

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING OF THE  
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
OF THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA,  
HELD ON TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 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, March 14, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

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

There were absent: Mayor Buz Craft.

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 Pro Tempore Betts and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present, followed by the invocation given by Alderman Probst.

A quorum being present, the Mayor Pro Tempore 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 February 14, 2023, and the special town meeting of February 23, 2023, were approved with no changes. The motion for the approval of both the minutes was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

Mayor Pro Tempore Betts 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 January, 2023. The Municipal Accountant, Debra Moak, CPA, then presented the financial statement. 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 January 31, 2023. She then reminded the Aldermen that those statements were provided to them in their meeting packet. She then advised the Board which revenues are under budget and which are over budget at this time. She then brought them up to date on several items of interest. Those items included: insurance proceeds received to pay for the damages for the Port; that the vehicle lease payments are beginning to show up in the financials; the totals received from the American Rescue Plan, the Town has used some of the proceeds to offset the citizens' electric costs for the previous 3 months and also monies to help supplement employee retention payments in 2022. The remaining amount has not been appropriated; that budget revisions will be necessary for the fiscal year 2023 and there will be meetings later this month to start the budget process for the 2023-24 fiscal year. There were no questions or comments from the Board and, being none, Mayor Pro Tempore Betts thanked Mrs. Moak and her staff for their good work.

Agenda Item No. 2 was Board discussion and vote on approval of occupational license applications. The first application was by Leigh Anne Mason for “LESLIE-ANNE’S VINTAGE EMPORIUM” at 1664-B Carter Street. There being no comments or questions, a motion to approve the application was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Gardner, and unanimously carried. The second application was by Marcus Scirocco for “FINDERS RELICS & RESALE” at 1631 Carter Street. There being no comments or questions by the Board, the motion to approve the application was made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Gardner, and unanimously carried. The third application was by Melisa Inman for “VINTAGE SOULS MARKET & BOUTIQUE” at 103 Carter Street. There being no comments or questions, a motion to approve the application was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 3 was Board discussion and vote on approval of sign applications. The first application was by Ana Goug, the Parish Chair of the LSU Ag Center for a 42” x 62” aluminum sign, painted with the LSU Ag Center Logo to be placed at the foot of the levee near Vidalia Upper Elementary with the other signs, as per the attachment to the application. There being no comments or questions from the Board, the motion to approve the application was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried. The next application to be considered was by Leigh Anne Mason and Leslie Parker for a banner type sign for Leslie-Anne’s Vintage Emporium at 1644-B Carter Street. The motion to approve was made by Alderman Smith, which died for a lack of a second. There was discussion about knowing exactly what the sign would look like and how it would be exhibited. The Board decided to table the matter for further discussion with the applicants.

Agenda Item No. 4 was Board discussion and vote of approval on a Resolution of Waste Water System Improvements and Grants through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program operated by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. Municipal Manager, Jay LaSyone was called on to speak to the Board about the Resolution. He explained to the Board the need and reasons for the need to pass the Resolution and after a short discussion, a motion to adopt the Resolution as presented at the meeting was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried.

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

Agenda Item No. 5 was Board discussion and vote on approval of an Ordinance to Amend Ordinance No. 683 – Town of Vidalia Utility Rate Ordinance, by adding the industrial renewable rider schedule. After Agenda Item No. 5 was announced, the Board was reminded that they needed to have a public hearing. The motion to enter a public hearing was made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried. The Mayor Pro Tempore then conducted the hearing. Noting that there were no comments or questions, the Mayor Pro Tempore asked for a motion to close the public hearing. A motion to close the public hearing was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried. The Mayor Pro Tempore then announced that it was time to vote on the actual passage of the Ordinance. Alderman Smith then made the motion to adopt the Ordinance, as introduced at the February 14, 2023, meeting, which motion was seconded by Alderman Gardner and unanimously carried.

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

Agenda Item No. 6 was Board discussion and vote of approval of an Ordinance to Amend the Employee Handbook for the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana. After announcing Agenda Item No. 6,

