

Present:

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

Fire Department –
Maintenance –
Police Department –
Tax Department – Laura Holloway
Zoning – Ben Houser

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

Mayor Norton asked the audience to mute their cell phones or turn them off.

Alderman Myers 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

Ike Lassiter

Mr. Lassiter spoke with Elmer Hall regarding the hostile being closed. He asked all to think about where the hikers may stay during the upcoming hiking season. Tim Arnett said there is talk that Scott Cauthen preparing the Octagon House and/or land for hikers to stay.

All Hands and Hearts are in Town; they are a volunteer group: Karen introduced several members of the group. She told the Board of the projects they have been working on.

Tim Arnett

There was an accident on Hot Springs Mountain over the weekend. Due to traffic being backed up it took a long time for First Responders to get to the people needing care. Mr. Arnett asked the Board about getting a motorcycle so that First Responders can get to people who need care, more quickly. Alderman Myers told everyone that the First Responders are in the process of getting a side-by-side. He said this type of vehicle could travel on the shoulders of the highway. The side-by-side will be equipped with lights, siren, and the ability to transport a person to an awaiting ambulance for care.

Volunteer

Suggested some of the churches might be able to help out with the hikers since the hostel is closed.

Stacey Geyer

She provided the Board with information regarding a peace pole. World Peace has initiated the concept. The pole would read: May peace prevail on Earth. There are different options, regarding the pole, that are offered. The organization is wanting to put the pole up but needs Town approval. Alderman Myers asked for confirmation that the pole would be placed on Welcome Center property. Ms. Geyer said it would be on Welcome Center property near the corner of Gentry's [Hardware Store]. Mayor Norton asked for a motion to approve the peace pole; Alderman Gentry made a motion to approve but added that the pole needed to be at the Welcome Center; Alderman Myers seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Tom Parker

Introduced himself. He is a volunteer from Utah; he came to help the Town recover after the hurricane. [He has been in town helping since the first couple of weeks after the hurricane.]

TJ Phillips

The Town's non-profit, Rebuild Hot Springs, has been up for a couple weeks. The non-profit is helping people who: lost their job due to the hurricane, had damage to their home, or damage to their business. He reminded all that the application deadline is on December 6, 2024. David Wagner asked that business owners please remind their employees to get their application in.

Sonya Phillips

Reminded all that the donation center is still operating out of the Hot Springs First Baptist Church. She asks that she be notified before sending people with donations to the Church. If she isn't notified that donations are coming in, people have a tendency to just drop things off in the Church's parking lot; this can create a mess and cause destruction to some donations. Ms. Phillips said she and the other volunteers are wanting to keep the Church property nice and clean. Alderman Myers told everyone that Ms. Phillips phone number may be found on the Rebuild Hot Springs website.

Bill with All Hands

He represents a dog rescue. He has received multiple reports of a large black dog running through town. He is trying to get the dog back with its owner.

Glenda Dolbeare

She wants to know who she can contact regarding the traffic through town. Alderman Stancil said a massive effort has kept the 18-wheeler trucks from going through town. She reminded all that the other I-40 traffic is coming through town at this time. Alderman Myers added that not much can be done about car traffic going through town. Ms. Dolbeare asked if Hot Springs was still under a State of Emergency; Mayor Norton told her we were.

Michael (?????????)

Is wanting to get an update of the Red Bridge pump station. Mayor Norton told him that the Board will be discussing the pump station in a few moments.

DEPARTMENTS

Entertainment Committee – SaraJo Litwak

The Town's Christmas event will be on Saturday, December 14 and will begin at 5:00pm.

Tax Department – Laura Holloway

Ms. Holloway said she is in hopes of having the 2024 tax bills out by the end of the week. Alderman Myers asked if late fees were being charged on taxes. Board members and Ms. Holloway responded that the state requires penalties be applied as of January 6th each year. Mayor Norton advised that she had asked if the Town would be able to provide people with an extension; she found out that we will not be able to give an extension on the property taxes. Alderman Myers asked if there was a mandate on how much the penalty must be. Ms. Holloway explained that a 2% penalty is assessed on January 6th and going forward, .75% interest is assessed on the first of each month until taxes are paid in full. Alderman Myers again asked if that was a state mandate; Ms. Holloway told him it is. Alderman Myers told the public that this is another thing to poke state congress and governor about. He is wanting people to request waiving the late fees for the 2024 taxes. He said not all will need it but some people will. Ms. Holloway explained that she had been told that tax bills going out is a courtesy and bills don't have to be sent out. All property owners are aware that property taxes are due annually and people need to prepare to pay their taxes. Ms. Holloway said she has a book explaining all of the tax rules if anyone is interested in looking at the book to better understand the rules.

TOWN BUSINESS

Mayor Norton

Water on River Road side of Town will be off the this evening [December 2, 2024]. Maintenance has been working on leaks and the wells can not be turned back on until the leaks are fixed.

Mayor Norton met with Hannah and Rod, from the County earlier in the day. The qualification request for the Engineer on the Fairveiw water project bids were opened during the meeting. McGill and associates won the bid. The water rates need to be officially set. The County will have the project until it's completed. After everything is completed, the Town of Hot Springs will take over the water system. Mayor Norton said she has researched the information and most cities/towns charge two-times the in city/town limit rates to customers who are outside the city/town limits. Mayor Norton asked for a motion to approve the two-times in city/town rate for customers who are outside the city/town limits or asked the Board if they would like to discuss. Alderman Myers asked if we could charge just one and a half times the city/town rate. Alderman Gentry explained that our maintenance crew would have to travel out to Fairview to repair what ever needed to be repaired or attended to. The maintenance crew will also have to read the meters. Alderman Stancil asked if two-times the in city/town rates would be enough. Alderman Gentry said that would be her first thought. Ketih Webb, with McGill, said a financial analyst has not been done, so it is not yet known what it will cost the Town of Hot Springs to manage the out of city/town system. He currently recommends to charge a double rate for outside the Town's service boundary. The Board decided to wait on the rate vote.

Mayor Norton referenced an email from Land of Sky regarding the Mountain Area Work Force Development Board received funding from the Department of Commerce Work Force Solutions. This will allow the hiring of individuals for cleanup or humanitarian functions for public for-profit or non-profit entities in County's approved by FEMA; Madison County is one of the counties. This could include administrative functions and possibly IT functions. The funding could possibly go through a temporary agency. If a person lost their job due to the hurricane, the temporary agency and this grant could pay their salary. Mayor Norton asked the Board to review and do some research on the subject.

Mayor Norton had a call with 120 Water earlier in the day. Another year of service, by 120 Water is \$4,000.00; this allows access to their lead line inventory software. There is an additional \$2,500.00 fee for managed services (support from 120 Water). Our information could be downloaded on a spreadsheet if the Board decides to not continue service through 120 Water. Jordan Jackson, with Rual Water, has told Mayor Norton that they could provide similar services for \$19.00 per month. Mayor Norton told the Board that the 120 Water contract ends on January 3, 2025. She told the Board that if they wish to continue with 120 Water's contract it would need to be voted on at the evening's meeting. Alderman Gentry said the 120 Water's fee is not in the 2024-2025 budget. The Board asked why the service would need to continue. Mayor Norton advised the state will continue to require additional information, require additional testing on structures that identified as having lead service lines, and require the Town to put a program in place to help the property owner address the matter. 120 Water would help with this 2nd phase. Marion Griffin asked the Board if the report was for town businesses or for residential homes. Alderman Gentry responded that the state will require the lines to be replaced. Mr. Webb told the meeting attendees that the State can help people replace lines in which lead is leaching into the water or update the lead lines to keep lead from leaching into the water. Alderman Gentry told the Board that if they decide to keep 120 Water, there would need to be an amendment to the Budget. Mayor Norton stated that the Town could not afford the fees at this time. Alderman Myers made a motion to discontinue the 120 Water contract; Alderman Stancil seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton asked the Board to approve a \$150.00 monthly stipend for all of the work Kevin Reese has been doing for the town's websites. Alderman Myers made a motion to approve this request; Alderman Gentry seconded the motion; all were in favor.

Mayor Norton asked _____ if there were photos of the manhole before it was repaired. She said she needed copies of the pictures.

Alderman Gentry

She asked if we received money for the old garbage truck; Mayor Norton said the insurance company will make a payment for the loss of the truck. Alderman Gentry said that maintenance is asking for a tractor with a frontend loader. Maintenance felt that we could get a good used tractor for \$13,000.00. Mayor Norton advised that since the tractor is less than \$30,000.00 the Board will not have to vote on the matter.

Keith Webb with McGill and Associates

The Red Bridge pump station was damaged due to the hurricane. A control panel replacement has been ordered. The Town's Maintenance Team will install the pump and a control panel and have the pump station back up and running. This pump station collects sewage from the Andrews Avenue service area and any connections on the Spring Creek sewer line. This pump station and the Spring Creek pump station pumps the sewage to the wastewater treatment plant for treatment.

Mayor Norton has been asked if Peerless Blowers can empty their tanks. The factory is set to close on December 12th. If the tanks are not emptied there is concern that they will freeze and burst. We currently do not know how many gallons the tanks hold. Mr. Webb said if the tanks are drained before the pump station is up and running the Town's only option would be to pump and haul the flow to the waste water treatment plant.

Mayor Norton asked to discuss the Spring Creek sewer line. Options are being reviewed for immediate access to the sewer line on the South and North. A 1,500 gallon tank could be placed on the South side of the street for businesses on the South. We would have to have a company come to pump and haul the sewage. The concern is for the North side of Bridge Street. If the sewer line is reconnected for the Tavern and Spring Creek Motel, the line would still be on the creek and could be taken out again buy the next flood producing event. Mayor Norton advised that the sewer line is not staying on the creek. Currently, there is not a cost calculated to the sewer line being moved. Mr. Webb said FEMA and the Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has been asked for an opinion for leaving the sewer line on the creek; neither have responded as of yet. FEMA had previously advised that they want to see the sewer line moved off the creek when it is built back. The area has been surveyed to see what options are available.

Mr. Webb has not yet spoke with DOT to see if the sewer line could be, again, placed under the Bridge Street bridge. This section of sewer line was damaged during the flood. Another option is to move the sewer line off the creek. This would require the Andrews Ave. sewer line deeper to get to the same service area.

Mr. Webb said that an answer would be needed from the County, DEQ, whomever, if we put a temporary sewer line back on the creek could it be made a permanent line if it is armored to reduce vulnerability from future floods. Could we fill in the creek to armor the sewer line. Part of the Spring Creek pump station repair was due to the retaining wall collapsed. A new retaining wall/flood structure was rebuilt around the pump station. There are high costs attached to this type of repair. Mayor Norton added that FEMA pays to replace what was there before the flood, and there was not a retaining wall in place prior to the flood, so the cost would be on the Town. FEMA requests that the sewer line be put back in a more resilient manner than it was before the flood.

Alderman Stancil said the Spring Creek bridge has been a problem since the 1970's. She stated that the same situation could occur again, due to the bridge's structure. Mayor Norton said the Town could not wait for DOT to fix the bridge before the sewer line is fixed.

David Wagner said that the sewer line is on private property. He said permits had already been pulled to remediate the creek bank and cover the sewer line that was already there.

He said the line that wasn't protected washed away, but the line that had been protected didn't wash away. He talked about his property line going 10' to 15' past the pipe and into the creek. Mayor Norton told Mr. Wagner that the Town has easements, Mr. Wagner responded that the Town had easements to maintain the sewer line, but it wasn't maintained and is the reason why the line was washed out and destroyed. He feels that a plan needs to be put in place to protect the sewer line, with the right engineering, and then maintain it.

Mr. Webb said that under the emergency repairs, the line could be repaired where it is to a point, not under the bridge, but to where the Tavern and the motel could be served. Mr. Webb said what he's unclear of is who would pay for the enhancements that would protect the pipe. Mr. Wagner said an organization came to him and said that his property as well as the Tavern's property would fall under certain requirements and would be covered by that particular organization. He said that the Army Corp of Engineers would be involved. Mr. Webb told Mr. Wagner that the Town would need documentation from the County or the State Agencies that they will do the stream bank restoration; all the Town can do is a contract to repair the sewer line in its current location. Currently, there is not money to make the stream bank enhancements. A concern, from the Town's standpoint, is that FEMA would deny the request to reimburse for the enhancements. Mr. Webb told Mr. Wagner is that the Town will look at the options, but what can't be included in the repair work are stream bank enhancements. If he has an organization is willing to do the enhancement work, that is great.

Mr. Webb reminded Mr. Wagner of the best alternative that has been presented is that if the Tavern and Mr. Wagner would provide the Town with an exchange of easement, a new sewer line could be placed between the Tavern and Mr. Wagner's building, in the ally way – this would be the best resilient option. Mr. Wagner expressed concern for the depreciation of his property value if the sewer line were placed as Mr. Webb mentioned. He explained that he would be out more cost as he would have to bring the sewer lines from behind the motel so that it could run into a sewer line if it were places in the alley way between the Tavern and his building.

Mayor Norton finally explained to all that the Town will be getting the sewer lines away from Spring Creek and the French Broad River. If anyone is wanting to put up money for creek based enhancements now, the Mayor put them on notice that they will have to re-route their sewer line in the near future.

Someone spoke up and said that since multiple structures along the creek from the Cat Hole down has been submitted to a program and is supposed to be approved. The Army Corp of Engineers will probably be in to some time in spring 2025 to start repairs and enhancements on the creek banks to divert the creek from harming any structures.

The Board has requested that information be gathered and submitted for review regarding what Mr. Wagner and the other have stated will occur to make enhancements to the creek bank.

Alderman Myers asked Mr. Tim Arnett, owner of the Spring Creek Tavern, to explain the work that has been done at the Tavern. Mr. Arnett told the Board what has been done at the Tavern regarding their sewer line. Mr. Arnett, graciously, told the Board that if they need to step back and redirect their sewer lines, that is what they will do. He also,

graciously, said that in the future if the line needed to again be redirected, that is what they will do.

Mr. Webb said he will put the different options and their costs together and bring it back to the Board. He explained that getting sewer service back to the Tavern and Mr. Wagnor's motel, on a temporary basis, could be completed in two to three months. Mayor Norton explained that since the Town is still in an emergency phase, the Board would not have to vote on the matter. Mr. Webb said he would get the options to FEMA, Emergency Management, and DEQ. If they agree with the recommendations then they could move forward with the emergency repairs.

Alderman Gentry commented that she would hate to see anyone having to tear everything up in a few years to redirect lines to accommodate the new sewer lines. Mr. Wagoner said he won't be able to make any changes as it would be a big burden for him. He said he purchased the property at the highest amount in the business district, his property is mortgaged and he doesn't want his property depreciated. He said he doesn't think what has been discussed is any better option than the sewer line remaining down by the creek. Mayor Norton stated that no one is going to replace the Town's sewer line. Mr. Wagnor strongly stated that the Town would fix the sewer line and someone would come in and remediate the bank to better protect the sewer line.

Mr. Webb let the Board know that he will gather the options and they can meet the following week to review. Mayor Norton said that she and one Alderman will be in the 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 7:08pm.

3-3

Approved
Abigail Norton

Mayor Abigail Norton

1-6-2025

Date

Other