

Present:

Mayor Abigail Norton
Alderman Jeanne Gentry
Alderman Wendy Stancil
Alderman Dan Myers
Attorney Larry Leake

Disaster Relief Admin Assistant (DRAA) – Sena Kassim
Maintenance – Jeremy Trantham
Police Department – Chief David Shelton
Rebuild Hot Springs Area (RHSA) – TJ Phillips
Tax Department – Laura Holloway
Zoning – Tim Arnett

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

Mayor Norton referred attendees to the Public Charge that were placed on each chair. She asked that everyone turn their cell phones down.

Mayor Norton asked the Board for a motion to approve the February 3, 2025 meeting minutes. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in approval.

Mayor Norton asked the Board for a motion to approve the February 15, 2025 Special Meeting minutes. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in approval.

AGENDA

The people who were on the evening's agenda were not present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Longinotti – Said he had read that Asheville will receive 222-million dollars, in hurricane relief, from the state. He asked if Madison County or Hot Springs would also receive state help. Mayor Norton said she had not heard anything, but that doesn't mean something wasn't in the works.

Chris Donochod – Asked the Board if Department of Transportation (DOT) had mentioned anything about replacing the Spring Creek Bridge. Mayor Norton said she hasn't heard anything but she will be meeting with the media, she said she can mention the need for something to be done about the bridge.

DEPARTMENTS

Planning & Zoning – Tim Arnett

Mr. Arnett told the Board that the signs have been put up. Mayor Norton said that Mr. Cauthan does not want to move forward. Mr. Arnett said he would take the signs down.

ReBuild Hot Springs Area (RHSA) – T.J. Phillips

Town & Trail Fest will be held on May 2nd & 3rd. Mr. Phillips said information can be found on the website: TownandTrailFest.org. Mayor Norton asked Mr. Phillips about the business grants. Mr. Phillips said one of the two grants has gone out. The second distribution will be sometime this week.

Tax Department – Laura Holloway

Ms. Holloway told the Board that the Town has collected 97.86% of the Real Property taxes. [Ms. Holloway misspoke; only 87.86% of the Real Property taxes have been collected. ☹]

TOWN BUSINESS

Mayor Norton

Asked Attorney Larry Leake if the Town would have to put the pavement of the Public Parking lot out to bid: The Town owns the property and RHSA is wanting to pave the parking lot and will use their money to do the work. Mr. Leake said since RHSA is using their money the project would not have to be put out for bid.

Mayor Norton referred the Board to the resolution regarding septic tanks and sewer system. A Berry Wills resident asked the Town about replacing their septic tank. In or around 1970 the Town installed septic tanks for homes, within the city limits, that are down the river [River Road]. The residents were given the option for the Town to maintain the septic tank as long as the resident paid sewer fees. If the resident opted out, they would only be charged water fees and have full responsibilities of their septic tank. Mayor Norton asked the Board to look at the first page, 3rd paragraph, 4th sentence indicates: "all systems previously installed by the Town of Hot Springs will continue to be maintained by the Town and the person served will be required to pay the normal sewer rate". The Mayor asked Attorney Leake if the wording 'maintained' included the replacement of a septic tank. Town Clerk, Nancy Thomas, said that in the [18] years that she has worked at Town Hall, the Town has only been responsible for pumping the tanks, as needed; the Town has never replaced anything. Attorney Leake said his interpretation of the resolution is that the Town would replace the tanks, as needed.

Mayor Norton had provided the Board with information regarding an old tractor that the Maintenance Team has but isn't using anymore. Alderman Stancil made a motion to place the tractor on surplus property [to sell]; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

The Board was directed to a memorandum from Land-of-Sky. Katlin Finkle is certified in planning and zoning. Mayor Norton told the Board that through a memorandum of agreement, Ms. Finkle could go through the Town's Zoning Ordinance and offer recommendations and updates. Charges for Ms. Finkle's service is \$4,000.00. If the Board is in agreement, there will be a budget amendment made; the amendment would be made from the Town's Planning and Zoning appropriated funds. Alderman Gentry made a motion to mover forward with Ms. Finkle's service; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in agreement.

Mayor Norton let the Board know that the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) is no longer offering any type of insurance. They are working with a Broker to provide municipalities Medical, Dental, Vision, and Life. The Mayor said she will share the quote information with the Board as soon as she receives it. The Mayor also said that the employees could be given the option to go through the Affordable Care Act (ACA). She said the Town could pay the ACA premium if the employees find a policy they like. Mayor Norton said she will also look into a small group ACA coverage. She told the Board the decision needs to be make by May 1, 2025 as the NCLM coverages terminate on June 30, 2025.

Mayor Norton provided the Board with an updated bid, for the mud removal at City Hall, from Bruce Bender. She told the Board that a representative with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has taken soil samples of the mud and will send off for testing. The representative said that since there is a concrete floor, under the mud, there is not a fear of the kerosine leaking into the ground water. Mayor Norton was told, by the DEQ representative, that the soil can be retested in a few months and see how much the kerosine had dissipated. If the testing shows the kerosine levels are below the commercial and industrial levels, we could began repairing Town Hall. However, the levels will determine the number of hours people can safely work in repairing and work in the office. Alderman Stancil asked Mr. Bender how soon he'd be able to begin work on removing the mud once the test results are back. Mr. Bender said he could start within 2-weeks to a month. He doesn't have a time frame for the removal; he is thinking from 4 to 6 weeks.

Mayor Norton referred the Board to the 2-quotes she have for the maintenance shop wiring. **Akins Electric** bid is \$10,000; this includes replacement of 200-amp service panel, rewiring the building, new outlet switches and light fixtures. **Pelletier Electric, Inc.** bid is \$7,310.00. Alderman Myers made a motion to award the job to Pelletier Electric, Inc; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

The Mayor presented 2-quotes for the foundation repair at Town Hall. **Andy Turner** submitted a quote for \$3,000.00. **Foundation Solutions of Ettiwa's** quote is for \$8,800.00. Alderman Stancil made a motion to award the job to Andy Turner; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton told the Board that Senator Budd will be in town on March 19th. He will be visiting with RHSA at the current Town Hall office. We are wanting someone to come clean the office the day before. Mayor Norton told the Board that Tonia Norwood had cleaned

Town Hall in the past. The Mayor also mentioned Missy Davis who cleans for the Spa. She then asked the Board for a motion to have one of the ladies to come in and clean. Alderman Myers made a motion to have Tonia Norwood to clean the office; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Alderman Stancil

Alderman Stancil updated the Board about her trip to Raleigh, NC with the Flood Coalition. She said the trip was odd. The group met with different types of people: representatives and different organizations. Alderman Stancil said the group will be traveling to Washington, D. C. the 25th, 26th, and 27th [of May]. The group will focus on four towns, and Hot Springs is included in the four.

Alderman Myers

Alderman Myers wanted to discuss the dumpsters that had previously been placed in the Public Parking area. He said a plan needs to be prepared so that the dumpsters take up minimal space in the parking lot. The dumpster that was previously in the parking lot was owned by the Spring Creek Tavern. Big Pillow's dumpster was on their property but the truck had to access the dumpster via the public parking lot. David Wagner said his cottages/restaurant currently did not have a dumpster but will have one once the restaurant opens.

Mayor Norton asked Mr. Phillips, President of RHSA, if there was a plan drawn for the parking lot. Mr. Phillips said they should have one soon. He said Keith [with M^cGill] will, more than likely, be the engineer on the project. David Wagner asked if there could be time for public discussion or if an advisory board put together to review where the dumpsters would be placed in the public parking lot. Alderman Myers said he'd like the engineers to design for the dumpsters to use the least amount of space as possible; and taking into consideration the Big Pillow's dumpster needing to be accessed from the public parking lot. Mr. Wagner asked about the trash bins being placed near the Red Bridge in a bay. Alderman Gentry reminded all that the Town has lost 12 parking spot; there will no longer be parking on Bridge Street. Mr. Trantham said the pump station can't be blocked. He is concerned that if dumpsters are placed by the Red Bridge people will park in front of them making it close to impossible to get to the pump station in an emergency. Chief Shelton said the trash won't get emptied if people are parked in front of the dumpsters when the trash truck comes. Alderman Myers suggested placing the dumpsters at the old fire station. None of the businesses wanted to have to take their trash that far away. Mayor Norton asked David Wagner if he was expecting to put his dumpster in the public parking lot. Mr. Wagner said that he would also need a dumpster for his business. Mayor Norton asked Mr. Wagner if his lot wasn't big enough to have a dumpster. Mr. Wagner responded that it wouldn't be an ideal situation with what he has planned. There was a long pause in the conversation. Mr. Wagner then stated that he understood what the Mayor had asked. Alderman Stancil asked if the dumpsters could be placed on the other side of the old jail. Alderman Myers mentioned the space may be used as an egress for the public parking lot, but will depend on what the

engineers design. Chris Donochod, owner of Big Pillow, suggested having the three dumpsters in a row; his dumpster would be on his property, Mr. Wagner's dumpster on Mr. Wagner's property, and perhaps the Tavern's dumpster could be set there too. Alderman Myers responded that the Board couldn't tell Mr. Wagner that he'd have to have the Tavern's dumpster on his property. Mayor Norton mentioned [Mr. Wagner allowing the Tavern's dumpster to be placed on his property] it would be a neighborly thing to do. Mr. Wagner stated that all the options could be reviewed. Mr. Phillips said he'd discuss this with the engineers and explain we need to have room for three dumpsters and loose as little parking as possible. Mr. Phillips said he will be speaking with the engineers on Tuesday, March 11.

Mayor Norton introduced the new Town Attorney, Larry Leake. Mr. Leake was welcomed with a round of applause.

Since there is no other business to discuss, Alderman Gentry made a motion to adjourn, Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:36pm.

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Approved: Abigail Norton

6-9-25
Date