board whose terms expired in July and will expire this month. The following members terms have/will expire: JoAnn Alexander (In-Town), Lester Mullis (In-Town), Jack Hardin (ETJ) and Charlie King (ETJ). JoAnn Alexander is not interested in being reappointed to another three-year term with the remaining three members interested in reappointment. Bob Adams is interested in being appointed for a three-year term in place of JoAnn Alexander. With no discussion, Alderman McMillan made the motion to reappoint Lester Mullis and appoint Bob Adams as in-town Planning Board members. Also, reappoint Jack Hardin and Charlie King to the Planning Board as ETJ members and to send the County for approval. Alderman Shoemaker seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Water/Wastewater Asset Inventory & Assessment Project- Brantley Price stated the Federal Clean Water Act and the NC Water Infrastructure Act will be making loans for grants for the cost of both a Water & Wastewater System Asset Inventory & Assessment Project. The grant amount would be in the amount of \$150,000 for each project and the town will be responsible for the cash match of \$2,250 for each project with a total of 20% match, but the other match will be in-kind match by town employees. Brantley said the Town has funds in maintenance and repair that can be used to fund the match. These project would assist the Town at a later time in applying for grant funding for both water & sewer. Mike Acquesta and Municipal Engineering will assist in applying for the funds. If the Board agrees, two resolutions will need to be adopted, one for water and one for sewer. The Town has applied for these grants twice in the past but has been denied as more needy Towns are awarded first. With no discussion, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the Water & Wastewater Asset Inventory & Assessment Project Resolutions as presented. Alderman Green seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of Downtown Revitalization Project- Brantley explained to the Board that West Jefferson had been awarded \$50,000 by the Rural Economic Development Division of the NC Department of Commerce for downtown revitalization projects. This was approved under NC Session Law 2015-57, Senate Bill 257, Section 15.8(a). These funds can be used for the following: public infrastructure including water, sewer, electric, lighting, sidewalk, traffic, road and/or digital infrastructure improvements, facade or building improvements, property acquisition and wayfinding signage. One option for these funds included completing the sidewalk on the Backstreet, from First St. to Main St., including adding a bumpout on the Backstreet at the stop sign of the intersection of Backstreet and Second St.. Also, to include using pavers for the area that could be used for public space. Another option included adding a small bumpout at WJ Hardware similar to the one across the street at the Hotel Tavern. The proposal is due September 15, 2017 and the project has to be completed by October 2018. The funds can be spent before the proposal is submitted. Discussion took place on installation of

sidewalks on Business 221 between the 7-11 and Carpet House. Brantley said he would check with DOT on the feasibility of sidewalks in this area, but a previous discussion with DOT would require engineering and potential high costs for a sidewalk in this area. The Board was in consensus to call a special meeting to discuss this Downtown Revitalization Project on Wednesday, August 23, 2017 at 5:30pm at West Jefferson Town Hall. No action was taken at this time.

Police Report- Police Chief Jeff Rose gave the Police report for the month of July. There were 260 calls dispatched through the communications center, 15 auto collisions were investigated, 13 people were arrested on charges of larceny, assault and drug related crimes. 11 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. Charles said the filter plant recently had a valve repair and currently 50,000 gallons/day were running through the filter plant. Charles also spoke on lightning recently hitting a well and the control panels, with repairs being made. No major issues to report. The Board thanked Charles for his report.

Maintenance Report- absent.

Town Managers Report- Brantley Price gave his report to the Board. Taxes collected to date are \$40,343 with the 2017 tax bills being mailed out August 1st. Brantley spoke on sidewalk repair along Jefferson Avenue and the Backstreet. The funds for the Mountain Outfitters expansion project were approved and will be moving forward. Brantley read a letter to the Board on the recent water inspection commending the Town employees and their dedication. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comment- opened at 7:04 pm. Ellen Phipps, business and building owner at 1 N. Jefferson Ave., spoke to the Board. Ms. Phipps stated she invested in a building in West Jefferson when many empty buildings were prevalent in downtown. She stated she feels she deserves to be treated fairly for the tax monies spend and paid on her building in downtown. Ms. Phipps said she was disappointed with the Board's decision on the hitching post placement in front of her building when there are plenty of other spaces in Downtown such as in front of Town Hall. Ms. Phipps said she would have liked to have been notified of the hitching post because she's paid \$54,000 in taxes over the last 15 years. Also, Ms. Phipps said she was not notified of this hitching post when Mr. & Mrs. Pucci were still leasing a storefront owned by her and also having the horse drawn carriage rides out in front of her building. Ms. Phipps asked why the Town would allow a hitching post and not charge someone when she's a taxpayer but would allow someone else to have the hitching post and make money as a business. Ms. Phipps asked the Board to reconsider other options of relocating the hitching post other than in front of her building.

