

Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
June 3, 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, Town Attorney Jak Reeves, Assistant Town Manager 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 Aldermen. After the invocation was given, those in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of June 3, 2024 Agenda – Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the agenda as presented. Alderwoman Shelton seconded with a motion of 4-0 in favor.

Public Hearings

Fiscal Year 2024-25 Town Operating Budget – Mayor Hartman stated the purpose of the public hearing is to hear any comments on the proposed fiscal year 2024-2025 town operating budget. The public hearing was open at 6:01pm. Mayor Hartman highlighted aspects of the budget for those in attendance. With no further comment, Mayor Hartman closed the public hearing at 6:03pm.

Regular Session

Approval of Minutes – With no discussion, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the minutes for the special meeting held on April 22, 2024 and the regular meeting on May 6, 2024 as presented. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of FY 2023-24 Audit Contract – Priscilla Norris, CPA presented her new contract to the board stating that she went up a flat 5%. Priscilla reminded the board that she has been assigned to complete the town's audit for the past 26 years and by being local the town staff has easy access to her. Misty Watson also presented her contract to the board. Misty has clients in Watauga and Avery counties. After the discussion, Alderman Green made a motion to accept Priscilla Norris' contract for the 2023-24 audit as presented. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 2-2 with Alderwoman Shelton and Alderman Reeves opposed. Mayor Hartman broke the tie with a vote in favor of Priscilla Norris making the final vote 3-2 in favor.

Consideration of Jefferson Station Signage – Christy Denny, HOA President of Jefferson Station approached the board regarding the signage located on the property. Christy would like to collaborate with the town and Arts Council to give the signage a new look for the town and Jefferson Station homeowners. The mayor encouraged Christy to work with the town to be able to present ideas and estimates to the board at a later date.

Consideration of Public Art on the Crosswalk – Executive Director of the Ashe County Arts Council Joni Ray came before the Board for approval for a public art project with the goal of

improving the visual impact of the crosswalks while engaging members of the community in the creation of the sidewalks. Alderwoman Shelton made the motion to approve the concept of the project for Joni to move forward with designs and securing artists. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 3-1 with Alderman Green opposing.

Consideration of Budget Amendment #4 – With no discussion, Alderman Barr made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #4. Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0.

Consideration of Approval FY 2024-25 Budget Ordinance – With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to approve Budget Ordinance as presented. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0.

Consideration of Approval FY 2024-25 Schedule of Fees – With no discussion, Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the Schedule of Fees. Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0.

Consideration of Town Taking Over West Evergreen Street – Bob Nash again approached the board about the town making an exception to adding West Evergreen Street to the street system. Town Attorney Reeves advised the board that the street is not up to town standards according to policy. Alderman Green was apprehensive about allowing the takeover since there are several other streets in town that would like the same exception to the rule. Town Attorney Reeves stated that the neighborhood would need to submit a plat of the land to dedicated for recording and provide a soil sample for a special assessment of the road. The board did not make a motion on this matter.

Consideration of MOU with Rescue Squad in Baldwin – After the last meeting Town Attorney Reeves was asked to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding before a fire truck is placed at the facility. Alderman Green asked for specific amounts of contributions to be listed on the contract. The agreed upon amount to be listed was 25% as the truck would take up one of four bays. Alderman Barr requested for the MOU to be annual with the option to terminate the contract 30 days prior to July 1st of each year. Town Attorney Reeves agreed to make the changes to the memorandum.

Consideration of Uniform Policy – After some discussion, Alderman Barr made the motion to approve the policy as presented in the amount of \$1000 annually to purchase shirts and pants for each individual in the maintenance, park, water, and sewer departments. Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion with a vote of 3-1 in favor with Alderman Green opposing.

Consideration of Town Hall Renovation – No discussion was held.

Consideration of Police Manual – After some discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to adopt the police manual with the option to revise at the next meeting. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Police Report – Chief Jordan gave his report to the Board for the month. A total of 276 calls were dispatched through the communications center including 5 motor vehicle crashes, 16 larcenies, 4 drug cases, 2 DWIs, 17 minor citations, and other miscellaneous calls. The Board thanked Chief Jordan for his report.

Water & Wastewater Report – Wastewater Superintendent Brandon Patrick gave his report to the Board. Nearly 9 inches of rain were reported for the month. A spill occurred at the plant during the flood since employees were unable to cross the creek. Both filters are currently operating. The Board thanked Brandon for his report.

Maintenance Report – Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller gave his report to the Board. Monthly totals were reported with 68 locate tickets, 4 water leaks, and 3 sewer issues. The water line on Mount Jefferson Road will be moved later this week. Eric assisted Brandon Patrick with the lead service line locate. A total of 29 flood issues were reported with all correct but 9 or fewer. The fire department did not have any water damage during the flood due to the tile repair on a neighboring property. The board thanked Eric for his report.

Town Managers Report – Town Manager Brantley Price gave his report to the Board. The flooding on May 26th damaged several streets and ditch lines. North Carolina Emergency Management was here this past Friday assessing the damage with the possibility for the town to be reimbursed 75% of some repair costs. Small businesses are eligible for low interest loans through Small Business Administration. Highland Cove experienced the most damage, estimated to be around \$30,000. Town funds were distributed into a CD that yields 5% interest and a money market yielding 4% interest. Only one response was received from Municipal Engineering for the Golden Leaf grant storm drain infrastructure on Backstreet and Long Street. Bid opening for the contractor to construct the parking lot, restrooms, and shelter is June 10th. The town received two responses from engineers for the upgrade at the greenfield pump station. Taxes collected to date total 97.8% of the levy. A capital credits check in the amount of \$11,800 was received from Blue Ridge Energy. Sales tax is up 9% from the prior year, with year-to-date up 1%. The TDA is running a special Tar Heel Towns with Our State magazine. Martin Roofing will be installing the new roof on the town hall soon. Fireworks are scheduled on Ray Hill Drive at 9:30pm on July 4th. The town hosted the regional main street meeting for our region last month. Representatives from Wilkesboro, North Wilkesboro, Newton, Spruce Pine, Boone, and the Department of Commerce were all in attendance. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comments – Kelly Hardy former President of the Mount Jefferson Child Development Center expressed his discontent with an incident that occurred at the daycare between his wife and a town employee, resulting in a DHHS investigation being opened. Mayor Hartman stated the town will be waiting until the DHHS investigation is complete before making a statement. Local business owner Michella Allen came before the board to say how welcome she feels in West Jefferson. The Board all praised Michella and her new business.

Aldermen Comments – Alderman Reeves gave an update on Alderman Shoemaker asking everyone to keep him in your thoughts. Alderman Barr restated his desire to help the residents of West Evergreen Street. He also thanked the staff and all the attendees. Alderwoman Shelton also asked for everyone to remember Alderman Shoemaker. She then stated her desire to work with Town Manager Price on the exterior remodel of the building. Mayor Hartman requested everyone keep Alderman Shoemaker and Alderman Green in their thoughts. Then, he recognized Ben Massey who was in attendance.

Closed Session – Alderman Barr made the motion to enter closed session. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0. The time was 7:24pm.

Return to Regular Session – The Board returned to regular session at 8:07pm

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