

**Minutes of the Town of Jonesboro  
Regular Council Meeting – 6:00 P.M.**

**Jonesboro, Louisiana  
February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

Meeting was called to order by Mayor Leslie Thompson. Present were the following Council Members: Nia Evans Johnson, Robbie Siadkek, James Ginn, Aaron Stringer, and Devin Flowers. Council Members Absent: None. A quorum was present.

The **Invocation** was conducted by: Stringer  
The **Pledge of Allegiance** was led by: Ginn

**Additions To Agenda:** Mayor Thompson requested Wilda Smith be added as item 6a, Melissa Bell 6b, Ordinance Introduction (Police Chief Salary) 12a, Assistant Police Chief Recommendation 12b, Public Works Director Confirmation 16, Lott Oil Agreement 17, Signatory Authority Resolution 16a. Flowers motioned to accept such to be added. Stringer seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Mayor's Town Update:** Mayor Thompson announced his intentions for the new administration, for the Town to flourish in the spirit of cooperation, and setting the tone at the top. He stated he would not have been able to return to the office of Mayor without being compliant to governmental law, the Town is in a tough budgetary condition, the Town has been operating on a \$2.7M budget for the past 10 years, and re-emphasized the need for complying with budgetary law.

Mayor Thompson discussed two separate budgets he'd received for the current fiscal year which have an approximate \$200,000 discrepancy between them as they pertain to the police dept. (PD), and emphasized the potential illegality for the Town to operate on a budget that is not functional and appears not to have been properly amended by way of ordinance.

Mayor said, the second budget of \$2.9M supporting the higher figure of \$524,850 allotted to the PD was found in the Town's Book of Ordinances for 2018 unsigned by former Clerk and former Mayor, that the extra \$200,000 allotted to the PD came from the Street Department's dedicated funds, that the Town needs a short and long term plan, and invited Board Members to visit his office for further discussion.

**Public Comments:** Police Chief James Harris said the discovery of a \$524,000 budget for his department allows room for his efforts to hire as he previously requested. P. Chief stated, Mayor Thompson's previous administration shut the PD down and there have been many serious problems since. Chief Harris acknowledged the Town's fire and water issues, and emphasized the need to also consider law enforcement as a top priority.

Chief Harris said, the Jackson Parish Sheriff's Dept. is doing an excellent job of assisting his department, it's not the Sheriff's job to protect the Town within the city

limits of Jonesboro, the Town needs a PD and those he's seeking Council's approval to hire are not for organic growth but to replace positions recently vacated.

Chief said he originally thought he was operating on a \$332k budget, that he's not trying to spend the entire \$524k he currently has, and if the PD doesn't respond to emergencies it's because he doesn't have backing from City Hall (CH).

Chief said, the very next day after Mayor Thompson shut down the PD in his former administration, that an armed robbery took place in Town, that a man had his skull cracked open, and concluded by saying the Town needs law enforcement.

A second person addressed the Council with a public comment concerning late fees and reconnection charges on her water bill. Mayor referred her to CH for resolution.

**Wilda Smith** – Ms. Smith announced the following Chamber of Commerce events: 1) Chamber After Hours - featuring an ACT Workforce Meeting at 5:30pm on 2/21/19 at the Jackson Parish Library. 2) Chamber Banquet 3/21/19. She encouraged participation and seeking updates on the Chamber's Facebook page.

**Melissa Bell:** Ms Bell introduced VP Racing Fast Lube of Jonesboro as a new oil change facility and requested repaving of Morrow St.

**Expenditure Report:** Mayor said Kenneth Folden CPA would be assisting the Town with reconciling bank records, audit compliance issues and providing complete financial reports upon the Council's approval of the Town entering into contractual agreement, and that income reports were currently unavailable.

Mayor said current independent auditors alerted him to the possibility of the Town receiving it's worst audit report in recent years, that what's being reported doesn't reflect on this administration, that the Town is in a new phase going forward, that CH is resolving audit compliance issues, and said the Town avoided being on the State's non-compliance list by working with Mr. Folden.

**Approval of Minutes:** Evans motioned to approve Minutes for December 2018. Ginn seconded. Board unanimously approved. Stringer motioned to approve Minutes for January 2019 to include a correction of Siadek having done the Pledge of Allegiance. Siadek seconded. Board unanimously approved.

**Approval of Council Meeting Dates:** Council resolved by way of unanimous roll call vote for Meetings to remain scheduled as 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month, 6:00 pm Jonesboro City Hall. Said action is designated as Resolution 2019 – 002.

**Dept. Head Report – Fire:** Chief Treadway provided a written monthly Fire Dept. (FD) report, explained the format, said the Town's rescue trucks and operation equipment

are outdated, that drastic and immediate improvements are needed to prevent the Town from losing its Class 4 rating, that residential and commercial liability insurance rates would raise if such loss of rating occurred.

Chief reported maintenance trouble issues with the 2004 Fire Truck, said he has one firefighter on duty 24/7. The FD averaged 900 calls in 2018, had 69 calls in January 2019.

Chief spoke about a FD call occurring during his report to Council, said 3-4 men are needed to cut someone out of a vehicle, JFD heavily depends on volunteers for backup, and warned against insurance rates becoming unaffordable and being uninsurable due to Town's lack of fire/rescue safety equipment and manpower.

**Dept. Head Report – Police:** Chief Harris announced a public safety plan to implement a 1 cent millage that would produce \$750k for the Town, said that he wouldn't need that much and would work to give the FD what they need. Chief said PD officers don't get benefits and should be commended on their diligence to provide public safety.

Chief Harris said he'd begin providing a quarterly report at the March council meeting, reported 1200 calls from January 2018 to present with a variety of issues including opening car doors, gunshots, and armed robberies. Chief reports the PD made 153 arrests (15 drug related).

Chief said PD has written over 546 citations, and implemented a new court system which allows for the proper tracking of revenues generated based on tickets and fines. Chief said \$77,639.70 has been collected, that \$73,866.77 is still owed, total of which is \$151,546.47. Chief said the suspending of driver's licenses and other measures will be used to help collect past due funds.

Chief said the PD responds to arsons, burglaries, armed robberies, domestic abuse, traffic and other issues, stated his goals for the dept. to be 24/7, and concluded saying he has 3 post certified officers, and the State is about to require all part time and reserve personnel to be post certified by way of academy training.

**Police Chief Employment Recommendation:** Chief Harris said, after reviewing the Lawrason Act he is correcting a mistake of having already assigned Matthew Garrett as Assistant Police Chief by now bringing his formal recommendation to Council. Stringer motioned for Matthew Garrett to fill said role. Siadek seconded. Motioned carried unanimously.

Ginn asked Chief Harris to explain the need of increasing the number of PD staff from 10 to 14. Chief said he needed the coverage, that some of the positions previously

terminated were never replaced, that some were moved from full time to part time, and others moved to reserve status.

Chief said the results of him hiring two additional officers is not an increase in his budget, that through January 2019 PD expenditures were \$300,604.54, his monthly expenditures range between \$11k-13k per month, and his (fiscal year) budget is \$524,850.

Evans asked Chief to clarify the monthly expenditure amount. Chief said the \$11k-\$13k figure doesn't include \$8,900 of worker's compensation that he was told gets charged to each department on a rotating monthly basis.

Mayor Thompson said the line item of \$200,000 for PD salary, and not the entire figure of \$524k must be considered, that the PD spent about \$144k so far, and a budget modification is needed.

Mayor said Kenneth Folden would help with the numbers required to modify the current f.y. budget. Ginn said, monies within the PD budget could be moved around to accommodate additional salary expenditures.

Mayor said, a judge's written opinion in his personal court case states that operating on an unbalanced budget is a felony because it was done willfully and knowingly, that he's not going back to jail, and won't sign off on such.

Ginn stated it is unclear as to which budget the Town is operating on, that this issue will be resolved with a new budget, and the Town needs to work from what's been presented now. Ginn asked Chief Harris if the PD salary budget could accommodate the new hires being proposed.

Evans also asked Chief Harris if the same \$13k for salaries is going to be spent monthly. Chief Harris said, without the worker's comp and overtime, and that he couldn't anticipate emergencies. Mayor Thompson said he wanted the Council to be sure of what they're voting on.

Flowers recommended fixing the problem first, then give Chief Harris what he needs. Mayor said he'd work with Chief Harris in the next 30 days to help make sure his numbers are right.

Ginn asked Chief Harris if the new hiree's salaries are within the \$524,850 PD budget. Chief confirmed, said he's simply replacing one full time officer with another, and replacing another who is removed from full time status and placed on unpaid reserve.

Ginn motioned to accept Police Chief's recommendations to hire Luegenia Anderson

and Patrick Cook as police officers. Siadek seconded. Motion carried unopposed.

**Dept. Head Report – Public Works:** Public Works Director (PWD) Calvin Wortham updated Council concerning past and current non-compliance issues as described in their packets, actions required to comply and avoid fines, and discussed the need to publish a public notice letter from LDHH.

PWD said, cost estimates will be made on repaving Morrow St. after consulting with the engineer. A repair or replacement of a track hoe is needed, that permission to upgrade Lott Oil's underground tanks for improved accountability is needed, and costs determined.

PWD answered questions, discussed plans to properly train staff and to focus on water billing issues, and introduced Monroe LDHH reps Lollis and Dobbs who attended Council meeting after having surveyed the Town water system same day.

Lollis said, a survey of sewer system is upcoming, that Town has non-compliance issues and is under an administrative order for both water and sewer, and said PW wants LDHH involvement for open communication and transparency.

**Engineer Assessment Report – Brad Graff:** Graff surveyed the above ground and sewer systems for 2 days. In the water system he found 50 deficiencies, said minor repairs are needed to prevent major problems, only 1 pump station operating at full capacity, 1 station operating in automated fashion as designed. There are overflow issues, low pressure issues may be related to a stuck valve, a more in-depth study is needed.

Graff said, he able to evaluate half of the Town's pump stations, that security fences in certain water and sewer system areas are needed. Potential repair costs, recommendations for a systematic approach for repairs, potential grant funding, and meeting application deadlines were discussed.

Graff answered questions, said a full engineering assessment is necessary to meet grant funding application requirements. PWD said a mapping diagram of both water and sewer systems will help determine water flow and valve problems.

**Approval of Dept. Head Reports:** Stringer motioned to accept all reports. Flowers seconded. Motion passed unopposed.

**Council's Confirmation – Clerk, Magistrate, Town Attorney:** Ginn sought for Council to be provided with resume and qualifications of Mayor's recommendation for Clerk, David J. Dill. Ginn and Evans requested a more in-depth search for the position. Mayor agreed to 2 more weeks of advertising. Mayor Thompson said, he'd return to the next

Council meeting with his recommendation for Clerk. Evans motioned to table this Item. Attorney Stokes said, motion died for lack of a second.

Evans motioned to confirm Yumeaka Washington as the Town's Magistrate. Ginn seconded. Motion carried. Flowers motioned to confirm Douglas Stokes as Town Attorney. Siadek seconded. Motion carried.

Attorney Stokes outlined his procedure of answering questions outside of Council meetings in a written format to the Mayor, clarified his representation of the Town, updated Council regarding steps taken with the Municipal Code Corp. (MCC) to update the Book of Ordinances by the previous administration.

Attorney Stokes said, he has a final draft of the MCC update in his possession, that about \$6k is owed, and final steps need to be taken to complete the process. Mayor Thompson said, when the budget gets amended those funds would be priority.

Attorney Stokes clarified. The Town currently has it's own (3 ring binder) Book of Ordinances at CH (containing original signed copies of ordinances passed by Council). MCC's version is a book-style format of the same with a system for adding new pages of ordinances as passed.

**Contractual Agreements – Kenneth Folden CPA, Town Attorney, Magistrate, Pine Belt, Lott Oil:** Evans motioned to authorize the Mayor to enter into contractual agreement with Kenneth Folden, CPA. Flowers seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Stokes said he'd provide a written agreement for the Council to review and authorize the Mayor to sign. Item tabled till next meeting.

Stringer motioned to authorize Mayor to enter into contractual agreement with Yumeaka Washington as Magistrate. Siadek seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Flowers motioned to authorize Mayor to enter into contractual agreement with Pine Belt. Evans seconded. Motion carried.

Attorney Stokes urged caution concerning a contractual agreement with Lott Oil, said a service of monitoring fuel usage doesn't need to be bid on, but that gasoline sold at an increased price of 25 cents per gallon for said service may require a bid process. Mayor said Lott Oil already won the bid, and there would be no increase in cost.

Evans motioned to authorize Mayor to enter into contractual agreement with Lott Oil. Flowers seconded. Motion carried.

**Land Certification:** Jackson Parish Police Juror Lynn Treadway presented a proposal of a 3 year project to declare an 80 acre section of Jonesboro land as job site certified

for corporations to consider bringing in new industry, provided Council with a picture of the site, discussed oxidation pond issues, improvements needed to proceed with the project, and the potential of a joint endeavor agreement with Jackson Parish.

Mr. Treadway introduced Christine Rambo and Daniel Michelle from North Louisiana Economic Partnership. Ms. Rambo said environmental and cultural studies have been completed, that a raw sewage discharge pipe on the site is out of compliance, that help from the parish and state is available to fix the problem.

Engineer Graff provided steps needed and potential costs. Mayor Thompson said the only step needed is how to fund the required improvements. Mr. Michelle said the project is very special and marketable.

**Sunday Alcohol Sales:** Attorney Stokes prepared an ordinance to be introduced by Council that would eliminate the current prohibition of alcohol sales on Sundays, said it proposes for the same selling hours of alcohol on Sundays to be implemented as currently allowed all other days of the week.

The possibility of repealing the existing ordinance prohibiting alcohol sales on Sundays with a subsequent ordinance repealing such was also discussed. Attorney Stokes said the AG would not accept a request for an opinion concerning the Town without a resolution by the Town authorizing such request.

Mayor Thompson discussed the benefits of being able to help fix problems with the increased revenues, asked for a motion to introduce said ordinance. Evans moved to introduce said ordinance. Attorney Stokes said no second is required for the introduction of an ordinance.

Public hearing date to discuss said ordinance is set for 5:30 pm before the 6:00 pm Council Meeting at Jonesboro City Hall Community Room on March 12, 2019.

**Signatory Authority:** Attorney Stokes recommended Errors and Omissions insurance coverage for those being authorized to sign on behalf of the Town, said the Mayor can designate others who are not the Clerk to sign.

Evans motioned for a resolution to provide signatory authority to Mayor Pro Tem Aaron Stringer and David J. Dill as Deputy Clerk, with corrections being made to the draft provided which are to reflect Dill as Deputy Clerk. Ginn seconded. Motion carried.

Resolution designated as is 2019 – 003.

Stringer motioned for Attorney Stokes to be authorized to seek an AG opinion on repealing current ordinance that prohibits alcohol sales on Sundays. Flowers seconded. Motion carried. Resolution designated as 2019 – 004.

**Council Comments:** Evans thanked all for coming out and staying so long. Siadek said monies spent on water and sewer issues in the past are a drop in the bucket compared to what's needed currently, thanked all for coming out. Ginn thanked the Town's administrative staff and all Town employees for hard work, said he appreciates the passion of each public safety office, suggested a work session meeting to help eliminate long meetings. Flowers recommended the Board to learn the Lawrason Act.

**Adjournment:** Flowers motioned to adjourn. Evans seconded. Motion carried.

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Deputy Clerk, David J. Dill

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Leslie Thompson, Mayor

***"We Are An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer."***