

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING OF THE
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN
OF THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA,
HELD ON TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2023 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, June 13, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

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

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 Alderwoman Demby.

A quorum being present, the Mayor declared the 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 May 9, 2023, were approved with no changes. The motion for the approval of the minutes was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

The Mayor then asked if anyone had comments on current agenda items. Noting that no one had any questions or comments, he advised that he would continue with the formal agenda.

Agenda Item No. 1 was the presentation of the financial statement for April, 2023. The Mayor then called on the Municipal Accountant, Debra Moak, CPA, who presented the financial statement. As customary, she began by explaining the various fund balances, which summaries included a comparison of actual expenses to budget expenses. The summary sheets, previously given to the Aldermen, were reviewed in detail, and she reported on the various positive and negative fund balances and indicated the net changes in the various funds through April 30, 2023. She then reminded the Aldermen that those statements were provided to them in their meeting packet. She then reported which revenues are under budget and which are over budget at this time. Next, she brought them up to date on several items of interest. Those items included: cash in the bank; investments; total assets and liabilities; a summary of where revenues and expenses should be and actually are; the debts having been paid on the transmission lines, the municipal complex and the new fire truck; capital outlay is at 59% of the budget; budget revisions will be necessary for the fiscal year ending 6/30/2023; the proposed 2023-2024 budget, with a \$10 million surplus is being voted on at this meeting with no reduction in services and reductions in expenditures. She also noted that the budgets are necessary to keep the Town in compliance with the Louisiana Local Government Budget Act. That concluded her presentation and the Mayor asked if anyone had any questions of Mrs. Moak. There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 2 was Board discussion and vote on approval of occupational license applications. The first application was by Brenda Struth for Sango GMC LLC, d/b/a "Sango Pre-Owned Superstore" at 4253 Carter Street, with an accompanying application for a sign permit for

replacing inserts to advertise the “Sango Pre-Owned Superstore” as shown in the attachment to the application. Without discussion, a motion to approve both the license and the sign permit was made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried. The next application was by Elizabeth Ann Morgan for “Unique Rental Services” at 507 S. Spruce Street. There being no comments or questions, a motion to grant the occupational license was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 3 was Board discussion on Group Home (Aleshia Dennis). The Mayor noted that the application had been withdrawn. He stated that a therapeutic group home would be beneficial to the Town and Parish, but that the Town’s Zoning Laws do not allow for such a project in the proposed neighborhood.

Agenda Item No. 4 was Board discussion vote on Vidalia Police Department personnel:

Brittany Payne (full-time dispatcher)
Devin Ainsworth (full-time dog catcher).

After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor asked if there were any comments or questions or any Board discussion to be had. There being none, a motion to approve both hires, Brittany Payne as full-time dispatcher and Devin Ainsworth as full-time dog catcher was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 5 was Board discussion and vote on approval to accept Louisiana DEQ Environmental Audit of the Town Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Mayor called on Cornell Lewis to field questions concerning the audit. After the explanation by Mr. Lewis, a motion to accept the Audit was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 6 was Board discussion and vote on entering an Intergovernmental Agreement between the Town of Vidalia and Town of Ferriday to transfer (2) sewer pumps to the Town of Ferriday. The Mayor again called on Cornell Lewis to discuss this item with the Board. Following Mr. Lewis’ presentation, a motion to enter into an IGA as requested, was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 7 was Board discussion and vote of approval on a Resolution to award a bid to APAC-MS, INC. for the City of Vidalia-Roadway Improvements: Myrtle, Peach, Alabama and Elm Streets. The Mayor addressed this agenda item and related that the bids for the roadway improvement project were opened and read aloud on Thursday, May 11, 2023. Noting that APAC-MC, INC. was the only bidder and requested that the contract be awarded to them in the amount of \$758,742.50. Following a short discussion with the Board, the motion to award the bid to APAC-MC, INC. (\$758,742.50) was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

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

Agenda Item No. 8 was Board discussion and vote of approval on a Resolution for State Project – Vidalia Slough Pump Station. The Mayor then spoke to the Board about the need for the Slough Pump Station Project. After a short discussion, he requested that the Board pass the Resolution, as presented. The motion to approve the Resolution authorizing the Town of Vidalia to enter into an agreement with the State of Louisiana, Department of Transportation and Development, as presented at the meeting, was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

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

At this point, the Mayor requested to add an Agenda Item to allow Ms. Loran Scott to discuss the Community Safety Action Plan for the Town, with the Board, and hopefully pass a Resolution in support thereof. The motion to add the agenda item was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Gardner, and unanimously carried. The Mayor then asked Ms. Scott to address the Board. Following her presentation, the Mayor had a few questions of her about the Summer Food Program. Following that, the Mayor called for a motion to pass a Resolution as requested. The motion to pass the Resolution in support of the Community Safety Action Plan was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderwoman Demby and unanimously carried.

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

Agenda Item No. 9 was Board discussion and vote on fixing the amount to be maintained in the Hydroreserve Fund, in accordance with Ordinance No. 588. After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor explained the need to do this on an annual basis and explained the requirements for setting the amount. He said that the amount has been traditionally set at \$2.3 million in accordance with the provisions of Ordinance No. 588, and while that is somewhat in excess of the statutory requirement, he requests that the Board pass a resolution maintaining it at the \$2.3 million. The motion to fix and maintain the amount in the Hydroreserve Fund at \$2.3 million was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 10 was introduction of an Ordinance to Amend the Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenses for the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, for the fiscal year 2022-2023. After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor reminded the Board that no action is needed as this is introduction of the Ordinance only. He then indicated that he would like to have the Board set up a date to have a Special Meeting to have the required Public Hearing and then vote to pass the Ordinance, after the required advertisements. Following a short discussion, it was a consensus that they would have a Special Meeting on Friday, June 23, 2023, at noon for that purpose.

Agenda Item No. 11 was Public Hearing on an Ordinance to adopt the Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenses for the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, for the fiscal year 2023-2024. After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor advised that they need to have a public hearing and asked the Board for a motion to enter into the Public Hearing. The motion to enter the Public Hearing was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Gardner, and unanimously carried. The Mayor and Board then entered into the Public Hearing and the Mayor conducted the hearing. The Mayor asked if there were any comments or questions about the budget. Sabrina Dore' questioned the Mayor as to whether the Town has a plan for what they are going to do with the Power Plant when it comes time for the Town to purchase it or to replace revenues if they decide not to. The Mayor addressed her question at some length indicating that plans are in place and representatives have been contacted about advising the Town on the best choices of action. He also discussed a potential solar farm and a hydrogen production facility that the Town might invest in which may be beneficial for the Town down the road. Following that, there being no questions from the audience, he asked if the Board had any questions or comments that they wish to make before they adjourn the public hearing. There being none, he asked for a motion to exit the public hearing. The motion to exit was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried. The Mayor and Board then exited the public hearing and resumed the agenda.

Agenda Item No. 12 was Board discussion and vote on an Ordinance adopting the Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenses for the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, for the fiscal year 2023-2024. Following announcing the Agenda Item, the Mayor advised the Board that all of the Department Heads and Supervisors are in attendance and asked if the Board wanted all to come up one at a time

to present to the Board or would the Board like to question specific departments and supervisors to come up and speak. Alderman Gardner stated that he would like to have the department heads come up one at a time and make their presentations. On polling the Board, it was the consensus to have the Department Heads come up one at a time and make their presentations. The Mayor then started with the Street Department and called upon Lee Staggs to address the Board. There followed representatives of the Police Department, Fire Department, IT Department, Utility Department, Streets and Sanitation Department, Gas Department, the Port Commission, Water Department and the Convention Center, all who made presentations to the Board. Following the presentations, the Mayor opened a discussion by the Board. Alderman Smith and Alderwoman Demby had no questions about the budget and Alderman Betts wanted to use ARPA funds to pay the LEPA-1 expenses for July, August and September which would indirectly lower the electricity costs for the Town's consumers. The Board voted unanimously to approve that. Alderman Gardner then mentioned that it looks like the Slough Project is proceeding and he hopes that maybe there will be dirt work progress by the end of the year. Alderman Gardner also entered into a discussion with the Mayor over the Town's policies on paying for travel expenses by the Board. Following the exchange between the Mayor and Alderman Gardner, a motion was made to adjourn, but the Mayor reminded the Board that it was time to vote on the budget. After further discussion, a motion was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Probst, to pass the Ordinance with the mentioned changes. The motion passed unanimously.

(A COPY OF THE ORDINANCE IS ATTACHED HERETO AND MADE A PART HEREOF).

Agenda Item No. 12 was adjournment. The Mayor noting that there was no further agenda items, asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried.

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

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The following Resolution was offered by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Smith:

STATE PROJECT NO. **H.015189**
PARISH OF **CONCORDIA**

**RESOLUTION
TOWN OF VIDALIA**

A Resolution authorizing the **Town of Vidalia** to enter into an agreement with the State of Louisiana, Department of Transportation and Development under the Louisiana Statewide Flood Control Program for assistance in the implementation of a flood control improvement project; providing for the necessary documentation of the need for the flood control improvement; and providing for other matters in connection therewith.

WHEREAS, the **Town of Vidalia** has a need for flood control improvements; and

WHEREAS, the **Town of Vidalia** has reviewed the application for **State Project No. H.015189, Vidalia Slough Pump Station**, and agrees with said agreement; and

WHEREAS, the **Town of Vidalia** has applied for State matching funds pursuant to Chapter 38 of Title 34 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, as amended, to implement a project to improve its flood control and the **Town of Vidalia** is fully aware of its obligations under said Statute; and

WHEREAS, the **Town of Vidalia** is a political body duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of Louisiana and is eligible to apply for funds under said Statute; and

WHEREAS, the State has made funds available pursuant to the above Statutes.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the **Town of Vidalia** as

follows:

Section 1. That the **Town of Vidalia** acknowledges that an application was submitted to the Louisiana Statewide Flood Control Program.

Section 2. That at the appropriate time and upon approval of funding assistance and prior to commencement of work on the project the **Town of Vidalia** agrees to execute a Project Agreement and a Statement of Sponsorship pursuant to the Statute and hereby authorizes and empowers **Buz Craft, Mayor** to enter into and execute said agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development.

Section 3. That **Buz Craft, Mayor** is hereby Authorized Representative for the **Town of Vidalia** to represent the **Town of Vidalia** with regards to the receipt of funds from the Louisiana Statewide Flood Control Program for a flood control improvement project.

Section 4. That said Authorized Representative shall have the authority to sign and approve all documents that are necessary under the circumstances to accomplish the above project.

This Resolution adopted this 13th day of June, 2023, and the vote was unanimous.

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

The following resolution was offered by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Smith:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the following bid was opened and read aloud on May 11, 2023, for the Vidalia-Roadway improvements: Myrtle, Peach, Alabama and Elm Streets:

APAC-MS, INC. in the amount of \$758,742.50.;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Vidalia award the project to APAC-MS, INC., in the amount of \$758,742.50.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor is authorized to execute any and all documents including contracts, estimates and change orders between the Town of Vidalia and APAC-MS, INC.

THIS RESOLUTION adopted this 13th day of June, 2023, with the vote recorded as follows:

YEAS: Aldermen Betts, Probst, Gardner, Smith and Alderwoman Demby.

NAYS: NONE.

ABSENT: NONE.

AND THE RESOLUTION was adopted this 13th day of June, 2023.

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

On the motion of Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, the following resolution was offered:

**RESOLUTION
COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION PLAN OF VIDALIA**

WHEREAS, The Town of Vidalia recognizes the importance of assuring safe streets and

roadways for its citizens utilizing various modes of transportation, including bicycles, motorized wheelchairs, and pedestrian access, and;

WHEREAS, the serious accident rate, and specifically the percentage of fatal incidents, needs to be improved by 50% throughout Concordia Parish by 2028, and;

WHEREAS, in 2021, The United States Congress passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act (IIJA), and;

WHEREAS, IIJA provides funds that are available through the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) to local governments under a competitive grants process, and;

WHEREAS, on March 30, 2023, the USDOT released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Safe Streets and Roads for All Discretionary Grant Program, that allows applicants to request Planning funding for the development of Safe Community Action Plan of Vidalia., including a Sidewalk/Pedestrian Access Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED and authorized by the Board of Alderman of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, hereby authorizes the staff to apply for, and accept if awarded, a Planning Grant under the USDOT's Safe Streets and Roads for All Discretionary Grant Program, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Vidalia further commits to the establishment of a Community Safety Action Plan of Vidalia, which will be charged with oversight of the action plan development, implementation, and monitoring. This Committee will ensure robust engagement with the public and relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and community groups, that allows for both community representation and feedback. Information received from engagement and collaboration is analyzed and incorporated into the action plan. The Town of Vidalia, the Louisiana Department of Transportation (LADOTD), and other applicable agencies will be included in the process to assure that plans and process are coordinated and aligned with other governmental plans planning processes to the extent of practicality.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Vidalia further commits that the plan development process will utilize inclusive and representative processes. Underserved communities will be identified through data and other analyses in collaboration with appropriate partners. Analysis will include both population and characteristics and initial equity impact assessments of the proposed projects and strategies, and;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Town of Vidalia will, upon approval of the Community Safety Action Plan of Vidalia. under the Safe Streets and Roads for All Discretionary Grant Program, move forward with the selection of qualified Contractor(s) to begin the development of the Safe Community Action Plan of Vidalia.

YEAS: Aldermen Betts, Probst, Gardner, Smith and Alderwoman Demby.

NAYS: NONE.

ABSENT: NONE.

And the Resolution was adopted this 13th day of June, 2023.

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

ORDINANCE NO. ____

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE OPERATING BUDGET OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES FOR THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

WHEREAS:

- 1) This proposed ordinance was previously introduced at the May 9, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen;
- 2) Due notice of the introduction of this proposed Ordinance was advertised in the official journal on the 17th day of May, 2023; and
- 3) A public hearing was held by the Board of Aldermen on the 13th day of June, 2023;

NOW THEREFORE:

BE IT ORDAINED, by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, in Regular Session duly convened as the governing authority of said municipality, that:

SECTION I. The attached detailed estimate of revenues and expenditures by Departments, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024, be and the same is hereby adopted to serve as “Budget of Revenues and Expenditures” for the Town of Vidalia during the said period.

SECTION II. The adoption of this Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures by and the same is declared to operate as an appropriation of the amounts therein set forth with the terms of the budget classifications.

SECTION III. The Mayor is hereby authorized to take all actions necessary and appropriate for the implementation of the Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenditures for the fiscal year 2023-2024. All such actions must be in compliance with La. R.S. 33:321. et seq.

The above and foregoing Ordinance was read and considered, section by section, and then on motion by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Probst, was submitted to a vote, as a whole, and the vote thereon was as follows:

YEAS: Aldermen Betts, Probst, Gardner, Smith and Alderwoman Demby.
NAYS: NONE.
ABSTAINING: NONE.
ABSENT: NONE.

WHEREUPON, the Mayor declared the foregoing Ordinance to be duly adopted this 13th day of June, 2023.

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR