

Town of Hot Springs  
Board of Alderman Meeting  
January 12, 2026

Present:

Mayor Abby Norton	Clerk – Nancy Thomas
Alderman Lisa Gahagan	Maintenance – Jeremy Trantham
Alderman Tammy Shelton	Planning & Zoning – Ben Houser
Alderman Wendy Stancil	Rebuild Hot Springs Area (HRSA) – T.J. Phillips
Attorney Larry Leake	Tax Collector – Laura Holloway
Town Admin & FO – Sena Kassim	

Mayor Norton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., reminded attendees to follow the Public Charge, and requested cell phones be silenced and conversations kept to a minimum.

The Board approved the December 8, 2025, minutes on a motion by Alderman Stancil, seconded by Alderman Shelton, with unanimous consent.

The Board approved the December 30, 2025, minutes on a motion by Alderman Gahagan, seconded by Alderman Shelton, with unanimous consent.

## **AGENDA**

### Will Yeiser

Mr. Yeiser, owner of Spring Creek Farm House, attended the January 5, 2026, Planning and Zoning meeting to request clarification on the Noise Ordinance. The property, formerly the Duckett House, was historically used for events but is now zoned residential. Since purchasing it in 2020, he has operated it as a short-term rental and hosted several events, some of which may not have complied with noise and event regulations. Property managers now instruct renters to keep all sound within the property boundaries.

Mr. Yeiser requested permission to host small events featuring non-amplified music, noting their potential benefit to local businesses. Alderman Gahagan stated that the Board would review the relevant policies and provide a response within two to three weeks.

Attorney Leake advised that a residential property previously grandfathered for commercial use loses that status after being used as a private residence for more than a year, reverting fully to residential zoning. Regaining commercial use would require rezoning, beginning with an application to the Zoning Board, followed by a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen, who hold final authority. He further clarified that profiting from events held at a rental property constitutes commercial activity. Mr. Yeiser asked when to expect a decision, and Alderman Gahagan indicated the Board would respond following a special meeting. Mr. Yeiser expressed his appreciation to the Board.

## **DEPARTMENTS**

### **Town Administrator – Sena Kassim**

Ms. Kassim directed the Aldermen to the account balance report and a Budget-to-Actual snapshot reflecting the Town's fiscal status as of January 6, 2026, compared with the same period last year. She noted that several line-item adjustments are required, as the Finance Office is currently at 134% of budget, whereas departments should be near 50% at this point in

the fiscal year. Some expenses may have been miscoded in QuickBooks and will need to be corrected. She also provided snapshot materials in advance of upcoming budget workshops to help identify departmental needs and current standings.

A summary of the water accounts was provided. This information can be discussed in one of the upcoming special meetings.

Ms. Kassim provided an update on the Town's ongoing projects, including the Sidewalk, Wastewater, and Sewer Projects; the Bridge Street and Spring Street improvements; the Downtown WiFi Hot Spot initiative; and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. 1 She noted that the Town received a \$2,000 NCLM grant for cameras and reported that electrical work at Town Hall is complete, with plumbing scheduled to begin within the week. 1 Work on the public parking lot, fencing, and stream bank restoration will soon advance in coordination with a volunteer landscape architect. The inland grinder pump at the existing wastewater treatment plant is now 85% complete, and the design charrette remains scheduled for sometime in April.

A recommendation was made for staff to complete a Risk Management course, and the course details have been provided. Certain positions require ongoing continuing education. Mayor Norton noted that the Town Administrator and Town Clerk will attend the course, and funding for training and professional development has already been budgeted.

Ms. Kassim informed the Board that concerns have been raised regarding overnight parking in the Public Parking Lot. Although the Town intended to discontinue overnight parking, the existing signage has not yet been updated. Mayor Norton announced that a special meeting will be scheduled to review the parking policy, including the status of the Public Parking Lot. Ms. Sonya Phillips requested that a parking map be provided to HSTA.

Ms. Kassim presented a community service request requiring the individual to complete 48 hours within two years. After consulting with Mr. Trantham, she reported that the hours would be most effectively scheduled during the weed-eating season. In response to questions from Alderman Shelton, Mr. Trantham clarified that the Town does not address vegetation involving utility wiring. Mayor Norton will contact the individual's payroll office once the scheduling details have been finalized.

