

**Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 6, 2021 | 6:00 p.m.**

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

Town Staff Present: Town Manager Brantley Price, Town Attorney Jak Reeves, Town Clerk Rebecca Eldreth, Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller, and WWTP Superintendent Brandon Patrick.

Several other residents of the community also attended.

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Hartman called to order the meeting of the Board of Aldermen. After the Mayor offered the invocation, those in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance which was led by Alderman Shoemaker.

Approval of the December 6, 2021 Agenda – Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Approval of the November 1, 2021 Meeting Minutes – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Alderwoman Miller seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Organizational Meeting

Swearing in Ceremony of Newly Elected Officials – Mayor Hartman introduced Clerk of Superior Court Pam Barlow who would be performing the swearing in ceremony of the newly elected officials. Mrs. Barlow preceded to swear in Alderman-elect Calvin Green, Alderman-elect John Reeves, and Alderman-elect Stephen Shoemaker.

Appointment of Mayor Pro tempore - With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to appoint Alderman Reeves as Mayor pro tempore. Alderman Green seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

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 how they looked forward to serving on the Board alongside their fellow Board members.

Regular Session

Consideration of Fire Department Relief Board of Trustees – Mayor Hartman informed the board that two individuals need to be appointed for the Fire Department Relief Board of Trustees. Alderman Green made the motion to appoint Fire Chief Eric Miller and Mayor Hartman to the board. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of Mutual Aid Agreement – Fire Marshall Josh Steelman came before the board to review a mutual aid agreement to the board for sections of Big Tree and Buffalo Three Top. The agreement would allow the departments to provide the highest level of fire protection to their respective fire districts along with the lowest possible public protection classification ratings for the homeowners. The agreement does not facilitate the exchange of fire districts or tax revenues. After some discussion,

Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the agreements as presented by Fire Marshal Steelman. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of 2022 Christmas in July Layout – Jane Lonon and John Smyre spoke on behalf of the Christmas in July Committee to present the plan to return the event to Jefferson Avenue. A map with the road closures was provided to the board with detours highlighted along Backstreet and Hice Street to School Avenue. The new layout would close Jefferson Avenue from Ashe Street to Second Street along with Main Street from Backstreet to the intersection for School Avenue and Sixth Avenue allowing the intersection to remain open to traffic. The new arrangement would stage the vendors in a checkerboard style pattern with the openings of the booth facing the sidewalks. The main stage would be placed on Main Street facing Jefferson Avenue. After some discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the new layout. Alderwoman Miller seconded with a vote of 5-0 following the motion.

Introduction of Ashe County Museum New Administrator – Andrew Cole, the new administrator of Ashe County Museum introduced himself and extended the invitation to the Toys for Tots toy drive. The Board welcomed Andrew.

Consideration of SB 300 Ordinance Revision – Mayor Hartman stated that last month Town Attorney Jak Reeves reviewed Senate Bill 300 which would require the town to amend the ordinances that can be criminally enforced. The revisions have a deadline of December 2021. Revisions for Chapter 93 Noise and Chapter 94 Nuisances were presented to the board that include the penalty listed within the chapters. Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the ordinances as written. Alderman Shoemaker seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Personnel Policy Amendment – Mayor Hartman explained that the new property insurance carrier for the Town has made a recommendation for the Town to review Motor Vehicle Records as the insurance company believes the inquiry will strengthen the current safety protocols. The Town Attorney has reviewed the recommendation and would like to see the revision added to the personnel policy. After some discussion Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the revision as presented. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration to Adopt Wellhead Protection Plan – An update to the Wellhead Protection Plan is required every five years. The update includes the addition of the new well site located near GE off Ray Taylor Road. With no discussion, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the updated protection plan as presented. Alderman Barr seconded with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Letter of Joint Venture on Paddy Mountain – A letter of agreement has been drafted for the collaboration between the Town of West Jefferson, County of Ashe, and Blue Ridge Conservancy on the purchase, development, and future maintenance of the Paddy Mountain property. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the agreement as presented. Alderwoman Miller seconded the motion with a unanimous vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Proclamation for Round Up for Paddy Mountain – Round Up for Paddy campaign has been established to assist with raising the additional funds for the purchase of Paddy Mountain.

Alderman Shoemaker made the motion in support of the proclamation. Alderwoman Miller seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor of the motion.

Consideration of Cemetery Plot Purchase – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the cemetery plot purchase for Gerold and Shelley Elliott. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Discussion of January Meeting Date – After some discussion, the date of Tuesday, January 4, 2022 was selected for the next meeting due to January 3, 2022 being a holiday.

Police Report – Absent

Water/Wastewater & Maintenance Report – WWTP Superintendent Brandon Patrick gave his report to the Board. Rain totals for the month were reported at 1.4 inches. A 6-inch water main was repaired on Jefferson Avenue before the Thanksgiving holiday. Since repairing the leak the flow at the wastewater plant has decreased by 40,000 gallons per day. The filter plant currently remains closed. The Board thanked Brandon for his report.

Maintenance Report – Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller gave his report to the Board. Monthly totals were reported with 54 locate tickets, 3 water leaks, 2 sewer issues, 5 taps installed, and 2 loads of junk hauled to the landfill. The maintenance department welcomed 2 new employees this month. The Board thanked Eric for his report.

Town Managers Report – Brantley Price, Town Manager congratulated the reelected members of the board. COVID-19 cases for Ashe County total 3534 with 60 cases active and 124 directed to quarantine. Over half the population has been either partially or fully vaccinated. An average of 54 clients per day have been accessing the public wifi with numbers averaging 100-150 users on Saturdays. The Town has put a hold on spending the American Rescue Plan funds as projects over \$5000 must be approved by the US Treasury, and it has been stated that no projects were to be approved at this time. The North Jefferson Avenue sidewalk project is ready to go out to bid. The bids will be for 2 sections in which one will replace the current section of sidewalk and the other to construct new sidewalks from 5th Street to 7th Street. Completion date for the project will be June 30 with a start date in March. The US Highway 221 aesthetics project has been awarded to Country Boy Landscaping, Inc with the completion date of the initial planting May 31, 2022. Taxes collected to date total 87% of the levy. Sales tax was up 12% in August with a year-to-date increase of 9%. The oil barrels under the sidewalk in front of the old Burgess Furniture Store building have been removed as required for the sale of the building. The new industrial park has received permits for the waterline installation from the state. Sewer flow has been down due to the dry conditions with daily flows of 160,000 gallons. The maintenance department have added 2 new employees, and both seem to be good additions to the team. The police department received a \$20,000 grant from the Governor's Crime Prevention for new radios with the assistance of the High Country Council of Governments. A small issue was reported on the audit as the police budget was overspent by \$4,000 due to placing COVID funds in the expense account instead of the revenue account. Priscilla Norris will be here to review the audit in January. The county currently issued a burning ban within 100 feet of a residence. Brantley then reminded the Board of the Christmas lunch at Craft Bistro on Friday, December 10th at Noon. The Board Thanked Brantley for his report.

Aldermen Comments – Mayor Hartman congratulated the recently reelected members to the board. All members of the Board thanked those in attendance.

Public Comments – None

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

Tom Hartman, Mayor

Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk