

Town of Hot Springs
Board of Alderman Meeting
April 14, 2025

Present:

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

Disaster Recovery – Mandy Myers
DRAA – Sena Kassim
Fire Department – Josh Norton
Maintenance – Jeremy Trantham
Police Department –
RHSA – TJ Phillips
Tax Department – Laura Holloway
Zoning –

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

Mayor Norton went over the public charge.

AGENDA

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no Public Comments this evening.

DEPARTMENTS

Disaster Recovery Admin Assistant – Sena Kassim

April 14 Spring Creek Community Center holding Insurance Clinic whether storm related or medical, public can attend. Ms. Hassin let everyone know that if anyone needs assistance with storm related issues, they may contact her.

Disaster Recovery - Mandy Myers

If anyone receives calls regarding donations, please provide them with her phone number. The pantry at the spa is open sporadically. Sena said she asked the workers that were there, earlier in the day, about the hours of operation at the donation store. The store is open when they have volunteers available. There are no set hours at this time.

Fire Department – Dan Myers

RHSA is in the process of fixing the trucks for the VFD. The FD does have power. Due to the lightning strike that occurred several days earlier, the generator has been kicking off and on, but the FD does have power.

Maintenance – Jeremy Trantham

Progress is being made by getting reconnected; if all goes as planned, Silvermine will get reconnected.

There are two young men that need to do Community Service work. Each of the men have 24-hours to complete. Their tickets are for DUI. Maintenance can get their time in, one at a time. The Mayor asked Attorney Leake if we needed any type of paperwork completed to have the young men complete their Community Service work. Mr. Leake said there was no paperwork needed prior to the men working for the Maintenance Department. Alderman Myers said as long as the charges were not related to theft or violence, he makes a motion to approve the young men work with the Maintenance Department; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Fire Department – Josh Norton

An insurance check was received for the two old generators that were stationed by the old fire department. He would like to purchase a new 25KW generator. The FD can use the generator and if the Town needs to use it, it's there. He expects the cost to be close to \$37,000.00. The Town can sell the damaged generators if they wish to do so.

Chief Norton is going to apply for a grant, up to, \$500,000 for Hot Springs. He would like to get a trailer and traffic cones. He also wants spare radios available to be checked in and out. He is also looking at a truck to pull the trailer. Chief Norton would like to get his application in first thing on Monday, April 21. The application process begins on April 21 and closes the end of May. The money is expected to be awarded by the end of June. Mayor Norton told Josh to figure out what is needed and apply for the grant. Chief Norton also suggested looking into the big tents, they can have heat, air, and could be shelter if needed.

Rebuild Hot Springs Area – TJ Phillips

Town Trail Fest is May 2 and 3rd. Main events will occur on the 3rd. A lot of information can be found on townandtrailfest.org [information was also sent out with the April water bills].

A request was made that when the sidewalks are redone, two of the AT markers were rescued, RHSA would like to add a 3rd marker honoring the first through hiker on the AT, Earl Schaffer. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve the 3rd marker; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor. Mr. Phillis said Mr Schaffer was present for the 1998 Trail Fest – That was the 50th anniversary of his through hike on the AT. Mr. Schaffer has since passed, but his Nephew, Dan, will be at this year's Town and Trail Fest.

Tax Collector – Laura Holloway

Ms. Holloway has prepared an updated version of the Live music application. She asked if anything should be added or removed. Mayor Norton asked for a motion to approve the updated application. Alderman Gentry made a motion, Alderman Myers and Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; therefore, all were in favor.

A list of the outstanding tax balances was provided to each of the Board members. Ms. Holloway told the Board that some accounts have small interest balances in which payment will not be pursued until the 2025 tax billings. The small balances were caused by having to assess interest to the accounts and payments did not include the interest. The third delinquent letters will go out the end of this month and people will be notified that they will be turned over to our attorney. Ms. Holloway will provide a copy of the 3rd letter to each of the Board for their information. Should someone approach the Board member to discuss the letter, the Board member will know what the person is referring to.

Ms. Holloway told the Board that in the March meeting she had inadvertently told them that the Town had collected 98% of the real property taxes – the collected amount at that time was 89%. As of today, Ms. Holloway said the Town had collected 92.01% of 2024 real taxes.

Alderman Gentry asked Ms. Holloway if she wanted to discuss payment plans for those who have received the attorney letter. Ms. Holloway asked the Board if they would vote on allowing the people who have received the attorney letter to opt for a detailed payment plan. Prior discussion was the tax payor had a month, per \$100 to pay their taxes. Alderman Gentry said they had to have the current year's bill paid, but that was the old policy. Ms. Holloway asked if that requirement would need to be in a new policy. Alderman Gentry said she doesn't see how some people could pay the current taxes and then pay the older taxes, just to have to pay off the next year's taxes before continuing to pay on the older taxes. Alderman Myers asked if it would have to be on a case-by-case basis; Alderman Gentry felt that it may need to be. Alderman Gentry added that Ms. Holloway would have to get permission from the board to offer payment plan to anyone. She said she wasn't ready to vote on the particulars of the new payment plan requirements. Alderman Myers said he wouldn't be read to vote on anything without additional information. Attorney Leake said that the tax payor's balance would need to be over \$500.00 before turning the file over for legal assistance. Ms. Holloway told the Board that she had previously presented an account to Small Claims Court. She said one of the questions the magistrate asked was whether or not the tax payor had been given the option to make payments; the Town had not offered a payment plan option.

TOWN BUSINESS

Mayor Norton

Mayor Norton asked the Board if they had reviewed the March meeting minutes that had been emailed to them and asked for a motion to approve. Alderman Gentry

made a motion to approve the March meeting minutes; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton told the Board that two days of Southern Software coming to the office for training would be \$600. Alderman Gentry made a motion for Southern Software to come to the office and train for two consecutive days; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton received two bids for the Yanmar tractor that is surplus property:
Donnie Waldroup bid \$609.00
Paul Morlan bid \$625.00

Alderman Myer made a motion to accept the \$625.00 bid; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton had provided the Board with bids/quotes on the package plants for the main wastewater plant; this information had also been emailed to the Board for their review prior to the meeting. She let the Board know that McGill recommends the Board accept the Integrated Water Services bid: Two package plants and one year of technical assistance = \$2,196,000.00 total. The package plants are in Spruce Pine so there will not be an enormous shipping fee nor will there be a big delay in receiving the plants as there would be with the other bids/quotes. The UNC Collaboratory will pay \$2,196,000.00 out of the \$4,000,000.00 grant. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve the acceptance of the bid from Integrated Water Services; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor. Mayor Norton asked for a motion to accept the package plant purchase resolution; Alderman Myers made a motion; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton presented an application for live music from the Magnolia. Dates requested are: May 3, 17, 24, 30 all are for 4:00pm until 10:00pm. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton told the Board that the \$1,000,000.00 grant for upgrades on the Spring Creek sewer line will now be paid by FEMA since Hurricane Helene destroyed the sewer line. McGill is asking the State (Department of Environmental Quality) for permission to use the \$162,300.00, set to upgrade the sewer line, to correct and repair manholes. It was determined that a manhole on Jackson Ave. was estimated as creating an approximate 100,000-gal, per month, flow. Water from the ditch has been going into the sewer line. There are 3 other manholes/sewer lines that have been identified with high flows due to the rains the Town has had.

Alderman Gentry

Alderman Gentry told everyone that the April water bill may be a bit confusing. She explained that the bills appear to have been billed for 1-month, but this isn't so. April bill is for two months, Feb and March. If anyone has any questions about their water bills, Alderman Gentry told everyone to speak with Ms. Holloway or Nancy Thomas.

Alderman Gentry said that the water budget is not in good shape. She is hoping that with reimbursement from the bridge loan the water budget would get back on track.

However, if reimbursement doesn't occur, the water budget will not be met for the 2024-2025 fiscal year and the Town will be in a shortfall.

Alderman Gentry let everyone know that late fees will be applied to delinquent water bills, starting with the April billing. The Town hasn't charged late fees since the hurricane. She also let everyone know that water cut-offs have started again with customers who are 90-days delinquent on their water bills.

Since there is no other business to discuss, Alderman Gentry made a motion to adjourn, Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 6:39pm.

3 in favor
Approved
Abigail Norton
Mayor Abigail Norton

Date
5-12-25