

Town of Hot Springs
Board of Alderman Meeting
May 12, 2025

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
Rebuild Hot Springs Area (RHSA) – TJ Phillips
Tax Department – Laura Holloway
Zoning – Ben Houser

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 everyone turn their cell phones down, to not talk while someone else is speaking, and to not have any side conversations.

Mayor Norton asked the Board for a motion to approve the April 14, 2025 meeting minutes. Alderman Myers 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 May 8, 2025 Special Meeting minutes. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in approval. Meeting was to review and pass a resolution to apply for the NC Small Business Infrastructure Grant Program.

AGENDA

There was no one on the agenda for this evening.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Tim Arnett

Mr. Arnett said there are a lot of wild animals coming into town with distemper. Asked that if anyone sees an animal acting strangely to stay away. He suggests that the animal be put down as distemper can make personal pets sick. Alderman Myers spoke up and let everyone know that Animal Control, nor Fish and Wildlife will not deal with raccoons. The only option is to unalive the animal. Mr. Arnett added that he spoke with the only County Wildlife Officer and the officer asked if he [Mr. Arnett] could take care of the animal, put it in a trash bag, and place it in the trash or bury it. Mr. Arnett said people to not check on an odd acting animal as there is something wrong with it.

DEPARTMENTS

Disaster Recovery Admin Assistant – Sena Kassim

Ms. Kassim said there were 42 Residents they have been helping; 19 are still in process; 17 are completed; and 6 have been moved over to MARC [Madison Alliance for Rebuilding Communities].

Donation/Pantry Coordinator – Mandy Myers

Ms. Myers said she is still working on getting donations. Water is outside the church for those who may need it; the water is available night or day. She is planning a laundry detergent making workshop, more information will be provided at a later date.

Maintenance – Charlie Hemphill

Mr. Hemphill said the Maintenance Department hopes to get the dump truck back by week end.

Mayor Norton asked Mr. Hemphill for the daily flow information. Mr. Hemphill said the flows were at 41,000gal per day.

Planning/Zoning – Ben Houser

Mr. Houser said the Planning Board discussed some issues with the Zoning Ordinance regarding the Industrial District [Section 604]. Mr. Houser had provided a handout to the Mayor and Aldermen. He explained that the Zoning Board's recommendations were underlined and crossed out on the handout. Example: Subsection 2 – Any industry -- Changing to any indoor manufacturing warehousing industry.

Mr. Houser explained that the Board of Aldermen makes the Zoning and the Board of Adjustments sees to the details.

Attorney Leake explained the information provided is "Special Uses". The Town has to give a business a place to set up. The Town has the right to tell people that the Zoning Ordinance may permit _____. The Board of Adjustment can issue special use permits, subject to certain conditions and specifications. Mr. Leake said reasonable structure, such as extra high fences, could be required. He said the _____ is a different branch of the Zoning Board. This gives a governing body, Board of Adjustment, the ability to regulate a business without the Board issuing conditions for it being located in a specific area.

Mr. Houser continued saying the Board added that there will not be any discharge into Spring Creek. Current businesses in operation before the Board of Aldermen votes on the new Zoning _____ will be grandfathered in with the prior Zoning _____

Mayor Norton asked the Board if they approved the amendments to Section 604 - Industrial District in the Zoning Ordinance. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve the amendments; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Rebuild Hot Springs Area – TJ Phillips

Mr. Phillips said Rebuild is working on 2 grants to make improvements on Town Hall and Community Center (including the old Jail). At this time, nothing has been approved, he is just wanting the Board to know what is going on. If the Board does approve Rebuild pursuing the grants, Rebuild will work with the Board to detail what needs to be finished on the Community Center; what needs to be taken care of for Town Hall, including upstairs; and then how to move forward in repairing the old jail. Mr. Phillips said there are no details required to apply for the grants other than what the buildings have been used for. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve Rebuild applying for grants; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Tax Collector – Laura Holloway

Ms. Holloway said she had sent an email to the Board and included the June 3, 2024 BOA meeting minutes regarding allowing people to make payments on their delinquent tax bills. A list of people whose name is being posted in the newspaper due to delinquent tax bills. Ms. Holloway is wanting to know if the Board could draft something that could be voted on next meeting regarding a payment plan policy. Alderman Gentry said she sent a response to the email stating that she didn't agree with what was discussed in the June 3, 2024 meeting. She said an attorney letter has been helpful in the past. Mr. Leake said it was punishment to have their name put in the newspaper; and if they are willing, it's not a good sign. Ms. Holloway told the Board that the second and third letters she has sent out let people know their name will be put in the paper if their taxes aren't paid. She said it doesn't seem to bother some people. Alderman Gentry said having Mr. Leake drafting a letter is a good start. Mr. Leake told the Board they need to come up with a threshold in which letters be sent. Mr. Leake also said none of the people he sends a letter to will be taken to small claims court. He said the process would be equivalent to foreclosure. This process is costly and why not all delinquent accounts will be forwarded to Legal.

The Board agreed that the accounts owing the lessor amounts can be notified that a payment plan is being offered; they must pay a specified amount, per month, leading up to the next tax billing month. The payment amount must have delinquent taxes paid in full before the next billing cycle. Alderman Gentry asked Ms. Holloway to call around other towns, even outside of Madison County, to find out how they handle such situations.

Ms. Holloway referred the Board to a diluted copy of the delinquent tax list. The interest balance people have been removed. This list lets the Board know who still owes on delinquent taxes.

Ms. Holloway told the Board that the newspaper ad will go out this week in the News Record. She let the Board know that she had failed to get the second and third letters out to a couple of estates and is the reason their names will not appear in the newspaper.

Ms. Holloway asked the Board if she could release a tax billing to a trust who no longer owns a piece of property. She explained she needs to remove the trust's billing and create an account to bill the new property owner. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve the bill release from the prior owner and bill the new owner; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Ms. Holloway told the Board that the Town had collected 92.93% of Real Property taxes. Out standing amount to collect is a little over \$29,000.00.

TOWN BUSINESS

Mayor Norton

Mayor Norton mentioned the sewer tap moratorium; she asked Mr. Hemphill what the flow average had been over the past two weeks. Mr. Hemphill said the flow average 30,000 and 40,000. Mayor Norton suggested to the Board that they look at the averages at next meeting and consider lifting the sewer tap moratorium.

Alderman Stancil asked about the timeline on the package plants. Alderman Gentry said she had been told 1-year; Mr. Hemphill said he had also been told 1-year. Mayor Norton didn't think that was correct. She said the Town would have to get bids to prepare the site; she said the package plants will need to be above flood level. She thought this would take around 6-months. Alderman Stancil asked if we know anything about the property at the manufacturing site; Mayor Norton responded that we haven't heard anything. Mayor Norton asked Mr. Leake to contact Advanced Biogas and see if they are willing to sell about 3 acres.

Mayor Norton is wanting to lower the tax rate. She said the taxes were lowered last year, about 45¢. She would like to lower the rate a couple more cents, however, we need to wait to see what the valuation is. Alderman Gentry said the Board has a budget workshop scheduled for June 3rd at 1:00pm, in the Spa's meeting room. She said she'd have more information by that time.

Mayor Norton announced that through the Land of Sky Mountain BizWorks grant will allow us to hire a project manager to handle all of the FEMA projects and work with the businesses. She said she would like hire Brad Guth for this position. The grant would pay Mr. Guth for 50-weeks. He will be available on July 1, 2025. Mayor Norton asked the Board for a motion to approve Mr. Guth; Alderman Myers made a motion; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton referred the Board to bids for a generator for the Fire Department. All bids are within \$3.00 of each other. Alderman Gentry said she'd prefer to approve a North Carolina company. Alderman Myers made a motion to accept the bid from Christy Willet; Aldermen Gentry and Stancil seconded the motion; therefore all were in favor.

Mayor Norton referred the Board to the Construction bids for Town Hall and Police Department; FEMA damages and pre-existing repair. Bids received from Adamson Homes \$226,805; Osburn Construction Company \$224,150; and TBK Properties \$245,000 (this does not include the pre-existing work). Alderman Myers asked if the FEMA work could be done and the pre-existing work done at a later time. Mayor Norton explained that the pre-existing work needed to be taken care of before any additional work could be done. Alderman Gentry made a motion to accept Adamson Homes bid for Town Hall and the Police Department; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; All were in favor.

Mayor Norton referred the Board to the construction quote for the Maintenance shed. Adamson Homes bid is for \$145,566, Highshoal Construction is \$112,574, and Osburn's bid is \$188,000. Alderman Myers made a motion to accept HighSchole for the Town Maintenance shed; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton referred the Board to the construction quote for the Town Maintenance, Old EMS, Building. Adamson Homes bid is for \$93,749; and Osborn's bid is \$125,497. Alderman Myers made a motion to accept Adamson Homes bid; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Alderman Gentry

Alderman Gentry announced that she will not run for re-election. She has been an Alderman for 10 years. She said she'd like to make a smooth transition for the new Board. She is working to make things flow smoothly during the transition. Alderman Gentry made a motion to promote Sena [Hassena Kassim] to Finance Officer. Alderman Gentry explained to all that Sena will be taking training and attending courses. Currently Sena is learning the Town Budget. It is important to have a Finance Officer who understands the budget, and if they don't it could cause a lot of problems for the Town. Mayor Norton said she spoke with Land of Sky & Mountain Bizworks. She said they are willing to allow Sena to work with the Town's finance and still pay her. Alderman Gentry explained that Sena can work X-amount of hours on the things she has been working on and get paid by the grant; but for the hours she is working on/learning about the Town's finances, the Town will pay Sena at the Finance Officer rate. Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

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 7:11pm.

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Approved
Abigail Norton

6-9-25
Date
