

Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2024 | 6:00 pm

Board Members Present: Mayor Tom Hartman, Alderman Rusty Barr, Alderman Calvin Green, Alderman John Reeves, Alderwoman Shelton, and Alderman Stephen Shoemaker (absent)

Town Staff Present: Town Manager Brantley Price, Assistant Town Manager Rebecca Eldreth, Town Attorney Jak Reeves, Police Chief Brad Jordan, and Wastewater Superintendent Brandon Patrick

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

Approval of February 5, 2024 Agenda – Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Alderman Reeves seconded with a motion of 4-0 in favor.

Public Hearings

Consideration of Rezoning Parcel 19267411 & 19267464 – Mayor Hartman stated the purpose of the public hearing is to hear any comments on the proposed rezoning of the property located off Oakwood Road. The public hearing was open at 6:01pm. David Tucker gave an overview of the project that includes no more than 30 single family dwellings and twin homes which will be built to conform with the existing neighborhood. The development will take at least a year and a half to complete. Several members of the community including Kevin Aldridge, Anthony Hamilton, Steve Leashomb, Don Lawrence, and Josh Rountree expressed their concerns for the development that included stormwater management and increased traffic on Oakwood Road. Mayor Hartman closed the public hearing at 6:23pm.

Regular Session

Approval of Minutes – With no discussion, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the minutes as presented. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Discussion of Keep America Beautiful 250th Anniversary – John Pence with Keep Ashe Beautiful came before the Board to share the 250th Anniversary celebration of Keep America Beautiful and to challenge the board to be part of the Greatest American Cleanup. If adopted the pledge will commit the Town to three simple actions of organizing three annual cleanups, hosting two beautification events, and hosting an annual celebration of the progress. Alderman Barr made the motion to adopt the Greatest American Cleanup Pledge. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Presentation of FY 2022-23 Town Audit – Priscilla Norris, CPA presented the Board with the audit findings for FY 2022-2023 audit. An unmodified opinion was given by the auditors. The Board thanked Priscilla for her report.

Consideration Rezoning Parcel 19267411 and 19267464 – Alderman Reeves stated he would like to see a traffic study done on the road with the increase in movement from the development. This matter was tabled until more information could be presented.

Consideration of 2024 Antique Fair – Keith Woodie came on behalf of the Antique Fair to ask for the same footprint on Jefferson Avenue as previous years. Mayor Hartman was presented with a petition from concerned merchants asking for the Fair to be relocated. Several merchants in favor of the current layout of the fair were in attendance. Antique Fair committee members offered to work with the businesses that are impacted negatively on the weekend of the Antique Fair by offering them a space in the footprint or passing out information to visitors to stopover at their stores while in town. The suggestion was even made to start the footprint at Town Hall and extend the space towards Hamilton Street. Keith then made the recommendation to leave the footprint of the fair as is and allow the festival committee to work with businesses to make the fair a success for everyone in town. Alderman Reeves made the motion to allow the Antique Fair to occupy the same space as previous years. With no second, the motion failed.

Consideration of Resolution of Intent to Close Proposed Road – Jimmy Miller representing Miller Properties of Ashe LLC is requesting the closure of a proposed street located between the Oreily's and Hometown Furniture building and the home of Kathy McGuire. Kathy is also in favor of closing the proposed road. The Millers are in negotiations to sell the property and the proposed road is causing an issue. Alderman Barr made the motion to adopt the resolution of intent to move forward with permanently closing the proposed road. Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Brunch Bill Ordinance – At the last meeting Town Manager Price was asked to have a Brunch Bill ordinance for review at the meeting. The brunch bill ordinance would allow alcohol sales to begin at 10:00am on Sundays instead of Noon. Alderman Barr made the motion to adopt the brunch bill ordinance as presented. Alderman Green seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Discussion of Stormwater Match – Jonathan Hartsell with Blue Ridge Conservation came before the board to review the possible stormwater detention system for the old tobacco warehouse project which would assist the town in reducing the runoff from his property onto the Backstreet then to Jefferson Avenue and Long Street. The grant funds for the project are available through NCDEQ DWR with the application due in June. A monetary match of \$15,000 is needed to make the grant competitive. This stormwater project would be a great project for the town, as we have already applied for the Golden Leaf funds to run a storm drainage pipe from the property and up Long Street to Jefferson Avenue. Chris Phipps, owner of the old tobacco warehouse plans to make an in kind match with labor in the amount of \$66,000 to install the detention system for the grant application. Alderwoman Shelton made the motion to approve the grant application with the match. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Encroachment Agreement on East Fifth Street – Mayor Hartman explained that after a survey was completed, it was discovered that the garage of 414 North Jefferson Avenue encroaches onto the town’s street by seven and a half feet. The property owners are requesting an encroachment agreement with the Town so they can sell the property. Alderwoman Shelton made the motion to approve the encroachment agreement as presented. Alderman Green seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement – North Carolina Emergency Management has updated the NC Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement that provides a mechanism for requesting assistance from other jurisdictions and the state during disaster events. With no discussion, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement as presented. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Approval of HGAC Buy Membership & Assign Brantley as Delegate – Helping Governments Across the Country Buy is a purchasing program that has negotiated competitive prices for many products. By using HGAC-Buy for the Paddy Mountain project we can buy directly instead of purchasing through a competitive bid process. Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the membership and appoint Brantley Price as the delegate. Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Budget Amendment #3 – With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to approve the budget amendment as presented. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Financial Review and Past Due Property Tax Update – Town Manager Brantley Price provided a review of the financials for the first six months for each department and updated the Board on past due property tax.

Police Report – Chief Jordan gave his report to the Board for the month. A total of 251 calls were dispatched through the communications center including 14 motor vehicle crashes, 15 larcenies, 2 fraud cases, 2 calls for service, 20 minor citations, and other miscellaneous calls. Alderman Green requested that officers be more present in the residential areas. Alderman Reeves acknowledged there has been an increase in patrol in the residential area since the previous meeting. The Board thanked Chief Jordan for his report.

Water & Wastewater Report – Wastewater Superintendent Brandon Patrick gave his report to the Board. A total of 7 inches of rain were reported for the month. Greenfield campground has been disconnected from the sewer system due to the amount of rain and ground water going into the sewer. A pressure test is necessary for the campground to reconnect. Both filters are currently running. The Board thanked Brandon for his report.

Maintenance Report – absent

Town Managers Report – Brantley Price, Town Manager gave his report to the Board. A meeting is scheduled this Friday to start the interconnect project. Completion date for Paddy Mountain is set for October 2024. The trail builders are asking everyone not to hike the trail while it is under construction. Taxes collected to date total 91.6% of the levy. The first past due letters have been sent out. Sales tax is down 0.5% from prior year. Occupancy tax is only down 0.4% for the first six months. Chief Brad Jordan was voted Best of the Best police officer by Ashe Post and times. Brantley was able to attend the county and city managers seminar which

was highly attended. Some of the sessions included budgeting and creating great local government workplaces. Replacement lights have been ordered for downtown with the hope of them to be received by the end of February to be installed in March. High Country Tea and Grazing Room will be opening on East Second Street. Blue Deer Cookie is coming to Jefferson Avenue. High Country Woodworks opened at the end of town. There is a joint county and town meeting scheduled for February 19th. Representative Pickett and Senator Hise will be in attendance. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comments – none

Aldermen Comments – Alderman Green thanked the fire department for their completion of the inspections for 3 short term rentals. Alderwoman Shelton stated that the meeting was a good meeting and that she enjoyed meeting with the police department and knows they are stretched thin. Alderman Barr said he would like to see a resolution with the Antique Fair. He also appreciated the meeting with the police department. Alderman Reeves thanked the maintenance department for all their hard work.

Adjournment – With nothing further, Alderman Barr made the motion to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Alderwoman Shelton with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Tom Hartman, Mayor

Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk