

Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
November 4, 2024 | 6:00 pm

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

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

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 November 4, 2024 Agenda – Mayor Hartman made the request to add an update from the ABC store manager and the appointment of the fire and assistant fire chief. Alderman Reeves then made a motion to approve the agenda with the additions. Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Public Hearings

Consideration of Rezoning Parcel 19223001677 to Highway Commercial – Mayor Hartman stated the purpose of the public hearing is to hear any comments on the proposed rezoning of the property located at 428 East Second Street. The public hearing was open at 6:12pm. Alderman Green stated that he did not see any issues with the rezoning of the property. With no further comment, Mayor Hartman closed the public hearing at 6:14pm.

Regular Session

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

Consideration of Naming Paddy Mountain Trails – Jordan Sellers came before the Board to discuss the proposed names of the trails on Paddy Mountain. The access trail is a green blaze trail and would be named the Northern Peaks State Trail. Next, the lower loop which is an orange blaze would be named Shag Bark Hickory Loop. Last, the upper loop that is a blue blaze would be called the Cohosh Loop. Shag Bark hickory and Cohosh are two plants that are common at Paddy Mountain and are somewhat unique. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the names of the trails. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Update on 2024 Holiday Parade – Brantley informed the Board that the Rotary club planned to hold the parade and was looking to call on groups from other areas if the number of participants was low.

ABC Report – General Manager Justin Jones reported to the Board. Sales for the first fiscal quarter of the year are up 2.28%. First quarter distributions include \$62,500 to the Town of West Jefferson, \$2600 to the West Jefferson Police Department, and \$3,600 to alcohol education

through the Ashe County Sheriff's Office. The store was closed on September 27 due to the hurricane, and no damage was reported to the store. The Board thanked Justin for his report.

Consideration of Rezoning Parcel 19223001677 to Highway Commercial – With no discussion, Alderman Reeves made the motion to approve the rezoning as presented. Alderman Shoemaker seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Statements of Consistency – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the statements of consistency as presented. Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Letter to NC DOT for 221 Flooding Issues – A letter to the area representatives for the NC DOT was presented to the Board for review. The letter was drafted to address the flooding issues on US Highway 221 Business. Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the letter. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0.

Consideration of Hot Cocoa in Town Parking Lot – Jennifer Walters with Divine Hope Baptist Church asked permission to use the Town parking lot during the parade. Instead of handing out hot chocolate the church will be handing out stadium cups with goodies to the patrons of the parade. With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the use of the parking lot. Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0.

Consideration of ABC Term Limits in Ordinance – A draft of the ABC ordinance was presented to the board that establishes term limits for the ABC Board of 3 terms at 3 years each term. Alderman Green expressed his opinion against the term limits. Alderwoman Shelton was in favor of the term limits to allow new members to join the board with fresh ideas. Alderman Reeves also spoke in favor of the term limits. Alderwoman Shelton made the motion to approve the ordinance as presented. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 3-1 in favor with Alderman Green opposed.

Update on Flood Damage – Town Manager Price gave an update on the damage to the town from Hurricane Helene. Representatives with FEMA were in the office today to review the damages, discuss reimbursement processes and will be back on November 15th for the Recovery Scoping Meeting. There are two culverts that need immediate repair. The culvert located on Highland Cove Road has left a water line exposed. The other is located on Church Avenue where the culvert stopped up. Water and debris ran over the road and broke the pavement on the shoulders. Carolina grading will be making the repairs before winter. All other damage will be reviewed by FEMA before being repaired. A debris removal contract has been signed with the County. The maintenance department assisted the Town of Lansing in sweeping their streets and park area to help with the dust. The Board thanked Brantley for the update.

Appointment of Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief – With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to appoint Eric Miller as Fire Chief and Jody Walters as Assistant Fire Chief. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Tax Release – With no discussion, Alderman Shoemaker made the motion to approve the tax releases as presented. Alderwoman Shelton 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 268 calls were dispatched through the communications center including 20 motor vehicle crashes, 6 larcenies, 1 drug case, 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. Only one quarter inch of rain was reported for the month. The main flood damage was to fences and gates. Work started on Saturday to replace the gate at the wastewater treatment plant while fencing was completed at the Reeves well today. The filter plant is producing just over 50,000 gallons a day. The Board thanked Brandon for his report.

Maintenance Report – Maintenance Supervisor Eric Miller gave his report to the Board. Monthly totals were reported with 36 locate tickets, 4 water leaks, and 1 sewer issue. The department has been focusing on storm debris and storm drains. The sewer jetter has been delivered, and the salt bins are full. Eric extended the invitation to the Annual Fire Department dinner to the Board before he gave the fire department report. There was a total of 15 calls, and the new service truck has arrived. The board thanked Eric for his report.

Town Managers Report – Town Manager Brantley Price gave his report to the Board. Brandon has submitted the lead service line inventory that he and Eric were able to complete without borrowing any funds. Engineers are still reviewing the Golden Leaf Stormwater project to reduce the cost as the low bid came in at \$150,000 over the awarded amount. A reimbursement was submitted for engineering and admin cost of \$40,000 which was denied as Golden Leaf does not cover those costs. However, we are working to make fees reimbursable. The town is working with contractors and suppliers to see what options the best for the funds that are available for the wastewater treatment plant. Options would be to complete the sewer extensions, upgrade UV, replace aerators, and sludge pump or complete headworks. There is a discussion with Blue Ridge Energy for a zero-interest loan that the project might qualify. Taxes collected to date total 75% of the levy. Sales tax is flat from prior year and at the breakeven from prior year to date. The Ashe Baptist Association will be using the old Burgess building now owned by Mo's Boots for the Children's Christmas Project. The request has been made to use 3 to 4 parking spaces in front of the building on December 2 through 6 from 8:00am to 5:00pm for drop off and pickup. The Jim Snyder Christmas Tree 5K will be held on December 7. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

Public Comments – none

Aldermen Comments – Alderman Shoemaker complimented the new look of the Town Hall exterior and thanked the maintenance department for all their hard work during the storm. Alderman Reeves expressed his joy in everyone being together. Alderwoman Shelton thanked the town staff for bringing us through after the hurricane.

Closed Session – Alderwoman Shelton made the motion to enter closed session under GS 143.318.11(a)(3) to consult with Town Attorney over Client Attorney matters. The time was 7:05pm.

Return to Regular Session – The Board returned to regular session.

Adjournment – With nothing further, Alderman Reeves made the motion to adjourn the regular meeting, seconded by Alderman Shoemaker with a vote of 4-0 in favor. The time was 7:25pm.

Tom Hartman, Mayor

Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk