

Present:

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

Fire Department/EMS – Josh Norton
Maintenance – Bryan Raines
Police Department –
Tax Department – Laura Holloway
Zoning – Ben Houser

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

Mayor Norton went over the public charge. A copy of the public charge was placed in each chair for the meeting attendees to read.

Mayor Norton asked if there was a motion to approve the May meeting minutes. Alderman Gentry made a motion; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton asked if there was a motion to approve the May 29, 2024 Public Hearing minutes. Alderman Myers made a motion; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ike Lassiter

On Monday, June 24, at the Community Center, there will be meeting regarding affordable housing in Hot Springs; within 6-miles surrounding the Town. There will be a panel available from 7:00pm to 8:00pm for Q&A. The panel will include representation from: Hot Springs Mayor, Zoning, Finance, Real Estate.

Mayor Norton clarified that this project is not only for within the Town limits, but also for the surrounding area and no more than 6-miles outside of the Town limits. She is concerned that if the project goes outside of the 6-miles, it would then be County, County Planning and Zoning. Mr. Lassiter said the panel will also include someone from the County.

AGENDA

Tim Arnett

July 6th the Town will be holding their July 4th celebration. This will also be the Spring Creek Tavern's 10th Year Anniversary. He is requesting an extension of the Noise Ordinance to play music until 12:00am. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve the extension. Alderman Gentry noted that if other venues requested an extension, they would need to also be approved. Attorney King confirmed Alderman Gentry's comment. Alderman Gentry seconded the motion. Mayor Norton requests that Mr. Arnett submit a request, in writing, so that she can provide the approved extension to

Police Chief, David Shelton. Mr. Arnett agreed that he would submit the request in writing.

BUSINESS – Mayor Norton

Mayor Norton presented Big Pillow's request to extend their music hours on Sunday, September 1st. For the Labor Day weekend, they'd like to have music from 6:00pm until 9:00pm. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve the extension; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Term of Office Ordinance

In May 2024 meeting a resolution was made to change the Governing Board's Terms of Office. Mayor Norton presented the ordinance that will put the resolution in place. Regular Municipal Elections for The Town's Officers will be held every 4-years, in odd number years. The elections will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Municipal Election Laws of North Carolina. Registered Town voters will elect 1 Mayor and 3 Aldermen.

The 2025 elections the Town will change to staggered terms. Mayor Norton read the Term of Office Ordinance. Alderman Myers made a motion to accept the Ordinance; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Resolution Zoning Ordinance

Currently, there is no zone in the Town that allows for a sewage treatment plant or a transfer station (pump station). The Zoning Ordinance will need to be amended. Per Attorney King, the Town will need to give a 25-day notice for a Public Hearing for amending the Zoning Ordinance needs to be published in the local newspaper; the hearing notice needs to run, in the newspaper, for 2-weeks. The Mayor told Ms. King that a special meeting will be held, to vote on the 2024-2025 Town Budget, the last week in June. She asked Ms. King if both topics could be presented in the same special meeting for the Board's vote. Ms. King said both topics could be addressed in the same special meeting.

Mayor Norton asked the Board for a meeting date. The Board decided on Wednesday, June 26th at 7:00pm.

MOA & Resolution for the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM)

The NCLM is offering Accounting & Technical assistance to the Town, free of charge. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Memorandum of Understanding

Kevin Reese has volunteered to take over the Town's website and keep it updated. The memorandum will be between the Town and Mr. Reese. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton presented information the Department of Transportation (DOT) has submitted regarding updating the sidewalk, handicap ramps, driveway connections; and adding pedestrian signs. The pedestrian will push a button to notify the traffic that someone will be crossing Bridge Street (a.k.a. Hwy 25/70).

DOT is looking at Park Ave. for a driveway connection. DOT said they would have to cut into the current drive an additional 4-feet – this will make the drive steeper than if already is. Alderman Gentry said the residence who own the properties on Park Ave. should be made aware of what DOT is going to do. Mayor Norton said that DOT will be speaking with the property owners, but it was possible that Park Ave. could be removed from the project.

DEPARTMENTS

Maintenance – Bryan Raines

Asked the Board for a new trash truck. ;)

The sewer plant flow meter is running almost as it should. There has been issues with it running high but it has been calibrated properly. The man who came out to calibrate the meter showed himself and another maintenance team member, Donnie Waldroup, some things that will be very helpful.

Maintenance has tried to contact the Hawkins representative. Maintenance has been advised to remove the dechlorinator box as it will help calculate the flow better. They haven't heard back from the representative yet, but Maintenance will keep the Board informed.

Mayor Norton referred the Board to the quote received for repair of the generator; this quote is without the automatic turn on ability --- someone has to manually start the generator. Alderman Gentry told Maintenance to get the generator repair scheduled for July 2024. Alderman Gentry made a motion to approved moving forward with the quote; Alderman Myers seconded the quote; all were in favor.

Tax Department – Laura Holloway

Ms. Holloway referred the Board to the handout she provided. The handout was a breakdown of recommended payments for the 2023 delinquent taxes. She, Mayor Norton, and Attorney King have been working on drafting a [demand] letter in which Ms. Holloway could fill in some areas and send out to the customers with delinquent accounts and she needs a [set] table to go by when offering payment options. Alderman Gentry said she isn't comfortable with the proposed payments as most of the people with delinquent accounts couldn't pay \$125.00 two times a month as they are only paid once a month by Social Security or Social Security Disability. Alderman Gentry referred back to the prior payment agreement of allowing people to pay their delinquent taxes off in 24-months; but this was when tens of thousands of dollars were owed. Alderman Gentry explained how the set payment plan requirements work – property owner would request a payment plan from the Tax Collector; the Tax Collector would bring the request to the Board for approval. Alderman Myers he wasn't comfortable with the property owner having to come into Town Hall, talk to the Tax Collector; and then having to wait until the first Monday of the next month to know if they could make payments on their delinquent tax bills. Alderman Gentry said that the process she explained was the prior Board's requirements when a lot more money was owed. Tim Arnett suggested that for every \$100 owed, the person be given that many months to pay. Example: \$100 owed, the person is given 1 month to pay; \$200 owed, the person is given 2 months to pay; \$300

owed, the person is given 3 months to pay, etc.... Alderman Myers said he is comfortable with Mr. Arnett's suggestion. The rest of the Board agreed.

Ms. Holloway requested that Adobe be put on her computer as, in working with Ms. King on the demand letters, she feels that there would have not been as much struggle in making updates. Currently, all she can do with Adobe files is read them. Aldermen Myers and Stancil said they approved the basic Adobe with editing for Ms. Holloway's computer. Ms. King told the Board that Adobe with editing would be useful for Ms. Holloway. She offered to check on this as her husband is in IT.

As of May 31, 2024 the Town has collected 98.07% of the 2023 real property taxes. The Town has also collected \$813.97 in interest for delinquent 2023 real property tax accounts.

Emergency MS – Mark Snelson

Wanted to address concerns regarding the automated external defibrillator (AED). Mr. Snelson said the AED shouldn't have any liability concerns regarding being shocked unless a person is in ventricular fibrillation (V-fib) rhythm. Only if a person is in V-fib will the AED shock a person. He said the defibrillator can not be overridden. Mayor Norton explained that another concern was that if the AED were placed in the Welcome Center's foyer, since those doors are not locked at night, the device would be stolen. Mr. Snelson said if the EMS department works with Duke Hospital on the units, if the units were stolen, the Hospital would replace them.

Mayor Norton asked Mr. Snelson if he thought the Welcome Center would be the best place for the AEDs to be located. Mr. Snelson said the AED needs to be centrally located and in a place where everyone knows where it is. Fire Chief Josh Norton mentioned that there are boxes in which the AED could be placed and when the box is opened 911 [emergency telephone number] is notified and 911 can then call out EMS and himself. Chief Norton did not know how much that type of box would cost. Mayor Norton asked how the AED was powered; Chief Norton advised that the device was battery powered and the fire department would be responsible for the battery replacement and pads. Mr. Snelson said that the batteries usually last 3 to 4 years. Mayor Norton told Mr. Snelson to get with Stacey [Geyer] and see if the AED could be housed at the Welcome Center and see where it could be placed. Mr. Snelson said that a wooden box could be built to hold the AED – as it didn't need to have a metal box.

Fire Department – Chief Josh Norton

The Fire Department was approved for a state grant. The Department will need to work with the County Commissioner on the fire tax. Chief Norton has tried to contact the County Manager but has not heard back from them. Chief Norton told the Board that the grant was to be used in building a sub-station at the Firefly Community. This is a \$37,000 project. Firefly is growing and some of the homes exceed 6-miles from Hot Springs. Chief Norton notified the Board that he will need their assistance in getting this on the ballot so that it can be up for vote in the November 2024 election.

Chief Norton asks that if anyone knows someone who is interested in joining the Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department (HSVFD) to let them know their help is needed.

As soon as the new fiscal year comes, HSVFD will need to find a mechanic to work on Engine 31 and Rescue 3.

Mayor Norton mentioned that she has noticed that the County's budget that each fire department, within the county, is in that budget. She asked Mr. Snelson if that was fire tax. Mr. Snelson confirmed that it was fire tax. Mr. Snelson said Smokey Mountain was put in years ago for the entire county's outside city limits. Chief Norton said Mars Hill and Marshall have full-time employees. He also said Mars Hill has a rural district. The Town governs all of the Mars Hill money but there are a couple of ways this can be done: The County could do it; a Board of Directors (as Country and Spring Creek do); or the Town can do it. The way the Town would be responsible for doing it is when the money come into the Town, there is a specific line item that would be Hot Springs Rural Fire Tax – that is where that the money would go for; that money would be used for nothing but that specific district. Mr. Snelson said what you could do is figure up what you spend fire tax _____ tax base as you do now and if its 3¢ or 4¢ of your tax base that goes to the fire department that's how you'd do that.

BOARD BUSINESS

Alderman Jeanne Gentry

2024-2025 Proposed Budget will be available for review, on the conference table. There aren't many changes from the prior budget. Streets and water have been added to. The meeting to approve the budget will be held on June 26th.

The Town has new water billing/payment software. We can now gather more information on the billings and payments. An example of the new software: There are still 80 accounts that have not paid for the February/March water/sewer bills. This is a total of \$10,000.00. Water rates for the coming fiscal year will be going up. The Town had a water rate study performed and the pending estimated amount of increase will be 75¢ a week for residential and business. The overage rates will be changing some. The Board will vote on the water/sewer rate increase at the June 26 Budget Approval Meeting.

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 6:46pm.

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Approved
Abigail Norton

Mayor Abigail Norton

7-1-24

Date

Other