Rebecca Lane, spoke to the Board on a proposal for a beer and wine festival in West Jefferson tentatively to be held on Saturday, May 5, 2018. Ms. Lane stated this event potentially could be held in the public parking lot beside Badgers Funeral Home. Rebecca said this could help bring business to Town and educate people on beer and wine making processes and not just be about drinking. Currently, the event coordinators are consulting with the WJ Business Association and WJ Community Partnership and would like to submit to the Board and ask for consideration to be on the agenda next month. Rebecca said a formal proposal would be submitted to the Town with the tentative agenda, insurance, etc. for consideration.

Kathy Hardy, co-owner of Mo's Boots, addressed the Board stating they may be using a storefront in front of where the hitching post may be placed and feels it could hide their storefront and impact their business.

Greg Whiteley, Town resident at 502 Mountain Ave., spoke on his concern and request for a stop sign at the intersection of Locust St., and Mountain Ave. stating there are a number of speeding cars in the area. He feels this area is dangerous, especially for children in the area. He requests the Town look into installing a stop sign at this location.

James & Debbie Pucci, former storefront owner and owners of the horse drawn carriage ride business in West Jefferson, was next to address the Board. Mr. Pucci said he regrets the feelings expressed tonight stating nothing has been done behind closed doors in regards to the hitching post as the Town Board designated this hitching post. Mr. Pucci said it has nothing to do with the lease of Ms. Phipps building, where they recently had a storefront. Mr. Pucci said he feels if a truck was parked in front of the building where the hitching post would be, it would hide any businesses there anyway. Mr. Pucci said when their business was located in front of where the hitching post would be and they had the horse rides open, it would allow their business to make more money and feels the same would occur with any new businesses in that storefront. Mr. Pucci said they are not trying to hinder businesses in West Jefferson but trying to draw people to that corner of the street (intersection of Main St. & N. Jefferson Ave.). Mrs. Pucci stated she had went around to local businesses and acquired approximately 150 signatures of people in favor of the horse drawn carriage rides. Mr. Pucci further stated the decision to put the hitching post at this location had nothing to do with renewing the storefront lease with Ms. Phipps, it just worked out that the business storefront didn't pan out for them. When people are waiting for these rides, Mr. Pucci said people will shop around and visit businesses along this area. Mr. Pucci said what was better than having a boot store than having a horse drawn carriage business in front of their storefront.

Ellen Phipps spoke again to the Board requesting to be on the agenda next month as they did not feel it was important enough to be included on this month's agenda after she asked to be placed on it.

Chad Phipps then addressed the Board. Mr. Phipps said he was Ellen Phipps' son and spoke on placement of the hitching post at the old railroad depot on W. Main St. Mr. Phipps said this is a perfect place for this business in his opinion as the depot was currently used for storage and not a storefront. He also said there is space there and the horses would be visible.

With no other public comment, the Mayor closed public comment at 7:41 pm.

Aldermen Comments- Alderman Shoemaker stated the Town tries to do the best they can for the benefit of West Jefferson. He said there is give and take on all issues and appreciates the input and concerns from all citizens and property owners.

Alderman Reeves stated he is willing to help and work together for the benefit of our citizens and appreciates all comments made.

Alderman McMillan said the Board tries to accommodate the best they can and not everyone will be please when 2 sides are opposed.

Adjournment- With no further items to be discussed or voted on, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alderman Reeves. A vote of 5-0 in favor. The time was 7:45pm.

Dale Baldwin, Mayor

Wesley M. Barker, Town Clerk