Ms. Kassim reported that while water and sewer services are largely returning to normal, a few properties currently have active water service but have not yet connected to the available sewer system. She requested guidance from the Board regarding how sewer charges should be assessed in these cases. Mr. David Wagner stated that his property is among those affected, explaining that reconstruction is still underway. Currently, only one spigot is in use, and no wastewater is entering the sewer System. He requested a one-time exception to waive the sewer portion of his bill until a Certificate of Occupancy is issued. Alderman Shelton moved to allow the two businesses significantly damaged by Hurricane Helene—whose sewer connections remain unusable—to be billed only for water until they can resume sewer use. Alderman Stancil seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

### **Rebuild Hot Springs – T.J. Phillips**

Mr. Phillips directed the Board to the provided handout. He reminded members that in December 2025, Rebuild requested approval to pursue grant funding for restoration of the Community Center and the old jail. The current draft represents the next step in that process and outlines the proposed scope of work to be submitted to the Appalachian Design Center (ADC), a volunteer network of engineers and architects. Rebuild is seeking feedback from the Board before formally submitting the project to ADC in hopes of securing volunteer engineering support.

### **Maintenance Department – Jeremy Trantham**

Mr. Trantham requested authorization to purchase a scrape blade and a set of forks for the maintenance tractor and submitted a \$2,193.00 quote from Marshall Tractor for the Board's consideration.

### **Planning and Zoning Board – Ben Houser**

Mr. Houser inquired whether the Planning and Zoning Board should revisit the event policy in light of the earlier discussion with Mr. Yeiser. Mayor Norton agreed and noted she would locate the previous draft so the Board could use it as a starting point. Once updated, the new Board of Aldermen will review the policy before it is forwarded to the Town Attorney for legal review.

### **Tax Department – Laura Holloway**

Ms. Holloway requested authorization for the required publication of tax lien advertisements in the local newspaper between March 1 and June 30, 2026. Alderman Gahagan moved to approve the request, Alderman Shelton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Holloway informed the Board that she will distribute copies of the tax collection letters scheduled to be mailed by the end of January. She is providing these copies so Board members are aware of the correspondence and are prepared should any recipients inquire about the letters.

Ms. Holloway requested that the Board authorize the release of \$14.96 from a taxpayer's account after the County confirmed that the storage container in question was never located within the Town limits. Alderman Stancil moved to approve the release, Alderman Gahagan seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The property owner submitted a note disputing interest charged on their 2024 taxes, asserting the payment was mailed before the due date. Ms. Holloway explained that she normally retains postmarked envelopes to verify mailing dates; however, the folder containing these envelopes was found empty. She noted that envelopes postmarked prior to the deadline but delivered afterward should have been included in that file. In good faith, Ms. Holloway requested Board approval to reimburse the \$68.85 in interest. Alderman Stancil moved to approve the reimbursement, Alderman Shelton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Holloway reported that the Town has collected 84.28% of the 2025 real property taxes to date.

## **TOWN BUSINESS**

### **Mayor Norton**

Mayor Norton scheduled two special meetings to address the personnel policy, parking policy, and several outstanding water account issues. A special meeting will be held on January 17, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. to review the personnel policy and Mr. Yeiser's request. The Board will convene again on January 31, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. to discuss parking matters, water accounts, and budget items.

Mayor Norton inquired about the status of the HSTA committee's mapping project. Ms. Phillips reported that the committee has begun initial work and anticipates completing the maps by the end of February 2026.

Mayor Norton reviewed the Interlocal Agreement between Madison County and the Town of Hot Springs. Madison County previously received a state appropriation of \$2.9 million to connect the Fairview water system to the Town's water system, with the County funding and completing all associated work. Under the Agreement, once the project is finished, the Town will assume responsibility for billing and system maintenance, and the Fairview system will be formally dissolved. Mr. Trantham reported that Fairview has already been removed from the State's system and confirmed that a Rural Water representative will inspect the Town's facility within the next two weeks. Mayor Norton stated she will consult with Attorney Leake regarding remaining legal considerations. Attorney Leake advised the Board that the \$2.9 million appropriation does not include funding for a water tank. He emphasized that separate funding must be identified. Mayor Norton noted that the Town has an existing \$5 million SRF grant that includes a planned redundant tank. The proposal is to relocate that tank to East Lawson on Ron Phelps' property, rather than construct it at the original 25/70 site. Because this tank predates Hurricane Helene planning, Attorney Leake cautioned the Board to avoid tying it to hurricane-related funding to prevent compliance concerns. He further explained that the contract omits any reference to tank funding, and the Town must still determine how to cover the estimated \$200,000–\$300,000 cost. He recommended proceeding with approval and execution of the Interlocal Agreement, as the project should continue while the Town resolves the tank funding separately.