the Mayor Pro Tempore advised the Board that they would need to have a public hearing before addressing the passage of the Ordinance. A motion to enter a public hearing was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried. The Mayor Pro Tempore then announced that they were in a public hearing. Noting that no one from the audience had any questions or comments, the Mayor Pro Tempore asked for a motion to close the public hearing. A motion was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Smith, that the public hearing be closed; and the vote thereon was unanimous. The Board exited the public hearing. The Mayor Pro Tempore then announced that it was time to consider the passage of the Ordinance to Amend the Employee Handbook. He asked if anyone from the Board had any comments and Alderman Gardner spoke first. He first commented whoever added Juneteenth as a Holiday should be commended; he then voiced his objection to the addition to the Handbook of making the policy pertaining to social media apply to both employees and public officials who work for the Town. He then expanded on his reasons for his objection to that language. His third issue was he believes that the dates that checks are going to be written should be published and Municipal Clerk Wilson responded to his comments. Alderman Probst then had comments on issues of sick time and Mr. LaSyone spoke on those issues. Following an extended discussion over sick time and personal time, the Mayor Pro Tempore noted that there was no further discussion being had and stated it was time to vote on the passage of the Ordinance. Alderman Gardner moved to pass the Ordinance with the deletion of the language regarding public officials being subject to the policy on the social media. Following a short discussion between Board members on that issue, the Mayor Pro Tempore noted that there was a motion on the floor, and asked for a second. There being no second, he declared that the motion failed for a lack of a second. There then followed a discussion between the Board members concerning whether the policy including elected officials should be in the Handbook. Following that discussion, the Mayor Pro Tempore stated that there had been a motion which had failed for the lack of a second and therefore asked for a motion to approve. Following some further discussion, Alderman Probst made a motion to pass the Ordinance as presented, which motion was seconded by Alderman Smith. A roll call vote was called for and the vote was as follows:

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

NAYS: Alderman Gardner.

The motion to approve the Ordinance to amend the Employee Handbook as presented passed.

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

Agenda Item No. 7 was Board discussion and vote of approval to allow Duck's Unlimited to sell alcoholic beverages at the Clarion Suites in Vidalia, Louisiana. After announcing the Agenda Item, Mayor Pro Tempore Betts explained the situation where Duck's Unlimited wishes to sell alcoholic beverages at the Clarion Suites. He stated the reasons that they are requesting it is a joint meeting of the Duck's Unlimited Chapters of Adams County and Concordia Parish and is a one time meeting. There was a short discussion between the Board members concerning the situation and at the conclusion of that discussion, a motion to allow Duck's Unlimited to sell alcoholic beverages at the Clarion Suites was made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Gardner, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 8 was Board discussion on a public announcement of transfer of property for industrial inducement purposes with Syrah Plus, LLC. Mr. LaSyone was asked to elaborate on the issue. He stated that this is in connection with the announcement of transferring additional property to Syrah, for the Phase III and IV expansions which are being planned by Syrah Plus, LLC. Mr. LaSyone then told the board that Mr. Peter Odgers, representing Syrah is present in the audience and asked him for comments. Mr. Odgers then made a more detailed statement regarding the expansion III and IV projects and gave more information on those projects. Mayor Pro Tempore Betts then announced that the rest of the agenda items are matters that the Mayor had planned on

discussing with the Board but that his presence would be required for those and since he is absent, he asked for a motion to table Agenda Items 9, 10, 11 and 12. The motion to table Items 9, 10, 11 and 12 was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

Then a motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried. The meeting was declared adjourned.

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PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

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BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer*

The following resolution was offered by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Probst:

**RESOLUTION**

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN OF VIDALIA AND THE ENGINEERING FIRM OF BRYANT HAMMETT & ASSOCIATES, LLC, TO SUBMIT THE NECESSARY APPLICATIONS AND PROVIDE FOR THE FUNDING TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING WASTE WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS AND PLACING THAT PROJECT ON THE PROJECT PRIORITY LIST FOR FUNDING THROUGH THE CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING LOAN FUNDING PROGRAM**

**WHEREAS**, the TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA is in need of wastewater system improvements; and

**WHEREAS**, loans and/or grants for this project may be available through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan program operated by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA, that:

**Section 1.** Mayor Buz Craft and the engineering firm of Bryant Hammett & Associates, LLC, are hereby authorized to submit the necessary applications and issue debt in the amount of \$5,602,327.00 to the Department of Environmental Quality on behalf of the TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA, for the purpose of placing the waste water system improvement project on the project priority list for funding through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan program;

**Section 2.** The Mayor and the engineering firm of Bryant Hammett & Associates, LLC, are further authorized to furnish such additional information as may reasonably be requested in connection with the pre-application; and

**Section 3.** The Mayor and the engineering firm of Bryant Hammett & Associates, LLC, are hereby designated as the Official Project Representatives for the TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA, for any project that may result from the submission of the pre-application.

The above Resolution was called to a vote and the vote thereon as recorded as follows:

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

NAYS: NONE.

ABSTAINING: NONE.

ABSENT: NONE.

AND THE RESOLUTION was declared adopted on this the 11<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2023.

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PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

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BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK FOR THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA**

**WHEREAS:**

- (1) This proposed ordinance was previously introduced at the November 8, 2022 Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen;
- (2) Due notice of the introduction of this proposed Ordinance was advertised in The Concordia Sentinel, the official journal of the Town of Vidalia, on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2022; and
- (3) A public hearing was held by the Mayor Pro Tempore and Board of Aldermen on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of March, 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 Employee Handbook for the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, as amended, and which was available for public inspection at the Vidalia Town Hall since November 8, 2022, is hereby adopted.

SECTION II. A certified copy of the amended Employee Handbook, as adopted hereby, shall be on file at the Vidalia Town Hall for public inspection once this Ordinance becomes effective, pursuant to statute.

SECTION III. The Mayor is hereby authorized to take all actions necessary and appropriate for the implementation of the amended Employee Handbook herein adopted.

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

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

NAYS: Alderman Gardner.

ABSTAINING: NONE.

ABSENT: NONE.

WHEREUPON, the Mayor declared the foregoing Ordinance to be duly adopted this 14<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2023.

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PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

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BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 683, ESTABLISHING AND ADOPTING ELECTRIC POWER, GAS, WATER, SEWER AND GARBAGE RATES FOR THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA, AND REPEALING ALL PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED ORDINANCES DEALING WITH SAID RATES, BY ADDING AN INDUSTRIAL RENEWABLE ENERGY RIDER SCHEDULE**

**WHEREAS:**

1. This proposed Ordinance was previously introduced at the February 14, 2023, regular meeting of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen; and
2. Due notice of the introduction of this proposed Ordinance was advertised in the official journal on the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of February, 2023; and
3. A public hearing was held by the Board of Aldermen on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2023.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Mayor and the Board of Alderman of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, in regular session, duly convened as the governing authority of said municipality that:

**Section 1:**

This Ordinance shall be known as the “UTILITY RATE ORDINANCE” and shall establish and adopt natural gas, electricity, water, sewer and sanitation rates for the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, and repeals all previously adopted ordinances dealing with said rates.

**Section 2:**

**NATURAL GAS RATES**

**RESIDENTIAL (PER CCF)**

Availability Charge \$10.50 per month + CPI

Gas Service (Consumption Charge) (WACOG + \$0.80/ccf) + CPI +  
RSF + LAUF Factor

**COMMERCIAL (PER CCF)**

Availability Charge \$15.00 per month + CPI

Gas Service (Consumption Charge) (WACOG + 0.775/ccf) + CPI +  
RSF + LAUF Factor

**INDUSTRIAL (PER MCF)**

**For customer whose 12-month gas consumption averages 1,000 MCF or more per month.**

Availability Charge \$150.00 per month

Gas Service (Consumption Charge) Negotiated at sole discretion of  
Town of Vidalia  
\*\*\*Economic Development  
Incentive can also be applicable

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CPI – Consumer Price Index  
WACOG – Weighted Average Cost of Gas  
RSF – Rate Stabilization Factor  
LAUF – Lost and Unaccounted F

**Section 3:**

**ELECTRIC RATES**

**RESIDENTIAL (Per KWH)**

Minimum Charge	100	0.1692 =	16.92
Next	200	0.1092 =	21.84
Next	700	0.1002 =	70.14
Excess		0.0924	

**COMMERCIAL (Per KWH)**

***A commercial customer is defined as any electrical customer who is non-residential and whose 12-month electrical load averages less than 3 MW (3,000 kW).***

	<u>USAGE</u>		<u>CHARGE (Per KWH)</u>
Minimum Charge	100	0.1710 =	17.10
Next	200	0.1112 =	22.24
Next	700	0.1032 =	72.24
Excess		0.0995	

**INDUSTRIAL (Per KWH)**

***For customer whose 12-month electrical load averages 3 MW (3,000 kW), but less than 10 MW (10,000 kW).***

	<u>KWH</u>		
First	50,000	=	0.0834
Next	200,000	=	0.0717
Next	250,000	=	0.0650
Above	500,000	=	0.0490

Demand Charge = \$7.50/kw

**LARGE INDUSTRIAL (Per KWH)**

***For customer whose 12-month electrical load averages 10 MW (10,000 kW) or greater.***

	<u>KWH</u>		
First	250,000	=	0.0650
Next	500,000	=	0.0510
Next	750,000	=	0.0425
Above	1,500,000	=	0.0349

Demand charge = \$7.50/kw

**+: FOR ALL RATE CLASSES:** All KWH's will be charged (or credited) a Power Cost Adjustment equal to the cost of power and energy as billed by the Town's electric service provider, adjusted for system losses, less 5.278 cents per KWH on a monthly basis.

\*Additional Facility Charges may apply to industrial customers.

**Section 4:**

**WATER RATES**

**RESIDENTIAL (W-R)**

First 4,000 gallons                      \$0.5000 per 100 gallons

Next 16,000 gallons	\$0.3100 per 100 gallons
Over 20,000 gallons	\$0.2000 per 100 gallons
Minimum charge	\$20.00

**COMMERCIAL (W-C)**

First 4,000 gallons	\$0.5000 per 100 gallons
Next 16,000 gallons	\$0.3100 per 100 gallons
Over 20,000 gallons	\$0.2000 per 100 gallons
Minimum charge	\$20.00

**INDUSTRIAL (W-1)**

First 4,000 gallons	\$0.5000 per 100 gallons
Next 16,000 gallons	\$0.3100 per 100 gallons
Over 20,000 gallons	\$0.2000 per 100 gallons
Minimum charge	\$100.00

**Section 5:**

**RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL SEWER RATES**

C – 100	G – Gallons	USAGE	CHARGE (Per CG)	
Minimum charge		40	0.4910	= 19.64
Next		160	0.0972	= 15.55
Excess			0.1356	

**Section 6:**

**SANITATION RATES**

**COMMERCIAL**

Minimum Charge	\$ 50
4 YARD DUMPSTER	\$120
6 YARD DUMPSTER	\$160
8 YARD DUMPSTER	\$190

All commercial accounts are picked up three (3) times per week. Dumpsters are not furnished by the Town.

**RESIDENTIAL**

\$21.95 Per Month

All residential customers receive pick up two (2) times per week. Canisters are not furnished by the Town.

**Section 7:**

The Town may negotiate an economic development incentive for Large Commercial/Industrial utility Customers (“Qualifying Business”) in order to attract new business that creates substantial additional jobs and greater substantial tax revenues within the corporate limits of the Town. The

Incentive Rate allows the Town to enter into a cooperative endeavor agreement with a Qualifying Business in order to set forth the salient terms of the utility Incentive Rate, which cooperative endeavor agreement may include but not limited to, (1) the length of time the Incentive Rate will be offered to the Qualifying Business; (2) the method of calculating the Incentive Rate; (3) whether the Incentive Rate will be limited to a certain amount; and (4) any other pertinent details that are negotiated between the Town and the Qualifying Business.

#### **Section 8:**

A committee made up of the Mayor, Mayor Pro Temp, an Alderperson at large to be selected by the Mayor, the Economic Development Director, the Town Accountant, the Town Attorney and the Town Manager shall be established and will have the authority to negotiate a cooperative endeavor agreement with each participating Qualifying Business in order to set forth the salient terms of the Incentive Rate. The final Cooperative Endeavor Agreement will require approval of the Board of Aldermen.

#### **Section 9:**

Louisiana State Sales Tax is charged on gas, electric, and water bills at a rate of 4% on non-residential and non-governmental customers. (As enacted during the 2016 Special Legislative Session).

#### **Section 10:**

The Industrial Renewable Energy Rider Schedule (Schedule) is a voluntary rate rider offered to Large Industrial Customers (LIC) pursuant to the Renewable Energy Assignment and Banking Agreement (Assignment) by and between the Louisiana Energy and Power Authority (LEPA) and the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana.(Town)

To be eligible for participation in this program, customers taking service under the Town's Industrial Rate Schedule must also meet the criteria outlined in the Agreement by and between LEPA and the Town. Prior to participating in this Schedule, the customer must request, and the Town must submit to LEPA a request to add LIC, which is subject to approval by LEPA.

The total energy available under this Schedule is assigned on a first come, first served basis and is subject to the requirements identified in the Agreement by and between LEPA and the Town.

The LIC must have a peak demand of one thousand (1,000) kW or more and may only request a LIC Renewable Energy Assignment under this Schedule that does not exceed twenty-seven (27) per cent of the LIC's energy use in the calendar year preceding the year in which the Town submits a Request to add LIC on behalf of the LIC.

Approval of the Request to add LIC pursuant to the Assignment by and between LEPA and the Town, shall establish the LIC's Customer Renewable Energy Assignment in kWh.

In addition to all other charges and fees applicable and billed to the customer under the Schedule, the LIC's monthly bill shall include a Schedule charge equal to one-twelfth (1/12) of the LIC's Customer Renewable Energy Assignment times \$0.004 per kWh.

Participation in this Schedule shall be month-to-month and shall continue until one of the following events transpires:

1. The end of the billing period in which the customer notifies the Town of its desire to withdraw from the Schedule.
2. The LIC ceases to take service under the Industrial Rate Schedule.
3. The Town ceases to take service from LEPA under the Full-Requirement Service Agreement.

The above and foregoing Ordinance was read and considered, section by section, and then on motion by Alderman Smith, and seconded by Alderman Gardner, 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 14<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2023, to be effective April 1, 2023.

PIARA WILSON , MUNICIPAL CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR