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Town of Jonesboro

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**Town of Jonesboro**

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**Date: May 10, 2022 Time: 5:45 p.m.**

**Place: Charles Garrett Community Center, 182 Industrial Dr., Jonesboro, LA 71251**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

The meeting was called to orderat 5:45 p.m. for a public hearing.

Roll call established a quorum with the following council members present – James Ginn, Robbie Siadek, Aaron Stringer, Devin Flowers; absent- Nia Johnson

Invocation was led by Flowers

Pledge of Allegiance led by Stringer

A public hearing was held on Ordinance 2022-01: An ordinance adjusting utility rates. There were no comments during the public hearing.

Public Comments were offered by Ms. W. Smith. She thanked the mayor for the support and assistance he has offered in getting the main street in the downtown area beautified. She indicated that the businesses would assist with watering plants and the sprinkler system would aid as well. There were no other comments.

Approval of Agenda- the agenda was approved on a motion by Flowers, second by Stringer, motion was unanimously carried.

Approval of Minutes of April 12, 2022, regular meeting – motion by Flowers, second by Stringer to approve minutes. Motion unanimously carried.

Mayor’s update expressed that he is proud of where the town is. He indicated that we are stronger financially than we have been in some time. He addressed a request submitted by Ginn (councilman) for production of records. Mayor stressed that we must work as a team in order not to retard the progress we are making as a town. Ginn is requesting copies of all bills, and other information. Ginn indicated that just as John Q. Public may, any council member may submit a public records request. Mayor stressed that he has asked that if any council member had questions about a specific bill, they would call City Hall with those questions prior to the meeting as the answers will be offered by the staff at City Hall. There seems to be some reluctance to contact City Hall. Mayor stressed that his objective is to operate in a non-audit finding environment. The most recent audit was a great audit rendering an unmodified opinion and moving forward, it is his objective to continue having great audits. The town’s legal counsel has indicated that the mayor must furnish the council with the information they need to make informed decisions on behalf of the town. As some council members are opting to “table” items which they do not understand or have questions about on the financials, it is not an audit finding to table items. It would be a finding if mayor refused to provide the information, but that has never happened. If you so choose to table matters, the record will show that the information required was provided.

A quote from the attorney in a recent opinion on providing information to the council: “*In your capacity as Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Jonesboro, you control what information you instruct staff to provide to the board of Alderman prior to or at their meeting.” You are entitled to determine activities the employees of the Town, other than those employed at the Police Department, are to perform. That being the case, it is my opinion that you have the option of providing the members of the Board of Aldermen prior to or at their meeting with such information as you deem appropriate*.”

Stringer indicated he did not have the March financials which he had moved to table last month. It was clarified that those updated financials are included in April packet.

Mayor stressed that any council member may make an appointment to come to city hall and they will be provided with access to any records they want to see without hinderance. As with any public records request, a fee will be charged for any copes of information requested during the inspection. The fee is one dollar per page for copies.

Ginn stressed that he considered his request a public records request and proceeded to submit an official request on the spot. He inferred his suspicion was that someone is attempting to withhold information stating he does not know ***why*** bills are being paid, just that they were paid. He wants to see invoices and disagrees that pulling a years’ worth of invoices would be time consuming and burdensome on the town’s staff. Mayor acknowledged receipt of Ginn’s public record’s request. Ginn encouraged citizens to make similar requests.

Approval of April bills paid - after looking over the bills. Stringer moved to accept April’s bills, second by flowers. In favor of approval of bills paid were Stringer, Flowers. Voting in opposition to approval of bills paid were Siadek and Ginn. Mayor Thompson broke the tie with a yea vote, motion carried.

Approval of April financials – after some discussion and satisfaction about whether the financials were up to date to include the discrepancies noted in March, mayor called for a motion. Stringer moved to approve April financials, second by Flowers. Voting in favor were Stringer, Flowers and Siadek. Voting no: Ginn. Motion caried with 3 to 1 vote in favor.

Advertising for fuel bids – bids for fuel are required to be taken every two years. Siadek motioned to advertise for bids, Flowers second. The motion carried unanimously. Advertising process will begin immediately.

Ordinance 2022-001 – an ordinance adjusting utility rates was addressed in the public hearing. Copies of this ordinance were distributed to all council members at the April meeting. Flowers moved to approve Ordinance 2022-001, second by Stringer. Voting yea were Flowers, Stringer and Siadek. Voting nay: Ginn. Motion carried three to one with approval of Ordinance 2022-001.

Introduction of Ordinance 2022-002 – Ten-year requirement of Redistricting Board of Aldermen Districts- Cedric Floyd presented a map to indicate the new districts indicating that districts A and B will remain unchanged. The plan must be submitted to the Secretary of State by June 22, so we are working on a short window. A motion to introduce made by Stringer with a public hearing to be held at the June 14 regular meeting of the council beginning at 5:30.

Introduction of Ordinances 2022-004, budget of Revenues and Expenditures; 2022-005 budget of Water Revenues and Expenditures, 2022-006 budget of Sewer Revenues and Expenditures – 2022-2023 budget ordinances introduced by Siadek. Public hearing to be held at the June 14 regular council meeting beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Advertising for appointment of town’s official journal to be handled every year. Flowers moved to approve advertising to select official journal, second by Siadek, unanimous approval.

CS Software purchase $8ksoftware with cloud contract of 150.00/month. As we move from working with a CPA to handling accounting in-house, we will need to purchase software to do so. Flowers made the motion to approve the purchase of the software and enter the monthly contract for monthly cloud services, second by Stringer, unanimous approval.

Zoning recommendation (Jan Circle) no action was taken on this item as council suggested that property owners seek a legal opinion. There are several neighborhood restrictions on this subdivision. An opinion of the town’s attorney was rather indistinct suggesting that neighborhood restrictions would be subject to interpretation possibly by the courts. There is no mention of manufactured homes moving in, only the trailer restriction. There are no restrictions noted by the Zoning Commission. Stringer and the Mayor suggested getting an attorney to assist with clarifying the restrictions and leaving the decision to the property owners.

Appointment to Zoning Commission – Local resident Robert Hunter was appointed to serve the unexpired term of commissioner Alvin Jones who passed away. Hunter brings experience to the commission. Stringer made motion to appoint, second by Siadek, approval was unanimous.

Juneteenth Parade - The town recognizes Juneteenth as an official holiday for its employees. Mr. Khaalid Hakeem is working with citizens and other non-profits to make this a program a very special day to remember and to educate the town’s people on what this holiday is all about. Plans are on the board to establish a scholarship fund through Hakeem’s non-profit organization. A parade and other activities are planned for this day. This activity will bring revenues to the town and is viewed as an economic development opportunity. A motion to approve the use of the Fairgrounds by the Black Culture Society (contingent on having the proper insurance and security) and collaboration with the town for activities related to Juneteenth Day made by Flowers, second by Stringer. Motion carried unanimously. Stringer asked that Hakeem come back to the next meeting to report on activities planned for this event.

Town’s Membership in One Call (811) – no action taken. Motion to table by Flowers to give C. Wortham, Public Works Director, an opportunity to review the contract.

Jeff Glover of MGM Development Group announced that the development of the Jonesboro Senior Village has been approved by the Louisiana Housing Council. This will be a 50-unit senior development for persons aged 55 or older located on Industrial Drive. There will be many amenities in the development. Glover thanked all of those who supported the project and talked about the challenges and victories through the process of getting to the final approval. Construction will begin sometime around October 2022.

Police Department Hire – Sirena Jackson to be hired as a part-time employee in the police department. Motion to hire by Ginn, second by Siadek. Unanimous approval.

Compliance Officer report – will be continuing with clearing dilapidated housing by burning 5 structures on May 28th. All the preliminary work to burn has been completed.

Department head reports (reports submitted to council in packets) Motion to accept reports by Flowers, second by Siadek, unanimous approval.

Council’s comments – most thanked the public for coming out.

Motion to adjourn by Flowers, second by Siadek, unanimously approved.

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Janice M. Simmons, Deputy Clerk Leslie C. Thompson, Mayor

“We are an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer”

If you need Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations, please inform Town Hall prior to the meeting to make the necessary arrangements.