

Town of Hot Springs
Board of Alderman Meeting
February 6, 2023

Present:

Mayor Abigail Norton	Police Chief David Shelton
Alderman Jeanne Gentry	Maintenance Department – Jeremy Tranthum
Alderman Vaughn Barnett	Tax Department – Laura Holloway
Alderman Jimmy Moore	Zoning Committee – Lisa Hicks
Attorney Ron Moore	Entertainment Committee – SaraJo Litwak

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

Mayor Norton read a portion of the public charge and advised meeting attendees that the public charge was available to read should anyone wish to read the entire notification.

Mayor Norton asked the Board Members if there was a motion to approve the January 3, 2023 meeting minutes. Alderman Gentry made a motion; Alderman Barnett seconded the motion; all were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments.

AGENDA

Ike Lassiter

Mr. Lassiter said he is representing the Madison County Group Home (MCGH). Before 2020, the MCGH would sponsor the Trail Fest each April. However, since the last Trail Fest, the Town has adopted a Noise Ordinance. Mr. Lassiter is asking the Board that on Saturday, April 22, 2023, from 10:00am until 5:00pm, at the Alpine Court front lawn, what is the cost for having live, amplified music and announcements at the Trail Fest event. Mr. Lassiter is asking about the cost for having the amplified music during the festival.

Alderman Gentry advised the Alpine Court is within the commercial area of the Town's zoning. She also advised that the Town does not have a one day or festival event fee. Mayor Norton asked if we didn't have a special event fee that is not a year application fee.

Mr. Lassiter told the Board that MCGH will do all of their own set up on Friday and clean up on Sunday afternoon. There would be no cost to the town. Mr. Lassiter advised that all proceeds made, during the festival, would go to the MCGH for a vacation for the residents; residents are taken to the beach or somewhere. Each year money is set aside some money for the next year, but money earned through the silent auction, vendor fees, and such go to the MCGH. Grants have also been awarded to the MCGH.

Mr. Lassiter said Friends of the Library will sponsor a presentation by Sarah Jones Decker. Ms. Decker has a book about all of the shelters and lean tos of the Appalachian Trail. This presentation will be at the Chestnut Hall. Saturday evening, at the Laughing Heart, there will be a free meal, games, and different things for the hikers. Sunday morning there will be a pancake breakfast for the hikers, probably at the Pine Hall.

Alderman Moore said that since this is a fund raiser for the MCGH, his opinion would be to not have a charge for the events. Alderman Moore told Mr. Lasiter to make certain all of the guidelines for amplified music were followed.

Mayor Norton asked for a motion to not make an event fee charge, for Trail Fest, because it is a fundraising event for the MCGH. Alderman Moore made a motion; Alderman Barnett seconded the motion; all were in favor.

DEPARTMENTS

Police Chief David Shelton

Chief Shelton said parking is becoming an issue. There are a couple of extra parking places that used to be by EMS and the fire department. Since EMS and the fire department have moved, he is wanting the Town to open these parking spaces to be used by the public. Also the parking signs, no parking signs, have faded; Chief Shelton asks that the faded signs be replaced.

Chief Shelton spoke of the wreck that occurred, a couple months ago, on North Andrews and Bridge Street. Car was coming from Big Pillow. The driver was driving a sports car and couldn't see, well, over the crest of the railroad tracks. Chief Shelton suggests round traffic mirrors so drivers can see what's coming, NE and NW, by the tracks. Also, flashing lights, such as by the gas station, Chief Shelton suggests similar lights be placed at the crosswalk to bring better awareness of the crosswalk for drivers to slow down. Chief Shelton said the summer vendors have told him they have seen people, in the crosswalk, nearly hit by speeding drivers that are coming across the railroad tracks.

Mayor Norton asks that compact cars be the only vehicles allowed to park in the spots if Board agrees to open the 2 parking spots to the public. Large vehicles have been known to park down Andrews impeding the street.

Chief Shelton also asks that Maintenance work on the lighting in his office as there are several lights not working. Maintenance will look into this within the week.

Mayor Norton asked the Board if she could have a motion to open up the two parking spaces. Alderman Barnett made the motion; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton asked Chief Shelton if he would order the mirrors he spoke of. Chief Shelton said he would.

Alderman Gentry mentioned that we may have to go through DOT regarding the flashing lights as this is a state pedestrian crossing. Alderman Barnett suggested asking DOT to put up a stoplight. Alderman Barnett and Moore suggest asking DOT what they will since it is a state pedestrian crossing. Chief Shelton suggested a full-sized sign with flashing yellow lights. Mayor Norton asked Attorney Ron Moore if we would have to go through DOT to put up signage. Mr. Moore responded that the Town may not have to go through DOT. He suggested a sign which indicates "blind spot ahead", "slow down – hazard ahead". Chief Shelton mentioned putting the sign on a pole, to get above the railroad track. Mayor Norton asked the Board if we would need to get with Duke [Energy] about putting the sign on the pole. Mr. Jeremy Trantham said there would have to have electricity ran to the pole, but solar could be an option. Chief Shelton said he works in an area that has signs with LED lights around it and that is solar. Mayor Norton asked Chief Shelton to look into that too.

Jeremy Trantham

Mr. Trantham said one of the transducers, at the water tank, had gone out around Christmas – that has been fixed. The blower that we got, with the grant, is in at the sewer plant. Some electrical issues had to be worked out. The prior equipment ran on 50amps, but the new equipment needed 150amps to run, due to its size. Maintenance is working with McGill and the installer to get everything worked out. Initially, McGill thought the new equipment would run on the old power amperage. Mr. Trantham is waiting to hear back from McGill.

Alderman Gentry asked Mr. Trantham if he received a proposal from James & James (J&J). Mr. Trantham responded that he had not. Alderman Gentry asked Mr. Trantham to explain to the Board what needed to be fixed at the sewer plant. Mr. Trantham explained that the sewer plant has an arm that keeps stuff off the top of the clarifier (the center ring of the sewer plant). This arm turns continuously. The end of the arm is supposed to have a wheel that runs on a rim as it is turning. However, the wheel has rusted off and the arm is sagging. The wheel isn't very expensive but having it welded onto the arm is the slow down. J&J hasn't committed to a time frame in which the wheel could be welded onto the arm as well as rewelding other needs. Mayor Gentry said J&J needs to come up with a specific amount as the Town can't go into a repair job not knowing how much money the job would cost. Alderman Moore asked Mr. Trantham to get a worst-case scenario estimate for the two repairs. Mr. Trantham said he would contact J&J on Tuesday, 02/07/2023.

Mayor Norton asked Mr. Trantham about the transducer. Mr. Trantham said the transducer was working well. Said it started up, working, as soon as it was placed. Mayor Norton asked when the transducer was replaced as the Town has received another e-mail warning. Mr. Trantham advised that there was a day in which the little pump had been running, at the well house. The little pump does not keep up and there was a slip; thus the reason for receiving the e-mail warning. Alderman Gentry told the Board that we now have a spare transducer should anything go wrong with the one that is currently in place. Mr. Trantham explained to the Board that we had to buy a new transducer and the supply company sent us three, by mistake. Mr. Trantham said when he contacted the supply company they told him to keep one transducer as an extra and send the third one back. The Town got two transducers for the price of one. Mr. Trantham told the Board that Maintenance was able to get the tree limbs, covering the road, taken care of while they were working at the pump house.

Alderman Moore said he and Mr. Trantham had talked about painting the speed bumps. The Board agreed to paint the speed bumps. Alderman Barnett told Mr. Trantham to make certain the cones are up so that people won't drive over the bumps and get fresh paint on their car. A road closed sign was mentioned. The Maintenance team will test to see how long it will take for the paint to dry. The Maintenance team will also wait for warmer, dryer weather to paint the speed bumps.

SaraJo Litwak

Ms. Litwak said the Entertainment Committee has several events planned for 2023. The Committee has several other ideas but will discuss those further into the year. Ms. Litwak provided the Board with a list of events such as an Easter egg hunt and Fourth of July events. The Committee is thinking about having the Easter egg hunt at the school, that way the children would be in fenced grounds and they would be less likely to run into a street. In an effort to draw people to a less congested area of town, the Committee thought that the July 4th evening events could be at the grounds of the Alpine Courts. Hopefully, they can get a bluegrass band or Ashley Heath to play from 4:00pm to 6:00pm or 5:00pm to 7:00pm. They would also like to have vendors and the Lion's Club food tent.

The Entertainment Committee would like to discuss having an evening Christmas Parade ending at the tree lighting. Last year, the Committee noticed, as they were preparing for the Christmas Tree lighting, that traffic was not as bad around 5:00pm as it had been earlier in the day. With this thought in mind and knowing the Christmas Parades have been missed by a lot of people the Committee could begin to discuss and work things out now, instead of telling the Town they will try, and then not be able to come through with a parade. At this time, the Committee is thinking of having the parade on Saturday, December 9, 2023. The Committee feels as though the 2022 tree lighting, the homes and businesses lights went well. For 2023 the Committee would like to have the decoration contest to be between December 1st through the 15th and give people a little more time [to decorate]. Ms. Litwak has some ideas of asking local businesses to contribute to the Entertainment Committee for the 4th of July festival. Wendy Stancil will be applying for another TDA grant for the Committee.

Alderman Gentry would like to see the Easter egg hunt at the school. Lisa Hicks said she has spoken with Lisa Gahagan and she said that would be ok. Ms. Litwak said the Committee would like to start the bed races again for the 4th of July. They are thinking of having the bed races down South Andrews Ave. or at the school, but school would have to be coordinated with the fire department. The Committee is thinking of a lot of different things, too.

Dan Meyers

Mr. Meyers said Fire Chief Josh Norton is applying for a grant for new rescue tools. The grant money is up to \$30,000.

Mayor Norton

Land of Sky will be on the phone with the Planning Board during the March meeting. They will be discussing the short-term rentals. Mayor Norton told Lisa Hicks to let the Planning Board know, during the February meeting of the call with Land of Sky. Mayor Norton told Ms. Hicks to gather questions so that we can get the questions to Land of Sky so they may research before the March meeting.

There is a vacant seat in the Planning Board. Mark Snelson has agreed to take the vacant seat. Mayor Norton asked for a motion to approve Mr. Snelson being placed on the Planning Board. Alderman Moore made the motion; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Laura Holloway

Ms. Holloway had provided the Board with a list of the delinquent taxes. She will send letters out to property owners whose name appears on the list asking that the taxes be paid. A second letter will go out in March, and a third and final letter will go out in April. The third letter will let the property owner know that the next step is for the unpaid taxes are turned over to Legal.

Ms. Holloway let the Board know that the Town has currently collected 83.34% of the 2022 real property taxes. Personal and Real taxes collected are currently 81.11%.

Ms. Holloway asked the Board if they approved her putting the names of people, with unpaid real taxes, in the news paper in May or June. Alderman Gentry advised that was not something the Board had to approve as that was normal procedure.

Attorney Ron Moore commented on the taxes owing over \$1,000.00. He suggests that after the letters have been written to let him send out a letter as a good response was seen several years ago when he sent out letters.

BUSINESS

Mayor Norton

Asked the Board about the sewer tap moratorium. She asked the Board if they wanted to lift the Town moratorium. Mayor Norton noted that the Town is still under a state moratorium for sewer extension. Mayor Norton told the Board that she sent a very specific question to the DWI [Division of Water Infrastructure]. The response was that the State's extension moratorium means the Town can not extend the main line. The State's moratorium does not mean that we can't allow anyone to tap into the existing line.

Mayor Norton asked the Board if they want to retain the Town's moratorium or release it. Alderman Moore asked how the system was doing at this time. Alderman Gentry said the Town continues to run over the daily usage allowance. Mr. Trantham agrees; the Town is remaining over the daily allowance; and when the big rains come in, it is very high in numbers. Alderman Gentry added that the Town is over the base line because the permit hasn't been increased. Mayor Norton told the Board that Keith Webb [with McGill] is working on the matter. Alderman Gentry suggested that the Town wait. She is concerned that it will take a couple years to get the permit. Mayor Norton will ask Mr. Webb where everything is in the process and how much longer it may be to get the permit.

Mayor Norton wants to discuss the cars parked on River Drive. She is concerned about an ambulance of fire truck may have issues getting through with the cars parked on the road. The property residence work on cars. Mayor Norton asked Mr. Trantham about the garbage truck making it through the area with the parked cars. Mr. Trantham said it was tight, the truck goes over in the trees a little bit, but they could get through. Attorney Moore asked the cars are parked on the road. Alderman Moore responded that cars are parked on the road all over town. Alderman Gentry noted that a regular car or truck can easily drive down the road. Alderman Barnett said the garbage truck is as wide as a fire truck. Attorney Moore asked if there were other Town streets where cars are parked on the road. Alderman Gentry said every street has the same problem. Alderman Moore asked if a 'no parking' sign could be placed where the problem is where it would be tight to pass. Mayor Norton suggested to send a letter to the people who have multiple cars parked on the street. Attorney Moore said a letter could be sent out, but it would have to be sent to every resident where multiple cars are parked in the street, not to just one area. Attorney Moore asked if the vehicles were blocking the road to where two cars could not pass. The Board responded that one car would have to wait for the other car to pass. The parked cars will not allow two cars to pass each other. Alderman Moore suggested that if the property has parking, the people living on the property should park in their own driveway.

Mayor Norton told the Board that the Town is getting closer to receiving the Walnut Mountain shelter. It will be placed at the Welcome Center.

Alderman Gentry

The Town's budget is in good shape. The General Fund is at 51% and Water/Sewer is at 59%. The 59% is before the budget amendment was applied, so Water/Sewer budget will be at a higher percentage.

The Town has about \$30,000 for repair of the Community Center. We did not get the \$50,000 private grant. Working with the Accountant, we were told that the *Town can use money from General Funds. Alderman Gentry asked the Board what they thought about putting a Renovation Committee put together or would they rather to just start the renovations. She said we need to start the work. She asked the Board where they thought we should start. Alderman Barnett said the roof needs to be fixed first. Alderman Moore suggested to start from top and work down. Alderman Gentry felt the heat/air would be next so the Town could allow people to, again, use the building.

Alderman Moore suggested to get bids for the roof, heat, and cooling. Mayor Norton said that once these needs are completed the Board could then put a committee together. Alderman Gentry asked Attorney Moore if the Town had to put notification, in the newspaper, that we are taking bids. Attorney Moore said we do have to put notice in paper.

Chris Donochod asked the Board if the renovation would be the entire building, or just the Community Center. Alderman Gentry said the jail is on lease; Alderman Barnett advised we'd have to put a roof on the entire building [Community Center and jail].

Alderman Gentry presented 2 Budget Ordinance Amendments. Amendment #2 take proceeds from the sale of the caboose (\$8,600), event expenses (\$4,000), and Fire Department expenses (\$13,417) and amend the General Fund to change the line item amounts to put in the Community Center budget. Alderman Gentry asked for a motion to change the line-item amount. Alderman Moore made a motion; Alderman Barnett seconded the motion; all were in favor.

The next Budget Ordinance Amendment is Amendment #3; it is for the Water/Sewer Enterprise fund. The Board will take the American Recovery Act (ARP), (\$91,944) and appropriate it to the into water/sewer fund. The Town will be able to do much needed work that we otherwise couldn't work on as quickly. Alderman Gentry asked for a motion to approve; Alderman Moore made a motion; Alderman Barnett seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton

At 6:52pm, Mayor Norton announced that the Board needed to move into an Executive Session to discuss personnel and legal matters. Alderman Gentry made a motion; Aldermen Barnett & Moore seconded the motion; all were in favor.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 7:38pm. Alderman Barnett made a motion to return to regular session; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton noted that the Executive Session was to discuss Chief Shelton's pension. It is a law that all full-time police officers receive a pension.

Since there is no other business to discuss, Mayor Norton asked for a motion to adjourn; Alderman Gentry made the motion to adjourn; Alderman Moore seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Approved

Mayor Abigail Norton

Date

Other