

Present:

Mayor Abigail Norton
Alderman Jeanne Gentry
Alderman Wendy Stancil
Alderman Dan Myers

Fire Department –
Maintenance – Jeremy Trantham
Police Department – Chief David Shelton
Tax Department – Laura Holloway

Mayor Norton called the Town meeting to order at 6:00pm

Mayor Norton asked everyone to mute their phones, not to carry on side conversations or speak when someone else is speaking.

Mayor Norton asked for a motion to approve the January 2, 2024 Board meeting minutes. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton asked for a motion to approve the January 20, 2024, Special Meeting minutes. Alderman Gentry made a motion, Alderman Myers seconded the motion, all were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ike Lassiter Pickle Ball is a loud sport. He has read articles about lawsuits and players being reported for excessive noise while playing Pickle Ball. Mr. Lassiter wanted the town to be aware that if anyone is planning to play or build a pickle ball court the noise, while playing pickle ball, could violate the town's noise ordinance.

AGENDA

Andy Fulton – Vice Chair/Citizens Committee: For the Love of Hot Springs

Committee has about twenty members who live or have a business within the Hot Springs Town Limits. All are welcome to the committee; if anyone is interested in the committee, please contact Mr. Fulton. The next meeting will be the week of February 13.

Bylaws have been created for the committee. The start of the committee came out of a survey performed in 2023.

First three efforts the committee will focus on are: Community Spaces, Market Rate & Affordable Housing, and Municipal Assets. The committee will first focus on the community parking lot. They are planning to figure out how to best utilize the space for better parking, determine the cost for the improvements and then look for grants to cover the improvement budget.

Mayor Norton provided Mr. Fulton with an article, regarding committees from the School of Government. Mayor Norton advised that since the Citizens Committee's Board was appointed by the Board of Aldermen, the Citizens Committee Board must follow the open meetings law. The committee must post when they meet. Mr. Fulton said the committee will research ways to get meeting announcements out to the [general] public. Currently, they are using a community dashboard for committee members and meetings are posted, well in advance, for the committee members. Mayor Norton asked Mr. Fulton to provide her with the committee's meeting dates so she can post dates and time on the Town's website. She advised Mr. Fulton that special meetings must provide the citizens with, at least, a 48-hour notice of the special meeting.

Michael Graham

Mr. Graham asked how the McCalls and EMS were able to lease the jailhouse & fire building. He wanted to know if there was a set format for the lease of town property and if there were plans for the building. Mr. Graham also asked what the status of the Community Center – he would like to know if the Community Center could be leased. Mayor Norton explained that the McCall's leased the jailhouse with the intent of putting in a coffee shop; this was 5 years ago. The jailhouse was in worse shape than the McCall's realized, so their coffee shop plans ceased. The building still needs repair. The Board has not discussed plans for the building. Mayor Norton shared her thoughts on the use of the jailhouse/fire building: Put public restroom in the bay area and put in a Hot Springs Museum in the other part. The building needs a roof. The Community Center now has mini splits for heat & air and could now be rented out. Mr. Graham would like to see the museum and public restroom. Alderman Gentry said she would like to see the historical panels placed in an area where visitors could see. Mr. Graham said he would like to have a place where the community could come together, without having to eat or drink, for square dancing, bingo, etc.

Ken Ramsay

He too was wondering about the jailhouse & fire building. He asked if he could put his name in as being interested in leasing the building. Mayor Norton let everyone know that if the Town decides to lease the building it would have to be posted.

DEPARTMENTS

Police Chief David Shelton – Police Department

Chief Shelton said he has requested costs for updating the cameras. Chief Shelton would like for a representative from the company he is working with to come out and give a presentation to the Board. For now, Chief Shelton asks that someone with a bucket truck to clean the camera lenses.

Jeremy Trantham – Maintenance Department

The Red Bridge pump had some issues which have now been addressed.

The Department has a new truck for which they are pleased to have.

Laura Holloway – Tax Department

Ms. Holloway requested release of taxes & interest for two trailers. Phillip Solomon was taxed \$48.00 for two trailers he no longer owns. 2023 scroll did not include the trailers. Board approved.

Ms. Holloway requests release of \$893.01 in interest from Duke Energy's 2023 tax account. Duke was able to prove they sent a certified mailing with their 2023 tax payment on January 2, 2024. In looking at tracking, the payment is still in South Carolina. Ms. Holloway told the board that she had requested Duke to void first check and overnight another check for the base amount. As Duke had promised, the replacement check was overnighed, and payment was received on February 1. Alderman Gentry made a motion to release the interest; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Ms. Holloway provided a listing of unpaid properties. She let the Board know that letters will be sent out reminding real property owners that their taxes are delinquent and their name will be posted, with the amount of tax they owe, in the newspaper if the taxes are not paid. Ms. Holloway also let the Board know of her intent to advertise delinquent accounts in the local newspaper, at least once, between March 1 and June 30, 2024.

Ms. Holloway told the Board that she had contacted the School of Government and found that the town can post delinquent tax accounts to town's Facebook account. However, Mayor Norton had suggested the post on the town's website and not Facebook. Alderman Myers made a motion to not post the delinquent accounts to Facebook; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion. Alderman Myers made a motion to post the delinquent tax accounts to the town's website.

Gail Dufek, with the Madison County Group Home asked if they could put flyers in the next water bill letting the town's residence know of when the Manna Food Bank will be distributing food. Ms. Dufek said she would print the notices to be put in with the water bills. There should be no additional cost to the town [postage, paper, or printing]. Board asked who would put the notices in the water bills. Ms. Holloway said she could help with that while folding and putting the water bills in envelopes. Mr. Ike Lassiter said he would, also, help. Alderman Stancil made a motion to approve the Manna Food Bank distribution information to be put in the next water bill; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Ms. Holloway told the Board that 91.30% of Real Property taxes had been collected; 92.70% of Personal Property taxes have been collected; and a combined total of 91.44% of the billed 2023 taxes had been collected.

BUSINESS

Tom Swartout, Senior Project Manager with McGill Associates

Mr. Swartout gave an update on the wastewater treatment plant project. He provided the Board with handouts. Asked if there were additional questions on getting the execution of the contract. The preliminary design has been started. Alderman Stancil asked what the timeline was for the project. Mr. Swartout said it was hard to know, the project is ARPA funded [American Rescue Plan Act]. There are government guidelines – one, specifically,

is that all construction contract reimbursements have to be filed by December 31, 2026. They are trying to get everything ready for bid by the end of 2024 with intent to have contracts signed in 2025 and construction going on in 2025 and 2026.

Mayor Norton asked if the land purchase would be finalized by the end of 2024. Mr. Swartout said he is planning on the land purchase to be finalized quickly.

Mayor Norton said the town had put out an RFQ [request for qualifications] and the Board voted, in December, to go with McGill. The Board now needs to vote on the McGill contract for engineering services for the \$4-million grant. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve, Alderman Myer & Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Keith Webb, Chief Technology Officer with McGill Associates

Mr. Webb gave an update on the \$1-million Viable Utilities Funding grant. The grant will allow for several projects: Replacement of a section of a Spring Creek sewer line, rehab of the housing authority's wastewater treatment plant, and upgrade of the Spring Creek/Post Office pump station as well as a request to cover use part of the \$1-million grant for a new blower at the wastewater treatment plant and two wastewater samplers. These items have already been purchased. McGill is working with the funding people to release all of the grant funds. Mr. Webb expects that the Spring Creek pump station plans _____??? _____ [somebody kept rustling paper and made it hard to understand what Mr. Webb was saying 🤔] within the next month.

Mr. Webb said that any remaining funds, out of the \$1-million, there will be some additional improvements at the wastewater treatment plant. One improvement would be to purchase a second blower. The current back up is 40 years old. Alderman Gentry confirmed that McGill is still working on getting the blower, purchased last year, covered under the \$1-million grant. Mr. Webb confirmed. Alderman Myers asked about the sewer line by the Spring Creek Tavern. Mr. Webb said as soon as the engineering report and plans are approved the project will go out for bid. Hopefully within the next six months we will have a contract for the repairs. Typically, the repairs should be completed within 2-months after project is started. Mayor Norton asked about the sand filter. Mr. Webb said the timeline for the sand filter is the same, repairs are about a two-week repair once the sand is in.

In regard to the County's request for the Hot Springs water to be extended to the Fairview community, Mr. Webb said the Fairview community water system would be replaced. The County received money for this project; \$2.9 million has been allocated to the Fairview community water system. Once the project is completed, the twenty-five current Fairview residents will become Hot Springs water customers. There will be a tap fee for current non-customers to be put on the Hot Springs water source. Currently, Hot Springs does not have an outside water rate. Mayor Norton has been working with the NC Rural Water Association and they had stated 2-times the residential rate, for water, would be a right amount to charge an outside water customer. An outside customer would pay \$90 every two months.

Mayor Abigail Norton

Mayor Norton said she noticed Town Hall doesn't have a street number posted. Ben Houser stepped out and found the street number above the entrance door. It's dark

numbers on a dark background. There was mention of the numbers being painted a lighter color.

Mayor Norton presented a resolution to authorize the sale of two used fire trucks and an old maintenance truck. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve the sale of the trucks; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton received two quotes for the wellhouse roof repair. The insurance deductible is \$1,000 and they will pay \$3,100 for the wellhouse repair. Alderman Gentry requests that the contractor has liability insurance. Alderman Myers said that if the contractor is licensed by the state. Alderman Stancil made a motion to table the topic and review the policy to ensure verbiage in the policy requiring the contractor had [active] liability coverage; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

The wellhouse generator needs to be repaired or replaced. Mr. Trantham said quotes for repair, in 2023 was from \$23,000 to \$26,000; a new generator would cost around \$70,000 and delivery time is around 48-weeks. Alderman Gentry requests that Mr. Trantham get the repair job quoted. Mr. Webb said that an automatic transfer switch could be added to the generator.

Alderman Jeanne Gentry

The town has a lot of paving that needs to be done. The budget, between the Powell Bill fund and the streets department, we would have enough to cover the paving. Cost is about \$24,000. The paving is already in the budget.

Alderman Gentry let everyone know that she is turning the water accounts over to Alderman Stancil. The water billing is now processed through new software. Currently there are eighty-three customers that have not paid their December 2023 water bill for several billings prior. There is \$17,000 in outstanding water payments. The Board will hold a special meeting to discuss/update the water policy.

Since there is no other business to discuss, Alderman Stancil made a motion to adjourn, Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:59pm.

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Approved _____
Abigail Norton
Mayor Abigail Norton

3-4-24
Date _____
Other _____