

Town of Hot Springs
Board of Alderman Meeting
July 14, 2025

Present:

Mayor Abigail Norton	Disaster Relief Admin Assistant (DRAA) – Sena Kassim	Police Dept. – David Shelton
Alderman Jeanne Gentry	Donation Center – Mandy Mae	Project Management – Brad Guth
Alderman Wendy Stancil	Entertainment Committee – Kevin Reese	Rebuild Hot Springs Area (RHSA) – Jodie Orozco
Alderman Dan Myers	Fire – Dan Myers	Safety – Dan Myers
Attorney Larry Leake	Maintenance – Jeremy Trantham	Tax Collector – Laura Holloway
	Planning & Zoning – Tim Arnett	

Mayor Norton called the Town meeting to order at 6:03pm.

Mayor Norton referred attendees to the Public Charge that were placed on each chair. She asked everyone turn their cell phones down or off.

Mayor Norton asked the Board for a motion to approve the June 9, 2025 meeting minutes. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in approval.

Mayor Norton asked the Board for a motion to approve the June 25, 2025 Budget Approval Meeting minutes. Alderman Stancil made a motion to approve; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in approval.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nancy Thomas – Said she has a U-Card through her United Healthcare Medicare Advantage card. The U-Card helps pay for utilities and groceries. She wanted to let the Board know that if credit card payments could be taken for water bills, she and others could pay their water bills with their U-Card. It was mentioned to Ms. Thomas that the town is looking into card payment ability, however, until that time, money orders could be purchased with credit & debit cards. Perhaps the U-Card could purchase a money order for water bill payments.

Robin Smith – Let the Board know that she is thankful for them, the Maintenance Team, and all the others within the Town.

Andy Fulton – Asked Mayor Norton to speak about updates regarding the water treatment plant and the curbs, downtown. Mayor Norton said bids have been let for a sight prep to be able to bring the package plants in; this is due at the end of July 2025. The installation of the plants will be put out to bid. Duke will put in the power. Julia Byrd, with McGill spoke of the package plant deal being secured, the water treatment by end of month, the separate bid and construction package for the installation. Mayor Norton said that due to the projected cost of the project, it has to go through a different bid process. The request for bids will be out for 2-weeks. If we do not receive 3-bids, the bid request has to be opened again for 2 more weeks. If 3 bids still haven't been received, then the Board can look at the bids that have been received. This could take another month before awarding a bid.

Mayor Norton explained that the Department of Transportation (DOT) sent out a surveying company to map where permanent drainage will be placed. The Town has no say in where the drainage will be placed. She said later in the meeting, the Board will review quotes for temporary sidewalk repair. However, the drainage issue must be taken care of quickly as water is running under the Town Hall building as well as causing problems for 16 S. Andrews Avenue (Artisun Gallery & Café).

Mr. Fulton brought up the portion of the sidewalk that was removed in front of 164 Bridge Street (Vinyl Pies). He is asking the Board if he could replace this portion of the sidewalk. Mayor Norton told Mr. Fulton that the Board will be reviewing quotes for a temporary sidewalk repair.

Glenda Dolbeare – Asked if the water just started running under the buildings – not when Hurricane Helene hit or just when it rains. Mayor Norton explained that the flood water washed out underneath the sidewalks and the road. Alderman Stancil said that the DOT had paved over a drainage spot, there is a crushed drainage pipe, several problems are causing poor draining issues.

AGENDA

There was no one on the agenda for this evening.

DEPARTMENTS

Disaster Recovery Admin Assistant – Sena Kassim

29,405 volunteer hours have been documented since Hurricane Helene hit the Town.

She is still working with a couple of residents, trying to get them back into their homes.

Sena continues to work with Rebuild Hot Springs Area (Rebuild or RHSA) to help gather funds.

Donation/Pantry Coordinator – Mandy Myers

Ms. Myers reports that the pantry is doing well.

Water is still needed, so if anyone knows where water has been stored, please let her know.

Mother Earth Foods (MEF) is delivering fresh produce. Ms. Myers said if we use their online service, they will continue to deliver to Hot Springs – even after the grant time period is over. She explained that after the grant, the Town may not continue to receive free produce, but will still have access to good foods.

A freezer has been donated to the Donation site. Frozen foods can now have frozen foods.

Entertainment Committee – Kevin Reese (reporting for SaraJo Litwak)

Mr. Reese said the committee had nothing to report this month.

Fire Department – Dan Myers

Alderman Myers said the Fire Department didn't have anything to report at this time.

Mayor Norton told Alderman Myers that she and would like to meet with the Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department (HSVFD), along with Alderman Myers [as an alderman – not as a volunteer fire fighter]. She wants to come up with ideas, to present to the Board, that may help bring in more volunteers and to have people who have signed up to respond to calls. Alderman Myers said he can offer a couple thoughts at the moment:

1) access to benefits; 2) a per diem, per call; 3) furnished HSVFD tee-shirts.

Mayor Norton said there were fire safety grants available. Alderman Myers said the Fire Chief is currently processing one of the state grants. Jeremy Trantham spoke up and said Safer has a recruitment and retention grant, but after the 3rd or 4th year, the grant funding drops off and the Town would have to fund at that point.

Maintenance – Jeremy Trantham

Mr. Trantham provided the Board with information regarding a couple pieces of equipment the Maintenance Department needs. The first piece is chlorine suction pump for the well system. Currently, there is one for the two wells. They have to switch from one well to another. They used to have two, but now they are down to only one. A second pump would allow for saved time and not have to transfer from one location to another.

The second piece is a portable spectrophotometer with USB & power module. This piece measures the residual chlorine that leaves the sewer plant. This can be used at both plants. The item is part of the field lab that the state requires. Mr. Trantham told the Board that this piece of equipment has to be recertified, each year on July 31, or date closest to July 31. The recertification is performed at the lab the Town is using.

Mr. Trantham asked if the Health Insurance was taken care of. Mayor Norton said she has information for the guys. She will get the information to everyone – there will not be a card for now, but the filing information will be provided.

Alderman Gentery made a motion to approve the purchase of the water/sewer testing equipment; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Planning & Zoning – Tim Arnett

Mr. Arnett explained there was some mix-up regarding the July meeting. They will discuss the July agenda during the September meeting.

Mayor Norton asked Mr. Arnett to contact the Planning & Zoning Board (PZB) Members and tell them that the September meeting needs to be moved to the first Tuesday [Sept. 2nd] of the month as the first Monday is Labor Day. Mr. Arnett will let the Board members know and then will get back to the Mayor. Mayor Norton will update the PZB calendar.

Police Department – David Shelton

Chief Shelton is presenting a proposal for a 5k run and a 1-mile fun run on behalf of Gary & Karen Goss with the Iron Horse (IHo). This is scheduled for Saturday, October 4th. The 5k is to start in front of the IHo, will go down River Road, then back to Town. They are thinking the 5k could bring in up to 200 runners; the 1-mile fun run may bring in up to 100 runners. The run will benefit the restaurant. The registration is open and on line. The Goss' have insurance for the event. They have Chief Shelton's support as well as Mark Snelson's, with the EMS, support. Chief Shelton said he and Officer Workman will monitor the traffic. Alderman Myers is asking about how all this will work with the temporary red lights on the Bridge, River Road, and at Gahagan Road. Chief Shelton said perhaps the lights may not be operating over the weekend. Alderman Myers said the insurance may have wording about not being in a construction zone – this may nullify the insurance. Mayor Norton told Chief Shelton would check with the Goss' to see how the construction may affect the insurance policy. Alderman Myers asked to table the subject to the August meeting. Chief Shelton will reach out to Ms. Goss to go over Board questions and thoughts.

Chief Shelton said a department vehicle is 13 years old and beginning to break down. The air conditioner is not working. It is too hot to expect an officer to come in and work in the heat. He is asking the Board to consider purchasing a new car; he has quotes coming in this week. Alderman Gentry said a budget amendment would need to be made for the purchase of a new car. Mayor Norton asked Chief Shelton to come into the office at 9:00am on Thursday [July 17], and they can get on line and look at cars on the Sheriff's Association's procurement website.

Chief Shelton said the air conditioner at the Lion's Club is not working. Alderman Myers suggests that Chief Shelton contact Andrew Thomas as he is the club's president.

In the June meeting Chief Shelton had talked about having a policy resolution for Mutual Aide Assistance. He would like to have the Mutual Aide Assistance resolution be put in place. This would allow quicker response for assistance rather than having to wait for a county office come to help, if needed. The proposed agreement is for Marshall to assist Hot Springs and Hot Springs to assist Marshall. There is no money exchanged for time, travel, gas, or anything else. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve the resolution; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Safety – Dan Myers

Alderman Myers told the Board that the County Manager has designated the Hot Springs Elementary School as an Emergency Shelter. A list of names will be created to designate people to required roles at the Emergency Shelter (i.e. Nurse, Vet-Tech, Child Care Specialist, etc...). Rod _____ will have a couple of people come to Hot Springs and meet with Mayor Norton and Alderman Myers to discuss the needs. Mayor Norton and Alderman Myers will then reach out to residence and request they fill the positions needed at an Emergency Shelter. Once positions are filled, the information should be forwarded on to the county for approval. Alderman Myers said the Town's people will have to be notified as to who is on the Emergency Shelter list and asked if they are okay with receiving service from the designated people.

Tax Collector – Laura Holloway

Ms. Holloway requests permission, from the Board, to release \$70.39 from the tax bill. The County has notified her that a personal property on the 2024 tax scroll should not have been noted on the scroll.

Alderman Gentry made a motion to release \$70.39 from the 2024 tax billing; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Capturis pays water bills for Norfolk Southern (NS). Capturis is asking that late fees be released on the two NS accounts for the April 2025 billing cycle. Capturis was late in paying the April 2025 bills for both accounts; late fee amount totals \$20.00. April 2025 water bills were due April 30, 2025. Town didn't receive April's payments until May 27, 2025. Alderman Gentry made a motion to deny the request to release late fees on the NS accounts; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

During the June meeting, Ms. Holloway was asked to find out the cost for a LocatePlus subscription. The subscription would allow the finding of Social Security numbers and dates of birth so that delinquent tax files could be forwarded to the State's Debt SetOff service. The service would allow the Town to capture delinquent taxes through State Income Returns and any gambling winnings. A monthly subscription is \$89.95 (with a \$99.95 one time set up fee). By paying monthly, the annual subscription amount would be \$1,179.35. An annual subscription, if paid up front would be \$899.50. However, Ms. Holloway feels that she would only need the service for 6-months; January through June. The 6-months would allow for 50 searches per month. Alderman Gentry said the Town didn't collect \$1,000.00 when they last used the service. In her opinion, the service is not worth the money.

Ms. Holloway told the Board that the list, provided in this meeting, would be the last delinquent account list she would provide until January 2026. She asked for the Board's assistance in collecting delinquent taxes that are listed on the report.

At this time, 94.33% of Real Property taxes have been collected. The amount still outstanding is over \$23,000.

Project Manager – Brad Guth

Mr. Guth had provided each Board member with a packet regarding Forgivable Loan Opportunities from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). He told the Board that the Town can participate in two of the funds; Wastewater Projects and Water Projects. He has provided the Board with a list of Town needs that could benefit from the DEQ forgivable Loan Opportunities, up to \$5-million. The loan fee, of 2%, will also be forgiven. The Town has a wastewater project that is beyond the \$5-million forgiveness threshold, the Housing Authority's filter system. It is estimated that this filter system would cost around \$2.6-million. Anything over the \$5-million forgiveness amount, the Town would receive 75% forgiveness of the loan; the interest rate would be zero percent. There is a 2% loan fee and the term would be 20 to 30 years. Mr. Guth referred the Board to the two resolutions he had provided. The resolutions will allow the Town to apply for the funds.

Mr. Guth asked Ms. Byrd, with McGill, if she had anything to share. Ms. Byrd explained she used to work with DEQ, specifically with the water division. She said the funding opportunity has never occurred before with DEQ and is generous. In looking at the projects Hot Springs has, the town scores high on the ranking system. Ms. Byrd said she is confident that Hot Springs would receive the funding under the terms and conditions.

Mayor Norton explained that the resolutions are to apply for the grant. A pre-application was completed to let DEQ know what the Town needed. The Housing wastewater was applied as decentralized, but does not qualify as such. The Housing wastewater would need to be included in wastewater – this would increase the loan to approximately \$7,600,000.00. Five-million of this would be forgiven. The Town could need \$100,000.00, a 2% fee, and would need to be paid up front if the grant is awarded.

Plus, the 2% fee for the water would also be needed. The total \$200,000.00 would need to come out of the water & sewer account. Mayor Norton told the Board that the money would have to be borrowed. The Town would have to get approval from Local Government Commission to get approval for a loan as the Town is on the Viable Utility Reserve Distress List. Mayor Norton told the Board that she recommends not doing the Housing Authority – the Housing Authority would add \$2.6 million to the loan amount and the Town would have to pay back 25%; that is a lot of money. Ms. Byrd explained that the wastewater resolution includes two projects. She said if the Town approves, it doesn't obligate the Town to _____ applications. Ms. Byrd said they would only submit the application for the priority project. Alderman Gentry asked what needed to be done at the sand filter [Housing Authority]. Ms. Byrd explained that repairs had been made but there are still compliance issues with the discharge. The application they had thought about submitting was to convert the sand filter to one main pump station. Alderman Gentry confirmed that approving a resolution doesn't obligate the Town to accept anything. Ms. Byrd confirmed. Attorney Leake told the Board that filing of the application subjects the Town to no obligation. With that said, Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve both resolutions; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Rebuild Hot Springs Area (RHSA) – Jodie Orozco

RHSA is requesting approval for Letters of Support for three grants. Two are from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy:

- Wild _____ Action Fund Land Protection Grant – Dark Sky Conservation to install historical street lights as part of the sidewalk reconstruction project.
- Wild _____ Action Fund Community Resilience Grant – New Garbage Receptacles and Drinking Water Fountain.

Ms. Orozco told the Board that making an application doesn't obligate the Town to accept anything. The third grant is from the National Park Service:

- The Fiscal Year 2025 Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund Disaster Recovery Grant – For the preservation, repair, and recovery of the historic elements of Town Hall. There would be a potential easement from the State.

Applying for the grant would not obligate the Town to the easement; that would be part of the agreement process if the funds are granted to the Town.

Mayor Norton confirmed that RHSA was only requesting three letters of support to apply and RHSA will apply for the preservation grant on behalf of the Town. Ms. Orozco confirmed and explained that the first two were letters of support and the third would be an owner consent letter. Alderman Myers said his concern was with the easement; there isn't a description of the easement. Mr. Guth referred Alderman Myers to the website for a sample easement. Mr. Guth said the historic preservation easements limit what can be done to property; once the Town received money for the rehabilitation (rehab), it is up to the Town to maintain the rehab for a specified number of years and no other alteration could be done during that timeframe. Attorney Leake told the Board that if the terms were not acceptable to the Town, the Town would not have to accept. Mr. Guth said there were other grants for which the Town could apply. Alderman Myers made a motion for the Board to provide of letters of approval, consent, and support for the Wild _____ Action Fund Land Protection Grant, Wild _____ Action Fund Community Resilience Grant; and letter of consent to the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund Disaster Recovery Grant from the National Park Service; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

TOWN BUSINESS

Mayor Norton

Mayor Norton requests that the Board place Project Manager, Brad Guth, on the Town's cell phone plan and get him a phone. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

The Mayor referred the Board to quotes for temporary sidewalk repairs on Bridge Street, from: Melrose Concrete and Finishing, Dean Cook submitted as Forest Cook, and Foothills Construction. Alderman Myers made a motion to award Dean Cook/Forest Cook as he is local and lowest bid; Alderman Stancil asked that the Board discuss in Executive Session.

Mayor Norton referred the Board to a quote from _____ Sludge Pump for the wastewater treatment plant. The quote is below the micro purchase threshold, but above the amount she can approve. She asks the Board for approval. She said this would be paid for through the bridge loan and reimbursed by FEMA. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton told the Board she made the changes to the Water/Sewer Policy and Water/Sewer Application that were requested in the June meeting. She asked the Board if they were ready to approve the documents. Alderman Stancil questioned section 5a, Meter Reading Billing and Collecting, the last sentence: The Town may vary these dates or length of period covered. Alderman Stancil said she'd like to see an explanation as to how the variance may occur, e.g. maintenance emergency and meters not read. Mr. Trantham said it typically takes 3-days to get the meters read, depending on the weather, amount of re-reads. He said if the bills are to be out by the 1st of the month, meters will need to be read during the third week of the month. The policy will be noted that meters will be read the third week of the non-billing month. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve the Water/Sewer Policy and Application; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton said Kevin Reese will be revamping the Town's website using a different content management system. Mr. Reese said Rebuild will integrate the Town's website into their service infrastructure at no cost to the Town, saving almost \$600 per year. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Alderman Gentry

Alderman Gentry let the Board know she needs to discuss four water accounts during the Executive Session.

Alderman Stancil

Alderman Stancil said the North Carolina Governor has set up a Western North Carolina Advisory Board regarding the flood; this is where the Governor gets his updates on the matter. Alderman Stancil said she attended the latest meeting. Funding for destroyed crops will be available. She said the meeting provided information and statistics about the recovery. There will be two subcommittees, she joined the resilience

subcommittee. She hopes the subcommittee will provide first information on funding. Alderman Stancil said she will keep the Board informed.

The League of Municipalities provided information about the _____ Grants. They will send out a copy of the webinar. Mayor Norton and Ms. Kassim were participants in the initial webinar and are familiar with the grants.

Alderman Stancil told the Board that she and Mayor Norton had met with all of the staff members. They were interested in hearing suggestions and some thoughts. She had made a synopsis of the meetings and is providing the Board with information for discussion in the August Executive Session.

The Board will go into Executive Session to discuss delinquent water accounts, a couple of quotes, and a contract. Alderman Gentry made a motion to move into Executive Session at 7:23pm; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

At 8:44pm, Mayor Norton announced the return to Regular Session.

Alderman Gentry

Made a motion to bill Ted More for water/sewer from the time he moved back into his home to current. Mr. Moore moved back, after the flood, in February [March] 2025. Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Alderman Gentry made a motion to charge A.J. Weems for the April 2025 water/sewer bill as our system didn't note an April bill payment and he didn't have a receipt documenting a cash payment; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

The Laughing Heart Lodge water bills, from September 2024 to current totaled \$7,902.00. Only \$116.00 has been paid since this time frame. Due to a leak, the Town averaged three water billing cycles and has rebilled the Lodge \$599.00. Alderman Gentry made a motion that Laughing Heart Lodge pay the \$599.00; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Regarding 423 Berry Wills Road; Johnny Lawson owns this property and has not been billed nor paid for use of water/sewer since his renter moved out, in February 2024. Alderman Gentry requests that Ms. Holloway review Mr. Lawson's account to confirm water has been used since Mr. Lawson's last renter moved out to current. Alderman Gentry made a motion that if it is determined that water has been used, Mr. Lawson is to be billed accordingly; Alderman Myers seconded the motion.

Alderman Gentry requests that each of the four water customers receive letters. She asked Ms. Holloway to not do anything until she speaks with her.

Alderman Gentry made a motion that employees no longer purchase personal items through the Town and then reimburse the Town. Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton asked for a motion to be made to award the temporary sidewalk repair to Melrose Concrete and Finishing, as discussed in Closed Session. Alderman Gentry made the motion; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

The contract, prepared by the Town's Attorney, with Adamson Homes, LLC should be approved and the Mayor is authorized to sign the contract for projects #1 and #2. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve; Aldermen Myers and Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Since there is no other business to discuss, Alderman Gentry made a motion to adjourn, Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:53pm.

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Approved
Abigail Norton
Mayor Abigail Norton

8-11-25
Date