

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING OF THE
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN
OF THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA,
HELD ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2024 AT 6:00 P.M.
IN THE TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM, 200 VERNON STEVENS BLVD., VIDALIA,
LOUISIANA**

The Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, met, in regular session, in the Town Hall Meeting Room on Tuesday, January 9, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

There were present: Mayor Buz Craft, Aldermen Jon Betts, Brent Smith, Tommy Probst and Alderwoman Rosa I. Demby.

There was absent: Alderman Robert Gardner.

There were also present: Piara Wilson, Municipal Clerk; Debra Moak, Municipal Accountant; George C. Murray, Jr., Municipal Attorney; Jay LaSyone, Municipal Manager; and members of the press.

The meeting was opened by the Mayor and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present, followed by the invocation given by Alderman Betts.

A quorum being present, the Mayor declared the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, to be duly convened, in regular session, as the governing authority of said municipality, and opened the meeting for the conduct of business.

After being reviewed, the typed minutes of the regular town meeting of December 12, 2023, were approved with no changes. The motion for the approval of the minutes was made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried.

The Mayor then asked if anyone had any comments on current agenda items. The Mayor recognized Cassandra Lynch who commented on Agenda Item No. 7 which is the discussion on partnering with the Recreation Board on renovating the old ball parks. Ms. Lynch noted that she is happy that the Town will be renovating those parks but wants to make sure that the concession stands and restrooms will be renovated as well. The Mayor assured her that he will discuss these items at the time of taking up that agenda item and thanked her for her comments.

The Mayor then announced that Agenda Item No. 1 is the presentation of the financial statement for November 2023 by Debra Moak, CPA, and Municipal Accountant. Ms. Moak began by explaining the various fund balances, which summaries included a comparison of actual expenses to budget expenses. Following that, the summary sheets, previously given to the Aldermen, were reviewed in detail, including a report on the positive and negative fund balances and indicated the net changes in the various funds. She then reported on which revenues are under budget and which are over budget at this time. Following that, she brought the Aldermen up to date on several items of interest, which items included: cash in the bank; investments; total assets and liabilities; combined revenues and expenses, showing a change in net position of a negative \$3.7 million. She explained that the reason for the large negative net position is due to the Hydro rebate expense paid in November. She then touched on sales tax collection and hydro royalties; and she concluded by advising that the Auditors have completed their audit and it was submitted by the deadline to the Louisiana Legislative Auditor. She further stated that she was advised that there were no findings in their report. There being no questions or comments, the Mayor thanked Mrs. Moak for her usual thorough presentation.

Agenda Item No. 2 was Board discussion and vote on approval of Occupational License applications. The only application was by Morgan White Blunski for “Rancher’s Daughter Western Boutique” at 901 Carter Street. There were no questions or comments, and a motion to approve the application was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried.

At this point, the Municipal Clerk advised the Mayor that Alderman Gardner had joined the meeting, which the Mayor duly noted.

Agenda Item No. 3 was Board discussion and vote on approval of Liquor and Beer Permits. The first request was by El Ranchero Mexican Restaurant at 1619 Carter Street. The Mayor noted that there was also an application by Pepe Betos Mexican Kitchen & Cantina at 1102 Carter Street and asked if the Board wanted to address both at this time. Alderman Gardner then made a motion that the applications both be approved for liquor and beer permits. That motion was seconded by Alderman Smith and unanimously carried. At this point, Alderman Probst reminded the Mayor that the Pepe Betos application had a sign application attached. There being no further questions or comments, a motion to approve the sign application was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 4 was Board discussion and presentation on Daupler Notification System for utility outages. After announcing the Agenda Item, the Mayor made preliminary remarks and then called on Mr. LaSyone, the Municipal Manager to report on this issue. Mr. LaSyone stated that it is a reporting system to alert customers in rural areas to utility outages. He gave a comprehensive explanation of the various advantages that the system can provide. He indicated that the cost would be approximately \$30,000.00 per year as a package deal. Alderman Probst stated that he likes this project and Alderman Betts spoke on some of the issues. The Mayor indicated that this would be included in next year’s budget. At the conclusion of the discussion, it was moved by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried, to proceed to implement the system.

At this point, the Mayor advised of the several nights of freezing temperatures which would be coming during the next week and suggested to everyone that they should be preparing for the freezing weather.

Agenda Item No. 5 was Board discussion and vote on transferring the management of the Town Dog Pound to Vidalia Police Department. The Mayor first gave an over-view of the situation wherein a request has been made to terminate the activities as a dog shelter and have just a dog pound which would be under the Police Department. He noted that this is just an informational item and that no votes will be taken. He stated that it will take several months because we have a dog Ordinance in place and it will need to be amended. There followed comments from Alderman Probst, Alderman Gardner, Alderman Betts and generally by the Board. The Mayor was asked questions about various items which he answered. At the conclusion, he indicated that the Board would be kept up to date on the progress of revising the Town’s Dog Ordinance.

Agenda Item No. 6 was announcement required by State Law that a Resolution will be considered at the February 13, 2024, meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen to transfer property for industrial purposes from the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, to Louisiana Renewable Fuel Facility, LLC. Following announcing Agenda Item No. 6, the Mayor advised the Board that this item is a formality, as it has already been approved and the appraisal for the property has just been received. There are several steps that the Town must go through in order to transfer property to Louisiana Renewable Fuel Facility, LLC. Mr. LaSyone then reminded that there are notices which

have to be published and that the meeting on February 13, 2024, the public will have a chance to ask questions and make comments prior to any formal action being taken.

Agenda Item No. 7 was Board discussion on partnering with the Recreation Board on renovating old ball parks. After announcing the Agenda item No. 7, the Mayor then recognized Mr. Mike Bowlin and asked if there were any Rec Board members with him. Mr. Bowlin indicated that there were none but that the Rec Board had been notified they were on the Agenda for tonight's meeting. At this point, Alderman Probst told the Board that there is a Rec Board meeting tomorrow afternoon at 5:30 P.M. So if any one would like to attend that meeting, that they certainly could. There followed a general discussion between Mr. Bowlin and members of the Board about various aspects of the problems with the old ball fields. At the conclusion, the Mayor advised that there is a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement in place that he signed and the Town needs to review that agreement. It was the consensus of the Board, that they would like to do what is necessary to participate in getting those ball fields back up to being in top shape.

Agenda Item No. 8 was Board discussion on Alderman Brent Smith attending a Water System Management Training Class. The Mayor explained the need to have the Mayor or a Board member attend the Water System Management Training Class. He indicated that Alderman Smith did go to the class in order to raise the Town's rating from a B to an A. There followed a short discussion between the Mayor and Mr. LaSyone and others regarding the State's rating system and changes that might be made. It was brought out that the Town's water system recently has been producing the best water that it ever has.

The Mayor then stated that he had been asked to mention the Mardi Gras Parade and asked Ms. Lynch when that was. She said that it will be February 10, starting at 3:00 and gave some information on the route. The Mayor urged everyone to attend the parade.

Agenda Item No. 9 was Board vote to enter Executive Session to discuss possible litigation. The Mayor then asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session and that motion was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderwoman Demby and unanimously carried. The Mayor, Board members and staff entered into Executive Session and withdrew from the Board room.

Following the Executive Session, the Mayor, Board and staff re-entered the Board Room, and after being seated, the Mayor asked for a motion to exit the Executive Session. The motion to exit the Executive Session was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 10 was adjournment. The Mayor then asked for a motion to adjourn and the motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Gardner, and unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned.

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR