

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING OF THE  
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
OF THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA,  
HELD ON TUESDAY, MAY 9, 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, May 9, 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 Alderman Betts.

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 April 11, 2023, were approved with no changes. The motion for the approval of the minutes was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Probst, 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 March, 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 March 31, 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: that at the end of March, revenues and expenses should be at or around 75% of budget over-all, total revenues were at 67% of budget and expenses were at 76% of budget; as approved by the Board, debts of the Town were paid off in January including \$4.5 million on the transmission lines, \$5.7 million on the Municipal Complex debt, and \$561k on the new fire truck, and the budget has not been revised to reflect these Board approved changes; capital outlay is at 59% of the budget. She then noted that budget revisions will be necessary for the fiscal year ending 6/30/2023. That concluded her presentation and the Mayor asked if anyone had any questions of Mrs. Moak. Alderman Gardner said he had a question. He then made a statement concerning the process for being reimbursed for attendance at meetings. Following his statement, the Mayor answered his questions. Following their exchange, the Mayor proceeded on to Agenda Item No. 2.

Agenda Item No. 2 was Board presentation of financial audit for Town of Vidalia for fiscal year 2021-2022. After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor called on Mr. Scott Adams, CPA, with Silas Simmons, LLP, the Town's auditors. Mr. Adams took the podium and began by stating that this year's audit is an unmodified audit, which means it is a clean audit with no significant findings. Following that, he went on to explain the audit process in general and pointed to several different items in the audit which showed that there were no significant findings that would need to be addressed by the Town. Following his presentation, the Mayor asked if the Board had any questions and there being no questions, he thanked Mr. Adams for his presentation and noted that the Silas Simmons firm spends a lot of time on our audit and is very thorough in everything they do. He also commented on Mrs. Moak's assistance that she gives them as well as the Department heads. After that Mr. Adams reiterated how much help Debra and her staff and the Town Department heads are in helping them make the audit.

Agenda Item No. 3 was update by the Mayor on various current Town projects. The Mayor then spoke to the Board to update them on various current Town projects. Those projects were: the overall project on upgrading the Town's drainage which has been ongoing for some time now and the contractors are just waiting for some good weather so they can re-surface the areas where they replaced culverts in various portions of the Town; the Street overlay is proceeding as planned and the Mayor talked about the various streets that were scheduled for re-surfacing in the near future, depending on good weather, and the Mayor indicated that bids were being taken this coming Thursday for the projects; the project for cleaning our culverts on Logan Sewell Drive, which drainage system drains the entire Town. The Mayor also indicated that they will be cleaning out the beaver dams in the Alabama Street area; work continues on the new sub-station and probably will be 12 to 14 months before that is online; the Town is planning on taking some of the ARPA funds to raise the water wells over the levee and called on Cornell Lewis for an update; the Mayor next discussed the slough drainage project and called on Town Manager, Jay LaSyone, to give an update on that project; then the Mayor called on Ms. Loran Scott to tell the Board about the Town of Vidalia Summer Feeding Program. Ms. Scott indicated that the project is the "Healthy School Food Collaborative" which is a Federal Project to deliver two meals a day to the school children during the months of June and July. She also indicated that there is a program that they are working on for Seniors. She also touched on some street safety projects that are ongoing. The Mayor then called on Mr. Bobby Paul to alert the Town folks that ULM will be doing a drone flyover of Vidalia on May 22, to photograph all of the streets, utilities, buildings, etc. with drones. This will be helpful to the Town so if we have a disaster then we will be able to document what the Town looked like before and after a disaster.

Agenda Item No. 4 Board discussion vote on approval of occupational license applications. The first application was by Hannah Grace Hinkle for "ROLLING 'N' THE DOUGH" at 3046-A Carter Street. Hannah Hinkle spoke on behalf of the application. There being no comments or questions, a motion to approve the application was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried. Following that, the Mayor asked if they would be asking for a sign permit and was advised that they had submitted one that morning. The Clerk advised that it was on the agenda for next month. The Mayor suggested that the Clerk get copies of that application so the Board could take the matter up now and save Ms. Hinkle another trip to a meeting. While the copies were being added, the Board took up the second application which was by Ira Jonathan Wood for "OLD SOUTH TRADING POST, LLC" at 102 Front Street. After comments by the Mayor, there being no comments or questions, a motion to approve the application was made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried. Upon the Clerk returning with the paperwork, which copies of the paperwork were given to the Board members for review. The Mayor then asked for a motion to add the permit application to the agenda. Alderman Betts made that motion, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried. Following that, after review of the request for a sign permit, there being no questions or comments, a motion to grant the

permit application for a sign permit was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 5 was presentation of dividend check from Louisiana Worker's Compensation Corp. to Town of Vidalia (Beau Pilgrim, Reed Insurance Agency). At this time, the Mayor recognized Beau Pilgrim who, on behalf of Reed Insurance Agency, presented the Town with an insurance dividend refund check for \$222,429.67, which the Mayor happily accepted. Following comments by Mr. Pilgrim indicating that the amount of the check was so high because of the Town's excellent protection class rating, which most Town's our size does not have, and the fact that the Town has managed to keep their Worker's Compensation Claims to a minimum. The Mayor thanked Mr. Pilgrim and there followed a short photo session.

Agenda Item No. 6 was Board discussion and vote on Vidalia Police Department personnel. Mark Davis (full-time narcotics officer). After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor noted that Chief Merrill is in the audience and asked if anyone had any questions or comments. There were no questions, comments or discussion, and the Mayor asked for a motion to approve the hire of Mark Davis as a full-time narcotics officer. The motion was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, and unanimously carried.

Agenda Item No. 7 was Public Hearing on an Ordinance to amend the Vidalia, Louisiana, Zoning & Development Code. After announcing Agenda Item No. 7, the Mayor reminded the Board that a Public Hearing was needed prior to voting on the actual Amendment of the Ordinance and asked for a motion to enter the Public Hearing. The motion to enter the Public Hearing was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Probst, and unanimously carried. The Mayor and Board then entered into a Public Hearing and the Mayor recognized Ms. Cassandra Lynch, Chairperson of the Vidalia Zoning & Planning Commission, who reported on the actions of that Commission and the reasons for needing to make Amendments to the Zoning & Development Code. Following Chairperson Lynch's thorough presentation, the Mayor recognized John Thompson, Project Engineer and Scott Griffing, Project Manager, and asked them to make their presentation. Mr. Griffing proceeded to reiterate what the project is all about and why the amendments to the Code are needed. Following his presentation and answering several questions from the audience and Board, the Mayor asked for a motion to exit the Public Hearing. A motion was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Gardner, and unanimously carried, to exit the Public Hearing. The Mayor and Board then exited the Public Hearing and resumed with the agenda.

Agenda Item No. 8 was Board discussion and vote on an Ordinance to amend the Vidalia, Louisiana, Zoning & Development Code. After announcing the agenda item, the Mayor asked for a motion to amend the Vidalia, Louisiana, Zoning & Development Code and get a second and then they could discuss the matter. There followed a short discussion on the procedures for adding to the Ordinance to Amend raising the height of pole signs from 20 feet to 35 feet. Following that discussion, Alderman Betts said that he would amend his motion to include changing the height requirement in Commercial Districts to 35 feet. Alderman Smith seconded that motion. The Mayor then called for a vote on the motion to Amend the Vidalia, Louisiana, Zoning & Development Code in accordance with the recommendations by the Planning Commission and the Amendment by Alderman Betts. Alderman Smith seconded that motion and the vote was unanimous.

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

Agenda Item No. 9 was introduction of an Ordinance adopting the Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenses for the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, for the fiscal year 2023-2024. The Mayor then reminded the Board that this is not an action item but is the introduction of the Ordinance and that a copy will be available at Town Hall for inspection and would be voted on, after a public hearing, at the next regular Town meeting.

Agenda Item No. 10 was Board discussion and vote on approval of bids for American Cruise Line Bus turn-around. The Mayor advised the Board that two bids had been received, one from Cothren Construction in the total amount of \$49,265.62 and one by Camo Construction for \$54,976.00. Following a short discussion, motion was made by Alderman Probst, seconded by Alderman Betts, to award the bid to Cothren Construction. The vote thereon was unanimous.

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

Agenda Item No. 11 was Board discussion and vote on approval to advertise for bids on Town surplus vehicles. The Mayor began by commenting that the Town has received a number of vehicles through the Enterprise Rental Program and now the Town has excess surplus vehicles. The Mayor then noted that Chief Merrill has been in contact with several of the adjoining municipalities to determine if there could be some intergovernmental agreements with the surrounding agencies to allow them to obtain the vehicles for their police departments. There followed a general discussion about the advisability of advertising all the vehicles or only some. Town Manager LaSyone spoke to the Board with his suggestion for the procedure which would include getting Enterprise to get secondary market values for the Town so that when the bids come in on the surplus vehicles they can be compared to consider the best course of action. Following discussions, a motion was made to authorize the Town to advertise for bids for both the Police Department surplus vehicles and the Utility Department surplus vehicles, was made by Alderwoman Demby, seconded by Alderman Betts, and unanimously carried. Chief Merrill and Town Manager LaSyone, were instructed to proceed in accordance with the previously mentioned plans.

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 Demby, seconded by Alderman Gardner, and unanimously carried.

---

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

---

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer*

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE VIDALIA, LOUISIANA ZONING AND**

**DEVELOPMENT CODE**

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:

- (1) The proposed Ordinance was previously introduced at the meeting of April 11, 2023; and
- (2) After due notice of advertising of this proposed Ordinance in the Official Journal of this Board on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2023, and public hearing held by the Board on the 9th day of May, 2023, it is hereby ordained and adopted as Ordinance of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, that:

WHEREAS, to better serve the ever-changing needs of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, a new Code of Ordinances was adopted August 16, 2017, by Ordinance No. 673.

WHEREAS, in order to keep the Zoning and Development Code relevant and responsive to the changing needs of the Town of Vidalia, it is necessary to update the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, Zoning and Development Code so that the positive development of the Town may be continued and the health, safety, convenience, morals, and general welfare of the community may be promoted; and

WHEREAS, the Vidalia Planning and Zoning Commission have recommended to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen certain amendments and/or deletions to that Zoning and Development Code concerning changing the zoning designation of parcel number 0420026500; amending Section 4.4.23.3; amending Section 7.5.2 to set the maximum size of pole signs; and amending Section 7.5.9.2E2)e. A copy of the Ordinance has been available for review at Town Hall since its introduction;

THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, that the Vidalia, Louisiana, Zoning and Development Code is hereby amended as follows:

- (1) Change the zoning designation of a 32.72 acre tract of land (Parcel No. 0420026500) from commercial mixed use to community commercial use;
- (2) Amend Section 4.4.23.3 insofar as it prohibits fuel pumps and canopies from being located in the front of a property;
- (3) Amend Section 7.5.2 to set the maximum area of pole signs at 200 square feet; and to set the maximum height of pole signs at 35 feet; and
- (4) Amend Section 7.5.9.2E2)e insofar as it restricts the color of electronic lighting to only amber or white.

The foregoing ordinance was read and considered as a whole, and the vote thereon was as follows:

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

WHEREUPON, the Mayor declared the foregoing Ordinance to be duly adopted this 9<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2023, to be effective immediately.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

\_\_\_\_\_  
BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR

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

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS**, the following bids were opened and read aloud on May 2, 2023, for the construction of the American Cruise Lines Bus Turn-around:

Cothren Construction in the amount of \$49,265.62;

Camo Construction in the amount of \$54,976.00.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Town of Vidalia awards the project to COTHREN CONSTRUCTION, in the amount of \$49,265.62.

**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 COTHREN CONSTRUCTION.

**THIS RESOLUTION** adopted this 9th day of May, 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 9<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2023.

---

PIARA WILSON, MUNICIPAL CLERK

---

BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR