

Town of Hot Springs  
Board of Alderman Meeting  
January 6, 2025

Present:

Mayor Abigail Norton  
Alderman Jeanne Gentry  
Alderman Wendy Stancil  
Alderman Dan Myers  
Attorney Selina King

Fire Department –  
Maintenance – Jeremy Trantham  
Police Department – Stacey Workman  
Tax Department – Laura Holloway  
Zoning –

Mayor Norton called the Town meeting to order at 6:00pm

Mayor Norton read the public charge.

Mayor Norton asked if there was a motion to approve the December 2, 2024 meeting minutes. Alderman Myers made a motion; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton asked if there was a motion to approve the December 16, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes meeting minutes. Alderman Gentry made a motion; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

## AGENDA

There wasn't anyone on the evening's Public Agenda.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

**Gary Goss** told the Board that the Vinyl Pies Pizza shop is planning to reopen within the next few months, but before they open, the sidewalk needs to be replaced as it is currently tripping hazard. Mr. Goss said the pizza shop owners are planning to take up the buckled sidewalk and pour a new sidewalk themselves. He said it would be approximately 20-feet.

Mayor Norton said the Town Charter indicates that the Town is responsible for the sidewalks. The sidewalk in front of the pizza shop is on US Highway 25/70 and DOT may be responsible for replacing the damaged sidewalk, but they have a lot of damaged roads they are trying to get repaired. Mayor Norton said she will contact DOT to make sure the sidewalk repair is their responsibility.

Alderman Stancil asked Jeremy Trantham if he had heard anything from a county engineer regarding the pavement in front of David Wagner's. Mr. Trantham said he had not heard from anyone.

David Wagner asked if there was a Trail Marker in the section of the sidewalk that will be replaced in front of the Vinyl Pies Pizza shop. Mr. Goss said he'd have to look.

Mr. Wagner asked about the dumpster situation in the parking lot next to his property. Mayor Norton said the subject was part of the Board's discussion, this evening.

Mayor Norton said, according to Robert's Rules of Order, public comments are limited to 2-minutes. Once the Board starts discussing the Town's Business, there is to be no open discussion. She asked that if attendees have another comment, it be known at this time.

## DEPARTMENTS

### Entertainment Committee – SaraJo Litwak

The leaning Christmas Tree will be removed.

### Maintenance Department – Jeremy Trantham

North Spring Street is back open. The fence around the Lift Station will be replaced; this is a State mandate that the Lift Stations are fenced in. When weather gets better, the sidewalk will be fixed in N. Spring Street.

Work on the River Road Sand Filter will begin this week.

### Safety Meeting – Dan Myers

A short Safety Meeting was held to report where each town was [in regard to the hurricane flooding clean up and rebuild]. Alderman Myers said that Hot Springs was ahead of the curve.

### Tax Department – Laura Holloway

Tax bills have gone out and payment have been coming in. At this time, 46.90% of the billed property taxes have been paid.

Ms. Holloway said she contacted the School of Government to find out how overpayments, due to re-evaluation appeals were to be handled. She was notified that the overpaid amount should be returned to the property owner. The Board agreed that the overpayment should be returned to the property owner and NOT credited to the 2025 tax bill.

## BUSINESS

### Mayor Norton

Said that comments have been made that the Town isn't pulling their weight [after the hurricane and flooding]. Mayor Norton asked meeting attendees to share the information that the Town is doing everything that they can do. She stated that the Town has State regulations and guidelines that must be followed. She also stated that the Town also has a

budget that is over extended [due to the hurricane and flooding]. Mayor Norton does not know the specifics of the comment, but she wants everyone to know the Town is doing the best they can with what they have.

Mayor Norton asked the Board for a decision regarding City Hall employees' office space. She expressed appreciation to the Spa for allowing City Hall to work out of their extra space but said the employees need to move to other accommodations with a bit more space. She said the Welcome Center and/or Community Center are options as both buildings are owned by the Town. Mayor Norton let everyone know that Police Chief David Shelton needed to be stationed in a central location and have privacy. Mayor Norton asked the Board to approve to place City Hall employees and Maintenance be stationed in the Community Center and have Chief Shelton stationed in a portion of the Welcome Center.

Mayor Norton told the Board that she is waiting on a second quote to get rid of the mud in the Town Hall building's basement. The first quote was for \$118,000.00, due to the hazardous material [kerosine mixed with the mud]. She said All Hands and Heart can tear out the moldy sheetrock and take up the floors. Mayor Norton advised the Board that it will be a long time before the Town Hall building can re-open.

Alderman Myers said he has a concern with using a portion of the Welcome Center for the Police Department. Mayor Norton said that the Town would have to put up a lockable temporary wall.

Alderman Stancil asked Mayor Norton if Stacy Geyer was aware that we are talking about having Chief Shelton office in the Welcome Center. Mayor Norton told her that she was in the beginning stages of thinking things through. She said she had talked with Stacy, but Stacy was not yet aware of her current plans.

Mayor Norton said the only other option we have is to wait another two to three months for the Corp of Engineers to drop trailers, next to the Laughing Heart. If we use the Welcome Center and Community Center we will let the Corp of Engineers know we won't need the trailers any more.

Alderman Gentry made a motion [to use the Welcome Center and the Community Center as office spaces for Police Chief Shelton, the Maintenance Team, and the City Hall employees]; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton referred the Board to an Interlocal Agreement for the Fairview water project, first sentence on page 2; "Extending the water system on East and South Lawson Road. Final location to be determine with final design." Mayor Norton sent a question to the county since the project is not only on East and South Lawson, but will also include Fairview Loop and Old Dixie Road. She said she is asking if the additional wording needed to be in the agreement. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve the agreement; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

The Board was referred to the Interlocal Memorandum of Agreement with the Land of Sky. They will come in and take care of the FEMA Grants portal. They can make sure our

contracts McGill has for the Town, with the contractors, have the FEMA required wording. Mayor Norton said she feels this will be the best opportunity to be refunded, by FEMA, for all that we have done. Alderman Gentry said the million-dollar loan would pay for Hanah, with the Land of Sky, to ensure all the contracts are in a FEMA acceptance order. Mayor Norton told Alderman Gentry that Category Z will pay for Hanah's service. The money will have to be paid by the Town initially; Alderman Gentry is asking if a budget amendment would need to be made. She said the accountant has said that amendments to the budget need to be made for hurricane expenses. Alderman Stancil asked if the Board could vote on this agreement with the contingent that the matter of a budget amendment be determined. Mayor Norton said this will be coded under the hurricane water and sewer line item. Alderman Gentry will contact the accountant to see what needs to be done.

Alderman Myers made a motion to approve the agreement with Land of Sky; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton asked the Board if the Town should get rid of the dumpsters or should the Town continue to pay for the dumpsters. The bill depends on the dumpsters weight. In the beginning of the disaster clean up, the dumpsters were being changed every couple of days. Alderman Stancil said the Town could not have dumpsters when the entire downtown was a construction area. Alderman Myers said payment for the dumpsters can't come out of any grant or loan money; the Town is having to foot the entire dumpster bill. Alderman Gentry included that the dumpsters were not in the budget. Alderman Myers indicated people approach him regarding the Town's tax rate not being adjusted as the County has. However, if we continue to put an excessive burden or strain the budget, we will have to leave the tax rate where it is or possibly even raise the tax rate. Mayor Norton told Alderman Myers that she understands what he is stating, but the tax rates could not be raised at this time. Alderman Myers said that a lot of Town residence are currently out of work; if the Town continues to pay for the dumpsters that is taking people's tax dollars to pay for the dumpsters. He doesn't like continuing to see the Town's tax dollars going toward dumpsters, especially after 3-months [since the storm]. Tim Arnett asked if the businesses got together and put in \$100.00 a month if a dumpster could be placed somewhere, and if so, where? Alderman Gentry asked about the Conex box full of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the community parking lot. She said it needs to be moved and donated to other areas that are still in need. Someone spoke up and said they may have a box truck that the Town could use to transport the PPE. Alderman Myers said that once the Conex box is emptied, it can be moved to the Fire Department to store emergency supplies. A couple of the business owners asked the Board to supply one more dumpster – this will give them time to meet with the other business owners and see if they, too, were willing to contribute money to keep a dumpster, in town, for their use in further cleanup. The Board agreed to furnish one more empty dumpster.

Alderman Gentry asked if the desks, used at City Hall, were usable. Mayor Norton said they were not. Alderman Gentry said she saw that there was a donation of \$6,500.00 to the Town. She thinks that money could be used for dumpsters and 4 new desks. Alderman Myers told the Board that the conference table was useable.

Alderman Stancil

Alderman Stancil suggests that airtags be placed on the stolen truck, if it is located, or on the replacement truck. Mr. Trantham mentioned that OnStar may be helpful in finding the stolen truck. Officer Workman said the Police Department will look into the matter. She said she had been making some calls to the area in which the truck may have been in.

Alderman Stancil let the Board know that she has joined the American Flood Coalition. She will work with Legislators in Raleigh and Washington D.C. regarding climate change policies. She feels this will help the Town receive funding.

Alderman Myers

Alderman Myers said it is his opinion that airtags be placed on all Town vehicles. The tags can not only assist in recovering a stolen vehicle but can also provide statistics of how the vehicle is driven. He indicates that the auto insurance might be willing to pay for the airtags. Alderman Myers said he would get the cost information together for airtags and present at the February 2025 meeting.

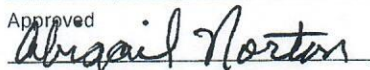
Alderman Myers said within the next couple of weeks, the Board will roll out CodeRed; Emergency Software. People can download an app on their phone or attach their email and home address. In case of an emergency, the Town can go online and map information regarding a specific area, i.e., water turned off in a specific area. Then residents can look at their app or email and see what is going on. Alderman Myers said he will put up flyers around town; the flyers will have QR Codes people can use to get signed up with CodeRed. Alderman Stancil added that CodeRed functions without cell service – which is good.

Alderman Stancil

Alderman Stancil added that the County Long Term Recovery Group will hold a meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>. She asks if anyone is interested to let her know and she will post specifics.

Since there is no other business to discuss, Alderman Myers made a motion to adjourn, Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:08pm.

Approved



Mayor Abigail Norton

2-3-2025

Date