

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING OF THE
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN
OF THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA,
HELD ON TUESDAY, MAY 14, 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, May 14, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

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

There was absent: Alderman Brent Smith.

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 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 April 9, 2024, were approved with no changes. The motion for the approval of the minutes was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried.

The Mayor then stated that it was time for comments on current agenda items. He reminded those present that if anyone wanted to comment on the current agenda items, or items in the future, they should come to the podium and use the microphone so that they could be on record. Noting that there were no comments on current agenda items, he proceeded to the formal agenda.

Agenda Item No. 1 was the presentation of the financial statement for March 2024 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. Next 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; and she noted that the change in net position has improved over last month. She then touched on sales tax collections and hydro royalties. In conclusion, she advised the budget process is concluded and the proposed 2024-2025 annual budget is being presented tonight to the Aldermen and will be available for public inspection tomorrow. The Mayor then thanked Mrs. Moak for her usual thorough presentation.

Agenda Item No. 2 was presentation of Financial Audit for Town of Vidalia for fiscal year 2022-2023 (Scott Adams, CPA with Silas Simmons, LLP). After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor welcomed Mr. Scott Adams with Silas Simmons, LLP, who are the Town's independent auditors. Mr. Adams took the podium and introduced himself and told them that he

has the pleasure of giving the report on the financial audit for the Town for the fiscal year 2022-2023. After introductory remarks, he began his report. He stated that he is happy to report that they are able to give the Town an unmodified opinion which means that it is a clean opinion and that the Town's financial statements are presented fairly in all material respects. He added that that is the opinion the Town would wish to have. He then went through the 102 page report in a summary fashion. Following his summary of the financial report, the Mayor thanked him and remarked that most municipalities do not have these clean reports and that Vidalia has had one for 2 or 3 years. He wanted to thank Debra Moak and her staff for doing such a fine job of coordinating with Mr. Scott and Mr. Scott responded that it was a pleasure doing business with her and her staff who are very knowledgeable and very cooperative. The Mayor then again thanked Mr. Scott for the time and effort his firm has put into this report.

Agenda Item No. 3 was Board discussion and vote on approval of occupational license applications. The only application was by Dennis Cooper for "DC AG LLC" at 406 Carter Street (location change). After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor asked if anyone had any questions or comments, and there being none, asked for a motion to approve the application. The motion to approve the application was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 4 was presentation of dividend check from Louisiana Worker's Compensation Corp. to Town of Vidalia for low worker's comp. claims for 2023 (Beau Pilgrim, Reed Insurance). At this point, the Mayor made introductory remarks about the history of Reed Insurance and recognized Mr. Beau Pilgrim with Reed Insurance and also Pattie Jones. He then went through a history of the various agencies that finally became Reed Insurance. Following that, he invited Mr. Pilgrim and Pattie Jones to come down and take pictures with the Board before making the presentation. Mr. Pilgrim displayed a large replica check from Reed Insurance to the Town of Vidalia for \$293,712.20, which represents a dividend from the Worker's Comp to the Town because of the money that the employees have saved by being very safety conscious. He stated that the check represents 72% of the Town's payments for Worker's Compensation. After Mr. Pilgrim's presentation, the Mayor upon accepting the dividend payments, thanked Beau and the Worker's Compensation for initiating this program and thanked all of Vidalia's Town workers for making this possible by being so safety conscious.

Agenda Item No. 5 was Board discussion and vote to approve advertising for bids on new garbage truck. After announcing this item, the Mayor had introductory comments on why the new truck is needed and said that Mr. Staggs was available to answer questions from the audience or the Board. Following the Mayor's comments, he asked if anyone had any questions or comments and no one did. He then asked for approval for advertising for bids on a new garbage truck. A motion to approve advertising for bids on a new garbage truck was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 6 was introduction of an Ordinance adopting the Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenses for the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, for the fiscal year 2024-2025. After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor advised that this is an introduction only and there will be no discussion about it tonight and it will be duly advertised and it is expected that it will be considered for passage at a special meeting on May 30, 2024. A copy of the Ordinance will be available at the Town Hall for inspection.

Agenda Item No. 7 was introduction of an Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 700, 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 amending the industrial rate structure. After announcing the Agenda Item, the Mayor indicated that this item it is an introduction only and no action will be taken tonight; it will be duly

advertised and a copy will be available at Town Hall; and is expected that the matter will be taken up for passage together with the Ordinance on the Operating Budget at a May 30, Special Meeting.

Agenda Item No 8 was Board discussion and vote to approve the summer youth program for Greater Mt. Carmel Missionary Baptist Church (Raymond Riley, Sr.). Prior to announcing this Agenda item, the Mayor stated that the Rev. Raymond Riley, Sr. is in attendance tonight and he went on to say that the Town has approved this program in the past. The Mayor asked if Rev. Riley would like to make any comments and Rev. Riley took the podium. After a brief explanation of the program, Alderman Gardner said that he moved to fund it, stating that he had previously asked for \$5,000.00. There was a short discussion of that request being funded by Hydro Funds and this request is being funded by General Funds. At the conclusion of a short discussion, the motion was to fund the program this year at \$4,736.00. That motion was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried.

Before announcing Agenda Item No. 9, the Mayor advised that it had been put on the agenda as it was thought that some changes might have to be made, but that matter has been approved, so that matter will not be addressed.

Agenda Item No. 10 was announcement of annual grade for Town of Vidalia Water System received from the Louisiana Department of Health. After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor explained what an honor it is for the Town to receive the rating of 93 out of 100 together with some bonus points gave us a 105 out of 108 points. He then went over the requirements of maintaining a system at that level and thanked Cornell Lewis and the entire water staff for doing such a great job. Next, the Mayor explained that Vidalia's Water rates for the quality of water we have are very low. Unfortunately in the future, the State may mandate that rates be raised to meet some of the State's requirements. He just wants everybody to know that the Town is dedicated to keeping the rates as low as possible while giving the best water possible.

Agenda Item No. 11 was Town of Vidalia Project updates (Mayor Buz Craft). The Mayor announced that the last item on the agenda for Project updates. He said good news is coming, he can't tell anybody right now about it, but the D. A. Biglane Road issue is about to be solved. Next he talked about the streets that are going to be overlaid which are Camellia Street, Pear Street, Lynn Street, section of Miller Street, Carolina Street, Florida Street, Georgia Street, Debra Drive and Oak Street. The Town is working on the infrastructure now for Polk Park; the water plant is ready for bids; the Vidalia port final permit is 120 days out and he wants to thank Rep. Letlow for assisting with that problem. The substation work is progressing, but the poles for the transmission lines may be some time being delivered. The Slough Project should be ready to go by the fall of the year. The wastewater projects are still in progress and the Town has applications out for funds for that project. Raising the water wells are progressing; the sidewalk work with the DOT is progressing slowly because of permits that they have to get and administrative matters they have to take care of; we are still looking at the Walnut Drive drainage issues; we are having a problem trying to find a contractor for the various turn-arounds; we are engineering the sidewalk on S. Oak Street now; the problem trees issue has been bid out and the Mayor stated that he thinks that is all we have and asked for a motion to adjourn.

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

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

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