

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN
OF THE TOWN OF VIDALIA, LOUISIANA,
HELD ON THURSDAY, MAY 27, 2021 AT 5:30 P.M.
AT THE VIDALIA CONFERENCE & CONVENTION CENTER, 112 FRONT STREET,
VIDALIA, LA**

The Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, met, in special session, at the Vidalia Conference & Convention Center, in Vidalia, Louisiana, on Thursday, May 27, 2021, at 5:30 P.M.

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

There were absent: NONE.

There were also present: Jay Lasyone, Town Clerk; George C. Murray, Jr., Town Attorney; Town Accountant, Debra Moak, CPA; and Pam Middleton, Executive Secretary to the Mayor.

Also attending were Scott McLemore, City Judge; Wyly Gilfoil and Bryant Killen, representing the Vidalia Port Commission; Police Chief Joey Merrill; and Fire Chief Johnnie Evans.

The meeting was opened by the Mayor with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance by those present and the invocation was 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 special session, as the governing authority of said municipality, and opened the meeting for the conduct of business.

The Mayor then opened the floor for public comments on current agenda items. There being no comments, the Mayor closed the floor for comments.

Agenda Item No. 1 was presentation of proposed budget for fiscal year 2021-2022 (Debra Moak, CPA & Municipal Accountant). The Mayor made comments on the proposed budget and turned the floor over to Mrs. Moak for her presentation. Mrs. Moak went over many items in the proposed budget, as presented to the Board and as contained in their packets, and at the conclusion of her presentation, asked for comments and questions and there were no comments or questions. The Mayor thanked her for her thorough presentation.

Agenda Item No. 2 was Departmental reports. The Mayor first called on Mr. Lee Staggs to report on the Street & Sanitation Department. Mr. Staggs spoke to the Board and gave a summary of the significant items in the budget which are being requested by the Street & Sanitation Department. Those items included a back-hoe; a pick-up truck; a portable pressure washer; a device to re-claim the Freon from air the newer air conditioning systems which the old device will not re-claim; and a sand blaster. Following his presentation, Alderman Betts asked whether the sweeper needs replacing or will it be used for another year. Mr. Staggs replied that the head has been re-built and he plans to use it another year. Alderman Gardner then questioned the status of the 24 foot by 24 foot building for the employees. He was advised that it had been delivered that day and cost about \$11,000.00 less than anticipated. Alderman Gardner then asked about employee incentive increases based on the amount of work they do and Alderman Probst had questions about the status of street repairs and following replies to his questions, he stated that he was still concerned and wants to see action. He also indicated that he is still getting phone calls about sidewalks needing repaired. Next, the Mayor called on Richard Roth, head of the Electrical Department, and he spoke to the Board on the items in the budget for the Electrical Department, including an air compressor, a skid steer with attachments, which he wants to lease; the installation of several shut-off valves for the water system which would

allow shutting off sections of the Town without having to shut off the whole Town for repairs; four (4) aerators and an additional lift station. There were no questions of Mr. Roth. Next, the Mayor called on Fire Chief, Johnnie Evans, who indicated that he has asked for a service truck to replace a 2003 vehicle; some oxygen equipment; a light bar for one of the vehicles; and to make repairs on their training building. There were no questions of Fire Chief Evans. Then the Mayor called on Regina Fleming who discussed the items in the budget for the Convention Center, including new LED lights; repairs to the roof; repairing the amphitheater; upgrades on the visual equipment; the audio equipment was done last year; and the need for an additional maintenance person. Next, the Mayor called on Mr. Bobby Paul, who discussed the needs of the IT Department. Then the Mayor called on Mr. Joe Dallalio to talk about the Recreation District, who indicated that they need a new mower. Following him, Chief Merrill spoke to the Board and indicated that he needs to order nine (9) vehicles to replace those that are aging out and reminded the Board that, these days, you have to ask for vehicles many more months ahead of time than in the past. He also indicated that he is talking to several persons in an attempt to find one who would manage the Police Department's fleet. He also discussed the need for new facilities at the training center. Chief Merrill was followed by Judge Scott McLemore, who gave an overview of the present situation at City Court. Lastly, Mr. Gilfoil gave a brief report on the conditions at the Port, as the Board had heard a much longer presentation at the Special Meeting of May 20.

Agenda Item No. 3 was public hearing on an Ordinance adopting the Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenses for the Town of Vidalia, Louisiana, for the fiscal year 2021-2022. The Mayor asked for a motion to open the public hearing. A motion was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderwoman Demby, to open the public hearing and the motion passed unanimously. There were no questions or comments and the Mayor asked for a motion to close the public hearing. A motion was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Smith, to close the public hearing and the motion carried unanimously.

Agenda Item No.4 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 2021-2022. The Mayor then asked for a motion to open the discussion of the Board and the motion was made by Alderman Betts, seconded by Alderman Smith, and unanimously carried. The Mayor then opened the floor for discussion by the Board members. Alderman Gardner spoke first and had a question concerning whether or not the salary for the Economic Development Director being in this budget. The Mayor advised that it was in this budget. Alderman Gardner then asked about the vehicle for the Code Enforcement Officer and the Mayor responded that they are looking at several sources to obtain a vehicle for him. Alderman Gardner then asked that research be done on insurance for the employees and their families. The Mayor indicated that the Administration searches each year for the best deal for the employees. Next, Alderman Gardner inquired about the status of the pumping station over by the levee. The Mayor stated that plans are in progress and that he understands that

there may be State Funds to pay for that project and that it would be much better to have the State pay for it than the Town. Alderman Gardner then stated that he wants to be notified when approval

is given for the project. Alderman Gardner next stated that in the last budget there was \$150,000.00 for playgrounds and the Mayor reported that the Administration is in discussions with the School Board and the Recreation District to build a playground. Then, Alderman Gardner stated that he would like another \$150,000.00 be put in the budget for sidewalk repairs and new sidewalks. He then brought up his wish that \$10,000.00 be placed in the budget to remove the old swimming pool that used to be behind the Upper Elementary School. After some back and forth discussion, the Mayor advised him that he should request that of the School Board since he believes that they own the property. Finally, Alderman Gardner requested that the Hydro rebates be made twice a year instead of once a year. The Mayor explained to him that that is not possible, because the Ordinance requires that the total amount of the refund be calculated at the end of each year before the refund can be made. Alderman Gardner then made a motion that an additional \$150,000.00 be put in this year's budget for sidewalk repair and new sidewalks. Alderman Probst seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. The Mayor then advised that it was time to vote on the Ordinance adopting the Operating Budget of Revenues and Expenses for the fiscal year 2021-2022. A motion was made by Alderman Betts to adopt the budget, as presented, and as amended by Alderman Gardner concerning the sidewalks, and it was seconded by Alderman Smith. The vote thereon was as follows: YEAS: Aldermen Betts, Gardner, Probst, Smith and Alderwoman Demby. NAYS: NONE. The Clerk announced that the budget was adopted by a unanimous vote.

Agenda Item No. 5 was adjournment. The Mayor announced that there was no further business and asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Gardner, seconded by Alderman Probst and unanimously carried. The meeting was declared adjourned.

/s/ Jay LaSyone
JAY LASYONE, TOWN CLERK

/s/ Buz Craft
BUZ CRAFT, MAYOR