**Minutes of the Town of Jonesboro                                           Jonesboro, Louisiana**

**Regular Council Meeting – 6:00 P.M.                March 12th, 2019**

**Public Hearing re: Sunday Alcohol Sales Ordinance** Began at 5:30 PM. Meeting was called to order by Mayor Leslie Thompson. Present were the following Council Members: Nia Evans Johnson, James Ginn, Aaron Stringer, and Devin Flowers. Absent: Robbie Siadek. A quorum was present. (Siadek arrived 6:00 PM)

**Invocation:** Conducted by Alderman Ginn

**Pledge:** Conducted by Alderman Johnson

**Public Hearing Discussion:** Mayor Thompson opened the floor for the public to discuss the Board’s consideration of an ordinance allowing for alcohol to be sold on Sundays during the same business hours as currently allowed all other days of the week.

**Agenda Amendments:** Mayor Thompson announced changes in the sequence of agenda items originally posted, and proposed the following additions to Council: Approval of Change In Bank Operations, Consideration of Police Dept. Hire, Discussion of Police Chief Salary, Introduction of Ordinance (Cross Connection Valve), Consideration of 3 Resolutions (Oxidation Ponds), Accept Resignation of Fire Chief Mark Treadway, Recommendation For Hire of New Fire Chief - Brandon Brown, Talbert St., Wilda Smith – Chamber of Commerce

Stringer motioned to amend the agenda accordingly. Flowers seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:** Stringer motioned to accept Minutes of the regular meeting held February 12, 2019. Evans seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

**Public Comments:** None.

**Mayor’s Address:** Mayor said the Town’s employees and citizens are excited about progress made over the past 30 days. The Governor’s Office sent 8 representatives to City Hall (CH) to discuss water/sewer issues. A hiring panel has been created to interview applicants for the Clerk’s position for 30 more days. Mayor stated the goals for CH is to be audit ready and compliant.

**Kenneth Folden, CPA:** Mr. Folden discussed his goal of providing Council with financial statements to correct past audit finding issues and stated his goals for CH’s audit preparation. He said current expense reports and department head input will help with budget preparation, and requested approval to open a Control Bank Account to simplify deposit and bill paying processes.

Siadek motioned to open the Control Bank Account. Flowers seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**Sunday Alcohol Sales Ordinance:** Stringer motioned to adopt (**Ordinance 2019 – 001**). Johnson seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Johnson – Yea, Siadek – Nay, Ginn – Nay, Stringer – Yea, Flowers – Yea. Motion carried (**3-2 in favor of**).

**Alcohol Sales Resolution:** A discussion took place about **Resolution 2019 – 004 as** discussed in the February 12th 2019 Meeting.Mayor Thompson briefly discussed potential increases in revenue.

**Wilda Smith – Chamber of Commerce:** Ms. Smith provided details of upcoming events, new businesses opening and encouraged attendance of the Chamber Banquet 3/21 and the Sunshine Festival 4/20 on Easter Weekend.

**Department Head Report – Police:** Chief Harris provided details of department activity including arrests, citations, service calls, and monies collected for fines. Chief reported cards containing harsh comments were mailed to each of the Aldermen by the Jonesboro Concerned Group, that a person of interest has been identified via Wal-Mart security video, that State Police, FBI and DA’s Office has been notified, and that the DA doesn’t feel a need to prosecute at this time.

Chief Harris said that public records requests made to him would be honored. Alderman Ginn inquired regarding a running total of monies still owed on uncollected fines. Chief Harris said new bill collection and online payment processes are in place to collect old debts. The potential of an amnesty program was discussed.

**Recommendation For Hire:** Chief reports Off. John Williams is moving from part-time to a non-paid reserve position, Off. John Maxwell is moving from a full to part-time position, and he is seeking to hire Tony Little at $11/hr.

Siadek so motioned. Stringer seconded. Motion carried.

**Police Chief Salary Ordinance:** Chief is asking that his salary be increased by the amount of monies currently being paid by the Town for health benefits that he’s not using because he is a VA medical benefit recipient. He estimates $30,000 of unused benefits have been paid by the Town on his behalf thus far.  
  
If Council agrees, Police Chief would opt out of the Town’s health benefits package, the exact dollar amount of salary increase would be determined and provided in the draft of an ordinance for the Board’s review, and said ordinance would be introduced at the next council meeting. Attorney Stokes said, once the salary is set that an elected official’s salary could not be reduced while in office.

**Department Head Report – Public Works:** Mr. Calvin Wortham (PWD) reported that water a major water issue affecting the Town had been solved on February 14th, that water meters hadn’t been accurately read since August 2013, and that the department is working hard to solve billing issues.

PWD said, the Governor’s Task Force who met with him and Mayor Thompson on 030119 included representatives from the Delta Regional Authority, Dept. of Health & Hospitals, Rural Water and USDA offering insight and assistance with the Town’s issues.

PWD reports that a new meter reading system is expected to arrive in approx. 30 days, antiquated meters need to be replaced, and that customer service is a priority. Reports 56 street lights out have been identified and reported to Entergy for repair.

**Introduction of Ordinance – Cross Connection Control:** A backflow prevention device is required to be installed on all service connections to deter possible contamination into the Town’s distribution system. A written draft of the ordinance was distributed to Council. Johnson motioned to introduce (**Ordinance 2019 – 002**).

**Oxidation Pond Resolutions:** A single motion to adopt three **Resolutions** per DEQ requirements for the North Oxidation Pond (**2019-005**), South Oxidation Pond (**2019-006**), and East Oxidation Pond (**2019-007**) was made by Ginn. Flowers seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

PWD answered Council’s questions regarding the location and functionality of meters, and verification of services being provided.

**Approval of Contract – Brad Graff, Engineer:** Mr. K. Randall Smoak from Mr. Graff’s firm attended the meeting. Stringer motioned to accept Engineer’s contract proposal. Flowers seconded. Motion carried.

**Resolution – AG Opinion (Water Bills):** Mayor Thompson asked Attorney Stokes to include in the proposed resolution a specific clause pertaining to this being a new administration that is currently seeking to resolve the matter of water meters not having been read since August 2013.

Attorney Stokes discussed how the resolution would be proposed, said that the ultimate decision (how to deal with past water billing issues) is the Board’s, and that the process for seeking an AG Opinion could take 4-6 months.

Attorney Stokes said an estimated dollar amount of related losses from the PWD to provide a scope of the problem would be required to proceed. Johnson motioned to adopt said Resolution (**2019 – 008**) with updates to the current draft as discussed to be included. Flowers seconded. Motion carried.

**Talbert Street:** Alderman Stringer motioned for Talbert St. to be evaluated for repairs by Engineer Graff. Siadek seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Department Head Report – Retiring Fire Chief Mark Treadway:** Fire Chief read his letter of retirement to the Board. Chief praised his firefighting team for many years of hard work and dedication, and recommended Brandon Brown to replace him. He reiterated the Council’s need to upgrade the Town’s firefighting equipment and staffing, and encouraged cooperation with his recommended replacement.

**Recommendation For Hire – Fire Chief Brandon Brown:** Mayor Thompson recommended Brandon Brown to be considered as the new Chief upon retiring Fire Chief Mark Treadway’s last official day, April 2nd, 2019. Stringer so moved. Flowers seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Mayor Thompson requested the Board to work with him as he attempts to balance the budget across the board, and to help the Town avoid losing a PIAL rating.

**Acceptance of Department Head Reports:** Flowers motioned to accept all department head reports. Stringer seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**Council Comments:** **Johnson** thanked all for showing support, said that the Council and Mayor are working hard on their behalf, asked for cooperation and respect of their positions, and encouraged public feedback.

**Ginn** thanked PWD and the department for their hard work towards restoring billing capability, and thanked Chief Treadway for his service. **Siadek** said he was unaware of discrepancies during his previous tenure as an alderman, asked for transparency of such issues, and thanked Chief Treadway for his years of service and wished him well.

**Stringer** also thanked Chief Treadway, mentioned the need to do minimize dangers and to something positive on Talbert St.  **Flowers** asked to pray for the Town’s strength, thanked Chief Treadway for his years of commitment and dedication, and encouraged Brandon Brown as the new Fire Chief.

**Mayor’s Closing Comments:** Mayor Thompson said the long Council meetings recently reflect the Town’s hard work, asked the Board for help to understand what took place with the recent water tank lawsuit settlement, requested information regarding a motion to earmark certain monies received, and said the matter would be discussed as an agenda item next month.

**Adjounment:** Flowers motioned to adjourn. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

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Deputy Clerk, David J. Dill Leslie Thompson, Mayor

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