

Town of West Jefferson - Board of Aldermen
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 2, 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, 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 December 2, 2024 Agenda – With no discussion, Alderman Barr made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Public Hearings

Consideration of Text Amendment to Article V – Mayor Hartman stated the purpose of the public hearing is to hear any comments on the proposed text amendment to Article V. The text amendment would add “with annual permit and inspection” to the permitted use of short-term rentals. The addition would allow the town to penalize the short-term rental owners \$100 for violation of noncompliance. The public hearing was open at 6:04pm. Alderman Green was not in favor of the \$100 a day penalty to the owners that have not completed the permit application. In order to reduce the penalty amount a text amendment would need to be made to Article XIX as the \$100 a day penalty is standard for any zoning violation. With no further comment, Mayor Hartman closed the public hearing at 6:08pm.

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 Road Closure on Backstreet – Mason Harris, the owner of Backstreet Subs, made the request to close Backstreet from Ashe Street to State Street for the annual Faith Feeding Families event on Christmas Eve. Mason was not in attendance for the meeting. Alderman Green and Alderman Reeves expressed their concerns about the road closure on Christmas Eve. Alderman Barr offered his property at Parkway Storage for the event. Alderman Green made the motion to not allow the road closure on Backstreet. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor. Mason Harris appeared after the meeting adjourned and was upset to hear that the road closure was denied. Mayor Hartman offered an alternative to close Ashe Street instead of Backstreet. Mason was asked to seek approval of the businesses located on Ashe Street for the road closure and report back to Town Manager Price. After Mason Harris informed Town Manager Price that the business owners were not opposed to closing West Ashe Street, Town Manager Price received consent from board members via text message.

Consideration of Text Amendment to Article V – With no discussion, Alderwoman Shelton made the motion to approve the text amendment. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 3-1 with Alderman Green opposing.

Consideration of Statements of Consistency – With no discussion, Alderwoman Shelton made the motion to approve the statements of consistency. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 3-1 with Alderman Green opposing.

Budget Amendment #3 – Budget Amendment #3 is to recognize the \$90,000 contribution from the county for Paddy Mountain. With no discussion, Alderman Green made the motion to approve the budget amendment. Alderman Reeves seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Consideration of Water and Sewer Taps – Mike Leserra with Mike's Muffler has requested the town waive the fees for a new water and sewer tap on his property. Alderman Green and Alderwoman Shelton felt that if this was approved others might ask for the same favor. Alderman Green made the motion to deny the request. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 3-1 with Alderman Reeves opposing.

Consideration to Award Wastewater Plant Upgrades and Sewer Extensions – Carolina Grading was the only bidder on the project with an estimate of \$1,187,500. All the work will not be able to be completed due to the cost. The following will be completed with the funds available: replace UV system, sludge pump for belt press, aerators, redo pumps and controls for tertiary filters, and sewer line extensions on Ridge Avenue, Liberty Street and Independence Street. Alderman Barr made the motion to award the project to Carolina Grading. 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. Alderman Barr seconded the motion with a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Police Report – absent

Water & Wastewater Report – Wastewater Superintendent Brandon Patrick gave his report to the Board. Two and a half inches of rain were reported for the month. The flow at the plant has been higher than normal since the hurricane. Brandon is hoping to find the issue when the new sewer flow meter arrives. The filter plant is producing just over 50,000 gallons a day. The Board thanked Brandon for his report.

Maintenance Report – absent.

Town Managers Report – Town Manager Brantley Price gave his report to the Board. After Hurricane Helene NC DOT Division 11 which includes Ashe, Alleghany, Wilkes and Watauga had \$152 million in road and bridge damages with 318 road closures. Our Division Engineer, Michael Poe has requested that the hydraulics team relook at the section of Highway 221 Business for stormwater issues. While working with FEMA on the flooding issues from Hurricane Helene, an issue with the brush dump site at Wade Bare Road was revealed. This property has been used for a brush dump for several decades. While talking with FEMA we found the brush debris could not be permanently kept on the property due to not being a permitted site. FEMA recommended we call DEQ to see if the property could be permitted as a

temporary site. DEQ says it cannot permit the site for a brush dump as it was an old landfill, and there is concern of damaging the cap of the landfill. We are still working with State and FEMA for other alternatives. It is possible that we hire a contractor to remove the brush, and FEMA will reimburse those expenses. This property may not be usable any longer for debris. The Town Hall renovation is almost complete with only the signage, glass door, window, and decorative cover for the air conditioning units to be installed. The paving and landscaping are complete at Paddy Mountain. Plumbing and electricity are waiting to be complete. Taxes collected to date total 76.5% of the levy. Sales tax is up 5% from the prior year with a 2% increase from the previous year. The ABC Commission is scheduled to review performance standards on December 4th with the store. The Jim Snyder 5K is on December 7th. A Doctor of Acupuncture is opening on East Second Street in 2025. Brantley then extended the invitation to the board to the employee Christmas dinner on December 13th. The Board thanked Brantley for his report.

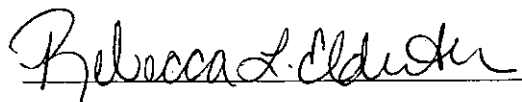
Public Comments – none

Aldermen Comments – Alderman Reeves complimented the decorations in town. Alderman Barr praised the newest mural in town. Alderwoman Shelton expressed her delight of the overall look of the town for the Christmas season. She added that she would like to add more snowflake lights next year and leave the lights up a little bit longer. She also noted that she would like the town to look into the addition of an amphitheater in the park for future events. Alderman Green again requested that the gate to the cemetery be left open during the day. He also requested that the fire department make a report at all meetings moving forward. Mayor Hartman asked for an update on the drain at the bottom of Radio Hill that has been stopped up. He would like to see fire pits be added to the Christmas tree lighting next year. Alderman Reeves added that the new hotel is set to be open April 1, 2025.

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. The time was 6:48pm.



Tom Hartman, Mayor



Rebecca Eldreth, Town Clerk