Following this discussion, Alderman Shelton moved to approve the Interlocal Agreement. Alderman Stancil seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **Alderman Lisa Gahagan**

Alderman Gahagan reported that she spoke with Katie Eakins of Irving, Texas, regarding the transition of the Package Plant from 2-phase to 3-phase power. Duke Energy has submitted the necessary request to Norfolk Southern, which is coordinating with Rail Pros to schedule required flaggers; however, the process is currently delayed in Norfolk Southern's real estate division.

To help move the project forward, Alderman Gahagan provided Ms. Eakins with the contact information for Phillip Cramer at Duke Energy in hopes of expediting the next steps and avoiding the need for generator use. She expects an update from Ms. Eakins by the following day and will forward any communications to Mayor Norton.

Alderman Gahagan reported that the Board is coordinating with Sheriff Harwood during Chief David Shelton's absence. She noted that an incident occurred between the Dollar Store and Ricker's, and that Sheriff Harwood will publish a public update on Facebook. The Sheriff's Office responded to the situation between 1:00 and 2:00 a.m. on Sunday. To increase local coverage, the Board has spoken with Officers Workman and Elkins about increasing their presence in Hot Springs. Alderman Gahagan expressed interest in discussing the potential hiring of an additional officer at an upcoming Saturday special meeting.

#### **Alderman Tammy Shelton**

Said she received a call from Geina at the diner regarding the diner's high water bills every month. She said the bills were \$7,000 to \$8,000; so she spoke with the Maintenance Department. Mr. Trantham said they will read the meter on a daily basis for a couple of weeks to see if they can figure out what is happening. Alderman Shelton asks that we help the diner out at the end of the month as the diner's typical bill is \$2,000. Mayor Norton asked Alderman Shelton if the diner had already received an adjustment as only 1 adjustment, per calendar year,

is allowed. Alderman Gahagan asked if only one adjustment was allowed per year even if someone had a leak. Mayor Norton explained that normally the reason for an adjustment is due to a leak. Alderman Shelton reported that the diner's situation has been going on for a year at this point. A daily meter reading will let everyone know how much water is being used on a daily basis. Alderman Gahagan would like to look at the matter to determine how the bill will be handled once the problem has been determined. Alderman Shelton will let Geina know that the Maintenance guys will monitor the situation for a couple of weeks and she'll get back with her at that point. She also brought up that the diner's water bill is somehow connected to the Dollar Store's water bill. Ms. Nancy Thomas explained that the Dollar Store's water runs through a meter, and that is how she knows how much to charge the Dollar Store. Then the water runs through the diners meter. Ms. Thomas said she subtracts the Dollar Store's usage from the diners usage and the balance is then billed to the diner. Ms. Thomas said she'd look at the software to insure it was calculating correctly.

#### **Alderman Wendy Stancil**

Alderman Stancil reported that The Faith 360 Network, a nonprofit formed in response to Hurricane Helene and affiliated with ABCCM, is working with communities in heavily impacted areas to develop a Preparedness Pallet for future disaster response. The proposed pallet would include essential supplies such as fuel containers, paper goods, water, a generator, tool kits, StarLink equipment, work lights, and a ham radio. Alderman Stancil will meet later this month with Faith 360 representative Tiffany Dix, who will also conduct a site visit. As part of the review, Faith 360 requested information on where the Town would store the pallet. It was suggested that the fire department may serve as an appropriate storage location.

At 7:35 p.m., Alderman Stancil moved to enter Executive Session; Alderman Shelton seconded; motion carried unanimously.

At 8:46 p.m., Alderman Stancil moved to return to Regular Session; Alderman Gahagan seconded; motion carried unanimously.

The Board addressed personnel and legal matters during Executive Session.

Alderman Shelton moved to retain Paul DeLisle as the alternate zoning administrator at a rate of \$75.00 per month. Alderman Gahagan seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Attorney Leake presented the proposed sewer service ordinance requested at the previous meeting. Alderwoman Stancil moved to approve the ordinance, Alderwoman Shelton seconded the motion, and the Board approved it unanimously.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m. on a motion by Alderman Gahagan, seconded by Alderman Shelton; all in favor.

3-3

Approved

2-9-2026  
Date

*Abigail Norton*

Mayor Abigail Norton

Action items:

- Overnight parking in the public lot. Sonya with HSTA will be providing a parking map, likely end of February.
- Event Policy, Mayor Norton to provide as a starting point for the Board.
- Smokey Mountain Diner and Dollar General need to have their own meters.