

Town of Jonesboro

Mayor Leslie Thompson P.O. Box 610

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**Town of Jonesboro**

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN**

**MINUTES of the January 11, 2022 Meeting held at the**

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

**PUBLIC HEARING**

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. by Mayor Thompson.

Roll call established a quorum with the following council members present: Ginn, Siadek, Stringer, Flowers, and Johnson.

Invocation was led by Councilman Flowers.

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilman Ginn.

The floor was opened for a public hearing on the following two items:

Ordinance 2021-026 Hours of Sunday sale of alcoholic beverages

The old ordinance needed to be changed in order to comply with the new ordinance which makes it lawful for the sale of alcoholic beverages of high or low alcoholic content on Sundays (12 midnight Saturday to 6:00 a.m. the following Monday). Stringer requested the Mayor to read section 4-17 so that everyone would be aware of what the change is.

Zoning Change (Industrial Dr.) public hearing

The Zoning Committee has approved this change with all of the required advertisement. The second step was missed with the requirement of advertising by the council. This action corrects that mistake.

There were no comments from the public on either of the two issues.

**Regular Meeting**

Public Comments – One local citizen (J. Newman) talked about sewer problems at the McDonald Street lift station. It has been inoperable for some time. Whenever it rains water backs up and he asked that someone would address his issues and give him a status report of what has been done to correct the matter.

The Town’s server crashed rendering employees unable to complete all items required to complete the agenda. Mayor Thompson requested the following revisions/additions to the agenda:

Add as 9A- minutes from the special called telephone conference meeting held on December 17, 2021.

Add as 13A – a motion to approve purchase of a new server for the Town of Jonesboro using ARPA funds to meet the EPA, DEQ mandate.

Add as 16A – motion to use of $200,000 in ARPA funds as a match for the LCDBG project

Add as 16B – motion to use $80,000 of ARPA funds to rebuild aerators

Add as 16C – motion to use of $68,100 of ARPA funds as a match for a $261,000 grant the Town received recently for repair of the tank near the police station.

Motion to add items to the agenda by Flowers, second by Siadek, motion carried.

Approval of the agenda with changes as indicated on a motion by Stringer, second by Johnson, motion carried.

Approval of Minutes of December 14, 2021. Mayor Thompson requested that the approval of minutes from the special call meeting held by telephone conference on December 17, 2021be added with this item.

Stringer moved to accept minutes of December 14 and December 17, 2021, second by Flowers, unanimous approval.

Approval of December bills - – Flowers moved to approve the bills, second by Johnson. Mayor indicated that the CPA’s contract is coming to an end and we are now looking at and paying the bills on our own. There has been a substantial reduction in outstanding bills and the expectation to become current with bills should happen very soon. Ginn questioned balance in the cash control account and Mayor Thompson responded to his query. Being no other questions or discussion, motion carried.

Industrial Drive Zoning Change – each council member was provided the proper wording for the zoning change by Town Attorney Doug Stokes as follows:

“That the zoning classification of the immovable property described on the Exhibit A attached to and made part of this recommendation be changed from industrial to R2 Multifamily Residential subject to the condition that if said property has not been purchased by MGM Development LLC by May 30, 2022, as evidenced by a deed conveying that property to it recorded on or before that date in the conveyance records of Jackson Parish the zoning classification of that property shall, without any further action by any entity, revert back to industrial.”

Stringer moved to approve the zoning change according to the instructions and wording by the Town’s attorney to include a date change from April to May, second by Flowers, motion carried.

Broadband – server purchase – the Town’s server crashed this week, commonly known as the blue screen of death. It is approximately 23 years old and does not support the most recent version of Windows. While Hi-Tech was able to get it back up and running, there is no guarantee that the system will not crash again or when. We were unable to use the technology which is an important part of completing the work we do at Town Hall. Additionally, the computers in the office are as old as the server and will require replacement of 6 work stations (computers) and 6 Windows software which have not been supported by Microsoft for more than 3 years. The Town will get state contract pricing on these items which is the most inexpensive way to go. Cost of server plus cost of computers, monitors and labor is $22,000. Installation and labor costs are included in this number. Mayor Thompson asked for authority to contract with the tech company for the new server and computers using ARPA funds. Flowers moved to approve the purchase of the server, computers and cost of labor using ARPA funds, second by Johnson, unanimously approved.

Approval of December financials – Stringer moved to table this item until the next regular meeting as according to Mayor Thompson, there are some items in the report which do not seem to be correct.

Mayor’s update – Town is moving in a very good direction. We have some income/revenue challenges. We will make the necessary concession as we move forward. We are doing well with our grant awards. He commended the engineer, public works director and staff for working hard to get us where we are now. He thanked the council for supporting the requests on tonight’s agenda. We are seeking a CPA firm to replace the outgoing CPA and we feel good about the prospects we have. We are fortunate that we have received ARPA funds to do some things which we really need to do. As we embark upon the 1.2 million dollar sewer project, we are fortunate to be able to use the ARPA funding to fill in a gap. The bids for the sewer projects came in a little high, requiring additional funds to offset this. We have some

aerators which need to be addressed. Now that there is additional money in the federal coffers, we are able to get some additional funding to address the infrastructure. Mayor Thompson indicated that there is much work to be done in the Town; therefore he encouraged the council to remain focused and work together to make things happen for the town. Stringer asked if the town is on the non-compliance list. The mayor indicated we have never been off of the non-compliance list. We are on a conditional non-compliance allowing us to seek funding for infrastructure. The previous administration failed to complete several audits which we have been working to complete. At this point the audit firm has not yet completed the audits. Stringer stressed that the audits have not been completed. The pandemic has made it difficult to get the information they need but they are working to complete the outstanding audits.

Brad Graff – update (LCDBG) Town engineer Graff talked about the various projects that he is seeking additional funding on. He has worked to see if there were any costs that might be lowered in the bid by asking the low bidding contractors for an itemized list of expenses. On the projects which came in over the estimate, there were no components which could be cut out to lower costs of the projects. Cutting anything out would jeopardize the grant. An additional $200K of ARPA funds would be required to meet the requirements. We received a $261K grant to improve Well #1 storage tank near the police station. This grant requires a match in the amount of $68,100. Brad Graff continues to check on Water Sector grants which should be announced very soon. The work on the airport grant has been started.

Ginn asked whether the match was a 3/1 or 4/1 match. As it turns out, it is a 4/1 match. Graff indicated he would recalculate his numbers and notify council of the corrections.

Motion to approve 200K LCDBG match using ARPA funds- Stringer and second by Siadek. Unanimous approval.

Motion to approve the $68,100 match using ARPA funds by Siadek, second by Flowers, motion carried.

Motion to approve $80K of ARPA money for aerators by Flowers, second by Siadek. Unanimous approval.

Motion to approve the server, installation, software, etc. at a cost of $22,410.77of ARPA funds by Flowers, second by Siadek, motion carried.

Resolution 2022-001 ARPA Grant for Airport – Johnson moved to adopt the resolution second by Flowers to approve and accept the ARPA funds for the Jonesboro Airport. It was clarified that this money is separate from the other ARPA funding. Johnson, Flowers, Ginn, Siadek approved the motion to adopt the resolution, voting in opposition (nay) was Stringer. Motion carried.

Request to relinquish Town’s right-of-way on Cooper St (United Methodist Church) - Mayor asked for a motion to table this item as we need information from a legal standpoint and our attorney was not available. Stringer moved to table.

Ordinance 2021-026 Hours of Sunday sales of alcohol Ordinance to correct the extension of hours alcoholic beverages of high or low alcoholic content may be sold to include lawful hours of sales between midnight Saturday until 6:00 a.m. the following Monday, motion to approve by Johnson, second by Flowers, motion carried.

Department head reports (reports submitted to council in packets). Stringer moved to accept the department head reports, second by Flowers, motion carried.

Executive Session – Stringer moved to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter and following this motion he moved to come out of executive session with no action having been taken.

discussion ensued regarding the situation with Fire Chief Brandon Brown. Stringer moved to have Brown terminated based on the charges he is facing. Stringer’s indicated that his motive was to have his motion and recommendation on the floor. Motion seconded for discussion by Siadek. Stringer expressed his disappointment with the fire chief and expressed that he did not understand why no one had brought this issue to the attention of the council. Stringer feels that since fire chief has done something wrong, he does not have the confidence of his fire team and if he is not corrected, how can he correct his guys. Stringer suggested he be suspended or have some kind of corrective action taken because he “ broke the handbook.” He wanted on the record that a 21 year old, licensed, town employee should be driving town vehicles per the handbook. Mayor reiterated that all departments other than the police department with an elected Chief of Police are appointed by the Mayor. Hiring, firing and the power to suspend rests with the mayor according to the Lawrason act. Mayor Thompson indicated that he has seen what it is like for an individual to be punished before they have had due process and there will come a time where the system will work through the process and if the individual is found guilty he will then exercise the action he believes he is required to take. Stringer wanted to be on record as not in support of retaining the fire chief. Mayor Thompson called for the vote as to whether or not to terminate the fire chief. Vote was as follows: Stringer- yes, Siadek – yes, Flowers – no, Ginn – no, Johnson – no. This vote was simply a formality as the council does not have the authority to terminate anyone according to the Lawrason Act. This power rests with the mayor only.

Council’s comments Ginn commented on Lawrson Act and stressed that the council has the right to ask questions. There being no other comments, motion to adjourn Flowers, second Siadek.

Mayor’s comments - none

Adjournment

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

“We are an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer”