

Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 6, 2023 | 6:00 pm

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

Town Staff Present: Town Manager Brantley Price, Town Attorney Jak Reeves, Town Clerk Rebecca Eldreth, Police Chief Brad Jordan, Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller, and Wastewater Superintendent Brandon Patrick

At 6:00 pm Mayor Hartman called to order the meeting of the Board of Alderman. After the invocation was given, those in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of March 6, 2023 Agenda – Mayor Hartman made the request to strike the Summer Literacy Initiative from the agenda. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the agenda with the deletion of the Summer Literacy Initiative. Alderman Green seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Public Hearings

Consideration of Voluntary Annexation of Parcel 19223184003, 19223184003, 192231847004 – Mayor Hartman stated the purpose of the public hearing is to hear any comments on the proposed annexation of the property located off Mount Jefferson Road. The public hearing was open at 6:02pm. Adjoining property owner Ernie Morrow came forward to ask where access to the property will be located. Roy Putnam, the pastor of the church came forward to answer Mr. Morrow’s questions. The right of way will be located off the access of 875 Mount Jefferson Road. Chris Kiernan then asked how the use of the right of way would affect the parking for the existing business at 875 Mount Jefferson Road. Mr. Putnam stated that Sundays would be the biggest day for traffic and that they would be good neighbors. With no further comment Mayor Hartman closed the public hearing at 6:11pm.

Consideration of Fire Tax Increase for FY 2023-2024 – Mayor Hartman stated the purpose of the public hearing is to hear any comments on the proposed increase of the fire tax for FY 2023-2024. The public hearing was open at 6:11pm. Town Manager Brantley Price gave a summary about the fire tax increase stating the funds would be used for two full time workers to join the department. The increase would provide an additional \$190,000 in funds. Alderman Green stated the increase would only affect the residents in the West Jefferson fire district outside of city limits. There were no comments opposing the fire tax increase. With no further comment, Mayor Hartman closed the public hearing at 6:13pm.

Regular Session

Approval of Minutes – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the minutes for the January and February regular meeting minutes. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Voluntary Annexation of Parcel 19223184002, 19223184003, 19223184004 – With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to approve annexation of the three parcels for Restoration Church. Alderwoman Miller seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Fire Tax Increase for FY 2023-2024 –With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to approve the increase in fire tax to \$0.04 per \$100 in value. Alderman Shoemaker seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Art on the Mountain – Executive Director Joni Ray came before the board for approval of the 2023 Art on the Mountain event. The footprint would block off traffic on School Avenue in front of the Arts Center at 303 School Avenue from the crosswalk to the side entrance to the lumber warehouse on Saturday, September 23 from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the Art on the Mountain footprint as presented. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Farmers Market Lease – Market President Jennifer Ley gave the board a review of the 2022 market. The 2022 market hosted over 20,000 visitors with live music cooking demonstrations, master gardening classes, and had the most successful fall festival to date. The market was able to optimize the double up program giving the recipients of EBT, WIC and senior programs double the amount of dollars when they purchase from the market. The market has applied for a \$6,000 grant that they would like to use to improve the accessibility in the market. The 2023 market already has 50 vendors and opens on April 8, 2023. Jennifer then asked the board to approve the 2023-2024 lease for the market. With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the lease. Alderwoman Miller seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Food Trucks in the Park for Lost Providence – This agenda item was skipped since no one was present to discuss.

Consideration of Renaming a Portion of Graybeal Avenue – Chris Phipps, owner of the old tobacco warehouse located at 104 Long Street came before the board to see if there was any interest in letting him rename the portion of Graybeal Avenue that runs in front of his building in. The board were all in agreeance that Chris can rename the road as long as he keeps the heritage of the tobacco warehouse in mind. With no further discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made a motion to approve the renaming of the portion of Graybeal Avenue. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

ABC Report – Haskell McGuire gave his report to the board noting that sales for the store are still increasing but at a slower pace. The second quarter for year 2022-2023 saw a 1.29% increase in sales over the previous year. Haskell then gave an update on two areas of concern,

alcohol abuse education and the distribution of limited supply liquors. The Board thanked Haskell for his report.

