

Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 7, 2020 | 6:00 pm

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

Town Staff Present: Town Manager Brantley Price, Town Attorney Jak Reeves, and Town Clerk Rebecca Eldreth

Mayor Hartman called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Alderman to order at 6pm. Alderman Reeves led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the December 7, 2020 Agenda – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the agenda with the addition. Alderman Reeves seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Regular Session

Approval of Minutes – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the minutes from the regular meeting held on November 2, 2020. Alderwoman Miller seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Antenna Installation at the New Well Site by Carolina West Wireless – Joel McMillan with Carolina West Wireless presented to the Board via Zoom. Joel discussed the potential of placing a 35-foot-tall wooden utility pole with one antenna on top at the well site across from GE. Town Manager Brantley Price and WWTP ORC Brandon Patrick have both reviewed the proposed location and see no issues with the placement. The lease will be for either 5 or 10 years with the option to renew for an additional 10 years with the rental fee increasing by 3% each year. Alderman Green asked that Town Attorney review the lease prior to completion. With no further discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the lease giving the Town Manager the option to approve a 5- or 10-year lease as he sees fits. Alderman Barr seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor. Joel McMillian thanked the Board for their consideration.

Discussion of Police Officer Firearm Buyback – Mayor Hartman informed the Board the police department budgeted to replace their handguns this year. In the past the Town has sold the handguns back to the officers, and several of the officers have expressed interest in buying back their guns. Per NC General Statute 20-187.2(b) *Active members of NC State Law-Enforcement agencies, upon change of type of weapon worn or carried by such member at a price which shall be the average yield to the state from the sale of similar weapons during the preceding year.* The Board agreed \$250 is a fair price for the Officers to buyback the weapons after researching the price of used handguns. With no further discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the sale of the handguns for \$250 to the Officers. Alderwoman Miller seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of the County Billing and Collecting Property Taxes – Mayor Hartman stated that the County has proposed billing and collecting the taxes for each town to streamline the process. The County's Tax Administrator Chris Lambert would like the decision to be made soon to prepare for 2021 tax bills. After some discussion Alderman Shoemaker made the motion for the Town to continue billing and collection the taxes in house. Alderman Green seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Demonstration Permit Revision – Mayor Hartman stated that the Demonstration permit needs to be updated as the statement “unless a specific exemption applies as set forth in the North Carolina General Statutes, no one involved in the permitted activity as granted in the permit shall carry a firearm or weapon” to cover any ambiguities. With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to approve the revision as presented. Alderman Reeves seconded with a unanimous vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of Board of Adjustment Date – After some discussion it was decided to set the date of Monday, December 21st at 5:30pm.

Consideration of Purchasing Ham or Turkey in Lieu of Employee Lunch Due to COVID-19 – Mayor Hartman explain that he would like to offer the employees a ham, turkey, or gift card since the Town was unable to hold the annual summer picnic or Christmas Lunch. Alderman Reeves made the motion to gift all the Town employees a \$60 gift card. Alderwoman Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of Police Department’s Totaled 2019 Ford Interceptor – Officer Miller collided with a deer in his 2019 Ford Interceptor causing \$18,000 in damages totaling the vehicle. The Insurance company has offered \$29,999.61 as the total loss settlement which includes replace required equipment for a police vehicle. A new vehicle would cost an additional \$14,600 on top the settlement payout. The other option would be to repair the damaged vehicle, but the repaired vehicle would only have a salvaged title which not covered by collision insurance. After some discussion, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the purchase of a new police vehicle. Alderman Shoemaker seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Town Managers Report – Brantley Price, Town Manager gave his report to the Board. Rain totals for the month are 3.1 inches making the year-to-date total 77.4 inches. The spring has one filter running at approximately 45,000 gallons per day. The state of North Carolina is currently in Phase 3 under the Governor’s Executive Order until December 13th. Ashe has a total of 1052 cases confirmed with 111 currently active. WJPD received 5 calls last week for masks violations. North Carolina is scheduled to receive the Pfizer vaccine in the late part of December. Invoice Cloud is up and fully functionally. Quotes for the Downtown Wi-Fi project are due this week. A preliminary study has been completed on the North Jefferson Avenue sidewalks with only a few easements and driveway issues on the lower section. The property owners are willing to work with the Town to resolve the issues. Taxes collected to date total 73.2% of the levy. Sales tax for the year is up 12% for the year. At the last meeting, the Board requested that contact be made with the owners of the billboards at the intersection of Hwy 221 and 163. The owner called after a letter was sent by the Town. He stated that he understood the concerns but stated that it is good income for the family as they have 4 kids. He plans to set 2 rows of rose bushes under the billboards. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comments – Mayor Hartman opened the meeting to public comment. With no comments the Mayor closed public comment.

Aldermen Comments – Alderman Shoemaker complimented the Town and all the Christmas lights with lots of visitors. Alderman Green and Alderman Reeves agreed with Alderman Shoemaker. Alderwoman Miller thanked the fire department for riding Santa around on Saturday afternoon. Alderman Barr thanked the fire department and the town for the decorations.

Closed Session – Mayor Hartman asked for a motion to enter closed session per G.S. 143.318.11(a)(6) to consult with the Town Board concerning personnel. Alderman Reeves made the motion to enter closed session.

Adjournment – With nothing further, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Alderman Barr with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Tom Hartman, Mayor

Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk