

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THE MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMAN TAKEN AT A REGULAR TOWN MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 18, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M. AT THE ARNAUVILLE MEETING ROOM, 107 RUE DE JAUSIERS, ARNAUVILLE, LA 70512

Present: Mayor, Todd Meche

Aldermen: Jamie Huval, Debbie Kidder, Kevin Robin, Cynthia Stelly, Suzanne Stelly

Town Clerk: Dolores R. Quebedeaux

Town Attorney: Kay Theunissen

Town Engineer: Kenny Boagni

Police Chief: Eddy LeCompte

Utility Superintendent: Todd Abshire

Parks and Recreation Director: Zelma Jackson

Called to Order: Mayor Meche

Prayer: Suzanne Stelly

Pledge: All

Mayor Meche asked the board to amend the agenda to add Mr. Willie Wyble, Jamie Huval moved to add Mr. Wyble to the agenda seconded by Cynthia Stelly, motion passed.

Accept January 21, 2020 Regular Town Meeting Minutes—Mayor Meche

Jamie Huval moved to accept the January 21, 2020 Regular Town Meeting Minutes seconded by Debbie Kidder, motion passed.

Accept January 2020 Expenses—Mayor Meche

Jamie Huval moved to accept the January 2020 Expenses seconded by Suzanne Stelly, motion passed.

Utility Report—Todd Abshire

The Mayor and Board Members were given a utility report provided by Todd Abshire.

Water—Well #1 was chlorinated and cross-washed. The well will be put back in service as soon as samples are cleared by LDH. The utility department will begin flushing the water system as soon as Well #1 is put back online. A 6" gate valve that was leaking on Well #1 was changed. There is a 6" check valve inside of the chlorination room that is not holding but they are still capable of valving off the treatment plant using a valve in the well yard. This check valve can be changed in the future, probably during the next project at the well. The monthly Safe Drinking Water Act daily chlorine residual logs were verified by Todd Abshire and are on file in the utility office filing cabinet as required by law.

Wastewater—The monthly flow records were faxed to HoPak Laboratories to verify flow in accordance with the discharge permit, as well as all analytical results being examined, reported and filed in the appropriate filing cabinet in the utility department files.

Gas—The gas system is operating near 40 pounds of inlet pressure at the Cypress Station and 40 psi at the Koch Station.

Todd is working on a water and wastewater rate study as requested by the mayor and should have the results before the new fiscal year budget is proposed.

LRWA is hosting a Management Training at the Town of Washington Community Center from 5-9 P.M. of February 27th, Mayor, Council; Clerks are invited to the training. The training is specifically designed for decision makers and discusses topics such as the public bid law, open meetings law, LDH operational requirements for water and wastewater systems, setting sustainable rates, policies and procedures, management's responsibilities, etc., the training is free and supper will be served.

Kenny Boagni stated that the drainage project on East Street is progressing, and the difficult part is complete.

Police Report—Chief Eddy LeCompte

With the Etouffee Festival just two months away the Department has been reviewing how well the movement of vehicles proceeded when a “One Way” circle for traffic was implemented around the cemetery and festival area. Unless negative feedback is received their intentions are to replicate what was done last year.

Another Neighborhood Watch meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 26, 2020 at the Town Hall meeting room with an anticipated starting time of approximately 6 P.M. Chief is hoping to have guest speakers from neighboring parishes. Everyone is invited who lives in the 70512 zip code area.

Three employees submitted their resignation. Patrol Officer Cody LeBlanc effective January 31, 2020, Provisional Patrol Officer Ryan Ferguson effective February 14, 2020 and Dispatcher Christina Clark effective February 1, 2020. Further, Reinstated Provisional Patrol Officer Taylor Rials Bergeron changed her mind and resigned a second time also refusing to return in a Reserve Officer capacity.

Since the Department is working with a skeleton crew he has sought and received the services of the Sheriff’s Office to assist in manning three night shifts per week. Chief said that he is also filling in temporarily as needed.

He asked the Council to increase the pay of Patrol Officers effective immediately as per recommendations, along with the suggestion of Mayor Todd Meche confirmed by his email of the past weekend. He applauds the Mayor’s acknowledgement of a need for pay adjustments in aiding the efforts to recruit and retain candidates for a longer period, as well as bringing the department salaries closer to a living wage. It is recommended that starting pay for a Provisional Patrol Officer with no experience will be \$10.58 per hour (Grade 2 step 7), after a probationary period of six months, depending on acceptable performance, pay will increase to \$11.64 per hour (Grade 2 Step 15), and finally after graduation from POST Academy, upon recommendation, the pay will be \$13.09 per hour (Grade 2 Step 26).

- 1) Chief petitioned the Council to approve the hiring of Mr. Curtis Chavis to the position of Provisional Patrol Officer at a pay rate of \$10.58 per hour subject to the approval of the recommended pay schedule proposed. Should the proposed pay schedule pay be adopted.
- 2) Chief petitioned the Council to adjust the pay of Provisional Patrol Officer Shamar Smith to what is being offered to Mr. Chavis (\$10.58 per hour).
- 3) Chief petitioned the Council to increase the pay rate of Provisional Patrol Officer Jacob Russo to \$11.64 per hour since he has satisfactorily completed six months service in his position in an acceptable manner.
- 4) Chief petitioned the Council to approve the hiring of Brody Pierrottie to the position of Night Dispatcher at a pay rate of \$8.56 per hour.

Chief intends to review the pay rates of all the Dispatchers and shall submit a pay rate adjustment for them at the next Council meeting.

Statistics for the Arnaudville Police Department for the month of January 2020 were: 13 Citations, 5 arrests, 90 calls for service.

Mayor asked for a motion to accept the pay scale as recommended by the chief, Debbie Kidder moved to accept the recommendation of the chief seconded by Suzanne Stelly, motion passed.

Jamie Huval motioned to hire Mr. Curtis Chavis at \$10.58 per hour seconded by Kevin Robin, motion carried.

Jamie Huval moved to up the pay of Jacob Russo to \$11.64 per hour seconded by Debbie Kidder, motion carried.

Mayor asked for a motion on the hiring of Brody Pierrottie, Debbie Kidder moved to table the hiring of Mr. Pierrottie seconded by Cynthia Stelly, motion carried.

Jamie said considering what was brought in front of the Council at the previous meeting from the Chief he also supports tabling. Chief said he is shorthanded dispatchers and they will be working a lot of overtime.

Parks and Recreation—Zelma Jackson

Zelma stated that registration is out for Baseball, and they are trying to finish the work on the dugouts. Some bids are being accepted for the fences.

Willie Wyble

Willie Wyble stated that he is having problems with the police department. He said that he requested a copy of a document that should have been completed on Saturday (Feb. 15, 2020) he requested the document on Monday morning (Feb. 17, 2020) he does not have what he requested. Mr. Wyble asked the chief if he had the report that he asked for, the Chief said no. Jamie asked what document Willie was inquiring about; Willie said it was a report of an incident that happened between him and Officer Jacob Russo. Willie asked the Chief if he had any idea when he would get the report, chief said this matter is being investigated. Willie said he is still under the impression that he can still get the document. Chief said he could not get the report due to it being under investigation. Willie said that Chief said that he called 911; Mr. Wyble said he went to the 911 office and he said the paper work that was given to him had absolutely nothing to do with 911. The paper work states that Willie made a phone call at 5:56 to the dispatcher Mrs. Richard he wants to know what phone number made the call, chief said if the dispatcher writes the number it will be in the log book. Willie told the chief the paper work has nothing to do with him. Jamie Huval asked what generated this matter and Willie stated he needed to find out from the chief. Willie also told the chief that the police department is being put on notice that when the department speaks to him in person or on the phone he will video and audio record any communication between them will be documented. Willie informed the Council that he went to St. Landry Parish and filed a complaint and that they will handle this matter. The Chief is required to do his part on this matter. He said that St. Landry will handle this matter but he will follow up on the matter. Kevin Robin asked Mr. Wyble for a copy of his documents. Jamie asked Mr. Wyble to give a briefing of what happened to him. Willie stated that he was taken off of his property. Jamie asked if he was arrested and Willie stated that he was and his Miranda Rights were read to him, and was handcuffed. He said that he was pulled off of his steps while sitting down. Jamie asked him if those were bruises and Willie stated it was. He also notified the Chief that when he is on his land and no laws have been broken neither the chief or his officers will remove him from his property. Kevin Robin asked Mr. Wyble why he was arrested. Mr. Wyble said according to Mr. Russo he was disobeying the direct orders of a police officer he needed to vacate his property. Jamie asked Willie why he was asked to vacate and Willie said that he would have to ask Mr. Russo. Jamie stated that is very troubling to hear a citizen like Mr. Wyble who volunteers at the Church for someone to be treated this way by the Police Department; he said that it is unfortunate that this council has been wrestling with so many issues with the department. Jamie stated that the police department has gone through numerous employees and was told it was due to the pay. Jamie stated that the council has upped the pay; the police officers know what the pay is when they take the positions. Jamie also stated that there is a problem with hostile work environment in the department; several of the police officers have spoken to the Council about complaints in the department. With that being said Jamie said that he is calling for the formal resignation of Chief Eddy LeCompte.

FORMAL CALL FOR REQUEST OF CHIEF EDDY LCOMPTE'S RESIGNATION

For the past six years, Chief Eddie LeCompte has served our town, and we are forever grateful for that sacrifice. However, within the last few years, particularly, last six months, this council's confidence in Chief Eddie LeCompte has diminished. Over the past several months the Council of the Town of Arnaudville as collected, what is believed to be, substantial evidence of numerous Exhibits proving that Chief Eddie LeCompte is no longer fit for the position of Chief of the Town of Arnaudville. These exhibits

cover anywhere the thirty-eight employees we have lost under the leadership of this administration to the hostile work environment this administration has been accused of, the numerous lawsuits our town has been subjected to under this administration, as well as a lack of protection provided by the Arnaudville Police Department because the administration is unable to keep its department properly staffed. This council strongly believes that it is not only our fiduciary responsibility to the Town of Arnaudville, but also our responsibility to the staff members of the Arnaudville Police Department as well. Therefore, today, February 18, 2020, the council, as a whole and in unison, in representation with the people of Arnaudville asks for the formal resignation of Chief Eddie LeCompte.

Respectfully signed:

Jamie Huval

Kevin Robin

Cynthia Stelly

Debbie Kidder

Suzanne Stelly

Jamie Huval asked Chief Eddie LeCompte if he would resign and Chief LeCompte said no.

Jamie stated that in that case he is calling for a vote of confidence.

A VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE

In the matter of Chief Eddie LeCompte, Chief LeCompte has no competence with money, no competence with managing his employees, no competence in retaining employees, no competence in running his department, no competence in working with the governing body, and no competence when hiring employees.

With this being said, I Councilman Jamie Huval, on the 18th day of February, 2020, makes a motion that this council call for a vote of No Confidence on Chief Eddie LeCompte. Let it be known that while this vote cannot remove the Chief from office it shows that this governing body does not agree with his actions and decisions he has made as a leader of our community and most importantly we do not support him in these actions and decisions. However, let the record reflect that while this body has no confidence in the chief, we do fully support our officers and dispatchers who put their lives on the line daily to make sure that each of us can sleep soundly at night and we wish to continue a working relationship with each of them seconded by Debbie Kidder, motion passed.

Jamie stated that he is on the Agenda for Police Department Solutions but unfortunately Sheriff Bobby Guidroz was not able to attend. Sheriff Guidroz will be at the next town meeting, Jamie asked the council to please consider the possibility of looking into the Sheriff coming into the Town of Arnaudville and replacing the police department, not replacing but taking a look at different avenues of protection. Chief LeCompte said he is aware of what Mr. Huval is implying; he said they have lost a number of police officers. He said that in his tenure of 5 years he lost police officers.

Chief asked Shamar Smith what was his badge number and he answered 32. Chief said they started off with badge number 10, he said he now has police officers here that are still working. He has lost 19 officers in 5 years. He said he looks at this council and yes there have been employees who have gone to the council without going through him at no time has any of the council members gone to him and asked him for his reply on any problems. He feels this is a kangaroo court, he said he looks at the council as representatives of the town that are acting as a jury and as a jury the council should be open minded to both sides of any story. He said he has never been approached as to why he is doing what he is doing and what he has done and why he is doing it. He said his door is always open; he has no problem with someone approaching him. He said there is a discrepancy in pay, there is a discrepancy in not having insurance. He understands why officers have left because of better pay and insurance. He applauds the officers and understands. He said the officers work 12 hour shifts not 8 hour shifts, they

do not get holidays because they have to work. Chief said he fills in whenever he possibly can and gets calls at all hours of the night. All of his employees have been told that they can come and talk with him. Chief stated that his budget is always under budget. All police business is confidential. The police department has to be unbiased; he would like to see the council members to be unbiased as well. Jamie stated that he would email chief with a list of line items.

Jamie Huval moved to open the meeting to the public seconded by Cynthia Stelly, motion passed.

Melanie Robin stated that she feels everyone is in attendance for the same reasons. Everyone has love for the Town of Arnaudville. Melanie said that she takes care of the law officers by providing food and drinks for all of them. Melanie said that she wonders why one police officer put their business on Face Book. She said they were victims of 2 crimes on a Saturday evening, she called the police department and she was told they could not do anything because it was out of their jurisdiction, but the crime happened in the town limits. Chief said that if a crime is committed in the town and do not live in town limits, the only thing he can do is take the report , write the report up and a cut a warrant to arrest that person. Melanie asked if the report was written and chief said no and the only thing he heard about the incident was that the officer searched for the person and could not find him. He knows who the person is that committed the crime. Chief said the officer went back and he was asked to leave the business. Melanie stated that this has not happened, no officer was ever asked to leave the premises. Melanie stated that the criminals need to be taken off of the streets and if they are told it is out of their jurisdiction what are they to do. She said they just have to be victims of crime for the seventh time. Melanie stated that she is not involved in insubordination and lies for anything with the store that she runs for 37 years.

Kevin asked who the chief of police is; Melanie said she was the chief of police. Kevin said that the buck stops with the chief. Kevin said he has been in the room and Melanie was a victim of crime, he cannot tell him what this woman was subjected to. He said chief held the line and lied and said he does not have confidence in the chief. Kevin said that it is time for the foolishness to stop. He said the police department is not being run on a professional basis, he said he does not blame the police officers he blames the chief. Melanie stated that everyone needs to work together and that is not happening. Melanie said that perhaps both parishes should take over and protect the town. Kevin Robin thanked District Attorney Cravins for attending the regular town meeting. Mr. Cravins stated that he does not take sides but is happy he had attended.

Jamie Huval moved to re-enter into the regular town meeting seconded by Debbie Kidder, motion passed.

Up-Date from Parish Council—Alvin Stelly

Mr. Stelly thanked the Mayor, Council, Town Clerk and the Chief of Police for allowing him to attend. Mr. Stelly congratulated Mr. Charles Cravin's for being the new District Attorney. Mr. Stelly said that as of Saturday parish president Mr. Bill Fontenot was in ICU in Baton Rouge and has not had an update since then. Mr. Stelly spoke of the jail tax, he said that the tax is needed and should be considered. He said it was voted down but will be on the ballot in November. He said that if the jail tax does not pass there will be serious problems. Mr. Stelly stated that he represents District 7 and if anyone needs anything that he can help with please call. Mr. Stelly was thanked by the Mayor and Council for his prompt responses.

U-Date on Projects—Mayor Meche

East Street drainage should be completed within the next 3 or 4 weeks. The sale of the new water well property is completed. Mayor will be getting prices for a fence for the new water well. The generators are being worked on to get ready for the hurricane season. These generators are for the gas, water and sewer plant. The water main next to Myrans will soon be replaced. Also, the pot holes are being analyzed so patch work can begin.

Citizens' Concerns

Adjourn

Motion was made by Debbie Kidder seconded by Cynthia Stelly, motion carried.

Attest:

Dolores R. Quebedeaux, Town Clerk

Todd Meche, Mayor