Consideration of Contract with Sextons for Pond – Attorney Jak Reeves reviewed the mutual agreement contract between the Town and Go Green Agribusiness to allow the installation of a dry hydrant for use as a water source by local fire departments. With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to accept the contract as presented. Alderwoman Miller seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of ARPA Funds – Mayor Hartman explained that the board needed to adopt a resolution accepting the ARPA funds in the state budget. With no discussion, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the resolution to accept the funds. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Consideration of Sidewalk Sales – Mayor Hartman gave a list of dates for the Mo's Boots and Mountain Outfitters sidewalk sales. The board was in consensus to approve the dates as presented but would like a list of guidelines of acceptable behaviors put together for the businesses before the sales take place. Items mentioned were not to park any trailers or equipment in the alleyways and not to park personal vehicles in front of other businesses during the sales. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the sidewalk sales with the conditions laid out by the Town Manager. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Review of Police Manual – Town Attorney Jak Reeves and Police Chief Brad Jordan presented the policy manual for the board to review. Revisions and suggestions will be discussed at a future meeting. The board thanked Jak and Brad for their work on the manual.

Discussion of Budget Meeting Date – The board agreed to meet Thursday, March 16th at 5:30pm.

Tax Releases – With no discussion, Alderman Green made a motion to release the taxes as presented. Alderman Shoemaker seconded the motion with a vote of 5-0 in favor.

Police Report – Chief Jordan gave his report to the Board for the month of February. A total of 249 calls were dispatched through the communications center including 11 motor vehicle crashes, 11 larcenies, 4 drug cases, 2 DWIs, 10 minor citations, 2 trespasses, and other miscellaneous calls. The Board thanked Chief Jordan for his report.

Water and Wastewater Report – Wastewater Superintendent Brandon Patrick gave his report to the Board. A total of 4 inches of rain were recorded for the month of February. Beaver Creek and Greenfield pump stations were added to SCADA. The filter plant is producing over 90,000 gallons per day. The Board thanked Brandon for his report.

Maintenance Report – Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller gave his report to the Board. A total of 69 one call tickets were located, 2 water leaks, 2 sewer issues were reported for the month. The department has completed the 10% sewer line flush as required by the state, cleaned out storm drains, made 4 trips to the landfill, marked water lines on Mount Jefferson, finished the bench and table installs in the park. The board thanked Eric for his report.

Town Managers Report – Brantley Price, Town Manager gave his report to the Board beginning with project updates. The town received a grant for the feasibility study for sidewalks leading from downtown to Beaver Creek School Road. Sidewalk installation would be \$71,000. The town did not receive any of the infrastructure grants, but did receive the Asset Inventory Assessment Grant of \$200,000 each for water and sewer in addition to \$55,000 for the study on the interconnect between West Jefferson and Jefferson. Taxes collected to date total 96% of the levy. Sales tax for October was up 9.5% over the prior year with year-to-date sales tax up 14%. The West Jefferson Business Association and West Jefferson Tourism Development Authority have both agreed to split the cost of the snowflakes for the light poles. Pump capacity issues were revealed while completing permits for New River Heights. The town will need to review and see the best way to increase the capacity at each pump station as the capacity will be needed for the new town homes, middle school, and industrial park. This item will be added to the budget to get an engineering firm to access, make recommendations, and give estimates on how to upgrade to increase capacity. A copy of the trail designs for Mount Paddy were distributed to the board. The trails include a 1.7-mile upper loop and a 1.1-mile lower loop with a .3-mile connector from the parking area. Blue Ridge Conservancy will be applying for \$100,000 in funding which would give sufficient funds to construct the trails along with some funds thru the state for the design that has not all been spent. The conservancy will also be applying for a PARTF grant to construct shelters, restrooms, and parking area. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comments – Todd Loy with Barks and Company inquired about the use of parking spaces in front of the store to celebrate the 1 year anniversary. The board informed Todd to he would need make his official request at the April board meeting.

Aldermen Comments – The Board thanked all those in attendance along with town staff. Mayor Hartman expressed his condolences to Alderman Green for the loss of his wife, Dot Green.

Adjournment – With nothing further, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Alderman Reeves with a vote of 5-0 in favor. The time was 7:15pm.

Tom Hartman, Mayor

Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk