

MINUTES FOR BOARD OF ALDERMEN WORK SESSION

MAY 25, 2021

5:00 PM

The following elected officials were present: Mayor Coleman, Alderman Huggins, Alderwoman Morrow, Alderman Cearley, Alderman Milton, and Alderman Withers.

The following staff members were present: Maria Stroupe, Town Manager; Nolan Groce, Development Services Director; Shannon Whittle, Town Clerk; Doug Huffman, Electrical Director; Bill Trudnak, Public Works Director; Brandon Whitener, Recreation Director; Jonathan Newton, Finance Director; Earl Withers, III, Fire Chief; and Kevin Wingate, Police Sergeant.

Mayor Coleman called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Mayor Coleman then opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

At this time, the Mayor asked if there were any changes to be made to agenda. Maria Stroupe requested to add a discussion on the purchase of Town property, time permitting and Alderman Withers requested to add a discussion on parking on Gaston Street, also time permitting. Due to the length of the meeting, Alderman Withers withdrew his addition from the agenda later in the Work Session. Ms. Stroupe's addition was added as Item D under New Business. Alderman Withers then motioned to set the agenda, seconded by Alderman Huggins, and carried unanimously.

New Business:

Item 3A Proposed Budget

Town Staff is proud to present the proposed budget for the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year, which includes the Economic Development Fund for the first time. The proposed budget totals \$17,944,427. This budget represents emerging from COVID, bringing back some projects and items that were previously put on hold, and continuing to provide outstanding service to our community; all while remaining fiscally responsible with Town resources. Attached are sheets highlighting each fund and department, please see Exhibit 3A. Each of the attached sheets were explained by the Town Manager. During the discussion, Alderman Cearley stated that he thinks the Across-the-Board increase should be broken out differently to benefit those in more hazardous positions, such as the Electric and Public Utilities departments. After some debate, the board were in favor of continuing with the proposed 2% increase, as is, with a 3-2 majority vote. Alderman Cearley and Alderwoman Morrow voted nay, while Aldermen Milton, Withers, and Huggins were all in favor. Alderman Cearley then expressed his opposition to the proposed 6% rate increase on water. After further debate, the board were also in favor of continuing with the proposed 6% increase, as is, again with a 3-2 majority vote. Alderman Cearley and Alderwoman Morrow voted nay, while Aldermen Milton, Withers, and Huggins were in favor.

Before continuing on to the next item, a small recess was taken, beginning at 6:28 pm and reconvening at 6:38pm.

Item 3B Zoning/Setbacks Discussion

A discussion concerning zoning classifications and setbacks was held, please see Exhibit 3B for pertinent information. The mayor expressed his concern that the developer may expect lost revenues from the Town if the ordinances do change. This possibility was substantiated by Staff. Following the discussion, the board has requested that the setback requirements be changed from 6 ft. to 8 ft. Nolan Groce will speak with the developer's and this discussion will be resumed once he has received their response.

Item 3C Benches in Downtown

Members of the Board had expressed interest in replacing some benches located in the 100 block of W. Trade St., as the existing ones are in a state of disrepair. Upon investigation, the current benches were not purchased by the Town, but by local business owners a number of years ago. If there is interest in providing public benches in downtown, there will need to be a discussion on the numbers of benches and placement. Attached is a quote for benches matching those already on the Court Square, please see Exhibit 3C. The board would like to move forward with the purchase of 10 benches.

Item 3D Purchase of Town Property

A potential buyer has expressed an interest in purchasing a piece of property currently owned by the Town. The property is located off of Ollie Way and is approximately 1/3 of an acre in size. The Board expressed their interest in proceeding with a possible sale.

Item 3E Parking on Gaston Street

This item was removed from the discussion due to time constraints and will be brought back at a later date.

Alderman Withers motioned to adjourn, seconded by Alderwoman Morrow, and carried unanimously. 7:55 pm.

Rick Coleman, Mayor

Shannon Whittle, Town Clerk