

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING OF THE  
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
OF THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA,  
HELD ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 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, February 13, 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 January 9, 2024, were approved with no changes. The motion for the approval of the minutes was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried.

The Mayor then asked if anyone had any comments on current agenda items. Noting that there were none, the Mayor proceeded to the formal agenda.

Agenda Item No. 1 was the presentation of the financial statement for December 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. She then 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 is due to the \$3M rebate. She then touched on sales tax collection and hydro royalties, and she concluded by advising that the capital outlay is at 28% of budget and that \$279K of ARPA funds have been used to offset the power cost adjustment for the months of June, July and August. There being no questions or comments, the Mayor thanked Mrs. Moak for her usual thorough presentation.

The Mayor then recognized Mr. Peter Odger who reported on the status of Syrah's expansion program.

Agenda Item No. 2 was Board discussion and vote on approval of Occupational License applications. The only application was by Jenny Hinkle for "Miss-Lou Studio Creative, LLC", at 3046-C Carter Street, with accompanying sign application. Ms. Hinkle spoke in favor of

approval of her application and gave an overview of the plans for the studio for creative art. There being no questions or comments, a motion to approve the application for the license as well as for the sign application was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 3 was Board discussion and vote on approval of sign applications. The first application was by Hanna-Grace Hinkle for a sign for “Rolling ‘N’ the Dough” at 3046-A Carter Street, as per attached pictures. There being no questions or comments, a motion to approve sign application was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried. The second application was by “Luxe Wellness & Spa” for a lighted sign as per the picture attached to the application at 200 Carter Street, where the Young’s Funeral Home sign used to be. There being no further questions or comments, a motion for approval was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 4 was Board discussion and vote of approval of Liquor and Beer Permit renewal. The only application was made by Family Dollar Store #20670 at 1919 Carter Street, for a beer permit Class B - \$25.00. There being no questions or comments, the motion to approve the permit was made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 5 was Board discussion on amending the current utility rate Ordinance in regards to solar power and industrial rates. The Mayor began by advising the Board that this is an information only item and no action is to be taken. He then went on to explain the need to update the Town’s utility rate structure with regards to solar power and industrial rates and to amend the current Ordinance, as required.

Agenda Item No. 6 was Board discussion and vote of approval of designated projects to be funded by excess Hydro revenues. After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor advised that he is passing this item to obtain additional information, to which the Board approved.

Agenda Item No. 7 was Board discussion and vote of approval of a Resolution authorizing the Town of Vidalia to submit to USDOTD for consideration for funding a project that includes D. A. Biglane Road. (Loran Scott). After announcing the agenda item, he called on Loran Scott to speak to the Board about this item. Ms. Scott took the podium and told the Board that this is a project which will cost \$4,970,000.00. She is applying for a grant which would require a 10% amount as the Town’s portion. This project includes the Vidalia Innovative Gateway Project, which covers D. A. Biglane Road. She then went on to hit the highlights of a hand-out that she had available and ended by asking the Town to consider passing a Resolution as presented. After her presentation, the Mayor thanked her and asked for a motion to approve the Resolution. The motion to approve the Resolution as presented, was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

(A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION IS ATTACHED HERETO AND MADE A PART HEREOF).

The Mayor then took up Item No. 6. He first explained the procedure whereby he had discussed individually with the Aldermen and then using those conversations together with input from citizens, he came up with a list of what he considered the items that the Aldermen most wanted to consider. At that point, he advised that the first thing that was agreed upon was to pay off the municipal debt, which was \$12 or \$13 Million Dollars. The first project to be considered was Polk Park. The Mayor said that he would like to hold off on setting the amount this year until they determine what other projects they wish to fund. He asked for a motion to approve

Polk Park, but to wait to fix an amount to fund until the end of the meeting. That motion was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried.

The next project to be considered was renovating the Council on Aging building of which the upper floor is occupied by the Masonic Lodge, but the Town owns the building. He went on to say that it is important for the Senior Citizens to have a place to meet and take part in many activities. A motion was then made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Probst, that the renovations should be made and that \$50,000.00 has been allocated. The motion passed unanimously.

The next project to be considered was safety nets for the Recreation District Complex. The funds allocated would be \$50,000.00. The motion to approve the project was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Smith. After a short discussion, a roll call vote was requested and the vote thereon was as follows:

YAYS: Aldermen Betts, Smith and Alderwoman Demby.

NAYS: Aldermann Probst.

ABSENT: Alderman Gardner.

Motion carried.

At this point, Alderman Probst asked to be allowed to explain his reasons for voting no, which he did.

The Mayor then indicated that next on the lists was the Viking/Eleanor Street ditch project, which was for discussion only. Following a discussion of the problems and solving the issues, it was decided that the matter would be tabled for next year.

The next project for consideration was sidewalks on South Oak Street. A total of four (4) blocks. There followed a short discussion, during which it was estimated that the cost would be around \$30,000.00 to \$50,000.00. Following this discussion, a motion was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, to fund the project. The motion passed unanimously.

Next on the list was the After-school Tutorial Program. The requested amount for the program was \$150,000.00. Following a discussion of the program and the goals and results, a motion was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Smith, to fund the program, subject to guidelines to be approved by the School Board. It was noted that the program would be conducted at the Concord Youth and Adult Association Building.

The next project to be considered was playground equipment and basketball courts at the Vidalia Junior High School. The request for funding was \$185,000.00. The Mayor indicated that he feels while it is a worthwhile program, there is a lot of information which needs to be gathered and the School Board needs to be involved. The consensus was to table this for next year.

The next project to be considered was turnarounds in District 2 on N. Spruce, Magnolia and Walnut Streets. The Mayor indicated that there are no turnarounds at the present time and they are greatly needed. The Mayor estimated the cost at \$150,000.00 to \$200,000.00. After additional discussion, the Mayor said that he would put \$150,000.00 in at present but of course would have to get estimates. A motion was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried, to approve the project.

The Mayor next stated that he is not sure what this means but it is “beautification of Alabama and Florida Streets”. Following a discussion and input from the audience, the Mayor determined that the Town can handle that “in house” and will not have to use Hydro funds and gave an explanation of the problems involved and his suggested solutions.

The Mayor then announced that the “Beautification Committee” has requested \$167,000.00 for a list of projects. The Mayor then went to list those projects being: flowers around the cruise ship landing site; upgrading “welcome” signs; lighting and upgrading toll booth with flowers; large flag pole; upgrades to gazebo with lights and flowers; Riverwalk banners and signs; upgrade MLK signs; putting outlets at old Courthouse site; and botanical art on utility boxes. There followed an extensive discussion about the various items and the conclusion was to fund the following projects for \$153,000.00. The following action was taken: tabling the cruise ship improvements; funding the upgrades to the “welcome” signs; to the toll booth area; the flag pole; the gazebo improvements and flowers; the Riverwalk banners and signs; upgrades to the MLK sign and the courthouse electric outlets; and table the botanical art on utility boxes. A motion to do that was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Smith, and the vote was:

YAYS: Aldermen Betts, Smith and Alderwoman Demby.

NAYS: Alderman Probst.

ABSENT: Alderman Gardner.

The next project to be considered was the Vietnam Wall Memorial. Following the Mayor’s introductory remarks, Alderman Smith asked to say a word and he suggested that he believes that the Town should pay for the total project as it involves all of the Town and it would be a tremendous draw to the Town of Vidalia. Alderman Probst interjected that he believes that the group proposing the Wall should try and get the citizens of Vidalia involved in this by fundraising efforts, etc. There followed a general discussion concerning this matter. Following the discussion, the Mayor asked for a motion to fund the Vietnam Wall Memorial for \$40,000.00. That motion was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried.

The next project to be considered would be the problem trees in Town. Following a lengthy discussion of how to determine what trees need to be cut back to make the power lines safe and the different ways of doing that, the consensus finally was that there has been \$300,000.00 dedicated for this process and that the motion will be to find out what is left in that fund and then use whatever monies from Hydro to bring that fund back up to \$300,000.00. A motion was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried, to do that.

The next project to be considered was to pave the area over by the Complex that has electrical hookups. Following a short discussion, Alderman Smith who had brought that issue up offered to table it.

The Mayor then turned to the task of fixing the amount to allocate for Polk Park. Following some discussion, it was moved by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried to fund \$1.6 Million for Polk Park.

At this point, Alderwoman Demby wanted to thank everyone involved in getting the lights and flags down Martin Luther King because it really makes that area a beautiful area. Also

that was one of the things she wanted to do before she left office and as everyone knows, she is now retiring.

Agenda Item No. 8 was public hearing or comments on Purchase Option Agreement for industrial inducement purposes with Louisiana Renewable Fuel Facility, LLC; approving the form and terms of such agreement; and providing for other matters in connection therewith. After introducing the agenda item, the Mayor said he needs a motion to go into the public hearing. The motion to enter the public hearing was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried. The Mayor announced that they were now in the public hearing. He then asked for questions and comments. He reminded them that this is for the company that is going to make methanol fuel to go in ships and other forms of transportation. After a question from the audience about where this facility will be located, there were no further questions or comments. The Mayor then asked for a motion to exit the public hearing. Alderman Probst made that motion, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 9 was Board discussion and vote of approval of a Resolution authorizing the Town of Vidalia to enter into a Purchase Option Agreement for industrial inducement purposes with Louisiana Renewal Fuel Facility, LLC; approving the form and terms of such agreement; and providing for other matters in connection therewith. The Mayor first reminded the Board that they had just gone through the public hearing necessary and that the Town had given conditional approval previously. He asked if anyone had any discussions at this time, no one did. He then asked for a motion to approve the Resolution as submitted at the meeting. That motion was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried.

(A COPY OF THIS RESOLUTION IS ATTACHED HERETO AND MADE A PART HEREOF).

The Mayor then announced that there is only one more item left on the agenda as Agenda Item 11 was a request by Alderman Gardner and that Alderman Gardner could not make the meeting and asked that the item be pulled.

Agenda Item No. 10 was update on employee work week by Mayor Craft. The Mayor began by noting the need to do something for the employees as there have been significant increases in insurance and other matters in recent years and we need to find some way to reduce the burdens on the Town employees and that going to a 4 ½ day work week would be one way to do that. The Mayor said that no services would go down or would salaries be reduced. Alderman Probst stated that the Town needs to keep its employees and this would be an incentive for employees to stay with the Town. Alderwoman Demby had similar thoughts. There were no negative comments from the Board and Cassandra Lynch stated that the Town employees have been a great help in putting up the lights, changing lights, and decorating the old Courthouse and she thanked them very much.

Agenda Item No. 12 was adjournment. The Mayor then asked for a motion to adjourn and the motion to adjourn was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned.

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PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

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BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

The following resolution was offered by Alderman Probst, and seconded by Alderman Smith:

### **RESOLUTION**

A Resolution authorizing the Town of Vidalia to submit to the United States Department of Transportation and Development(USDOTD) for consideration for funding a project that includes the Vidalia Innovative Gateway Project(D.A. Biglane Road); and authorizing Mayor Buz Craft to sign all documents necessary to implement said Resolution.

**WHEREAS: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program** have been made available for transportation improvements within the Concordia Parish Area, and

**WHEREAS: The Town of Vidalia** has selected a project to submit to the United States Department of Transportation and Development (USDOTD) for consideration for funding, and

**WHEREAS: The selected project includes the Vidalia Innovative Gateway Project (D. A. Biglane Road)** a connector road utilized by residents and the heart of the Town of Vidalia's Industrial Park, and

**WHEREAS: The Town of Vidalia** hereby requests Federal funding from United States Department of Transportation and Development (USDOTD) in the amount of **\$4,970,000.00** and

**WHEREAS: The Town of Vidalia** agrees to provide local matching funds of ten percent due to population being below 5000, in the amount of **\$497,000.00**. The local entity agrees to provide said matching funds in a timely manner.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: the Town of Vidalia** acknowledges if said project is selected for funding through the United States Department of Transportation and Development (USDOTD) selection process, said project is subject to all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations regarding RAISE funding, as well as subject to the rules and procedures established by the USDOTD regarding approved RAISE GRANT projects.

The above Resolution was presented for adoption at the February 13, 2024, Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, and the vote thereon was recorded as follows:

YEAS: Aldermen Betts, Probst and Smith; Alderwoman Demby  
NAYS: NONE  
ABSTAINING: NONE

ABSENT: Alderman Gardner

And the Resolution was declared adopted on this 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2024, to be effective immediately.

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PIARA WILSON, CLERK

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BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

On motion of Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Probst, it was moved to adopt the following resolution:

**RESOLUTION**

A resolution authorizing the Town of Vidalia, State of Louisiana, to enter into a purchase option agreement for industrial inducement purposes; approving the form and terms of such agreement; and providing for other matters in connection therewith.

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 4717.2 of Title 33 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended (the "Act"), the Town of Vidalia, State of Louisiana (the "Town"), gave notice of the Town's intention (the "Notice") to grant an option to purchase for a portion of the Vidalia Industrial Park (as hereinafter described, the "Property") for industrial inducement purposes (the "Option"); and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Act, the Notice was published in the *Concordia Sentinel* on January 17, 2024, and January 24, 2024; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Notice and in accordance with the Act, the Town, on this date, held a public hearing on the proposed Option, at which hearing no objections were presented; and

WHEREAS, the Town wishes to enter into a Purchase Option Agreement by and among the Town and Louisiana Renewable Fuel Facility LLC, in substantially the form attached as **Exhibit A** hereto (the "Agreement") to govern the respective obligations of the parties thereto; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Aldermen, acting as the governing authority of the Town, desire that the Mayor, Buz Craft, be authorized to execute the Agreement and sign any and all documents required in connection with the adoption and execution of the Option.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Aldermen of the Town of Vidalia, State of Louisiana (the "Governing Authority"), that:

SECTION 1. The foregoing "WHEREAS" clauses are hereby adopted and incorporated as if fully set forth herein.

SECTION 2. This Governing Authority hereby approves the Option for the Property described in **Exhibit A** hereto.

SECTION 3. This Governing Authority hereby approves and Mayor Buz Craft is hereby authorized to execute the Agreement in substantially the form attached as **Exhibit A** hereto, subject to revisions as may be approved by the Governing Authority and Louisiana Renewable

Fuel Facility LLC. Mayor Buz Craft is hereby further authorized to execute and deliver any and all additional instruments, documents and certificates which may be required by or provided for in the Act, the Agreement, or as may otherwise be required for or necessary, convenient or appropriate to the Option described in this Resolution.

SECTION 4. The Agreement is on file for public inspection at the Vidalia City Hall, 200 Vernon Stevens Blvd, Vidalia, Louisiana.

SECTION 5. The Clerk of the Town is hereby ordered and directed to publish this Resolution one (1) time in the official journal of the Town as soon as possible, provided that any exhibits hereto are not required to be published but shall remain on file for public inspection.

SECTION 6. This Governing Authority finds and determines that a real necessity exists for the employment of special counsel for legal work on matters related to the Option and, accordingly, Foley & Judell, L.L.P., is hereby employed as special counsel for said purpose for a term not exceeding one (1) year from the date of this Resolution. The fee to be paid said special counsel shall be an amount computed at hourly rate based on the Attorney General's then current Maximum Hourly Fee Schedule, not to exceed \$2,500 in the aggregate, together with reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, and the Clerk is authorized to pay such invoices as and when presented. The scope of this legal representation does not involve federal claims.

SECTION 7. Mayor Buz Craft is hereby further authorized to do and undertake any and all actions necessary to effectuate the purposes of this Resolution.

SECTION 8. This Resolution shall become effective immediately.

The foregoing having been submitted to a vote, the vote thereon was as follows:

YEAS: Aldermen Betts, Probst and Smith; Alderwoman Demby

NAYS: NONE.

ABSENT: Alderman Gardner

And the resolution was declared adopted on this, the 13<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2024.

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PIARA WILSON, CLERK

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BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR



