

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING OF THE
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN
OF THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA,
HELD ON TUESDAY, APRIL 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, April 9, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

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

There were absent: Alderman Robert Gardner 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 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 March 12, 2024, were approved with no changes. The motion for the approval of the minutes was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

The Mayor then stated that it was time for comments on current agenda items. He stated that usually comments would be allowed at a later date and 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 February 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. 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, and noted that the change in net position has improved over last month. She then touched on sales tax collections and hydro royalties, and advised that there are \$908K remaining undesignated in the ARPA funds and that those funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024, and expended by December 31, 2026. In conclusion, she advised that the budget process is close to conclusion and there may be a proposed budget by the next meeting. At this point, the Mayor commented about the low hydro revenues and reminded everyone that normally the Town's net position would be positive by this time. Following that, he thanked Mrs. Moak for the great work she does for the Town.

Agenda Item No. 2 was Board discussion and vote on approval of occupational licenses. The first application was by Montserrat Gonzalez for “Montses Latino Stone & Snack, LLC” at 4004 Carter Street. There being no questions or comments, a motion to approve the application was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Probst and unanimously carried. The second application was by Mr. Devin Buckles for “J and K Seafood” at 2014 Carter Street. Mr. Buckles spoke in favor of his application. Mr. Buckles advised that he will be doing boiled seafoods out of a mobile seafood trailer situated at that 2014 Carter Street address. When asked if he would be moving from place to place in Town, he said that he would not be moving unless it would be to cater a specific event. A motion was then made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried to approve the application. The third application was by Nancy Creel for “Creel Cuts” at 1600 Carter Street. This application is for a change of ownership. Following a short discussion, there being no questions or comments from the audience, a motion was made to approve the application by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 3 was Board discussion and vote on resolution to approve bids for the Town of Vidalia Water Plant expansion project. The Mayor then addressed this Agenda Item and advised that the bids were opened and read aloud on Monday, March 18, 2024, for the Town of Vidalia-Water Plant Expansion Project. There were two bids: Womack & Sons Construction Group, LLC in the amount of \$9,763,482.00 and Greenbriar Digging for \$12,637,725.00. Noting that Womack & Sons Construction Group, LLC was the low bidder and that Bryant Hammett & Associates, LLC, advised the Town that they have evaluated the bids and recommended an award of the low bid from Womack & Sons Construction Group, LLC. Following a short discussion among the aldermen, the motion to award the bid to Womack & Sons Construction Group, LLC in the amount of \$9,763,482.00 was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

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

Agenda Item No. 4 was Board discussion and vote to partnership with Home With Heroes Foundation Wreaths Across America. (Mark LaFrancis). The Mayor began by reminding the Board that they have helped fund the Home With Heroes Foundation, Inc. for the last two years and reminded them of some of the projects in the local area that the Foundation has in place. He told the Board that Mr. LaFrancis could not be available due to illness. He said that he would like to see the Board assist the Foundation this year. He reminded the Board that in the past they have assisted the Foundation for their local work in the amount of \$1,000.00. A motion was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried, to assist the Foundation as in the past.

Agenda Item No. 5 was Board discussion on the Town of Vidalia Policies and Procedures regarding travel and travel expense. The Mayor began by explaining in some detail the activities with regard to travel and travel expenses that has brought this matter to the attention of the Board. It involved an Alderman getting an advance in expenses and not going to the conference. There followed a general and broad discussion on how to solve the problem and the result thereof was a consensus that they need to review the Town’s Ordinance on the policies and procedure regarding travel and travel expense. As there is an Ordinance in place, it was decided to review that Ordinance and see what changes need to be made, as that would require an Ordinance to amend the current Ordinance.

Agenda Item No. 6 was Board discussion and vote on Vidalia Police Department personnel, Noah Foreman – Patrolman (Full Time).

After announcing the Agenda item, the Mayor called on Chief Merrill to give the Board an update on this matter. Chief Merrill took the podium and told the Board of the need for another full time patrolman and gave some background on Mr. Foreman and his qualifications and experience. Following the Chief's presentation, it was moved by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried, to approve the hire.

Agenda Item No. 7 was Town of Vidalia Project updates by the Mayor. The Mayor began by stating that he is going to try to give a quick overview of some of the projects which are ongoing at the present time and the first was the Council on Aging's request for \$50,000.00, and he turned the floor over to Mr. LaSyone who gave a more detailed report on where they stand on that project. No. 2 was the safety nets for the ball fields involving \$50,000.00 and he said that the Town is talking with the Recreation District and others to see how to implement that program. No. 3 was the South Oak Street Project which is ongoing. No. 4 was the After School Tutoring Program. He briefly explained where that stands. No. 5 was the turn-arounds on streets in District 2 which are progressing. No. 6 was the Beautification Committee's request for the big flag which the Mayor says probably would be put in the median as you come off the bridge in Vidalia. The Mayor indicated that this is an expensive item and they are looking for assistance from the State and from the Veterans Administration to see if they can get that project done. No. 7 was the Vietnam Wall which is progressing – they have gotten the seed money and have started to beautify that area. No. 8 was the problem trees which have been designated for cutting down. That project is ongoing. No. 9 was Polk Park which he said is in progress and it is going according to plan. There were other street projects which are awaiting the okays from the Department of Transportation. After making those reports, the Mayor finished up by talking about the severe weather problem which the Town was facing and advised everyone of the procedures in place in case they have severe weather in Town and assured the people that the Utility Department was on call and that they will be monitoring that situation closely.

Agenda Item No. 8 was adjournment. The Mayor, noting no further agenda items, asked for a motion to adjourn and the motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned.

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

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

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the following bids were opened and read aloud on Monday, March 18, 2024, for the Town of Vidalia – Water Plant Expansion Project.

BIDDER	AMOUNT
Womack & Sons Construction Group, LLC	\$9,763,482.00
Greenbriar Digging	12,637,725.00

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Vidalia accepts the low bid from Womack & Sons Construction Group, LLC in the amount of \$ 9,763,482.00 and makes award; **contingent on Concurrence of Contract Award, by the Division of Administration, Facility Planning and Control.**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the bid amount from Womack & Sons Construction Group, LLC exceeds the amount of construction funds available through the **Division of Administration, Facility Planning and Control.** Therefore, the Town of Vidalia will be accountable for any and all funds over Facility Planning and Control’s contribution, in order to complete the construction of the project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor is authorized to execute any and all contracts, estimates and change orders between the Town and the contractor.

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

And the Resolution was declared adopted on this 9th day of April, 2024, to be effective immediately.

PIARA WILSON, CLERK

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR